History Through Seer Stones:
Mormon Historical Thought
1890-2010

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Since Mark Leone’s landmark 1979 study Roots of Modern Mormonism, a scholarly consensus has emerged that a key element of Mormon distinctiveness stems from one’s subscription to an alternate narrative or experience of history. In the past generation, scholarship on Mormon historical thought has addressed important issues arising from these insights from anthropological and sociological perspectives. These perspectives have joined a rich and venerable controversial literature seeking to “debunk” Mormon narratives, apologetic scholarship asserting their epistemic harmony or superiority, as well as fault-finding scholarship that constructs differences in Mormon historical thinking as a problem that must be solved.

The lacuna that this project begins to fill is the lack of scholarship specifically in the field of intellectual history describing the various alternate narratives of the past that have been and are being developed by Mormons, their contents, the methodologies by which they are produced and the theories of historical causation that they entail. This dissertation examines nine chronica (historical narratives and associated theories of history) generated by Mormon thinkers during the twentieth century. Following Philip Barlow’s definition of “Mormon” as any religious group
that includes the Book of Mormon in its canon, this project examines five chronica generated by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism’s 14-million-strong Utah-based denomination), two generated by the Community of Christ (Mormonism’s 175,000-strong Missouri-based denomination) and two generated by independent Mormon fundamentalists (polygamists), one in Utah and the other in Mexico. In so doing it examines the thought of B. H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie, W. Cleon Skousen, Ogden Kraut, Margarito Bautista, Hugh Nibley, John Sorenson and a variety of CoC writers such as Harold Velt, Roy Cheville, Little Pigeon and F. Edward Butterworth.

Following the work of Leone and Jan Shipps, it engages ethnographic perspectives on unique elements of Mormon temporal phenomenology and its relationship with ritual practice. It also examines how national political and religious movements interpenetrate with Mormonism to condition different understandings of the past; the interactions of Mormon understandings of the past with Mexican revolutionary nationalism and indigenismo, Cold War anti-communism, the 1970s New Left, Christian fundamentalism and Gilded Age progressivism are concurrently examined. Similarly, Mormon interactions with various epistemes and methodologies are canvassed, including New Testament criticism, cultural anthropology, conspiracy theory, medieval typology and the Cambridge myth and ritual school.

Ultimately, a set of religious communities that prioritize subscription to a narrative of Israelite immigration to the Americas and pre-Columbian Christian history of the Western Hemisphere, including the post-resurrection ministry of Jesus Christ, has had to reach a special accommodation with history. This project is a study of the diverse accommodations that have been achieved, their epistemic bases and their sustainability in light of the different forms of time consciousness that underpin them.
Acknowledgments

This project, first and foremost, would not have been possible without the extraordinary and generous aid I received from my partner Rachel Gostenhofer, without whose help and guidance I could never have produced so much so quickly or so well-informed by scholarship of fields and in languages I have only begun to comprehend. But it has been her love, encouragement, hard work, brilliant advice and emotional support, often provided under adverse circumstances in her own life, that have been most crucial in this project and without which it would not have been completed.

My supervisor, Kenneth Mills, similarly deserves high praise not only for his flexibility, kindness, dedication and intellectual depth but also for gaining not just a knowledge but a curiosity into and real engagement with areas of inquiry far outside his normal field. His work as an advocate for me and for this project have been generous, steadfast and unflagging, even when it has been work that I have inadvertently created for him. My prior supervisor, Derek Williams, similarly deserves recognition and thanks for the generosity, guidance and support that he gave me during its first years and early crucial chapters. Russell Kazal’s contribution to this project has been similarly generous and has been underpinned by an extraordinary polymath knowledge whose breadth has been of pivotal importance in unifying the various bodies of scholarship and knowledge from which my project draws. This contribution has been made from time he did not have and often on very short notice and yet it has always been offered with exceptional patience and gentleness. Pamela Klassen’s early contributions in helping to shape the project and place me in contact with key theoretical as well as topical scholarship also merit heartfelt appreciation, as does Rick Halpern’s support to both my intellectual and professional development in this guild and in providing me with great professional as well as academic opportunities.

I also want to thank the Greater Toronto Latin America Research Group (LARG), University of Toronto Latin American Studies, Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies, Mormon History Association and John Whitmer History Association for affording me opportunities to present my work to fellow scholars and provide me with such helpful feedback. I am particularly appreciative of the LARG for its inclusiveness, collegiality and hospitality in including me as a junior scholar.

As there are no historians of Mormonism at the University of Toronto, I want to single-out Richard Bushman and Terryl Givens who broke new and generous ground in including me as the first non-Mormon scholar to be welcomed and sponsored to attend the Joseph Smith seminar at Brigham Young University. This seminar was key to grounding me in the field of Mormon religious studies and placing me in a network of scholars like Grant Underwood from whom I have learned much; more importantly, it helped to ground me in LDS culture at a human level. In that respect, although not the largest contributor, I want to thank the Mormon Scholars Foundation for their support of me in the past, along with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Ontario Graduate Scholarship, University of Toronto School of Graduate Studies and Department of History and the Mormon History Association.

I must also express my heartfelt appreciation to and thank the archives with which I interacted: the Tom L. Perry Collection at Brigham Young University, the Archive of the West at the University of Utah, the LDS Historical Archive and the Community of Christ Archive. But, in particular, I want to express my profound appreciation of el Museo de Mormonismo in Mexico City and especially its founder and benefactor, Fernando Gomez, for the great personal
trust and generosity entailed in temporarily entrusting irreplaceable portions of its archive to me for analysis.

I also want to thank James Winter for seeing the historian in me in my youth and his attempts to both steer me onto an academic path in 1990 and aid me in finding it again in 2002.

Finally, I want to thank my mother, Valerie Jerome, whose unflagging support not only of my scholarship but of any and every task to which I have committed myself has made this dissertation possible. Not just her support but the courage and lifelong commitment to struggling against adversity with dignity that she exemplifies every day has given me the strength to continue in this enterprise and those before it.
# Table of Contents

**History Through Seer Stones: A Prologue** ................................................................. 1  
**Chapter One: Introduction and General Concepts** .................................................. 10  
I. Subaltern Pasts ......................................................................................................... 12  
II. The Archive .......................................................................................................... 17  
III. The State of the Field ......................................................................................... 19  
IV. The Mormon Canon ............................................................................................... 23  
V. Mormon Denominations ......................................................................................... 27  
VI. Formative Influences on Mormon Historical Thought ...................................... 32  
VII. Mormon Temporal Phenomenology .................................................................... 50  
VIII. Chapter Synopsis ................................................................................................. 61  

**Chapter Two: The Modernist-Fundamentalist Debate, Mormon Style** ................. 67  
I. Setting the Scene ...................................................................................................... 67  
II. The Progressive *Chronicon* .................................................................................. 80  
III. The Rise of the LDS Conservative *chronicon* .................................................... 98  

**Chapter Three: Fundamentalist Mormons and Mormon fundamentalists** .......... 123  
I. Dramatis Personae .................................................................................................... 123  
II. The Skousen *chronicon* ....................................................................................... 127  
III. Ogden Kraut and the fundamentalist *chronicon* ................................................ 146  

**Chapter Four: Margarito Bautista** ........................................................................ 171  
I. Margarito Bautista ................................................................................................... 171  
II. *In medias res* ......................................................................................................... 174  
III. An Elect Mexico ...................................................................................................... 181  
IV. The Gentiles ........................................................................................................... 191  
V. The Blood of Israel (*Sangre Regia*) ....................................................................... 194  
VI. National election, Plans A and B. ......................................................................... 199  
VII. The Modern Apostasy ......................................................................................... 208  

**Chapter Five: the Method of Hugh Nibley** ........................................................... 218  
I. Introduction .............................................................................................................. 218  
II. The Immovable East .............................................................................................. 223  
III. Patternism ............................................................................................................. 230  
IV. Finding a True Text ("These fragments I have shored against my ruin") ............. 237  
V. Kinds of True Texts ................................................................................................. 247  
VI. How to Translate Correctly ................................................................................... 255  
VII. Distinguishing Truth from Fraud ......................................................................... 257  
VIII. Scripture and Who Reads It ............................................................................... 260  
IX. Fashioning the Big Picture ................................................................................... 263  
X. From Method to *chronicon* .................................................................................. 265  

**Chapter Six: The Fall and Rise of External Evidences** ......................................... 267  
I. The RLDS, Herald House and the other progressive *chronicon* ......................... 267  
II. The John Sorenson *chronicon* ............................................................................. 283  
III. Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 317
Chapter Seven: The Theory of Hugh Nibley ................................................................. 318
I. Fragmentary Systems .............................................................................................. 318
II. Dispensational Science ....................................................................................... 321
III. Types and Shadows ........................................................................................... 331
IV. The Temple ......................................................................................................... 337
V. Internal Evidences in the Ancient Americas ....................................................... 341
VI. The Nibley Project .............................................................................................. 344
VII. Nibley and the Scholarly Counter-Elite .............................................................. 345

Chapter Eight: Collapse of the Reorganization ......................................................... 353
I. The End of RLDS Progressivism ......................................................................... 353
II. The Community of Christ chronicon .................................................................. 365
III. The Subaltern Speaks ....................................................................................... 383
IV. The Community Awaits Revelation ................................................................... 394

Chapter Nine: Conclusion .......................................................................................... 396
Appendix – LDS Temples ......................................................................................... 405
Bibliography/Works Cited .......................................................................................... 408
History Through Seer Stones: A Prologue

~ Below is one version of the history of the universe that a contemporary member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints might fashion for herself based on scripture, church-approved apologetic materials and conversations with coreligionists enshrined in Mormon practices of “temple work” and testimony described below. The story which follows is not meant to describe a definitive or comprehensive Mormon past but to rehearse the elements common to many LDS narratives of the historical past, very much living realms of Mormon historical thought. ~

The events chronicled in the Old and New Testaments are true, not just metaphorically but historically so. But here are some things you may not know about the past:

God was once a human being like us. He grew up on a world much like our own.1 Over time, he came to understand the underlying physics of our universe and mastered them, allowing him to die and resurrect himself as a god.2 As a god, he established his throne near the distant star of Kolob, from which “worlds without number” radiate outwards.3 Aeons ago, in a place called the Spirit World, he began siring his spirit children through his wife, the Mother in Heaven.4 These spirit children lived in a world much like our own except that they and it were made out of a highly refined physical substance known as “spirit,” something invisible to our

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2 Joseph Smith, Jr., Teachings of Joseph Smith, 347; Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1960), 125. In most Christian religions, all laws or rules governing cause and effect in the universe are contingent upon and changeable by God; Mormonism’s God is likewise circumscribed by key elements of universal law. While there are disagreements about the extent of the circumscription and which universal laws are God-binding versus God-made, the Law of Opposites, which solves the problem of evil, is widely agreed to limit God and is specifically codified in scripture:

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. (Doctrine and Covenants 77:7)

eyes. This world had religious observance, manufacturing, education and all the elements of a productive society, along with the physical/spiritual infrastructure needed to sustain it. Over time, through a combination of education and experience, these spirit children became increasingly distinct and individuated, developing their own personalities and inclinations.

God wanted the best for his children, to become like him and one day, become gods and so, based on the physical laws he had learned in the process of becoming a god, he developed the Plan of Salvation. In this plan, he, perhaps with some assistance, would create the planet earth where his spirit children would be born into mortal, fleshy human bodies just as his once had been, with their skills and inclinations intact from their time in the Spirit World but minus their memories. That is why we don’t remember our life there. On Earth, God’s children would learn the arts of virtuous living and priesthood power and be tested and, if they passed the test, be resurrected as gods. These arts, collectively, are what is properly meant by the term “the Gospel.” But in order for this plan to work, they would have to first become and be made of perishable flesh by way of a “fall;” they would then have to be redeemed from this fallen state by one spirit who would come to earth and be sacrificed at the “meridian of time,” near the midway point in the planned history of the world. God’s eldest son, our elder brother, Jesus, thought this was a good idea and even agreed to play the role of the sacrifice. Another of God’s elder children thought this was a bad idea because many spirits might make the wrong choices, once

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5 Doctrine and Covenants 138; Dennis B. Horne, Bruce R. McConkie: Highlights from his Life and Teachings (Roy, UT: Eborn Books, 2000), 338.
6 Joseph Smith, Jr., Teachings of Prophet Joseph Smith, 345-47; McConkie, Mortal Messiah (vol. 1), 23. Mormons have suggested that one’s talent, race, wealth and prophetic calling are substantially but not exclusively determined by one’s conduct as an immaterial spirit prior to birth. Furthermore, based on what people do in their earth lives, one can reason more specifically because talents that seem randomly distributed, unearned and natural to us in this existence have actually arisen from systematic pursuit and practice in pre-mortal life. (McConkie, Mortal Messiah [vol. 1], 23-25); Pratt, Seer, 18.
7 Joseph Smith, Jr., Teachings of Joseph Smith, 347.
8 James E. Talmage, Jesus the Christ: Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 6-16.
deprived of the memory of their spirit life, and fail to become gods. So he proposed another plan in which, deprived of “free agency,” God’s spirit children would not be tested, and all make the right choice. But knowing the physical laws of the universe more fully than Lucifer, God knew that only his plan would work. At a great council in the spirit world, the spirits debated the two plans and God’s original plan, backed by Jesus, won majority support. Lucifer would not accept the results and what is known to Christians as “the war in heaven” erupted. Following the victory of the spirits backing the correct Plan of Salvation, Jesus was assigned the job of being sacrificed and the Archangel Michael was rewarded for his service in leading the heavenly hosts by being assigned the job of Adam, the first human being.

Following the war, God and the most advanced spirits then set about planning and making the earth. Once creation was complete, Adam, formerly Michael, and his wife Eve were created near present-day Jackson Country, Missouri, on the outskirts of Kansas City. As described in the Bible, the human race experienced various growing pains but there were some notable successes about which you may not have heard. The prophet Enoch founded a city whose people were so righteous that they were all translated from the earth to another location where they will not taste of death until it is time for all human beings to be resurrected at the conclusion of the Plan of Salvation when Jesus comes to the earth for a second time.

Now based in Asia, following the Deluge, the human race continued to suffer various setbacks as chronicled in the Book of Genesis, but this was also the period in which many great civilizations were established. Egypt, for instance, was founded by the daughter of Ham and a

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10 Doctrine and Covenants 107:54; Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980), 386.
12 Doctrine and Covenants 107:53.
13 Moses 7.
Canaanite woman named Egyptus while the land was still underwater.\textsuperscript{14} It is this lineage from which the pharaohs of Egypt descend, originally a righteous lineage, despite being cursed with Canaanite blood. It is around this time that a civilization began to develop in Mesopotamia that ran afoul of the Lord, causing him to confound their tongues and take other measures to prevent the completion of the “Great Tower.” But one group of the faithful received a warning that they should escape from the region and journey a great distance to a new and special land.\textsuperscript{15} Led by the prophet Jared, whose brother served as the main recipient of the group’s revelations from God, this small group of refugees left Mesopotamia and journeyed some distance overland through Asia before fashioning, under divine direction, submersible barges which they used to travel to the New World.\textsuperscript{16} There, they established a righteous society that, sadly, declined over time, devolving into factionalism and endemic warfare due, in large measure, to the presence of destabilizing secret societies. Sometime in the seventh or sixth century BCE, society entered its terminal phase and the two major factions annihilated one another in a massive military conflagration from which only one combatant survived.\textsuperscript{17}

The Jaredite departure was not the only important event in the history of the people of God that took place in Mesopotamia and yet is not part of the Biblical narrative. The prophet Abraham began his career as a priest in Chaldea where he was persecuted by pagan worshippers following various false gods, including the god of the then-pharaoh of Egypt.\textsuperscript{18} Although much of Abraham’s career as prophet and priest is chronicled in the Bible, there are some things you may not know. For instance, Abraham, like his son, was also nearly sacrificed on an altar (in his

\textsuperscript{14} Abraham 1.
\textsuperscript{15} Ether 1.
\textsuperscript{16} Ether 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Ether 15.
\textsuperscript{18} Abraham 1.
case, it was to an Egyptian god at the pharaoh’s behest). The earliest known possessor of the Urim and Thummim, oracular seeing stones that would later become part of the Breastplate of Judgment, Abraham used the stones to obtain crucial knowledge from the Lord including humanity’s extraterrestrial origin, the contents of the Plan of Salvation, the physical nature of spirits, the involvement of multiple gods in the creation of the Earth and important information about astronomy including information about Kolob.

Around the time the Jaredites entered their terminal phase, a contemporary of Jeremiah, a prophet named Lehi living in Jerusalem began to receive visions from God, commanding that he exhort the people to repent. Yet when, like Jeremiah’s preaching, this fell on deaf ears, Lehi was instructed to flee to the desert with his family and close associates. Once in the desert, not far from the city, he and his youngest son, Nephi, who also received visions, were commanded by God to return to Jerusalem and retrieve a body of scripture and genealogy recorded on brass or bronze plates. These plates were in the keeping of a local notable named Laban and, in the course of spiriting the records away, a confrontation ensued and Nephi killed Laban at the Lord’s behest so as to make off with the plates.

The party then journeyed through the wilderness to another location on the coast where they were instructed by God in the building of vessels to take them to the “land of promise.” They were also aided by a special object provided by the Lord called the Liahona, a small compact device that gave them directions for their overland and maritime migrations. The Lehites embarked on their journey across the sea to some location in the Americas where they began to settle. During the process of settlement, Lehi died and his family split into two factions: one led by Nephi, his youngest son, the other by Laman, his eldest. The Nephites

\[\text{Abraham facsimile.}\]

\[\text{Abraham 3-4.}\]

\[\text{1 Nephi.}\]
formed an urban society that hewed closely to the word of the Lord which, thanks to their access to a more complete scriptural canon and a series of visions enjoyed by Nephi and his father, included diligent sacrifice and piety in anticipation in the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, slightly less than six centuries in their future. The Lamanities on the other hand become a semi-sedentary people who were cursed by God.  

Shortly after the Nephites departed, things worsened in Jerusalem and Mulek, a son of the Judean king Zedekiah received instructions from God to also depart the Near East and journey across the ocean to the New World or Promised Land. Once in the Americas, they constructed a large metropolis that would later come to be known as Zarahemla. Although architecturally and culturally impressive, Mulekite society degenerated due to a lack of written records and people soon lost both their literacy and correct religious and historical knowledge. Shortly after establishing their city, the Mulekites were visited by Coriantumr, the last king of the Jaredites who lived among them for the last few weeks of his life and imparted his people’s records to them. Centuries later, the Mulekite received other visitors of Near Eastern origin, members of the Nephite people with whom they fused into a single polity. Shortly after the Nephite polity reconstituted itself in Zarahemla, its leaders learned that Coriantumr, the surviving Jaredite king had lived briefly among the Mulekites prior to his death and left with them the Jaredite people’s records. These records were translated by the Nephite king using the Urim and Thummim.  

By about the first century BCE, Nephite history had settled into a pattern, with episodes of widespread apostasy, sometimes directed or instigated by those in high office, being corrected through the ministry of prophets who succeeded, by and large, in returning the people to the faith of their forefathers. In addition to internal apostasy, other endemic problems in Nephite society

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22 1 Nephi.
23 Omni 1:21.
24 Mosiah 8.
were the periodic emergence of class divisions and government corruption, an ongoing military conflict with the Lamanites, punctuated by occasional periods of peace and the rise of a group called the Gadianton Robbers, a secret society affiliated with the Lamanites, drawing inspiration from the secret societies that had been so damaging to the Jaredite civilization.

In the century prior to Christ’s birth, Nephite society underwent some significant changes, first under the leadership of the reformer king Benjamin. Under the leadership of his successor, king Mosiah II, they changed the organization of their government from one of hereditary leadership to a system of “judges,” with authority vested in a chief judge and a set of subordinate judges, all popularly chosen.25 During the “rule of the judges,” additional institutional changes took place; church and state were institutionally separated and religious life attained a new vibrancy. There was also a period of maritime exploration when the mariner Hagoth organized large ships of colonists to explore and consider settlement on islands off the west coast.26 This period was also characterized by increasing problems of heresy and apostasy and by an intensification of Lamanite attacks. Just prior to the birth of Christ, Nephite society took an iniquitous turn and, surprisingly, a Lamanite prophet named Samuel appeared to call the people to repentance.27

Following Christ’s crucifixion, a major natural disaster took place throughout the territory occupied by the Nephites, accompanied by three days of darkness. The disaster resulted in earthquakes and the destruction of whole cities through flooding and volcanism.28 Following this event, the resurrected Christ arrived in the Americas and preached at the Nephite capital. Over the next few months, he established a new church in the Americas, led by twelve disciples,

25 Mosiah.
26 Alma 63:5.
27 Helaman 13-16.
28 3 Nephi 8.
on three of whom he conferred immortality. Following Christ’s departure, all of the Lehites in
the Americas were converted to the gospel in the space of two years and the Nephites and
Lamanites fused into a single people. For the next two centuries, Israelite civilization in the
Americas experienced a golden age of peace and prosperity.

But after this golden age, the old pattern of Nephite history reasserted itself. Lamanites
and Nephites again became distinct groups; class divisions resurfaced; secret societies
reappeared; and religious apostasy again became a significant problem. Within a generation, the
Nephites were at war and remained so for the next century and a half as Lamanite power waxed
and Nephite piety and virtue waned. The increasingly bitter warfare between the two groups
reached its climax at the Battle of Cumorah, a hill where the Lamanites inflicted a catastrophic
and total defeat on the Nephites whose only surviving combatant, Moroni, son of the war leader
Mormon, buried his people’s records on golden plates in the hill a generation later.

Around the same time, the true church was also dying out in Europe, Africa and Asia due
to pressure, first in the form of persecution and then in the form of cooptation through a process
of Church-state fusion initiated by the Roman emperor Constantine. For the first time, in both
hemispheres, lines of priesthood succession and true knowledge of the Gospel were not just
reduced to a remnant but totally eliminated, inaugurating a period of more than a millennium of
darkness called the “Great Apostasy.”

Approximately fourteen hundred years later, during the Second Great Awakening in the
Burned Over District of Upstate New York, a spiritually sensitive young man named Joseph
Smith Jr. prayed to God for answers to spiritual questions of his day and was visited by the Lord

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29 3 Nephi 9:30.
30 4 Nephi.
31 Mormon 1:5.
32 Mormon 6.
and his son Jesus. Three years later, Moroni, now an angel, appeared to him and after four years of testing, permitted him to remove the plates from the hill and translate them from the Nephites’ “reformed Egyptian” language via divine aid. The hill contained not only the records on golden plates of metal but also the ancient seer stones, Urim and Thummim. Using these stones and another oracular stone in his possession, Smith produced the Book of Mormon.

Moroni was not the only angel or resurrected being to visit Smith. Beginning in 1820, Smith was visited by God, Jesus, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist and other ancient prophets who provided him with both the information and authority and powers (in the form of “keys”) necessary to reconstitute or “restore,” the one true church and the “fullness of the gospel,” which had been absent from the earth since the Great Apostasy. These visitations allowed Smith to re-found God’s one true church in 1830, restore the powers of the priesthood to the earth, restore ancient ordinances like the baptism of the dead, commence the gathering of Israel as foretold in Isaiah and translate additional ancient scriptures that came into his possession, like the Book of Abraham, translated from Egyptian papyri. After gradually regaining the keys, powers and ecclesiastical institutions lost to humanity during the Great Apostasy, Smith was martyred by an anti-Mormon mob in 1844. The work he performed and its continuation after his death is collectively called the Restoration by Mormons.

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34 History 1:17-20.
35 History 1:30-45.
36 In this project, I have chosen not to italicize the names of Mormon scriptures the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses, Book of Abraham, Inspired Version, Joseph Smith Translation and Doctrine and Covenants. To treat these documents as inferior to other scripture based on their minority status seems arbitrary, unhelpful and contrary to Chicago Manual of Style protocol. Similarly, Mormon scriptural citation practices will function identically to those practices common to the citation of Christian and Jewish scriptures.
38 Doctrine and Covenants 128; Doctrine and Covenants 110:11; Joseph Smith Jr., History of the Church, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 520-34.
Chapter One: Introduction and General Concepts

The story you have just read is a fairly standard rendering of the Mormon scriptural narrative. This project is an examination of the various versions of this story offered by twentieth-century Mormon thinkers and the modes of thought employed to support these various renderings of the story. More formally, this dissertation project is an intellectual history of Mormon historical thought from 1890 to the present, featuring an engagement with the structures and ideologies generated and mobilized to support “faithful” histories.¹ This work closely examines the historical scholarship and apologetics of prominent members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereinafter LDS) including Brigham H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie, Hugh Nibley, W. Cleon Skousen and John Sorenson and touches on the works of several others. It also, following Philip Barlow’s definition of “Mormon” as a member of any religious movement that includes the Book of Mormon in its canon, includes serious treatments of the historical thinking of polygamist schismatics Ogden Kraut and Margarito Bautista, along with a several writers of historical apologetics for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ([hereinafter RLDS], known since 2002 as the Community of Christ [CoC]).

Today, there are approximately fifteen million Mormons, overwhelmingly concentrated in the Americas and Pacific Islands. The vast majority are members of the largest denomination, the 14 million-strong, Utah-based LDS but there remain dozens of denominations, founded since the death of Mormonism’s founding prophet, Joseph Smith, in 1844. My project will concentrate on LDS members but will also deal with the two next largest denominational groupings, first, the Missouri-based RLDS, with approximately 175,000 members and, second, polygamist or

¹ Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, Mormons and Their Historians (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 147.
“fundamentalist” Mormons. Although Mormon fundamentalists are often organized into either very small denominations or have no denominational affiliation, they number, as a whole, approximately 20,000.²

Mormons, not just LDS members, are a group that gains much of its distinctiveness from beliefs about the past that are not shared by non-Mormons. By canonizing the Book of Mormon, Mormon communities must, in some way, stand behind two non-mainstream narratives of historical events: (a) events purported to have taken place in the American Northeast and Midwest between 1820 and 1844, during and prior to the ministry of Smith and (b) events purported to have taken place in Mesoamerica and possibly other regions of the American continent between 590 BCE and 421 CE. Belief in these historical narratives has become, in the twentieth century, the main litmus test for membership in the LDS and, to a lesser extent, in other denominations. In 1996, Douglas Davies put this as follows:

Unlike Catholicism's concern over church authority or Protestantism's interest in biblical authority, Mormonism, despite its very real engagement with these topics, has been preoccupied with history. Many have argued that, for Mormons, history functions in the way in which theology works in other religions. This is understandable given the Mormon belief that God restored truth to the earth through particular divine manifestations which were given to Joseph Smith in the 1820s and 1830s. These foundational events are viewed as the sine qua non of Mormon religion. While heresy in other churches takes the form of denial of particular doctrines… the functional equivalent of heresy in Mormonism lies in the denial of these foundational events and of the status of Joseph Smith as a prophetic founder of a distinctive church with new revelation… And this is why the canons of the historical critical method are so problematic in Mormonism.³

But it is not just the fact of Smith’s ministry that has focused Mormons on defending a distinctive historical narrative; the contents of the ministry and the scripture it has left us make additional demands. Not only is it asserted that Smith performed a number of miraculous acts

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between 1820 and 1844; the fruits of these acts are a body of scripture that makes many assertions about the past, of which the Book of Mormon is only one important element.

I. Subaltern Pasts

Whether in the canonical *History of the Church* describing Joseph Smith’s miraculous translation of a set of golden plates using seer stones and his encounters with various angels, Book of Mormon narrative of sixth century BCE Judeans travelling to the Americas and establishing societies there, the Book of Abraham narrative of the foundation of Egypt by Ham’s daughter or the various revelations Smith received regarding Enoch’s building of a city and its residents’ ultimate departure from the earth, Mormonism’s foundational texts offer readers what Dipesh Chakrabarty terms a “subaltern past.”

Chakrabarty describes subaltern pasts as “participat[ing] in life-worlds subordinated by the ‘major’ narratives of the dominant institutions.” These “pasts” need not be those of subaltern or minority groups per se but simply be “pasts” that are incompatible with the mainstream practice of history.⁴ One of the most common ways that these pasts partake of life-worlds that render them incompatible with the mainstream practice of history is through “the agency of supernatural beings.”⁵ Chakrabarty, here, is operating with a very different definition of “supernatural” than the definition understood by Mormon thinkers. Ironically, whereas Mormon thinkers have tended to reject or question the ontological dualism implied by the term, it is Chakrabarty who reifies it. Although appearing to reject the Platonist or Cartesian physics in the sense of bifurcating the universe into sense-perceptible and formal domains, his definition produces a strangely similar division. “Supernatural” in his formulation appears to refer to events disqualified by the currently-operative model of causation within the physical sciences.

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⁵ Ibid., 103.
Because of my allegiance to and respect for the physical sciences, I must state that although I may intermittently utilize and find conceptual utility in the problem as posed by Chakrabarty, I do not consider subaltern pasts to be pasts. I consider it unproductive to attempt to occupy any kind of middle ground with respect to the objective validity of both the foundational and scriptural narratives of Mormonism – I consider Joseph Smith to be the author of nineteenth century Mormon scripture, not merely its translator. But this does not mean that I intend for this project to join controversial or debunking scholarship of Mormonism; my goal is to explore the subjective reality that Chakrabarty might term its subaltern. To do so more fully, I need to offer a modified definition of a subaltern past for the purposes of this project. Moving away from simple conflict with the physical sciences, one can describe a subaltern past as an historical narrative that arises out of rules for structuring causation or locating pattern in time that are epistemologically excluded from today’s social and physical sciences.

A significant type of subaltern past that does not consistently do violence to mainstream models of physical causation is the type of non-academic and folk history known as “conspiracy theory.” Although academic historians inveigh against conspiracy theory as a legitimate practice of history, there has been little or no effort on the part of historians, sociologists, or anthropologists who study conspiracy theory to arrive at a taxonomy beyond what we might call “I know it when I see it.” Robert Goldberg, a pre-eminent authority on conspiracy theory in twentieth-century American history expresses similar frustration as to the uninterrogated criteria that mainstream historians use to affix the label “conspiracy theory” and the tendency to pathologize the participants in conspiratorial discourses. But while Goldberg makes genuine strides in replacing psychological explanations with a framework of social and historical

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processes to explain the generation of conspiracy narratives, he leaves the “conspiracy theory” itself undefined. Perhaps some historians’ relative disinterest in offering a taxonomy of conspiracy theory inheres in the discipline’s contemporary skepticism of grand narratives and the grandiose structuralist frameworks they often entail, making the illegitimacy of conspiracy theory appear self-evident to many historians simply by virtue of the totalizing, structuralist claims ubiquitous in conspiratorial thought.

One of the few successful essays in taxonomizing conspiratorial thought is in a short article by Brigitta Wallace, on “cult archaeology,” a kind of conspiracy theory arguing for large-scale but unrecognized pre-Columbian migration and settlement of the Americas by Europeans and Asians. Although Wallace developed her set of defining criteria exclusively for theories of Scandinavian settlement, it is easily portable to other literatures popularly exemplified in Menzies’ 1421: The Year China Discovered the World. Writes Wallace:

1) Its proponents are usually good, engaging writers. 2) It deals with subjects such as ancient alphabets and Old World cultures in which the public has no prior knowledge. 3) The practitioners of cult archaeology portray professional scholars as prejudiced and myopic individuals who abhor new theories and discoveries, especially if these discoveries are made by lay people. 4) Cult archaeology enjoys a special appeal within the North American WASP segment of the population… whom it provides with ancient roots on a continent where these people have traditionally been regarded as newcomers. 5) Interwoven with the claim for a Norse or other Old World origin for a plethora of North American features is the unspecified assumption of the supremacy of an Old World culture…

Although this description mixes attempts at psychologizing the audience and the author with its attempt to define the subgenre, it nevertheless offers us a starting point for considering how one might define conspiracy thinking. In particular, the third element of cult archaeology might be generalized to conspiracy as follows. Conspiracy thinkers assume that professional scholars oppose their ideas for two entangled reasons: (a) they are assumed to derive their authority and

legitimacy from a fixed body of knowledge rather than specific investigative and cognitive processes that enable them to generate knowledge; (b) they are therefore constantly engaged in suppressing changes in knowledge in order to defend the authority of their guild. This misperception of social scientists tends to be isolated to subscribers of conspiracy theory but appears similar to a more broadly-held common view of physical scientists; in popular media, “science” is often constructed not as the processes by which models of physical causation are generated but instead as the currently-accepted and thus authorized models.

Conspiracy thinkers tend to believe that humans in possession of authority tend to act in what social scientists might label an anti-Foucauldian fashion in that they consciously and formally collude in their actions to defend their clearly-perceived authority. This assumption underpins the majority of conspiracy thinking. In this way, conspiracy theorists place themselves in opposition to the consensus in a variety of social scientific fields such as psychology, sociology, economics and anthropology, working from the assumption that concerted self-interested action arises from conscious processes of coordination and collusion, whereas social scientists might identify unconscious, or, if conscious, non-collusive processes by which dominant groups pursue collective advantage. This kind of ubiquitous and self-conscious black-hatted behaviour by the powerful tends to be paired, in conspiracy thinking, with three other ideas that do not cohabit comfortably with the mainstream of social scientific thought the belief, (a) that secret collusion is routine and that such collusion is infrequently and incompletely “leaked” outside of the group advantaged thereby; (b) that those in possession of authority understand themselves to be gaining benefit and advantage at the expense of uninitiated the
majority; and (c) that because of the above propensities, social mobility between posited elite and non-lite groups is minimal at the level of both lineage and individual.\textsuperscript{10}

If subaltern pasts of a “supernatural” character are characterized by a rejection of the authority and methodology of the physical sciences, subaltern pasts of a conspiratorial character can be characterized primarily as a similar rejection of the social sciences. Supernatural and conspiratorial subaltern pasts are by no means the only types we encounter but they are the most easily identified. What they share with all subaltern pasts is the property of being undergirded by distinct, alternative rules of causation giving rise to different patternings of human action in time or, alternatively phrased, different social and physical scientific laws. In this project, my aim is not simply to offer an inventory of the specific episodes and events contained in the subaltern pasts of Mormonism but to adumbrate the various causal models that thinkers use to explain these events and the inevitable pattern that they form.

Especially in contemporary America, subaltern pasts are hardly marginal, except from the perspective of the academic community that generated and uses the term, the perspective from which this project is necessarily written. At the time of composition of this chapter, pollsters have found that more than one in four US voters believe in the subaltern past offered by Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck and others suggesting a vast conspiracy to conceal the president’s birth outside of the United States; and one in five believes him to be a covert practitioner of the Muslim religion. Beck, it should be noted, is one of the most famous and publicly influential LDS members today and bases his conspiracy narratives on the works of Skousen whose \textit{Five Thousand Year Leap} he republished in 2009 and vigorously promoted to his audience of

\textsuperscript{10}The most common conspiracy narratives feature small social groups represented most commonly as the Babylonian freemasons, the international Zionist conspiracy, and as either conflated with or opposing, the lineal descendants of Jesus Christ: Goldberg, \textit{Enemies Within}, 6-9, 57-58. For further examples see also Vern Grosvenor Swanson, \textit{Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mormonism’s Sacred Bloodline} (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort Inc., 2006).
millions. For this reason, I want to suggest that this project offers not only a closer examination of Mormon historical thought; but it also sheds light on the larger intellectual frameworks that undergird the subaltern pasts to which tens of millions of Americans today subscribe.

II. The Archive

I have selected authors and materials in order to assemble corpora sufficiently comprehensive to articulate a robust theory of human action in time, or to resurrect a medieval term for a model of patterned time, a *chronicon*. This term was developed by ninth-century German thinkers to whom it meant something akin to one of the meanings currently attached to the term “historiography.” Coined by Fréculeph of Lisieux in 852 and defined by Otto von Freising, it is a universal history that includes a meta-theory of causation underpinning the historical events it unites. Although I shall sometimes use the term “historiography” to describe a school of historical thought, what I seek to describe in each of the main sections of this project is the *chronicon* of a single author or coordinated group.

This dissertation focuses on complete *chronica* that encompass large swaths of the Mormon past to which the Books of Mormon, Abraham and Moses pertain. As such, the works of Richard Bushman and other key writers in the New Mormon History movement are not included here, despite the fact that the most distinguished professional academic historians within the LDS and RLDS/CoC in the second half of the twentieth century can be counted amongst that movement’s members. These individuals significantly outnumber those affiliated with FARMS, the only movement examined here that is based on professional academic accreditation and methods. Although a few scholars associated with the New Mormon History, like Bushman, have produced small amounts of work on the pre-1820 Mormon past, most have

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not. Taken together, the New Mormon History and its associated institutions and publications make important contributions to Mormon historical thought, but because those contributions cannot be expressed as full *chronica*, spanning the centuries before 1820, they are not included in this study.

The *chronica*, the basis of their respective archives and the chapters in which they will be examined are listed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronicon</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Archive Contents</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LDS conservative</td>
<td>Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R McConkie</td>
<td>Monographs and edited collections by Fielding Smith and McConkie</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS progressive</td>
<td>Brigham H Roberts, James E Talmage</td>
<td>Monographs by Roberts and Talmage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist Mormon</td>
<td>W Cleon Skousen</td>
<td>Historical monographs authored by Skousen</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon fundamentalist</td>
<td>Ogden Kraut</td>
<td>Books and major pamphlets by Kraut</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bautista</td>
<td>Margarito Bautista</td>
<td>Books and major pamphlets authored by Bautista</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nibley</td>
<td>Hugh Nibley (with David Rolph Seely, Jo Ann Seely, Jeffrey R Holland, Andrew Skinner, Dana Pike)</td>
<td>FARMS edited collections, FARMS’ multi-volume collection of Nibley’s writings, early Nibley monographs</td>
<td>5, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorenson</td>
<td>John Sorenson</td>
<td>Monographs and edited collections published by FARMS featuring Sorenson</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLDS progressive</td>
<td>Harold Velt, Thelona Stevens, Chris B Hartshorn, Paul M Hanson, Russell F Ralston, Elbert Smith</td>
<td>Historical monographs published by Herald Publishing House 1934-63</td>
<td>6, 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two publishing houses are prominent on this list: the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and Herald Publishing House. Herald Publishing House is the formal house organ of the RLDS. FARMS is not merely a book and periodical publisher. It is an academic institute that seeks to foster communication amongst researchers allied in a commitment to the historicity of the Book of Mormon. FARMS looms large both in the
publication of scholarship undertaken since its formation and in the composition of the Nibley archive. The decision to use the FARMS collection of Nibley’s works means that the two chapters devoted to his chronicon are subject to a process of winnowing outside my control: I am selecting from within a body of work already pre-selected by FARMS. I do not think, however, that FARMS has done any violence to the corpus, given the willingness of the collection’s editors to express their qualms with key elements thereof and the obvious thoroughness with which Nibley material has been amassed.

III. The State of the Field

Scholarship of Mormon historical thought constitutes somewhat of a paradox. There exists a set of key, widely-held views regarding Mormon historical thought that would seem to suggest that the study of twentieth-century Mormon chronica would be a highly fruitful enterprise. First, there is a broad consensus supporting Davies’ assertion regarding history displacing doctrine as the primary site of Mormon religious distinctiveness. Second, there is a similar consensus that expressions of difference or dissent within Mormonism are likely to be framed, at least partly, in historical terms. Third, there is a sense that the generation of historical narratives is a site of grassroots creative participation in Mormon religious life, especially in the form of biography. Yet studies of Mormon historical thought, particularly of twentieth century Mormon historical thought, are few and far between.

In addition to Davies’ work and Jan Shipps’ *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, which offers a more thoroughly elaborated examination of the place of the foundational narrative in Mormon religiosity, an important text on the subject of Mormon historical thought from which this dissertation draws much is Mark Leone’s 1979 ethnography, *Roots of Modern Mormonism*, which argues that Mormon distinctiveness arises from the
employment of different cognitive processes that elide differences between past and present, fusing them into a unified whole exempt from dialectical engagement. This book draws attention to distinctive elements of Mormon temporal phenomenology but, as an ethnography, focuses not on the contents of Mormon *chronica* but instead on the grassroots processes that give rise to them. Other ethnographies, especially of non-white Mormons, similarly take note of and draw attention to alternate historical narratives generated by self-identified Lamanites (see below) but, as with Leone, these ethnographic treatments have other emphases; thus, the works of Thomas Murphy and Armand Mauss draw attention to the historical writing of Margarito Bautista but make arguments that do not require substantive engagement with the content or structure of these histories.\footnote{13}

*Mormon History*, published in 2001, is a text that takes notice of many of the phenomena discussed in this dissertation but tends to be negatively judgmental of unique or distinctive Mormon histories. In essence, David Whitaker and his co-authors chronicle the halting and incomplete attempts by LDS leaders and other members to move the faith’s historical methods and the histories they generate into closer conformity with the academic mainstream. Whereas the text is useful in providing a narrative of historical practice and drawing attention to key publications and points of rupture between mainstream and LDS history, its central implied question, “How and why is Mormon history failing to be history?” tends to produce condemnatory assessments rather than descriptions. Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton’s 1988 *Mormons and Their Historians* is, like *Mormon History*, mainly an institutional history of

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}}
publishing within the LDS Church; its interventions into the subjects with which this project is concerned are, however, very useful, although they do not do the kind of work this project seeks to carry out. A key contribution is its brief discussion of the subject position of apologetic, or to use the LDS euphemism, “faithful” scholars. It makes a similarly useful intervention, joining Leone in identifying the 1890 Manifesto (the official renunciation of polygamy by the LDS) as a watershed moment not just in doctrine and political economy but as a moment of radical reformulation of Mormon historical thought.14 Most importantly, it examines the process of professionalization within Mormon history and chronicles the introduction and adoption of new approaches in both faithful practices and respectful external scholarship.15

Because of the 1890 rupture between nineteenth-century LDS thinking and contemporary historical thought, I cannot do as much as I would like with some of the excellent scholarship produced on earlier Mormon ideas of history. Grant Underwood’s Millenarian World of Early Mormonism and John Brooke’s Refiner’s Fire contain thorough examinations of both temporal phenomenology and the narratives to which it gave rise during the ministry of Joseph Smith but are of only limited utility in examining post-Manifesto historiography. Similarly, Richard Bushman’s Rough Stone Rolling comprehensively treats important elements of Smith’s historical thought in the period and its reception by congregants.

Three important scholarly interventions in post-Manifesto that do touch on the work of this dissertation are Simon Southerton’s Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA and the Mormon Church, Terryl Givens’ By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a World Religion and Philip Barlow’s Mormons and the Bible: the Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion. Southerton’s intervention suffers from some of the problems

14 Arrington and Bitton, Mormon Historians, 158.
15 Ibid., 151-54.
that *Mormon History* does in that it not only adopts a position favouring the epistemology and conclusions of the mainstream but it then uses this as a point of departure for inveighing against the failure of apologetic historians to practice it. Although this approach is helpful in identifying areas of potential dishonesty or willful blindness on the part of apologetic scholars, the author’s disapproval of apologetic scholarship limits his interest in fully conveying the ways in which it makes sense to its practitioners and audience. That stated, the book make an important contribution in adumbrating the points of divergence between two Mormon *chronica*: those of Nibley and those of more mainstream prolific FARMS writers like Sorenson and Welch. It also offers helpful data about the differences in institutional reception and folk engagement with these *chronica*.  

As part of a more general study of textual approaches to the Book of Mormon, Givens engages key issues and sources examined in this project in the fourth and fifth chapters of *By the Hand of Mormon*. Its examination of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Mesoamerican archaeology and the intersection of popular and academic literature based thereon with the historical writings of Roberts and Talmage and its chronicling of subsequent LDS-sponsored Mesoamerican archaeological expedition, including the one in which Sorenson participated helps to contextualize and explain the historical thinking of key subjects of this project. The subsequent chapter very briefly examines the *chronica* of Nibley and Sorenson and some of the dynamics within LDS intellectual culture that gave rise to them.

Barlow’s *Mormons and the Bible* deals with various aspects of Mormon approaches to the Bible and much of the book is not directly germane to the issues taken up in this project. But

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18 Ibid., 118-130.
it does address two very important areas. First, the chapter on Mormon engagement with New Testament criticism is an important one in grappling with the problems of reconciling specifically Mormon scriptures and scriptural claims with this body of scholarship and also in addressing an important aspect of the Roberts-Fielding Smith debate. Barlow also flags one of the most important elements of this analysis: typological thought in Mormonism. His examination is very much focused on Smith’s nineteenth-century typological apologetics and the late Smith and Young-era lived typology or “experiential replication” of Biblical events that Arrington and Shipps also identify.

Generally, the field engaged by this project has not been extensively ploughed. This stems from the fact that much of the scholarship on Mormon belief and thought is focused on the movement’s origins and the claims in its foundational narrative. This focus was established during Mormonism’s first decade and arises from a combination of controversy over Smith’s claims and attempts by non-Mormons to debunk them through scholarship and partly through a Protestant essence-in-origins premise that infuses much study of religious movements. As a result, although it is now widely accepted that the period from 1890-1930 was one of a radical reformulation of Mormonism, studies of Mormon belief still presume a continuity between nineteenth- and twentieth-century belief that seems unwarranted.

IV. The Mormon Canon

And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.

...Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write

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20 Ibid., 60-61; Arrington and Bitton, Mormon Historians, 157-58; Shipps, Mormonism, 122.
it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.\(^\text{21}\)

God’s direct statement to the prophet Nephi established in Mormonism not only a willingness to accept the new scripture containing this declaration but other scriptures that the movement might later encounter. Indeed, it helped to establish an expectation of such encounters. In addition to the Book of Mormon, the LDS have canonized the Book of Moses, the translation of an ancient parchment written by Moses received by divine revelation in the winter of 1830/31 and the Book of Abraham, a divinely-aided translation of Egyptian papyri purchased by Smith in 1834.\(^\text{22}\) In addition to these ancient documents, a number of modern revelations from God to the Church have been canonized. Originally published as the Book of Commandments in 1833, Doctrine and Covenants is a modern scripture that has continued to be updated with new messages from the Lord.\(^\text{23}\) Today, the books of Moses and Abraham are presented as part of a collection entitled the Pearl of Great Price, also containing excerpts from two other documents, the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST) and the History of the Church. The original, seven-volume History is the sole repository of a number of doctrines and revelations that today are understood by Mormons as among the most authoritative. Smith’s first and second visions that establish Jesus and God as two ontologically separate entities, clarify the literal son-ship of Jesus Christ, and recount Smith’s encounters with the angel Moroni, appear in this text and are also excerpted in Pearl of Great Price; but the King Follett Discourse only appears in History of the Church and

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\(^{21}\) 2 Nephi 29:3-12.
\(^{23}\) Book of Commandments (Independence: Church of Christ Board of Publication, 2007), 2; Doctrine and Covenants, Ed.
yet is one of the most authoritative and important texts in Mormonism, despite its absence from the formal canon.  

JST and *History* have a curious relationship to the LDS canon. Whereas only small portions of them are part of the “Standard Works,” the formal canon of the Church, the remainder of these documents function as de facto or quasi-canonical, especially *History*. Both were composed by Joseph Smith during his ministry. The former is a massive revision to both the Old and New Testaments conducted through a divinely-aided or revelatory “translation” process; the latter is a lengthy, detailed history compiled by Smith and his associates during the Church’s time in Nauvoo. In addition to these two documents, a third document also enjoyed a degree of quasi-canonical status in the LDS tradition at the beginning of the period examined but lost this status over the course of the twentieth century; the *Journal of Discourses* is a compilation of major spoken and written expositions of doctrine by the original generation of apostles appointed by Smith. Although not an official view, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s idea that the de facto canon comprises the Standard Works plus Joseph Smith’s sermons may be close to a normative position.

As well as being composed of additional texts to the Old and New Testaments, Mormonism is also distinct in the ways that it deals not just with the finitude but with the fallibility of its canonical materials. Again, the Book of Mormon speaks directly to distinct Mormon approaches to scripture in its description of the fate of the Old and New Testaments in the second century CE:

> And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations... the many plain and precious things which have been taken out

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of the book... because of these things which are taken away... an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. 27

With the understanding that the Bible had been modified early on and also that many other portions had not been “translated correctly,” and receipt of specific revelations that restored allegedly lost teachings and clarified other Standard Works, Mormon denominations have considerable additional exegetical apparati fashioning distinctive interpretations even of scriptures they share with other Christians. 28 This system of additional canon, quasi-canonical and specifically modalized scripture is common to the LDS and its offshoots. 29 The hierarchical ranking of the importance of teachings amongst canonical and quasi-canonical documents is, according to W. D. Davies, based on the emphasis placed by the Church’s authorized prophetic ministry in the present, in dialogue with the operation of the Holy Spirit within each member. 30

Stabilizing the specific contents of the canon became an important project for the LDS at the beginning of the period studied and continued until the late twentieth century when sections of History were still being moved into Doctrine and Covenants. 31 The creation and compilation of the Pearl of Great Price was incremental through the later nineteenth and early twentieth century.

27 1 Nephi 13:29.
28 Articles of Faith 8. The Articles of Faith stipulate that Mormons recognize the validity only of those parts of scripture that are correctly translated: Doctrine and Covenants 76:24 appears to suggest that references to Christ’s atonement and resultant salvation also applying to the inhabitants of other planets were omitted from the Gospel of John; Doctrine and Covenants 84:6-17 restores lost ancient records of priesthood succession from Adam to Moses; Doctrine and Covenants 107 explains that there are and have always been two kinds of priesthood (i.e. that of Melchizedek and that of Aaron). In addition, in Doctrine and Covenants 29:40-47, God recounts the events of the Fall, explains its theology and exempts young children from its effects. In Doctrine and Covenants 33:12-12, God explains that “the Gospel” is the “rock” upon which His church is built. Doctrine and Covenants 74:1-5 claims specifically to be an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:14 clarifying the status of Mosaic Law. Finally, Doctrine and Covenants 77, specifically styles itself an exegesis of the Book of Revelation.
29 RLDS approaches to canon will be examined in Chapter 7.
30 W. D. Davies, “Reflections on Mormon Canon,” Harvard Theological Review 79, no. 1 (1986): 44-66, 57-59. One rung below the nineteenth century quasi-canon is what might be termed “found revelations.” These were pronouncements by Smith that had never been included in either canonical or quasi-canonical works. They had rather been preserved in periodicals whose rediscovery conferred on them new meaning and significance, or more problematically, they appeared in biographical or autobiographical works of older Saints. Consider, for example, the second-hand statement that Oliver Cowdery revealed the brother of Jared’s name to be Moriancumer in Brigham H. Roberts, New Witnesses for God, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1926), 2:137.
31 Horne, Bruce McConkie, 193.
centuries. This was effected by excerpting key documents that had previously only appeared in *History*, which was itself undergoing processes of stabilization and quasi-canonization during an overlapping period of time. These acts, I suggest, are not simply an outgrowth of late- and post-Victorian impulses to systematization; instead, they stand as a testament to the act (as opposed to rhetoric) of delimiting a canon and the act of closing it.\(^{32}\)

Historical patterning recognized by religious movements arises primarily if not entirely from exegetical and other interpretive processes that mediate among scriptural records, popular historical narratives and lived experiences of temporality. Although Mormonism, due to its more historically-focused, malleable and internally consistent scriptural canon draws more of its historical patterning from core canonical works, I would suggest that it is still not an exception to this common reality, hence the range of *chronica* this project discusses.

Although the narrative of the Restoration begins in 1820, the institution history of Mormon churches begins in 1830 with a founding meeting shortly following the plates’ publication of the Book of Mormon. In the years following the establishment of the Church, its founder and first presidency, the most senior of Mormonism’s many quorums, received a series of revelations from God originally codified in the Book of Commandments and later re-issued and canonized as Doctrine and Covenants.\(^{33}\) These revelations formed the basis of Mormonism’s (chronologically) second unique book of scripture.

V. **Mormon Denominations**

An important part of this canonical work involved the series of revelations the Church received directing its members to establish the city of Zion near present-day Kansas City.

\[^{32}\text{Jonathan Sheehan, }	extit{The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 16.\]

\[^{33}\text{Richard P. Howard, }	extit{The Church Through the Years: Volume 1: RLDS Beginnings, to 1860} (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1992), 191-94.\]
Adherents were directed to establish a set of communities close to the locations where Smith informed them Adam had built his first altar after his expulsion from Eden and where they were to build a temple to which Christ would soon return and from thence preside over his latter-day kingdom. Following the Mormon expulsion from Missouri and a worsening situation in the movement’s other centre, Kirtland, Ohio, most Mormons relocated to Illinois where they founded the community of Nauvoo. It is in Nauvoo that new doctrinal fissures began to emerge that would structure later schisms in the movement. The Nauvoo period in Mormonism was a period that placed greater emphasis on ideas most strongly expressed in the Book of Abraham, which Smith had translated from Egyptian papyri he purchased in the late 1830s. Doctrines centred of the idea of “sealing” moved to the fore, including proxy baptism of the dead, polygamy and exaltation, a new soteriology of self-apotheosis; controversies surrounding these doctrines began late in Smith’s ministry and intensified thereafter.

Following the prophet’s martyrdom in 1844 the movement experienced its most significant schism. A majority of the movement’s adherents who remained the LDS chose to follow Brigham Young as the successor to Smith’s post of Prophet, Seer, and Revelator. Young led this group on a famous trek to the faith’s present-day centre in Utah. There from 1847 to 1877 LDS doctrine and practices developed in relative isolation under Young’s leadership. From 1877 to 1890 under the leadership of successors John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff, Young’s key teachings of polygamy, the gathering of Israel, the formation of United Orders (collectivist economic projects, known as Zions) and theocratic autocracy continued to be propounded. The

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34 Doctrine and Covenants 97, 103.
35 Doctrine and Covenants 110:13-16.
36 “Sealing” encompasses a range of rites or “ordinances” that create permanent bonds between individuals that exist through eternity. Once performed, various soteriological properties are understood to inhere in sealed collectives rather than merely in the individuals comprising them. Generally, sealing is linked to lineage and the most common sealing practices are marriage and post-mortem proxy baptism.
37 Leone, Modern Mormonism, 16-27.
practice of polygamy, or more specifically polygyny, in Utah was dramatized and opposed by various groups in the United States. Prominent constituents of this coalition included the Republican Party and Women’s Christian Temperance Union. But perhaps more eager than any other member of this coalition, both to oppose LDS polygamy and to prominently showcase its role in its opposition, was the RLDS.

The RLDS formed through a complex sixteen-year process between 1844 and 1860 and further consolidated organizationally over the next generation. The complexity of this process may be related to the fact that, unlike LDS congregations, RLDS groups were not shaped by the socially cohesive practices of theocracy, polygamy and proxy baptism. Many of the organization’s early controversies focused on what portion of the doctrines propounded between 1838 and 1844 would be included in the faith’s theology. But one doctrine over which there was immediate unanimity was that of plural marriage and the denomination’s first conference was unanimous and vehement in its rejection of LDS polygamy; other entailments of the Nauvoo-era doctrines of “sealing” took longer to be repudiated. In place of the Book of Moses, Book of Abraham and later revelations received by Smith, the RLDS formally canonized the JST (in RLDS terminology, it is the Inspired Version or IV), something the LDS never did. Its exclusion from the LDS canon had much to do with its retention by Smith’s widow Emma, the mother of the Reorganization’s founding prophet, Joseph III, but was blamed on its alleged incompleteness, a position that softened over time.

40 Howard, Church, 1:325-31.
41 Barlow, Mormons Bible, 51-54.
Whereas the LDS had quickly constructed a temple in Utah to resume sealing rites, the RLDS took the position that these rites could only be performed at the temple it was revealed they were to construct in Jackson County, a place that all Mormon denominations believe to be the “centre stake” of the millennial kingdom. As long as the Missouri temple remained un-built this element of Mormon practice could be indefinitely deferred.\textsuperscript{43} Absent distinctive ritual practice or shared doctrinal emphasis, the RLDS identity came to be based on two central tenets, both oppositional to the larger LDS: a hereditary presidency (a position ultimately abandoned in the 1980s) and opposition to polygamy. RLDS members argued that through the public practice of polygamy and various alleged doctrinal heresies by Young and his successors, the LDS church constituted an abominable and heretical force that must be destroyed through various agencies, including the US Federal government.\textsuperscript{44}

There is not space here to enumerate and describe the various significant schismatic groups that formed in the mid-nineteenth century. One of these groups does, however, merit mention, the Church of Christ – Temple Lot group, because of its impact on LDS-RLDS relations and the respective groups’ temple building projects. Temple Lot members argue that in 1838 Joseph Smith had become a “fallen prophet.”\textsuperscript{45} They were, furthermore, even more conservative than the RLDS in the construction of their canon which comprises the Book of Mormon and the Book of Commandments. This group is significant in that its members who had been more reluctant to abandon Missouri following the brutal persecution of Mormons there had ended up with legal title to the piece of land that Smith had been told by revelation would be the site of the temple. The Church of Christ’s unwillingness to transfer this land or to erect a

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 79-82.
temple of its own became the subject of considerable litigation between its members, the LDS, and the RLDS. In the 1894 Temple Lot case the court found that the Church of Christ owned the temple lot and that Joseph Smith had never practiced or advocated polygamy.\textsuperscript{46}

Beginning in the 1920s, these denominations would be followed by various LDS fundamentalist groups. In this case, I use the term “fundamentalist” in a specifically Mormon sense. This term does not so much refer to the practice of the fundamentalist hermeneutic or other elements of Protestant fundamentalism. The fundamentalist label in Mormon circles is attached to denominations openly practicing polygamy after the church’s formal renunciation in 1890. Broadly, fundamentalist Mormon denominations fall into two categories. On the one hand there are groups similar to the RLDS and Temple Lot which claim to constitute the true Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and argue a line of succession from Smith’s church in 1830 to their one true Church in the present day. These groups do not enter into my study as they continue to centre on elements of group identity that the LDS Church abandoned in 1890, in particular that of a political kingdom of God and the practice of plural marriage. This study does however engage with Fundamentalist groups that style themselves faithful dissidents within the LDS Church. Ogden Kraut’s small polygamous movement and Margarito Bautista’s Ozumba community are but two examples; although Bautista exhibits a long-term trajectory from faithful dissident to rival prophet, this move did not culminate in a rival prophetic claim prior to his death.\textsuperscript{47} This second type of Mormon Fundamentalism can be distinguished from the first in one important way that begs our attention: dissident as opposed to competing Fundamentalists tend not to construct their often slightly divergent theological positions in direct opposition to one another but instead tend to share both perspectives and data freely. Indeed, as a demographic

\textsuperscript{46} Russell F. Ralston, \textit{Fundamental Differences between the Reorganized Church and the Church in Utah} (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1963), 62.

\textsuperscript{47} Ogden Kraut, \textit{One Mighty and Strong} (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1991), 129-32.
entity, Kraut’s movement is all but insignificant, but, as a source for Fundamentalist tractates and doctrine, Kraut looms much larger precisely because of this shared body of literature.

VI. **Formative Influences on Mormon Historical Thought**

   Key factors both motivating and permitting the development of an internally consistent Mormon *chronicon* (or *chronica*) were the historical and cultural environments in which the movement emerged. The articulation of at least superficially scientific rules of causation was a crucial part of intellectual life during the nineteenth century and Mormons were enthusiastic participants in this enterprise. Both Brooke and D. Michael Quinn have done comprehensive work showing the ways in which pre-nineteenth century religious and intellectual movements were made manifest in Mormon scripture and ritual practice during the ministry of Joseph Smith. Brooke mounts a strong argument showing the importance of Renaissance hermeticism and its descendants in shaping early Mormonism and the ways in which Smith’s role was as much one of magus as minister.\(^{48}\) He is similarly convincing in showing the ways in which early converts to the movement were already familiar with key ideas of restorationism, dispensationalism, hermetic magical practice and the “primal Adam.”\(^{49}\)

   However, the LDS members who had populated the Great Basin by 1890 and the RLDS members of the Midwest at the turn of the twentieth century were not drawn to nearly the same extent from the “prepared people” who founded the movement. Whereas these people and their descendants occupied leadership roles by 1890, Mormonism had taken on a life of its own and, by the turn of the century, was addressing a larger, more variegated group of adherents.


\(^{49}\) Brooke, *Refiner’s Fire*, 91. In Mormon baptisms of the dead, we can see traces of occult Hermetic true name magic in that adherents are encouraged to learn the precise names and identities of deceased ancestors so that they might, through a ritual performed behind closed doors, baptize these individuals posthumously through a living proxy thereby elevating their status in the afterlife.
concerned with using their faith to answer the pressing questions of the age. While they might be vaguely familiar with movements like freemasonry and mainstream ideas of dispensationalism, this was no longer a movement populated by aspiring magi. In addition, Brooke points out, internal dynamics within Mormonism produced a two-phase process of theological change. From 1856 to 1890, a desire for social control in the intermountain West caused leaders to exalt the earthly kingdom of Deseret in place of a future perfected state, beginning the process of elision between real and ideal and the amplification of the importance of temple rites that Shipps and Leone see as central to Mormonism. A second wave of more profound, rapid change began in 1890 with the Manifesto. Rejecting any essence-in-origins argument, I want to suggest that the Mormon chronica elaborated in the last decade of the nineteenth century and thereafter were conditioned primarily by an interaction between Mormonism’s foundational texts, then-leadership and early prophetic ministry interacting with the major movements and intellectual currents of the day.

At both popular and elite levels, there existed a widespread interest both among intellectual elites and in folk intellectual discourses, in a project underway since the nineteenth century, the reunification of two categories that had only recently become fully separable: science and religion. Beginning with Newton, English-speaking intellectuals had been concerned with resolving what they saw as the “Galilean problem.” Newton’s fondest wish was that his synthesis would fuse together these things that should never have become separate. But what had begun as an elite anxiety over this apparent incoherence had been progressively democratized. In many respects, we can view Mormonism as one of the hundreds of local, idiosyncratic responses to the democratization of that project.

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50 Ibid., 279-81, 285-88.
51 Ibid., Refiner’s Fire, 290-91. For Brooke, the most reliable proxy for this change was the gradual abandonment of the Adam-God doctrine, which declared that Adam was the god of our world.
Another pre-existing concern that shaped Mormonism both during its foundational process and in the ensuing decades was the “end of miracles” theory most famously propounded by John Wesley which distinguished the authentic miracles worked in the apostolic age from the fraudulent miracles of the medieval Catholic Church. Mormon ideas of the “Great Apostasy,” in which the authentic doctrines and authority of the Early Church are lost in a thousand year “Dark Age” are underpinned by this Wesleyan historiography. The necessity for a “restoration,” the basis on which Mormonism was founded is, in many respects, a logical entailment of this thinking. Hence, this element of Wesleyan thought forms part of the basis for nearly all Mormon chronica. But if there is a Restoration, there must be new and plentiful miraculous events, given the theory’s structure in seeing the miraculous as a proxy for the legitimate. Whereas Mormons tended to date the end of this dark age somewhat later than their reformation-centered cousins, the degree to which an anti-Catholic vision of a restored early Church was whole-cloth adopted from mainstream Protestantism cannot be understated. As a result, a key authorizing basis of Mormonism was the resumption of miracles in the nineteenth century following their termination in the fourth. How these miracles were conceptualized was conditioned powerfully by Mormon’s ontological monism.

Widespread Mormon belief in dispensational theories of history after 1890 cannot be viewed as a simple borrowing from Protestant dispensational thought. Dispensational thought, while strongly represented in the revelations received by Smith during his lifetime, does not appear to have comprised a significant portion of nineteenth-century Mormon historical theory. However, it did ironically serve as the basis for much of the historical theory of mainstream evangelicals during this time. This general dispensationalism divided history into three distinct

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52 Brigham H. Roberts, Outlines of Ecclesiastical History, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), 181. Roberts here cites Wesley’s Works vol. vii, Sermon 89.
53 Brigham H. Roberts, Outlines of Ecclesiastical History (Salt Lake City, 1890), 173.
periods, each associated with a member of the Trinity; each of these dispensations was understood to have a unique set of properties. But at the very point at which mainstream evangelical thought came to abandon general dispensationalism and began to bifurcate into a progressive post-millennialism and a teleological pre-millennialism focused on an imminent eschaton, dispensational theory came for the first time to loom large in Mormon historical thought late in the nineteenth century.54

Mormons had never seriously adopted a three-dispensation system but instead adopted a less popular but nevertheless also pre-existing, or at least contemporaneously-developed, dispensational system, in which each dispensation is a one thousand year period associated with one of the seven seals in the Book of Revelation, yielding a seven thousand year world history.55 Mormons associate each dispensation with the prophet or lawgiver that inaugurates it by restoring the fullness of the gospel.56 These prophets are typically identified as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Joseph Smith.57 Similar to Marxian historical epochs, each has an internal declensionist teleology in which its members apostatize from the Gospel, eventually necessitating the inauguration of a new dispensation so that the gospel may be restored, except for the terminal dispensation (our own), the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times which cannot apostatize because it is the last dispensation. Just as each Marxian epoch begins with a revolution and is characterized by growing class disparity and social conflict, reaching a crescendo in an

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54 Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992), 86-90. The term “eschaton” typically refers to the final rectifying global conflict between the elect and their enemies and the resulting triumph and paradisiacal epilogue in apocalyptic belief systems. This project construes this term more broadly to refer to all rectifying or utopian conclusive episodes in theories of history, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat in the original Marxian formulation.


epoch-ending revolution, the Mormon dispensational system works through a restoration-apostasy cycle. These similarities, I suggest, arise from an important feature of the nineteenth century, an implicit belief that any *chronicon*, is underpinned by the idea of “progress.” This “secular religion” of the nineteenth century can be found throughout the intellectual and religious movements of the era, be they Marxian, Comtian, Hegelian or even evangelical.  

Science-religion reunification, the Wesleyan *chronicon* and dispensationalism were all important pre-existing elements of the nineteenth-century intellectual environment that exerted influence both in Mormonism’s foundational period and in its subsequent developments. Equally important was another set of ideas, those that developed contemporaneously with Mormonism and which came to exert an increasing influence, engendering discourses of both opposition and cooptation, typically simultaneously in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Unlike theories of the Israelite origin of native Americans, which were both fully developed and amply encompassed in the *Book of Mormon*, British Israelitism developed contemporaneously with Mormonism and is, depending on one’s exegesis, absent from, contraindicated or, at best, encoded in the Mormon scriptural narrative. Michael Barkun traces the origins of British Israelitism to the 1840 publication of John Wilson’s *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origin*, meaning that it came into being contemporaneously with Mormon doctrine. Barkun argues in favour of a late date for this ideology, suggesting that previous eschatological discourses of an elect British role in the redemption of Palestine or claims of Israelite descent by marginal religious figures like Richard Brothers in 1791 are distinct from the theory that the

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59 R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 8. Moore, for instance, dates the formation of spiritualism to the period between 1848-50 out of a set of antecedent movements such as Swedenborgianism and Transcendentalism (*In Search of White Crows*, 12, 18).
British people, as a whole, comprised a significant portion of the “ten lost tribes.”\textsuperscript{61}

Organizations espousing these views were repeatedly encountered by Mormon missionaries in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{62} As racial theory became more developed throughout the nineteenth century, Wilson’s initial claims were generalized to the “Nordic” peoples to include Scandinavia and other Germanic areas. This complication of the initial theory also allowed for the explanation of difference amongst these peoples on the basis of tribal difference, for instance explaining uniquely British characteristics by virtue of Ephraimite heritage.\textsuperscript{63}

Barkun’s taxonomy of British Israelitism is somewhat problematic for the purposes of this study as it is very clear that Brothers’ conception is much closer to that espoused by Smith and other early Mormon leaders. Certainly, the Book of Mormon seems to posit a personal lineal descent from the lost Israelites but there is no trace of a belief that Israelite blood was widespread.\textsuperscript{64} Instead it was seen as concentrated in Smith’s personal lineage and certain key allies within the Church; these individuals were identified as Ephraimites.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, as the claim of Israelite descent became more generalized among Mormons, this served as a means of distinguishing adherents from the mass of people of English descent. Furthermore, the tortured parables of “grafting” trees is but the strongest indication among many that white Mormon converts were initially understood to be Gentiles whereas aboriginal converts were to be understood as Israelites.\textsuperscript{66} But as the idea of British Israelitism gained in popularity contemporaneously with both Mormonism and the opening and subsequent mass migrations from the primary mission field in England, there was increasing interpenetration of these

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{62} Mauss, \textit{Abraham’s Children}, 18.
\textsuperscript{63} Barkun, \textit{Religion and Racist Right}, 8.
\textsuperscript{64} 2 Nephi 3.
\textsuperscript{65} Mauss, \textit{Abraham’s Children}, 23; Doctrine and Covenants 133:1.
\textsuperscript{66} Mauss, \textit{Abraham’s Children}, 50; Jacob 5; 1 Nephi 10:14, 15:13-16.
discourses, which began appearing in Church periodicals in 1878 and culminating in the ultimate adoption of British Israelitism in all but name by Joseph Fielding Smith during the Cold War. 67

Like Mormonism, Higher Criticism was a nineteenth-century movement that premised its study of the Bible on the document’s evident imperfections and inconsistencies and the need to address this problem through human agency in order to more completely comprehend the events that it referenced. Although antecedents of Higher Criticism can be traced back to the early generations of the Reformation, the movement to supplant the Augustinian model of textual harmonization and complementarity with a systematic attempt to uncover an historical Jesus through an examination of contradictions among biblical texts and between these texts and other historical and physical knowledge did not coalesce until the early nineteenth century. 68 Based on a “left Hegelian” formulation of Enlightenment rationalism, the Tübingen School developed text-critical methods to evaluate scripture on the basis of genealogy, hierarchy, and literary pedigree. Although originally more strongly based on Hegelian progress teleology, which sought to reconstruct Christian origins through a confrontation between Jewish Christianity (thesis) and confronted Paulinism (antithesis) which then yielded the Hegelian synthesis of Catholicism, the methods developed by the movement have taken on a life of their own and form the basis of much academic biblical study today, mostly shorn of their Hegelian origins. Taking its name in opposition to conservative, or mainly “textual,” ways of looking at the biblical texts (i.e. “lower criticism”), the group attempted to rigorously contextualize the biblical materials within the social-cultural Palestinian milieu of their time.

The most impactful of the Higher Critics’ contributions with respect to Mormon thought was the successful dismantling of received wisdom concerning the authorship of biblical texts

68 Archetypically expressed in Augustine’s De Consensu evangeltarum, “On the Harmony of the Evangelists.”
using source criticism. The most prominent instances of this were the dismantling of the idea of
Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, replacing it with the “Documentary Hypothesis,” and their
formulation of the “Synoptic Problem,” the question of the sourcing and interrelation of the three
synoptic gospels. Initially, many Tübingen scholars championed “Markan posteriority,” the idea
that Mark was a synthesis of the “Jewish” Matthew and “Gentile” Luke. But as Higher
Criticism has moved away from its Hegelian roots in the twentieth century, this theory has since
been supplanted by a two-document hypothesis, which champions Markan priority, arguing that
the synoptic gospels of Matthew and Luke both utilized Mark, and the lost hypothetical sayings-
source “Q” to construct their narratives.

Although Mormonism had, like the Tübingen School, been founded in the early
nineteenth century based on a new sense of the fallibility of the Bible and scepticism thereof, this
shared concern actually served to magnify problems of their interaction which began shortly
after 1854, when the Tübingen school’s work entered the Anglophone world. Revelations
Smith had received to solve the problem of the authorship of the Book of Revelation, identifying
John of Patmos as John the Apostle only served to magnify the rupture between academic
scriptural criticism and Mormonism.

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69 Richard Elliott Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible? (San Francisco: Harper Collins San Francisco, 1997), 22. This
hypothesis was developed by a reinterpretation of the long-noticed “doublets” or other repetitions located in the
Hebrew Bible that had traditionally been understood as mutually complementary. The Higher Critics, however,
came to identify particular doublets based on the word they used for the deity. Oftentimes, repetitions of stories like
the narration of the Abrahamic covenant or Jacob’s journey to Mesopotamia can only be distinguished, they found,
by the particular name of the deity found therein. By the nineteenth century many scholars noticed that it was not
merely doublets, but triplets and other repetitive formations in the biblical materials which often corresponded to
different literary styles, names of deities, and other agenda. This led to a working hypothesis that identified four
sources for the Pentateuch associated with Yahweh (“J”), Elohim (“E”), the priestly source (“P”), and Deuteronomy
(“D”). Although no longer understanding progress in a specifically Hegelian sense, each source was understood as
reflecting a different stage in the historical development of Israelite religion: Friedman, Wrote the Bible, 24. Typical
of the milieu, we again see the totalizing power of ideas of progress in structuring nineteenth century chronica.

70 This took place, inter alia, through translations of key works such as D.F. Strauss’s The Life of Jesus Critically
Examined and Ludwig Feuerbach’s Essence of Christianity.

71 Other instances of conflict included revelations pronouncing definitively on Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch
and the exclusive, eponymous authorship of Isaiah: John W. Welch, “Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of
Spiritualists, more than any group, sought to confront directly the problem of estrangement between science and religion and rose rapidly to become a popular movement and mainstream movement by mid-century. Rather than looking to hard-scientific methodologies and seeking to transport them into the realm of religious interpretation directly, Spiritualism attempted to use recent hard-scientific discoveries and transport them into the realm of religious understanding analogically.

As popular understandings of Newtonian optics, contemporary astronomy and, most importantly, the development of electrical energy, filtered down to a large enough proportion of the population whose professional and intellectual endeavours existed outside of the scientific community, the concept of energy came to animate a different understanding. In many respects, Spiritualism was simply the re-emergence to the fifteen- and sixteenth-century Italian Hermeticism that gave rise to the scientific revolution, simply in the guise of different terminologies; its main point of divergence from this movement was its universalism and rejection of occultism. If spirit could be understood as a type of energy or, as the Mormons had presciently suggested, matter, various elements of religion could be hybridized or annexed to an analogically-scientific discourse. Many types of energy, for instance, had only recently been detected. Could it not be, reasoned the Spiritualists, that the physical detection of spirit was also therefore imminent?

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Many types of energy had been known for some time but their intentional and conscious harnessing for human technological purposes was only recent. Was it not reasonable to assume that the practice of what might be called “magic” was occasionally accomplished through individuals who incompletely and only coincidentally understood some aspect of the functioning of spiritual energy? Furthermore, could one not now explain historical periods in which the use of magic had been more prevalent as a time when human spiritual technology had been superior? Similarly, astronomical discoveries initially appeared to suggest numerous habitable systems in the universe in addition to the earth. Might these not explain angels, gods, demons, and the like who, if they possessed sufficient technology to visit human beings, would certainly appear superficially to be magical? Over time, spiritualism continued in an increasingly anti-mystical, pseudoscientific trajectory, evinced in the formalization of the Theosophy as a system in 1875.78

Because of its vestigial surviving forms, we tend now to regard Spiritualism as a movement disinterested in, or hostile to, mechanistic technologies. But this stereotype is anachronistic if applied to the period in question, when Spiritualists saw their movement as a new science extending Victorian empiricism to a new set of phenomena.79 The physical equipment used for divination during these times appears to have been understood as meeting technological as opposed to aesthetic requirements: confusion between these two requirements comes not from a mental distinction on the part of manufacturers and consumers of this technology, but from the sympathetic magical principles that a technology derived through analogical reasoning would likely have.80

79 Moore, White Crows, 22.
80 Taves, Trances and Visions, 147.
In addition to less popular forms of Hermeticism interpenetrating with Mormonism in its foundational period, the concurrent growth of more popular hermetically-rooted movements of Spiritualism and Mormonism resulted in ongoing borrowings as these two systems developed alongside one another in nineteenth-century England and the US. Evidence of the close relationship between the two movements continued into the twentieth century when the interwar resurgence of Spiritualism, associated with large-scale war and influenza mortality, took place contemporaneously with one of only two revelations canonized by the LDS in the period since 1890, recounting Joseph F Smith’s journey to the Spirit World and encounter with the faithful dead.  

81 Other notable evidence of this is James Talmage’s condemnation of Spiritualism as an intentional fraud perpetrated by Lucifer to lure people away from the Gospel by creating LDS-like frauds.82

A key heritage of Mormon-spiritualist interpenetration is what is termed by philosophers “ontological monism” whereby physics and metaphysics are collapsed into a single system and is manifested in theologians’ criticism of the movement’s alleged inability to distinguish between moral and physical law.83 The fact that Mormonism contains within it an articulated system of physics or rather a set of assertions about physics that may or may not cohere as a system, is of substantial assistance in that one might expect that at least some of the rules that give rise to pattern in Mormon history are either identical to or entangled with Mormonism’s physical propositions.

Often in popular discourse and media portrayals of science, physics is mistakenly defined in a narrow and prescriptive fashion. The Greek word “φυσική” is synonymous with the Latin

81 Mary Farrell Bednarowski, “Spiritualism in Wisconsin in the Nineteenth Century” Wisconsin Magazine of History 59, no. 1 (1975): 19; Bennett, Transatlantic Spiritualism, 8-9; Doctrine and Covenants 138
82 James E. Talmage, Lectures on the Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City, 1899), 236.
word “natura,” yielding the essentially synonymous English adjectives “physical” and “natural.”

The discipline of physics is the modern descendant of the medieval and early modern discipline of natural philosophy, the project of describing the universe’s contents and the rules governing them. To descend again into etymology, the universe is the English equivalent of the Latin “universitate rerum,” meaning, literally, “all things.” Mormons, like medieval Catholics, betray not so much a hostility to but a refusal to apprehend the highly problematic category of the metaphysical which arises from the arbitrary removal of certain things from the list of the universe’s alleged contents and placing them on a separate list of phenomena governed by a different set of rules. Unlike many Christianities that utilize a Platonic system of ontological dualism to sustain two lists of universal contents and two sets of rules, Mormonism’s ontological monism seeks to offer divergent and supplementary rules to modern physics rather than seeking to fashion a parallel system of causation.\(^\text{84}\) Mormonism is underpinned by the idea that spirit is a type of matter and that God, his throne, the Spirit World, angels and spirits exist within profane space and time.\(^\text{85}\) This is somewhat anticipatory of Arthur C. Clarke’s definition of magic (i.e. that any technology sufficiently advanced will be indistinguishable from magic).\(^\text{86}\)

Finally, there is the intellectual movement that I will call “proto-Patternism.” It is somewhat problematic to label this intellectual current because it partakes of two distinct projects: the production of a new kind of non-Eurocentric total world history and attempts to consciously syncretize the great world spiritual traditions such as in Henry David Thoreau’s Transcendentalism.\(^\text{87}\) The loosely-defined “Seeker” movement saw it as necessary to look beyond the Christian traditions of the West and to assimilate crucial practices and cosmologies of


\(^{85}\) *Doctrine and Covenants* 131:7-8


the other great “religious traditions.” Seekers thus helped precipitate the emergence of “world religions” as a category of study. But the purpose of studying Hindu meditation or Confucian morality was teleological in character and as this study continued, some Seekers became increasingly convinced that the “world religions” were in fact the scattered and broken vestiges of a single, great world religion that existed before historically-documented time. Despite their near-universal tendency to align with ideas of progress, the broadly-defined Seeker movement saw human history as neither a progression nor a declension but rather as a gradual restoration of primordial coherence. The former project of creating a new world history made considerable use of the “world religions” excavated and engaged by the Seekers. James Frazer’s *Golden Bough* (1890) constitutes perhaps the most successful survival of this period, but is not necessarily representative of the kind of historiography that this project produced and gave rise to the academic movement of which Nibley considered himself a member, the Patternists. More typical of nineteenth-century proto-Patternism was the specificity and awe with which H. G. Wells’ world history described the “global” “heliolithic” ur-civilization. As with the Spiritualists, vestiges of the Seeker movement remain but in a similarly marginal state for a similar reason: the very spirit of inquiry engendering the movement ultimately yielded an academic consensus against its legitimacy.

The process of professionalization out of which this academic consensus arose was not a sudden or conclusive process. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the agenda-driven antiquarian, non-institutionally-based amateur histories came to be supplanted by the emergence

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89 Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), passim.
of an academic historical profession and related fields of anthropology and sociology that, using distinct methods and theories, formed professional disciplines that studied the past. As these nascent disciplines developed, their epistemologies became increasingly divergent from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century practices of history that had previously been mainstream, resulting in an ever-increasing (up to the present day) re-categorization of mainstream nineteenth-century histories as subaltern pasts. As a result, the amateur synthetic studies world history and world religion that established the lines of inquiry demanding the creation of these professions were among the first texts to be pronounced illegitimate by professional academic historians.

More generally, beginning in the 1860s, the fragmented, eclectic approaches to solving problems in religion and history through ideas of progress began to give way in the United States to a broader intellectual synthesis, the Spencerian worldview. This allowed many of the various intellectual tendencies and movements that had been seen as fragmenting the Christianities of the Anglophone world throughout the nineteenth century, to re-unite under a rubric structured by ideas of progress developed analogically from popular understandings of evolution. In a somewhat Hegelian fashion, this worldview enjoyed a generation or two of almost uncontested dominance, even among those who rejected Darwinism, before calling for an antithesis in the form of Fundamentalism. But at its inception, there existed no real science-religion conflict; it would be elements of the Spencerian synthesis, like biological evolution, that would draw that forth.

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The modernist-Fundamentalist debate arose in American mainline Protestantism (more specifically, the American religious landscape of the mid to late nineteenth century), prior to the emergence of Fundamentalism as a formal ideology in the 1920s and prior to the solidification the term “evangelical’s” present identification. With antecedents in the First and Second Great Awakenings, the emergence of the modernist-Fundamentalist debate can be situated within the context of the popularization of Darwinian theory by Herbert Spencer in the 1870s.

It was at this point that ideas of evolution restructured pre-existing historiographic debates; thereafter, modernist-Fundamentalist debate changed the landscape within which historiographic questions were situated. Previously, a diversity of opinions and thinkers like Smith and his successors had offered idiosyncratic syntheses to respond to these questions. But with the emergence of Spencerian thought there was a move, though halting and by no means universal, from heterogeneity to polarization. The Spencerian worldview was fundamentally driven by the vague concept of progress, as compared to the more precise idea of evolution by natural selection that it vulgarized and misapplied to the social sciences. Within their social, economic, political, and religious organizations, human beings were recapitulating a larger natural process whereby inferior, simple systems were, in a gradual and uniformitarian fashion, giving rise to more complex, sophisticated and superior systems. The uniform and gradual nature of this process, combined with its upward teleology, provided more fertile ground for certain positions within these historiographic debates than for others. Frazer’s Golden Bough, in this way, is typical of the way in which pre-existing intellectual currents were modified through being situated within a Spencerian framework; in place of any idea of recovering the diffuse

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96 The term “evangelical” is utilized by both sides in the debate and appears to be one of the terms over which ownership is contested.
remnants of an ancient religion was the idea that all human cultures, no matter how isolated, recapitulated a progress narrative, going from magic to religion to science. Frazer sought out examples of ritual practice from regions the world over that could not have been in contact in order to illustrate the fundamentally identical nature of the “primitive mind.”

The polarity between an acceptance and rejection of Spencerian thought, furthermore, was harmonized with pre-existing points of dissension within Christianity between what is termed a “pre-millennial” and a “post-millennial” historiography. Those within late nineteenth-century Protestantisms who most effectively hybridized the cosmological and historiographic ideas of their religion with Spencerian thought were immediately successful in consolidating a majority of intellectuals, opinion leaders, and hierarchs within that discourse. That said, the penetration of this discourse into popular religiosity remains an open question to which this project does not pertain. It is nonetheless clear that in the late nineteenth century, post-millennial modernist religious thinkers initially enjoyed a commanding lead in what would become the modernist-Fundamentalist debate. Perhaps the most important element of their lead was a discursive dominance. Conservative thinkers who questioned this movement’s assertions tended to frame their opposition within the discourse of the movement itself. The problems with its positions were depicted as its incorrect interpretation of science, its overzealous application of sociology, or its excessively generous repurposing of racial theory. A second and nearly as important element in the initial post-millennial modernist lead was the lack of organizational and ideological coherence on the part of those who refused to join this discourse. Lacking an alternative discursive framework that was either coherent or portable amongst the opponents of

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100 Boyer, *Time Shall Be No More*, 93.
post-millennial modernism, those outside of the emerging consensus were not so much losing a debate as inaudible.

Superficially, this dominance lasted a century but was problematized early on by the agency and choice of local congregations. The fragmentation and reduced legitimacy of progressivism in the political sphere may also have assisted those who had never really joined the consensus in formulating an opposition. Racial and economic discourses that questioned progressive thought could be imported from the political sphere to the religious with equal ease. It was not until the 1920s that, through its own organizationally-distinct top-down multi-denominational efforts, pre-millennial Fundamentalism was able to acquire the coherence that it needed to challenge post-millennial progressivism. The so-called Scopes Monkey Trial was not so much an expression of a longstanding science-religion debate as an event that bore witness to the conflict between two epistemes becoming fully self-conscious.¹⁰²

Prior to this watershed event, a greater anti-Spencerian coherence was expressed in the form of the publication of *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915) and the unprecedented conservative ecumenical structures that were necessary for their ongoing penetration.¹⁰³ Although ideologically allied with post-millennial progressivism, ecumenical organization in the nineteenth century, shorn of ideology, could be practiced more efficiently by Fundamentalists for whom subscription-based structures could produce both greater flexibility and, with time, greater uniformity than the federated governance structures that characterized progressive ecumenism.

As significant as the organizational strides Fundamentalists made, these were entangled with epistemic advances necessary to undermine the discursive hegemony of progressive

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thought. Biblical inerrancy and Scottish common sense realism provided the alternative epistemic backbone necessary to offer an alternative countering progressive intellectual hegemony.\textsuperscript{104} This did not merely yield a new exegetical practice based on a vulgarized Victorian Baconianism; it offered a folk empiricism to compete with the technocratic empiricism associated with academic practice and progressive thought.\textsuperscript{105} These epistemic foundations had been laid through a series of Bible conferences and institutes that had developed and codified the alternative hermeneutical principles that Fundamentalists would then generalize to phenomena outside scripture.\textsuperscript{106}

It must be noted that Spencerism neither unified the various tendencies it contained into a coherent system of thought nor harmonized the polarities that existed within each. It did however offer a master discourse within which the ideas of these movements could be comfortably situated. This master discourse was premised on the following beliefs: 1) an inevitable fusion of science with religion (or at least with those elements of religion that were sufficiently progressive and thereby sufficiently correct to be fused with science); 2) an upward teleology of human social organization and ideology that was leading to a global integrated human community under the rubric of a meta-ideology of progress and order; 3) imminent scientific and technological advancement that would accelerate the development and integration of humanity in a progressive fashion; and 4) a paradoxically incrementalist eschatology of human beings moving in an accelerating yet fundamentally uniformitarian fashion towards a perfected paradisiacal state engendered through the accelerating development of social and physical technologies.

\textsuperscript{105} Ammerman, “Protestant Fundamentalism,” 9.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 20.
What happened to this consensus? Progressives, unlike early Christians, adapted poorly when faced with their overestimation of the imminence of the *eschaton*. More problematically still, many of the social forces unleashed by an unshakable faith in science and technology, empiricism, and processes of professionalization turned against the progressive synthesis as further investigation and greater engagement with empiricism undermined the bold and optimistic assertions of Spencer’s generation.

Of course, the story of the rise of Fundamentalism and the collapse of the intellectual hegemony of progressive religiosity should not be read as the collapse of progressive and liberal Protestantism. Although no longer a hegemonic force, it remained the majority force in American religion until possibly as late as the 1970s. The initial Fundamentalist insurgencies played-out in school districts and large denominations handed the new movement a series of defeats, although, from an organizational perspective they were clearly victories. Even in conservative regions of the US, it was not until the 1960s that these kinds of battles began to turn in Fundamentalists’ favour.

VII. Mormon Temporal Phenomenology

Before introducing Mormons to the cluttered intellectual landscape of the modernist-Fundamentalist debate in the late nineteenth century, it is necessary to introduce Mormon temporal phenomenology as we find it in the twentieth century. As with Mormon historiography, doctrine and ideas of canon, the Mormon churches we find in the twentieth century were not the same as those of the nineteenth. As exemplified in the Doctrine and Covenants descriptions of the transfiguration and visitation of Moses and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple and the creation of

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Zion’s companies for the exodus to Utah, much of nineteenth-century Mormon historical thought was structured by the “experiential replication” of episodes from the Biblical narrative. But Wilford Woodruff’s capitulation to the US government through the release of the Manifesto in 1890 ended that and inaugurated the beginning of a new period not just in Mormon history but in the Mormon experience of time.

Leone argues that with the emergence of proxy baptism or “temple work” as the centre of the LDS religious experience in the twentieth century, Mormon adherents’ lived experience of time was profoundly reshaped. Altering the fate of those already dead and often long dead as the faith’s primary activity is a crucial element in producing what Leone characterizes as a kind of all-now consciousness that is the very opposite of Christian Fundamentalist historical consciousness. In evangelical and Fundamentalist religiosity the incongruence between biblical pronouncements and contemporary events functions as the primary means for commenting (critically) on the present. The Pauline epistles are one of the best sources of Fundamentalist social criticism which powers its dialectic between ideal and real by conflating it with a past-present dialectic that conceptualizes the early Church as identical with the ideal. The behaviours endorsed or condemned by the putative apostle are compared with mainstream social practice in the present in order to generate a harsh social indictment of contemporary life.

Mormons, on the other hand, according to Leone,

…make themselves a function of the here and now. The contexts in which religious concepts and daily life are welded together illustrate how neither concept nor life is allowed to develop any hint of inappropriateness in the face of the other. Usually the dialectic between the two is one of a group’s handles on the present, because the ideal and real are often perceived to be in conflict, thereby pointing up the inappropriateness of one or the other. Among Mormons the dialectic happens so fast that past experience,

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110 Arrington and Bitton, Mormon Historians, 157; Doctrine and Covenants 110, 136.
111 Arrington and Bitton, Mormon Historians, 158.
112 This is in accord with the work of Alexander and others but Shipp suggests that its entry into routine religious practice was contemporaneous with the exodus to Utah in the late 1840s and is inextricable from the creation of a latter-day Israel (Shipp, Mormonism, 127).
113 Leone, Modern Mormonism, 9-10.
as codified in the ideal, and the present problem addressed never have a chance to seem in conflict. Consequently, they do not comment on each other, and as a result, Mormons serve the present.  

Mormonism, he suggests,  

Has eliminated the usual way people make contrasts. It has reorganized distinctions between past, present and future so that these are no longer separate from each other but are considered equally understandable because they are equally accessible… Nothing at another time is beyond understanding just because it is past or future; nothing in life is beyond comprehension because there is only one plan… the present absorbs past and future, collapsing contrasts; in so doing, it extinguishes the ability to see present conditions as any different from those that have been or might be.  

Stated even more strongly, Leone suggests that we violate the lived historical consciousness of the Mormon experience simply by asking “how did the past become the present?” In a sense, then, the purpose of my project is to examine a body of Mormon-generated literature that violates what Leone describes as Mormon historical consciousness. But I would prefer to understand this project differently, not as a refutation of Leone’s insights but instead as a study of their elite intellectual manifestation in Mormon apologetics.  

Proxy baptism or “temple work,” Leone notes, is not the only locus of the unique LDS experience of temporal dialectics. Sacrament and testimony meetings, the main collective sacramental act each week, in which Mormons share personal “testimony” of their struggles and experiences, are also an important element of this because Mormons tend not to compare or pass judgment on the substance of performances within the area of religion, doctrine and theology, although they do in almost every other domain. They do not discuss talks afterward or rate them against each other or against previous experience.  

And both temple work and testimony meetings help to generate a larger Mormon subcultural discourse of time that infuses the whole of LDS experience, not just one or two specific sacramental loci.  

114 Ibid., 169.  
115 Ibid., 9.  
116 Ibid., 207.  
117 Ibid., 194.  
118 Ibid., 174.
This project proceeds from the general premise that Leone is essentially correct with respect both to LDS subjectivities regarding time and the specific processes of ritual and associational culture that serve to maintain them. It also recognizes that, as Leone’s description is of post-1890 Mormonism, one can reasonably expect that nineteenth-century Mormon temporal phenomenology gave way to the Leonian experience over time, that old ways of being in time were gradually supplanted by new ways of being in uneven, gradual and halting processes and experienced to varying degrees. This places me in the same camp as Shipps who also flags temporal phenomenology as a key distinguishing feature of Mormonism and makes use of Leone’s work, although I favour his late date over her earlier (1850s) one for the emergence of Mormonism’s all-now consciousness.\footnote{Shipps, \textit{Mormonism}, 113. This is not to dismiss the eloquence of Shipps’ idea of the original gathering of Israel as “participating in the paradigmatic act of creation” in the Eliadian sense (\textit{Mormonism}, 121).} Her elaboration and modification of his work is helpful in establishing an idealized, imagined version of the nineteenth-century “pioneer” (1847-90) past as the most perfect manifestation of atemporal reality in which LDS members situate themselves.\footnote{Ibid., 111.}

Most of the conceptual tools, or at least their intellectual antecedents, that Mormons have used to structure the \textit{chronica} that bear witness to their distinct experiences of time have been enumerated above or will be described in individual chapters due to their applicability to only a single \textit{chronicon}. But there is one area of intellectual engagement with time that is both widely applicable and does not appear traceable to any nineteenth-century intellectual movement that made contact with Mormons yet exerts a profound influence, historical typology.

If Mormons were explicit through their citation practices and even occasional laudatory statements concerning their indebtedness to key Protestant historiographic traditions or, conversely in the case of British Israelitism or Spiritualism, vehement denials of self-evident
influence, their adoption and increasing influence of a pre-modern Roman Catholic
historiographic approach appears to have been thoroughly unconscious until its labeling as such
Catholic typology a borrowing if there were any evidence of such; instead, typology seems to be
an instance of independent generation.\footnote{This is not the only example of genealogically unconnected instances of generic similarity between Mormon and medieval Catholic history. The Mormon biography subgenre bears a surprising resemblance to medieval hagiography, especially with respect to formulaic treatments of childhood and adolescence.} Using similar ingredients to those that gave rise to
historical typology in Late Antiquity, Mormons appear to have gradually adopted typological
modes of historical analysis gradually, beginning in the 1830s. The terms “type” and “shadow”
from the pseudo-Pauline book of Hebrews are of obvious interest to those who formulated the
Church’s early revelations, as evinced by the text of Doctrine and Covenants, especially when
seeking clarification of Biblical texts. But I would suggest that this does not constitute actual
typological thought. Rather, it functions in a way that some scholars have mistakenly understood
medieval typology to function. Superficially, typological practice in medieval texts may seem
simply to be an apologetic tool, to wrap terminology around a necessary and foregone conclusion
about contemporary actions,\footnote{Beryl Smalley, \textit{The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), ix.} as it appears to have been used in Hebrews.

A more sophisticated engagement with medieval typology in the specific practice of
history appears in the works of Henri de Lubac on typological theories of history. As a kind of
historical thinking, this way of reasoning flourished during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle
Ages after which, it is suggested by mainstream historians, the study of history began to re-
emerge during the Scholastic Renaissance, as exemplified in the writings of the Victorines,
despite the continued use of typological terminology in the medieval and early modern
According to de Lubac, the key thinkers who formed typological historical practice were the Venerable Bede, Rabanus Maurus and Augustine of Hippo. Although Erich Auerbach, one of the few other text scholars to engage this, is in accord with this view, he persuasively argues that this practice is better dated to Tertullian in his engagement with “figures,” effectively synonymous with “types,” in that he is explicit in describing as opposed to practicing this exegetical method versus other allegorical methods he opposes.  

Historical typology is a subset or entailment of allegorical exegesis of scripture, employed initially in Antiquity by Pythagoreans, Cynics, Stoics and Platonists as a means of constructing a stronger connection between their philosophies and cosmologies and early Greek literature, in particular the Iliad and Odyssey, which were understood by these movements in a “scriptural” sense. ‘Allegorical’ readings of historical events were initially practiced in order to disassociate scriptural events either from the factual historical record (due to their apparently non-factual claims) or from any apparent moral lesson or contemporary behavioural imperative they might appear to suggest or require. Mythic events in history were removed from profane time and exiled to an atemporal realm in which they remained true but were deprived of the property of actually having taken place. It appears that it is in this sense that “allegory” and “shadow” entered the formal Christian canon in the Pauline and pseudo-Pauline epistles in a way highly consistent with the contemporaneous deployment of allegorical exegesis in Roman

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125 Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 28-32, 36, 52. This status as synonymous was not achieved until the early medieval period, however.
This is not, however, how late antique and early medieval typological thinking functions. This thinking, likely building on the heritage of Philo, who exhorts his fellow Jews to comply with Mosaic ritual and purity laws precisely because they allegorize something more profound, is developed in the anti-Valentinian polemics of Origen and Tertullian before finding full expression in Augustine’s works. A key element of ancient allegory is inverted in this formulation: the allegorical importance of a passage instead magnifies its historical factuality. This is not, however, true of the imperative force of non-historical episodes treated allegorically. In this way, the Pauline attack on the imperative force of Mosaic Law is preserved but disassociated from any project of de-temporalizing scriptural events. The Bible is, in this formulation, first and foremost history, events that have actually taken place. Certain of these events take on a special importance in that they not only have happened but they also allegorize one or more events located at other points in time. Augustine renders this idea as “prophesying by means of things done… [or] deeds done… prophetically” and Bede as “allegory of the deed” as opposed to the word. This does not just make them more important but more real.

The way in which events themselves signify and predict other events that exhibit a narrative similarity is amply demonstrated in Augustine’s exegesis of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac as a prefiguration of God’s redemption of humanity through the sacrifice of his son.

128 Ibid., 2:3-5; As an example, see Philo of Alexandria, De Specialibus Legibus, 1:6.
129 de Lubac, Medieval Exegesis, 2:3.
130 de Lubac, Medieval Exegesis, 2:59.
131 Ibid., 2:41.
132 Ibid., 2:87.
133 Auerbach, Drama of European Literature, 34.
Repurposing pseudo-Pauline terminology, he traces the actual Biblical foundation of this form of exegesis more appropriately to Matthew 12:40, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

The power of a type or figure (simply the Latin rendering of “type”) is not limited to the project for which it was originally deployed, reconciling the New and Old Testaments. It is ongoing. Types in the Bible refer not only to other events in scriptural history but also to the ongoing life of the Church and the *eschaton*, indeed to all events in the process of salvation. In this way, the sacrifice of Isaac/Christ is also recapitulated in the Eucharist. Practitioners of historical typology in the Middle Ages, then, comprehended types as an aspect of the physical properties of the universe, an awareness with which they credit Moses and other prophets.

Most importantly for the purpose of our discussion, because it constituted an element of the rules of cause and effect governing the physical universe, typology was not so much an apologetic tool as it was an analytic tool. Typology allowed one to reason about human action in time, not simply for apologetic or polemical purposes but, more importantly, as a means for making deductions about history. Typology predicted that certain narrative episodes would repeatedly occur at irregular intervals at varying scales, from the personal to the global. Should one identify a past or future event that bore narrative allegorical resemblance to one or more scriptural episodes, this constituted the discovery or fashioning of new knowledge not only about history but about the larger historiographic tradition it informed. It was in his comparison of different historiographies based on typology that von Freising had originally coined the term *chronicon*.

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This understanding of recurrent self-similar narrative episodes at varying scales as the basis of elite medieval historiography helps us to shed light on visual artistic and folk dramatic manifestations of medieval historical thoughts, typically denigrated as “medieval anachronism.” Art history scholars have made much of the emergence of the idea of “anachronism” in the early modern period. Whereas anachronisms in medieval art that, for instance, depicted Biblical figures clad in contemporary garb appear to have been largely unconscious, Renaissance art was characterized by three key developments: (a) a reduction in visual anachronism, (b) the emergence of “deliberate anachronism” and, relatedly, (c) evocations of the past through controlled anachronism. An example of (b) is Rogier van Weyden’s depiction of a crucifix in the background of a nativity scene; an example of (c) is the depiction of Augustine of Hippo furnishing his home with pagan statuary, signifying his participation in the Late Antique world, notwithstanding his own revulsion at such artifacts. This kind of controlled, conscious and limited deployment of anachronism stands in sharp contrast to the kind of thinking that characterized the preceding regime of medieval aesthetics:

all artifacts... were understood in the pre-modern period to have a double historicity: one might know that they were fabricated in the present or recent past but at the same time value them and use them as if they were very old things. This was not a matter of self-delusion or indolence but a function of an entire way of thinking about... historicity ... [yielding an] ‘omnitemporal’ scheme of history presupposed by figural thinking.  

Representation of this kind of thought in the visual sphere is somewhat easier to apprehend than in its narrative mobilization, a less theorized manifestation of typological thought but one with which it is necessary to become better-acquainted to apprehend its re-emergence in Mormon historiography. It is unsurprising, therefore, that one of the better treatments of the issue in textual representations is an art historical study. Magdalena Carracasco observes that the

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139 Ibid., 405, 408.
atemporality of medieval hagiographies is self-conscious and intentional. Gregory of Tours, for instance, titled his work “Life” rather than “Lives of the Fathers,” to explicitly declare the essential sameness of the life narrative of all holy men. Similarly, apparently monotonous repetitive elements in saints’ lives were actually intentional devices to minimize but not eliminate episodic variation to reveal a “timeless, living truth, a constant present.”

Erich Auerbach explains that

> the individual earthly event is not regarded as a self-sufficient reality... but viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be concrete reality... But this reality is not only future: it is always present... and true reality is present at all times or timeless.

A good medieval example of the functioning of this mode of thought appears in the play known as the *Second Shepherd’s Pageant*, one of a set of Corpus Christi plays performed in late Medieval England. The Pageant chronicles the story of four shepherds all economically dislocated by the early stages of Enclosure at the beginning of the English wool boom. The play is a popular bawdy comedy in which one of the four seeks to steal another shepherd’s sheep. Hilarity ensues as the thief variously attempts to hide, disguise, and excuse his theft. But just as the thief is exposed and humiliated at the end of the play, an archangel appears to the three honest shepherds and summons them to witness the birth of Christ. The idea that the wool boom and processes of enclosure that it engendered would be taking place in first-century Palestine was unproblematic to the play’s audience who shared, I would suggest, the type of all-now consciousness that Leone attributes to modern Mormons. Alternatively, what could be even

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141 Auerbach, *Drama of European Literature*, 72.


143 Ibid., 89-99.

144 Ibid., 100-01.
more striking is not the retrojection of enclosure to antique Palestine, but rather the birth of Christ in fourteenth-century England. But both of these descriptions miss the point: an all-now consciousness does not clearly distinguish between these two claims because what is interesting is the actions of the shepherds including their participation in Christ’s birth. What is not interesting is the precise temporal location of the event. For Shipps and Barlow, the seeds of this are in the experiential replication of the biblical narrative by Mormons beginning with their “exodus” to Utah and not in the redeployment of pseudo-Pauline terminology in Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁴⁵ And, like late antique Christians, Mormon historical thinkers may have begun using typology simply as an apologetic tool but, over time, have increasingly employed as an analytic one.

One other element of Mormon thought that finds its origins in important source material for Mormonism but does not precisely resemble movements of the time is the idea of an eternal, atemporal priestly order. In LDS thought, priesthood is not merely a title; it is a physical agency or principle by which what non-Mormons might term “miracles” or “magic” are effected. Likely building on Masonic thought and Cabalistic thought, Mormonism holds that there is a single unbroken line of secret knowledge/power in which priesthood inheres back to Adam and from thence back to the original God enthroned at Kolob (priesthood is the power through which gods create worlds).¹⁴⁶ A further entailment of this conflation of ecclesiastic office with monistic physics is that the Church, when fully exercising priesthood powers, has always had precisely the same organization and offices at all times. There has always been a

¹⁴⁵ Barlow, Mormons Bible, 75-77.
¹⁴⁶ D. Michael Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic Worldview (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 177; In his Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt, ed. N B Lundwall (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), Orson Pratt explains that priesthood has no beginning or end; it is eternal coming from an “endless succession of priests who have inhabited an endless succession of worlds” (403). See also, Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1985), 309, and Brooke, Refiner’s Fire, 166.
president/prophet/seer/revelator who heads both a three-person “First Presidency” and a twelve-person quorum, who is assisted by a Council of Seventy and presides over a church organized into stakes, in turn organized into wards with two separate priestly orders, and so on. This has been true in all dispensations, beginning with Adam, first President of the Church.\textsuperscript{147} God only acts through his authorized representatives\textsuperscript{148} except during times of apostasy when he may choose to act through others.\textsuperscript{149} Alternatively, he may, as took place during the most recent Restoration, act through authorized representatives from other dispensations who have become immortal but retain their priesthood powers.\textsuperscript{150}

This doctrinal stipulation that all pious societies have an identical configuration at all times and places is striking as another manifestation of the temporal consciousness Leone describes. Indeed, Leone finds this doctrine especially illustrative of his theory; because as long as the Church is the Church, the structure it has now is the structure it has had through all time.\textsuperscript{151}

\textbf{VIII. Chapter Synopsis}

These bases established, the following project anatomizes and analyzes the nine distinct chronica mentioned in the “Archive” section, above. Chapter Two, “The Fundamentalist-Modernist Debate, Mormon-Style,” examines the ways in which the early twentieth-century conflict between the emerging Christian Fundamentalist movement and the then-regnant modernist or progressive post-millennialist Christianity of the elites of America’s mainline Christian churches was recapitulated within the LDS Church.

\textsuperscript{147} Best articulated in Joseph Fielding Smith’s \textit{Progress of Man}, 423; Pratt, \textit{Masterful Discourses}, 545.

\textsuperscript{148} Talmage, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 170, 310.

\textsuperscript{149} Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Progress of Man}, 237; Brigham H. Roberts, \textit{The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles} (Salt Lake City: George Q Cannon & Sons, 1893), 222; Talmage, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 170.


\textsuperscript{151} Leone, \textit{Modern Mormonism}, 9, 201.
James E. Talmage and Brigham H. Roberts, two General Authorities of the LDS Church, took an early leadership role in fashioning narratives of the Book of Mormon past that reflected the Church’s post-1890 accommodation with the American mainstream. Although canonical and other official pronouncements prevented Mormons from staking-out either wholly pre- or post-millennial positions regarding the eschaton, the influence of modernist post-millennial Christian thought is highly evident in their writings which comprise, for the purposes of this project, the progressive LDS chronicon. Their contemporary and fellow General Authority, Joseph Fielding Smith was explicit in his identification with the thought of the emerging Fundamentalist movement outside the Church and developed a chronicon distinct from that of Roberts and Talmage that reflected a conservative approach. But, just as Roberts and Talmage were inhibited from expressing a truly post-millennial position, Smith was similarly doctrinally constrained from expressing an exegetical position consistent with the larger social movement that inspired him. In the early parts of the chapter, the ways in which non-Mormon intellectual movements conditioned LDS ideology and were repurposed in its defense are examined.

Later, the chapter focuses on the more complete elaboration of the conservative LDS chronicon by Bruce R. McConkie, a key ally and associate of Smith, but a generation younger. This portion of the chapter emphasizes the ways in which, although partly engendered by the Fundamentalist movement, the conservative chronicon represents a highly distinctive understanding of time, without parallel outside the LDS. It is here that readers should begin to appreciate an increasingly Leonian all-now understanding of time and its expression through the use of typology. The chapter concludes with a description of the independent Mormon generation of a pre-modern typological historiography in McConkie’s works along with a curious spatialization of the all-now consciousness that I address in my conclusion.
The third chapter, “Fundamentalist Mormons and Mormon fundamentalists” explores the impact of Cold War American conservative thought on Mormon theories of time in much the way Chapter Two tracks the recapitulation of the Fundamentalist-modernist debate earlier in the century. While Chapter Two spends some time addressing the impact of this thinking on the work of Smith, Chapter Three describes its most complete embrace and fullest elaboration in the works of two Mormon mavericks, LDS member increasingly at odds with Church authorities, W. Cleon Skousen and polygamist schismatic, Ogden Kraut. In contrast to the conservative appropriation of typological reasoning, the Skousen and Kraut chronica show a branching contingencies theory of time that highlights the differences between the Mormon doctrine of foreordination and its approximate equivalent in mainline Christianity, predestination. This branching contingencies model is alloyed with a much more thorough appropriation of Fundamentalist proof-texting practices and a conspiratorial logic that inverts the legitimacy of mainstream authorities to yield another distinct type of Mormon chronicon. In the concluding pages of the chapter, I explore a distinguishing feature of the chronica produced by dissident Mormons, out of accord with their Church: a highly structured history of the period since 1890, in contrast to orthodox historiographies that render this time as essentially shapeless.

The fourth chapter, “Margarito Bautista” explores a rare archive within Mormondom: the works of a non-white Mexican LDS convert who ultimately led a schismatic movement that left the LDS due to the Church’s refusal to endorse and publish the magnum opus of his chronicon. In Bautista’s thought, readers will recognize features similar to Kraut’s sense of branching contingencies and a robustly structured present dispensation. But Bautista’s work is situated within a different intellectual culture than that of his Anglo American coreligionists: the Mexican revolutionary state between 1930 and 1961. His world history is Mexico-centric,
heavily informed by the intellectual movements that flourished in the revolutionary state. More than any other figure, Bautista’s work illustrates the flexibility of Mormon thought as it interacts with local conditions, giving rise to a theory of time that partakes of revolutionary *indigenismo*, neo-Pythagorean philosophy and the political enthusiasms of his time and place to argue for an Amerindian-led millennial kingdom, centred in the Valley of Mexico, of which the revolutionary state is an elect embryo.

The fifth chapter introduces the most prolific, best-known and most intellectually creative of all faithful Mormon historians of the pre-modern world, Hugh Nibley. Nibley’s work casts a long shadow from his first major work of faithful history in 1947 up to the present day. He is unique amongst non-hierarchs in the LDS in being continuously featured in official church educational materials for the past half-century. The size of his corpus and depth of his thought grant Nibley two chapters in this project, the first describing his unique methodology for assessing and analyzing historical materials, including his own theories of translation and documentary authentication, and the second (Chapter Seven), describing the complete aeon-based cosmological system that his *chronicon* encompasses. In it we see the most thoroughly typological understanding of both time and space expressive not only of an “all now” consciousness but the “all here” thinking also reflected in McConkie’s work.

Although he clearly partakes of academic movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the distinctiveness of Nibley’s historical/cosmological thought is foregrounded in exploring the influences of James Frazer and the Cambridge School, Bedrich Hrozny, H. G. Wells, Karl Jaspers and Immanuel Velikovsky (along with what Edward Said terms “orientalism”). Nibley’s intensely typological understanding of history is also traced in his
intellectual descendants whose influence in the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) has waxed in the past decade.

Chapter Six introduces two of the most influential publishing houses in Mormondom, FARMS and the RLDS’ Herald Publishing House, as an entrée into chronica focusing on the “external evidences” (i.e. archaeological and historical data from the New World purporting to confirm the Mormon narrative). Herald Publishing House, in a far more coordinated fashion than any LDS publisher, produced a series of books by disparate authors in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s putting forward an RLDS progressive chronicon. Using increasingly discredited Victorian scholarship supplemented with twentieth-century cult archaeology, the RLDS took an unsustainable position in arguing for substantial and increasing accord between the academic mainstream and Mormons. Greater RLDS use of proof-texting and appeals to mainstream authority are contrasted with LDS approaches to demonstrate the ways in which the denomination’s greater need to perform in accordance with the American mainstream produced a more vulnerable chronicon.

RLDS progressive thought is compared with the work of archaeology professor John Sorenson, one of the most prominent early members of FARMS, an institution that sought to create a faithful LDS practice of history with an unprecedented academic rigour and commitment to mainstream processes like peer review. Sorenson’s attempts to maintain fidelity to his professional status as an archaeologist concurrently with his fidelity to Mormonism produce a radical redescription of the Book of Mormon past that deliteralizes scriptural accounts in unexpected ways. Ultimately, he achieves limited success in defending the Book of Mormon’s status as an ancient document at the expense of its status as a true document. This approach,
while most extremely exhibited in Sorenson’s work, is a feature, to a lesser degree, of much pre-2000 FARMS production which is also briefly examined.

The eighth chapter also features the RLDS and tracks members’ attempts to achieve a new accommodation between their subaltern pasts and the mainstream historical narrative through the adoption of liberal and New Left intellectual positions developed in the 1960s and 1970s. This top-down intellectual movement that sought to stage a tactical retreat from the Book of Mormon narrative while rebranding the RLDS as a liberal peace church has not been a success demographically or organizationally; it resulted in a substantial schism in 1984. It nevertheless produced extraordinarily creative explorations of history that sought to profoundly relativize and circumscribe Mormon claims while, concurrently, giving voice to indigenous Polynesian and Native American RLDS members’ highly distinctive and creative accommodations with the past. While many FARMS authors, in the 1980s, sacrificed the truth of the Book of Mormon to preserve its antiquity, the RLDS did the opposite, sacrificing its antiquity in an attempt to preserve its truth.

The ninth and concluding chapter reviews the nine *chronica* this project explores and offers some final remarks regarding the sustainability, popularity and epistemological foundations and practices of the various schools of Mormon historical thought. The chapter also assesses the applicability of the Leonian framework in comprehending twentieth-century LDS thought and the possible emergence of an “all here” consciousness to match the “all now” consciousness of Mormons as LDS temple-building accelerated and globalized throughout the twentieth century.
Chapter Two: The Modernist-Fundamentalist Debate, Mormon Style

I. Setting the Scene

According to all contemporary mainstream periodizations of Mormon history, 1890 constituted the beginning of the second era of Mormonism. Thomas Alexander has treated the initiation of this period most comprehensively, anatomizing the process whereby the Utah-based LDS Church and its members assimilated into US society politically, economically and intellectually.\(^1\) Armand Mauss also treats this process, focusing less on its initiation and more on its conclusion in the mid-century period with the commencement of a third period of retrenchment during which corporate efforts at assimilation were replaced by a newfound emphasis on Mormon difference at mid-century.\(^2\)

Beginning in 1890 there was a fundamental reorientation in Mormonism away from the distinguishing elements that had theretofore constituted the faith’s uniqueness. This change was not merely ritual or doctrinal as the institutions that had made theocratic, communitarian Mormonism were dismantled.\(^3\) It was at this point that Mormonism, in an attempt to assimilate with mainstream American culture, moved away from the central tenets of polygamy, geographic isolation, and theocracy.\(^4\) In their place other systems of boundary maintenance and assertions of uniqueness arose. These were pre-existing elements of Mormonism that had not been previously significantly emphasized: the Word of Wisdom (health advice from God that received a new exegesis as a prohibition on tea, coffee and alcohol) and proxy baptism. It was also at this point

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that history began to emerge as the unifying element in Mormon community.⁵ While the promotion of minor revelations, such as the Word of Wisdom and the practical manifestation of this new historical centre in the form of a greater imperative for proxy baptism, were crucial in providing an orthopractic basis for Mormon community, Mormonism’s new historical turn also required the backing of a coherent history. This requirement for coherence constrained Mormons’ previous main basis for making historical assertions, additional revelation.

The catalyst for this reorientation was what Mormons term “the Manifesto,” a statement by Prophet Wilfred Woodruff, that is often classed as a revelation by LDS members but not by smaller Mormon denominations. (RLDS, Temple Lot and other groups that did not journey to Utah do not accept it because these groups never embraced the polygamous system it rescinded and groups that have separated from the LDS since have generally done so over the polygamy issue.) Whatever the formal category of statement, the Manifesto, in its renunciation of polygamy, inaugurated this second period, recognized by Bushman, Mauss, and Alexander, as the “settlement period.”⁶ During this process of assimilation, Mormons sought to emphasize their patriotism and cultural similarities to non-Mormon Americans, mobilizing consciously mainstream and harmonious discourses in Church publications. The program of Woodruff and his immediate successors was to end governmental persecution, not, primarily, to attract converts. This required a re-description of Mormonism not merely to the American public, but more importantly to the faith’s adherents so that they could understand the degree to which their faith was already in harmony with the American mainstream. Mormon General Authorities and publications, then, were not merely tasked with situating their ideas within a mainstream

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⁵ ———, Mormonism In Transition, 259-65, 291; Leone, Modern Mormonism, 6, 8-9; Doctrine and Covenants 89:18-21.
⁶ Mauss, Angel and the Beehive, 197-98.
American religious discourse, intellectually; they faced this task formally as well. The project of demonstrating the mainstream character of Mormon religious discourse can be viewed in hindsight as an unqualified success. Not only did General Authorities and publications adopt the forms and intellectual frameworks of their evangelical (both modernist and Fundamentalist) fellow citizens; they also succeeded in enacting in miniature within Mormonism the conflict between these two polarities that neither evangelical Protestants nor Mormons could have anticipated in 1890. The perfection with which Mormons managed to recapitulate this debate within their own faith would have made the most ardent assimilationists of the early settlement period proud. Victorian eclecticism gave way initially to a Mormonized Spencerian consensus that recast peculiar LDS doctrines in progressive, post-millennial terms before calling forth its antithesis in the form of Mormon conservatism.  

In 1890 everything in Mormonism was up for grabs: polygamy, theocracy, block voting, the gathering of Israel, and other doctrinally and historically definitive topics. And it is unreasonable to assume that the elements of Mormonism that did not change during the 1890s were somehow intrinsically less changeable than those elements that did. In fact, one could almost make the opposite argument that Mormons changed only the important things about themselves during the period of accommodation with the United States. Properties of Mormonism insufficiently controversial to require the action of the U.S. Federal government and nation-wide campaigns by groups like the WCTU, were not necessarily a priority for Church leaders who had their hands more than full with the major, defining questions of their faith. With

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7 The General Authorities are the members of the most senior priesthood quora of the LDS Church comprising the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, Quorum of the Seventy and a number of other senior positions. Typically there are approximately one hundred General Authorities.

so much in flux, it is important to recognize that the apologists of this era enjoyed and exercised wide latitude in fashioning new Mormon *chronica* to meet the needs of their day.9

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, the General Authorities Brigham H. Roberts (1857-1933) and James E. Talmage (1862-1933) were not just self-selected as privileged expositors of Mormon doctrine; they were, in a larger sense, discursively selected. It is likely that a minority of the members of the Quorums of the Twelve and Seventy were both intellectually equipped and dispositionally inclined to engage in the project of expressing Mormon thought, and specifically Mormon historical thought, within the progressive discourse. We must then view the ascendance of Roberts and Talmage in Mormon historiography in the first three decades of the Settlement period (1890-1920) as mandated more by the confluence between their interests, rhetorical style, and personal disposition on the issues and ideas of the day than as an institutionally church-initiated program. This is especially true of Roberts who in other respects was sometimes out of step with Church hierarchs in this period. His alignment with the Democratic Party following the decision of the first presidency to realign the church with the Republicans had rendered him a controversial figure early in his career as apostle, before he had published most of his historical apologetics.10

Roberts and Talmage were part of a general *zeitgeist* in the Gilded Age Church that optimistically perceived an imminent convergence between emerging academic disciplines and Mormon thought. They were joined in the early twentieth century by fellow apostle John A.

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9 Indeed, many of the policies regarding Mormon canon described in Chapter 1 were settled in this period or later. Pearl of Great Price was collated and presented as a Standard Work at this time and controversy over the JST, KJV and other Bible translations continued through much of the twentieth century (Philip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: the Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 148-81).
Widtsoe and intellectual Nels Nelson in articulating this optimism with the enthusiastic backing of the First Presidency under the leadership of Joseph F. Smith.\textsuperscript{11} Roberts, although remembered as one of the greatest intellectuals in LDS history was, for the most part, an autodidact who received little formal education beyond teacher training in the Normal School of Deseret University in 1878, an education he himself deemed lacking.\textsuperscript{12} He nevertheless held formal education in high esteem and saw professionalizing academic guilds not only as reliable sources but as entities engaged in a laudable project not dissimilar to that of the Church. First noticed by future prophet Joseph F. Smith for his impressive valedictory address, Roberts became involved early in both official and quasi-official Church publishing, serving as editor of key church periodicals, the \textit{Millennial Star} and \textit{Contributor}; of his thirty-five monographs, a number were adopted by the Church as textbooks and a good deal more were intended for that purpose but ultimately not accepted.\textsuperscript{13} His first major monographs, \textit{The Gospel: First Principles} and \textit{Outlines of Ecclesiastical History}, published in 1888 and 1890 respectively were enthusiastically adopted as teaching manuals in the Church, but as the modernist-fundamentalist debate gathered steam in the LDS Church, his subsequent teaching offerings became more controversial.\textsuperscript{14} Talmage, along with fellow apostles Widtsoe and Joseph F. Merrill, brought a formal scientific education with him to his position on the Quorum. Talmage was trained in chemistry first at Brigham Young Academy (the precursor to BYU) and then Lehigh College in Pennsylvania, followed by Johns


\textsuperscript{12} ——, \textit{Autobiography}, 69.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 172, 220-23, 228, 254-55; ——, \textit{Truth and Way}, xi.

Hopkins University in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{15} While Roberts might be viewed as somewhat of a maverick, Talmage was consistently dispatched to deal with the most sensitive issues in Mormonism, enforcing through persuasive or bureaucratic authoritarian means, unpopular quorum decisions.\textsuperscript{16} Talmage’s publications, although less numerous, were even more likely than Roberts’ to be adopted by the Church for official educational purposes and have exerted an even greater staying power; today, his \textit{Jesus the Christ} remains an official LDS publication, issued to all missionaries.

Throughout their careers, Talmage and Roberts were explicit regarding the importance of the Spencerian synthesis in shaping their thinking in addition to their public confidence in the incremental convergence of Mormonism and science.\textsuperscript{17} As in other American religious movements, opposition to the modernist formulation of the faith did not immediately produce a coherent opposition as much as growing mistrust of the modernist project. And in many respects, Mormonism was slower than many evangelical movements to identify more strongly with anti-modernist forces at both the elite and folk levels. Even in 1911, when purges of modernists from the BYU faculty began, the firings were accompanied by a statement by President Smith that this did not entail a rejection of Higher Criticism or other intellectual movements associated with modernism.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{16} These included discouraging popular folklore about the Three Nephites conducting inquisitions against the covert practice of plural marriage, removing all geographic footnotes from the Book of Mormon and enforcing prohibitions on official statements about Book of Mormon geography (Alexander, \textit{Mormonism in Transition}, 73; Barlow, \textit{Mormons and the Bible}, 163; Terryl L. Givens, \textit{By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion} [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 108).
\textsuperscript{17} Dennis Rowley, “Inner Dialogue,” 126; Stan Larson, introduction to \textit{The Truth, the Way, the Life} by Brigham H. Roberts, xxxvi, lvi.
\textsuperscript{18} Ford, “Modernism and Mormonism,” 97, 101.
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It was in the 1920s that the modernist-fundamentalist debate began in earnest among LDS general authorities, a decade after the publication of *The Fundamentals*.\(^{19}\) This took place in the wake of the same phenomena that overtook American evangelicals: the bold and confident progressive synthesis developed in the age of Spencer was first under attack by the very academic community it had helped to engender. Mesoamerican archaeology and history as well as Egyptian palaeography were increasingly betraying their former Mormon allies as they were the larger community of academic Seekers or proto-Patternists.\(^{20}\) A consensus had emerged between 1905 and 1915 amongst the incipient historical and archaeological guilds in favour of theories of independent development and of viewing American Indians as a single race, descended from one group of migrants, while sufficient deciphering of Mayan inscriptions to produce a zero-date for their calendars had further limited historical speculation. R. Tripp Evans also suggests that new formulations of American empire during the Roosevelt and Wilson eras removed much of the creative imperative for finding a classical past suitable for the world’s newest empire.\(^{21}\) This is not to suggest that the LDS Church and its members did not remain intensely interested in Mesoamerican history and archaeology, that pre-1928 publications citing external evidences did not remain popular or that publishing by faithful Mormons outside the upper ranks of the clergy did not continue to cite external evidences, although there was a marked decline in such publications.\(^{22}\) But until the 1960s, there was minimal institutional

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., 162.

support for supporting the Book of Mormon narrative with non-Mormon historical scholarship, at least inside the LDS.\textsuperscript{23}

As a result of these reverses, Talmage was called upon to release a new edition of the Book of Mormon in 1920 which, while preserving the footnotes indicating the date at which events chronicled had taken place, expunged all geographic footnoting. The confident speculations of Apostle Orson Pratt as to the precise Latin American locations to events in the book had to be removed due to their increasingly obvious conflict with the findings of archaeologists and mainstream historians.\textsuperscript{24} While Talmage was engaged in orchestrating the staged retreat of an intellectual movement of which he had previously been a proponent, Roberts was engaged in a public battle with Smith over questions raised by the alliance between the publishers of \textit{The Fundamentals} and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church which had produced a doctrine known as Creationism. Roberts’ willingness to speak out of both sides of his mouth with respect to the age of the earth and evolution was being challenged by a programmatic and conscious dogmatism expounded by Smith who specifically assailed Roberts’ idea of “pre-Adamites,” human beings who had evolved in earth but died out in a major cataclysm shortly before Adam’s creation/arrival.\textsuperscript{25} This dogmatism was not simply a coincidental Mormon echo of the Fundamentalist movement; it was, in fact, the result of the direct communication between Fielding Smith, the authors of \textit{The Fundamentals}, and the Seventh-Day Adventists, who had lent

\textsuperscript{23} Sorenson counts fifteen models of Book of Mormon geography published between 1928 and 1960. Three were published by RLDS members. Of the remaining twelve, only three were published by LDS publishers; the remainder were unpublished or self-published. And none of the three published works appeared in the period between 1940 and 1957 (Sorenson, \textit{Geography}, 40-41, 48-51, 66, 72-74, 98-99, 104-06, 133-34, 201-03; Stan Larson, “The Odyssey of Thomas Stuart Ferguson,” \textit{Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought} 23, no. 1 (1990): 55-92, 86.

\textsuperscript{24} Givens, \textit{Hand of Mormon}, 108-10.

their theory to this larger movement. Smith’s ultimate victory in the conflict over evolution was the first event in the gradual re-alignment of the mainstream of the Mormon Church with Fundamentalist Christianity, a process ongoing to this day, in opposition to waning progressive thought. But this process was not primarily effected through decisive battles within the faith, the public debates of 1930-31 among Smith, Roberts and Talmage notwithstanding. Instead, mortality at the top deprived the Quorum of its pro-science faction with the deaths of Roberts and Talmage in 1933 and of Widtsoe and Merrill in 1952.

The major intellectual figure in the opposing camp during this early period was Joseph Fielding Smith. Smith’s anti-intellectualism does not appear to simply be an inheritance from his father whose presidency adopted much more equivocal positions in the debate, but was instead conditioned by the ecumenical connections he made to evangelical and Fundamentalist groups opposed to evolution. Smith’s position was a substantial departure not just from the progressive post-millennialism that had characterized Gilded Age Mormonism but also from the esteem in which nineteenth-century Mormon leaders had held the general idea of science. In 1920, he began condemning not just specific scientific ideas but also the scientific method and scientists as a guild, and in 1936, in the wake of Talmage’s and Roberts’ demise, he focused that attack on LDS scientists in particular.

Unlike the university-educated Roberts and Talmage, Smith (1876-1972) was a proud autodidact who self-identified as an intellectual and amassed a vast library over the course of many years. Although of the same generation as these men, he revealed through his religious life manifestations of the things that set him apart ideologically from his fellow General

26 Numbers, Creationists, 339-339-43.
29 Joseph Fielding Smith and John J. Stewart, The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith: Tenth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1972), 5.
Authorities. Unlike Roberts, he never practiced plural marriage; instead he was instrumental in establishing the post-Manifesto centre of LDS religious life and sealing practice, temple work. From 1907-10, he established the Utah Genealogical Society and promoted proxy baptism work to congregations around the Southwest by way of a series of speaking tours. However important familial connections may have been, it was this promotion of temple work that served as an important justification for his call to join the Twelve.30

Bruce R. McConkie (1915-85), a lawyer who did not join the Twelve until 1972, may seem somewhat out of place in this set of early twentieth-century General Authorities.31 But when Smith died, it was in McConkie’s home, where he had been staying following the death of his wife in 1971. McConkie was married to Smith’s daughter and the two men had enjoyed a positive rapport since the early 1930s.32 Their shared approach to the past, elaborated in a series of major books between Smith’s 1936 Progress of Man and McConkie’s 1985 New Witness to the Articles of Faith, including the co-authored Doctrines of Salvation, yields a harmonious integrated corpus of writings that describe a conservative Mormon chronicon that waxed in popularity with adherents during the forty-nine years Smith served as official Church Historian beginning in 1921.33

If anything, conservatives were the subject of more controversy and condemnation than the progressives they ultimately supplanted. Beginning with Talmage’s Quorum-authorized public condemnation of their views on science in 1931, the positions taken by Smith and McConkie were not universally appreciated. McConkie’s 1958 Mormon Doctrine was not only condemned by the Twelve for being published without notice, authorization or consultation was

30 Ibid., 151.
31 Dennis B. Horne, Bruce R. McConkie: Highlights from His Life and Teachings (Roy, UT: Eborn Books, 2000), 44, 118.
32 Ibid., 42, 117.
33 Smith and Stewart, Life of Joseph Fielding Smith, 206.
subject to a moratorium on its further printing. The combination of its popularity and authoritative tone resulted in the institution of a new policy of General Authorities being required to include a disclaimer in their publications that they are not officially representative of the Church.  

As in the larger battle between post-millennial progressivism and pre-millennial Fundamentalism, evolution was a major flashpoint of conflict in Mormon debates. Predictably, other debates spilled over fairly easily. The Creationism debate, which contained within it both the conflict over evolution and geological questions concerning not only the age of earth but also doctrines such as continental drift, was recapitulated fairly precisely. Numbers demonstrates that the same shift witnessed in evangelical churches (those that experienced the most pronounced shift in public opinion) took place within Mormonism between the 1930s and 70s. Similarly, while one might expect that early Mormon doctrines with respect to the fallibility of scripture might inoculate the faith against such discourses, a number of debates engendered by New Testament criticism nevertheless emerged largely intact within this Mormon subset. Questions of authorship (of the pseudo-Pauline epistles in particular), and of cultural and environmental factors conditioning authorial statements formed a major part of the conservative-progressive debate within Mormonism. While what might be termed “scientific” issues in this new science versus religion discursive paradigm comprised the lion’s share of historiographic

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34 Horne, Bruce R. McConkie, 61-69.
36 Numbers, Creationists, 339.
37 E.g. Talmage suggests Paul is not the author of Hebrews in his Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 33; Roberts equivocates on the question of Pauline authorship in The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1893), both denying it (77-79) and insisting upon it (272-74). McConkie is vehement that Paul is the author in The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 107.
debates, the disagreement over the historical accuracy of scripture was again recapitulated within Mormonism.

More than personalities, what animated the debate both within the church and society at large between Fundamentalists and modernists was the debate between pre- and post-millennialism. The uniformitarian upward telos of human society posited by post-millennialists was challenged by a Fundamentalist declension narrative. And this opposition was to an even greater extent yoked to contemporary political questions of globalization, empire, and the emerging peace movement in mainstream America. Curiously, both conservative and progressive Mormons made the argument that Zion existed at the present in embryo. But whereas Roberts located its embryonic forms in the League of Nations and the Peace Movement, Smith saw the emerging American empire as the seed of Zion. But if the idea of Zion and its ontologically monist underpinnings were more effective in narrowing the pre- versus post-millennial debate, another equally important element of Mormon thinking acted to circumscribe and constrain the distance between the polarities. Dispensational theory, premised on an apostasy-restoration cycle, necessarily mandated an agreement between pre- and post-millennialists in two respects: (a) as this was the “Dispensation of the Fullness of Times,” the last of the dispensations, and as the Church could therefore by definition not apostatize, the magnitude of the declension was necessarily limited by the success by the Church and the accommodation it had achieved; (b) on the other hand, the minority status of the elect both in general dispensational theory and in the specific prophecies of the current dispensation similarly circumscribed the degree to which Zion could be built prior to Christ’s return. In a sense then, although questions of progress and the issues that divided pre- and post-millennialists in the larger debate were the primary force

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structuring Mormon debate, all Mormons were concurrently, as a matter of doctrine, both pre- and post-millennialists. They were pre-millennialists in the sense that Doctrine and Covenants, by revising and clarifying the Book of Revelation, left no room to maneuver on the question of whether the millennium could be inaugurated without Christ.\textsuperscript{40} Similarly, they were post-millennialist not in a narrow historiographic sense, but in the broad historiographic sense that universal progression was recognized as one of the most important underlying “laws” that governed the universe.\textsuperscript{41}

Before the Manifesto, the typical strategy for solving problems in scripture, both ancient and modern was to obtain additional revelations from God. This process had left nineteenth-century Mormons with a rich heterogeneous, variegated and open-ended canon, supplemented by an even more open-ended quasi-canon. But following the Manifesto, with the one exception of Joseph F. Smith’s 1918 vision, the canon and quasi-canon were effectively closed. Henceforth the Victorian antiquarian tool of selective reporting would be more than sufficient to give Mormon history a coherence that no new Revelation, no matter how comprehensive, could have conferred. Omission proved a more effective tool than clarification when contending with such thorny issues as Young’s Adam-God doctrine.\textsuperscript{42} A variety of positions can be adopted between two polarities within the selections made by General Authorities in this larger heterogeneous canon. One position might emphasize their selections as primarily descriptive of a normative Mormonism in 1890 and would confer on them little agency in selecting items like the King Follet discourse over Brigham Young’s discourses or on the importance of Adam to the local

\textsuperscript{40} Doctrine and Covenants 77:12-14.
\textsuperscript{41} Joseph Smith Jr., \textit{Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith}, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company 1989), 354. This is expressed in the King Follett Discourse.
\textsuperscript{42} Drew Briney, \textit{Understanding Adam-God Teachings} (Salt Lake City: Drew Briney, 2005), xii. See also, Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Gospel Questions}, 5:122. The Adam-God doctrine, while peripherally historical, like other Adamic doctrines such as the pre-Adamites is not examined here but well-canvased elsewhere.
henotheistic structure of Mormonism on earth or in adjudicating the dispute between the
superiority of the King James translation over English translations of Jerome’s vulgate and the
insufficiency of King James compared with the Joseph Smith Translation. On the other hand, one
might suggest a high level of agency on the part of General Authorities in the ordering and
emphasis of doctrines within the canon. Irrespective of whether we see the selections made as
primarily prescriptive or primarily descriptive, we can nevertheless derive from them the unique
Mormon doctrines with respect to history that continued to be defended and emphasized well
into the twentieth century and in many cases, up to the present day.

II.  The Progressive Chronicon

The considerable corpus of monographs Roberts generated is based on a reasonably
consistent method. Roberts digests mainstream scholarship in the areas of pre-Columbian
American history and archaeology and ecclesiastical history drawn from a Protestant Evangelical
tradition. These two bodies of literature are then placed in dialogue with the broadly defined
Mormon canon. Roberts bases much of his reasoning on resonances between these bodies of
literature and reasons in four main categories:  history (locating and correlating events between
two or more bodies), historiography (locating understandings of time and historical structures
within two or more), archaeology (informing his understanding of events he knew to have taken
place with the presence or absence of a discovered archaeological record), and, least
significantly, philology. Locating resonances amongst different sources of historical data was
considerably easier in the period in which Roberts wrote given the pre- and proto-professional
environment within which academic archaeology and history were practiced. This looser, more
creative environment led to a much wider range of possible theories and assertions about specific
past events being able to hold some degree of authoritative legitimacy, lacking the clear
authorizing processes that exist in a contemporary archaeological and historical practice. Combined with an eclecticism that functioned like secular on proof-texting, mainstream Gilded Age historical practice verged on what might be labelled conspiracy thinking today. Although professionalization was underway during Roberts’ apologetic career, this process was incomplete. The transition from an unorganized, unaccredited group of self-financed, agenda-driven practitioners of Victorian eclecticism into a professional, university-centred guild was by no means concluded when he produced his last publication on pre-Columbian America.\footnote{Peter Novick, \textit{That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63, 87-89.} At the beginning of his career, certainly, Roberts’ status as an autodidact and practice of eclectic cherry-picking from sources was in no way out of step with mainstream historical practice. Indeed, Roberts likely engaged in a more empirically rigorous and less arbitrarily selective use of evidence than mainstream practitioners of history in his day. The ways in which his project of producing a more empirically-grounded, less selective church history in his \textit{Comprehensive History} than that offered in the quasi-canonical \textit{History of the Church} ran afoul of Smith and others is a testament to this.\footnote{Roberts, \textit{Autobiography}, 227-29.}

Many of the seminal texts still used in cult archaeology were generated in the era when Roberts flourished or that immediately prior and are proof-texted by Roberts in fashioning his arguments. Roberts’ engagement with Ignatius Donnelly’s work exemplifies this. Donnelly’s efforts to prove the historicity of the lost continent of Atlantis are used by Roberts to offer an explanation for the events Donnelly seeks to explain that explicitly denies Atlantis’ existence.\footnote{Roberts, \textit{New Witnesses for God}, 2:206.} He performs a similar operation with respect to Augustus Le Plongeon, the inventor of the new
discipline of “psychic archaeology,” whose conclusions with respect to the Toltecs Roberts takes seriously despite his condemnation elsewhere of non-Mormon authorized psychics.

But most were further from the margins than these. The texts on which he is most reliant in elaborating his chronicon with respect to the pre-Columbian Americas are: Josiah Priest’s American Antiquities (1834), William Prescott’s Conquest of Mexico (1843), Lord Kingsborough’s Antiquities of Mexico (1848), John D. Baldwin’s Ancient America (1871), Hubert Bancroft’s Native Races (1874), Marquis de Nadaillac’s Pre-Historical America (1884) and Peter de Roo’s History of America Before Columbus (1900). All of these texts suffered delegitimation during the era of academic professionalization but some shed legitimacy faster than others. Most of this decline in legitimacy took place after 1909, when Roberts’ major treatment of the Nephite past, New Witnesses for God, was published; and the text did not undergo any significant revision in its second edition in 1926.

During the 1820s, Mormonism has been just one of a myriad of manifestations of a new American English creole interest in Mesoamerican history resulting from the contemporaneous end of Spanish colonialism and the rise of Manifest Destiny as a national ideology. This made the pre-Columbian past a novel subject, lacking in traditions or foundation. Although theories of indigenous American descent from ancient Israelites had entered mainstream discourse during the first generations of Spanish colonization, they gained a new force with the work of Edward King, Lord Kingsborough, who used his substantial fortune (and more) to produce a massive compilation of primary documents, proto-archaeological data and historical speculation that

48 Ibid., 1:8
entered the English language in 1848. Kingsborough’s copious research and documentation lent a new air of legitimacy to this speculation by presenting it in an apparently evidence-based Victorian empiricist style. But the most of the evidence he collected in no way pertained to two of his main arguments, that the Semitic racial phenotype was evident in pre-Columbian art, and that nearly all pre-Columbian religious rituals and taboos were derivations of Levitical rules. But even before Kingsborough, Josiah Priest, like Joseph Smith and Ethan Smith offered a more intuitive account of Native Americans’ Israelite origins, relying heavily on evidence of the Mound Builder civilization and philological evidence.

John D. Baldwin produced a somewhat more sober assessment of pre-Columbian America in his 1871 treatise. It dismissed the Israelite origin hypothesis as a “wild theory” and also suggested that too much was being read into the supposed crosses mobilized as evidence for pre-Columbian Christianity, given the commonness and multivalent nature of the cross as a shape. Baldwin was also prescient in dismissing diffusion hypotheses generally, suggesting that independent development is a reasonable theory of civilizational advancement. Mormons could, however, make use of his work. First, they could find support theories of an ancient, more civilized Toltec race as the origin of Mayan, Aztec, Mound Builder and possibly Inca civilizations. Second, his assertion that the Mound Builders were a highly advanced society that engaged in metalworking helped to reinforce narratives regarding the magnitude of

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50 King died in debtor’s prison (Evans, Romancing the Maya, 35).
51 Ibid., 35.
54 Ibid., 185. Here, Baldwin was out of step with nearly all of his contemporaries who dismissed the possibility of independent development (Evans, Romancing the Maya, 11).
55 Baldwin, Ancient America, 53, 71, 75,
indigenous civilization in the Midwest and Upstate New York. Third, the idea of “two races” of indigenous people, the surviving “wild Indians” and the extinct “civilized” obviously lent legitimacy to Mormon narratives.57

William Prescott, like his contemporary Washington Irving, was an exemplary practitioner of Victorian historical romanticism, and this style, combined with the considerable staying power of his historical claims, conferred on them a considerable popularity well into the twentieth century.58 Whereas his claims regarding the origins of Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations were minimal and in the vein of Baldwin’s (although his work shows some sympathy for the theories of Kingsborough), his romantic style, combined with his high opinion of these civilizations made him a useful source for those arguing in favour of the scale and grandeur of pre-Columbian society and accepting the accounts of his informants, the conquistadors.59 This was important and somewhat exceptional in an era that so exalted “progress” as a social scientific principle that it rendered such a past almost unscientific.60 It is this assertion of grandeur against a social scientific consensus that likely makes Bancroft a favoured author for LDS and RLDS members identifying with progressive thought, given his similar coolness to improbable migration theories.61

Peter de Roo, the last published of those heavily cited by Roberts, offered a helpful synthesis of much that had gone before. Glossing and, where possible harmonizing the work of

56 Ibid., 43, 61. See also Priest, American Antiquities, 92, 177.
57 Baldwin, Ancient America, 66. This third element was the nearly unanimous premise of European and Anglo-American theories of the Mesoamerican past in the nineteenth century (Evans, Romancing the Maya, 11; Priest, American Antiquities, 84).
60 Levin, “History as Romantic Art,” 22.
61 Humphreys, “William Hickling Prescott,” 12; Peter De Roo, History of America Before Columbus: According to Documents and Approved Authors (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1900), 1:3.
others, de Roo both amplified the work of his predecessors, suggesting, for instance, a coal-fired Mound Builder smelting industry, and attempted to find accord by asserting the supplementarity rather than contradiction of their theories wherever possible. De Roo’s pre-Columbian America amplifies Nadaillac’s theory of multiple migrations and identifies different peoples by Old World origin, by way of the Bering Strait, Aleutians, Polynesia, Israel, Spain, Ireland, Norway and Scythia. This practice of explaining local difference within the Americas by way of multiple migration theories was already in evidence in the work of Priest but grew in magnitude as the century wore on.

In some respects, Roberts’ thought was anticipatory of post-Victorian professional scholarship, especially as practiced by LDS academics. First, in order to hybridize his sources, Roberts begins a lengthy process that continues with Mormon intellectuals throughout the twentieth century of de-literalizing the Book of Mormon, not in order to equivocate as to its existence as a real historical document about a specific set of places and times, but rather to save its status as such. In order, for instance, to make the Book of Mormon narrative conform more closely to the archaeological record, Roberts accuses the authors of the Book of Mormon of exaggeration when they describe the extent of the Jaredite civilization in North America. Because of the lack of archaeological evidence in certain regions, Roberts de-literalizes the term “the whole face of the land,” accuses Moroni the abridger of the Jaredite record of “hyperbole,” and instead suggests the Rocky Mountains rather than the Pacific Ocean as the western boundary

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62 ———, History of America Before, 1: 3, 13, 67, 89. De Roo cites Bancroft, Prescott and Nadaillac explicitly and utilizes their scholarship to support his conclusions.

63 Ibid., 1:3, 17, 50, 54, 91, 108, 305, 313, 331. Although not included on De Roo’s list, theories of Atlantean and/or Egyptian origin were sometimes cited by those favouring a multiple migration theory, in addition to proponents of the Atlantis theory (Evans, Romancing the Maya, 42, 113).

64 Priest, American Antiquities, 55.

65 This process reaches its Zenith with John Sorenson (Chapter 5).

and the Great Lakes rather than the Arctic as the northern.\textsuperscript{67} Similarly, Roberts de-literalizes all sources of the total extermination of peoples in the book based on his understanding of indigenous practices of warfare. Warriors die, Roberts suggests, but non-combatant populations more likely merge with demographically or militarily-ascendant groups.\textsuperscript{68} In this way we may identify Roberts as one of the earliest proponents of the idea that the Nephites survived past 421 CE. And again, using the logic of how indigenous warfare must have been conducted, Roberts revises scriptural assertions of the disorganization of Lamanite society to suggest that Lamanites must have been sufficiently organized to beat the Nephites in war.\textsuperscript{69}

To be sure, most of Roberts’ deductions about the Mormon past of the Western Hemisphere are not so egregiously at odds with scripture. For instance, he is able to conclude from the absence of obviously Nephite structures in the archaeological record that Nephite buildings must have been overwhelmingly wooden.\textsuperscript{70} Roberts circumscribes Mormon scripture in other key respects in his ongoing effort to rescue the Book of Mormon not so much as a literally true document, but as an historical document. Although Roberts does not distinguish these claims as such, in its full elaboration in the FARMS corpus, the distinction between rescuing the validity of the Book as a true document and as an historical document only diverge from this point forward amongst Mormon thinkers seeking accord with the academy. It is not merely with respect to the literal truth of putative eye-witnesses of the Book of Mormon’s alleged authors that Roberts further circumscribes the text. He also adopts the position that it is non-exhaustive in various respects—that the texts preserved therein comprise but a small portion

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 2:170-71.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 2: 239.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 2:261-62.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 2: 393.
of the “national literature” of the Nephite and Jaredite peoples.\textsuperscript{71} Indeed he relies on the book’s own testimony that it is an abridgement to emphasize that omission and selectivity are key characteristics of any abridgment process.\textsuperscript{72} Not only is the Book of Mormon not all the Nephites and Jaredites had to say about themselves, it is similarly not to be regarded as a complete record of all migrations to the Americas. Roberts states that not only is the Book of Mormon not the history of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, its story of two Near Eastern migrations to the Western Hemisphere should also in no way exclude Phoenician, Viking, or other pre-Columbian migrations.\textsuperscript{73} But if Roberts circumscribes what the Book of Mormon can say about the New World prior to 421 AD, he takes bold steps in expanding how it may assist us in understanding Western Hemispheric history from 421-1492 CE. Accepting the Doctrine and Covenants requirement of the equivalency between the Lamanites and American Indians, and utilizing the works of Bancroft and others in theorizing this missing millennium, Roberts argues that there must certainly have been a southward migration of the most sophisticated Lamanite peoples after their victory at the battle of Cumorah, that these southward migrants engaged in a process of rebuilding complex civilizations in both the Mexico Valley and the Andes, and that these Lamanites, fused no doubt with non-combatant Nephites, must have practiced a religion hybridizing Christian beliefs and “idolatry.”\textsuperscript{74} Roberts can deduce this because of the prevalence of claims, made by historians whose findings he prefers, regarding “pre-Columbian” Christian beliefs in the Americas and the general beliefs of scholars in an upward trend in Andean and Mesoamerican civilizations in the millennium prior to Columbus.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 3: 130.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 3:500.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 2: 398-402.
\textsuperscript{74} Doctrine and Covenants 28, 54. Roberts, \textit{New Witnesses for God}, 2: 264, 405-08.
\textsuperscript{75} ———, \textit{New Witnesses for God}, 3:173.
Operating as he does with the works of historians subscribing to an upward teleology mandated by progress narratives, Roberts’ post-millennial progressivism is most strongly in evidence when he theorizes about the nature of Nephite governments. Surprisingly, Roberts asserts that although the reign of the Nephite Judges was indeed a period of republican governance, that the reign of the kings was a period of monarchical governance, and that the period following the perfect Nephite theocracy of the two hundred years following Christ’s appearance on the American continent could be characterized as a kind of warlordism, he distinguishes between governments of this nature in the present day and those of the past. This distinction is not based on the Mormon dictum that all governance structures, ordinances, writings, and gospel teachings are unchanging through time, but rather that, as more technologically-backward peoples, the Nephites must naturally have practiced what he terms “simple” or “primitive” versions of these systems.\(^{76}\) While principles might be unchanging though time, their technology and precision of execution follows an upward telos. So strong is this progressive telos that Aztec and Mayan astronomy and mathematics are lauded as superior to contemporaneous European work in these fields rather than being condemned as an unworthy declension of perfect Nephite teachings. That stated, Roberts, of course, cannot escape from various temporally-sensitive Mormon assertions: not only is he unequivocal in his agreement with the mainstream doctrines of unchanged and unchangeable ordinances, complete ancient knowledge of the gospel, and various other atemporal claims, he is especially committed to recognizing the election of the Western Hemisphere as a consistent ubiquitous force shaping all historical events past and present. However, in the style of a true progressive, Roberts in New Witnesses For God vol. 3 gives the last word on Hemispheric election not to the brother of Jared,

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 3: 148-53.
the greatest prophet in the history of the world, but to American statesman Daniel Webster in his 1852 address on the subject.\textsuperscript{77}

In his engagement with Higher Criticism, Roberts exhorts Mormons in contact with this debate to adopt no position in a struggle that he characterizes as taking place between two fundamentally false schools of thinking: 1) the Higher Criticism, subsuming within it academics, modernist theologians and also mainline Christian intellectuals, and 2) the opposing category of “apostate Christianity.”\textsuperscript{78} This allows Roberts to make use of insights and positions developed by both camps in this rhetorical battle, but I would suggest it is not primarily opportunism that sends him in this direction. Two foundational assertions in Mormonism appear to partake in the positions of the opposing camps. Mormon scripture is clear that the Bible has always been the Bible, a position that Roberts feels he must defend. On the other hand, even more foundational to Mormonism, is the belief that the Old and New Testaments are damaged, fragmentary, unreliable, and deliberately adulterated by the ignorant and the malicious. Roberts, in a sense, then, is not so much neutral in the battle between the oil men of the Southwest and the scholars of Tübingen; rather, he is necessarily allied with portions of both movements. De-literalizing the Book of Mormon in order to rescue its integrity as an ancient text might be viewed as allied with Higher Criticism; partaking of the opposite camp, however, Roberts can sustain conservative Fundamentalist views. The Book of Mormon, recognized nevertheless as imperfect, is understood as a text of superior purity and authority and can therefore intercede against the Higher Critics to defend, for instance, the single authorship of Isaiah, whose stylistic changes are explained by Roberts as a gradual deepening of the prophet’s communion with

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 3: 321.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 2: 11,32.
God. Roberts does not just respond to Higher Critics but brings the kind of concerns he imagines they might bring to the Book of Mormon as a means, both of legitimation and inquiry. Stylistic uniformity is a real problem for Roberts. He emphasizes therefore that within the abridgements that comprise over three-quarters of the Book of Mormon one should expect stylistic conformity because there is indeed one author. He then goes to some effort to show stylistic non-uniformity in the remaining quarter of the Book of Mormon. He is similarly challenged by problems of style and language: how might one explain identical words and phrasing between the Book and the KJV? This, Roberts suggest, can be explained by the agency of translation. Joseph Smith did not receive the words in early modern English. Instead, he adapted meanings he received through the mentally strenuous effort of operating the seer-stones; these meanings he then placed in an idiom he found reasonable. And when Smith recognized that he would be generating texts nearly precisely identical to the KJV Bible, it must have seemed only reasonable to him to borrow KJV language whole-cloth.

More interestingly, although his conservative colleagues will take this principle much further, in Roberts we see a nascent spatialization of dispensations. In addition to his recognition of the Western Hemisphere as differently propertied, perhaps no more than a statement of

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79 Ibid., 3: 449-58. It has long been acknowledged that the book of Isaiah betrays multiple authorship. Only the most conservative of text-critics and commentators today would dispute this point. The three phases of authorship that one finds in most commentaries and critical literature on the corpus are generally understood as follows: First Isaiah (chapters 1-39), Second or "Deutero"-Isaiah (chapters 40-55), and third or "Trito" Isaiah (chapters 56-66). Some scholars have understood the redactional process of Isaiah text formation to correspond to discrete historical periods. R. Clements, for example, discerns, "an eight-century (preexilic), a seventh-century ("Josianic"), and exilic, and a postexilic redaction" ("The Prophecies of Isaiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.," *Vetus Testamentum* 30 [1980], 2). In his *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), Brevard S. Childs analyzes current trends in Isaianic scholarship. In the last few years, he notes, new redactional layers implying further pluralized authorship have been detected in Deutero-Isaiah (Childs, *Isaiah*, 3). In addition, recent scholars have further nuanced the three-authorship model by understanding the various contributions not as historically distinct, but as mutually informing; thus, Deutero Isaiah is understood to have re-worked her source material, and likewise, Trito-Isaiah largely based her material on Deutero (Childs, *Isaiah*, 3).


81 Errors in grammar could be explained by Smith’s imperfect comprehension of English grammar. Uses of Upstate New York idiom could again be explained by Smith’s idiosyncratic language.

uncontestable doctrine, we see also an assertion of revelations as local and the term local within this description signifying both temporal and spatial locality. Roberts also maintains the hemispheric dualism present throughout all Mormon historical thought of the Western Hemisphere, with hemisphere as a category proceeding based on different laws. It is, however, his posthumously published writings in *The Way, The Life, and The Truth* that show the most complete development of a spatialized dispensationalism. Kingdoms are recognized as planetary, empires as solar systems, “and so on up,” to include galaxies and universes. Roberts notes, however, that the process of celestialization, the outcome produced through progressive dispensational cycles, is at different points depending upon the specific kingdom undergoing the process. This process of transformation from telestial to terrestrial to celestial has been taking place at various points in space and time infinitely into the past and will continue infinitely into the future as the universe expands.

Here we can see most clearly the implications of monistic thought in forcing all metaphysical propositions into the fully physical sense and placing all events within profane time. By using pseudoscientific language, Roberts is able to articulate a middle position with respect to Creationism, one that articulates that geology is right, and evolutionary biology is wrong. Because the earth was created in Kolobian time which cannot be easily assigned to an interval of time on earth, the geological uniformitarian position needs not be in conflict with scripture. The six “great periods” are not after all earth days, but days as per the temporal systems of the planet Kolob. Furthermore, because of the established Mormon principle that creation is the ordering of matter, not the creation of matter *ex nihilo*, problematic fossils that

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85 Ibid., 248. This terminology is part of a tripartite schema used by Mormons to refer to three degrees of afterlife “glory” with respect both to persons and to worlds; telestial is the lowest, celestial the highest.
86 Ibid., 245.
might undermine the six-day narrative might be explained by Roberts as remnants from the planet that failed to celestialize and out of which the earth must have been made. Roberts is able to use his adherence to the Mormon doctrine of Arthur C. Clarke-style miracles to adopt a similarly scientific-sounding discourse with respect not only to the miraculous but also angelic visitation. Given his demonstration that there exist celestial worlds that have moved thorough the dispensational cycle to its conclusion prior to us, it therefore must follow that the inhabitants of these worlds are celestialized beings. As such, all angelic visitation and ministration can be effectively explained as extra-terrestrial visitation. Roberts points out, in fact, just how scientifically forward looking Joseph Smith and his contemporaries must have been. As with pre-Columbian American archaeology, New Testament criticism, Smith’s revelations and non-canonical statements continue to be validated by the march of science. Smith’s prescience with respect to an eternal universe, extra-terrestrial life, the infinity of time and space, and the conservation of matter and energy all help to reveal early Mormonism as scientifically prescient.

It is in moments like this and in his discussion of the pre-Columbian Americas that Roberts stakes out a position that progressive Mormons would be unable to maintain. For Roberts it is not that New Testament criticism, pre-Columbian history, and contemporary science are solving the problems of explaining or justifying Mormonism, rather Roberts is confidently offering Mormonism as a tool for solving the problems of modernity. It is through Mormonism then that the science/religion debate is not to be solved in favour of one party over the other;

87 Roberts, The Gospel, 335. Although the Roberts/Fielding Smith debate centres on some of these doctrines, the similarity between the positions of both Smith and Roberts to contemporary creation science is more significant than their conflicts over pre-Adamites and the like.
88 Roberts, Comprehensive History, 1:202-09.
89 Roberts, New Witnesses, 2: 358-61.
90 Ibid., 1:426-37.
instead Mormonism will reunify these divergent constituencies. This unification is of course just another element of the gospel of progress. We are evolving toward celestialization; technological progress is permitting social improvement, and through technology the Gospel will be spread to the point at which the *eschaton* can begin. 91 In addition to Mormonism, contemporary movements are also giving rise to this. Roberts identifies such movements as “peace,” and “internationalism,” as represented in both The Hague and the League of Nations, and in Zionism, the uniformitarian incrementalist beginnings of the return of Jews to both the Holy land and to the Gospel. 92

Although Talmage’s historical thought is not identical to Roberts’ it can be most effectively classed with other progressives, also including Widtsoe and Nelson. To understand more completely the historical thought of this intellectual movement, it is most useful to see Talmage’s historiography as a further elaboration or alternative construction of the same basic theory of time. As such, this section is not as much as summary of Talmage’s writings as an inventory of interesting elaborations and alternative formulations.

Perhaps due to his later entry into the field, perhaps due to his greater acquaintance with academic study, Talmage, in his approach to American antiquities, is somewhat more discerning and less naively hopeful about the emerging professional scholarly consensus. His writings in this area are much less prolific than those of Roberts and significantly less indebted to the conspiratorial cult archaeology of Le Plongeon and his ilk. He hews more closely to basic claims widely shared amongst scholars of the pre-Columbian Americas. Spearheading, as he did, the project of expunging the Book of Mormon’s geographic footnotes, Talmage makes almost no

92 ——, *New Witnesses for God*, 3:309.
specific geographic claims about the location of events in the Book of Mormon narrative.\textsuperscript{93} His main interventions in pre-Columbian American history are the identification of areas where Mormonism offers what he deems a more credible explanation of widely acknowledged historical events than do mainstream scholarship. The fact that scholars of his time believed there had been two phases of Asiatic migration to the Americas is viewed as a vindication of the Book of Mormon, but beyond that the Book is offered as a more complete explanation than vague theories about an ice bridge and a demand for game. Similarly, the rehabilitation of Hispanic baroque ideas that the Eucharist had been celebrated in pre-Columbian America by some nineteenth-century antiquarians is viewed as more than a vindication of Mormonism.\textsuperscript{94} Mormonism was again offered as a tool to aid mainstream academics in explicating this phenomenon.\textsuperscript{95}

As with his position on American antiquities, Talmage hews even more closely to a proto- and emerging scholarly consensus in the area of the Higher Criticism. He fully accepts the position of higher critics that a number of biblical texts attributed to Paul were in fact authored by other individuals and that the apostle John almost certainly did not write the Fourth Gospel.\textsuperscript{96} More importantly still, Talmage holds the view which he mobilized to justify continuing revelation by God, that the Bible has not always been the Bible. In his defense of Mormonism’s allegedly still open canon, Talmage dismisses critics who cite sections of the Book of Revelation to indicate the canon was closed. How could this be, Talmage argues, when the book of Revelation was produced at a time when the New Testament did not exist and had not been

\textsuperscript{93} Earlier editions of some of Talmage’s works do not reflect this circumspection (e.g., Talmage’s Lectures on the Articles of Faith [Salt Lake City, 1899], 265-68).
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 292.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 298.
\textsuperscript{96} Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 33, 140.
ordered into books? This is not to suggest that Talmage was in any way more reserved than others in strongly articulating his belief in the special veracity of Mormon scripture. The Book of Mormon, he argues, is in fact the basis from which a canon must be constructed; it, rather than the Bible, must serve as the foundation. The Bible he points out, is and has always been intrinsically fragmentary, more so even than Mormons argued it was in the nineteenth century. This lack of completeness, which Smith originally attributed to the ignorant and corrupt removing of the “plain and precious truths” of the Bible, is further explained by Talmage in exalting present day Mormons. Ancient Israelites, he suggests, were simply unready to learn about the Plan of Salvation. Although this information was held by priests, they and the prophets among them deemed this knowledge beyond the comprehension of ancient Israelites and therefore only communicated it through parable and metaphor. The subordination of the Bible (even while rhetorically proclaiming the Bible as the pre-eminent of the Standard Works) to the Book of Mormon in the project of canon construction was further justified in two ways. First, it can be used to validate and correct the Bible, but the Bible cannot be used to validate or correct the Book of Mormon. Second, the revelations received by Nephite prophets are the only reasonable authoritative basis upon which to declare the process of biblical canonization valid, given that canon formation in the Eastern Hemisphere was inextricable from the Great Apostasy.

This area aside, Talmage appears a confident and enthusiastic proponent of mainstream science, a category he suggest must be expanded to include Mormonism, given that theology,
when correctly practiced, is a science like any other. Although these statements are ubiquitous in both progressive and conservative LDS literature, Talmage is certainly the most effective, convincing and passionate proponent of the Arthur C. Clarke theory of the miraculous. Noting that Mormonism is not unique in its embrace of the Victorian project of religion-science fusion, Talmage suggests that this project itself was engendered, albeit indirectly, by Mormonism because in order to prevent human beings from receiving the gospel Satan created the spiritualists movement as a mockery of the Mormon faith. To stray briefly into more general theological questions, not immediately germane to Mormon historical thought, it is worth nothing that Talmage was also the most enthusiastic in articulating the idea of a law-bound Mormon God. Because God is bound by law, there are some whom God wishes to save but He cannot and, most interestingly, that biblical law is in many cases God’s explication of natural law rather than His proclamation of divine law.

The idea of vicarious atonement, the physical principle by which Christ affects the salvation of the world, Talmage suggests is part of the salvation due to physical requirements rather than its moral reasonableness. “Prefigurement” and “similitude” are physical principles by which the plan operates. It is difficult to discern, in his limited treatment of the question, whether Talmage’s typology here is analytic or merely apologetic but this choice of terms is revealing in that the term “prefigurement” is offered at all. At the very least, it shows that progressives were not necessarily anti-typological. To better elucidate and differentiate Talmage’s broader theological position from those of LDS conservatives, it is also worth noting

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102 Ibid., 3.
103 Ibid., 236.
104 Ibid., 108.
105 ——, The Vitality of Mormonism: Brief Essays on the Distinctive Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1919), 76-77.
106 Ibid., 301-11.
that Talmage emphasizes the ways in which Christ progressed during his lifetime and the ways in which he equivocates on the possibility of his continuing progress.\textsuperscript{107} Christ’s ignorance of his godhood at birth and the subsequent realization of his divinity during his presentation in the temple in early adolescence do not represent the end of his progression. Indeed, his desert confrontation with Satan is not simply a fulfillment of a technical requirement that he be tempted; rather this confrontation is a tool Christ uses to achieve greater progress himself.\textsuperscript{108} But if on behalf of a more rigorously ethically-minimal Mormon creed Talmage is ready to make specific declarations about what portions of the faith are laws not of God’s choosing, in other respects he encourages a circumscription of Mormonism’s physical claims. The physical processes of earth’s future regeneration during the millennium and the physical location and appearance of terrestrial and celestial worlds are things about which Talmage suggests Mormons know significantly less than they believe they do.\textsuperscript{109} That stated, he to an even greater degree than Roberts, hews to mainstream evangelical ideas of post-millennialism when it comes to doctrines of progress. The earth’s regeneration to its paradisiacal glory, he suggests, has already begun and is being incrementally established. This process began with Elijah’s return to the world in 1836 in the Kirkland temple.\textsuperscript{110} He similarly exceeds Roberts on the question of whether God’s kingdom has yet been re-established on earth. Rather than suggesting present day political or ecclesiastical arrangements are preparatory to the kingdom, Talmage suggest that although he does not know, it is quite possible that the kingdom, not just its embryo, has already

\textsuperscript{107} ——, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 442.
\textsuperscript{108} ——, \textit{Jesus the Christ}, 128.
\textsuperscript{109} ——, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 390.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 386-87.
been established.\textsuperscript{111} Similarly, the gathering of Jews to Palestine is not merely antecedent to the true gathering, it is the gathering itself.\textsuperscript{112}

\section*{III. The Rise of the LDS Conservative chronicon}

Disappointing archaeological findings and academic professionalization were not the only or perhaps even the primary factor in the decline of progressive thought within the Mormon faith, nor was the rise of Smith’s popularity. Talmage had been highly effective at gaining the backing of the quorum in publicly repudiating Smith’s attacks on the scientific method and guild in 1931 but, within less than three years, both he and Roberts were dead and their replacements in the Quorum, more congenial to anti-modernist perspectives.

Smith did not merely break new ground in reformulating Mormon historiography during and subsequent to his conflict with Roberts. In several respects he also broke with recent Mormon tradition. He happily admitted, for instance, that a number of his teachings directly contradicted those of previous authorities and that he was willing to contradict other General Authorities seated at the time (much to the chagrin of Roberts who was being progressively outmanoeuvered over key debates in creationism).\textsuperscript{113} One of the ways in which Smith permitted himself to do this was to even more thoroughly circumscribe the Mormon canon. The Church and its apostles, he argued, are only responsible for the veracity of the Standard Works in the canon and not for statements about General Authorities, no matter how authoritative or popular, which do not appear within the Standard Works.\textsuperscript{114} Yet at the same time, he was just as likely as previous expositors of LDS Church history to make use of information contained in the quasi-canon, granting him ample room to engage in cherry picking not just in non-Mormon sources but

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 379.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 349-50.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Numbers, \textit{Creationists}, 340-43.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Doctrines of Salvation}, ed. Bruce McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1: 322.
\end{itemize}
within Church historical and doctrinal documents. But if Smith were willing to foment greater discord within the Mormon oecumene, he was also willing to place his faith in the ecumenical dialogue that was enabling Fundamentalists to rally against the forces of modernists. This ecumenism did not extend to the historians and scientists of whose work Roberts and Talmage made use; comparing Smith’s historical texts to those of progressives, one is immediately struck by his lack of interest in sources of external validation. In his chapters of Essentials in Church History dealing with the Great Apostasy, Mormon indebtedness to Protestant historians is unacknowledged rather than emphasized, for instance.115 A notable exception to this is his late-career interest in popular neo-catastrophist Immanuel Velikovsky, but this too is consistent, upon examination, as much of Velikovsky’s work focused on disputing the consensus of scientists and historians of his day.116

Smith’s affinity with Fundamentalists also assisted him in upending the progressive consensus by arguing that human history could be better organized into a declension narrative than into one of progression. His conservative nostalgia manifested in multiple ways within the LDS conservative chronicon, the most striking of which were his rejection of a progress teleology and the assertion of patriarchy rather than democracy as the divine organizational principle of human society. To make this point, he redescribes the Nephite era of the Judges as an aberration from normal governance principles and opines that, although not expressed in the text, most judges were actually hereditarily rather than democratically selected.117 Befitting the period when he first rose to prominence, he reflected depression-era pessimism that dictatorship not democracy was the ascendant system of governance, a phenomenon which he dates to 1860

117 ——, The Progress of Man, 101, 122, 138.
which he sees as the beginning of a downward trajectory in human governance systems.\textsuperscript{118} And whereas progressive discourse had heavily emphasized the Mormon principle of common consent and exalted “theo-democracy” as the ideal form of government, LDS conservatism exalted patriarchy not just in the present but throughout time. McConkie generalizes this principle throughout time through his interpretation of sealing practices, asserting that lineages and not persons are the basic unit of human organization and salvation and that the basis of justice not just politics is patriarchal.\textsuperscript{119}

Although many of these have historical and historiographic implications, little space would remain if this chapter offered a comprehensive inventory of the minutia of technical metaphysics (or more accurately Mormon physics) on which much of Smith’s historical writing is focused. What this writing does achieve, taken together, is important for the LDS conservative chronicon: it highlights instances of what non-Mormons might see as magical agency in history and describes this agency in specifically Mormon as opposed to generally Christian terms. For instance, he explains that prior to the city of Enoch being translated from the earth all angels were pre-mortal spirits but subsequent to this translation the majority of angels were translated person visiting from the city.\textsuperscript{120} Similarly, he sees in scripture not an exhaustive list but a starting point for enumerating prophets of previous dispensations who have become immortal, arguing that the prophet Alma has become a translated being.\textsuperscript{121} There are also far more instances of direct divine intervention.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 397-403.
\textsuperscript{120} Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Gospel Questions}, 2: 98.
\textsuperscript{121} ——, \textit{Gospel Questions}, 5:38. “Translated” beings are a different class of immortal from “resurrected” beings but these technicalities do not bear on the substance of this project.
This interest in miraculous agency and rejection of progress teleologies still takes place within the monistic structures established in the nineteenth century and continues to celebrate modern technology but these elements are situated in a declensionist history. Smith reminds his readers that Abraham, Adam and Moses had greater scientific knowledge than his contemporaries.\footnote{122} This is because, he argues, God always gives scientific knowledge to those who pray for it, just as he rewards theological knowledge.\footnote{123} All contemporary technology was known to ancient prophets and, in keeping with twentieth-century Fundamentalist thought, apocalyptic visions are interpreted as referring to specific twentieth-century technological developments.\footnote{124} We have greater technology today because God is restoring knowledge to us via specific interventions; while all technology was imagined through the days of Adam, it was directly inhibited by God’s action until the present day.\footnote{125} But due to the moral failings of humans (rebellion against God always diminishes scientific knowledge) God must intervene to precipitate technological developments, meaning that technology is advancing today even as scientific knowledge is waning.\footnote{126} Thomas Edison, for instance, holds the patents that he does because of divine intervention; the only reason Mormons do not comprise the scientific establishment is because they have more important work that requires priesthood holders.\footnote{127} In surveying the great sweep of global history Smith argues that there is no historical \textit{telos}; there is no discernable pattern of stone, bronze, and iron ages that any sort of technological age might succeed or precede another.\footnote{128}

Like many espousing this declension narrative, Smith is also a big fan of western
triumphalism. To reconcile the glorious upward trajectory of the “West,” it becomes necessary
for God to be significantly more active, not just generally but during the fifteen centuries of
global apostasy separating the early church from the Restoration. The Reformation and
Renaissance join the American Revolution as instances of God’s direct intervention in history to
which, in keeping with his triumphalist theme, the Monroe Doctrine is also appended. 129 The
Lord acted through such luminaries as Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Wycliffe and Edison.130
The Diaspora and scattering of the Ten Lost Tribes are similarly elevated.131 In keeping with the
racialist discourse of all Mormon discourses of his time, it becomes necessary for Smith to
explain all European racial virtue by generalizing British Israelitism into an historical principle,
while, like Talmage decrying the system to which he is indebted as heretical. Because Smith is
able to use his racial theory to doubly justify the election of the United States, England
consequently becomes another elect nation in his formulation.132 In a sense then, Smith preserves
much of the narrative of modern progressivism not as a coherent pattern but as a long series of
exceptions. The only area of human endeavour in which he is willing to acknowledge the
existence of progress is through the also God-leavened growth of genealogical societies and
vanity press family histories.133

Although positing a downward trajectory in human history, Smith faces a similar
challenge to that faced by his predecessors who posited an upward trajectory: that of
Mormonism’s assertion of the essentially unchanging nature of the Gospel, the Church and its
ordinances. Even here, we can detect a marked shift from progressive discourses emphasizing

129 ———, Progress of Man, 222-28, 357, 466; ———, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 177-78.
130 ———, Progress of Man, 416, 466; ———, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 181.
132 ———, Progress of Man, 349, 356.
133 ———, Doctrines of Salvation, 2: 125-27.
the fallibility of the written record and the crucial importance of ongoing revelation from God to maintain the elect’s path on the straight and narrow.\textsuperscript{134} If the antiquity of scripture cannot recommend it on the basis of theological correctness, Smith fashions another criterion. Beginning with Adam’s \textit{Book of Remembrance}, the written record is not merely essential to salvation on the basis of its preservation of the Gospel; it is also the basis of salvation for the majority of souls functioning as it does as the basis of all genealogical information and therefore all proxy baptism.\textsuperscript{135} Leaning heavily, as most Mormons do when exalting the importance of ancient records, on the story of the Mulekites, he emphasizes the much more rapid drift into apostasy that takes place without the written record even amongst an elect people set apart by God.\textsuperscript{136} Writing, he says, is crucially necessary and without it Satan would have triumphed over God.\textsuperscript{137} This naturally inspires him to attribute yet another element of the western triumphalist narrative to divine action: the development of movable type.\textsuperscript{138} Whereas the Law of Opposites, a pre-existing universal law binding God, was the only element of Mormon cosmology expressed in terms of law by progressives, encoded as it is explicitly in scripture, Smith elevates writing to a fundamental part of a cosmological rule. This becomes part and parcel of his project of investigating cosmological minutiae and elucidating rules by which the universe functions. The Law of Witnesses, that no prophet shall preach alone and that other prophets witnessing his work must leave a written record, extends another principle of the Restoration, that of affidavits validating prophecy, throughout time.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{134} E.g. Talmage, \textit{Vitality of Mormonism}, 159.
\textsuperscript{135} Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Progress of Man}, 208; ——, \textit{Gospel Questions}, 1: 213.
\textsuperscript{136} ——, \textit{Progress of Man}, 137.
\textsuperscript{137} ——, \textit{Gospel Questions}, 2: 213.71.
\textsuperscript{138} ——, \textit{Progress of Man}, 213.
\textsuperscript{139} ——, \textit{Doctrines of Salvation}, 1: 203-12.
If universal laws in the conservative formulation are more numerous, they are also more flexible. Both Smith and McConkie push back against prior formulations of a progressing, law-bound God and instead posit a less limited, more omnipotent, less changeable God. While Smith is not always clear and can be downright self-contradictory when it comes to which laws proceed from God and which precede God, this approach informs all elements of his thought. This emphasis on a more traditionally omnipotent God generally has little effect on the historical thought of LDS conservatives except in one crucial area: the explanation for the unchanging rather than the progressing God he depicts. All problems in universal laws were worked out in other worlds in ages past. While it might have been true billions of years ago during other worlds’ progress from a telestial to a celestial status, God today is so perfect that he is incapable of progress and his laws are so thoroughly tested that he will never create a new one. In this respect, while Smith is usually seen as an advocate for a young earth, it must be acknowledged that he describes a far older universe than Talmage or Roberts. And in this universe, our earth is far less important than in LDS progressive discourse which sometimes seems to imply that our world is an early essay of the Lord. More importantly, divine omnipotence is not restored by reinstituting ontological dualism but by further extending the bounds of profane space-time in which God exists.

One would normally expect that the primary flash point of disagreement between members of the movement aligned with pre-millennial Fundamentalists and those aligned with post-millennial modernists would concern the approach to the Bible. While this is certainly true, the unique features of Mormonism function to considerably limit the magnitude of this

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140 The unfairness of mortality, for instance, is something Fielding Smith credits not to the universe but to God who has made it so to test his people; it is not simply a matter of God making good from something unfortunate—the unfairness proceeds directly from Him. Similarly the requirement that ordinances be performed in temples emanates from God and not from the universe (——, Gospel Questions 3: 71; 5: 57).

141 Ibid., 4: 69.
disagreement. Nevertheless, differences are substantial between the two camps. Smith’s camp is most distinguishable in that its reading of scripture is fundamentally structured by modern circumstances, events and doctrines to an even greater extent than that of his predecessors. In the course of his writings, he puts forward a series of rules or principles for scriptural evaluation to which he demonstrates considerable fidelity. Key questions that then structure this evaluation are as follows: When reading a biblical passage one must assume authorial knowledge of all information available in the present, such as the structure of the solar system. Other clarifications granted in modern revelation regarding contemporary practices can similarly shape the past given the eternity of God’s gospel and ordinances. It is therefore a settled issue of what day of the week the Sabbath was celebrated in ancient Israel: it must have been Sunday. Given the strict ordinance requirements of the faith, John 4 is simply incorrect about the circumstances of Christ’s baptism.

Another element of LDS conservatism that we see informing Smith’s historiography is the reading of his greater church authoritarianism into history. As long as priesthood holders exist on earth God will not visit non-priesthood holders; one can therefore assume that every person in the Bible visited by God held a specific priesthood office. This unnamed rule supplements the Law of Witnesses and other laws in structuring the reading of ancient scripture. The question of the eternity of ordinances and offices is rendered a double edged sword because if modern revelation and modern practice are supreme it becomes necessary to declare many apparent universals in the Bible to be temporally local. “Different conditions” in other

143 Ibid., 2: 59. Similarly, the various clarifications, as it were, of the identities of Elijah and Elias that appear in Doctrines and Covenants necessarily overrule statements about these prophets in the Gospel of John and Ecclesiastes (——, Doctrines of Salvation, 2: 101-09).
144 ——, Gospel Questions, 3: 43.
145 Ibid., 3: 116.
dispensations invalidate certain elements in scripture such as Paul’s proclamation of women speaking in church.  
Fundamentalist-aligned biblical conservatism is more unambiguous in Smith’s continuing J. Reuben Clarke’s privileging of the King James Bible (KJV) but, as with omnipotence, the position is justified by making assertions about the past. Given God’s favouring of Wycliffe, he justifies the privileging of the KJV on the grounds that all of its improvements and corrections descended not from the project of clarifying the document but were plagiarized from Wycliffe’s Bible.

He nonetheless maintains Mormon orthodoxy that the ancient scriptures are incomplete and many “plain and precious things” have been deliberately excised, such as the mentioning of baptism from the Old Testament. Smith supplements the pernicious translator and scribe with more laudable reasons for the incompleteness of ancient scripture. Mormon ideas of “sealed books” or portions thereof, while never off the table, are much more strongly emphasized in conservatism than in LDS progressivism. Added to this is a novel explanation or at least an extension of a previous one for scriptural incompleteness: the Lord himself has looked upon the audience of the time and adjudged them too corrupt or unready to receive His word. Of course, in the case of the Book of Mormon there is a much simpler reason for information to be missing: it is, he reminds us, an abridgment. But his theory of what the abridgment might explain is more comprehensive than that of Roberts or Talmage: not only have the various plates authored

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146 Ibid., 3: 65.
147 Barlow, Mormons and the Bible, 175. Joseph Fielding Smith, The Progress of Man, 219, 228; ——, Gospel Questions 3: 171. Fielding Smith also engages in an amusing if not strictly germane discussion of the KJV’s preferable use of personal pronouns; “thou,” arguing it was a much more formal pronoun than “you” in early-modern English and, therefore, the KJV restores the appropriate amount of formality in addressing the Lord thus. Perhaps better than any other example, this demonstrates the sharp distinction between the Roberts-Talmage approach of showing Mormonism’s congruence with scholarship and Fielding Smith’s disinterest in external Biblical criticism outside, possibly, of the Fundamentalist school (——, Gospel Questions, 2: 15).
149 Ibid., 2: 73.
150 Ibid., 4: 161.
by the Nephites been abridged, but some elements of the Book of Mormon are also an abridgement of the Plates of Brass.¹⁵¹ In this way, Old Testament quotations in the Book of Mormon are not necessarily explained as the repetition of doctrines. They may also be explained as the condensation of a purer, more correct Old Testament by Mormon and Moroni. The most impressive of Smith’s innovations in scriptural exegesis is his more universal application of principles; if the Book of Mormon and Bible are to be read in a particular way, this is also the correct way to read Doctrine and Covenants. Roberts and Talmage engage in less persuasive and consistent exegesis regarding the revelations, seeming to suggest that Mormons should be inhabiting Jackson County by now. Smith’s explanation for the current state of affairs is much more compelling: as often happens in the scripture, a prophecy might be delivered apparently to one generation but is really for a future generation.¹⁵²

Writing as he does in the period of the lowest ebb of confidence in the Book of Mormon narrative, it is unsurprising that Smith has little to say about Nephite and Lamanite history. Nevertheless, a few changes in approach are worth noting. The problem of Pratt’s footnotes out of the way, Smith is willing to offer a different geographical theory. He uses the work of cult archaeologist Hyatt Verill to locate all events on the continent of South America.¹⁵³ He also brings a new literalism to his Book of Mormon history, reinstating the doctrine that extermination truly means extermination and no Nephites survived 421.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, he validates earlier nineteenth-century Mormon racialism by emphasizing changes in Lamanite skin colour as

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 5: 182.
¹⁵² Ibid., 4: 112.
¹⁵³ Ibid., 2: 196. Verrill will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Six.
¹⁵⁴ Joseph Fielding Smith, Progress of Man, 141.
indicative of their virtue and validating this by the remark that since converting to Mormonism every generation of the Catawba tribe has had whiter skin.\textsuperscript{155}

This belief might appear on its face to be, like the doctrines regarding other worlds, pseudoscientific but to perceive it as such minimizes the alliance between Fundamentalist and conservative thought. The Fundamentalist understanding of science as a fixed body of knowledge, rather than a way of knowing and of scientists and the knowledge they generate as a competing source of authoritative information about the universe, yields an extraordinary freedom of thought not enjoyed by progressives employing pseudoscience, especially when this belief is applied to social sciences like history. By taking an oppositional posture to academic knowledge, Smith can simply declare all historical evidence about Sabbath observance to be wrong, without even engaging with the relevant corpus of evidence. This represented a new kind of Mormonism freer from the world in its construction of historiographic and cosmological systems than even Joseph Smith’s era of eclecticism and proof-texting from science.\textsuperscript{156}

Eschewing the geological uniformitarianism of LDS progressives Smith throws his lot in with the Fundamentalists in positing rapid, recent continental drift in the age of Peleg and a Pangaea existing both pre-Peleg and in the Millennium (when the world will also become completely flat).\textsuperscript{157} Arguments constructing scientific knowledge as a dataset opposing scripture are more easily sustained by his premise that social iniquity is actually reducing scientific knowledge every day, with new technological developments taking place miraculously and in spite of science. It is then unproblematic to declare that the catastrophe that is alleged to have reshaped the Americas during the crucifixion was global in scope, proof-texting from Velikovsky, a safe

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 143. ——, \textit{Answers to Gospel Questions}, 3: 123.
\textsuperscript{157} ——, \textit{Doctrines of Salvation}, 1: 84, 169.
source in any event, given his similar conspiratorial skepticism towards academics as a guild. In another conservative move, Smith steers Mormon dispensational historiography toward its Plymouth Brethren foundation, allowing him to assert a precise two thousand years separated Adam and Abraham. Each dispensation is subject to a uniform repent/prosper/forget cycle.

Given its alliance with Fundamentalism and its anti-science tone, it is ironic that it is in LDS conservative versus progressive thought that we see the application (as opposed to identification) of ideas of space-time. Roberts and Talmage might have explicitly mentioned the inspiration they gained from Einstein’s General and Special theories of relativity, but the studiously ignorant like Smith and McConkie independently generate it.

Surprisingly, given his opposition to so many elements of his chronicon, Smith is fully in accord with the henotheism espoused most clearly in Roberts’ The Way, the Truth and the Life, despite the role he played in vetoing its publication. Indeed, he amplifies this element by, as noted above, suggesting that the earth is a late rather than early essay in God’s world-making craft and one that has been going on for “untold” ages, suggesting an extensive pre-lapsarian period in earth history measured according to “celestial time” which is configured on the reference frame of Kolob. This resort to the extra-terrestrial as a basis for understanding time profoundly informs Smith’s work. Perhaps as part of his project of domesticating Young’s Adam-God formulation within an orthodoxy that has denied it, he argues that, like his father, Christ is implicated in the creation of all worlds and that Adam therefore is our world’s god.

158 Ibid., 1: 79.
160 ——, Progress of Man, 112.
162 Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 76; ——, Gospel Questions, 1: 78; 2: 60, 212. These ideas are no doubt inspired by the nineteenth century apostle most in accord with respect to the conservative conception of the godhead (Orson Pratt, The Seer [Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 1990], 17).
Furthermore, he goes on, other older more celestial worlds have gods greater than Adam. Every planetary system has its own gods and as human beings discover more and more galaxies, the scale of God’s work and the correctness of Joseph Smith become more evident. The Nephites’ awareness of this as a fundamental part of the Gospel is attested-to by their Lamanite usurpers maintaining much of this astronomical knowledge through the Mayan civilization. God, then, has been building and peopling worlds for countless ages and he is always creating new earths. To emphasize the eternal nature of the system, Smith de-literalizes the King Follett discourse on which it is based, rendering God fully eternal, declaring that He has always been doing this. Lest this position be seen as harmonious with mainstream cosmology, Smith os quick to emphasize that life arises much more easily on other planets than is credited in the scientific establishment. Furthermore, life exists on worlds not even imagined to be worlds; all celestialized worlds turn into stars on which people continue to live. Our inability to visit stars and communicate with their inhabitants has to do with the tripartite degrees of glory. This cosmological system, shorn of any need of conformity with mainstream astronomy, appears to have enabled Smith to make a crucial leap in the development of Mormon historical thought.

Because dispensations are clearly spatialized, in that they are conceptualized as blocks of space-time, radiating out from Kolob rather than sequential periods of time on worlds, he is able to suggest that there are additional dispensations beyond those to which the seals refer. The Nephites by virtue of their geographic separation can be understood as a dispensation occupying

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164 ——, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 97.
165 ——, Gospel Questions, 2: 143-44.
166 ——, Progress of Man, 184.
167 ——, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 61. So much for the idea that He was once a “man like us!” (Joseph Smith Jr., Teachings Joseph Smith, 345).
168 ——, The Progress of Man, 499.
169 ——, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 72, 89.
170 Our world in its post-lapsarian state is telestial and one can only visit a world of a lesser degree of glory than one’s own.
as they do a discrete section of space-time relative to the ancient Israelites. The Jaredites similarly fall into this category. More radically still, Smith who believes that the majority of the Ten Lost Tribes, unlike the minority whose blood is sprinkled amongst the Saxon race, must exist in a separate geographic location and by virtue of this separation also constitute one or more additional dispensations.\textsuperscript{171} This view stands in contrast to Talmage’s project of globalizing dispensational periods; he, in contrast, goes to considerable lengths to synchronize the Eastern and Western hemisphere’s respective apostasies in order to place them in a single historical process.\textsuperscript{172}

Despite flourishing in a much later time, Bruce McConkie is included in this chapter for who reasons, his status as a General Authority and his obvious continuity with Smith, a continuity that is not merely intellectual but political both in debates within the quorum and the positioning of Mormons within the larger intellectual political environment of the United states, not to mention his role as editor and compiler of many of Smith’s writings. McConkie’s writings develop key ideas from Smith, but only some of these are based on Fundamentalist discourse. He follows him for instance on his tactical endorsement of Mendelism but goes further in his discussion of Christ’s genetics by noting that God as a resurrected being must have had sex with the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{173} He similarly follows Smith in embracing the Fundamentalist contradiction that unites a declension narrative with Western triumphalism, even being so generous as to add that Protestantism both caused modernity and continues to power it to this day.\textsuperscript{174} Nevertheless he shares the view that things will get worse before the millennium including a total apostasy and

\textsuperscript{171} ——, \textit{Doctrines of Salvation}, 1: 161-62. This dispensation is unfortunately inaccessible because it is only described in the lost \textit{Book of Zenos} (——, \textit{Answers to Gospel Questions}, 2: 57).

\textsuperscript{172} James E. Talmage, \textit{The Great Apostasy} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1994), 48.

\textsuperscript{173} Bruce R. McConkie, \textit{The Mortal Messiah}, 1: 330, 368. Despite this he continues to defend the use of the term “virgin” as literal and accurate. Fielding Smith argues that Mendelian genetics are likely correct because of the way patriarchal blessings function (Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Gospel Questions}, 3: 64).

\textsuperscript{174} Bruce R McConkie, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 672.
global war, a war which he understands will be nuclear.\textsuperscript{175} He also echoes and extends the contention that civilization is contingent upon writing and, once again finding common ground with Christian Fundamentalism, asserts that the KJV constitutes one of the greatest “stabilizing forces” in human history.\textsuperscript{176} Its importance, he suggests, is demonstrated first by the fact that it was in this version of the Bible on which the JST was based, and, second, that reading this version caused Smith to initiate the restoration.\textsuperscript{177} Finally, McConkie echoes Smith’s authoritarianism in his affirmation that resurrected beings, prophets and the like only visit temples unless there are no functioning temples in the world.\textsuperscript{178}

Although all Mormon authorities emphasize the miracles and spiritual gifts that were restored with authority in 1830, a distinguishing element of McConkie’s work is his assertion that the world is more magical than we imagine. Far more people than is commonly thought, he suggests, have met God in visions and visitations and there may be as many as twenty beings of the power and significance associated with Adam, Joseph Smith and the other dispensation heads.\textsuperscript{179} Interaction with God, angels and immortals is far more common than we credit. In particular, he notes, how extraordinarily large the number of people meeting God must have been given his residence in the city of Enoch between 3382 and 3077 BCE.\textsuperscript{180} McConkie also considerably elaborates and extends Smith’s alternative to the Higher Criticism by offering a systematic way of reading scriptures. Like other Mormon thinkers he attacks key premises of the Higher Critics: given that prophecy is an objective reality, the names Joseph Smith, Moses, Jesus

\textsuperscript{175} ——, \textit{The Mortal Messiah} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980), 3: 439-40; ——, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 435. The view that Revelation describes a nuclear war was by no means unique to Mormons mid-century.

\textsuperscript{176} ——, \textit{The Promised Messiah}, 89.

\textsuperscript{177} ——, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 391-93.

\textsuperscript{178} ——, \textit{The Promised Messiah}, 576.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 443, 599-605.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 606.
and Cyrus were naturally all foreknown, upending all dating practices.\textsuperscript{181} Furthermore, thanks to the Book of Mormon, we know that anachronism in naming cannot be a problem because the names of prophesied individuals are incapable of changing over time: Jesus Christ we know was named Jesus Christ in Adam’s \textit{Book of Remembrance}.\textsuperscript{182} Epistemologically shielded from any real engagement with historical discourses, McConkie can, much like his intellectual patron, comfortably argue that his entire theory of biblical criticism is based on Hebrews which he vehemently asserts was written by Paul.\textsuperscript{183} Despite McConkie’s conservatism with respect to biblical reading practices, he nevertheless admits that issues of linguistic and cultural translation are important in Bible interpretation and reception and, although prophets primarily address the audience of their day, this is mitigated by their concurrent participation in a dialogue with all other prophets in all other times.\textsuperscript{184} Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the primary cause of all revelations is a request that God clarify issues in the prophet’s day, with a conspicuous exception: the Book of Mormon. Although never acknowledging the substantial body of criticism locating this text as a product of nineteenth-century upstate-New York society, McConkie suggests that with the death of their countrymen, Mormon and Moroni could only have had one possible intended audience: Joseph Smith and his followers. Therefore the Book of Mormon is understood to have been written if not \textit{by} Joseph Smith then certainly \textit{for} him.\textsuperscript{185}

At this point a few words should be said about sources. Canon Farrar and Alfred Edersheim have been the Protestant historians upon whom Mormon General Authorities of all stripes have relied throughout the twentieth century. But over time the significance of these two authors has loomed increasingly large. Whereas they comprise a tiny fraction of Roberts’

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\textsuperscript{181} Joseph Fielding Smith, \textit{Progress of Man}, 453-54; Bruce R. McConkie, \textit{The Mortal Messiah}, 1: 38. \\
\textsuperscript{182} ———, \textit{The Mortal Messiah}, 1: 37. \\
\textsuperscript{183} ———, \textit{The Promised Messiah}, 107, 417. \\
\textsuperscript{184} ———, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 398, 418. \\
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 426.
\end{flushleft}
citations, for McConkie and Smith the two constitute an absolute majority of the authorities on whom they relied in their historical works. However, the importance of Edersheim in LDS conservative thought only becomes fully apparent in McConkie’s project of adducing the actual words spoken by Christ in his quasi-biographical texts. Edersheim constitutes the fourth corner of the sources McConkie uses to reproduce Christ’s “discourses;” the KJV Bible, the JST and Doctrine and Covenants, are united in order to reconstruct what Christ must have said in his life.\textsuperscript{186} Ironically, Edersheim, the proud Protestant convert is proof-texted heavily in order to place such terms as “the Plan of Salvation,” and the “Law of Opposites” on the lips of Christ.\textsuperscript{187} This project also shows McConkie’s continuation of the unacknowledged hierarchy Smith establishes among the Standard Works. Latter-day revelation is clearly privileged above older revelation. McConkie becomes somewhat more explicit in articulating this by suggesting that the best test of one’s fidelity to God is fidelity to latter-day revelation.\textsuperscript{188} The logical entailments of latter-day revelation furthermore join the revelation itself in priority over older scripture. John the Baptist, McConkie explains, must have had a normal professional career, then married and had children. What latter day revelation tells us about the process of exaltation means that most biographical details about John the Baptist that appear in the New Testament are false.\textsuperscript{189}

Supersession is not the only issue in subordinating older scripture; following Smith, McConkie confirms the position that God himself can be added to the list of persons responsible for the omission of crucial teachings from the Bible. Israelites would not have been ready for the doctrine of Divine Sonship or the verbal articulation of baptism.\textsuperscript{190} Expanding upon this idea of the divinely mandated concealment of crucial elements of scripture, McConkie also suggests that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{186}——, \textit{The Mortal Messiah}, 1: 130-32, 3: 165, 314.
\item \textsuperscript{187}Ibid., 3: 17, 220.
\item \textsuperscript{188}——, \textit{Articles of Faith}, 28.
\item \textsuperscript{189}——, \textit{The Mortal Messiah}, 1: 385.
\item \textsuperscript{190}——, \textit{The Promised Messiah}, 142-45.
\end{itemize}
in addition to doctrines omitted from the Bible some doctrines within scripture are intentionally concealed. Ancient prophecies, he suggests,

were hidden in historical recitations of little-known events, so we may anticipate it will be the same with some things concerning his future appearance. If his ministers used similitudes and types and shadows to tell of one coming, such also will be their approach to his later appearing.  

This, however, is not to suggest that McConkie does not primarily credit the corrupt and conniving scribes, translators and priests whom Joseph Smith blames for problems with the Bible. The Bible began to degrade after passing out of the hands of Malachi, the last priesthood holder in whose hands it rested; and in accord with the conservative emphasis on institutional authority, it follows that long-term custody of the scripture in the hands of non-priesthood holders resulted in the removal of such details as Paul’s marriage.  

This process of dilapidation was more rapid and complete amongst texts outside of the mainstream Christian canon. Much of the scripture generated by the Restoration, he suggests, is not novel to the era of Smith but is instead an entailment of a revelation he received concerning the Apocrypha. Perhaps following the lead of his contemporary Nibley, McConkie argues that the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha were once correct but have become so thoroughly adulterated that their whole-cloth replacement, rather than re-translation, was necessary.  

McConkie’s kinship with Nibley is most evident in his enthusiastic practice of analytic typology. Unconsciously recoiling from his Fundamentalist-inspired exegetical principles, he notes that it is actually very difficult to discern what portion of a revelation should be understood in the figurative sense but this process of discernment is one worthy of cognitive investment.

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191 Ibid., 32.
192 ——, *Articles of Faith*, 404-07.
193 Doctrine and Covenants 91: 1-3.
195 Ibid., 1: 121.
In elucidating his contribution to this enterprise, McConkie uses the following terms, which he treats as roughly synonymous, in discussing this phenomenon: “type and shadow,” appear with some frequency as do “similitude,” and “prefiguration.” Similitude is to be understood not merely as a narrative principle entailed in the description of Biblical events in order to show their similarity but also as a physical one. The physical salvific power of ordinances operates through the physical principle of similitude best illustrated in pre-Eucharistic sacrifice. The similitude of the ritual sacrifice of animals to the physical death of Christ is what gives them physical effect. All ordinances he suggests, not merely those referring to Christ’s atoning sacrifice, refer through similitude to real world events. The ritual re-enactment of these events is not merely instructive, pedagogical or a means of remembrance, it appears in McConkie’s formulation to constitute something akin to sympathetic magic. This property, furthermore, is like the Law of Opposites, an apparent pre-existing and amoral element of universal law. For, as McConkie notes, had Cain understood typology, his blasphemous sacrifice to the Lord would nevertheless have worked and achieved the desired physical effect, provided it had been powered by faith, understood here not as fidelity but as a type of energy. Prefiguration, similarly, is identified by McConkie as a physical principle when he discusses the resurrections of Lazarus and Christ. Types and shadows similarly entail an actual appropriation of power. The power of prophets, McConkie seems to suggest, derives in part from their identity as types of Christ.

Prefiguration also has a pedagogical function, and the greater the need for instruction, the greater the allegorization of instruction through similitudes. Comparing the Jaredites to

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197 ——, The Mortal Messiah, 1: 54, 125-33, 160; ——, Articles of Faith, 168, 197, 294-95.
198 ——, Articles of Faith, 168.
200 ——, The Promised Messiah, 448.
contemporaneous Israelites, McConkie remarks that while world history is revealed to the Jaredites in plainness, the Israelites received the same information in “dark similitudes.” In this system of correspondence, it is not merely that narrative can allegorize physical events. Physical events can allegorize physical events! Christ’s persecution, for instance, need not be narratized in order to allegorize the coming persecution of Jews in the Bar Kokhba revolt and ensuing diaspora. Types and shadows are, for McConkie, not just a thing of the past; the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom provide us crucial information about the nature of the second coming. Another crucial exegetical practice of McConkie’s that is simultaneously a physio-cosmological claim is the principle of “double fulfillment.” This concept was, like many of McConkie’s ideas, deployed earlier by Smith (to explain how John the Baptist and Joseph Smith fulfilled the same prophecies) but only reached full elaboration in these later works. Various prophecies, McConkie suggests, are prophecies of both the first and second comings of Christ. This claim, whether consciously reasoned as such by McConkie, again points to an underlying belief in a cyclically patterned history. Certain properties necessarily inhere in messianic visitation itself. Therefore kinds of events must be true of all such visitations, past, present and future.

Linked to the typological worldview is his extension of Smith’s increased spatialization of dispensations. The foundation of this comes from McConkie’s explication of the Mormon world-creation system, when he discusses the actions of Jesus/Jehovah, Michael/Adam, and God in the creation of our world and others. In some versions both Jesus and God are implicated in

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201 Ibid., 145.
202 Ibid., 397-403.
203 ——, The Promised Messiah, 429-33.
204 ——, The Mortal Messiah, 3: 455.
205 Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 1: 193.
206 Bruce R. McConkie, The Promised Messiah, 81.
the creation of all worlds and Adam is our local God; in others, Jesus and Adam are local and
only the Father is involved in the creation of all. What is important is the way this points to a
macro-dispersational system that is profoundly spatial. The unfolding of multiple dispensations
initiated by creation takes place in different points in space-time and these dispensations are
linked primarily or exclusively through the person of God and various resurrected and translated
beings rather than through any apparent chronological relationship to one another. As with others
who have understood dispensations, both spatially and temporally, McConkie includes Enoch as
a dispensation head, something that Talmage and Roberts do not do. It is important to
recognize that this decision to render Enoch’s geographically, though not temporally, separate
city as a dispensation actually requires conservatives to explicitly de-literalize the seals exegesis,
something that although less than enamored of it, progressives were not prepared to do. Furthermore, it seems that the pre-existence evolves in McConkie’s formulation towards
functioning like a dispensation, itself, insofar as it is located at a distinct point in space-time and
contains an apostasy followed by a confrontation between the elect and the unholy. The pre-
existence in this theory is not operating in another dimension or another reality, but on a different
planet, a more intensely monistic position.

Following Smith on the Jaredites, Nephites, and Lost Tribes, and maintaining his curious
ambivalence towards British Israelitism, McConkie goes farther in adding additional earth
dispensations. It is likely that not only are these three groups separate dispensations but that

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\begin{enumerate}
\item McConkie, The Mortal Messiah, 1: 5.
\item Talmage, Articles of Faith, 12. Cf. James E. Talmage, The Vitality of Mormonism, 358 and Brigham H. Roberts, A
Comprehensive History of the Church, 1: xxix. Enoch is promoted to dispensation head in Roberts’ posthumously
published Brigham The Truth and Way, 417.
\item Whereas Talmage and Roberts dutifully suffer with this system without comment, McConkie dispenses with the
1,000-year system speculating for instance that only 857 years separate Noah from Abraham (McConkie, The
Mortal Messiah, 1: 54).
\item ——, Articles of Faith, 475. Although “long beyond comprehension” and preceding the creation of the earth
considerably, it too is fully seated in space-time (——, The Mortal Messiah, 1: 29).
\end{enumerate}
groups additional to the Nephites and Lost Tribes were also separate dispensations visited by Christ during his first century global mission. Similarly, other dispensations likely existed at other points in the past and McConkie speculates that Atlantis might have one. Furthermore, just as the universe contains many unknown dispensations, McConkie suggests that the number and location of dispensations and, consequently temples, that have existed in the world cannot be known based on the information currently available. This is not to suggest that McConkie is in any way tentative in his assertions; his statements about global history betray an even greater confidence than those of Smith when he asserts, for instance, that no freedom of religion ever existed in ancient Rome, that all present day Indians are Lamanites and that the Book of Mormon is absolutely confirmed by Mesoamerican archaeology. This confidence is paired with the primary feature of LDS conservatism, the attempt to push back against the King Follet discourse idea of a limited progressive rules-bound God even while reinforcing the cosmological system described therein, including its many specific laws governing historical action. The persecution of prophets is “axiomatic” because God has instituted this law to test their loyalty.

If the number of dispensations multiplies in McConkie’s thought, their diversity declines. The early Restoration emphasis on the unchanging nature of elect society and God’s relationship to it can be restored, shorn of progressive social science. There has always been an individual who held the literal title “president of the Church,” beginning with Adam. Similarly, there always exists a holy city where faith is centred and the apostolic system is extended further back into the past making not only the first presidency but the quorum of twelve an eternal institution.

211 ——, Articles of Faith, 136-37.
212 ——, The Promised Messiah, 287; ——, The Mortal Messiah, 1: 99.
213 ——, Articles of Faith, 446, 519, 662.
214 McConkie’s history is governed by a number of God-instituted laws in addition to the pre-existing Law of Opposites and he even equivocates about that, sometimes speculating that God created the Law of Opposites at the moment he became self-aware as God (——, The Mortal Messiah, 3: 49).
215 Ibid., 3: 361.
216 ——, Articles of Faith, 310.
represented in ancient Israel by the twelve princes of the twelve tribes. Much as McConkie is clearly an intellectual and political follower of Smith, he offers a smoother, less strident, conservatism that necessitates him contradicting a few of Smith’s positions. Democracy, for instance, is restored as God’s eternal ideal government and the pre-existence is further regularized into a fully just system with McConkie asserting that in contradistinction to previous theories of birth order, segregation, and foreknown election, all souls were equal at the beginning of the pre-existence. McConkie also strikes a middle position between Smith and the progressives when it comes to the Mormon eschaton. The gathering of Israel has definitely begun, McConkie states most of the time. This gathering, he suggests, is both temporally and geographically diffuse, but given the diffusion of the Ten Lost Tribes, this is reasonable. Nevertheless the state of Israel is clear evidence of the beginning of the gathering. Again as a racial apologist McConkie curiously re-mobilizes Smithian scripture, suggesting that the rise of both the Mormon church and the state of Israel indicate that the era of the Gentiles is ending because, following his mentor, McConkie holds to the position that virtually all Mormons are lineally and genetically Israelis, that the lineage of Isaac has yielded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It is likely, therefore, that white Mormons, not Lamanites, will rebuild the temple in Jackson County. This event will take place sooner than we imagine because Smith’s pessimism that things must get worse prior to the millennium has been replaced by the

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217 ——, The Mortal Messiah, 1: 83; ——, Articles of Faith, 333.
218 ——, The Mortal Messiah, 3: 83. This, no doubt would have been very helpful in McConkie’s role as the last great institutional apologist and polemicist on behalf of the Church’s refusal to confer priesthood rights on African Americans.
219 ——, Articles of Faith, 420, 539-47. For equivocation see ibid., 511-19.
220 Ibid., 547.
221 Ibid., 452.
222 ——, The Mortal Messiah, 3: 442-43; ——, Articles of Faith, 37-40.
223 ——, Articles of Faith, 519. It may however be that the temple in Jackson County need not be built at all, as the city of Enoch will descend from the heavens and land on top of the appointed temple site (——, The Mortal Messiah, 1: 95).
view that things are already that bad, that the earth is currently covered in darkness and we are living in the days of Mormon 8:12-32.224

Although initially a microcosm of larger debates between post- and pre-millennialists in American religion, this debate’s recapitulation amongst Mormon General Authorities grew to resemble the discourse that engendered it less and less. Although conservative with respect to God’s omnipotence, perfection and uniqueness, the conservative LDS system expressed by Smith and McConkie bears scant resemblance, in its historical thinking, to contemporary evangelical and Fundamentalist American Protestantism.225 Whereas dispensational thought, albeit more teleological and less cyclic, was an important feature of mid and late nineteenth-century American Protestant thinking, it has ceased to be a noticeable feature of the present-day movement’s intellectual landscape.226

It is at this point helpful to refer to the Bushman-Mauss periodization of Mormon history, informed by the Stark-Bainbridge “optimum tension” model.227 Whereas Talmage’s and Roberts’ writing accompanied Mormonism’s entry into the “settlement period,” the following “entrenchment period,” during which Mormons reasserted their uniqueness, covers the latter portion of Smith’s career and all of McConkie’s. But whereas this model predicts that Mormons would naturally develop more distinctive historiographic and temporal doctrines, it casts no light on the specific shape these would take. Again, to place this narrative in dialogue with key scholarship, the intensification of typological thought, the extension of the dispensational system

224 ——, *Articles of Faith*, 439-42.
and the increasing self-similarity of dispensations within the universal system all point to the emergence of the Leonian consciousness gradually over the twentieth century.
Chapter Three: Fundamentalist Mormons and Mormon fundamentalists

I. Dramatis Personae

Mormon historical conservatism might be traced, in part, to the interaction between the cultural and organizational forces of the Fundamentalist movement and a new generation of LDS leadership. But the *chronicon* of McConkie and Smith is not only substantially divergent from that of contemporary conservative evangelicals and Fundamentalists; its divergence has only grown with time. In this chapter, I examine two Mormon thinkers who, in different ways, were more closely in accord with the thinking of conservative Christian Fundamentalist and evangelical thinking of the twentieth century. While not espousing the *chronica* of a Hal Lindsey or a Pat Robertson, the historical thinking of Willard Cleon Skousen (1913-2006) and Ogden Kraut (1927-2002) will seem much more familiar to those familiar with Christian conservative historical thought with respect both to historical method and historiography of the twentieth century. Today, Skousen’s work is especially worthy of note because it is enjoying a renaissance thanks to the promotional efforts of Glenn Beck who republished his *Five Thousand Year Leap* in 2009 and, through vigorous endorsement to the eight million daily listeners to his television and radio broadcasts, was able to catapult the long out-of-print text to the rank of number one in amazon.com sales that March.¹

Skousen, a lifelong LDS member, did not move to Utah until 1951 to take up a teaching position at BYU. Prior to that time, he had served as an administrator at the FBI, while working there, and had obtained a law degree from George Washington University. Skousen made much of his time with the Bureau in his later career as a writer and lecturer against communism but there are conflicting accounts of his closeness to J. Edgar Hoover and his involvement in

investigative and policy-making work. Although he never obtained a doctoral or master’s degree, he served as a member of the BYU faculty from 1951 to 1956 and 1961 to 1978. During this period, Skousen also began his career as an author and anti-communist activist. Initially popular as a speaker, especially within John Birch society circles, based on his 1958 *The Naked Communist*, Skousen became an increasingly marginal figure on the extreme American right during the 1960s due to his public repudiation by the Bureau. In the 1970s, a similar process unfolded within the LDS community beginning with a condemnation of his scholarship by fellow BYU faculty in 1971 and ending with President Spencer Kimball’s instruction to all LDS clergy prohibiting them from promoting Skousen’s views, publications or events. In the 1980s, however, Skousen gained a new credibility with the Reagan-era far right through his new organization, the Freemen Institute (founded 1971), under whose aegis he published *Leap*. During this period, he was boldly ecumenical, often making common cause with non-LDS Fundamentalists, evangelicals and other conservative Christian groups in his struggle against the forces of international communism. This ecumenism is evident not only in Skousen’s associations and sales but in his intellectual approach. As a result, I label Skousen’s *chronicon* Fundamentalist Mormon due to its substantial interpenetration with Christian right thinking and literature. Whereas Skousen’s writings remain very popular with a large number of conservative Mormons, they clearly do not enjoy the kind of authority that the McConkie-Smith corpus does, even if they exhibit, if anything, greater popularity at the moment.

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3 Zaitchik, “Glenn Beck’s life”; Skousen refused, for instance, to disassociate himself from Reverend Sun Myung Moon, his putative ally in the global struggle against communism.
If Skousen was a Fundamentalist Mormon, Kraut was a Mormon fundamentalist. The “fundamentalist” designation is applied not only to the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints led by the infamous Warren Jeffs but also to all Mormon groups practicing or advocating polygamy. As the LDS Church moved from covert tolerance of polygamy to a genuine and sincere collaboration with law enforcement agencies pursuing its extirpation, the Mormon fundamentalist movement was born between 1890 and 1934. After practicing polygamy covertly while serving within the priesthood of the LDS, Kraut’s profile began to rise with the 1969 release of the self-published *Jesus Was Married*, describing Christ as a polygamist. This was the first of sixty-five tracts he published (as the owner of a small press) covering an enormous range of issues within Mormon religiosity. Kraut had not grown up as a Mormon but had converted in his teens. Shortly thereafter fell in with marginal elements within the LDS, who were in public conflict with Church authorities before returning to a more mainstream path as Church member after settling in Dugway, Utah. He attended BYU briefly but did not obtain a degree, leaving his studies to undertake his two-year mission for the LDS, one he insisted on performing “without purse or scrip,” a harbinger of his future approach to scripture. He then worked for much of his life as a professional photographer for the US army. In response to his increasingly fundamentalist writing, a formal investigation was launched by LDS authorities,

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5 Ogden Kraut, *Missionary Experiences: Without Purse or Scrip* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, undated), 1-10; “— —,” www.FindAgrave.com; ——, *Military Experiences or My Two Years of Fun and Games with Uncle Sam* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, undated), 1-4.
resulting in his excommunication in 1972, although he was never found guilty of the actual practice, despite having lived covertly for three years as a polygamist. 6

Surprisingly, Kraut remained on good terms with both his former LDS coreligionists and with members of various fundamentalist groups, due in large measure to his Pacific persona and his decision to remain aloof from all ecclesiastical organizations and practice fundamentalism as an “independent.” 7 Despite his collegial relations with most polygamist groups, Kraut strongly disapproved of fundamentalists who have become distracted by their claims of holding keys and setting up churches; and he was notably elite-focused in his criticism of the LDS Church, focusing his criticism on leaders not members. 8 Even so, in 1988, his work was published in the official LDS magazine *Sunstone* and presented at the group’s 1988 and 1991 conferences; and his credibility as a researcher (vs. scholar) was also championed by the LDS apologist FARMS Review in 1993. 9 The esteem in which Kraut was held has resulted in his writings being used by members of the main fundamentalist groups, in addition to the 10% of the 20,000-strong movement that independents comprise and also in his increasing popularity as a source of polygamy for both media and scholars, a role in which his second plural wife Ann Wilde has

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6 ———, ed., *Complaint against Ogden Kraut* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1973), 63-65. This writing was especially troubling to the LDS because the Deseret Bookstore began selling his tracts, based on some enthusiastic comments made by Joseph Fielding Smith regarding his monograph *Jesus Was Married* (Vern Grosvenor Swanson, *Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mormonism’s Sacred Bloodline* [Springville: Cedar Fort Inc., 2006]; Ann Wilde, telephone conversation, September 30th, 2010.

7 ———, telephone conversation; Kraut’s writings remain popular with various polygamist groups with which he refused to affiliate (“Ogden Kraut,” www.mormonfundamentalism.com); Kraut specifically condemned violence by fundamentalist groups (Ogden Kraut “The Singer/Swapp Siege: Revelation or Retaliation” *Sunstone* 68 [November 1988]: 15) and, as a result, was trusted by the FBI to liaise with fundamentalists during an armed standoff (—— “The Singer/Swapp Siege,” 14; “Police officer dies as siege ends in polygamist’s arrest,” last accessed September 29th, 2010, http://www.religionnewswblog.com/17710/addam-swapp-4). In 1997, he was treated by the New York Times as an accurate informant from within the fundamentalist movement (Florence Williams, “A House, 10 Wives: Polygamy in Suburbia,” *New York Times*, 11 December 1997).


continued since his demise.\textsuperscript{10} It is important to take note of a critical feature of the fundamentalist movement: many of its members, like Kraut, were not born into the Mormon faith and 75\% have never been LDS members. Whereas fundamentalists clearly are part of a unique culture/subculture within America, this group should not be understood as part of the Mormon culture described by Leone, perhaps immediately adjacent to the LDS culture but not exactly within it.\textsuperscript{11}

II. The Skousen chronicon

Skousen operated within an environment of newfound and growing solidarity and ecumenism on the American religious right engendered, in large measure, by an escalating and shared fear of communist infiltration of the US. This fear had given rise to what might be termed the “McCarthy coalition,” one of unprecedented breadth in representing disparate and often competing social and religious movements that ironically exhibited an extraordinary inclusiveness of previously shunned or marginalized groups. Smaller organizations, like the John Birch society, were also effective in this regard in maintaining a discourse of shared Christianity while cutting across denominational boundaries.\textsuperscript{12}

It is important not to overstate the fundamentalist-Fundamentalist distinction. It is important to note that although Skousen was in no way a polygamist, the various doctrines supported by Mormon fundamentalists from which the church sought to distance itself during the Settlement Period were strongly defended by Skousen. In addition, Skousen and Kraut were acquainted and were in private accord regarding even more doctrines than they shared publicly.\textsuperscript{13} A key example of this would be the doctrine of Blood Atonement, an idea for which Skousen

\textsuperscript{10} Quinn, “Plural Marriage” 11; Ann Wilde, telephone conversation.

\textsuperscript{11} Quinn, “Plural Marriage,” 7.


\textsuperscript{13} Ann Wilde, telephone conversation.
exhibits considerable sympathy. Unlike nineteenth-century ideas of Blood Atonement which sought to justify vigilante violence against apostates, Skousen’s concept was much more closely allied with the conservative Americans’ renewed support for the death penalty for serious crimes in the United States. Whereas Smith sought to ally Mormon conservatism with the American religious right in debates regarding science and the general Fundamentalist anti-urban declensionist narrative, Skousen’s work brought Mormonism, or at least his brand, into accord with a number of other aspects of American Christian Fundamentalism. These involve Fundamentalist practices of hermeneutics and exegesis, and popular modes of conspiratorial thought. In Skousen’s earliest publications we see the mobilization of a newly created post-war American concept of “Judeo-Christianity,” styled in opposition to this international conspiracy. This concept structured his ecumenism and appears to have led the endorsement of certain ideas that even within the Mormonism’s highly permissive doctrinal structure would be viewed as heretical. I refer here to Skousen’s advocacy of the heresy of “immaterialism.”

In his zeal to deny dialectical materialism, Skousen sternly asserts the position that it was incorrect, evil and possibly pathological to see the universe as comprising nothing but matter and perceiving materialist explanations for all causes.

There are other crucial ways in which Skousen’s writing exemplifies the Cold War thinking of American conservative evangelicals. Firstly, there is the appeal to Freudian psychology as an atemporal descriptor of human behavior and motivation. This cannot be understated as it shapes Skousen’s understanding of causation within history, his own subjective

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temporal phenomenology and temporal phenomenology more generally. In his Mormon historical works he posits three kinds of time: mechanical, solar and “psychological.” Apparent inconsistencies in biblical descriptions of time are explained by Skousen as arising from the discrepancy between narrators’ and actors’ subjective psychological experience of time. In his discussion of the actions of Joseph’s brothers in the Old Testament, Skousen suggest that all of their actions following their initial betrayal of Joseph are shaped by a “guilt complex” and glosses their increasingly vindictive and irrational behavior as “new symptoms” constituting a “psychological reaction” to new events. Skousen also partakes of more general Cold War tendencies toward pathologization in human thought and behavior. These are evident not merely in his denunciations of communism and criminality, concepts that are substantially conflated in his worldview as pathological in character, but also in his reading of the historical past. Contemporary knowledge of a discipline to which Skousen refers as geriatrics allows him to conclude that behaviour late in the reign of King Solomon results from “senile dementia,” thereby absolving the leader of responsibility for his actions.

Given the importance given conspiracies in his worldview, it comes as no surprise that Skousen’s thinking emphasizes the already-prominent position of the Gadianton robbers and “secret combinations.” But Skousen goes beyond seeing an ongoing Satan-directed conspiracy reflecting the permanent continuation of the war in heaven as the main structure shaping his chronicon; it is Satan himself that he depicts as the adversary of Moses on Mt. Sinai. And this was not wholly out of step with general Fundamentalist thinking in the McCarthy era which

17 W. Cleon Skousen, The Third Thousand Years (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 52.
18 Ibid., 143.
19 Schrecker, Many Are the Crimes, 147.
20 W. Cleon Skousen, The Fourth Thousand Years (Salt Lake City: Bookcaf, 1966), 274.
21 E.g. Ether 8; 3, Nephi 7.
22 Skousen, Third Thousand Years, 281.
conflated all supposed enemies of America into the single category “communist” and then declared the contents of this category to be uniform. This omnipresent conspiracy allows him greater latitude in both the use and interpretation of evidence. Whereas in Smith’s re-conceptualization of Mormon thought the physical sciences transitioned from ally to adversary, Skousen performs this very same operation on the social sciences and in particular the discipline of history. For instance, Skousen suggests that whereas the scriptural narrative may offer clues as to the origins of the various nationalities, no national history can be viewed as trustworthy because all have sought to minimize the degree to which there has been miscegenation in the era following the Deluge.

It is not simply history itself that this mode of conspiratorial thought allows Skousen to manipulate more effectively. His belief in the conspiratorial action of human beings within history is of similar utility. For instance, Skousen suggests that the total absence of any trace of Semitic rule in Egypt (which he terms the “Hyskos” period), arises out of a massive conspiracy by the indigenous Egyptian people who after regaining control of their state utterly obliterated all literary and potential archaeological evidence of this period of Semitic rule. Similarly, paganism itself arises from a carefully coordinated conspiracy and constitutes a single system. Nimrod of the Old Testament, in Skousen’s worldview, is the author of a document entitled the *Institutes of Nimrod*, a handbook for all “heathen” religions, which are founded upon the twin principles of human sacrifice and the exaltation of animals above human beings. Through this text, Skousen believes Nimrod to be the progenitor of all idolatrous worship. Conspiracies in Skousen’s framework are sufficiently disciplined and coordinated that even their oral traditions,

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24 W Cleon Skousen, *The First Two Thousand Years* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1953), 238.
25 ____*, *Third Thousand Years*, 93-95.
26 ____*, *First Two Thousand Years*, 242-45.
27 ____*, *Fourth Thousand Years*, 419.
something that Mormon scripture suggests are inherently unreliable, are able to transmit specific instructions and plans across such traumatic events as the Deluge itself. The construction of the tower of Babel, for instance, is based fairly precisely on the oral tradition of Cain’s lineage.

Having cleared the decks of academic knowledge and methods, Skousen is able to engage in a folk practice of various social scientific disciplines, such as demography. By employing very simple exponential multiplication to posit rates of reproduction far beyond anything that mainstream population biology could consider, he is able to come to the defense of the literal truth of Genesis and 1 Nephi. When coupled with Skousen’s literalistic belief in antediluvian life expectancies, he is able to arrive at a population model whereby a population of two persons can grow to a person of five billion in the space of a mere 600 years. Skousen’s simplistic population math is further reinforced by his appropriation of other common American conservative discourses of his era. The Orientalism that will be deployed much more cautiously by Nibley is displayed starkly when Skousen observes that the literal truth of the Exodus narrative is in no way impeded by the logistical problems of three million Israelites migrating from Egypt to Palestine because it is well known from present-day experience that people of the Middle East can “live simply.” Plural marriage is also deployed to defend population claims.

Although racialist ideologies profoundly conditioned all Mormonism of his day, its impact on Skousen’s chronicon is more substantial than on most. While McConkie and Smith

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28 Consider, for instance, the ubiquitous statements in Book of Mormon history regarding the Mulekites.
29 ———, First Two Thousand Years, 229.
30 ———, First Two Thousand Years, 144. He carries this kind of mathematics into postdiluvian periods demonstrating that the exilic Israelite population could easily have grown from seventy-five persons to three million in the space of 215 years, even accepting contemporary life expectancy (——, Third Thousand Years, 190). This population of three million in the Exodus narrative Skousen explains to be fully consistent with other scriptural statements noting that at this rate of reproduction only 600,000 of the three million would have been fighting men of the age of majority (Ibid., 257)
31 Ibid., 480.
32 ———, Fourth Thousand Years, 125. Any problems, Skousen suggests, resulting from the plural marriages of Solomon and David are caused by their failure to practice these institutions as earlier patriarchs had.
tend to participate in this type of discourse in a more constrained fashion, we can see in Skousen a much closer link to a more general historiographic position. The City of Enoch may loom larger in Skousen’s cosmology and scientific thought than in that of other prominent Mormon writers but it stands out as a glaring exception to his otherwise consistent retrojection of contemporary ideas of urban decay from Cold War America. His belief in an ahistoric Jeffersonian ideal of human geography causes him to subscribe to the theory that cities are essentially evil and that population density tends to correlate strongly with human iniquity. Cities cause crime and thus low population densities are always preferable. In fact, until after the Deluge, only evil people lived in cities and all good people were pastoralists. Skousen’s more muscular reading of race into the historical record also causes him to make a much stronger distinction between the categories of Jew and Israelite in the past. Lehi and hence his descendents were of the tribe of Manasseh and, Skousen wishes to underline for us, absolutely not Jews. Skousen similarly sets the Jews apart as an inferior branch of the Israelites when he claims that rabbinic Judaism makes some useful observations about Christian eschatology in that it refers to the Messiah as Joseph but that Samaritanism is far more accurate and insistent on this and all subjects related to the *eschaton*. The failure of Jews to fully appreciate the Restoration and other aspects of the latter days arises from what he supposes to be an antipathy towards the Ephraimite tribe of Israel.

Not only do we see a residual anti-Jewish element in Skousen’s work, along with the interpenetration of anti-Semitic and anti-Communist discourses of his day combined with a

33——, *First Two Thousand Years*, 169.
34This is again unsurprising, given the already racialized discourse of anti-communism and the greater susceptibility to communism that Jews and blacks were believed to have (Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 121, 150).
36——, *Third Thousand Years*, 157.
37Ibid., 158.
general anti-black perspective, but we also see a third element of Skousen’s retrojection of racialism in the importance of whiteness throughout human history. Moses, for instance, Skousen takes pains to clarify, was white. This alleged whiteness does not merely tell us about Moses’ appearance; Moses’ race is a powerful determinant of his values and ideology. This makes the relations of Moses and others to Egyptian history especially problematic for Skousen. In order to resolve this, he aligns himself with a particularly extreme interpretation of the theory of Werner Keller arguing that Egypt’s rulers were indeed part of the Hamitic lineage subject to the priesthood ban until an invasion by the Hyskos people who were of Semitic stock. This invasion was instantaneous, rapid, and total. It only follows, then, that many of the low points in Israelite history can be explained by the dangerous practice of miscegenation. The corruption and disunity of Israel resulting in the destruction of the Northern Kingdom arose directly from “their tolerance for Canaanite culture [which] led to intermingling and thus to intermarriage.”

Roberts and Talmage attempted to stake out a middle ground between Fundamentalists and Higher Critics, while Smith appeared to align himself with the former but nevertheless borrowed at his convenience from Higher Criticism and its descendants. Skousen, on the other hand, completely rejects any elements of Higher Criticism or their heritage. Higher Critics, he explains, are identical to communists. His belief that Marxism is a development rather than a repudiation of Hegelianism assists him in holding this view. Given the total illegitimacy of Higher Criticism, it becomes necessary for Skousen to align himself with some kind of modern text-critical tradition that is not obviously heretical. Because Mormonism’s Articles of Faith

39 Skousen, *First Two Thousand Years*, 2-4.
40 ——, *The Third Thousand Years*, 93-94.
41 Ibid., 527.
42 ——, *Naked Communist*, 351.
43 Ibid., 34.
make it very clear that the Bible is a flawed document, a purely Fundamentalist approach to scripture is not open. Instead Skousen opts for the biblical scholarship of Adam Clarke, an Enlightenment-era Anglican theologian concerned with reconciling “common sense,” reason and scripture, a project he carries out in his massive Bible Commentary. This scholarship, aligned with a simplistic anti-intellectual deployment of the topos of reason, constitutes Skousen’s main approach to exegesis. Clarke, for example, is cited to explain that Joshua’s spies would never have stayed at the home of a harlot and that this misperception arose from an early modern English assumption that any female tavern owner naturally would be a harlot. Skousen then goes on to reason that because we know that she married a righteous prince of Judah it is also possible to know that she was not of Canaanite stock because the savior was born through her lineage; of course this also means she was white.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, Clarke can reinforce Skousen’s anti-communism when he argues that early Christians absolutely did not practice communism and that the apparent episodes thereof in the Acts describe only “a feeling of unity.” He is able to make this assertion in part building on Clarke’s previous work which concluded that early Christians clearly held formal legal title to their personal property.\textsuperscript{45}

Another important element of Skousen’s particular approach to biblical criticism again represents a significant departure from both progressive and neo-orthodox Mormon commentaries on biblical events. It is also a practice prevalent amongst Skousen’s contemporaries in the RLDS although mobilized in aid of the opposing ideology in American politics. This practice is most easily described in colloquial terms as “making excuses.” Unlike the overwhelming majority of LDS histories, Skousen’s works involve a curious kind of colour commentary wherein he passes moral judgment on various actors up to and including God

\textsuperscript{44} ——, Third Thousand Years, 475.
\textsuperscript{45} ——, Naked Communist, 344-345.
himself. For instance, in recounting the story of the theft of the Brass Plates by the sons of Lehi he makes note that this breach of law is justifiable because Laban has previously defied God’s command to relinquish them. Similarly, the practice of “idolatry” in “heathen temples” during the rule of Solomon is blamed on his “heathen wives” and not on the great monarch himself. When Skousen considers the frequency of murder within the Hebrew Bible he remarks that killing another person is only murder when it is not Blood Atonement and therefore infers that otherwise unexplained or unjustified slayings likely represented the enactment of this practice. In some of the more grandiose excuse-making we see from Skousen there are evident parallels with the Cold War politics of his day and previous episodes of American imperialism. For instance, the “subjugation of heathen tribes” by the Israelites was “designed to prepare them for…freedom.” The Israelites’ “tragic mistake” was that they did not “carry out this program with firmness.” Furthermore, the necessity of practicing colonization or, in some cases, genocide arises from the fact that God is bound by law. The Deluge, for example, was necessitated by the probationary or mortal estate ceasing to function as a result of widespread iniquity. Because mortality could no longer work the way the Plan of Salvation required, the Lord was forced to make the unfortunate choice of eliminating the overwhelming majority of the human race. This is also why God forced Moses and the Israelites to enter the Promised Land via Canaan in order to end Canaanite child sacrifice and wipe its practitioners off the face of the earth. Their continued existence, Skousen explains, would have similarly “contaminated” the “second estate” further and, therefore, all would be better off if they were sent back to “the spirit

46 ———, Fourth Thousand Years, 701.  
47 Ibid., 276.  
48 Ibid., 143. Incest was similarly unproblematic in the generations following Adam because the human race was “new and uncontaminated” (——, First Two Thousand Years, 78)  
49 ———, Third Thousand Years, 449.  
50 ———, First Two Thousand Years, 204.
world.” These episodes are examples of the “rule of anathema” whereby certain nations must be utterly annihilated. But, Skousen reassures us, “the Lord will not order the anathematization of a nation until it is altogether corrupted.” This rule, he suggest, is explicitly codified in Genesis 15:16.

Skousen also develops a novel theory for dealing with questions of major historical events omitted from the text of the Hebrew Bible. Whereas the Fundamentalists of his day tended to greet major historical events outside of this narrative with skepticism, Skousen offers a different approach. The Bible, in this formulation, mentions only people whose actions are related to “the Gospel.” We do not know the names of the first two generations of Adam’s children before Cain and Abel because, having never accepted the Gospel, their names were never recorded. Noah similarly was the father of many children before his three boys. Those not mentioned, Skousen adduces, were either apostates or left the planet with the other residents of the City of Enoch. This desire for economy and focus on the part of early biblical authors is not the only possible reason for omissions from the biblical text. The “compiler of chronicles,” for instance, was simply negligent in failing to include “the rest of the acts of Solomon.” Clarke’s writing gives crucial support to Skousen’s project of identifying problematic omissions and additions in the Hebrew Bible. A large number of verses were “spuriously planted” in “the original Hebrew text” by the compliers of the Septuagint. This approach is helpful in dealing with the thorny issue of which Pentateuch commandments constitute eternal instructions and which were specific to Moses’ dispensation. Working similarly from contemporary aesthetic and

51 Ibid., Third Thousand Years, 414.
52 Ibid., 449.
53 Ibid., First Two Thousand Years, 199.
54 Ibid., Fourth Thousand Years, 271.
55 Ibid., 15. He is similarly mobilized to show which Psalms really were written by David and which were not. David’s inspired Psalms have been given out of sequence without appropriate authorial attribution due again to the negligence of the compiler (Ibid., 32).
moral preferences retrojected into the past, Skousen produces a lengthy table distinguishing which laws formed part of a permanent “laws of covenant” and which were from a previous dispensation’s “word of wisdom.” In this way, Skousen is able to fashion a list of obviously timeless prohibitions, including sodomy and arson, and those local to the Mosaic dispensation which were fulfilled in Christ.\textsuperscript{56} It is no coincidence, Skousen suggests, that periods of greatest apostasy within Israel have tended to be the periods with the least in the way of scriptural accuracy.\textsuperscript{57} For this reason, from Adam down to the conquest of Canaan there is sufficient data to fix events with relative accuracy…working backwards from Christ we’re able to fix with reasonable exactness the chronology of events back to the reign of Saul [leaving] a period in excess of 300 years between the conquest of Canaan and the crowning of Saul which is difficult to chronicle with any degree of exactness.\textsuperscript{58}

Scripture is not only affected by apostasy in that the accuracy in which it records events declines, but also non-prophets, even when correctly recording events, will naturally make crucial errors of interpretation and misunderstand the causation for the events that they chronicle. These factors in combination with obvious inaccuracy give rise to things like the Samson narrative which is “completely inconsistent with the rest of the scriptures.” It is obviously impossible that Sampson could have been favoured by God at all.\textsuperscript{59}

Despite the elimination of many characters due to their irrelevance to the Gospel, scripture is still too inclusive. The superior compilers of the Book of Mormon, Skousen notes, “refused to include sordid and monstrous acts” and by virtue of being sunken in apostasy, the compiler of Judges chose to include “the sorrows and depravity of Israel’s dark ages…which might very well have been left untold.”\textsuperscript{60} Skousen also draws from his understanding of the Book of Mormon for one additional element of his particular brand of biblical criticism. He

\textsuperscript{56} ibid., 567.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid., 524.
\textsuperscript{58} ibid., 567.
\textsuperscript{59} ibid., 590.
posits the existence of original books such as a firsthand account of David written by the
prophets Samuel, Gad, and Nathan, inspired texts that formed the basis of the books of Samuel,
Kings, and Chronicles produced by “unknown compilers.” The problem of abridgment and
compilation is not one unique to apostate times. Although a “warped apostate scribe” is
implicated in the lacunae in Genesis, an additional problem with the text is that the “lost
prophecies of Joseph” identified in modern revelation were abridged by Moses as part of his
project of “writing Genesis.” The problems with Moses’ abridgement may also have arisen
from the fact that Skousen sees the author of the Pentateuch, like Joseph Smith, as elect, yet
flawed and egotistical.

Throughout his ministry, Moses consistently made decisions that it appears Skousen
himself would have made better. There was any number of things that Moses “should never
have done.” As noted above, this fallibility is something that Skousen is willing to attribute to
God himself. It would have been better, for instance, if God had gone with his original plan and
killed all of the Israelites who worshiped the golden calf. This view does not just arise from
Skousen’s good opinion of his own judgment but from his understanding of the Plan of Salvation
not as a foreordained and foreknown sequence of events, but instead as a branching set of
contingencies, a conception that appears common in Mormon fundamentalist thought as well. In
this way, Skousen understands God’s original plan as conferring the Melchizedek priesthood
upon all of the Israelites at Sinai and the proclamation of the Mosaic law as a kind of “back-up
plan,” a set of health advice based on contemporary medical concerns offered as a consolation

61 Ibid., 313.
prize. This even affects Skousen’s eschatology. Although the Book of Mormon and certain revelations discuss the possibility that the Gentile nations of America will fail at the eschaton and that the Lamanites will lead Christ’s millennial kingdom, Skousen suggests that this is a contingency plan, and that based on current trends, Canada, the US, Brazil and Argentina, will “go into the millennium intact” (although this is not certain).

It is surprising that, in light of his closeness to Fundamentalism, Skousen suggests that canonical scripture is not a stable objective category. Instead he sees canon as fundamentally lineage-based. The prominence of Isaiah in the book of Mormon thus arises from the specific “family canon” of the Lehites, and the Brass Plates brought to the Americas include Isaiah on the basis of a family decision. Laban’s custody of these plates is similarly explained by the fact that they are associated with the lineage of Joseph from which Laban is descended and we should understand the scripture relevant to us as Joseph’s “family canon.”

With respect to the general shape of human action in time, Skousen is similar to Smith in his general appropriation of conservative evangelical pre-millennialist views of history. On the one hand progress is a fundamental reality and this phenomenon of progress is even more generously ecumenical than Smith’s understanding. It is an attribute of “Judeo-Christian” societies. Communism, then, is a “road block in the path of normal human advancement.” In this optimistic view, if people are free and civilized they will always naturally become prosperous. Nevertheless, these views enjoy the same kind of uncomfortable co-habitation with a declensionist view of history as they do in conservative evangelical thought. All history,

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66 Ibid., 271-272.
67 ———, Fourth Thousand Years, 509.
68 Ibid., 524.
69 ———, Third Thousand Years, 147.
70 ———, Naked Communist, 46.
71 Ibid., 5.
Skousen suggests, is a process of declension. It is for this reason that the most complete scripture is Adam’s Book of Remembrance. But as with Smith, this sense of decline, decadence and urban decay is unproblematically paired with western triumphalism. This sense of the greatness of the West is able to cohabit with declensionist thought through Skousen’s insight that all good ideas in non-Christian religions and philosophies are rediscoveries or much more often remnants of the gospel revealed to the ancient Israelites. Plato’s Republic, for instance, like Egyptian and Babylonian religious texts, contains “fragments of the truth” especially regarding the multiple post-mortal estates and the need to engage in proxy baptism of the dead. Although Skousen would deny such a principle to be in operation, there is also an element of natural selection outside of the sociological sphere. All successful states are naturally based on a combination of the Decalogue and key inalterable theocratic principles which constitute the basis of Greek, Roman and English common law. These societies are not, however, viewed as types or shadows of an ideal society. Notably absent in the Skousen chronicon is any element of typological thought. Indeed, Skousen directly confronts multiple signification and prophecies in a clearly Fundamentalist fashion: “Prophets often wrote in this kind of language when their words applied to more than one situation.” Signification then is contained exclusively within the author and the texts they generate rather than in the events.

Lacking a natural telos, indicators of what might be termed progress are linked exclusively to the moral qualities of the human population in the Skousen chronicon. An entailment of this is the view that there has been no incremental process of technological

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73 ———, First Two Thousand Years, 249.
74 Skousen joins the western triumphalist narrative much earlier than Fielding Smith suggesting that it was in the age of Pericles that the ancient Greeks discovered experimentally much of what God had told the Israelites through revelation (——, Fourth Thousand Years, 809).
75 ———, First Two Thousand Years, 249.
76 ———, Fourth Thousand Years, 538.
77 ———, Third Thousand Years, 293.
78 ———, Fourth Thousand Years, 653.
development. The earth has never had a stone age; the age in which Adam lived is better understood to be a “pioneer age,” and part of a universal and endlessly repeating pioneer experience conditioned not by typological properties but the immutable physical and social realities of all frontiers. Adam, in his day, had access to high levels of technology which allowed him to construct cities, practice medicine and build pipe organs. The application of this thought to social-scientific principles is equally jarring. At all times, Skousen argues, the principal body of Saints lives in one place and those who do not are absent because they are on “missions.” This is another way that Skousen exhibits an affinity with fundamentalists.

Thus, all holy people live under constitutions mandating free government, not just on earth but throughout the entire universe and, as in the Cold War, opposing, Satan-led governments are all “totalitarian” in character. It is for this reason that Skousen is able to use Thomas Jefferson as an aid for fleshing out the details of Israel under the rule of Moses. Israelite government was highly decentralized and only the “most weighty problems” were referred to high level priests; governance practices at all levels were naturally informed by “justice,” “liberty,” “equality” and “civil rights.” These inferences are part of Skousen’s larger theory of virtuous societies which seems to be a personal idiosyncratic elaboration of British Israelitism. Ancient Israel under Moses had the following constitutional structure: Moses held the rank of “president,” Aaron and Joshua served as “vice-presidents” and below them was a “senate” of seventy under which was a “House of Representatives.” All crimes were solved through a system of tort law except “first degree murder.” This legal system also included the

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79 ——, *First Two Thousand Years*, 75.
80 Ibid., 76.
81 Ibid., 195.
82 We shall revisit the question of gathering as an historical principle below.
83 ——, *First Two Thousand Years*, 102; ——, *Third Thousand Years*, 108.
84 ——, *Third Thousand Years*, 620.
85 ——, *Five Thousand Year Leap*, 14-16.
presumption of innocence. Following the dispersion of the ancient Israelite kingdom, the most virtuous body of Israelites moved to England via the Black Sea region and Germany. Based on the same immutable principles they then established the English government in the year 450 as a commonwealth of free people with an identical structure. There were only four crimes in Anglo-Saxon England which flourished from 450-800 CE: treason, cowardice, desertion and sodomy. The Colony of Rhode Island adopted this immutable social structure whole cloth in 1639 and the United States constitutes a direct continuation of this social order based on the “virtually identical” belief of its founders who were all divinely inspired and influenced by exactly the same thinkers, such as Locke, Cicero and Jesus (naturally producing an essential unanimity on all matters). This social order of constitutional government, decentralization, liberty and tort law is inalterable because human nature is inalterable; it is therefore appropriate at all places and in all times because of the immutability of human beings.

Governance structures are not the only immutable element of social science. The repeated attempts to re-found the City of Enoch are another aspect of the human experience. At Sinai, for instance, the Israelites were offered the opportunity to found another Enoch-like city. Melchizedek, like Enoch, was given this opportunity which he and his people appear to have taken, perhaps resulting in them joining the City of Enoch, or in the removal of a second city from the earth. Whether in his dealings with the people of Enoch, Melchizedek or Moses, God always enumerates the rules for running a theocracy. Each time these rules are written and then “voluntarily accepted” or rejected and this is the experience of all elect peoples. What we see

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86 Ibid., 17.
87 Ibid., 226.
88 Ibid., 14, 227.
89 Ibid., 28.
90 Ibid., 119-21.
91 ———, Third Thousand Years, 286.
92 Ibid., 292.
in evidence here is the logical entailment of two canonical elements of LDS thought: a divinely-mandated constitutional order and the identity, across time, of ecclesiastical institutions. In this second respect, Skousen’s writing is only jarring because of his zealous use of contemporary terminology. Elijah, for instance, had all that was needed to “organize the Church and serve as its president.” And the “carnal commandments” that Skousen carefully disentangles from timeless laws, such as the death penalty for sodomy were added to them by another General Conference. Contemporary LDS concerns over authorization to receive revelations and the like are fused with a special concern over lineage to require special explanation for the apparent reception of revelations by David and Solomon. God, Skousen opines, must have used prophets to communicate with Solomon rather than doing so himself. How unfortunate it is, he adds, that we do not know their names.

The City of Enoch or the possibility thereof is a highly predictable event in Skousen’s chronicon and yet it runs counter to key social scientific premises by virtue of being a city. In all but name, it seems more like the pastoral republic of Enoch. Not only is it a solitary example of positive urban development in the antediluvian period, it is also a highly though necessarily exceptional event cosmologically because in the year 2948 BC when Enoch was exactly 430 years old he and his city were “removed from earth to another planet.” All virtuous people except those on mission at the time were part of this mass translation. And according to his exegesis of Joseph Smith’s discourses, almost all messengers from God since this date have been extra-terrestrials from the City of Enoch, and not, as many Mormons believe, disembodied pre-

93——, Fourth Thousand Years, 330. Similarly, Josiah is mentioned as having “called a general conference” (Ibid., 641). General conferences are a specific type of meeting formally required in the LDS Church.
94——, Third Thousand Years, 337.
95——, Fourth Thousand Years, 277. Similarly, David must have discovered that the famine with which he dealt was caused by God’s displeasure over a past event through another unnamed prophet not mentioned in the biblical text. (Ibid., 172).
96——, First Two Thousand Years, 19.1
97Ibid., 195.
mortal angels. The messenger who came to Jacob, for instance, was like those who visited Abraham on behalf of God, a resident of Enoch’s city.\textsuperscript{98} Because the people of Melchizedek enjoyed a similar fate to those of Enoch, Abraham and Isaac reached Salem/Jerusalem to find it uninhabited, its people having recently departed for other parts of the solar system.\textsuperscript{99} And the failure of the Israelites to achieve the same was just one of many “City of Enoch situations” that have occurred throughout history.\textsuperscript{100} If City of Enoch situations are not as rare as we might think so too are God’s episodes of “developing a chosen people.”\textsuperscript{101} This is part of an ongoing historical process of “pruning and grafting” in the development of God’s people.\textsuperscript{102}

When it comes to the science of world-creation, Skousen tilts towards the positions of Young and Roberts over conservative views, underlining the non-literality of the biblical account, the Kolobian origin of Adam and our planet and emphasizing the ubiquity of “interplanetary transportation of life.”\textsuperscript{103} The decision of God to limit Mosaic and post-Mosaic revelation solely to this planet, necessarily obscuring any accurate account of its physical creation, has been vindicated by history, as Skousen observes that no good has ever come of distracting people with information about other planets and gods.\textsuperscript{104} Once within scriptural or historical time, Skousen actually hews very closely to creation science. He is firm, for instance, that Pangaea separated into continents in precisely 2240 BCE.\textsuperscript{105} Conformity with Creationist

\textsuperscript{98} ——, \textit{Third Thousand Years}, 72. Similarly, the holy messenger who came to Gideon was “from the translated City of Enoch…since the task of serving as ministering angels was given to Enoch’s people until the second coming” (Ibid., 537).
\textsuperscript{99} ——, \textit{Fourth Thousand Years}, 93.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{101} ——, \textit{Third Thousand Years}, 2.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 4. Although race is important, God may only have a chosen people but never a chosen race; choseness is not heritable, but instead inheres in ongoing compliance with God’s commandments (Ibid., 3).
\textsuperscript{103} ——, \textit{First Two Thousand Years}, 19-20, 29.
\textsuperscript{104} ——, \textit{Third Thousand Years}, 221-22.
\textsuperscript{105} ——, \textit{First Two Thousand Years}, 35. The Atlantic has always existed, the Pacific Ocean formed in precisely this year. But if the contours of large bodies of water were in this case all but instantaneously changed the deluge had a surprising legacy. Even as of 2,000 B.C. the world’s geography was sharply different with large post-diluvium lakes throughout Asia making it hard to judge the course of the Jaredite migrants (Ibid., 235).
discourse allows Skousen to interact with science in a manner opposite to progressives. While they find the scientific method generally acceptable but its conclusions problematic, Skousen refuses to concede any validity to physical or social science but proudly trumpets their conclusions.  

We know for instance that Jonah was swallowed by a whale for two reasons: first, because “Jesus called it a whale,” and, second, because science shows us that a whale could provide Jonah with the requisite oxygen whereas a fish could not. This is confirmed by an anecdote Skousen found reported in his local newspaper about a man from Ipswich who was swallowed by a whale and yet survived.

As distinct from history, a common element in the works of faithful LDS members is an absence of a significant historiography of the present dispensation. Events are catalogued and sequenced but there is no apparent meta-narrative to events following Young’s establishment of Zion’s new centre in Utah. Although much has been written about the supposed history Pioneer era (1847 to 1890), this writing is detemporalizing in nature. Skousen again shows himself to be closer to Fundamentalism than LDS conservatives in not merely asserting declension but in offering a more complex and specific, albeit still declensionist, *chronicon*. This is especially evident in his comments on the United States as an elect political entity. The US grew in freedom and equality in a steady, incremental, and progressive fashion between 1776 and 1920, but since the early twentieth century the United States has been afflicted by a general declension. Whereas the Mayflower pilgrims had empirically tested communism and

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107 Skousen, *Fourth Thousand Years*, 457.
108 Ibid., 458.
determined it was contrary to divine law, this lesson is being unlearned by contemporary Americans (a trend that began in 1900). This, Skousen suggests, results from Americans embracing democracy too warmly. For Skousen being a republic and being a democracy are not only distinct but oppositional. But not all is lost. Fortunately the Plan of Salvation entails a very large proportion of all of the good spirits in the pre-existence being born in our day. So whereas America has been in decline for much of the twentieth century, new generations have the opportunity to restore the United States to the ideal condition intended by its founders and described in Alexis de Tocqueville’s ethnography. This restoration can be effected through reforms to the education system to create a new generation of Americans who are as educated as those who lived in the 1820s. This is to be achieved through the re-introduction of the Bible to classroom instruction. Otherwise the consequences are clear: the more Lamanite blood in a nation in the Americas, the worse its economic position; the greater the amount of Gentile blood, the better. However, if the Gentile nations fall further into apostasy and immorality this relationship will reverse as God selects a new chosen people.

III. Ogden Kraut and the fundamentalist chronicon

Kraut was an admirer of Skousen and also welded his Mormonism to a vigorous support for American conservatism, anti-communism, and Fundamentalist exegetical practices. And as in the case of other politically conservative Mormons, the “plague on both their houses” approach with which progressive post-millennialists approached the Reformation, in some cases exhibiting greater sympathy with Roman Catholicism, is rejected in favour of a clear

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112 Ibid., 132-134; ——, Five Thousand Year Leap, 133.
113 ——, Five Thousand Year Leap, 114.
114 ——, Third Thousand Years, 601.
115 ——, Five Thousand Year Leap, 239.
116 Ibid., 181.
identification with reforming forces. Kraut dramatizes this by espousing a kind of personal identification with Martin Luther. One of Kraut’s earliest publications arising from his excommunication proceeding with the LDS Church is entitled Ogden Kraut’s 95 Theses. This identification has immediate impact on the Kraut chronicon. Progressive post-millennialist thinkers tended to dismiss the Reformation as insignificant in comparison to the Restoration. LDS conservative thinkers, although more sympathetic to ideologies of Western triumphalism that necessarily exalt the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, tended to similarly minimize the significance of the Reformation as a relatively unimportant part of the Renaissance, an event in which they invest considerable significance by annexing Wycliffe and the production of the King James Bible to it. But they share the rhetorical project of presenting the Reformation as a seed-bed, at best, and a counterfeit, at worst, of the inauguration of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. Kraut, on the other hand, is very interested in the Reformation as a crucial event in sacred history and he is able to amplify its importance by, for example, pointing out elements of the Restoration emerging prior to Smith in northwestern Europe. He, for instance, places considerable emphasis on the putative decision of Luther and Melanchthon to authorize polygamy as a secret practice for King Phillip of Hesse. Such episodes are not limited to the first generations of the Reformation. Kraut also notes that Immanuel Swedenborg, like Joseph Smith, received revelations directing him to inaugurate celestial marriage including polygamy and was also advised by God about the nature of the pre-existence. But this is the less significant of the two ways that the idea of reformation is exalted in Kraut’s historiography.

119 ———, Outlines of Ecclesiastical History, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), 241, 265.
If the set of religious changes touched off by the original 95 Theses is unique and important, reformations are in fact events that need to take place intermittently in any functioning religious community. Kraut notes that “revivals,” “rebirths” and “reformations” were necessary in nineteenth-century Utah during the leadership of polygamist heroes Young and John Taylor. But if they were necessary then, how much more so today?\textsuperscript{122} Such reformations, Kraut suggests, will function like the Restoration in miniature resulting in the return of spiritual gifts, something he believes the Church has lost along with inventions, riches, knowledge and “much more revelation.”\textsuperscript{123} This exaltation of the days of Young and Taylor is reflected in Kraut’s explicit subscription to Youngian theology. It is not just the Manifesto and consequent abandonment of plural marriage that has resulted in the loss of spiritual gifts and the apostasy of the Church: crucial doctrinal changes have also had a considerable effect, such as the abandonment of the Adam-God doctrine, on which he was publishing during his excommunication.\textsuperscript{124} An entailment of the official Jesus/Jehovah Doctrine supported by Pratt and effectively canonized in Talmage’s \textit{Jesus the Christ} was that Mormons were able to adopt a story of human origins more consistent with those in mainstream American Christianity.\textsuperscript{125} Kraut, on the other hand, takes the position that the scientific thought of his day was far more accurate regarding the processes by which the earth was created and populated than the views of mainstream Bible-centered Christians.\textsuperscript{126} In fact, Adam was a space traveler who came here from another world, likely the planet Kolob; and as a resurrected being he was required to eat blood-producing fruit for many centuries in order to become mortal.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{122}——, \textit{The Church and the Gospel} (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1993), 234.
\textsuperscript{123}——, \textit{One Mighty and Strong}, 131.
\textsuperscript{124}Ann Wilde, telephone conversation.
\textsuperscript{125}Ogden Kraut, \textit{Michael/Adam} (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Publishing, 1993), 147.
\textsuperscript{126}——, \textit{Mysteries of Creation} (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1989), 7.
\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., 165.
this planet as distinct from the Heavenly Father, the Youngian framework not only alters our understanding of the first generations of the human race on earth, it much more effectively dramatizes the ideas that both human beings and God can eternally progress and, by the same token, that men can and do use priesthood powers in exactly the same way as God. Not only is the world more strongly affixed to a particular progress teleology, it also assigns a new role for Jesus. Kraut mocks the idea of Jesus functioning in his pre-mortal state as co-creator of the world, logically arguing that if Jesus were the co-creator of all of the worlds he would have to be Crucified on each one. Therefore, every inhabited world in the universe has its “own redeemer” and, consequently, its “own tempter.” Instead therefore, Jesus is the serpent. Although Kraut is silent as to the identity of the serpent in the Genesis narrative, his refusal to identify Lucifer as such and his position that Christ is the brazen serpent in the Exodus narrative and is accurately depicted as “Quetzalcoatl” the plumed serpent in Mesoamerican sacred architecture, assigned to Christ a more peripheral position in his pre-mortal past. In demonstrating a Christ-Quetzalcoatl equivalency, Kraut subscribes to the standard topoi of the “Quetzalcoatl myth.”

As with nearly all western triumphalist conservatives, Kraut’s idiosyncratic subscription to a theory of progress is consistent with Smith’s but more likely derived from a standard belief amongst other John Birch Society supporters of his age that moral advancement tends to vary inversely with scientific advancement. Today’s United States is, in Kraut’s view, the most

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129 ——, Mysteries of Creation, 43. This is a position whose logic is sufficiently troubling to neo-orthodox authorities that they specifically declare that although Christ was implicated in the creation of all worlds, ours is special in that he was only born on this one.
130 Ibid., 100.
131 ——, Compromise and Concession (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1977), 188.
132 On which, see Chapter 7.
133 ——, Only True God, 9.
extreme example of this. As in Skousen’s case this belief in general degeneracy is associated with unsurprising themes in discourses of urban decay. This is, of course, a highly racialized discourse. “God,” Kraut informs us, “is opposed to modern integration programs.” More effectively than Skousen, Kraut is able to read this racialism back through all time. Linking the technical arguments of McConkie and Smith that explain blackness as a mortal punishment for pre-mortal failure, Kraut suggests that this is not an exceptional thing but instead that segregation is a fundamental principle of moral and therefore physical law. Not only is blackness explained as a sign of pre-mortal failure, all gradations of racial difference are also explicable through pre-existent conduct. It is for this reason that Israel’s exodus from Egypt was necessary. As a divine physical principle, segregation is naturally opposed by a binary opposite, satanic “law of mongrelization.” It is for this reason that Deuteronomy 7 was written as an explicit prohibition of miscegenation. Racial slavery was therefore mandated by God from the very beginning of time. As a consequence, we are able to know with certainty that Jesus was white, as demonstrated in the 3 Nephi 19:30. Thus, Kraut sees the 1978 revelation ending the black priesthood ban as a catastrophic sign of the apostasy of the LDS. But he understands this not so much as perversely self-inflicted damage but, instead, as God’s punishment of the LDS for an apostasy already underway. Because priesthood powers are tied to race, this is God’s means of revoking the priesthood powers of the LDS for their abandonment of polygamy. This, Kraut suggests, is not unprecedented. Israelite-Philistine miscegenation was

135 ———, The Segregation of Israel (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1979), 201.
136 Ibid., 8.
140 Ibid., 2: 753.
141 ———, “Lineage of the Priesthood” in Ensign to the Nations, 2: 1267.
similarly used by the Lord as punishment. Those eligible for the priesthood, Kraut is clear, are the Israelites, and one can know an Israelite by the whiteness of his or her skin. White people very simply are those pure remnants of the tribes of Israel. Kraut in this way is able to expand upon British Israelitism with the assistance of Herbert Garner and Ted Armstrong, creators of the private Ambassador College, to show which European nations correspond to which Israelite tribes. Although not accepting all of their conclusions, he suggests that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh correspond to the United States and British Commonwealth. On the other hand, he prefers false etymology when it comes to the tribe of Dan, which obviously is today embodied in the Danish people, and the defunct Baltic state of Gottland, clearly the tribe of Gad. These ideas, he suggests, are backed in Acts, 1 Peter, and Eusebius’ Church History, which clearly show that the largest proportion of the Lost Tribes migrated to Great Britain where the apostle James ministered to them.

Kraut’s eclectic use of source material is linked to his highly particular ideas of canon which constitute an interesting hybrid of those of Skousen and Nibley. His exegesis of Doctrine and Covenants 91:1-6 is that the composition of canon is to be understood as personal rather than institutional. His canon then is one that he has fashioned largely through practices based on reason. Based on his deductions, Kraut recognizes key texts, to which he refers as pseudepigrapha, as of equivalent value to the Standard Works of the Church. These include the 4 Macabees, Odes of Solomon, The Books of Adam and Eve, Secrets of Enoch, Epistle of Aristeus, Story of Ahikar, Book of Jasher, and Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. This does

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144 ——, Gathering of Israel, 175.
145 Ibid., 181.
146 On which, see Chapter 4.
147 Ogden Kraut, “As It Is Translated Correctly” in Ensign to the Nations 1: 25.
148 Ibid., 15, 18; ——, “The Holy Priesthood vol. 5” in Ensign to the Nations, 2: 927.
not mean that Kraut understands these books to have been produced by their putative authors nor to have survived intact up to the present day. Instead, he understands the process of creating apocrypha or pseudepigrapha as a necessary and repeated element of canon maintenance. The books identified as apocrypha, he suggests, arose out of an inspired attempt to replace manuscripts lost in the Assyrian invasion (the works of Esdras best exemplifying this).  

Although we do not have any original manuscripts from Adam or Enoch, pseudepigrapha attributed to them helps to maintain the canon. For this reason, Kraut finds it unproblematic to accept the views of biblical scholars that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, the gospels were not written by the apostles, and the Pseudo-Pauline texts were not written by Paul. This is also the reason that God’s covenants with humanity are necessarily repetitive.  

God only finds it necessary to restore the canon through revelations given previously but lost in the event that human reason and empirical investigation are unable to solve these problems themselves. It is for this reason that the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to write the JST. Biblical scholarship and empirical investigation were simply insufficient to deal with the massive problems the Bible had developed over time. The JST restores key data, and more importantly, removes all contradictions that had crept into the Bible text. In Kraut’s view it is impossible for any true scripture to contradict itself.  

Increasing support for the KJV over the JST is another sign of LDS apostasy. Kraut disputes a position of some LDS authorities that the JST is an unfinished text and therefore not

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149 ——, “As It Is Translated Correctly,” 1: 25.
150 Ibid., 1: 3.
153 ——, “As It Is Translated Correctly,” 1: 38. The Inspired Version is also helpful in other respects in that it removes material that improperly entered scripture such as the entirety of the Song of Solomon.
154 Ibid., 1: 27, 43.
fully reliable. Instead he suggests that each incremental change Joseph Smith made to the text was valid and sufficient in and of itself. Processes of incremental revision, in Kraut’s view, are valid manifestations of divine revelation. In this way Kraut is able to canonize the revisions that Joseph Smith made to the Book of Mormon between 1830 and 1844 while rejecting all post-1890 changes as uninspired. However, this does not mean that the Mormon canon was fully revealed during Smith’s life; rather, the Manifesto constitutes an interruption in the emergence of scripture. Following Mormonism’s necessary reformation, the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, the original Book of Enoch, the rest of the visions of the brother of Jared and other scriptures shall come forth.

Despite Kraut’s bold and definitive statements regarding his personal canon, there are ambiguous and liminal areas that surround it notwithstanding his precise and exhaustive overhaul of its contents. For instance, he notes that perhaps the most useful text available on the conduct of war in heaven is the Bhagavad Gita. Similarly, an alleged vision or revelation experienced by George Washington sits at the margins of Kraut’s canonical system. Another text now lost and likely requiring restoration is the Swiss book published in 1739 called The Hope of Zion. Allegedly witnessed by various members of the church who visited Switzerland in the nineteenth century, the text predicts the birth and ministry of Joseph Smith and the rise of the LDS Church. Finally Kraut notes the importance and possible scriptural significance of what he terms The Dead Sea Scrolls, a category that includes the contents of the Nag Hammadi library,
along with recently discovered Jewish and Christian scripture.\textsuperscript{161} Even the less inspired portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are helpful in validating Mormonism by showing the Qumrani separatist approach to have been consistent with the early Church. He even speculates that the Teacher of Righteousness in the Dead Sea scrolls refers to Christ himself.\textsuperscript{162} One reason that canon can be so eclectic and personal is that scripture, while divinely inspired, is not the work of God. We only have two documents authored by God, and these are covenantal not theological in character: the Decalogue and the United States Constitution.\textsuperscript{163} This allows Kraut to sidestep any problems regarding Christian canon formation. The contents of the New Testament are acknowledged to have arisen from an \textit{ad hoc}, problematic fourth-century process that did not solidify until the end of the century; and it is far inferior to Mormon institutional canon formation due to a lack of democracy and formality.\textsuperscript{164}

The processes of discernment that Kraut employs to place texts within his personal canon also extend into the contents of the texts themselves. In reading any scripture Kraut states that “we must apply the science of textual criticism.”\textsuperscript{165} The purpose of this science is as follows: to find the original words contained in the scripture, to discover the original meaning behind these words, and to locate errors and interpolations by scribes. These have tended to manifest as changes to words, numbers, date inconsistencies within history and contradictions in teaching.\textsuperscript{166} However, this is not entirely the fault of the translators who began in most cases with incomplete texts such as the Gospel of Matthew.\textsuperscript{167} These methods, Kraut notes, are only applicable to certain types of written scriptural records. Those like the Book of Mormon that used symbolic

\begin{footnotes}
\item[161] ——, “As It Is Translated Correctly,” 1: 22. Of particular value are the \textit{Gospel of Mary} and the \textit{Apocryphon of John}.\textsuperscript{162}
\item[162] Ibid., 1: 21-23.
\item[163] Ibid., 1: 43.\textsuperscript{164}
\item[164] Ibid., 1: 5, 9.\textsuperscript{166}
\item[166] Ibid., 1: 2.
\item[166] Ibid., 1: 5.
\item[167] Ibid., 1: 8.
\end{footnotes}
alphabets can only be translated by prophets because of the multiple possible meanings of ideograms. The most powerful tools for this work are not philological. Logic, assisted by contemporary revelation, constitutes the best tool. Because we know through the First Vision that God has a body we can therefore know that all references to God’s immateriality “have been mistranslated.”

The last element of Kraut’s exegetical approach is the most ambivalent and equivocal element of his historiographic practice. One possible interpretation of Kraut’s exegetical-historical practices is that of all Mormon thinkers surveyed in this project, his is the most intensely typological. This view is exemplified in his statement that “the scriptures are replete with types, patterns and symbols to warn of future events. Many things that happen today are illustrations of events from out of the past or predictions of the future.” Kraut applies this apparently intensive typological thinking to recent events within this dispensation. Brigham Young, for instance, is a figure or type of Moses. Utah is the wilderness into which the Israelites entered before their return to the Promised Land that only a residue will successfully inhabit. In this way Kraut suggests “history repeats itself.” It is thus no coincidence that the Saints who participated on the trek to Utah were divided into twelve tribes, prefigured in the original Exodus. Similar to McConkie, Kraut takes the position that typology is not merely a scriptural or narrative property, but is in fact a physical property. In his description of the orthodox belief that from the days of Adam until the crucifixion, animal sacrifice functioned to “commemorate” Christ’s future sacrifice. The idea that blood sacrifice was necessary prior to Christ and unnecessary following his vicarious atonement is wholly ordinary. Kraut’s decision to use the

168 ———, *Only True God*, 22.
169 Ibid., 82.
170 ———, “The Kingdom of God vol. 1” 1: 1123.
term “commemorate” might indicate a kind of “all now” consciousness. Kraut’s typology also exhibits the characteristics of multiple signification evident in medieval typology in that the typological relationship between Jesus and Moses is in no way problematized by the relationship between Moses and Young.\(^{173}\) Types are, furthermore, not limited simply to ordinances or persons. The Deluge, for instance, constitutes a “symbol and pattern.”\(^{174}\) Typology is also no more spatially local than it is temporally so. Both all earths and all persons recapitulate the identical narrative of fall followed by water baptism, followed by fire baptism.\(^{175}\) Furthermore, distinct from orthodox LDS historiographies, Kraut’s *chronicon* comments typologically on the present. Just like the tribes of Joseph and Judah were fathered and then scattered in the Israelite past, so too did the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh gather in Utah in the nineteenth century, only to be scattered by apostate Church leaders in the present day.\(^{176}\)

Some of Kraut’s other assertions suggest a different explanation for his muscular application of typology. At the beginning of this section, I remarked that Kraut’s exegetical practices resemble Christian Fundamentalist exegesis in crucial ways. More than Skousen or any LDS thinker, Kraut engages frequently in apparently mercenary proof-texting practices. In a single book Kraut might quote McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* a dozen times. In half of these instances the quotations are put forward to illustrate the total apostasy of the LDS Church and the illegitimacy of its general authorities of whom McConkie is one. Yet in an equal number of instances Kraut will use the same text as a clear and articulate summary of correct Mormon doctrine. Kraut’s repeated use of mercenary proof-texting practices suggests the possibility that his typology is more like the Stoic typological exegesis from which medieval Christian typology

\(^{173}\) ——, *Compromise and Concession*, 183.
\(^{174}\) Ibid., 181.
\(^{175}\) Ibid., 181.
\(^{176}\) ——, *Gathering of Israel*, 187.
was subsequently derived. It is worth considering the possibility that Kraut is not engaging in typological reasoning but simply in typological apologetics especially in light of the following. Not all biblical events are to be understood or read literally, according to Kraut.\textsuperscript{177} The story of the cursing of Ham in Genesis is an excellent example of an episode that should be read typologically \textit{instead} of historically. Here we see Kraut mobilizing the very kind of typology decried by late antique and early medieval Christian thinkers as pagan and illegitimate. Types are understood in a genuinely typological analytic, as opposed to apologetic, system—as an elaboration of a historical episode and not a nullification thereof. The Ham episode is by no means the only instance of this. Moses, Kraut explains, faced an audience incapable of understanding true gospel doctrines of creation. The creation aspects of Genesis were written solely for “symbolical interpretation” to illustrate “the law of procreation.”\textsuperscript{178} There is a mass of conjecture regarding human origins and “even the Bible presents some bizarre and figurative stories for which there is no definitive interpretation.”\textsuperscript{179}

If his frequent and ambitious employment of typology presents a strong contrast to Skousen, other aspects of the Kraut method exhibit an equally strong affinity. The conspiratorial reasoning of Cold Ward American conservative thought that is evident in Skousen is far more aggressively yet ambivalently deployed by Kraut. Given his tendency to amplify to the greatest possible degree whatever idea he is mobilizing in support of his particular brand of reformed Mormonism, it is unsurprising that we should find Kraut alleging that just like the mainstream anti-communism of the Kennedy administration, the fall of communism has been an elaborate ruse staged for the benefit of a credulous public.\textsuperscript{180} Not only is there an international communist

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{177} ——, “The Holy Priesthood vol. 2,” 2: 732.
\item \textsuperscript{178} ——, \textit{Michael/Adam}, 46.
\item \textsuperscript{179} ——, \textit{The Church and the Gospel}, 148.
\item \textsuperscript{180} ——, \textit{Parallel Paths}, 69.
\end{itemize}
conspiracy that is ongoing in Kraut’s worldview, popular conspiracy ideas of a “New World Order” are also validated and placed within the Mormon eschatological binary through a precise equivalency drawn between the new world order and the force that LDS scripture identifies as “Babylon,” the signifier for the Satan-directed opposition to the forces of Zion. Kraut does not appear to in any way limit the number or complexity of concurrent conspiracies acting for the great deceiver. The new age movement, for instance, is identified as having been presaged in Deuteronomy 18:9-13 as part of an eschatological efflorescence of abominations and witchcraft. Likewise, the Gnostics are still with us now disguised as the Bavarian Illuminati who unlike the more diluted agents of the New World Order explicitly follow Satan. Kraut seems so enthusiastic about his conspiratorial worldview that he even abandons his near obsessive use of lengthy citations and excerpts to both render his documents more authoritative and, I would suggest, generically mimic Smith-era Mormon texts, particularly Church History, in contradistinction to the conservative LDS self-authorizing style. The most dramatic example of this is Kraut’s claim to have seen a “communist document” in the 1960s that clearly and specifically adumbrated the International Communist Conspiracy’s project of imposing the New World Order by forcing white people to marry black people.

Conspiracies explain much in the Kraut chronicon, beyond simple bad acts. They have fundamentally and negatively shaped the evidentiary pool from which he works. Psalm 45, he suggests, was deliberately corrupted in all biblical copies and translations during the Reformation to conceal the Lord’s approval of plural marriage. In the same vein he is able to square the absence of Moses from Egyptian history by explaining that elite Egyptians have

182 Ibid., Parallel Paths, 186.
183 Ibid., 65.
always been completely successful at annihilating any historical record of their enemies or predecessors.\textsuperscript{186} However, it is not only in Kraut’s praise for those secretly ordained to continue the practice of plural marriage following its prohibition by the US Government that we find in his writings an ambivalence regarding conspiracy. Many truths, Kraut suggests, could not be told by Joseph Smith to Mormons generally. Instead they were divulged only to a small group of elders who could secretly organize based on this knowledge.\textsuperscript{187} Although these truths are vast in number, just one example of the kind of explosive knowledge Smith and Mormon leaders are alleged to have reserved for their own conspiracy is the knowledge that Joseph Smith was in fact the direct lineal descendent of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{188} This kind of thinking, combined with the highly promiscuous proof-texting practices noted above, allows Kraut to engage in an all-out assault on contemporary educational institutions. If the Egyptian State, Soviet Communist Party or Bavarian Illuminati were capable of maintaining tight control of information on a vast demographic and temporal scale, obviously contemporary universities are highly likely to be populated by conspiracies that withhold or otherwise distort academic knowledge. Based on this premise Kraut is able to pick up pre-Columbian American history where the progressive post-millennialists abandoned it. Through a selective reading of academic literature, Kraut is able to conclude that there were indeed elephants and horses in the Americas in Nephite and Jaredite times, along with Mayan and Inca worship of Christ and an abundant geological record of the 34 CE cataclysm and that universities have systematically suppressed that knowledge.\textsuperscript{189} With only a little more work in reasoning from this carefully selected evidence, Kraut is also able to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[186] ———, \textit{Only True God}, 126.
\item[187] ———, \textit{Michael/Adam}, 8.
\item[188] ———, \textit{Jesus Was Married}, 93.
\end{footnotes}
conclude that the majority of the gold that Pizarro extracted from the Inca emperor had previously been a set of detailed records written on golden plates.

One last element of orthodox Mormon thought whose amplification by Kraut is worth noting is his tendency to apply a genealogical diffusion model for understanding global anthropology. Kraut credits that all civilized legal systems in the world derive from the Mosaic covenant in contrast to Skousen and Smith who see, for instance, Greek thought as independently generated. Similarly, the Egyptian government, he explains, was originally established as a counterfeit of Semitic Priest lineages because of Shem’s/Seth’s decision to build the pyramid of Giza in Egypt.

At this point it might seem that what characterizes the work of Kraut is his tendency to offer the most exaggerated manifestation of a unique or particular Mormon historiographic tradition. But what is far more striking and sets Kraut apart from the various LDS historical writers that this dissertation examines is his robust historiography of the present dispensation. As mentioned previously, the foundational events in the Mormon narrative have a special importance as the most unequivocal test of an individual’s fidelity to the Latter-day Saint movement. The historicity of the finding and translation of the Golden Plates constitutes a crucial article of faith in all LDS denominations. This scope of this foundational sequence of events is helpful in distinguishing amongst different understandings and philosophies of Mormonism. On one hand, we have the Church of Christ – Temple Lot who conclude this foundational period in 1834 with the attempted publication of the Book of Commandments. At the opposite end, we see the RLDS who conclude their foundational narrative in 1860. In the

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190——, Compromise and Concession, 183.
LDS, where the foundational narrative ends between 1846 and 1852, this leads to a history of the post-1847 Saints in Utah as a fallible people whose history is interesting but not specifically sacred. More importantly, the historiography of this period is also notable in that its importance has only receded over time, in favour of Shipps’ timeless pioneer era. Constructing an historical narrative presenting the Latter Day Saints as law-abiding, patriotic and generally non-polygamous Americans was an important project of Roberts, Talmage, and Smith not as a contribution to sacred history, but as an apologetic justification for post-Manifesto Church policies and actions. As questions of Latter-Day Saint loyalty both to government policy and to direction from an accommodationist patriotic leadership came to be resolved, the history of conflicts over polygamy and theocracy in the nineteenth century has moved from the foreground of theological and faith-promoting literature generated by LDS authorities and advocates into the domain of popular and academic history focused not on advancing a Mormon *chronicon* but instead on recovering a pioneer experience. How different then is the sacral significance of the fundamentalist perspective when Ogden Kraut states: “the savior made a parallel between our own generation and Noah’s.”

For fundamentalist Mormons, the death of Brigham Young in 1877 is understood to be the start of a fall into apostasy. One immediately sees from an examination of Mormon scripture times of fidelity to the gospel do not really contain events. It is only apostasy and persecution that generate history. We see this clearly in the Book of Mormon itself. 4 Nephi which comprises page 465-468 of the current edition of the Book of Mormon covers the period from 36 CE to 321 CE whereas the period from 600 BCE to 36 CE is covered in the preceding 463 pages. The Book of Mormon is able to summarize such a lengthy period in a scant four

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194 ——, *Segregation of Israel*, 141.
pages because both Nephites and Lamanites were living the Gospel law. Under such conditions no significant historical events could take place. Amongst the LDS one might reasonably expect a strong competing historiography of the period from 1877 to 1890, the period that Kraut identifies as the beginning of the fall into apostasy. And this is what we see in the early works of Roberts, Talmage, and Smith. An alternate narrative of persecution that seeks to depict it not as it has been previously understood in Smith’s lifetime and in the writings of earlier General Authorities as a sign of the fidelity and correctness of the Church, but instead as a dangerous cancer that would cause apostasy unless it stopped. Traces of this anti-fundamentalist historiography remain not so much in orthodox Mormon writing about the nineteenth century, but instead in modifications to the Mormon historiography of the Great Apostasy.

In opposition, then, to the idea of persecution being a dangerous thing that can cause apostasy, Kraut describes persecution as a property of any group of true followers of the gospel. At all times and places, those who truly understand and practice the Gospel of Jesus Christ will of course be persecuted. When the church is not being persecuted this is a sign of its apostasy. Whereas Kraut understands persecution to be nothing short of the greatest aid to the Gospel in maintaining a pure and upright Church, prosperity is understood to be the greatest test of the faithful and the thing most likely to cause apostasy. Nevertheless, in the 1880s, the Lord tested the Church through persecution and imprisonment and it failed to pass even this lesser test. In the century or more since the death of Young, the human race has fallen into the

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199 ——, Compromise and Concession, 140.
deepest apostasy ever, greater even than that of the Early Church. This is, while regrettable, unsurprising because fallibility within the Church and its leadership is the same today as it was during Christ’s time. We can know this to be the case by way of historical parallel because the Saints who were cast out of Jackson County and are insufficiently reformed after 150 years to be readmitted. Over that century and a half the Saints have failed to demonstrate that they are qualified to redeem Zion, build the temple, or construct the New Jerusalem. Many of Kraut’s works feature a more formal taxonomy of the apostasy of which he has identified ten clear signs.

This declension of the Church has led to the moral decay of the clergy, further accelerating this decline. But problems of apostasy and the failings of the Saints can be traced throughout the dispensation. Kraut does not posit an idealized past under the leadership of Smith and Young, but instead emphasizes the constant difficulties that the Church’s early inspired leaders had in exhorting the Saints to live the fullness of the Gospel. It is because the Saints failed to practice the United Order system of communal ownership, for instance, that they were expelled from Kirtland, OH, Independence, MO, and Nauvoo, IL. Had they lived the “Fullness of the Gospel,” the Lord would have protected them from their persecutors. This realization causes Kraut to make crucial modification to more orthodox LDS dispensational schemes: all dispensations contain key historical properties which include falling away from the Gospel.

200 ——, Segregation of Israel, 199.
201 ——, Church and the Gospel, 33.
202 ——, United Order, 171; ——, Gathering of Israel, 89.
203 (1) The end of spiritual gifts, (2) the end of written revelation, (3) the end of persecution, (4) the pursuit of temporal prosperity, (5) the scattering (as opposed to gathering) of the Saints, (6) widespread immorality and sin, (7) teachings that clash with those of former prophets, (8) reading sermons from prepared texts rather than under the inspiration of the holy spirit, (9) the preference for human law over divine law, (10) the striving of the holy spirit to tell every saint that the Church is out of order (——, United Order, 244)
204 ——, One Mighty and Strong, 52.
205 ——, Parallel Paths, 252-53. Curiously, the United Order was the only ancient doctrine that Kraut failed to practice; he and his plural wives abandoned the Order they established with other independent fundamentalists. It is curious that this commandment, above all others, is so exalted by Kraut given that it is the only one with which he did not comply (Ann Wilde, telephone conversation).
Although latter day revelation tells us that this dispensation will not fail, this does not immunize it from the universal dispensational property of falling away.²⁰⁶ In this formulation one can see how reformations are events equally as necessary to the fulfillment of the Plan of Salvation as are the restorations that they correct. But on this front, Kraut sounds an even more pessimistic note: every dispensation, he points out, has broken its covenant with God and slipped into apostasy. Revelations notwithstanding, our dispensation is in danger of doing the same.²⁰⁷ One other noteworthy aspect of Kraut’s modification of the Mormon dispensational scheme to accommodate the importance of reformations is his decision to start the present dispensation not with the restoration in 1830, but with the Church’s fall into apostasy in the second century AD. In this way, the Protestant Reformation is annexed to the most important dispensation in human history and understood much more clearly not as a failed restoration that did not start a new dispensation but instead as the opening act of Smith’s great restoration.²⁰⁸

Universal dispensational properties are, while not necessarily typological, an important element of Kraut’s criticism of the present day. For instance, Kraut’s position that the LDS Church has forsaken its article of faith to gather the Israelites in the present dispensation is supported by his argument that gathering is a cross-dispensational property of all Saints at all times. Noah, he suggests, advocated the gathering of Israel, as did Enoch, Jared, and Abraham. The Lot narrative in Genesis functions to dramatize the dangers of failing to gather. Ultimately the doctrine of gathering was clearly articulated as an element of the gospel by Christ in Luke 13:34.²⁰⁹ Because of this universal property, one can always determine whether the teachings of

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²⁰⁶ Kraut, One Mighty and Strong, 59.
²⁰⁷ ——, Compromise and Concession, 157.
²⁰⁹ ——, Gathering of Israel, 19-22.
a prophet are true or false depending upon their inclusion of this doctrine.\textsuperscript{210} The failure to gather, then, is as important a factor as the abandonment of plural marriage in the Church’s contemporary loss of spiritual gifts.\textsuperscript{211} But this gathering is also practical because only the gathered body of the Saints will avoid the great destruction that is to accompany the coming millennium.\textsuperscript{212} The gathering, like so many elements of Mormonism, is not merely a moral law, but a physical one. The structure of galaxies and other elements of the heavens attest to the universal pattern of gathering, a law so inextricable with the physical structure of the universe that it applies even to hell.\textsuperscript{213}

Similarly, Kraut chooses not to defend polygamy on the basis of its status as “a new and everlasting covenant” but instead on its trans-dispensational properties. This argument, he admits, is challenging because the conspiratorial acts of scribes and others have resulted in the KJV and all other Bibles being systematically edited to remove all exhortations to practice plural marriage, especially Christ’s repeated commands to do so.\textsuperscript{214} This necessitates a vigorous exegesis of the New Testament to explain that the marriage at Cana in the Gospel of John was that of Jesus Christ himself and that one can reasonably infer on the basis of Jesus’ professed love of Mary and Martha that they numbered amongst his wives.\textsuperscript{215} Furthermore, the “many women” who minister to Jesus in the Bible, it can also be reasonably inferred, were among his plural spouses.\textsuperscript{216} This explanation of textual corruption creates additional problems when Kraut is forced to confront the uncorrupted Book of Mormon. God, he suggest, only banned polygamy

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{212} ——, Segregation of Israel, 107.
\textsuperscript{213} ——, Gathering of Israel, 216-217.
\textsuperscript{214} ——, “The Holy Priesthood vol. 4,” 2: 129.
\textsuperscript{215} ——, Jesus Was Married, 29, 54.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 59.
for the wicked who were practicing it in Nephite times and his instruction that Nephites and Lamanites take only one wife applied only to those not practicing the Gospel.\textsuperscript{217}

Kraut is able to justify this seemingly peculiar position through his acknowledgement of how even within the Church polygamy was an unpopular doctrine that troubled most members and was only practiced by its most holy. Kraut’s ambivalence regarding conspiracy and his belief that conspiracies can both oppose and serve God’s will renders the covert practice of polygamy by Smith and a small church elite prior to its public proclamation as part of the larger phenomenon of Smith necessarily withholding key doctrines from those who were unready. Not only was the elite practice of polygamy, even while forbidden to the general body of Church members, an element of Nephite history, so too was a document like the Manifesto. Jacob 2:31 describes a situation where God reluctantly mandates monogamy.\textsuperscript{218} In this way even the voice of God himself forbidding polygamy does not indicate divine disapproval of polygamy but instead the Lord’s resignation and acquiescence to the repeated pleas of a fallen people. It is thus interesting that unlike the vast majority of Mormon fundamentalists, Kraut equivocates on whether the Manifesto is a revelation from God. Although he feels it is unlikely, he also considers the alternate possibility that it can be classed with revelations that are repeatedly sought to contradict God’s earlier word. God’s acquiescence to Israel ending the rule of the Judges and becoming a kingdom is one such episode. A more notable one is God’s reluctant consent to allow Martin Harris to show the first 116 pages of the Book of Lehi to his family.\textsuperscript{219} Although this resulted in the loss of Lehi’s word from the scriptural record, God’s reluctant

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 2: 828.
\textsuperscript{219} This is an important episode in Mormonism’s foundational narrative. One of Smith’s scribes in the dictation of the plates was asked by his wife to show her an early manuscript of the Book of Mormon. Upon receiving it, she destroyed it, challenging Smith to reproduce it identically from the plates. Instead, Smith interpreted new plates telling him not to do so; as a result the 116 pages, known as the Book of Lehi, have been lost.
granting of a revelation that he himself did not believe ultimately served the greater good by imparting a crucial lesson to believers. And if this was unlikely the case regarding the Manifesto, it was very probably the case regarding the 1978 revelation ending the ban on black priests. Such revelations cannot be succeeded by valid messages from God until their ultimate pedagogic agenda is apprehended by believers. These revelations constitute an obstacle whose presence in Doctrine and Covenants will prevent the receipt of any valid written revelations until they are removed. Such adulterations of scripture are easily spotted. God’s messages are unchanging if not through all time then certainly within each dispensation. As such one can know the validity of a contemporary revelation based on its harmony with those received by past prophets. This is not to suggest that contemporary prophets are in any way subordinate to those who have come before. Rather, all prophets should speak with a single voice by virtue of being prophets. The only way in which contemporary prophets should be privileged over those of the past is that their revelations are more likely to address the specific characteristics of the present situation.

Kraut’s focus on the historiography of the present dispensation is also faithful to Young in another crucial fashion not exhibited in the works of orthodox Mormons. Kraut refuses to distinguish between the political and ecclesiastical spheres; his work *Parallel Paths* is based on a claim of the total entanglement of church and state. Both institutions have strayed in parallel and both will inevitably return together to the correct path. Whereas virtually all Mormons hold to the creed that the US Constitution is an inspired document, most stop far short of total church-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{220} ——, *Segregation of Israel*, 180.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Ibid.; ——, *Compromise and Concession*, 155.
\item \textsuperscript{222} ——, *One Mighty and Strong*, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{223} ——, “The Holy Priesthood vol. 5,” 2: 895. It is on this point that Kraut inveighs most vehemently against McConkie as a false prophet in that he has most clearly articulated the view that present-day revelations absolutely can supersede previous ones (——, “The Holy Priesthood vol. 2,” 2: 753).
\item \textsuperscript{224} ——, *Parallel Paths*, 5-6.
\end{itemize}
state conflation. Kraut, however, argues that the American constitution is not merely a founding
document of the state from which Zion will emerge, the Founding Fathers, in his view, have
written the constitution of Zion itself. If Kraut can style himself a loyal member even while
enduring excommunication and persecution, it is unsurprising that he is able to generalize his
identification with the United States as a Cold War superpower into his theory of history. The
Kraut *chronicon* sees the entire universe in fact as two competing “super powers.” Naturally
then it only follows that Marx was a teacher, prophet, and priest of Lucifer himself.226

This allows Kraut to resolve the apparent problems of the clearly communistic elements
of the United Order. Socialism and communism are Lucifer’s counterfeits of the Order and can
be demonstrated as such because unlike the Order they *fail* to end all class distinctions.227
Ironically, much as LDS members in the nineteenth century understood themselves and the
events around them as a part of the world’s *eschaton*, the post-1890 drift that has robbed the
present and recent past of events germane to the sacred drama. This necessarily distances the
contemporary LDS from the very end-times events after which they are named. There is a way
in which with its precision and detail Mormonism’s foundational and anticipated eschatological
episodes more closely resemble profane time than the typological end of history in which LDS
members live day to day. In a sense, then, history must re-start in order for the LDS *eschaton* to
unfold. But for Kraut and the fundamentalists’ history has never stopped. And therefore the
millennium possesses an immanence for him that it lacks for subscribers to orthodox
Mormonism.

226 _____, *Only True God*, 73.
227 _____, *United Order*, 8.
Another economic depression is coming, Kraut informs us, and it will be the worst ever. And in the wake of this depression things will dramatically change. Kraut and others like him, those who have joined but have then been excommunicated from the LDS, were selected for their task in the pre-existence and as a result were born into the Israelite tribe of Ephraim who will lead the Church in the last days. It is these Ephraimites whom we should understand to be the Church of the Firstborn mentioned by Joseph Smith. The Ephraimites shall take up this mantle and become the elders of the Church. These elders will become the saviors of the American Constitution thanks to their leadership of militias based in the Great Basin region. This will lead to a mass of new revelations that will include information on artificial fuels, energy efficiency, and the location of new mineral deposits in this region.

Or not.

At least as far as our present dispensation is concerned, Kraut is in accord with Skousen on an idea of contingent election. Although he disagrees with Skousen’s optimisim regarding the triumph of the United States he shares his belief in a contingent and branching eschaton. If the LDS does not establish Zion, God will find someone who will. This group is likely to be the Lamanites whom past prophets believed would succeed in the establishment of Zion after the inevitable failure of the United States. The Lamanites in these last days will be a prophetic

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228 Ibid., 199.
229 ———, Segregation of Israel, 214, 216.
230 ———, Church and the Gospel, 171.
231 ———, Parallel Paths, 281.
232 ———, Segregation of Israel, 217. Curiously, Kraut condemned violence and refused to join any militia, despite his lengthy employment by the US army. He nevertheless saw the armed, unruly Ephraimites who joined him in practicing plural marriage as people meriting public defense and as part of God’s plan (Ann Wilde, telephone conversation).
233 Kraut, One Mighty and Strong, 133.
234 ———, The Gathering of Israel, 63.
235 ———, The United Order, 159.
people with each tribe led by its own divinely mandated prophet.\textsuperscript{236} Fundamentalists and fundamentalists, it seems, subscribe to an equally peculiar understanding of the temporal order, equally at variance with the prescriptive teleology of normal Christian eschatology and apocalypticism. The Plan of Salvation is not so much a linear sequence of events but instead functions as a branching set of contingencies, each foreknown by God but only a minority of which will come to pass. While in typological thought, any major scriptural event can be relied upon to happen more than once, scriptural events in the historical thought of Kraut, and to a lesser extent, Skousen have a real chance of never taking place at all.

\textsuperscript{236} ———, \textit{One Mighty and Strong}, 90.
Chapter Four: Margarito Bautista

I. Margarito Bautista

When I visited the Museo de Mormonismo in Mexico City, it was difficult for its founder and proprietor Fernando Gomez to conceal his admiration for Margarito Bautista; his recent self-published book *Benito Juárez y la Conexión Mormona del Siglo Diecinueve* must have found at least some of its inspiration in Bautista’s assertions that Juárez was like Moses, only better: a more impressive lawgiver of a greater law. Similarly, despite the museum’s prominent position across the street from Mexico City’s temple, the museum’s co-curator, Sergio Pagaza Castillo could not help remarking that not only does it enjoy a fruitful relationship with the temple. But it is also well-connected to Ozumba, the polygamous compound that Bautista founded in middle age. Nor is there anything especially subversive about this position on the part of Mexican Mormons. In his 1983 *Historia del Mormonismo en México*, faithful Mormon adherent Agrícol Lozano Herrera celebrates Bautista as a hero of Mexican Mormonism, despite his ultimate excommunication from the LDS Church.\(^1\)

The situation that gave rise to Bautista’s emergence as a leader, dissident and expositor of a unique Mormon doctrine began in 1910 with the Mexican Revolution which interrupted an active LDS mission in the country. In 1913, the Church evacuated its missionaries and, even after the fighting, this situation was prolonged by the 1926 government edict expelling foreign clergy. By 1936, F. La Mond Tullis suggests, the LDS Church in Mexico had been functioning autocephalically for at least a decade, this having been formalized by the Mexican group’s

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formal request for their own mission president. In 1934, the petition received its answer with the appointment of Harold Pratt as the new president whose ethnicity and apparently highhanded governance style only served to further deepen the rift. At this point, Bautista was residing in Utah, where he was studying to be a high priest, and had a positive pre-existing relationship with the hierarch whose previous job had been to head the mission to expatriate Mexicans in the US. He even dedicated his first historical synthesis to him. Unfortunately, this document was not the sort of book that either Pratt or the governing bodies of the Church wanted to see: it put forward a specific theory of Book of Mormon geography; it took a series of contemporary political positions, many hostile to the US government; and that was just the beginning. Worse yet, Bautista expected the Church to endorse and publish his bold new synthesis as a key piece of official literature to be distributed by the new Pratt-led mission.

But whatever defects the Church found in the book, it was highly popular with the members in Mexico who were already embroiled in a multi-year conflict with Pratt and authorities to the North. Its bold exaltation of the Mexican present and its indigenous past was an ideal accompaniment to the growing demands on the part of local leaders that a member of “Pueblo Lamanita Mexicano” replace Pratt and it quickly became sufficiently popular that an influential and government-connected member, Apolonio Arzate, was able to secure the funds and requisite government support for its printing. This provoked official condemnation from the Church and resulted in a ban on the publication and sanctions against members distributing it.

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2 F. LaMond Tullis, Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 1987), 123-25.
3 Ibid., 122.
4 Ibid., 123.
5 Lozano, Historia del mormonismo, 65; Tullis, Mormons in Mexico, 124-25.
6 ———, Mormons in Mexico, 124-25.
All of this culminated in 1936 in the third convention of the LDS in Mexico which resulted in a third of all Mexican Mormons leaving to become part of the “Third Convention Movement” after their demands that a member of the “Mexican race” be made president of the mission field were refused. And as the Third Convention began producing its own translations of Pearl of Great Price and Doctrine and Covenants, the Church began to retaliate with official excommunications of its dissidents. Ultimately, the Third Convention and the Church were reconciled in 1946 but years before this, Bautista had already left, disappointed in the movement’s retreat from his bold reworking of LDS theology and the Mormon historical narrative in his book. It is on this basis that Mexican LDS bishop, poet and historian Agrícol Lozano ultimately condemns him, not for his disloyalty to the LDS but to his patria by way of the Third Convention, an organization he deprived of his leadership and intelligence.

Bautista was born in 1878 to a Nahuatl-speaking peasant family and, after flirting with various Protestant denominations as an adolescent, was converted to the LDS Church by Ammon Tenney, a missionary from Utah in 1901. Within weeks, he was an elder, delivering Spanish-language sermons on behalf of the Church. During his time as a proselytizing elder in the relatively new mission, the most senior LDS members with whom he interacted, outside of those on time-limited official missions, tended to be practitioners of polygamy who had fled South, with the blessing and encouragement, initially of Church authorities, to continue the practice of polygamy outside the US, following the Manifesto. These individuals continued to constitute an important part of Bautista’s peer group until escalating revolutionary attacks on US-owned

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7 Ibid., 139, 141.
8 Ibid., 145.
9 Ibid., 147.
10 Lozano, Historia del mormonismo, 88-89.
11 Jason Dormady, 2007, “‘Not Just a Better Mexico:’ Intentional Religious Community and the Mexican State, 1940-1964” (PhD. diss, University of California—Santa Barbara), 188.
12 Ibid., 189.
13 Ibid., 192.
land and property caused the Church to recall its colonists. Soon after, he voluntarily relocated to Utah, settling there in late 1913 or early 1914,14 where he became a highly active member, assisting in the creation of the first Spanish-speaking congregation in Utah and perfecting his English. During this period he was featured in the Church’s house organ Improvement Era as an exemplary convert.15 Although he returned to Mexico on a two-year mission in 1922-24, he identified as a member of a political entity he termed “External Mexico,” comprising political exiles and economic migrants whose reincorporation into Mexico he came to see as increasingly imperative.16 But he did not return to Mexico until, to his complete surprise, the LDS Church refused to endorse or publish what he considered to be his brilliant magnum opus, La Evolución de México; Sus Verdaderos Progenitores y su Origen; El Destino de América y Europa and suggested that it was best left unpublished. It was only then, in 1935 that he departed Utah and returned to Mexico City to join the movement for autocephaly.17

To express Bautista’s chronicon in the spirit and style befitting him, it seems appropriate not to continue with his biographical details but instead to start...

II. In medias res

Bautista is the most anti-Leonian of the characters introduced so far because his work primarily seeks to answer the question that Leone says is un-Mormon to ask: “how did the past become the present?”18 Most Mormon histories of the New World stop and start where Mormon scripture does, leaving a gap between 421 and 1492; but much of Bautista’s work is concerned with filling in that blank. Similarly, the period between 1492 and 1787, not covered by Mormon

14 Ibid., 194.
15 Ibid., 195.
16 Ibid., 198.
17 Ibid., 207.
scripture is also of considerable interest to him. To pay homage to Bautista’s style of both writing and reasoning, we will join his narrative not at the beginning, but in the middle of what he has determined to be a pivotal event, the meeting between Hernan Cortes and King Moctezuma II in November 1519.

Bautista’s main interest in this encounter is the way in which it was both predestined and fully foreknown to Moctezuma and his court. How exactly did the Aztecs know Cortes was coming? It was universally known by all Mesoamerican people, he confidently states, that “WHITE AND BEARDED MEN” would arrive from the East. What many European scholars do not know or seek to minimize is that the complete prophecy stated that these men would also destroy the kings and gods of America and impose a new religion. Even though it led to the ultimate destruction of their descendants as a political entity, the arrival of Cortes must be read as a vindication of the prophecies of the Toltecs and their God, Queztalcoatl, constituting ultimate proof of the extraordinary knowledge possessed by these ancient peoples. The prophecy conveyed to Moctezuma by his ancestors that they were evil men and the whole of the Aztec people knew that their fall, at this moment, would be identical to the rise of a people known as the Gentiles. But this prophecy, which had come all the way from their earliest ancestor, the prophet Nephi, was not all darkness. The complete version stated that after suffering under the Gentile yoke, there would be a happy, blissful future for the indigenous peoples of the Americas. In this way, the 2,000 years of anticipation between Nephi’s first

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19 No events between Columbus’s arrival, described in 1 Nephi 13:12 and 1787, the enactment of the American Constitution, described in Doctrine and Covenants 101:77 are explicitly referenced in Mormon scripture.

20 Margarito Bautista, La evolución de México; Sus verdaderos progenitores y su origen; El destino de America y Europa (Distrito Federal: Arzate Brothers, 1935), 27. Capitalization is a trademark of Bautista’s, and I have accordingly preserved when citing him. (my translation)

21 ———, La Evolución, 29.

22 Ibid., 27.

23 Ibid., 45, 252.

24 Ibid., 28, 45.
articulation of this prophecy in 2 Nephi 1:5-12 was akin to the Jews’ centuries long anticipation of the Messiah. For this reason, even though its fulfillment began in 1521, or perhaps 1492, this great prophecy is still in the process of fulfillment.

But rather than following the prophecy and its fulfillment in the works of Bautista, I seek first to establish that the idea of Aztec knowledge of the prophecy as well as Aztec agency and greatness are not simply themes that Bautista mobilizes in order to explain or justify Mormonism. There exists, rather, a strong nationalist commitment to the rehabilitation of the pre-Columbian past. It is not just the “FAMOUS PROPHECY,” then, of which the Aztec people had “a perfect knowledge.” Even at the time of Cortes’ arrival, they still retained a perfect knowledge of the birth of the Messiah and his death from Nephite times. One of Bautista’s key sources for this assertion is Bernal Diaz’s eyewitness chronicle of the conquest of Mexico. Diaz, Bautista points out, recounts Moctezuma’s claim of possessing the scientific and religious knowledge of his ultimate conqueror. What interest would Diaz have in inaccurately representing Moctezuma’s knowledge of the Bible and the correct cosmology of the universe? Based on this section of dialogue from Diaz’s account, Bautista is able to reason that upon arriving in Tenochtitlan, Cortes was disappointed to discover that the city’s people were “perfectly familiar with European knowledge.” And not only were they perfectly acquainted, their knowledge of Christianity and the Gospel actually antedated that of their Spanish conquerors (having been introduced in the Lehites’ first migration to the Americas in the sixth century BCE). For instance, the astronomical arts of the Aztecs had arisen from their search

\[\text{Ibid., 29, 42.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 30.}\]
\[\text{——, Apostasia universal (Ozumba: Colonia Industrial Mexicana, 1957), 57. (my translation)}\]
\[\text{——, La evolución, 40.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 246. (my translation)}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 129.}\]
for the star heralding the Messiah.\textsuperscript{31} Like the Jews, Bautista asserts, the aboriginal people of the Americas have known their true history from the very beginning, whatever mistakes they may have made.\textsuperscript{32}

It is important at this point to clarify that when Bautista uses the terms “Lamanite” and “aboriginal” they are not to be understood as synonymous; but this does not mean that Bautista takes the position of Sorenson and other later scholars who argue that the Lehites were a group distinct from a pre-existing indigenous population. Instead, Bautista understands all indigenous Americans to originate from peoples chronicled in the Book of Mormon of whom the Lamanites form a subset. In this scheme, the Lamanites are those categorized in long-standing Mexican ethnologies as the “Chichimecs,” the non- and semi-sedentary peoples of Northern Mesoamerica, and their descendants. As the most prominent of the descendants of the Chichimecs, the Aztecs, are true Lamanites.\textsuperscript{33} On the other hand, the ancient Maya do not fit into this category. They should be understood as the Mulekite people, the founders of the City of Zarahemla introduced in Omni 1:14.\textsuperscript{34} But whereas their Mulekite subjects came to be known as the Maya, their Nephite overlords over time came to be known as the “Nahua.”\textsuperscript{35} Bautista spends little time on how he makes these deductions, largely because it should be self-evident to readers. A loose antique/medieval style of false etymology is, while not a large part, an important part of Bautista’s means of reasoning about the past. I use the term “antique/medieval” because unlike the false etymologies that have underpinned Victorian antiquarian and twentieth century cult archaeology of Mesoamerica, Bautista’s false etymology jumps effortlessly between languages and across time. The most striking example of this is his deduction that the ancient Mayan

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 135.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., \textit{Apostasia universal}, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., \textit{La evolución}, 138.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 219.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 129; Ibid., \textit{Apostasia universal}, 56.
\end{itemize}
hero-god Votan can be identified with the Mormon prophet Mosiah because the Spanish word for seer, “vidente,” also starts with the letter “v.”\textsuperscript{36} The fact that neither the Maya nor the Nephites spoke Spanish is unproblematic.\textsuperscript{37}

Even without false etymology, Bautista is able to draw a fairly detailed and specific picture of this group he calls the “Lamanites.” This group is not interchangeable with the peoples mainstream academic historians might see as Chichimecs, but is enlarged to support the narrative that Bautista is ultimately able to draw. The term “Nahua,” in this narrative is not understood to constitute all Nahuatl-speaking peoples; almost all important Nahuatl-speakers are annexed to the Lamanite/Chichimec category. Bautista does not merely see the Mexica as invaders from the North; he sees virtually all of the peoples who came to comprise the Mexico Valley civilization as of 1521 as being of Chichimec origin. In this way, groups like the Tlaxcalans are annexed to the Lamanite category.\textsuperscript{38} Following the lead of Roberts, Bautista takes claims of total Nephite extinction with a grain of salt. Instead, he suggests that during the last phases of the Lamanite conquest of the Nephites there was substantial intermarriage and other confusion of lineage due to the repeated sacking, abandonment and re-inhabitation of the great cities of Mesoamerica, causing present-day Mesoamericans to trace their lineages through their Lamanite forbears.\textsuperscript{39}

This confusing past helps to explain how it is that the Aztecs were able to retain so much Nephite knowledge.\textsuperscript{40} Again differing from Anglo-Mormon historians, with the possible

\textsuperscript{36} Here we see Votan viewed primarily as a culture hero divinity in an 1897 study, a “cave god” in 1934, and a vastly powerful progenitor deity in the most recent study (Marilyn Goldstein, “The Ceremonial Role of the Maya Flanged Censer” \textit{Man} 12, no. 3/4 [1977]: 416; Mary Butler, “A Note on Maya Cave Burials” \textit{American Anthropologist} 36, no. 2 [1934]: 223-25; Daniel G. Brinton, “The Missing Authorities on Mayan Antiquities” \textit{American Anthropologist} 10, no. 6 [1897]: 189).
\textsuperscript{37} Bautista, \textit{La evolución}, 443.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 551.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 436, 454, 511.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 127.
exception of Roberts in his celebration of the pre-Columbian past, Bautista makes clear that the
greatness of the Lamanite people is not all in the future. Netzahualcóyotl, celebrated by Mexican
historians of Bautista’s day as a multi-talented poet-engineer-warrior king who led the Mexica in
their most enlightened period, for instance, was the recipient of the original Gospel knowledge
passed, like the practice of baptism, intact, from one generation to the next. He, like the last
Aztec emperor Cuauhtemoc, should be proudly celebrated as a direct descendant Laman.41 And
they form part, Bautista seeks to remind his readers, of an older heroic tradition of Lamanite
greatness exemplified by the prophet Samuel the Lamanite and King Lamoni.42 This should not
obscure Bautista’s general view of the millennium between the Nephite defeat in 385 and the
beginning of Mexica hegemony in the fourteenth century, as anything other than, like the same
period across the Atlantic, a dark age of monarchical government, barbarism, and pagan religious
observance.43 Once, “our Lamanite ancestors took solemn possession of this continent,” a
millennium of extensive migrations began.44

This period was not as bad as it could have been. The Three Nephites continued their
ministry during this time and exerted a morally uplifting influence on the survivors of the
Nephite-Lamanite wars.45 These immortal disciples had been an important part of the folklore of
the American Southwest since Orson Pratt had stated in 1855 that they were about to “come into
our midst.”46 Between 1875 and 1925, folktales reporting encounters with the Nephites became
so common in Utah that Talmage wryly observed that, if legends were to be believed, the

41 Raúl Martinez, “Los Aztecas: breve estudio histórico-social,” revista Mexicana de sociología 1, no. 3 (1939): 42;
Bautista, La evolución, 129, 399.
42 Lamoni, was the first Lamanite king to convert and receive the Gospel (Alma 18).
43 ———, La evolución, 21, 59. (my translation)
44 ———, ¿Restituirás... el reino? (Ozumba: Colonia Industrial Mexicana, 1950), 167; ———, La evolución, 525.
45 The three disciples on whom Christ conferred immortality in 34 CE (3 Nephi 28:7), ———, La evolución, 36, 507.
Nephites must be “the most over-worked men” in Mormondom. Instead of making a competing claim of present-day ministry to the Mexican people, Bautista instead situates the Nephites’ involvement in Mesoamerica very much in the past. Their storied powers of healing, prophecy and teleportation made a heavy imprint on Mesoamerican history; it is their miracles that are recorded as the acts of ancient gods and heroes and form the foundation of Aztec mythology.

The millennium of migration was not without purpose. The Lamanites spent this time locating and conquering the Nephite holdouts throughout the Americas before returning triumphantly to the Mexico Valley in the fourteenth century having conquered the remainder of the continent. This process took so long because of the extraordinary craftiness of the Nephite resisters, among whom the Gadianton robbers played a leadership role. They were highly effective at concealing themselves in the landscape as the cliff and cave dwellings of the American Southwest attest. The 1325 conquest was not a local victory but the culmination of a millennium of conquest. And we should marvel at the adaptability of the Lamanites in their rapid transition from a life of nomadic barbarism to their new role as lords of the Aztec Empire.

Having rejected a literal extinction narrative for the Nephites and other non-Lamanite Book of Mormon peoples, Bautista develops a convoluted history of the period from the third century CE to the fourteenth, to explain where different groups came to be located. Without

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48 Lee, The Three Nephites, 47, 49, 55-56; Bautista, La evolución, 37, 507.

49 ——, La evolución, 513-14. Bautista hastens to remind his readers that the Gadiantons were originally a Nephite not a Lamanite group.

50 ——, Apostasia universal, 57; ——, La evolución, 24.

51 ——, La evolución, 26.

52 ——, En defensa de los derechos de la casa de Israel [II] (Ozumba: Colonia Industrial Mexicana, 1961), 10; ——, Apostasia universal, 56; ——, La evolución, 539. In brief, Bautista explains that Zarahemla’s military presence at the south end of the Nephite realm allowed the Nephites to spread peacefully through North America.
rehearsing its twists and turns, it is concluded that the Nephites/Nahuas and their Mayan vassals were concentrated in the Great Lakes region yet distributed widely between the thirty-second parallel and the Arctic Circle by the fourth century CE and have remained the primary population in this region ever since. In other words, it is not, for the most part, the present-day Mayan speakers who are the Maya, nor the present-day Nahuatl speakers who are the Nahua, nor the people living around Teotihuacán who are the descendants of the Toltecs. Non-Lamanite Book of Mormon peoples are the Indians of Anglo America; Lamanites are the indigenous peoples of Latin America.

This counter-intuitive reading has a clear purpose in establishing a different exegesis of Book of Mormon prophecies about the present day and past five hundred years. If the Lamanites only occupy the region south of the United States, it follows that the prophecies regarding the conquests of the Lamanites and of the Americas in general in 1 Nephi must refer only to the Spanish conquest and not to those of the English, French, or Dutch. That is not to say that none of these prophecies pertain to the United States, but rather that we should understand those concerning the conquest of the Americas as pertaining to regions south. This distinction is important in understanding Bautista’s understanding of election.

III. An Elect Mexico

In various ways, the Book of Mormon can be interpreted as arguing that the United States is an elect nation whose expansion and ultimate hemispheric or global dominion is ordained by God. Mormonism’s embrace of the ideas of Manifest Destiny and empire current in the era of Smith’s ministry informed the prophet’s presidential campaign in 1844 and, in precisely the era during the Nephite-Lamanite wars and that most of these individuals were not associated with the Nephite government whose army was defeated at the battle of Cumorah.

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53 ——, *La evolución*, 513-14.
54 ——, *La verdad que ellos me enseñaron* (Mexico, 1940), 52.
55 Ibid., 65.
that Bautista resided in Utah, came once again to be articulated forcefully as the dominant LDS understanding of the US, as exemplified in Talmage’s 1919 *Vitality of Mormonism*,

… out of this land, which in solemn truth is the land of Zion, shall go forth the law of the Lord unto the world at large. In the majesty of her high destiny our Nation has taken a stand as the champion of freedom and human rights. Her enduring greatness is conditioned only by the righteousness of her people… there is a time of seeding and a time of harvest. Only now has the world been even measurably prepared for…for the kind of government that shall yet be established in other lands as it has been in America. Fifty, aye, even twenty years ago, to have attempted forcibly to uproot the weeds of autocracy would have endangered the precious wheat of real democracy. There is a dominant element of timeliness in all works of God…

This is different from the kind of theocratic separatism that characterized pre-Manifesto Mormonism and the kind of isolationism favoured by conservatives. These arguments were based on an established theology that understood the US to be an elect state on multiple bases.

First, there is the argument of geographic election. As Bautista reports, the whole of the Western Hemisphere is and has always been Zion, the Promised Land, the land of freedom; this inheres in the land itself not just in its peoples. It has possessed this property since the Garden of Eden was created here. We should therefore understand the Jaredites not as having settled the Americas but as being tasked with repopulating the “Adamic continent.” Once here, they fulfilled their elect duty, building a civilization that lasted three millennia based on the Law of Consecration, functioning as a United Order.

Again, simply following the normative LDS doctrine of his day, Bautista reminds his readers that beyond any geographic election, there is tribal election. The Nephites and Lamanites are doubly elect because the descendants of Joseph (the Mulekites, as coming from Judah are not included) have a special right to the continent, as provided in Mormon scripture. But even amongst the elect descendants of Joseph, not all are equally elect. While Native Americans may

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58 Bautista, *La evolución*, 22, 211.
59 Ibid., 451; ———, *Apostasia universal*, 10-11; Bautista refers to America as the “Adamic continent” and reminds his readers that it is from “our continent” that the city of Enoch was raised.
60 ———, *La evolución*, 413, 451; ———, *Apostasia universal*, 12.
come from the tribes of Judah, Manasseh, and Ephraim, those descending from Ephraim are especially elect in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. And amongst the Nephites and Lamanites who descend from Ephraim, the Lamanites are especially elect because Book of Mormon prophecy specifically identifies them, of all the Israelites in America, as having a special work in the latter days. In other words, it is only people of indigenous blood in Latin America who conferred a special role at the eschaton. But some Lamanites are more elect than others. Because the culmination of the Spanish invasion of the Americas was not Columbus’ landing on Hispaniola, but the conquest of Tenochtitlan, and because the Aztecs were the first people to whom the Bible was introduced, it is the Mexican people who are preeminent amongst all the Lamanites. Now that we approach the eschaton, a new era is dawning, the era of the Lamanites and the previous era, the era of the Gentiles is at an end now that the Lamanites have been purified, scourged by Gentile rule.

A succession of elect races might have seemed familiar to Bautista’s Mexican readers in 1935, given the description of a similar succession of elect races in the chronicon of José Vasconcelos, the celebrated education minister of the Mexican revolutionary state. Beyond the general influence exerted by his writing in revolutionary Mexico, Bautista credits his original motivation to produce his magnum opus, La Evolución de Mexico, to a Vasconcelos speech to Mexican expatriates in California. Although the speech was ultimately rained out, and it is doubtful that Bautista ever got to hear Vasconcelos speak, it triggered an existentially fraught

61 ——, La evolución, 230.
62 Ibid., 230; ——, La verdad, 82.
63 ——, En defensa (1961), 10.
64 ——, La evolución, 502.
65 Ibid., 42, 207. The Spanish deserve limited credit for this scourging, having helped to end Lamanite idolatry.
experience for him, that he saw as analogous to the experience of Jonah. Upon emerging from his personal whale, Bautista was convinced of the need to put his *chronicon* to paper.\(^{66}\)

Vasconcelos was one of the most unlikely of the many unlikely celebrities of the Mexican revolution. Originally a philosopher trained at the tail end of the *científico* regime of Porfirio Díaz, he had, prior to the establishment of the revolutionary state, dedicated himself to writing of obscure philosophical matters in a project of rehabilitating Pythagorean philosophy to the present day.\(^{67}\) But his work as a public intellectual in establishing the state and his considerable success in launching the revolutionary education department helped to grant him a public platform that would make his book, *La Raza Cósmica*, the best selling and most widely produced book in inter-war Mexico.\(^{68}\) *La raza cósmica*, refers to the third of the three great races that will rule the world. Vasconcelos argues that there have been three eras of human history: one of materialism and armed struggle, followed by one of intellectualism or reason and political struggle, and the third age, which is dawning, of aesthetics and spiritual struggle.\(^{69}\) This third age will be the final age and will inaugurate a utopia. Each age is to be led by a different elect people – the British led the previous age – and the third age is to be led by the Mexican people whose unique combination of indigenous and Spanish blood make them an elect group, the fifth and final race to come into being. Spanish blood is important, he suggests, because the Spanish carry the highly-important blood of the Arabs and Jews who comprised much of medieval Spain.\(^{70}\) More generally, he suggests, *mestizo* people of Latin America generally fulfill this role and will, when the time is right, create a new world capital on the Amazon River called

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\(^{66}\) Ibid., 80-82.

\(^{67}\) Didier T Jaen, Introduction to *The Cosmic Race: La Raza Cósmica*, by José Vasconcelos (Los Angeles: California State University Press, 1979), xxv, xxviii.

\(^{68}\) Ann Rubenstein, personal communication 13 March 2008.


\(^{70}\) Ibid., 22.
Universopolis. This victory will not be a military one but a spiritual one that will succeed through integration instead of competition. Echoed in Bautista’s near-identical hierarchy, Vasconcelos sees the work of bringing about this secular millennium as specially mandated upon the Western Hemisphere, the mestizo race and the Mexican nation. Vasconcelos’ worldview did not just motivate Bautista but also helped him to structure the image of a millennial, elect Mexican state whose capital was outside the nation’s present borders, given the scriptural requirement that Zion’s capital be located in Jackson County.

Bautista’s nationalism, and a surprising conservatism, is evident in his practices of citing and sourcing his sources. While Vasconcelos sees his historical narrative as competing with the Mu, Atlantis, and Lemuria theories, and tends to support it with bald assertion rather than outside authorities, Bautista writes more in the style of Joseph Smith’s original History, making use of lengthy excerpts and citations of mainstream scholarship, which was also popular in progressive LDS histories before falling out of favour as the twentieth century wore on. But where Roberts might merely quote Prescott, Bautista treats the citation of Mexican historians as a dual opportunity both to support his theories and to wax nationalistic about their heroic contribution to Mexico. Gregorio Torres Quintero, especially, is to be admired because of the nationalist sensibility he brings to his scholarship, rehabilitating pre-Columbian legends from the realm of

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72 Ibid., 35.
73 Ibid., 9. The well-known Atlantis theory was supplemented in the late nineteenth century with the adduction that if a sunken continent was necessary to explain the Atlantic rim civilizations, it would therefore follow that the presence of major Pacific and Indian rim civilizations would indicate the existence of one or more additional prehistoric sunken continents. This is best articulated in Wishar Spenle Cerve, Lemuria: The Lost Continent of the Pacific (San Jose: Grand Supreme Lodge of AMORC, 1931). The Mu theory was based on the work of Le Plongeon, founder of the discipline of “psychic archaeology” to argue in favour of contact between the Egyptian Old Kingdom and Mesoamerica but was transformed in the 1920s by James Churchward into another lost continent theory as described in R. Tripp Evans’ Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination 1820-1915 (University of Texas Press, 2004), 152.
74 E.g. Bautista, La evolución, 86.
folklore to legitimate historical sources. And Bautista sees himself as part of Torres’ intellectual movement.

This folklore, like Jewish scripture from the Eastern Hemisphere, is far more reliable than anything else. Israelites, Bautista reminds us, are especially proficient at keeping an accurate record of the past against tremendous odds. Adopting a method that falls somewhere between patternism and proof-texting, Bautista engages with scholars like Torres not, primarily, for their views but for access to the folklore and conquest-era sources they use, lacking direct access to them himself. Quintero’s *La Patria Mexicana* is, for instance, helpful in describing the customs and habits of the Lamanite people during the dark period of 421-1492. In understanding the Nephite conquest of Zarahemla from the Mulekites, Luis Perez Verdía’s *Historia de México* is similarly helpful. By hybridizing this text with the Book of Mormon narrative, the two documents are seen as mutually correcting. The relative sizes of the two groups is corrected and refined through the writings of Perez, whereas Perez’s description of the migratory directions can be corrected through the Book of Mormon.

These historical reconciliations do not just allow Bautista to flesh out the details of legendary and Book of Mormon events; they also enlarge his vocabulary of equivalent and interchangeable terms for Mesoamerican peoples. Using his engagement with Perez, the Nephite lineage (the direct descendants of the prophet) is discovered to correspond with the Toltecs. Similarly, the terms “Lamanite” and “Carib” can be used interchangeably based on Torres.

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75 Ibid., 28.
76 ——, *Apostasia universal*, 53.
77 ——, *La evolución*, 24.
78 Ibid., 262, 439-440. Similarly because through etymological practice Bautista has identified the location of the Votan narrative as the city of Zarahemla (Bautista’s etymological practice also allows him to determine that Zarahemla was named based on eponymous kingship beginning with the Mesoamerican legendary figure, Zamná), he is also able to reason that because both Torres and Perez identify the next set of invaders as Caribs, the Lamanites must have already conquered the Caribbean Islands by the second century BCE (Ibid., 442, 509, 510).
79 Ibid., 445, 510.
When Bautista is able to work with translations of ancient documents, he does so with considerable enthusiasm. The English translation of the Book of Jasher he obtained in Utah, supplements the scripture at his disposal and is so convincing to him that he theorizes that it was part of the Brass Plates.\textsuperscript{80} Similarly the \textit{Infancy Gospel of James} is to be taken as another legitimate source in illustrating doctrines of celibacy as being an affront to women given the centrality of childbirth in Mormon soteriology.\textsuperscript{81}

Even when in conflict with mainstream scholarship, Bautista is highly reluctant to understand or explain this relationship as conflictual, staking out a strongly pro-science position. In his work Bautista asserts that there is nothing wrong with the disciplines of history or archaeology; they are indeed noble disciplines. He understands himself as merely assisting other practitioners of the disciplines by supplementing their work with his own.\textsuperscript{82} Due to extensive damage, the archaeological record is necessarily incomplete; the stone ruins of the pre-Columbian era attest to its glory but cannot give voice to its details. Only the texts of the restored Gospel can do that and those with access to them have a special duty to clarify that which archaeology has been unable to clarify.\textsuperscript{83}

In engaging in this most congenial conflict with physical and social sciences, Bautista is able to make what for other Mormon historians is a problem, into a solution. The great cataclysm of 34 CE has erased vast quantities of the Nephite archaeological record. Because this cataclysm was supernatural in character, it rendered unavailable evidence of events preceding it far more thoroughly than any natural cataclysm could have. The record of the Nephite past is buried deep in the earth or far under the sea. We should expect to find no archaeological trace

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 223, 228.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 173.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 21, 87. Bautista feels the same way about the historical profession (Ibid., 40).
\end{itemize}
either of the cataclysm or of anything the Nephites did prior to it until the *eschaton* when their ancient cities shall rise again.\(^{84}\) And when the cataclysm fails to explain this lacuna in the archeological record, the extraordinary competence of the Lamanites that he has established allows Bautista to argue that the great post-34 CE cities have been physically pulverized down to their very foundations.\(^{85}\) These buried or pulverized cities were far greater than Copan, Chichen Izta or Palenque, especially the great metropolis of Zarahemla.\(^{86}\) As with the Jaredite civilization, Bautista finds the Book of Mormon far too tepid when it comes to expressing its grandeur and he explains that its wealth and learning must have been known throughout the entirety of the Americas, from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic. In its day, Zarahemla produced all of the commercial, literary, artistic, cartographic, and horticultural minds of the Western hemisphere.\(^{87}\) Not only did it utterly dominate the entire hemisphere, but it also remained until the late fourth century the wealthiest city on the face of the earth.\(^{88}\) Its residents had the complete knowledge of the Plan of Salvation and the cosmology of the universe exceeding even our modern understanding.\(^{89}\)

Whereas the nationalism of Vansconcelos is no doubt the most important of the themes and strains within nationalist thought in the Bautista *chronicon*, Bautista is typical of most Mexican authors of his day in partaking of the thought of all of the major intellectual architects of the revolutionary state. It is much more the nationalist thinking of anthropologist Manuel Gamio in which we see Bautista’s concurrently contradictory and hierarchizing engagement with the indigenous past. Gamio constitutes the most prominent and intellectually coherent expositor

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\(^{84}\) Ibid., 22, 139, 461.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., 545.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 443.
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 444.
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 444.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 545.
of a multivalent discourse within Mexican nationalism known as indigenismo. Where Vasconcelos offers rhetorical grandiosity, Gamio takes a more practical approach to his project of uplifting indigenous Mexicans to their former greatness and in so doing, places more emphasis on Mexico’s indigenous rather than mixed heritage. Not only does he call for a reappraisal of Mexican art, placing pre-Columbian production at the top of his aesthetic hierarchy; he also favours a restoration of economic and political power to indigenous communities through the revolutionary state, along with an increase in social services and education designed to reinforce native cultures rather than encourage assimilation.\(^9^0\) He was a strong advocate of official land re-collectivization through the government’s recreation, in a democratized, modernized form, of the ejido system of collective lands and the rebuilding of village-based native artisanal production.\(^9^1\) Alexander Dawson describes the indigenismo of the Mexican revolutionary state as one in which the Indian is concurrently exalted as the sole and progressive embodiment of the revolutionary state and scorned as backwards and primitive, this contradiction arising, in part, from its status as a multivocal, contested discourse unfolding in public space.\(^9^2\) Alongside liberals, socialists and social Darwinists was the voice of Bautista, ambivalently using indigenismo to argue for indigenous election and for the subordination of some aboriginal groups to others.

This ambivalence towards the indigenous past, while less in evidence than in Vasconcelos’ work, creeps into Bautista’s writing and can be seen in his engagement with Lamanite idolatry and the treatment of the Maya.\(^9^3\) As noted above, Bautista is reluctant to


\(^{91}\) Ibid., 79-81.


\(^{93}\) Bautista, *La evolución*, 42.
associate the contemporary Maya with the historical Maya/Mulekites; ultimately, he concedes that the indigenous peoples of Guatemala and the Yucatán have a minority of Mulekite blood. It is in the context of longstanding conflicts between Central and Northern Mexico and its southern, Mayan provinces, including the Caste War which was ongoing from 1847 until as late as 1915, followed by the radicalism of Emiliano Zapata’s army of the South during the Revolution, that Bautista asserts that the Maya were of Judah not of Joseph. Due to their inferiority, they were totally dominated by the Nahua/Nephites, and occupied an inferior position in Nephite society who accounted for all of their architecture, religion, culture and science. Their only contribution was in the naming of Zarahemla after the city’s ruler Zamná.

If the achievements of the Maya are to be denigrated, the scriptural account of the Lamanites must, on the other hand, be burnished. Even if he was not the one to make the journey himself, the preaching of Samuel the Lamanite is the only way to account for the Three Magi, given that only he knew of and preached the details of Christ’s birth in the period immediately prior. It is only the Lehites, then, who could have traveled to Palestine to attend Christ’s birth. But it is the period following the Saviour’s ministry in the Americas that gives Bautista the best material. During the ensuing golden age, the Nephites and Lamanites had become completely fused as one people, the greatest society in American history. Although this group is called Nephites in scripture, the amalgamation of the Lamanites means that “our progenitors” formed a society exceeded only by that of Enoch. By focusing on this 200-year period, Bautista is able to describe “our progenitors” as the best most faithful monotheists in history, a people that at the

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94 Ibid., 514.
97 Ibid., 218, 262, 443.
98 Ibid., 132.
99 Ibid., 20.
noontide of their realm inhabited the Americas from the Antarctic to the Arctic Ocean, fluently bilingual, speaking both Hebrew and Egyptian perfectly, and proficient in the construction of massive cement highways and other technologies rivaling or exceeding our own.¹⁰⁰

IV. The Gentiles

In the Bautista chronicon, the Age of the Lamanites follows swiftly on the heels of the Age of the Gentiles. Distinct from contemporary Anglo Mormon or Jewish definitions, for Bautista, a Gentile is a white person or, rather, a person who today is white.¹⁰¹ This definition of Gentile is based on the nineteenth-century grafting of pseudo-scientific racial categories onto the biblical narrative, comprehending the world as being divided amongst the descendants of Noah’s three sons: Shem, whose descendants populate Asia; Ham, from whom the African peoples spring; and Japeth, who populated Europe.¹⁰² But while the election of the Israelites was based on their positive characteristics, following their apostasy the Gentiles were the only available people the Lord could choose, given the Hamites’ ineligibility for the priesthood.¹⁰³

For Bautista, there is one oft-repeated section of scripture that he sees as the most important prophecy regarding the Gentiles, Genesis 9:27, that “God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant,” one he understands to be a prophecy of the present day.¹⁰⁴ This prophecy reveals that the Gentiles were ordained to come to the Americas and steal the lands of the Lamanites as part of their general function of serving God by scourging other peoples through the power he has conferred on them to conquer and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 237, 259, 435, 450, 453-54.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 41. Although in his rather labored discussion of the Gentile people, especially in the late career period, his definitions can become a little muddied or confused, Bautista fundamentally never departs from his main definition of Gentile articulated in his original work of Mormon history.
¹⁰² ——, La verdad, 65.
¹⁰³ ——, Apostasia universal, 5; ——, La verdad, 74, 123; ——, Restituiras, 147. This interpretation was a standard, orthodox interpretation of the Book of Abraham until 1978.
¹⁰⁴ This particular verse looms large in the Bautista corpus (——, La verdad, 99).
subjugate the rest of humanity. This power does not just come from armed force but also their cunning, fulfilling the prophecy that “the Lord said that the stranger in your midst will rise far above you.” The divinely appointed task of the Gentiles was to scourge the Israelites and create the United States, thereby giving rise to the social and political conditions necessary to bring about the Restoration; but this task is now complete.

Mirroring his subcategories of the elect in the Era of the Lamanites, the Era of the Gentiles similarly has subcategories of the elect. There are all of the world’s Gentiles, and then there is that group who will inhabit the world’s most powerful Gentile nation, the United States, and within that group, those who temporarily received some of the keys of God’s kingdom. Although there can be good Gentiles like, for instance, Martin Luther, and some of Ephraimite stock still have a role to play, they are not typical. Most Gentiles are part of the decadent apostate and fallen nation, the United States, which has failed to heed the call of the Book of Mormon. Later in his career, Bautista adopts the position that the LDS Church is similarly apostate and illegitimate. Like the Jews who have failed to return to Palestine as the Lord commences his gathering of Israel, these Gentiles will suffer the consequences upon the Lord’s return.

It is not by skin color that one can most easily recognize Gentiles or Israelites but by their behaviour and mission. Whereas the Gentiles’ mission is as a scourge, the Israelite is to bless the

105 ——, *Apostasia universal*, 7.
106 ——, *La verdad*, 71.
107 Ibid., 54.
108 Ibid., 62.
109 This is only the most frequently-articulated of his mutually contradictory views of the Gentiles. Of all the inconsistencies in his writings, Bautista equivocates most strongly on this topic of the Gentiles, often within the same document (e.g., *Restituiras*, 152). In *Defensa* [1961] Bautista notes that most of the good Ephraimites are hidden in the extreme North and not part of today’s nations. These hidden Gentiles are among the Lost Tribes who will emerge from the frozen wastes of the North via a great highway (14).
world, and not to conquer it by force.\textsuperscript{110} By this means, Bautista can determine whether a nation is Israelite or Gentile by assessing how much human blood it has shed.\textsuperscript{111} In this way he is able to discern the answers to contemporary political and religious questions, and can reason widely about the past. For example, we can know that the Romans never converted to Christianity in antiquity because of their ongoing conquests of northern European peoples.\textsuperscript{112} In looking at the history of European colonialism, Bautista suggests that he can identify this as a truly Gentile conquest because the principles that can be derived from the behaviour of America’s conquerors, “HORROR, HATRED AND VENGEANCE,” show these to be Gentile nations.\textsuperscript{113}

The Gentiles are axiomatically violent and crude even among their own and this is why the Lord selected them to carry out for the Israelites of America what Bautista terms the “Pharonic mission.”\textsuperscript{114} When the Gentiles function as instruments of the Lord, they do so unconsciously, as witless dupes in the Plan of Salvation. Christopher Columbus is to be understood as an insane beggar who raised money door-to-door, who knew himself to be inspired by God but who did not actually know God or his true mission.\textsuperscript{115} This stands in sharp contrast to Lehi, who fully understood through his visions how to get to America and why he was going, more than two thousand years before Columbus’ incoherent and disaster-prone mission. Even so, Columbus was still given a chance by the Lord, not merely to be an instrument, but truly to be one of God’s people. Like Cortes and his men, he failed this test by choosing to dominate and conquer the people he found, thus illustrating the difference between

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{La verdad}, 99.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{La evolución}, 140.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 141. Similarly, the ongoing legality of slavery under Roman law can be taken as another sign of this failure to convert, even when Rome appeared to have accepted Christianity (Ibid., 143).
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 234, 527.
Israelites and Gentiles. 116 This reasoning cannot merely be applied to nations but also to institutions. Bautista judges Catholic and Protestant churches by their fruits, holy wars and a multiplicity of creeds. Given its bloody and discordant fruits, Bautista can thus assess the Reformation to have been a fundamentally Gentile project. 117

Importantly, for Bautista’s politics, because all conquest by the Gentile nations has been made on the basis of military force or papal authority, all Gentile colonialism in both the Americas and Africa can be understood to be illegitimate. 118

V. The Blood of Israel (Sangre Regia)

Up to this point, it is possible to classify almost all of the Bautista chronicon as falling within the broad discourses either of the Cosmic Race or of revolutionary indigenismo. But there is a key element to Bautista’s understandings of both the past and present that partakes of a more conservative worldview. Whereas discourses of mestizaje, cultural, physical and otherwise, overwhelmingly shape revolutionary Mexican discourses of race, and whereas both in the indigenismo of Gamio and Vasconcelos’ Cosmic Race narrative we see a progress teleology in a succession of races, an obvious continuity with the Comtian científico worldview of the liberal Mexican state, Bautista’s views of race and lineage exhibit no trace of any nineteenth century progress teleology. For him, modernity constitutes a fundamental aberration and the restoration functions to revive a timeless order based on the “Royal Blood.” From the very beginning, this governing principle has been at risk. If this blood and its possessors have shaped human history, the very existence and purity of this blood have always been at risk since its possessors, the Sons

116 Ibid., 234, 528, 536.
118 ——, La evolución, 49.
of God, the descendants of Seth, mixed it with that of the Daughters of Men. Although it is not always wrong to mix the royal blood with lesser blood given that it has functioned as the leaven of all non-Israelite nations, it is wrong to do so without the express instruction of the Lord himself. This blood, after all, has been the means by which the Gospel has been transmitted; when functioning properly the gospel should be transmitted lineally. As true dominion or the Kingdom of God has always been in the hands – or rather the veins – of the royal blood, Mexicans as the autochthonous branch of the tribe of Joseph partake of this dominion in the present day. It is in this light, Bautista suggests, that we should understand Joseph’s coat of many colors as prefiguring or symbolizing the myriad nations encompassed within this royal lineage. Each colour in the cloak represents one of the Israelite lineages including one for each of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. All blessed families are represented within this cloak and despite episodes of rebellion and miscegenation this lineage survived in Palestine until the birth of its most exalted member, Jesus Christ. But while the blood might persist, people’s recognition and obedience of its authorized possessors generally does not.

One of the reasons that Bautista so strongly exalts the Nephite golden age is its extraordinary exceptionality. The kingdom of God has, he suggests, “always been like a drop of water in a vast ocean, small, weak, temporary,” comprising affiliations of men possessed of the royal blood. This is why during the ministry of Joseph Smith the prophet was forsaken by his own wife and only 3 to 5% of his followers practiced a principle of Plural Marriage (only half of

119 ——, Apostasia universal, 5
120 ——, Restituiras, 166. God has sought to safeguard this blood and its pure descent which unfolded through the various vicissitudes of the Genesis narrative from Seth to Jacob (——, Apostasia universal, 20).
121 ——, La evolución, 232.
122 ——, Restituiras, 146.
123 ——, La evolución, 229-32.
124 ——, La verdad, 71.
125 ——, Apostasia universal, 3.
whom doing so correctly).\textsuperscript{126} And this situation remained throughout the LDS Church even prior to its ultimate renunciation of polygamy in 1890. Although every true prophet until that moment exhorted the people to practice the Principle, they remained covetous, engaged in infighting, and unable, except for a small minority, to glimpse the eternal things of God.\textsuperscript{127} This is why a large majority of Latter-day Saints chose to endorse the Manifesto, as only a tiny proportion of them had practiced the principle it renounced.\textsuperscript{128} Whereas non-compliance with the principle of plural marriage has recently plagued God’s people, the other equally important eternal principle, the Law of Consecration, has been rejected by the Lord’s people all the back into Old Testament Times.\textsuperscript{129} Here, the exceptionality of the Lamanites must be noted; even after their general apostasy, they continued practicing it until the arrival of Cortes.\textsuperscript{130} The Lord has divided time into a series of dispensations, each with their own restoration and prophetic ministry, precisely because it is within the nature even of the possessors of royal blood to apostatize again and again.\textsuperscript{131} And this apostasy repeatedly necessitating scourging has meant that since time immemorial the Israelites have tended to live under the dominion of the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{132}

In Bautista’s view, it must be understood that even in those times of Gentile dominion, they have never possessed the royal blood or known the associated “science” conferring priesthood powers and have thus never been able to perform miracles or, for that matter, achieve world peace.\textsuperscript{133} This is because it was foreordained in the Plan of Salvation that they would sin

\textsuperscript{126}——, Restituiras, 29; ——, La verdad, 91-92.
\textsuperscript{127}——, Restituiras, 13, 176.
\textsuperscript{128}Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{129}Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{130}Ibid., 164; ——, Contestación al agentilado de ríos y sus compañeros (Ozumba: Colonia Agricola Industrial Mexicana, 1960), 8.
\textsuperscript{131}——, Restituiras, 133.
\textsuperscript{132}——, La verdad, 60. Any Gentile knowledge then, scientific or otherwise, has arisen from these frequent failures and apostasies of the Israelite people when their decadence necessitates Gentile domination (——, La evolución, 231).
\textsuperscript{133}——, La evolución, 46-48, 200.
and fall.\textsuperscript{134} It is on this basis that Bautista argues that the apostle Peter would never have allowed the Gospel to go to the Gentiles and even at their most generous the early Church never conveyed the Gospel in its fullness to this group.\textsuperscript{135} Because God would not allow the priesthood to be used by the cruel, despotic or tyrannical, it is axiomatically impossible that it could have been conferred upon the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{136} We should not understand the Bible to have been passed to the Gentiles but instead we should understand it as having been stolen by them.\textsuperscript{137}

In order to elaborate his argument of Gentile exclusion, Bautista must do some heavy exegetical lifting to re-read the Pauline epistles in a way distinct not just from Christians but the LDS Church; this necessitates Judaizing Paul’s teachings. In the Corinthian epistles, Bautista reads every reference to “special office” or “calling” not as applying simply to Paul but to the whole of the Jerusalem Church that he represents.\textsuperscript{138} In Romans, Paul is understood as inveighing against only one group: the Gentile “proselytes” who sought to joined the Roman branch of the Church but then sought in pride to dominate its Israelite members.\textsuperscript{139} Arguing from absence, Bautista suggests that it is the absence of Gentiles that allowed the Western

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., \textit{La verdad}, 127, 133. Whereas the Church in Utah and its Mexican mission might teach that the Gentiles received the Fullness of the Gospel in the Apostolic Age, Bautista confidently asserts that they did not (\textit{ibid.}, \textit{La verdad}, 18). Bautista also makes a series of arguments regarding Catholic theories of apostolic succession that argue Peter conferred his priesthood powers on the Catholic Church: (a) There is no evidence whatsoever that Peter ever attempted to do such a thing (\textit{ibid.}, \textit{La evolución}, 145) (b) Had Peter done so, he would have been a traitor (\textit{ibid.}, \textit{La evolución}, 146) (c) Peter would not have had the power to do this anyway because Jesus Christ himself testified that no one possessed the power to remove the kingdom from the house of Israel, not even him! (\textit{ibid.}, \textit{Reino}, 6) and (d) Even if this were not impossible rules of apostolic succession would indicate that even if both Peter and Paul had granted the Gentiles some portion of their priesthood powers, upon the apostles’ deaths these powers would flow not to any Gentile successors but back to the quorum in Jerusalem (\textit{ibid.}, \textit{Apostasia universal}, 8; \textit{ibid.}, \textit{La evolución}, 147).
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{ibid.}, \textit{La evolución}, 202.
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.}, 204.
\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Ibid.}, 148.
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Ibid.}, 146. Speaking more generally of all of the apostles, Bautista argues that the commission to judge the tribes of Israel in Luke 22:28-30 and Matthew 19-28 renders conferring the priesthood on the Gentiles not only absurd but extremely risky. He also cites Ignatius of Antioch in support of the belief that the priesthood can only be conferred on Israelites (\textit{ibid.}, 151).
Hemisphere’s Church to avoid apostasy until 363, some time after darkness descended in the East.\(^{140}\)

One of the reasons, Bautista explains, that his exegesis seems so difficult and counter-intuitive is that centuries of Gentile exegesis have resulted not only in a misinterpretation of the locus of priesthood power, but also of the group to whom scripture pertains. The Bible must be understood as an extensive history of the House of Israel, by the House of Israel and exclusively for the House of Israel.\(^{141}\) Like the Sermon at the Temple, the Sermon on the Mount is to be narrowly construed with respect to audience; regardless of audience composition, its words were directed only to his true followers and not to the Israelite, never mind Gentile, mass.\(^{142}\) If a piece of scripture appears to address all of humanity, we can know this portion to have been amended by apostate Church councils.\(^{143}\)

Like others who joined the fundamentalist movement in this period, such as Kraut, Bautista returns to a pre-Manifesto narrative of Christian apostasy. To justify their avoidance of persecution by adopting the Manifesto Mormon apologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to re-describe second- and third-century Christian martyrs as being deluded or pathological members of an already apostate Church destroyed by persecution. But Bautista returns to the more traditional Wesleyan historiography that exalts the martyrs and sees Milvian Bridge and Nicea as the start of the Great Apostasy.\(^{144}\) Up until Diocletian’s persecution, the Gospel was preached and priesthood powers functioned; only in the early Catholic

\(^{140}\) Ibid., 150.

\(^{141}\) ——, *Apostasia universal*, 41.

\(^{142}\) ——, *La evolución*, 471. Christ signals this by the fact that he chooses to address those persecuted on his behalf. The Sermon at the Temple is the episode in the Book of Mormon where the risen Christ delivers elements of the Sermon on the Mount to the Nephites in 34 CE (3 Nephi 11-26).

\(^{143}\) ——, *La verdad*, 22, 24.

ecumenical councils were doctrines of exaltation and world creation removed.\textsuperscript{145} We should dismiss any claims the Church was fragmented in the third and fourth centuries; after all, we know from latter-day revelation that for even a one-ward church to function, a minimum of 220 priests is required in order to fill all of the requisite quora. Those who testified to ecclesiastical division mistook a skeleton crew for disunity.\textsuperscript{146}

VI. National election, Plans A and B.

As with other Mormon thinkers examined in this dissertation, I have sought to describe not the evolution of Bautista’s thought over time, but instead its fullest elaboration. However, one aspect of his thought must unavoidably be periodized. During Bautista’s full membership as a faithful adherent to the LDS and his subsequent leadership of the schismatic Third Convention movement, his \textit{chronicon} culminated in the Mexican revolutionary state. But following the collapse of the Third Convention, and his new affiliation with the fundamentalist movement, he developed a new theory that saw his \textit{chronicon} culminate in a small, elect group of Lamanite polygamists of which his \textit{ejido} compound, Ozumba, formed the vanguard.

\textit{Plan A: The Mexican Revolutionary State}

In Bautista’s view the opportunities lost in ancient times to the House of Israel and more recently to the Gentiles are now open to the Mexican people as the descendants of Lehi.\textsuperscript{147} On the first page of his 1935 lavishly produced \textit{La Evolución de México}, Bautista proclaims today as the moment of Mexico’s “becoming,” when Mexicans will reconstruct their Fatherland.\textsuperscript{148} But this process is fraught, contingent and demanding leadership because, much as foreigners are

\textsuperscript{145}——, \textit{La verdad}, 8; ——, \textit{La evolución}, 170.
\textsuperscript{146}——, \textit{La evolución}, 258.
\textsuperscript{147}——, \textit{Dedicado}, 46. Bautista’s \textit{chronicon} exemplifies the processes whereby non-white Mormon converts in the Americas and Polynesia invert the original Anglo Mormon interpretation of the Lamanite identity as subordinating indigenous converts into one that exalts them, based on their ethnicity as superior to white LDS members that Murphy describes (Thomas W. Murphy, “From Racist Stereotype to Ethnic Identity: Instrumental Uses of Mormon Racial Doctrine,” \textit{Ethnohistory} 46, no. 3 [1999]: 465, 470-71).
\textsuperscript{148}Bautista, \textit{La evolución}, 19, 77.
happy when Mexicans fail, it is the Mexican people themselves who are their greatest enemy. It is in this context that Bautista sketches out a sacred history of the Mexican state, stretching back to the Lehite colonization of the Americas. The spirit of democracy suffusing revolutionary Mexico is the very spirit that filled the people in the days of the prophet Alma, during his great missionary voyage to the Americas. Anti-colonial resistance to the Spanish was a property of the Mexican people sealed and stored for nearly 2,000 years, like a canister of lentils, waiting to be hydrated and leavened in the present. But even during this interval, Mexico has had a noble, sacred history. Even Moctezuma’s failed efforts to defend his empire nevertheless make him a true hero of the Mexican people. And like the preservation of the liberal and democratic principles of Alma’s day, indigenous survival, both physical and spiritual, through the 300 years of Spanish dominion, should be understood as an act of divine intervention. Mexico is not a country the Spanish have helped to make, but, instead, a country that lay dormant under their dominion. In this way, Spain is best understood not as Mexico’s mother-country but as its evil “STEPMOTHER!” God’s interventions have sometimes worked against the Mexican people during this period, such as when Cortes and his band were able to defeat Moctezuma, but this same divine intervention was manifest in the army of general Morelos and his victories over the Spanish during the Mexican War of Independence. We should therefore classify all of the heroes of the War of Independence and the Mexican Revolution as martyrs.

Even more than indigenismo or Vasconcelos’ Raza Cósmica, this exemplifies Bautista’s capacity to magnify discourses of the revolutionary state. During the 1930s, the government

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149 Ibid., 62.
150 Ibid., 42.
151 Ibid., 66.
152 Ibid., 67.
153 Ibid., 53. Even after Bautista’s alignment with Mormon fundamentalism, one can see in his writings moments of the continued conflation of the Lamanite elect and the Mexican state, such as his statement that his excommunication from the LDS Church is comparable to the “immortal words of Morelos: dying is nothing for one’s Fatherland” (——, Restituiras, 184).
initiated a massive program of official holidays and monuments commemorating the sacrifices of the Revolution, explicitly co-opting religious ideas of holy days as well as the language of “martyrs” and “apostles.” It also historiographically reorganized the Revolution not as a set of competing armed factions at each other’s throats but instead as a cooperative enterprise that produced a harmonious synthesis of the ideologies of its protagonists, Pancho Villa, Venustiano Carranza and Emiliano Zapata.

There is no sense that Bautista understands himself to be contesting or contradicting the state’s choice of heroes as he magnifies this discourse for the purposes of his own chronicon. And it is in this light that we should understand his positioning of Mexico’s first true liberal president, Benito Juárez, at the top of the hierarchy of national heroes. As the father of Mexican liberalism, he carried out a crucial element of the Plan of Salvation by establishing a liberal democracy, just like the one established by King Mosiah in pre-Christian times. Nevertheless, Bautista reinforces many key points of the government as it continued its halting program of land and resource nationalization. Bautista identifies 1903 as one of the worst periods under the Gentile yolk when US ownership of the Mexican economy reached its apex. Consistent with official historiography, the first hundred years of the Mexican state should thus be understood mainly as a period of disappointment, because the Mexican people were unable to establish “full national control.” It is not independence that should therefore be marked but instead the beginning of the revolution that must be noted as “resuming the day of our evolution.” For this reason Francisco Madero, Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles should be understood as

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155 Ibid., 146.
157 Ibid., 101.
158 Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 149; Bautista, *La evolución*, 62-63. And it did not have to be this way. It was Porfirio Díaz’s failure to continue in the grand tradition of Juárez and inculcate necessary civic virtue in the citizenry that delayed the resumption of Mexico’s evolution (——, *La evolución*, 72-73).
great Mexican heroes. Bautista’s allegiance to the Lamanite people here requires some qualification—Obregon is to be understood as a hero only until his decision to put down the Yaqui (i.e. Lamanite) rebellion of 1924.\textsuperscript{159}

The importance of the state itself in creating an incipient Zion is only fully evident in Bautista’s support for the Agrarian Reform.\textsuperscript{160} Like Gamio, he sees this process as nationally transformative but especially transformative of rural indigenous people. Repurposing a section of the Book of Mormon likely inspired by nineteenth century US myths of the non-sedentary “vanishing Indian,” Bautista makes much of the conflation of the Lamanites’ conversion to Christianity and their adoption of agriculture.\textsuperscript{161} The Agrarian Reform is to be understood in two ways: first as a precursor to the “Law of Restitution” requiring that those things stolen from the House of Israel be returned to it in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times.\textsuperscript{162} This restitution, however, cannot be fully enacted because it is simply infeasible for the present government to immediately up-end the Mexican economy so thoroughly and in this way the revolutionary \textit{ejido} is only an imperfect forerunner. But those farmers empowered through it will bring this restitution to fruition and lead the transformation of Mexico.\textsuperscript{163} This transformation is far more all-encompassing than the leaders of the revolutionary state even imagine because Agrarian Reform is the process by which the Lamanties will be fully redeemed

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{159}{——, \textit{La evolución}, 84-85. If any group is to be understood as archetypically Chichimec, it is the Yaqui who continued their semi-sedentary raiding way of life into the twentieth century.}
\footnotetext{160}{The Agrarian Reform was a process of land reform initiated by the revolutionary state to redistribute land seize during the Revolution to landless groups through a system of government-supervised recollectivization that sought to recreate pre-independence collective lands, known as the \textit{ejido}, in a democratized, modernized form. (Chasteen, \textit{Born in Blood and Fire}, 222)}
\footnotetext{161}{Ibid., 129; Brian W Dippie, “This Bold but Wasting Race: Stereotypes and American Indian Policy” \textit{Montana: the Magazine of Western History} 23, no. 1 (1973): 2-13. It is precisely in the late 1820s during the production of the \textit{Book of Mormon} that the “vanishing Indian” myth became fully formed (see, Murphy, “From Racist Stereotype to Ethnic Identity,” 456).}
\footnotetext{162}{Bautista, \textit{La evolución}, 102.}
\footnotetext{163}{Ibid., 104, 108.}
\end{footnotes}
and become “a white and agrarian people.”\textsuperscript{164} Lehi’s children, even Lemuel and Laman, were born white and it is only in 569 BCE that they became dark skinned.\textsuperscript{165} The Lamanties/Aztecs then will turn white again very soon, as they have on several occasions chronicled in the Book of Mormon.\textsuperscript{166}

Another project of the Mexican state, one that it sought to effect through events like Bautista’s traumatic yet inspiring near meeting with Vansconcelos, was what he understood to constitute the Gathering of Israel. Writing in the early 1930s Bautista exhorts his readers to do all they can to support the government of President Ortiz in luring expatriate Mexicans, as he himself once was, back to the Fatherland. In this process, Ortiz himself is to be understood not only as the President but also as the “shepherd” of the Mexican people.\textsuperscript{167} Like the Agrarian Reform, the official government policy of luring residents of “External Mexico” back to the country is not merely good politics; it is the Gathering of Israel, an inextricable component of the Plan of Salvation.\textsuperscript{168} The success of these policies is a high stakes matter because, like any other nation in the hemisphere, if Mexico does not take up its mantle and gather its sons from abroad, it will be destroyed by God through natural disasters and economic collapse like all other failed nations of the Americas.\textsuperscript{169} Bautista reminds his readers that properties of national election inhere not just in ethno-lineal groups, but in the geography of the Western Hemisphere itself, and as such the Mexican state is subject to God’s wrath, even if its leaders are unaware of the Lord’s specific requirements for nations of this hemisphere.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 88-89.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 89-90.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{169} Bautista, \textit{La evolución}, 72.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 550.
Apart from the Gathering, what then should this Mexican incipient Zion be doing? Positing an equivalency between the United Order and the Agrarian Reform and between repatriation and the Gathering of Israel, Bautista adduces a third crucial part of Mexico’s restoration: the foundation of the Church. Under the aegis of altruistic nationalism, the government must sponsor an investigation of religious doctrine, and as altruistic nationalists, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and even liberal atheists must come together to settle all religious matters of interest to the nation. Out of this process Mexico will create a national church functioning in separate parallel harmony with its national government.171 “Without personalism, fanaticism, or favouritism,” a national religious convention must be assembled based on a government sponsored totally objective process that although Mexico-centered will include delegations of intellectuals from all Latin American nations; in this process, new national heroes will emerge from every major religious denomination.172 This will not just aid the Lamanites but because, as the Revolution has demonstrated, the great city of Tenochtitlán is the place from which all global movements radiate, this congress will benefit the entire world, reversing centuries of religious dominance from the East.173

Sadly, for Bautista at least, the Mexican state failed to adopt this plan and so, like the Gentile nations before them, the Mexican people have chosen to recognize false doctrines breaching their eternal covenant with God and leaving the Plan of Salvation mutilated.174 Curiously, the transition that Bautista underwent between 1910 and the era of the Cold War is oddly paralleled by the life of the man who so influenced him but whom he never met. Whereas Vasconcelos was an up-and-coming opinion leader in the revolutionary state, and Bautista in the

171 Ibid., 194-955.
172 Ibid., 209. Of course, as per Genesis 9:27, the Gentiles will be arrayed against this plan, just as all of the Gentile nations already conspire, once again, to dominate the Mexican republic (——, Apostasia universal, 7).
173 ———, La evolución, 196-97.
174 ———, Reino de dios, 3.
rapidly growing LDS Church of that day, both men fell on hard times by making a play for public support that ultimately failed. When the Quorum and First Presidency selected a new head for the Mexican mission, Bautista to his great surprise was passed over in favour of a well-connected Gentile from Utah.\textsuperscript{175} The outrage that he experienced at the LDS failure to appoint an indigenous LDS person for this mission field was widely shared by his Mexican co-religionists.\textsuperscript{176} Under his leadership, they formed an organization called the Third Convention that approximately a third of all LDS members in Mexico joined. Numbering just shy of a thousand, this movement elected Bautista as its spokesperson and put forward a series of demands focused on remediating the under-representation of self-identified Lamanites within the Church, especially at the top.\textsuperscript{177} Due to a variety of factors, however, most importantly the appointment of a far more conciliatory if equally white mission field head, most members of the Third Convention within a few years either rejoined the LDS or left Mormonism for more mainstream religious movements, leaving Bautista as the leader of a rump of this original organization. During these years Vasconcelos staged a popular yet ultimately unsuccessful campaign for the presidency of the Mexican republic, and following his failure and loss of interest on the part of his supporters in staging a future campaign, descended into an increasingly marginal political position advocating ever more crankish, conservative and publicly irrelevant positions.\textsuperscript{178} The connections that Bautista had enjoyed with the revolutionary state remained intact throughout the Third Convention debacle. The same Apolonio Arzate, a medical doctor, printing press owner, thirty-third degree Mason and personal friend of two presidents, who managed to obtain large quantities of the highest quality paper to print \textit{La Evolución}, in 1937

\textsuperscript{175} Armand L. Mauss, \textit{All Abraham's Children} (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 147.
\textsuperscript{176} Tullis, \textit{Mormons in Mexico}, 123-25.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 137, 141.
\textsuperscript{178} Jaen, “Introduction,” xiv.
succeeded in securing for the small rump of Third Convention followers a parcel of *ejido* land at Ozumba for which Bautista put forward his own set of increasingly marginal, crankish and conservative writings until the end of his life.\(^{179}\) Initially calling his compound Nuevo Tenochtitlán, he moved the minority of Third Convention supporters sympathetic to his views to this newly-acquired land, land it seems that had been deliberately chosen for its superficial resemblance to pre-conquest Tenochtitlán.\(^{180}\)

Initially, the Ozumba pamphlets were produced from Mexico City but as time went on, following his excommunication from the LDS Church and his expulsion from the Third Convention, Bautista retreated exclusively to his base in Ozumba.\(^{181}\) From 1940 until his death in 1961, he produced a series of lengthy pamphlets and theological tracts and it is from this set of writings that I have been able to glean the structure of his second theory of election.\(^{182}\)

*Plan B: The Compound*

The failure of the revolutionary state to incarnate an incipient Zion helped Bautista explain its ongoing Third World status. Gospel practice, he had reasoned in his more hopeful days, results not only in a morally upright citizenry, but in an increased fecundity of agriculture and presence of minerals in mines.\(^ {183}\) Now, the Mexican nation had gone the way of the fallen Gentile and would go the way of the LDS Church which had suffered escalating persecutions following its failure to build the temple in Missouri.\(^ {184}\) In his earlier period, Bautista had suggested that educated Mexicans who opposed the key projects of the revolutionary state were analogous to the Israelites who asked Moses to lead them back into Egyptian slavery.\(^ {185}\) In


\(^{180}\) Ibid.

\(^{181}\) Ibid.

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 233.

\(^{183}\) Bautista, *La evolución*, 453.

\(^{184}\) ———, *Dedicado*, 43, 45.

\(^{185}\) ———, *La evolución*, 63.
previous eras, other Israelites suffered a punishment “prolonged over centuries and centuries,”
continuing to the present day.\textsuperscript{186}

Mexicans as a whole having failed him, Bautista fashions his new theory of an elect
people out of Mormon fundamentalist beliefs similar to those of Kraut. On the basis of this new
understanding, he argues that since in every dispensation the elect have had many wives and
concubines this principle must be continued in the present.\textsuperscript{187} As a fundamentally Israelite
institution, it was practiced in the early Church and Book of Mormon times. Bautista literalizes
Matthew 25 to read it as an explicit endorsement of polygamy through its reference to the ten
virgins who will meet the bridegroom.\textsuperscript{188} There is little need for creative exegesis of other
dispensations described in the Bible as the Old Testament is replete with instances of
polygamy.\textsuperscript{189}

Bautista’s support for plural marriage is just one case of his general principle that
anything that the Lord’s people could do in a prior dispensation can and certainly should unfold
in ours.\textsuperscript{190} This naturally necessitates the Law of Consecration, something that, like plural
marriage, the Lamanites continued practicing until the Spanish conquest.\textsuperscript{191} Like the Agrarian
Reform in his earlier theory of election, his fundamentalist theory centres on a collectivist

\textsuperscript{186} ibid., \textit{Apostasia universal}, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{187} ibid., \textit{Restituiras}, 105. And just as the Lord’s people are polygamists at all times and places, so it is that at no
time and place will the monogamous ever receive exaltation and become the creators and organizers of worlds and
peoples in eternity (Ibid., 84).
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 101. Bautista performs a similar move with Jacob 2:32-33, something often read by non-polygamist
Mormons as a prohibition on plural marriage in Nephite society. Bautista’s exegesis suggests that “you will not
commit fornications” represents a statement against those Nephites who did not practice the principle (——,
\textit{Contestación}, 8).
\textsuperscript{189} ibid., \textit{Restituiras}, 93.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{191} ibid., \textit{Contestación}, 8; ——, \textit{Restituiras}, 14.
material ordering of society, an order evident in 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi and Luke-Acts. For Bautista, this aspect of fundamentalism is actually more important than even plural marriage.

Full implementation of the Law of Restitution would have changed everyone’s skin colour and helped to initiate the millennium, but the Law of Consecration, which underpins the United Order, would be even more impressive. Living under this system of common property had, after all, saved all of the great intellectuals and holy men of Zarahemla during the cataclysm of 34 CE, causing them to be translated to the City of Enoch by virtue of being linked through this shared practice. This is because things are consecrated to the Church as a whole and it transcends space and time. As a result the Law of Consecration functions like Plural Marriage in creating direct connections between mortal humans and the immortal beings and gods of eternity.

VII. The Modern Apostasy

Like Bautista’s interest in discovering how the past became the present, his focus on developing a historiography of the present dispensation marks his thinking as far from that posited by Leone. Like other fundamentalists, Bautista’s later work focuses on this present-day historiography, premised on a muscular reading of scripture that recasts many prophecies of the latter days as applying not to mainline Christianity immediately prior to the Restoration, but instead to the LDS of the twentieth century. The earthly adornments, corruption and hypocrisy

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192 ——, Apostasia universal, 54; Margarito Bautista, Canje de verdades (Distrito Federal, 1944), 82. In the case of America’s apostolic United Order, all possessions were shared and distributed in a single continental system.
193 ——, Restituiras, 16. After all it was the failure to comply with the United Order rather than plural marriage principles that prevented the building of the temple starting in Missouri in 1832 (——, Restituiras, 24).
194 ——, La Evolución, 463; ——, Restituiras, 129.
195 ——, Contestación, 27. Because each terrestrial and celestial world is subject to the United Order, its adoption on earth links us to all eternal worlds, and inscribes the name of each member in the Book of Life (——, Reino, 23).
prophesied in the Book of Mormon are not attributes of Protestant and Catholic Christianity in the nineteenth century, but of the Church in the present day.\textsuperscript{196}

Rather than suggesting a sudden apostasy, Bautista gives shape to the present dispensation from the founding of the Church up to the present day as a declension narrative of divergence between the LDS and the Lord. This process began two years after the establishment of the Quorum of the Twelve when Smith was denounced as a “fallen prophet” and some of his most elect ministers fell under Satan’s sway. The Saints again disappointed God when they failed to live the United Order in their Missouri colony and in 1843 with their plotting against Smith in Nauvoo.\textsuperscript{197} There was then a half-century hiatus in this process of apostasy until the Manifesto in 1890 and, even more egregiously in Bautista’s view, the adoption of the Utah state constitution in 1896, prohibiting polygamy in perpetuity.\textsuperscript{198} Finally, in 1933, the first presidency specifically exhorted LDS members to obey the “solemn covenant” made with the US government.\textsuperscript{199} All along, there were signposts warning the Saints of their apostasy such as the storm of persecution in 1838 showing the Lord beginning to withdraw his favour, the earliest of which was the Lord telling them in 1834 that they were ineligible to construct the temple.\textsuperscript{200}

It is at this point that we can sense the degree to which Bautista treats the Mormon dispensational system as data about history rather than the structure of history. More real and important than dispensations are the “eras” in which the Lord conducts his work through a particular people. Before the present dispensation begins, the Era of the Gentiles had already begun and it continued until sometime between 1834 and the present day, likely, according to his

\textsuperscript{196}——, Restituiras, 100.
\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., 138; ——, Contestación, 44.
\textsuperscript{198}——, Contestación, 45.
\textsuperscript{199}——, Restituiras, 76.
\textsuperscript{200}——, Contestación, 43; ——, Dedicado, 62.
exegesis of Doctrine and Covenants, in 1896 or 1930. Smith’s statements both within and outside official scripture disparaging the Gentiles’ ability to receive the Gospel is indicative of the imminent closing of the Gentile era and the Lord’s return to working through Israelites.

Much of Bautista’s thinking about the present dispensation focuses on punishment for apostasy, especially since both Gentiles and Israelites are now subject to the same the high standards to which Bautista’s Israelite ancestors were held. This system of punishment is the corollary of the principles that underpin Bautista’s understanding of exaltation, a system of soteriology not based on individual merit but on the corporate performance of a lineage. The cursing, for four generations or more, of lineages who fail the Lord is a consequence of the relationships that inhere in the process of exaltation. Although the prophet pleaded with the Gentiles not to sin against the Gospel, they could not help themselves, just as the Book of Mormon prophesied. Here, Bautista inverts the traditional exegesis that conflates the Great Apostasy with this sin and instead suggests that this Nephite prediction was actually about the LDS. Now that the Gentiles have apostasized, Bautista is on firm scriptural footing that God’s chosen people are again the House of Israel. The Gentiles can look forward to a similar fate, the destruction and scattering of the United States and LDS Church, to the last chosen people who apostasized and had their temple and their kingdom, Judea, destroyed. This day is at hand because already these institutions are powerless against Lamanite priesthood holders.

Gentiles wishing to avoid the coming scourge would be well-advised to join with the

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201 La verdad, 42; Restituiras, 66.
202 Restituiras, 161.
203 La verdad, 89.
204 En defensa de los derechos de la Casa de Israel [I] (Ozumba: Colonia Agricola Industrial Mexicana, 1958), 28.
205 Restituiras, 99; En defensa (1958), 29.
206 La verdad, 36; Dedicado, 63.
207 La verdad, 55; Defensa (1961), 5.
208 Defensa (1961), 5, 9; La Verdad, 87-88; Restituiras, 22, 149, 154.
209 Restituiras, 167; La evolución, 71.
Lamanites.\textsuperscript{210} Once the Era of the Lamanites has begun in earnest, their priesthood holders will have the Fullness of the Gospel conferred upon them.\textsuperscript{211} In this new golden age the Lord will even walk among the Lamanites and live amongst his aboriginal followers.\textsuperscript{212}

Although the Lamanites will lead this last dispensation and the millennium that follows, the Jews of Palestine will also be exalted. After issuing the Manifesto, Prophet Woodruff’s words in Logan were the words of the Lord consoling the Jews of Palestine that even though they remained rebellious and obstinate, they were part of the Israelite people.\textsuperscript{213} In addition he points out that in latter-day prophecy, at the same time as the Lamanites “flourish like a rose” the Palestinian Jews will prosper in the desert.\textsuperscript{214} This is evident from the re-gathering of Israel in Palestine forecast in Doctrine and Covenants 45:24-25 and unfolding in Bautista’s day.\textsuperscript{215} These events are a direct result of Smith having received the keys of the gathering of Israel, a process that he put into motion for both hemispheres prior to his demise.\textsuperscript{216} Although the West will lead the East is not to be forgotten in the latter day plans for the Israelite people.\textsuperscript{217}

Or perhaps not.

On the other hand, Bautista suggests the House of Israel has suffered irreparable damage losing powers, virtues and much of the patrimony they should have inherited through its royal blood as a result of one nation in the House of Israel, the failed tribe of Judah.\textsuperscript{218} In this alternative historiography of the Jews of the Eastern Hemisphere, Bautista reinterprets his coat of

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., Contestación, 48.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 47. Naturally, these prophecies do not apply to those Lamanites who have rejected the Gospel. Like the Gentiles of the LDS Church who have worked against the Lamanites in the Latter Days, those Lamanites who reject the Gospel will have their privileges annulled and shall not partake in the millennium (Ibid., 51).
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 167.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., Dedicado, 38.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., Defensa (1961), 13.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., La verdad, 57.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., Restituiras, 70.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., La evolución, 42.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., Defensa (1961), 10.
many colours metaphor suggesting that only the Josephite colours within the coat will be saved whereas those other pieces rent from the cloak will be destroyed. In this view, nothing good or new has been happening to the Jewish people since Smith was granted the keys of the gathering and they remain in the same “dark era” into which they entered when they rejected the Messiah. In this version of latter-day apostasy, even the Great Apostasy narrative is modified to blame the Pharisees in place of Constantine. According to this version, Satan began spilling the blood of the apostles through the first century, eliminating James first in the year 44 and John finally in 96, causing the dispensation to close even before the end of the first century and Satan’s global reign to commence.

This is not the only time it appears that Bautista is contradicting himself, even on adjacent pages of the same text. In considering the many instances of inconsistency I have found, it has generally been my approach to offer the most frequently and comprehensively stated version of the Bautista chronicon on a particular issue. Whereas one might view this apparent inconsistency as a manifestation of some insufficiency within the author as theologian, historian, or polemicist, I would like to suggest that this is more likely Bautista’s rendering of an amplified version of the branching contingencies that forms such an important part of fundamentalist chronica. For Kraut there are at least two peoples being held in reserve if the LDS church does not recant its apostasy, first the Lamanites and then an unknown people. There is a possibility, although this can simply be explained as sloppiness or inconsistency, that what Bautista is doing is applying this model of understanding future prophesied events to the past, that like the future in prophecy the past imagined in the Bautista chronicon contains not just one

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219 ———, La verdad, 129.
220 ———, Restituiras, 111.
222 ———, Reino, 5.
set of possible events that can explain the present, but several, each worthy of recognition if it could have given rise to the present state of affairs.

This mode of understanding time does not cohabit well with typological thinking, resting as it does, on a linear rather than cyclical structure, emphasizing the specificity of individual events and the enormous consequences of choosing one course of action over another. While typological comparisons might be used to compare events for rhetorical purposes, it has almost no utility in reasoning about the unknown because the resemblance of an event in the present to one in the past does not assist us in predicting what will happen next, nor does knowledge of the present structure the past, filled as it is with unknowable apostates who did not follow the correct path. His most enthusiastic and lengthy use of the term “type,” is his discussion of Benito Juárez. Juárez was, in Bautista’s view, a Moses; his life narrative was similar to that of Moses, and he had the same ultimate mission of freeing his race. He was furthermore a law-giver and, as we know from the revelation concerning the American constitution, liberal constitutional orders are, like the Decalogue, divinely inspired. Furthermore, Bautista makes the argument that Juárez was greater than Moses, a more perfect representation of the type because the principle of free agency, as protected in Mexican liberalism, refers to a higher law than those enacted in the Mosaic Dispensation, including such crucial elements as the separation of Church and State.223 He was also, therefore, a type of Mosiah, a Nephite king who instituted constitutional democracy under the rule of the Judges.224 But these effusive claims have no apparent impact on Bautista’s reasoning about Mexican history beyond conferring compliments on the former president; in

223 ———. La evolución, 55.
224 Ibid., 55-56.
fact, Juárez is never mentioned again throughout the rest of the text. This is typical of Bautista’s rare deployments of typology.  

Keeping in mind this model of branching contingencies, Bautista considers the possibility that his efforts could be like the ministry of Noah who preached repentance for over a hundred years before finally giving up and allowing the mass of humanity to be extinguished in the Deluge. Similarly, Bautista considers the possibility that the present need not have been as bad as it is, that if only the Saints had succeeded in constructing the temple in 1832 it would be the Lord ruling the temporal sphere today instead of Lucifer. But instead “we” find ourselves in the same condition as the prophets in the Book of Daniel, next to the fiery furnace forced to choose between condemnation by God and the corrupt world around us. Things in the present day should be similarly understood as highly contingent. The Lord has been waiting for centuries for an obedient people to construct the temple and redeem Zion, but there is every sign that like the latter day saints before them, the Mexicans are refusing this commission. This is not just a problem for those living now: the souls awaiting the celestialization of this world cannot go onto fulfillment until Satan’s reign ends and the Temple is built.

Because time is so short, the greatest sin in today’s world is “PROCRASTINATION.” It is after all one of Satan’s three main arts for keeping humanity in darkness. And it must be remembered that our salvation has been contingent on Christ’s decision not to procrastinate.

225 Other instances of the rhetoric of types include the comparison of Spanish rule to the enslavement of Joseph in Egypt, the anticipation of Cortes by the Lamanites to the anticipation of the Messiah by the Jews, and the worship of Huitzilopochtli to the Golden Calf and the Manifesto to the thirty days of mourning following Moses’ death. They are similarly detached from any sustained argumentation (——, La evolución, 21, 42, 230; ——, Restituiras, 11).
226 ——, La evolución, 403.
227 ——, Restituiras, 170.
228 Ibid., 72.
229 ——, Dedicado, 41.
230 ——, Restituiras, 126.
231 Ibid., 2.
232 Ibid., 3.
Along with the savior, Bautista holds up other fine biblical examples of those who served God by not procrastinating, like Moses and Cornelius. At the time of his writing, the Gentiles had had the Book of Mormon for 110 years and the Lamanites for 60; and yet time and again he was met with the Satanic refrain that “it still isn’t time.” According to Daniel, the *eschaton* is supposed to have started in 1830; the Lord is getting impatient and the Lamanites will be lucky to be given another 60 years. Already, irreparable damage has been done through procrastination; too many have already died in this dispensation without dwelling in the Promised Land.

Bautista concurs with Kraut that it is likely that yet another people will be raised up by the Lord if the Lamanites fail. If the Lord let 600,000 die in the desert and chose to raise up a new and more faithful generation during the Exodus, he will be no less brutally decisive if the Lamanites fail to heed the Lord’s revelations. But if there is to be a new people, we know one thing: they too will come from the seed of Joseph and to them the Lord will fulfill his covenants with the house of Israel.

If the Lamanites do stop procrastinating, the New Jerusalem, which will be the “SUPREME CAPITAL OF THE WORLD,” will be built exclusively by indigenous people of royal blood and will make Jerusalem its secondary seat of power. As we can see from the revelations given by the Lord early in this dispensation, because he so quickly observed that his people had failed to construct the Temple, we can infer two things about the Temple-construction process: first, it can be completed in a very short period of time, and, second, it is

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233 *La verdad*, 120; *Contestación*, 21.
234 *La verdad*, 104-105.
235 Ibid., 106, 110.
236 *Restituiras*, 63.
237 *La verdad*, 81.
238 *Restituiras*, 25.
239 *La evolución*, 41, 415; *Apostasia universal*, 12.
impossible without the practice of the Law of Consecration, something the Missouri Saints could not enact.\footnote{——, Restituiras, 114.} This is because it is through this law Enoch and all other terrestrialized peoples have achieved this state, and the completion of this latter-day temple is inextricable with the terrestrialization of the earth.\footnote{——, Restituiras, 114.}

Much more importantly, it will inaugurate the millennium in which the Lamanites will rule. Using the priesthood powers conferred in the Temple, the Lamanites will directly participate in the resurrection of the faithful; they will be aided by the people of the City of Enoch, which will descend from the heavens and fuse with their temple and city.\footnote{——, La verdad, 82.} And there in the supreme capital of the world, a crucial adjunct to the temple will be built, the “Celestial University,” which through a rigorous 1,000-year training program will school each priesthood holder in the arts of cosmology and prepare him for his new role as god in eternity.\footnote{——, La evolución, 415; ——, Restituiras, 127.} Whereas the temple will invest each candidate for godhood with infinite power, the university will invest him with infinite wisdom.\footnote{——, Apostasia universal, 13.} Upon completion of the temple the Lord himself will arrive in Missouri with the true scepter of the house of Israel that he will use to scourge the President of the LDS and all of his followers.\footnote{——, Contestación, 29.} In particular, those in that number who have spoken evil against the Lamanites will, as per Mormon 8:21, be cast into the fire.\footnote{——, Restituiras, 178.}

Bautista’s \textit{chronicon} is a considerable distance from the types, shadows and powerful dispensational structure of the LDS conservative \textit{chronicon} and unsurprisingly has striking parallels with those of Kraut and Skousen who combine Mormonism with a powerful alloy of
nationalism and Fundamentalist proof-texting hermeneutics. But where Skousen and Kraut were part of a conservative defense of American white supremacy that focused on fears of contamination and status anxiety, Bautista was part of an optimistic celebration of Mexican racial identity that saw an imminent upending of white domination and subsequent restitution. Where Skousen and Kraut faced were engaged in a vigorous defense of private property rights in the face of a perceived communist threat, Bautista identified with a movement to expropriate unjustly stolen land from its private owners and award it to collectives. Their *chronica* reflect these differences, even as they exhibit similar hopes that this time, the eschaton is really coming and justice will reign. Or maybe not.
Chapter Five: the Method of Hugh Nibley

I. Introduction

Hugh Nibley (1910-2005), “the Thomas Aquinas of the LDS Church” according to David Reisman, was of impressive pedigree. A direct descendant of Joseph Smith’s first Jewish convert and grandson of Presiding Bishop and First Presidency member Charles Nibley, he came from a very well-regarded LDS lineage.\(^1\) While Nibley was commencing his undergraduate degree, which he would ultimately receive \textit{summa cum laude}, his grandfather was serving as the first and only councilor of the First Presidency to attain his position without being anointed an apostle. Like most young men of important lineage within the Church, his entry into university was delayed by a two-year mission which he concluded in the late 1920s; with the exception of his military service from 1942-45, that mission was the only significant period of Nibley’s adult life not centred on an academic institution.\(^2\) He received his doctoral training with William Popper in Semitic Languages at UC-Berkeley and was part of a small group of students and faculty around whom the Near Eastern Studies program came into being.\(^3\) During this time, the \textit{Golden Bough} and scholarly approaches favoured by James Frazer cast a long shadow and appear to have shaped Nibley’s reception and understanding of the ancient texts he studied from the outset, providing a framework for comprehending and categorizing what he discovered.

From 1938 to 1942, Nibley taught at Claremont but, following his demobilization, he moved to BYU, whose faculty he never really left, even in retirement, maintaining an office

\(^{3}\) Ibid., 3, 12.
there until shortly before his death.\(^4\) In addition to his faithful scholarship and teaching, one of his most significant contributions to BYU was to radically expand the university’s collection of pre-modern texts, of which it possessed only two when he joined the faculty. In pursuit of his research during the 1950s, Nibley travelled to other universities, particularly Harvard and Berkeley, to obtain still more texts, especially during his sabbatical years. This was also the period when he published most of his non-LDS scholarly contributions.\(^5\) But following the massive acquisitions and flurry of publishing, Nibley retreated into his fundamentally Provo-centred existence, shaped primarily by events in Utah and the LDS Church and not, except indirectly, by developments in the larger academic world. Whereas Nibley continued to learn new languages, acquire new texts (such as the Joseph Smith Papyri) and conduct ethnographic fieldwork (notably the Hopi Mission with Virgil Bushman), these experiences took place within the increasingly capacious LDS sub-academy.\(^6\)

Like Roman Catholics in the Northeastern US, LDS Mormons have engaged in academic institution building based on two often opposing impulses: cultural separatism and the performance of conformity with dominant cultural norms. As with Roman Catholics, this process was initiated in the nineteenth century, paralleling rather than succeeding mainstream institution building. Unlike other educational systems fashioned in nineteenth century America described as “separate but equal,” the religious separatist schools of Catholics and, I would argue, the LDS were fashioned with that very literal aspiration. Like Roman Catholic institutions, BYU and its various offshoots have been able to perform their conformity and legitimacy by way of longevity.

\(^4\) Ibid., 4.
\(^6\) ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 16.
rather than through significant modifications of their subculturally particular attributes (as as distinct from RLDS’s Graceland University).  

There are some challenges in situating Nibley on the spectrum between progressive and conservative LDS historical thought. On one hand, his scholarship received strong support and recognition from quora that otherwise seemed to favour the increasingly dominant conservative approach to history. It was under the leadership of David O. McKay that Nibley became the most honoured public intellectual of the LDS faith and the recipient not just of accolades but of privileged positions. He was not merely an apologist but an expositor of Mormon doctrine and exegete to the most senior members of the priesthood. On the other hand, we see in Nibley’s works a number of features associated with progressive rather than conservative factions of the Church.

First, Nibley’s work exhibits an intellectual optimism much dimmed following Roberts’ demise. He expects both the physical and social sciences to vindicate Mormonism and sees the trends in the scholarship of his day as doing just this. Prior to his publication of *Lehi in the Desert*, he had felt a building, incremental, scholarly reinterpretation of the ancient Near East that brought the academy to an unprecedented level of agreement with the Lehi portion of the book of Mormon narrative. Catastrophism, chaos theory, New Testament criticism, Near Eastern Studies, general relativity – all of these disciplines are inexorably catching up with Mormonism. Second, Nibley’s politics were very much aligned with American liberals and progressives and against the conservatism embraced by most of the LDS Church of his day. His opposition to the Vietnam War, belief that there existed no correct side in the Cold War and

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general support for collectivism are indicative of the breadth of Mormon subculture. Third, and despite his support from Smith, Nibley appears to take the side of Roberts in various debates that were decisively lost by the Quorum’s progressives: he gives equivocal support to elements of the Adam-God doctrine and clearly sides with Roberts regarding the pre-Adamites. We should not be surprised, then, that Nibley joined the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1946 at the behest of Widtsoe.

More interestingly, why is it that McKay chose to publish *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* as the Melchizedek Priesthood Manual, completely unedited? And why would Smith have chosen to write a laudatory introduction to this work? I would suggest that Nibley’s evident loyalty and devotion to the Church, his ingenious and eloquent apologetic skills and impeccable lineage only go so far. Instead, I contend that there is a way in which Nibley’s thinking about time becomes the key to his acceptance. His temporal thought is thoroughly unlike that of Roberts or Talmage, whatever details of similarity there might at first appear to be. I wish to draw attention to the ways in which Nibley’s *chronicon* constitutes the more perfect and elaborate expression of consciousness described by Leone than the conservative historiography of McConkie. Nibley’s processes of confronting apparent dialectics are far more intensely Leonian not merely than Talmage or Roberts but than Smith in the earlier part of his career. The decision on the part of the McKay presidency to see Nibley’s teachings as unproblematic likely also speaks to the increasing pervasiveness of the elision of apparent contradiction by mid-century.

In 1979, thirty-two years after Nibley’s career in Mormon scholarship began, a new school of thought that had been coalescing in Mormon apologetics formally came together in a

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10 ——, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, ix, x.
new organization: the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS).\textsuperscript{11} Inspired by the decades of work in Mormon historical apologetics by Nibley, a group of LDS scholars came together to create an academic community premised on two principles: first, that the Book of Mormon, Book of Abraham and Book of Moses were products of the ancient world and not of nineteenth-century America, and, second, that faithful history should be conducted using established academic methods and theories practiced in mainstream disciplines of archaeology, history, anthropology and religion. In the past thirty years, FARMS has published a regular academic journal and a series of books, as well as hosting conferences and sponsoring seminars; and all of these activities have taken place within an internal framework of scholarly peer review.

One of the major projects this group has undertaken has been to make popularly available a nineteen-volume collection of the works of Nibley and, in so doing, claim him as one of their own. This archive, approximately 10,000 pages in length, forms the overwhelming majority of the primary documents used in these chapters. While it is true that Nibley assented to this project and assisted with it prior to his death in 2005 and while it is true that a handful of his pieces appeared in FARMS edited collections and periodicals, the reality is that when it was formed, FARMS represented a new and different apologetic tendency than that embodied in his works.\textsuperscript{12} Although, over the course of its lifetime, FARMS has gone from perfunctorily indicating its putative accord with the great man of faithful history of the ancient world as per the LDS sociocultural framework described by Leone to re-describing him as their academic progenitor.

\textsuperscript{11} Simon G. Southerton, \textit{Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA and the Mormon Church} (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 148.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 170.
a sensible move given FARMS’s chronic inability to significantly impact the historical thought of grassroots Mormons, in contrast to Nibley’s continuing posthumous role in shaping them. But the reality is that FARMS’ methodologies and conclusions are not just radically different from those of Nibley, something directly acknowledged in prolific FARMS member John Sorenson’s pre-FARMS work; they run contrary to Nibley’s specific advice regarding the relationship between academia and the LDS church. The decision of FARMS to republish a vast proportion of Nibley’s former work under their editorship has been an ambivalent one. On the one hand, it has conferred upon FARMS scholars and the organization as a whole greater credibility and prominence than much of their own work has achieved; on the other, it has continued the legitimation of Nibley’s approach over that of FARMS in Mormon scholarship.

II. The Immovable East

Following the strategic retreat of the 1920s, the RLDS appear to have taken the lead in pre-Columbian historical apologetics regarding the Mormon canon. At the nadir of LDS confidence, it appears that even Roberts reported to the Quorum that he himself questioned Joseph Smith’s claims regarding the provenance of the Book of Mormon and suggested it was quite reasonable for Smith himself to have been the author. It was not until a generation later that those with institutional power in the LDS began making tentative steps back into the field of academic apologetics. This was not so much a result of any policy decision by any Church leaders but instead arose from the emergence of two faithful LDS academics whose innovative re-purposing of mainstream scholarship dragged the Church back into academic engagement with its subaltern past. Among these scholars, Sidney Sperry and Nibley used different

13 Ibid., 169.
14 Ibid., 142.
methodologies and focused on different historical periods and geographical regions in their work. Unfortunately, since this study lacks the space to accommodate an analysis of Sperry’s work, my study of this period will instead focus on Nibley alone. In part this is conditioned by the more robust and comprehensive nature of Nibley’s work and thought as well as the long shadow that he casts in LDS historical thought up to the present day.

The main innovation on which Nibley’s work rests was his geographic and temporal reorientation of Mormon apologetics. Mormon historians in Talmage’s era and prior had argued for the historicity of the Book of Mormon on the basis of what might be termed “external evidences,” in the form of the surviving material culture of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican peoples. Nibley takes a completely different approach. He argues that the Book of Mormon should be considered not as a document by and about Mesoamerican peoples but instead as a document by and about migrants from the ancient Near East. Instead of mobilizing Mesoamerican anthropology and archaeology, Nibley’s primary tools are near eastern archaeology and text-critical methodologies in reading scripture.

In this way, Nibley was able to accomplish an extraordinary inversion in Mormon apologetics. Resemblances between the Book of Mormon and the KJV were not, as they had previously been, the Achilles heel of Mormon apologetics; instead they became the strongest evidence of the texts’ independent generation. Any evidence of resemblance was taken by Nibley as an indication that both documents shared a common source and not that the Book of Mormon was generated through imitation of the Bible. This methodological premise underpins both Nibley’s scholarship and that of FARMS, whatever differences there might be. However, this premise has been largely unstated. Although more often presented as a conclusion than a

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16 Southerton, Losing a Lost Tribe, 174.
17 One cannot help but wonder how much the logic of the Q hypothesis in New Testament criticism influenced this development.
premise, it seems only reasonable to class Nibley’s belief that the Book of Mormon was a document generated in the ancient world by people of Near Eastern origin as a related premise.

Crediting Friedrich Blass with this approach, Nibley suggests that it is routine for professional scholars to evaluate a text based not on its probable origin but on its claimed origin. Indeed, the assumption of a text’s genuineness is now the basis of the analysis of all ancient documents. Any forgery will automatically become apparent because the text will appear inconsistent or incongruent with its alleged setting. Therefore, the verification of a text should proceed as though nothing is known about its origin. Although Nibley is not incorrect in his quotations of Blass regarding an approach to allegedly ancient texts, although the usual apologetic sin of amplification certainly manifests itself, the real problem is his claim of this approach’s normativity or ascendance in mainstream scholarship, similar to his problematic claims regarding the Cambridge School.

Nibley’s two unstated premises are accompanied by a set of explicitly stated premises. One of the most important is the acknowledgement that it is a priori impossible to prove religious or scriptural truths; as such, the Book of Mormon can never be proven true. In the study of religion, objectivity is likewise impossible; those claiming objectivity are actually

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20 ——, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 8.
22 A. W. Verrall, “The Eumenides of Friedrich Blass” *The Classical Review* 23, no. 1 (1909): 14. In this somewhat churlish quasi-obituary, the author observes that Blass “metes with unequal measure, and is too indulgent to tamperings which are not the less arbitrary because they have long been in print.” Nibley’s description of the Cambridge School is equally problematic; while he tends to describe its findings as a new academic consensus that emerged between 1925 and 1950, the reality is that its credibility peaked between 1895 and 1915 after which time its major contributions were subsumed within less teleological frameworks that did not construct a universal “primitive” (Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* [New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991], 115-16).
unconsciously privileging their own religious convictions.\textsuperscript{24} Nor should religious neutrality be aspired to, given that to fully comprehend any scripture some element of personal revelation is always required.\textsuperscript{25} Another universal in reading religious texts is the fact that no religious document is ever intended to be read allegorically by its author.\textsuperscript{26} Mysticism, he argues, represents an attempt to apply neo-Platonic ideas to religious systems whose core texts are actually hostile to such a reading.\textsuperscript{27} In this way, Nibley defines revelation and mysticism as opposing principles in both the generation and interpretation of any religious text.\textsuperscript{28} To be Mormon, Nibley suggests, is to understand the Bible to be a literal and historical document.\textsuperscript{29} In his narrative of the apostasy of the early Church, he attributes the triumph of mysticism and allegory in Biblical exegesis to the victory of the “University of Alexandria.” The university, he suggests, as an institution, is as naturally opposed to the Church as mysticism is to the principle of divine revelation.\textsuperscript{30}

One way in which Nibley appears ahead of his time is his frank recognition and discussion of the problem of subaltern pasts. Early in his career, Nibley observed that the academy cannot study the supernatural because the academy studies this world. The otherworldly is \textit{a priori} excluded from any truly academic analysis.\textsuperscript{31} For instance, archaeology can only take us back to the Garden of Eden. The events giving rise to the Edenic and post-Edenic worlds are inaccessible to scholars.\textsuperscript{32} Despite recognizing these limitations as inherent,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Hugh Nibley, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Publishing Company, 1987), 212.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Hugh Nibley, \textit{The World and the Prophets} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954), 184.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Hugh Nibley, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, eds. John W Welch, et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986), 130.
\item \textsuperscript{27} ———, \textit{World and the Prophets}, 90.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 123.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Hugh Nibley, \textit{Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967), 58. We see in Nibley here the explicit consciousness of Davies’ assertion.
\item \textsuperscript{30} ———, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 127.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 64.
\item \textsuperscript{32} ———, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, 33.
\end{itemize}
Nibley is nevertheless critical of the ways in which scholars have chosen to respond to them. He views the decision by mainstream scholars to purge miraculous events from narratives to be irresponsible and regrettable.\textsuperscript{33}

Moving from premises to method, we can now begin exploring the key tools by which Nibley reasons. Following Edward Said’s seminal work on the area, we may identify the first tool as “Orientalism.” In discussing the slaying of Laban, Nibley offers us an emblematic Orientalist turn of phrase. The slaying, he argues, looks bad “to the modern and western world, but not to the ancient or Oriental mind.”\textsuperscript{34} In keeping with the structure of Orientalist discourse which presupposes inscrutability and atemporality, Nibley’s favorite comparators are the Bedouin. Today’s Bedouin people, he suggests, have a worldview largely identical to that of patriarchal-era Jews who generated the Old Testament and through them, we have access to this.\textsuperscript{35} Similarly, American Indians and other timeless, unchanging peoples are also essentially the same as the Bedouin.\textsuperscript{36} These people are all “tent dwellers,” and thus share an essentialized ahistorical affinity with any tent dwelling peoples.\textsuperscript{37} Writing as though still in the era in which he began his academic work, Nibley is able to present himself as located firmly within the scholarly consensus he perceives, one exemplified in his repeated citations of Baldensperger’s “The Immovable East.”\textsuperscript{38} Nibley’s subscription to Orientalism as method rather than mere prejudice enables him to move evidence from place to place and time to time. Evidence about modern desert life is treated as evidence about desert life four thousand years ago, and vice

\textsuperscript{33} ———, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 185.
\textsuperscript{34} ———, \textit{Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 113, 212. Nibley also suggests that the episode’s congruence with the “Oriental romance” literary genre lends credence to the idea of the Book as an ancient Near Eastern document (——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 181).
\textsuperscript{35} ———, \textit{Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 79.
\textsuperscript{36} ———, \textit{Lehi in the Desert}, 66-67.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 148; ———, \textit{Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 225.
versa: fourteenth-century documents can describe the seventh century BCE. Nor is Nibley limited in this movement of evidence to texts he can unearth; his encounters with Arab immigrants in contemporary Utah provided him routinely with new information about the thinking and daily life of the authors of the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon.

The East is not the only perennial for Nibley. His experiences in the Second World War were every bit as instructive about warfare in ancient scripture as his encounters with his Arab neighbours. War and defeat, he suggests, are always the same. In his article on warfare in the Book of Mormon, Nibley argues for the book’s authenticity on the basis of finding direct points of comparison with twentieth-century warfare, and peppers the article with allusive terms like “G.I. Binge,” “The boys continued getting packages from home,” “Antwerp in 1914,” “Von Klauch,” “the Dew Line,” and “the Cold War.”

We should not, however, get the sense that Nibley is any kind of uniformitarian. Whatever cultural constants he observes were matched with a commitment to the catastrophist school of natural sciences. Nibley is an enormous fan of the work of Velikovsky, not exactly a credible individual in the field of hard sciences, but someone who cut a sufficiently impressive figure in popular culture to maintain a modicum of credibility amongst students of the humanities. Velikovsky is especially persuasive to Nibley, I would suggest, because he engages in a kind of reasoning that, while by no means identical, is similar in that it valorizes

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39 ——, Lehi in the Desert, 108; ——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 123.
40 ——, Lehi in the Desert, 6.
41 ——, Since Cumorah, 135.
42 Ibid., 330, 343-345, 354. Not only is war an eternal, but so, also, are its economic effects. The iniquity in Nephite society, for instance, was caused by “the post-war boom” (——, Prophetic Book of Mormon, ed. John W. Welch, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992], 330).
ancient primary sources and treats their authors as eye-witnesses especially when they describe apparently miraculous events.\(^{44}\)

Nibley’s subscription to catastrophism and lay reading of chaos theory cause him to argue that liberal Protestantism is incorrect because it contends that order is an emergent property of natural systems.\(^{45}\) Similar to Velikovsky himself, Nibley is able to make use of catastrophism as a means of explaining specific, otherwise extraordinary, or apparently inaccurate statements in the historical record. During the life of Abraham, for instance, there was a period of intense meteor activity that helps to explain the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This, he suggests, is backed up “in Greek and Jewish records,” and was due to the earth’s erratic axial movement (something which he attributes to the long-term effects of the Deluge).\(^{46}\) These factors conspired, according to what he terms “recent scholarship,” to cause the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.\(^{47}\) Disasters in the Book of Mormon, he is therefore confident, certainly correspond to as yet undiscovered real world tsunamis, fires and elevation changes caused by earthquakes.\(^{48}\) Nibley’s catastrophism is only a part of his general enthusiasm for new ideas and discoveries in the natural sciences. As understandings of nuclear physics and radiation became more popular and better understood, Nibley enthusiastically opined that \textit{Pistis Sophia} clearly states that prior to the re-use of matter following an aeon-ending

\(^{44}\) Immanuel Velikovsky, \textit{Worlds in Collision}, 1st Paperback ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1967) 64-67, 168. This section, for instance, describes Egyptian plagues of the Bible, the rivers of blood of a Quiche Maya manuscript, the death of Osiris and the slaying of Tiamat in Babylonian mythology as all referring to an actual event in the “second millennium” BC when the tail of a comet (the soon-to-be planet Venus) rained red dust and stones on the earth. Both Exodus and ancient Egyptian papyri, in this model, are described as “eye witness” accounts.


\(^{46}\) ———, \textit{Abraham in Egypt}, 168.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 173.

\(^{48}\) ———, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 265.
eschaton, this matter must naturally be “decontaminated,” before it is used again.\footnote{Hugh Nibley, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, eds. John W. Welch et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986), 134. Pistis Sophia is an example of a text that, although discovered before Nag Hammadi, is now classed as Gnostic due to its cosmological features and occult cosmological discourse (Elaine Pagels, \textit{The Gnostic Gospels}, 65).} This typifies his view that Mormonism’s ideas of creation are fundamentally “sound and scientific.”\footnote{Nibley, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 72.}

\section*{III. Patternism}

In one of the more explicit statements dissenting from the Nibley worldview, his publishers at FARMS note that Nibley’s methodology is so profoundly indebted to the patternist framework developed in Frazer’s \textit{The Golden Bough} that it conditions nearly every major conclusion that he draws about the ancient world. Here, John Gee is direct in his criticism, stating that Nibley’s approach is dated by virtue of his enthusiastic membership in the Cambridge School, and his scholarship helps to point us towards interesting and useful areas of study, rather than offering trustworthy interpretations or conclusions.\footnote{Hugh Nibley, \textit{An Approach to the Book of Abraham}, ed. John Gee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company 2005.), xxxv.}

According to Nibley, Frazer’s scholarship makes him the single greatest authority on what he terms “universal global cultic practice.”\footnote{——, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 15.} Although he both amplifies and modifies the theory developed by Frazer and his supporters, we can see that the major intellectual architecture of his work is structured more by his take on this approach than by any other single thing, save his religious affiliation. Evidence is to be mobilized not to answer questions but to exemplify that which the scholar already knows to be true. If one faces multiple pieces of dubious or multivalent data, an interpretation that shows connection or congruence is not only more likely to be correct, it renders all pieces of potentially congruent data more likely factual and univalent;
this is termed by Frazer the “law of similarity.”\textsuperscript{53} And in addition to a bedrock of putative facts about the prehistoric world and a scholarly methodology for obtaining more, Frazer also provides Nibley with a mission: “In the twentieth century,” Nibley pronounces, “an army of scholars following the lead of Sir James Frazer has been diligently at work first collecting thousands of scattered pieces of earlier customs and folktales and then trying to put them together.”\textsuperscript{54}

Although, perhaps, at the head of an irregular informal guerilla unit within any such army, it is in pursuit of this project that so much of Nibley’s work proceeds. But while the Cambridge School based the ubiquity of these allegedly similar elements in cultic practice on an evolutionary developmentalist theory, Nibley replaces this with a diffusionist explanation. The patternist assumption of a single “primitive” worldview and the Cambridge School’s project of depicting that worldview by locating manifestations of it in diverse times and places is the point of departure for so much of his work. Following the basic reasoning process of Frazer as described above, Nibley locates points of congruence amongst these texts claiming ancient origin. The greater the frequency of recurrence in these texts, the more likely a particular element is to be reflective of the culture being reconstructed.\textsuperscript{55} In one of the very few collections of non-Mormon writings published by FARMS, \textit{The Ancient State}, Nibley’s articles describing this vast prehistoric political and cultural entity are brought together, a posthumous testament to the degree to which Nibley sees patternism and Mormon historiography as essentially one and the same and bases his reasoning about the ancient world on the existence of a global prehistoric culture.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} Nibley, \textit{Message of the Papyri}, XXVII.
\textsuperscript{56} Nibley, \textit{Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 11.
Even his otherwise critical FARMS redactors accept Nibley’s description of what Frazer and company were all about. But they miss the fundamental creativity of Nibley’s powerful alloy of three fairly separate theories of history under the mantle of the Cambridge School: those of Frazer, Bedrich Hrozny and H. G. Wells. Nibley’s version of Frazer recasts patternism in pre-Spencerian terms, explaining the world’s “shocking lack of diversity” through a diffusionist, as opposed to evolutionary, model. Frazer and his followers argue that “primitive man” thinks the same way wherever and whenever she is; there are no kinds of primitive. In classic Spencerian “evolutionary” fashion, they understood the human race to be on a single teleological path and all cultural difference is explained as a location backwards or forwards on that single path, in Frazer’s case, from magic to religion to science.  

57 In the Cambridge model, primitive peoples all partake of the same myths and rituals because they all explain natural phenomena in the same way, through, for instance, sympathetic magic.  

58 Much of Frazer’s work, in fact, implicitly argues against diffusion by locating the same practices in places that could not possibly have had contact.  

59 And this is why Hrozny is indispensible to Nibley. After his earlier success at discovering and then deciphering Hittite, Bedrich Hrozny began work on a larger project linking the ancient civilizations of India, Crete and Mesopotamia to a single ur-culture north of the Caspian Sea. He was able to effect this linkage by uniting the migrations that generated Uruk and Sumer with the much later Aryan migrations as part of a single dispersion process emanating from the same geographic point and culture group in the Caucasus region. Instead of explaining the ubiquity of ritual and myth perceived by Frazer through an evolutionary model, Nibley sees it as having taken place through a process of diffusion, which amplifies from Hrozny’s dispersion patterns through the incorporation of narratives of pre-modern voyaging in Mormon scripture.

59 Ibid, 1: 378, 381.
In describing this “worldwide ritual complex of whose existence no one dreamed.”

Nibley lays down a few key certainties. He posits the largely discredited universality of what he will variously characterize as the “substitute king sacrifice,” “year rite,” “rod culture,” “census arrow,” Pleistocene tools, culture and language.\(^{60}\) Nibley is not only fairly certain about what kind of culture this was but also of this culture’s ultimate fate. The state that he describes was ultimately brought down during the period of the Tower of Babel.\(^{61}\) This was due to a prolonged period of severe wind storms, snakes and locusts evinced by, among other things, the total absence of any reference to wind storms in either the Old Testament or the Book of Mormon’s discussion of the Babel.\(^{62}\) The ubiquity of ideas of divine kingship and the investiture of political authority in rods in all states in the ancient world irrespective of whether the historical record shows these things in the specific state or not is explained by way of Babelite/Caspian dispersion. This indicates a “shocking lack of global religious diversity,” concurrently making and explaining his claim.\(^{63}\) But where Nibley reasons from here shows the magnification that patternist thought can undergo when alloyed with the fundamentals of LDS theology – a theology itself shaped in the Mormon experience of an eternal present. All pagan rites, it can be concluded, share a single progenitor in the ritual practice in which Adam engaged. The


\(^{61}\) ——, *Lehi in the Desert*, 163.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 178; ——, *Approach to Book of Mormon*, 331-35. But fragmentary evidence of this disaster continues to show up in the historical record until the Middle Ages. Nibley, in a bold rhetorical move, states that the absence of any mention of wind storms in Ether or Genesis is clear evidence of their ubiquity without explaining his reasoning.

\(^{63}\) ——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 16; ——, *World and the Prophets*, 134; ——, *Approach to Book of Mormon*, 307, 330; Although Nibley cites an earlier, untranslated work I have been unable to obtain, it is well articulated in Bedrich Hrozny, *Ancient History of Western Asia, India and Crete*, trans. Jindrich Prochazka (Prague: Artia, 1963), 55-57, 102-18.
recollection of this prehistoric universal is imprinted through a universal belief in the ancient
gods or giants who inhabited central Asia, or “Hyperborea.” This helps to explain a key error
in many incorrect theories posited by Protestants regarding the apostasy of the Christian Church.
Those who inveighed in early Christianity against the adulteration of Christian practices by
pagan practice, while likely correct in their opposition, were mistaken in that they failed to
apprehend how much of paganism had already appropriated the original and true Adamic
ordinances. Of course, it is not just Mormonism that solves problems for Nibley’s patternist
framework; the reverse is also true. The vexing problem of the Liahona is solved through
Nibley’s less than fully literal interpretation of the device as actually being a pair of divination
arrows, something he knows because of the universality and correctness of rods and census
arrows in making important determinations in the pre-Babel state.

One of the most audacious pieces of reasoning from this understanding of steppe people’s
ahistorical essence is Nibley’s retrojection of travel distances and times and therefore of political,
economic, and geographic scale from the Mongol empires to all non- and pre-equestrian peoples
who function as steppe nomads. Because steppe peoples are unchanging and the scale of travel
inheres in their nature as peoples, the enormous continental scale of the book of Mormon is made
to make sense, and without Nibley having to claim that Book of Mormon peoples ever rode
horses. Nibley’s re-purposing of nineteenth-century scholarship on central Asia also allows him
to argue that whatever the causes amongst indigenous North Americans, wars of extinction were
common in Asiatic historiography, not only common but essentially identical to the Book of

64 Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, 167, 195; ——, Eloquent Witness, 318; ——, World and the Prophets, 134.
65 ——, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 366. This process of pagan appropriation had begun with the reign of
Nimrod in Mesopotamia.
66 ——, Since Cumorah, 286.
Mormon’s description of these wars in which the king was always the last to be slain.\textsuperscript{68} Nibley does not retract Roberts’ previous solution to this problem, surviving Nephites. Instead, he suggests that it was unproblematic for there to have been both wars of extinction and survivors, going as far as to suggest that this has been the structure of all Central Asian history.\textsuperscript{69}

One of the heuristics Nibley brings to the study of our Hyperborean past is ideas of literary genre. As this past was the “Heroic Age,” when we encounter instances of heroic or epic literary production we can infer that they are descriptive of this time and place.\textsuperscript{70} It is on this basis, in part, that we can conclude heroic society was oath-based and based, in turn, on knowledge of oath-based steppe societies, featured multigenerational captivity of deposed nobles.\textsuperscript{71} We can conclude that its hierarchies were loose and that there were frequent crises of authority, for which there is multiple attestation in Ether, the \textit{Iliad}, and \textit{Beowulf}.\textsuperscript{72} This literature does not pertain to the state’s apogee but to the period when civilized peoples were forced into a nomadic life by the aforementioned environmental disaster.\textsuperscript{73} This is not to suggest that Nibley believes that \textit{Beowulf} is directly referential to the Hyperborean crisis. Rather, he suggests, heroic literature of this kind is produced through \textit{Volkswanderung}, and these episodes are so fundamentally similar that their life-ways and narratives will always be essentially the same.\textsuperscript{74}

There are some general principles that Nibley is then able to adduce. If we find that there is some area in which an ancient culture excelled in sophistication, we can reasonably assume that this excellence can be attributed to cultures preceding it and physically adjacent to it, even if

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 232, 235.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 237.
\item \textsuperscript{70} \textit{——}, \textit{World and the Prophets}, 195.
\item \textsuperscript{71} \textit{——}, \textit{Lehi in the Desert}, 198, 202-03, 205, 304.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 299. Problems arising from the differences between the Book of Ether and the rest of the Book of Mormon can be solved by understanding Ether as a piece of heroic literature (\textit{——}, \textit{World and Prophets}, 194).
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{——}, \textit{Lehi in the Desert}, 298.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 285-297.
\end{itemize}
we can find no direct evidence.\(^{75}\) If we find the same thing throughout discrete historic periods in a region, we may then reasonably infer it as taking place considerably prior to its earliest account. Using archaeological data we can then construct a “smooth curve” all the way back to the moment that the Tower fell.\(^ {76}\)

Nibley’s amplification of patternism is best illustrated by example. For Nibley, the year rite’s universality is such that it does not just exist in the past but is everywhere around him. His interactions with the Hopi, for instance, confirm for him the ongoing preservation of the rite and he accords these indigenous people the honour of having most perfectly preserved it.\(^ {77}\) The year rite is not just self-evident in the Enoch apocrypha; it is evident in the celebrations of Saturnalia, Yule and Christmas. The Christmas tree is just a non-textual manifestation of those many lost fragments that patternists seek to reassemble.\(^ {78}\)

The ancient state notwithstanding, diffusion alone is insufficient to explain such recurrence. Instead, this is understood by way of Nibley’s physicalization of the Frazer worldview: the year rite takes place at the same time because this is when God chooses to talk to us, and when God chooses to tell us to listen to him.\(^ {79}\) Armed with this more powerful version of the theory, Nibley can make sense of various episodes in the Book of Mormon, especially those that might pertain to ideas of divine kingship, now that it is understood that the universal meaning of all coronation rites can be validated.\(^ {80}\)

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 162.
\(^{76}\) Ibid., 157-58.
\(^{78}\) Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986), 259; ——, *Brother Brigham*, 78; ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 122. In this way Nibley can reconcile the Mormon celebration of Christmas with accepted doctrine that Christ was born exactly 1830 years before the day Joseph Smith founded the Church on 23 April 1830 (—, *Eloquent Witness*, 121).
\(^{79}\) ——, *World and Prophets*, 213.
\(^{80}\) ——, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 247. Similarly, we can understand great assemblies in the Book of Mormon as episodes of ritualized divine kingship (—, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 308).
Related to his enthusiastic embrace of the Cambridge School and Orientalism, Nibley makes use of a related body of scholarship in his enthusiasm for the discipline of Near Eastern Studies, a discipline in whose emergence Nibley played a minor part at Berkeley. Typically, his enthusiasm for this mainstream field of study emphasizing the connected nature of societies of the ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamia takes a creative and idiosyncratic turn. One should expect the Book of Mormon, therefore, to reflect the whole of the ancient Near East, not just the explicitly mentioned Egypt connections, but also Phoenician and Greek language and culture. For instance, if we can find writing on metal plates anywhere from Persia to Cyrene we can see the reasonableness of Smith’s golden plates claim.

Nibley is able to do much with Book of Mormon names in this light. Book of Mormon names that are not Hebrew are Egyptian are no longer problematic because those neither Egyptian nor Hebrew are found to be Hittite, Arabic or Greek. And given the ecumenism of Nibley’s phonetic morphology (see below), it is difficult to imagine a name appearing in the Book of Mormon that could not be found in some form in some Near Eastern language sometime in the past 6,000 years.

IV. Finding a True Text (“These fragments I have shored against my ruin”)

Nibley’s world was full of ancient texts and he devoured them voraciously. Throughout these texts there were innumerable candidates for anyone seeking fragments of a forgotten prehistoric global order. The problem Nibley faced was how to determine which texts and which parts of texts were true fragments and which were false. The Nibley method is not simply a self-serving practice of cherry-picking, however much this might prima facie appear to be the case.

81 ——, Since Cumorah, 55.
82 Ibid., 251. Similarly, longstanding trade and cultural exchange between ancient Judea and Egypt is magnified to suggest Judeans’ interactions with the whole of Eurasia in Lehi’s day (——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 33, 88-92; ——, Temple and Cosmos, 547).
83 ——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 281; ——, Lehi in the Desert, 32-33.
Rather, he is guided by a genuine structure, however totalizing and self-validating that structure’s results might turn out to be. As a faithful Mormon, Nibley understands that truth ultimately comes through revelation from God. Although he points out that we can find fragments of the original Adamic ordinances in Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Masonic, Hindu and Egyptian texts, our knowledge of these ordinances’ identity and correct practice comes not through Joseph Smith finding and reassembling these fragments, but instead through their transmission and reception anew, unmediated through divine revelation. Smith’s project, Nibley suggests, was theoretically possible without divine revelation even in the 1830s. Smith could have travelled through the Near East and found the places where this knowledge continued to be preserved either in written or ritual form but sifting through all that data would have ultimately proved infeasible even if theoretically possible. So, instead, he simply asked God for the information and it was given to him in a purer form. However much Mormonism might resemble Hermeticism, their common origin is not located on earth, but rather in God himself.

This process of revelation over reconstitution was not specific to Smith. Rather, it is an entailment of any dispensation. When God replaces knowledge it is through divine revelation. Like Joseph Smith’s knowledge, Christ’s knowledge did not come from the past, or from any recollection on his part of his pre-existent leadership of the Council in Heaven. Instead, Christ’s was like all of the other restorations of the Gospel; each one historically discontinuous with the previous dispensation. A true text, then, is not simply a text revealed by God. It is any text that resembles a text revealed by God. Similarity within a text to elements of God’s revelations to the LDS authenticate any text as valid.

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84 ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 321; ——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 383.
85 ——, *Message of the Papyri*, XXVIII; ——, *Temple and Cosmos*, 82; ——, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 180.
86 ——, *Temple and Cosmos*, 426.
87 ——, *World and the Prophets*, 110-111.
Nibley, like Kraut and Skousen, however much their ideas may differ, see canon as personal and reject the idea of a stable, finite, authorized canon. And he blames the distinction of canonical from apocryphal not on Mormon, Protestant or Catholic churches’ authorities, but instead on academics who had created the canon/apocrypha demarcation in the first place.\footnote{88} Nibley is explicit in his criteria for locating true fragments within apocryphal, pseudepigraphic and other ancient documents such as the Dead Sea scrolls.\footnote{89} At its most schematic, he argues that a correct or true fragment is any text containing or referring to any one of the following:

1. a great and continuous tradition dating back to Adam;
2. a secret core of teachings;
3. an epistle or book with a message to future generations;
4. the Plan of Salvation (by Plan of Salvation, Nibley does not simply mean the Mormon Plan of Salvation, but any text that refers to a prophetic apprehension of pattern in human action in time);
5. revelation (again Nibley modifies the semantic field to define revelation to suggest that it means awareness of the above stated pattern through union with God);
6. timelessness, or a pre-figuration or cyclical patterns in time;
7. reference to a Messiah;
8. the idea of mortal life as probationary;
9. any reference to a light versus dark binary in human society (e.g. the Dead Sea Scrolls’ references to the Children of Light); or
10. “an apocalypse of woe,” meaning any reference to physical cataclysms in human history associated with the inevitable falling away of the sons of darkness.\footnote{90}

\footnote{88}——, Since Cumorah, 38.
\footnote{89}“Pseudepigrapha” has multiple legitimate definitions in academic discourse. Its use here is not to the most widely construed definition of pre-modern pseudonymous literature but to specifically Ancient and Late Antique religious production. Pseudepigraphic production does not appear to have been generally understood as fraudulent in this cultural context but instead it was viewed as better to express a work one composed as authored by the person on whose philosophical or written tradition it was based, e.g. Pythagoras. This tradition, well-developed in Greek philosophy, was widely used in Antique Palestine in the Second Temple period and thereafter. “The Pseudepigrapha,” here refers to a body of Christian and Judaic writings produced in or about this region from the pre-Christian to Late Antique era (Hindy Najman, Second Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism [Leiden: Brill, 2003] 9-15). Narrowly construed, as Nibley sometimes uses the term, “the Pseudepigrapha” refers to a fixed body of second- to fourth-century literary production that was written in the name of the apostles or close associates such as the Apostolic Constitutions, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas and 3 Corinthians. There is some controversy over whether forgery was constructed as a problem by these documents’ audiences or whether pseudonym was a widely-understood and tolerated practice (Bart Ehrman, The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], 373-75).
\footnote{90}Nibley, Approach to Book of Mormon, 197-206.
Nibley suggests that many Gnostic and Jewish apocryphal texts state that after death we will return to the pre-mortal existence from which we have come. A key authority for this view is Gregory of Nyssa whom Nibley reads as complaining about the damage done to Christian doctrine by purging this apparently universal doctrine from the early Church. Following the Frazer method, he then infers that early Christian texts suggesting that heavenly post-mortem existence gives meaning to life can be read as endorsements of such a pre-existence. This is, in part, true because we know that our earthly experience has been ordered by our actions and choices in the pre-existence. References, therefore, to human assignments on earth, especially those based on merit, can be found not just in Origen’s somewhat explicit opening of the possibility of pre-existence, but in a wide variety of Egyptian and Dead Sea Scroll references to one’s mission in life.

Nibley is aided in finding references to the Plan of Salvation through his ingenious definition of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature, he suggests, does not merely bear all of the characteristics identified by most scholars for this genre, but in fact describes or seeks to describe the “Plan of Salvation.” Nibley, having annexed at least a portion of every piece of apocalyptic literature to this category, proclaims references to the Plan of Salvation to be ubiquitous. Because he believes that the Plan of Salvation was developed by the Divine Council in the pre-existence, Nibley can find both things by virtue of what he perceives as their

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91 Hugh Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out: Three Studies in Ancient Apostasy*, 2d ed. (Provo: FARMS, 2001), 55. Here, I use the term “Gnostic,” again in a narrowly construed sense. Jonathan Z. Smith has convincingly argued that the Gnostic religious tradition is not unique to the Hellenistic Mediterranean but applies to all religious discourses that comprehend the cosmos as ordered and comprehend that normative ordering as oppressive, dehumanizing, and evil and offer the adherents the opportunity to overthrow, subvert, and escape this fallen state. But I (and more importantly, Nibley) construe the term in a similar sense to Pagels as a group of writings found in the Nag Hammadi library that express a cosmology similar to the one Smith described above and other literary production from the Hellenistic Mediterranean that appear to be generated by similar or related social movements (Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 150-51; Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* [New York: Vintage Books, 1989], xiii-xxxvi).


93 ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 29.

94 ——, *World and the Prophets*, 210; ——, *Timely and Timeless*, 27, 30.

95 ——, *Timely and Timeless*, 4; ——, *Since Cumorah*, 114.
mutual entailment. Descriptions of the Plan are evidence of the existence of the Council and references to the Council entail descriptions of the Plan, even if only one of the two elements is present in any given ancient document.\(^{96}\) The relation in some texts of the Divine Council to the four beasts motif enables him to further add four beasts references to the long list of texts that speak to the Council in heaven and thereby the Plan of Salvation.\(^{97}\) Although clearly applying a higher standard for annexation into a soon enormous personal canon, the insatiable Nibley reaches beyond the texts that would normally be considered in such a project. Thanks to the importance of the Ancient Near East as a heuristic category, Nibley does not simply find the Plan of Salvation in Christian and Jewish documents. He also finds it in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and in Egyptian references to the confrontation between Horace and Seth.\(^{98}\) Not only can one idea naturally entail the Plan of Salvation, but so too can certain terms and phrases, such as “treasures in heaven.” The omnipresence that Nibley’s method attributes to the Plan of Salvation then allows him to conclude that if the Plan of Salvation is being mentioned so often in all these ancient documents, it must have been an extraordinarily widely-held belief in the ancient world, not just amongst the pre-apostate Christian church, but amongst all peoples and religions in the ancient Near East.\(^{99}\)

Mormon soteriology’s three degrees of post-mortal glory similarly help to authenticate possible canonical texts. Because they were described to Smith as metaphorically akin to the brightness of the sun, moon, and stars, it is reasonable to read ancient texts that compare these

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\(^{96}\) The Plan of Salvation can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are especially informative about the Council of Heaven, along with all Enoch literature and much early Christian literature (——, *Timely and Timeless*, 37; ——, *Message of the Papyri*, 471; ——, *Enoch the Prophet*, 242; ——, *Temple and Cosmos*, 186).

\(^{97}\) ——, *Abraham in Egypt*, 37. Because the outcome of the deliberations of the Divine Council was a plan to structure history, any document referencing a plan restructuring the shape for time, is, for him, similarly a text about the Plan of Salvation. Nibley finds a particular Syriac prayer especially authoritative because it links Christ’s crucifixion to “the Plan of the Eternal Father laid down before the foundations of the world” (——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 49).

\(^{98}\) ——, *Enoch the Prophet*, 50; ——, *Abraham in Egypt*, 55.

\(^{99}\) ——, *Timely and Timeless*, 55.
three things as referring to contemporary Mormon understandings of soteriology. Nibley is then able to find multiple references and the “conscious patterning,” of the text to reflect “the three degrees of glory” whenever this tripartite comparison appears in the Joseph Smith papyri.¹⁰⁰

Nibley will often argue for the ancient ubiquity of LDS beliefs; but his apologetic project also requires that LDS ideas of secret knowledge and secret religious ritual must also be generalized to the past. *Pistis Sophia*, a text that Nibley finds extraordinarily helpful, speaks of a series of veils that limit knowledge. All human cosmological knowledge is limited except that of Christ, who has passed through all of the veils.¹⁰¹

The practice of secret rituals, Nibley suggests, is fairly evident in the early Christian period. Stepping out of his minute textual analysis, he sensibly observes that anti-Christian and anti-Jewish polemics suggesting the practice of secret ordinances likely spoke to a larger truth also mentioned in scripture.¹⁰² It is in this context that the Gospel of Bartholomew “is believed to contain instructions and teachings given to the apostles in secret.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, given that some ordinances are secret today, Nibley is able to read ancient exhortations of secrecy as signs of the ancient practice of these ordinances. The Clementine homilies, for instance, point out a secret practice of baptism; because conventional baptism is a non-secret rite, Nibley is able to deduce that this must refer to the baptism of the dead.¹⁰⁴ He makes similar arguments regarding the Mormon prayer circle, anointing ordinances and even testimony meetings.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ ——, *Message of the Papyri*, 116-117.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 443.
¹⁰² ——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 365; ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 317; ——, *Since Cumorah*, 101. It is in the context of this truth that Nibley reads Matthew 17:9, Mark 9:9 and Luke 9:36, when he suggests that it is ritual practice that Christ is urging the apostles to keep secret.
¹⁰³ ——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 49.
¹⁰⁴ ——, *World and the Prophets*, 153.
¹⁰⁵ ——, *Message of the Papyri*, 175; ——, *World and the Prophets*, 33. A specific contemporary ordinance that Nibley is able to retrieve from past fragments is the Mormon prayer circle supposedly found in the Testament of Job and recently discovered fifth-century Coptic fragments thereof. On this basis, Nibley is able to conclude that this reference constitutes a piece of authentic fragmentary evidence of early Church prayer circle practice (——,
Not limiting ancient evidence merely to the textual, Nibley notes the presence of an “immersion pool” or “ritual bath” at Qumran.\(^{106}\) With the understanding of the consistent ritual practice of baptism prior to Christ’s restoration and evidence that this was full immersion baptism as the LDS Church requires, Nibley is able to find textual references to the universal practice of baptism far and wide. If baptism is understood to take place in a stone pool or “stone of washing” and given that the “stone of washing” is obviously the same as the “stone of truth,” we can find baptism not just in the works of Cyril of Jerusalem, but also in Herakles’ initiation by Alpheas and in ancient Druidic ritual.\(^ {107}\) The extension of baptism to the dead through proxy baptism need not just be located in documented practice; the theology underpinning Mormon understandings of temple work allows Nibley to read the *Pastor of Hermas* and the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* as providing specific instructions on baptizing the dead in the early Christian Church because it clarifies that not only did Christ minister to the Dead, but so too did all twelve of the apostles.\(^ {108}\)

Naturally, ritual is not the only element of the restored Church to be found in fragments. The narratives in the Book of Moses and Book of Abraham, along with addenda to key Old Testament narratives in the JST can similarly be found in fragmentary form in such diverse places as Midrash accounts of Sarah’s interaction with the Pharaoh, the Lord’s reluctance and ambivalence regarding his sending of the Deluge in the Hebrew Book of Enoch and unspecified

\(^{106}\) *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 61). The dating of other documents also allows him to project this ordinance forward and argue that the prayer circle is the last of the lost secret ordinances which persisted into the eighth century. (——, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 164). Nibley’s Orientalism also allows him to metabolize the writings of physicist-mystic-environmentalist Fritjof Capra on the subject of Far Eastern practice of the prayer circle (——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 79, 82).

\(^{107}\) ———, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 62.

\(^{108}\) ———, *Message of the Papyri*, 198.

\(^{108}\) ———, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 121; ———, *World and the Prophets*, 155; ———, *Since Cumorah*, 204.
Greek and Canaanite traditions that supposedly tell of the Pharaoh’s attempt to sacrifice a foreign
seer.\textsuperscript{109}

Although I shall turn to these two areas of Nibley’s thought in later sections of this
chapter, it is worth noting here that among the most important LDS beliefs the fragments of
which Nibley finds in ancient scripture are typology and ideas of cyclical time. He finds them in,
among other places, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Coptic Christian texts.\textsuperscript{110} Just one example of how
typology assists Nibley’s task of authenticating fragments in a highly problematic area of
pseudepigraphic literature is in the infancy gospels. Here, he contends that we can find a
“possible historical kernel of stories about the childhood of Jesus.” The way Nibley manages to
separate the wheat from the chaff in infancy gospels is by examining the degree to which they
describe Jesus’ childhood as resembling that of Joseph Smith. Those that describe Jesus as the
child of a poor hardworking and itinerant family, doing disturbing things that stirred up local
ministers, are those deemed most likely to be authentic. This is because, as we shall soon see, of
the structural similarity in the lives of all prophets, inhering not so much in the narrative
structures that describe them, but in the physical structures in which their lives take place.\textsuperscript{111}

Fragments are not distributed in a uniform density throughout all ancient texts. The most
important fragments of the Gospel are, for Nibley, to be found in certain key concentrations and
it appears that the most important of these are discovered in what he terms the “Forty Day
Literature,” those texts or portions of texts that describe Christ’s post-resurrection ministry
which describe history as a series of dispensations, confer secret teachings to the initiated, and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[109] ——, Abraham in Egypt, 187, 348; ——, Enoch the Prophet, 5.
\item[110] ——, Message of the Papyri, 471.
\item[111] ——, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 7.
\end{footnotes}
predict the future apostasy of the Church.\textsuperscript{112} This is crucially important in aiding Nibley’s categorization of different portions of the Book of Mormon. If, as Nibley proposes, the Ether is to be understood as heroic literature, 3 Nephi (because it describes almost exclusively the post-resurrection ministry of Christ in the Americas) is reasonably classed not merely as part of the Forty Day Literature, but as a sterling example. As such, it can then be used to authenticate other Forty Day Literature of more problematic provenance.\textsuperscript{113} Having used 3 Nephi to authenticate the Coptic \textit{Gospel of the Twelve Apostles}, more problematic texts like Luke-Acts can then be checked against what Nibley deems to be earlier, more accurate works.\textsuperscript{114}

One of the most important purposes of the Forty Day Literature is to function as a prescient historiography of the Great Apostasy in establishing not only the events that comprise this tragedy, but also the structure of these events. The basic narrative Nibley expects to find is that Jesus founded a Church, he and his members expected it to exist for a very short period of time, and anticipated its restoration millennia later.\textsuperscript{115} Proceeding from this premise, he can confidently judge as false any element in the literature that refers to Christ establishing a singular, long-term Church organization.\textsuperscript{116} The early Church’s neglect for education, its disengagement from politics, and its lack of a developed social gospel are all evidence of this.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[112]{\textsuperscript{112}, The Prophetic Book of Mormon, 410. This is not to say that the Forty Day Literature reveals all that is beyond the veils in \textit{Pistis Sophia}. Even after his resurrection, Christ still refuses to reveal information about the time before the creation of the world. That is because such information causes madness, as we know from the Medieval Slavonic/Hebrew text, the \textit{Apocalypse of Abraham}, in which Nibley finds the ancient prophet being driven mad by witnessing the process of nuclear fusion in the centre of a star (\textsuperscript{113}, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, 133, 138). Fortunately, Nibley observes, our story is about humankind, and we can therefore skip the parts that took place before creation (\textsuperscript{114}, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 353).}
\footnotetext[113]{\textsuperscript{113}, The Prophetic Book of Mormon, 409. For instance, 3 Nephi 28 can be read as an explanation of the role of death within the Plan of Salvation (\textsuperscript{115}, \textit{Enoch the Prophet}, 172). The Coptic \textit{Gospel of the Twelve Apostles}, for instance, can then be re-dated accordingly; if it is not the oldest gospel, why would it possess so many apparent resonances with 3 Nephi? (Hugh Nibley, \textit{Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins}, ed. Noel Reynolds (Provo: FARMS, 1982), 128).}
\footnotetext[114]{\textsuperscript{114}, The Prophetic Book of Mormon, 415.}
\footnotetext[115]{\textsuperscript{115}, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 209.}
\footnotetext[116]{\textsuperscript{116}, \textit{When the Lights Went Out}, 60.}
\footnotetext[117]{Ibid., 11.}
\end{footnotes}
Whenever terms like “the end” or “the end of all things” appear in early Christian literature they are not to be understood as referring to the \textit{eschaton}, but instead as references to the Great Apostasy and resulting end of proxy baptism, barring minor instances of multiple signification.\textsuperscript{118} Evidence of this fact can be found in the textual absence of “blasted hopes and expectations” when the \textit{eschaton} did not materialize. Therefore no one was lamenting Christ’s failure to return.\textsuperscript{119} The “strangely negative behavior” of early Christians, he concludes, indicates “not the imminent \textit{parousia} but instead the shutting up of shop until a distant re-opening.”\textsuperscript{120}

Given that most texts come from the time after the shop closed, Nibley especially prizes those he can date to the first century to recover the lost structures and teachings of the Early Church. In this respect, Nibley leans heavily on \textit{Didache}, which he identifies as one of the few documents to cross the gap intact. When discovered in the late nineteenth century, the \textit{Didache} was lauded as an invaluable historical artifact for the reconstruction of Christian origins. The text’s initial fanfare, especially by a scholar as preeminent as Adolph von Harnack, yielded to disparagement after the 1920s when its claims of antiquity were contested by text critics who found it derivative of works much later than its supposed date.\textsuperscript{121} But it was one of the texts whose interpretation changed with the emergence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Theories of late derivation were abandoned by many but not all scholars, given the Scrolls’ prominent featuring of a key characteristic of the document, the doctrine of the “Two Ways,” one of the two features of the document that was striking for Nibley and more mainstream scholars.\textsuperscript{122} The other feature,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 9; \textemdash, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 135-36, 193.
\item \textsuperscript{119} \textemdash, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 192.
\item \textsuperscript{120} \textemdash, \textit{When the Lights Went Out}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Jonathan A Draper, “The Didache in Modern Research: An Overview” in \textit{The Didache in Modern Research}, J.A. Draper (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 11.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 22-23.
\end{itemize}
relevant here, is the idea of it as a “Church manual” like *Apostolic Constitutions*, a rare description of the institutional manifestations of early Christianities. Even so, the Dead Sea Scrolls’ revision of scholarship did not so much establish it as a first-century document as it did the possibility of its first-century provenance, when paired with the characteristics that first caused scholars to note the apparent primitiveness of the liturgy.\(^{123}\)

Following upon and then extending from the work of scholars who, before him, had seen evidence of early Church organization in *Didache*, Nibley is able to recover various church offices, although not quite the ones other scholars find including the discrete offices of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthhoods, the permanent quorum of the twelve apostles, the “first presidency” and the office of “presiding bishop.”\(^{124}\) Whereas the “early Church depended wholly on the inspired teaching of living prophets,” he writes, this pessimistic narrative of an early Church, the glory of which would never be regained, was finally removed from Christian historical thought in the days of Eusebius. Curiously, although crediting Eusebius with the replacement of this declension narrative with a triumphalist one, Nibley also relies on the early Church historian as his main source for the pessimistic narrative.\(^{125}\) This is as good an example as any of the Nibley methodology’s capacity to differentiate truthful fragments from apostate and counterfeit teachings, even within the very same document. This also helps to explain the sense of optimism his writing maintains regarding the assertion that mainstream scholarship is incrementally validating Mormonism.\(^{126}\)

V. Kinds of True Texts


\(^{124}\) Hugh Nibley, *Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2005), 9, 35, 41. Given his family history, Nibley is especially gleeful about finding the presiding bishop rank.

\(^{125}\) ———, *When the Lights Went Out*, 27, 53.

\(^{126}\) ———, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 77; ———, *Apostles and Bishops*, 38.
Whether fragments or whole texts, there is a finite list of kinds of true texts Nibley recognizes. It goes without saying that revelations received in the present day, such as the sections comprising Doctrine and Covenants, are recognized as true texts. Another source worthy of further elaboration is oral tradition. While Nibley recognizes oral tradition as potentially a source of true teachings, whether fragmentary or complete, he notes, in accord with the lessons of the Mulek narrative and his interpretation of the writings of Clement and Eusebius, that it degrades over time, if deprived of contact with the Lord through revelation.\(^{127}\)

Not all cultures do an equal amount of violence to their orally-stored knowledge over time, and he suggests that indigenous peoples in the Americas have a much better record of maintaining stable oral traditions with minimal degradation. This view is validated for Nibley by nineteenth-century Hopi claims that the Book of Mormon was merely a compilation of their own peoples’ oral traditions. He then goes on to suggest that the Hopi worldview can be usefully generalized to all American indigenous peoples.\(^{128}\) This claim is not just illustrative of the variety of places Nibley can locate fragments; it demonstrates the gulf between his academic methodology and that of his subsequent FARMS publishers. The very first edition of the FARMS review condemns one of his two sources on the universality of Hopi worldview, *Two Pahute Legends*, as likely unreliable, politely observing that

We are entitled to wonder... how closely the author followed his Indian informants and how much contamination may have entered from his own religious and historical concerns. This is especially true of the second legend, “Three Days of Darkness,” where we do not even have the written version of the author/collector (who died in 1960), but rather the gathered and harmonized reminiscences of those who heard him recount it.\(^{129}\)

But these kinds of concerns are explicitly ruled out by Nibley’s position that texts’ veracity must be determined solely on internal rather than external factors. We can know whether this is an

\(^{127}\) ———, *Since Cumorah*, 99.

\(^{128}\) ———, *Brother Brigham*, 80. This testimony was received orally by Nibley while working on the Hopi mission.

authentic report of Paiute folklore because this is the kind of thing they would have said. And while the Hopi may have lost their literacy in the script of the ancient Nephites, their ongoing possession of the Hopi stone, which Nibley identifies as the land title to the Americas that the Nephites were ordered to make, indicates an oral tradition that maintains its fidelity to ancient beliefs and heritage long after writing disappears.¹³⁰

Another example of the accuracy of Hopi tradition is the snake dance. Whereas ancient Jews had largely abandoned the brazen serpent before the coming of Christ, Egyptians had moved away from serpent worship early, and early Christians had abandoned Ouroboros as a symbol long ago, the Hopi, through their snake dance, have continued to recognize the spiritual importance of passing through the great serpent, or as Nibley terms it elsewhere, the “aeon of the Serpent” in the human project of universal progression.¹³¹ But this is not oral tradition, exactly.

For Nibley, it is ritual, not writing or speech acts, that constitute the ur-form of communication. It is ritual from which narrative itself arises, he argues. Myths arise from ritual and not the reverse. The first ordinances commemorating the future sacrifice of the Messiah were practiced by Adam out of obedience long before any narrative structures emerged to justify or explain them; and although they might undergo adulteration or corruption over time, all rituals, ultimately narratized, go back to those first rites.¹³² In ancient Egypt, similarly, myths arose from rituals and not the reverse.¹³³ Mormons therefore should accord special recognition to

¹³⁰ Nibley, Brother Brigham, 85.
¹³¹ ———, Message of the Papyri, 314-17. For further evidence of the persistence and strength of Hopi oral tradition he also suggests that the flatness of Hopi social hierarchies indicate that their oral tradition has better preserved the basis for a social organization of the prehistoric state.
¹³² ———, Old Testament and Related Studies, 42; ———, Message of the Papyri, xxviii.
¹³³ ———, Eloquent Witness, 295. The situation in the early Church was similar (i.e. it was easier for leaders to suppress and overturn doctrines underpinning ordinances than it was to end their practice: Nibley, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 126).
groups that have preserved the Gospel through their fairly accurate continued enactment of Adamic ritual, like American Indians, Polynesians and Freemasons.\textsuperscript{134}

When it comes to written documents, there are certain classes of document that Nibley’s methodology distinguishes without explicitly naming or classifying. Beyond general observations that “ancient Oriental documents” are based on a kernel of truth and not on an imaginative enterprise by their authors and that the various books of Enoch exemplify this, preserving, as they do, the “plain and precious things” that Joseph Smith claimed had been removed from scripture, not all such documents have these properties for the same reason or in the same way.\textsuperscript{135} The kind of document might be termed “divinely restored,” referring to lost documents or portions thereof have been simultaneously brought back and authenticated through supernatural agency. The Book of Moses is a fine example of this. Not only does it restore Mosaic writings lost from the Pentateuch in its second through eighth chapters, but also its other chapters are themselves fragments, fragments of the Book of Enoch not present in the archaeologically recovered Enoch corpus. Although not all of the Book of Enoch will be restored until the \textit{eschaton}, these portions were “given as a bonus” to Joseph Smith.\textsuperscript{136} It seems that the reconstruction of the Book of Enoch, an important project of our dispensation, is an incremental one that involves uniting divinely restored fragments with other kinds of fragments.

To understand the next two types of documentary fragments Nibley recognizes, it is necessary to examine writings produced once the Great Apostasy was underway. The profusion of Gnostic writings produced in the second through fourth centuries resulted from the loss of the “true Gnosis,” the secret teachings of Christ’s forty-day ministry that were lost, along with the prophetic gifts that gave the early Church access to them. For this reason, the Gnostics were

\textsuperscript{134}——, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 369.
\textsuperscript{135}——, \textit{Enoch the Prophet}, 255; ——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 41.
\textsuperscript{136}——, \textit{Enoch the Prophet}, 91, 95.
most insistent on the paramount importance of Christ’s forty-day ministry even if a number of their claims about it were fraudulent or incorrect. Their response, an attempt to produce a “counter-Gnosis” to satisfy the demand for Gnostic teaching, was equally ambivalent. The popularity of this replacement Gnosis “attests to the universal awareness that such a teaching had formerly existed and been lost to the main Church.” Because of the greater persistence of correct ritual (vs. doctrine), the texts generated by those interpreting ritual “bear important witness to the nature of the thing that they are copying,” despite the loss of many formally articulated correct doctrines by the time Gnostic texts were generated. Nor was ritual the only source the Gnostics had for accurate information. Many later gospels, even though they may contain no original parts, still contain crucial truthful fragments because they were written by people exposed to the now-lost canon. In this way, the Gnostic project was not a failure; instead, it produced a Gnosticism that is an alloy of both truth and falsehood.

With respect to Nibley’s theory of text authentication, Gnostic documents contain two additional types of true fragments that I will term “deductively restored,” and “preserved.” In the former category, we have Gnostic doctrines created by extrapolating from correct ritual practice; in the latter, we have Gnostic doctrines recorded by witnesses to lost canonical materials. These three categories do not just encompass the various ancient and obscure documents that Nibley presents to his audience for the first time; they encompass all scripture, including the Standard Works.

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137 ——, Since Cumorah, 84.
138 ——, World and Prophets, 57, 63; ——, When the Light Went Out, 55.
139 ——, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 21.
140 Ibid., 17, 135.
141 ——, Since Cumorah, 51.
142 Ibid., 87.
After all, the great original books of Adam and Enoch have been lost. All we have now is a “second growth,” an attempt by prophets and scholars to replace them.\textsuperscript{143} This helps to make sense of Nibley’s claim of the “shocking lack of religious diversity” throughout the world’s history. Ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Babylonians would have seen the Bible as unoriginal, just as their own scriptures, literature and histories were derived from the lost earlier Gospel that the Lord had been required to restore.\textsuperscript{144} Although he rejects the specifics of the Q hypothesis, Nibley’s \textit{chronicon}, in a sense, is based on its total generalization. Not only does he believe all Gospels were based on an earlier, more accurate text; this is also true of all scripture of all religious traditions.\textsuperscript{145} In this way, Nibley understands Gabriel’s words in Luke 1, not so much as an account of the words of the angel, though they might well have been, but more as a “pastiche of old prophecies.”\textsuperscript{146} But true scripture is coming back now, whether divinely restored through Smith and the Mormon prophets, deductively restored by Nibley and other faithful scholars or preserved by ancient prophets like Mormon and Moroni.\textsuperscript{147}

Whether a document is evidence of deductive restoration, divine restoration or preservation is normally evident in Nibley’s analysis but the Pseude Clementine corpus is variously classed in all of these categories. I had hoped through my research to find a way to periodize Nibley’s opinions about the Clementine corpus, showing either an evolution towards or away from their status as deductive restorations. Unfortunately, there is no clear time-based pattern for the claims that he makes. Perhaps the clearest of his statements is this, that Clement was a true Gnostic, and an heir to the Gnosis that was ultimately lost.\textsuperscript{148}

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\textsuperscript{143} ——, \textit{Enoch the Prophet}, 130.
\textsuperscript{144} ——, \textit{Timely and Timeless}, 43.
\textsuperscript{145} ——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 97.
\textsuperscript{146} ——, \textit{Enoch the Prophet}, 128.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 54, 145. Moses 6 and 7 are mere “previews” of the soon-to-be restored Book of Enoch; its full restoration is inevitable in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times.
\textsuperscript{148} ——, \textit{World and Prophets}, 59.
Recognitions, Nibley has claimed, were a real historical document authored by the historical Clement, a first-century Christian with a close relationship to Peter. This individual is often considered to be Pope Clement I (fl. 96 CE), as the writings Nibley attributes to him suggest; but this does not fit well with the Nibley chronicon which denies the existence of the office of Pope. For this reason, first-century Clement is sometimes conflated with Clement of Alexandria, the second-century teacher of Origen (c. 150- c. 215). On the other hand, he has also claimed, in accord with the scholarly consensus, that the Pseudoclementine literature was written in the fourth century, but can still be considered valid because it is a highly successful attempt to reconstruct authentic material from an earlier period. At still other times, Nibley adopts an intermediate position following outlying scholars who date the recognitions to the late second century after Clement, but before their customary fourth-century date. Further yet, Nibley also argues that the authenticity and date of the Clementine Recognitions is irrelevant because their description of what would have been true in the early second century is essentially correct. The shifting stances are further problematized by the fact that even when Nibley recognizes Clement as the author of all of the Pseudoclementine corpus, he nevertheless suggests that Clement himself inserted apocryphal accounts of things that he did not witness. But this too is found to be unproblematic in the final analysis because Peter’s refutation of Simon Magus is correct because it stems from an accurate, ancient tradition.

But thanks to Nibley’s exegesis of Blass, all of this is mere trivia. We know that the Apostolic Constitutions, Pseudoclementine homilies, Clementine Recognitions, etc. correctly

149 Ibid., 8; ——, Enoch the Prophet, 226. In solid figural, typological style, Nibley sometimes also conflates Clement I with Clement of Alexandria, the teacher of Origen.
150 Nicole Kelley, Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).
151 ——, World and Prophets, 31.
152 ——, Temple and Cosmos, 350.
153 ——, World and Prophets, 166.
depict the doctrines of the early Church because they contain so many important LDS doctrines such as the pre-existence, the plurality of worlds, the structural separation of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, the prayer circle temple ordinance, eternal progression and the adoption of the Plan of Salvation by the pre-existent spirits, at least they do if one applies Nibley’s textual criticism methods.\textsuperscript{154}

The Dead Sea Scrolls occupy a similarly exalted and similarly uncategorized place in Nibley’s complex hierarchy of ancient texts. “Everything has changed,” Nibley suggests, “as a result of the emergence of the Dead Sea Scrolls”\textsuperscript{155} Everything changed, that is, for non-Mormons. Now the rest of the world is also connected to the ancient world unmediated through the recovery of ancient records, and unadulterated through the copying process.\textsuperscript{156} Like the Nag Hammadi library, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered during Nibley’s scholarly career and exerted a considerable influence on the development and content not just of his historical method but also his theory of causation in history.\textsuperscript{157} But the Dead Sea Scrolls are not merely authoritative because they, like the records in Hill Cumorah, had been sealed up for centuries. They are authoritative because their discovery, along with the foundation of the state of Israel, was prophesied in the Book of Mormon, rendering the Book and the scrolls mutually validating.\textsuperscript{158} Beginning with Enoch’s sealing-up of Adam’s Book of Remembrance for Noah to discover, the burial of records and their inscription on metal to preserve their contents have

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154}——, World and Prophets, 207; ——, Temple and Cosmos, 344; ——, Apostles and Bishops, 47; ——, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 65, 77, 121.
  \item \textsuperscript{155}——, The Prophetic Book of Mormon, 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{156}——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 121.
  \item \textsuperscript{158}Nibley, The Prophetic Book of Mormon, 275. Citing 2 Nephi 3:19-20, 2 Nephi 26:16, and Moroni 10:27-31, Nibley suggests that the coming forth of these two sets of ancient records is mutually validating.
\end{itemize}
always been a practice of God’s people.\textsuperscript{159} And when they engage in this act it can be read not only as evidence of their fidelity but of their shared consciousness of within the dispensational system by which history is organized.\textsuperscript{160}

This dispensational understanding of history is just one of a myriad of points of mutual validation Nibley finds in the Scrolls and the Book of Mormon. Not only do both demonstrate the pre-Christian articulation of what had been hitherto understood as Christian ideas; but both corpora also describe Mosaic law as anticipatory of its fulfillment in the Messiah, the need for immersion baptism, and the vesting of ultimate church authority in familiar institutions such as bishops, a quorum of twelve apostles and a three person First Presidency.\textsuperscript{161} One of the great things about these denser concentrations of truth in the fragments or, in the case of the Clementine literature and Dead Sea scrolls, these highly special, if uncategorizable scriptures, is that we can take more seriously other claims that they make (even without precise reference) to contemporary Mormonism. It is on this basis that we know that when the pre-existent spirits voted to adopt our Plan of Salvation, the inhabitants of all of the worlds of the universe rejoiced.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{VI. How to Translate Correctly}

Generally, FARMS authors have tended to minimize the divergence between Nibley’s \textit{chronicon} and their own. But when it comes to translation, his work is far enough from the beaten path that explicit criticism surfaces more reliably. FARMS has published two translations

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{159}——, \textit{Enoch the Prophet}, 131, 151; ——, \textit{The Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 75; ——, \textit{Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 173; ——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 61. Not only do these practices indicate the religious legitimacy of Nephite-style document-sealing, but the text of the \textit{Assumption of Moses} in the Dead Sea Scrolls also offers additional, independent authentication (——, \textit{Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 173).
\item \textsuperscript{160}——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 61.
\item \textsuperscript{161}——, \textit{Apostles and Bishops}, 55; ——, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, 248; ——, \textit{An Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 171, 190. Of course this entails implicitly dating the Qumran community to a much earlier period than that of the mainstream archaeological consensus.
\item \textsuperscript{162}——, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, 139.
\end{itemize}
of the Joseph Smith Papyri, Nibley’s and that of Michael D. Rhodes who co-writes wrote the introduction to Nibley’s translation with John Gee.\textsuperscript{163} The wide gulf between the two translations is immediately obvious through a cursory comparison but is also addressed, albeit euphemistically, by Rhodes:

Since Nibley made his own translations from all foreign languages except where noted, we have given him wide latitude in rendering his translation… Analysis of a random chapter showed that of its almost seven hundred citations, Nibley was completely accurate 94 percent of the time… there is no longer any question that Nibley could read Egyptian… we have tried to remain true to Nibley’s intent, sometimes preserving [his] readings of the ambiguous hieratic even though we might have preferred to resolve the ambiguity differently.\textsuperscript{164}

The difference between the two translations arises, fundamentally, out of divergent methodologies. Throughout his career, rather than minimizing the distinctiveness of his theory and method of translation, Nibley has been explicit. This transparency arises from the sense of responsibility he pairs with what he understands to be both the massive latitude and massive power he has in shaping public understandings of the past by translating documents in now-dead languages.\textsuperscript{165} And so Nibley attempts to translate in the style of Smith who fully understood the idea of translation “in the broad and proper sense.”\textsuperscript{166}

Recognizing that because ancient documents are intrinsically ambiguous, giving rise to multiple possible modern translations and understanding the impossibility of literal translation, Nibley arrives at his definition of correct translation.\textsuperscript{167} The “only possible” definition of translation is “a statement in the translator’s own words of what he thought the author had in mind.”\textsuperscript{168} Translating is not a matter of the “matching of words” but is instead “a meeting of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{163} Michael D. Rhodes, \textit{The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary} (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002).
  \item \textsuperscript{164} Nibley, \textit{Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri}, xx-xxi.
  \item \textsuperscript{165} ——, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 248.
  \item \textsuperscript{166} ——, \textit{Message of Papyri}, 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 55; ——, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 217, 252.
  \item \textsuperscript{168} Nibley cites Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in support of this theory but cites no specific work.
\end{itemize}
Furthermore, we can be especially liberal with ideograms because “Egyptian representation” was constructed to have the largest possible range of meanings. Another area where special liberality should be granted is in dealing with names. Names are found to recur across documents, not in instances of identity, but in instances of reasonable similarity. The equivalency he draws between “Zenos,” “Zenez,” and “Kenaz,” “Khenez,” and “Zenock,” is not atypical of his general work. And from this rendering of what some might see as separate individuals as one, Nibley is able to fashion a composite historical figure of an ancient prophet who developed a seven-thousand-year dispensational historiography based on the existence of multiple worlds and the principle of universal progression. This is further magnified when scholars revise the phoneme to which ideograms correspond; the equivalency Nibley posits between “Khem” and “Ham” remains intact even as “Khem” is revised to “Min.”

Nibley notes that the problems of translation are not limited only to textual material but generally apply to material culture and its interpretation. All archaeology, Nibley reminds us, is interpretive and the meanings of all findings are refracted through present-day thinking and the consciousness of individual archaeologists. And because all meaning in archaeology arises from interpretation, modern archeology is beset by all of the interpretative problems in the discipline of history.

VII. Distinguishing Truth from Fraud

——, Message of Papyri, 52.
——, Abraham in Egypt, 383.
——, Since Cumorah, 325; ——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 289; ——, Message of Papyri, 215.
——, Since Cumorah, 325.
——, Message of Papyri, 122.
——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 432.
All this talk of inclusiveness and complementarity may give the picture that for Nibley, there is no such thing as a fraudulent text. But this is not the case. He has standards for determining fraud, methods of distinguishing truly ancient documents from frauds about which he is highly explicit. He is necessarily explicit about these things because, as the greatest faithful scholar of his day, much of his production entailed finding fault with the methods of those who had pronounced the Book of Mormon a fraud.

When it comes to the Mormon scripture, Nibley argues, anti-Mormon critics err because they examine the methods by which Joseph Smith translated, rather than the results produced. Instead, when analyzing any document – Mormon scripture simply deserves to be judged by the same standards as other texts – one should apply two standards of consistency: self-consistency and consistency with the claimed historical setting and its literature. It is, after all, “impossible” to falsify history without contradicting oneself.

As with many other things, Nibley finds a shocking lack of diversity amongst forgery projects and, as such, is able to, in modern law enforcement terms, profile forgers. Not only do all forgers contradict themselves; they also seek to maximize narrative artistry, overreach their own vocabularies, use ambiguous, esoteric language and fail to exhibit unswerving public confidence in their production. Their desire for public approval also causes them to avoid presenting depressing or pessimistic messages to their audience. This latter observation, interestingly, is not about the Book of Mormon but is instead about Forty Day Literature, about which he says “nobody would willingly invent such a depressing message or accept it without the highest credentials.” Frauds also show up with the passage of time. As more is learned both

176 ———, *Message of the Papyri*, 59, 63.
177 ———, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 58.
178 ———, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 67.
179 Ibid., 64-69, 71, 228; ———, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 14.
about the period in which they were produced and the period that they describe, the
inconsistencies by which they can be detected will become apparent. A true text, like the Book of
Mormon, on the other hand, will only come to seem more consistent. 180

Nibley does not just develop these standards in order to argue for the historicity of the
Book of Mormon or Book of Abraham. He also uses them to locate the many fraudulent and
untrue ancient documents and fragments he confronts, in particular those that gave rise to the
massive fraud known as the Great Apostasy. This fraud, which not only produced fraudulent
documents but destroyed true ones, was not directed by the Roman Catholic Church but to a
more ancient institution that found a privileged place therein, to which Nibley refers throughout
his writings as “the University of Alexandria.” And it was this new arm of the Catholic Church,
acquired in the fourth century that was primarily guilty of the suppression of the Books of Enoch
other key texts. 181 This body did not just act to suppress whole books; it deleted crucial sections
of extant material. For example, the descriptions of the Divine Council and its vote on the Plan
of Salvation were carefully excised from Revelation and Genesis. 182

The main reason one would perpetrate such an enormous fraud is in order to pursue or
maintain power; after all, quoting George Orwell, Nibley observes that “who controls the past
controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.” 183 To this day, he claims, the
Catholic Church continues to restrict and destroy documents showing the illegitimacy of its
claims of succession to Peter. 184 This Catholic power grab is part of a long tradition; Nibley

180——, Prophetic Book of Mormon, 59, 70; ——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 309; ——, Enoch the
Prophet, 105, 111; ——, Lehi in the Desert, 111. Smith, for instance, could not have known of the Asiatic Captive
King custom, the contents of the 1821 translation of the Book of Enoch, the year drama, the great assembly, or that
there were fertile areas of south-eastern Arabia.
181——, Enoch the Prophet, 97.
182——, Since Cumorah, 211; ——, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 226.
184Nibley, Apostles and Bishops, 149.
strongly endorses Justin Martyr’s claim that Jewish religious authorities systematically modified the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{185}

From our knowledge of these large-scale fraud projects, we can adduce principles of fraudulent text modification in addition to those by which fraudulent texts are generated. The insertion or deletion of negatives in a text can be highly effective as evinced in early Christian documents stating that the Church had not lost its spiritual gifts or that true Christianity has no secret teachings.\textsuperscript{186} But fraud does not, in and of itself, indicate the falsity of a text. Given the authorial attribution of many ancient texts in the “Abraham tradition” (see below), a text can be both accurate and fraudulent.\textsuperscript{187}

When dealing with scripture, as a subset of ancient documents, additional strategies are available, thanks to the existence of modern revelation. Comparing modern revelation to past putative scripture does not merely reveal contradictions: emphasis and repetition in modern revelation reveals God responding to the damage to his earlier revelations. In this way we can see the lack of emphasis on God the Father in the Old Testament as part of the straying against which Isaiah inveighs and ultimately making necessary the re-emphasis on God’s role as our personal father in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{188}

\textbf{VIII. Scripture and Who Reads It}

In his writings, Nibley often argues that the Book of Mormon is superior to all other scripture because it has not been redacted. For this reason unfamiliar and unprecedented elements have been allowed to survive in the text (elements that apostate Churches, had they the

\textsuperscript{185}——, \textit{Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 372.
\textsuperscript{186}——, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 230; ——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 116.
\textsuperscript{187}Based, inter alia, on Nibley’s idea of rational Gnosticism, apocrypha and scriptural second growth (\textit{Abraham in Egypt}, 3).
\textsuperscript{188}——, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 242. Nibley is writing in a period after which the Adam/God question has been thoroughly settled by Church authorities. With the acceptance of the Talmage formulation, all references to the Lord Jehovah in the Old Testament are understood by Mormons to refer to Jesus Christ.
opportunity, would no doubt have removed).  Perhaps it is for this reason, then, that Nibley sees himself as a defender of the Book of Mormon circulated during Smith’s lifetime and not the version currently authorized by the LDS Church. While Nibley defends the Church’s current edition and maintains that there have been no substantive changes in meaning, he does not hide his belief in its inferiority to previous editions as editors have smoothed over apparent problems with the original book’s language. A key example of this problematic editing is the reduced specificity of the section describing to the Jaredites’ marine craft. The original version, Nibley maintains, refers unambiguously to the barges’ submersibility and technologies for keeping them airtight while under water, whereas later editions have stepped back from this.

Still, not all of the blame for problems with the Book of Mormon text, insignificant though they may be, rests with the generations of Church leaders following Smith’s ministry. In composing the original Book of Mormon, Smith and his associates were faced with a difficult choice and ultimately followed their first century apostolic predecessors in choosing to generate a text that conformed to the scriptural expectations of their day. As a result, they chose to replicate errors and inaccuracies in the King James Bible for the same reason that predecessors in the Early Church chose to replicate errors and inaccuracies in the Septuagint. Their choice of early modern English did not stem from a desire to alienate the Book of Mormon from the vernacular of its day, but instead to fulfill the genre expectations of its audience.

This insight was Nibley’s, and it stems from a general rule that applies to most of his exegesis: scripture is understood to be primarily directed to its immediate and contemporary audience. In his study of dreams in the Book of Mormon, especially those of Nephi and Lehi,

189——, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 209.
190Ibid., 344.
191——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 215.
192——, *Since Cumorah*, 129; ——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 217.
Nibley bases his exegesis on the meaning of symbols to contemporary Arabs who, from his Orientalist perspective, are effective stand-ins for sixth-century BCE Judeans. He accords with McConkie that only sealed records, like those portions of the Book of Mormon authored by Mormon and Moroni, buried solely for our benefit should be read based on our cultural assumptions as though directed to our society. For instance, Mormon wished to convey to us a clear and direct relationship between political and economic decline and moral virtue. Given that inspired redaction and abridgment clarify rather than adulterate scripture, problems of redaction and multiple authorship are not problems for Nibley. In the same way that Mormon, Lehi and Nephi are unproblematically fused in a single voice, the inclusion in Isaiah of writings by people other than the prophet only enhances the book, even if those individuals might be considerably separated from the prophet by time or space.

But the plainness and accuracy of the words of ancient prophets is up against a community of people who, despite their fidelity to the LDS Church, make significant and repeated errors in their interpretation of scripture thanks to the influence of Protestant thought. The first of these is to understand God as the unmediated author of scripture. Nibley notes that Jesus and God the Father are rarely directly quoted, and that we must therefore understand the inspired words of prophets as non-identical with the word of God. Another key exegetical error is the overgeneralization of events (i.e. seeing local events that comprise a prophet’s whole

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193 ——, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 254-257.
194 ——, *Since Cumorah*, 391; ——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 365; Nibley does not see this phenomenon as unique to Mormon scripture, and even suggests that the inspiration the Zionist movement and nascent state of Israel derived from the emergence of the Dead Sea Scrolls is indicative of the power of future-focused rhetoric in sealed scripture (——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 285).
195 ——, *Since Cumorah*, 325. Similarly, economic inequality, a major concern of our age, has therefore been highlighted in Mormon’s abridgement, emphasizing the rapidity of economic boom/bust cycles, and their extremity. This rises to the level of articulating what Nibley terms “Samuel’s law,” namely that when the economy becomes the main focus of a society that society will destroy itself. And it is for this reason that in Helaman 11, Nephi prays for an economic depression in order to save his civilization (——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 349, 362, 364, and 477).
196 ——, *Since Cumorah*, 143.
197 ——, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 64.
world as global events). This is not simply a problem with terms like “the face of the Land” in the Book of Mormon, but has also led to vast misunderstandings of the scope of the Deluge.\textsuperscript{198}

**IX. Fashioning the Big Picture**

However problematic the Gnostic legacy might have been, Nibley seems eager to follow in its footsteps, using human reason to reconstruct lost Gnosis. Ultimately, the product of Nibley’s work is not a simple endorsement or reinforcement of faithful Mormon historiography. Rather, the Nibley *chronicon* knits faithful LDS historiography together with elements of historical and Gospel truth that he has assembled through his own work as a faithful scholar. Like the four gospels, the accounts of Adam in the books of Genesis, Moses and Abraham, along with temple ritual, can produce a more complete picture of the life of the founder of the human race.\textsuperscript{199}

Nibley is most explicit in this project in his construction of what he terms the “Enoch picture,” which is constituted from a hybrid of Enoch fragments, pseudepigraphic reconstructions of Enoch, and those previews of Enoch found in the Book of Moses. The importance of this reconstruction project is evinced by the references to the Book of Enoch in both Doctrine and Covenants 107:56-57 and by what he counts to be 128 references to Enoch’s lost teachings in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{200} From this work of reconstruction we can know, for instance, that the deluge comes as the climax of a period of long preparation by the faithful and increasing restlessness of the elements.\textsuperscript{201} We also learn from the Enoch picture that there were high levels of technology and material wealth in the prophet’s day and that this provoked a significant and divinely mandated environmental catastrophe to prevent technological control of

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 66. The reality is that we know almost nothing of the geographic scope of the flood, something made clearly evident by the fact, as Nibley notes, that we do not even know where the birds went.

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 64.

\textsuperscript{200} ——. *Enoch the Prophet*, 95, 127.

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 12.
the environment. This in turn helps to explain how it is that so much of the original Enoch literature was about astronomy and Nibley associates the apostate churches’ rejection of the Enochian corpus as part of its abandonment of the project of scientific cosmology. The appearance of what might be mistaken for numerology in much of the Enoch pseudepigrapha in fact comes from the recognition that precise mathematical knowledge of both past and ongoing creation of worlds will be the best guide to the future. “To be effective such knowledge must be highly accurate as Enoch himself makes clear.”

Nibley does similar work with what he terms the “Abraham tradition.” Taken together, the tradition tells us that the tower of Babel existed to collect and accumulate data to mitigate and counteract intermittent environmental catastrophes. We can also know, he writes, that “the infant Abraham was nourished by two white stones, one of which gave milk, the other gave honey. The Talmud reports, commenting on this, that in Egypt it was believed that all abandoned babies (Abraham had been abandoned) were fed by two such miraculous stones—plainly showing where the legend came from.” This in turn shows that Abraham, not Peter, is the rock upon which the Church was to be founded, a doctrine for which Nibley finds confirmation in the *Odes of Solomon.*

This Abraham tradition then feeds into Nibley’s historical picture of the foundation of Egypt, a powerful alloy of assertions in ancient texts with the narrative offered in the *Book of Abraham.* Although, Nibley admits, “the story of the pioneer lady is not to be found in histories of Egypt,” it can nevertheless be supported through a reinterpretation of Egyptian

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202 Ibid., 184.
203 Ibid., 217-218.
204 ———, *Message of Papyri*, 262.
207 Ibid., 192.
208 ———, *Lehi in the Desert*, 323.
literature and the archaeological record.\textsuperscript{209} Egypt’s status as a hereditary matriarchy inferred from the \textit{Book of Abraham}, can be found in the fact that the title of Queen does not exist in ancient Egypt. This must be demonstrative of a matriarchy because without a title “the King can never escape her.”\textsuperscript{210} That stated, Nibley is somewhat equivocal on the question of the specific ontology of the founder of the Egyptian matriarchy. It may be that the ancient Egyptians fabricated her “to match the Noah story… [and to show] how a woman was sent forth to discover the land of Egypt while it was still under the waters of a flood [having] rebelled against God and been destroyed.” In this way, however dubious the “pioneer lady’s” ontology might be, Nibley is nevertheless confident that the \textit{Book of Abraham} narrative was part of an older, more authentic Egyptian written tradition.\textsuperscript{211} Whereas text-critical ideas of multiple attestation have tended to generate knowledge based on points of intersection between documents, the Nibleyian picture or tradition method is based on locating truth not at the intersection of two sets but in the union of the sets.

\textbf{X. From Method to chronicon}

Although the preceding chapter has necessarily revealed many elements of the Nibley chronicon, its main project has been to describe the methods he uses to create it. Through the amplification and physicalization of Frazer’s methodology, extending mere eclecticism into a massive knowledge-making project through the law of similarity that Nibley is able to fashion his Enoch picture and Abraham traditions. These practices, in turn, give rise not merely to a temporal pattern containing subaltern past(s); they give rise to an explicit theory of physical causation more ambitious and encompassing than any of the thinkers previously discussed.

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., \textit{Abraham in Egypt}, 589.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 505. Here we see similar reasoning to Nibley’s thoughts on Hyperborean wind storms. In making this argument, he finds an unlikely ally in the case for matriarchal primacy in Egypt, in Augustine of Hippo’s description of the Isis cult (---, \textit{Abraham in Egypt}, 522)
\textsuperscript{211} ---, \textit{Message of the Papyri}, 308.
Nibley’s distinctive understanding of questions of complementarity and contradiction and of translation, united with an explicit practice of his own amplified versions of patternism, Orientalism and text criticism are not just a method but a methodology, one radically different from those of other Mormon thinkers.

But the distinctiveness of these approaches cannot be fully adumbrated except by comparison. For this reason, before describing the Nibley chronicon and the theories of causation that underpin it, the next chapter will examine two other approaches to fashioning a Mormon *chronicon* that also seek to demonstrate accord with mainstream scholarship but base this on a methodology underpinned by external rather than internal evidences.
Chapter Six: The Fall and Rise of External Evidences

I. The RLDS, Herald House and the other progressive chronicon

So far, this project has focused on the chronica of LDS historical thinkers and members of fundamentalist Mormon groups that left the Church following its renunciation of polygamy. But, as noted in Chapter One, schism has been an ongoing property of Mormonism since early in its history. The event most productive of new denominational configurations was the 1844 assassination/martyrdom of Smith, initially giving rise both to a kaleidoscopic array of new Mormon groups and to a number of unaffiliated congregations that either did not take sides within the new denominational framework or did so in such a promiscuous fashion as to be effectively unaffiliated.¹

A number of these minimally and intermittently affiliated groups coalesced into a new denomination in 1860, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, under the leadership of Joseph Smith III, the son of the founding prophet by his first wife Emma.² Although initially a dark horse in the contest amongst Mormon denominations, by the late nineteenth century, the RLDS had become the second-largest, a position it has retained up to the present day.³ For much of its early history, the Church was focused on contesting the LDS claim as the true successor to Smith’s original movement.⁴ This argument was made in a variety of ways, the most important of which were lineal (the Church’s prophets were direct descendants of the founding prophet until 1996), geographical (the Church did not join the migration to Utah) and doctrinal (the Church rejected not only doctrinal innovations of the Utah-based LDS but also

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² Ibid., 1: 339, 375.
⁴ Howard, *Church Through the Years*, 2: 73.
of the later periods of Smith’s ministry). The most important site of doctrinal difference pertained to polygamy, but this blistering criticism of what was framed as LDS sexual immorality was grounded in a rejection of the whole subsystem of LDS ritual practice and theology on which it was based, that of sealing and exaltation. This meant that the RLDS did not practice proxy baptism nor did it advocate a soteriology of exaltation whereby the most virtuous saints would become gods of their own worlds. This was not merely a result of a theological dispute but one grounded in a different philosophy of ritual practice that was explicitly condemnatory of the practice of secret rites. For this reason, the RLDS were in no hurry to build new temples in their Midwestern Zion.

Opposition to polygamy, during the nineteenth century, offered the RLDS other opportunities beyond swaying uncertain Mormons to choose their fold over those of the Strangites, Bickertonites, Temple Lot group, LDS and others. It allowed the RLDS to perform their inclusion in American society by helping to lead the charge against Utah polygamy both prior to its renunciation and immediately following, during its covert practice. Aligning with the American mainstream and, thereby, gaining greater mainstream acceptance became another feature of RLDS identity, used as evidence of distinctiveness relative to the LDS. Reorganized saints argued that the absence of RLDS persecution in Zion was evidence that they were enjoying the favour of God and therefore the one true church.

In this way, the RLDS have been exempt, to a greater degree than nearly any group so far discussed, with the possible exception of the Ozumba compound, from the influence of temple

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6 Ibid., 2: 450.
9 Ibid., 235.
work on their experience of time. Without the distinct temporal phenomenology of the LDS, their Midwestern competitors faced different challenges in constructing, maintaining and justifying their subaltern pasts and were, at least partly because of this, much less successful in doing so. Today, the RLDS is now called the Community of Christ, a name it explicitly adopted in 2002 to de-emphasize its specifically Mormon roots and characteristics. By its own admission it is facing severe demographic crisis as it loses the capacity to retain the descendants of its aging membership base. Its present-day decline is not unlike that of other social gospel churches in contemporary Anglo America. This process of liberalization has not just, as it has with other liberal churches, left its supernatural claims in tatters but has also demolished its distinctive *chronica*. This process of decline has not simply been marked by conservatism and retreat but by bold, if failed, attempts to re-imagine the subaltern pasts of Mormonism in unprecedented terms.

Another distinguishing feature of the RLDS was the Church’s greater centralization, especially when it came to publishing. Whereas the LDS, upon their arrival in the Great Basin, by virtue of their demographic scale and geographic concentration could allow much of their publishing to take place through at least nominally private enterprises, the RLDS were at pains to maintain one printer which required ongoing Church subsidies. And because Herald Publishing House also functioned as a means of financially supporting the prophet, RLDS publishing early on became a means through which Church hierarchs could assert their authority and influence members. In 1926, this was formalized and the sole publisher of RLDS materials came under the permanent and direct control of the three-person First Presidency, led by the prophet.

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11 Pement and Edwards, *Herald to the Saints*, 57-58. The prohibition on a paid ministry could be avoided by virtue of his paid work as the editor of church periodicals and manager of its printing company.
12 Ibid., 156.
With the exception of the 1899 *History of the Church*, Herald Publishing was focused initially on producing short pamphlets and periodicals, most importantly the regular *Saints’ Herald*, but in the 1930s it began producing more substantial publications.\(^{13}\) But because of the high levels of coordination and oversight of publications I am able to do something with Herald books that I would be hard-pressed to with any major group of LDS publications, treat multiple authors’ corpora as distinct, coherent *chronica*.

Herald House’s move toward production of longer (historical) pamphlets began in the 1930s. By the 1940s regular book publishing was made formally manifest in a series of decisions made at the RLDS International Conference (1940) in which members of the Reorganization determined there were key lacunae in their corpus of publications to be filled with a series of planned books.\(^{14}\) During the early years of this gospel library project, Herald Publishing, although offering a plurality of authors who had real differences of opinion regarding not only individual speculative factoids and theories, nevertheless offered a broadly consistent historical ideology from the mid 1930s until the early to mid 1960s. For the purposes of examining all of the RLDS *chronica*, I refer to this initial period of relative consensus as articulating a progressive historiography due both to its substantial resemblance to LDS progressive post-millennialism and to the general RLDS political and cultural *zeitgeist* relative to other US churches at the time. Like Roberts in his discussion of Higher Criticism,\(^{15}\) RLDS progressives argue that for the forces of Christianity to succeed against those of atheistic modernity, the Book of Mormon must come into play because Christian fundamentalism alone is clearly unable to triumph over relativist modernist thought.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{13}\) Ibid., 152.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 175.
This similarity should not surprise us given that the re-centring of LDS sealing practice around temple work in place of polygamy had only just commenced when Roberts and Talmage began publishing. The various points of congruence between these two intellectual movements derive from an implicit belief in progress paired with the assumption that the Latter-day Saint movement is the ecclesiastical expression of this. This assumption is in such strong and ubiquitous force that it is most clearly detectable when, for some reason, events in the RLDS progressive *chronicon* fail to conform to this social scientific principle and their exception therefrom must then be explained. The history of the New World is a particular site for frequent RLDS declarations of how exceptional it is not to conform to a progress narrative.\(^\text{17}\) Another way that RLDS progressives are continuous with LDS progressives is their continued emphasis on external over internal evidences for demonstrating the veracity of scripture, something the LDS had begun to abandon in the 1920s. I connect this to the greater impulse among the RLDS to perform accord with the American mainstream.\(^\text{18}\) Unsurprisingly, RLDS historiography was more persistent in claiming that Mormon scripture and social science were mutually validating and converging.\(^\text{19}\) Furthermore, unnamed instances of divergence can be easily explained: archaeology is “in a state of flux,” but its progressive nature, an attribute it shares with the Restoration, assures that it will continue to move into closer accord with Mormon scripture.\(^\text{20}\)

Whereas Roberts, Talmage and others certainly made considerable use of Victorian romantic and proto-academic histories arguing for the Hebrew origin of Amerindians, their

\(^\text{17}\) For example, when RLDS authors argue that no technological or cultural progress/advancement took place in the New World prior to 1492, the extraordinary and exceptional nature of this claim is used to underline the importance of the Book of Mormon and its absolute necessity in understanding this exception to basic social-scientific laws (Paul M Hanson, *Jesus Christ Among the Ancient Americans* [Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1959], 96; Harold I. Velt, *The Riddle of American Origins* [Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1934], 3; ——, *America’s Lost Civilizations* [Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1949] 93).


\(^\text{20}\) Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 96.
employment of it does not compare to the RLDS who supplement this work with recent articles in popular American periodicals like *National Geographic, Scientific American, McCall’s* and *New York Times.*²¹ Episodes of mobilizing these writings often have the tone of proof-texting, but, at the same time, seek to embrace as much as possible of the outside source, even to the point of including elements in apparent conflict with the Mormon scriptural narrative.²²

Although RLDS progressives were using the same or similar secondary sources as LDS progressives, they were using them in a very different intellectual environment, in which processes of academic professionalization had largely concluded. For all the rhetoric of accord with mainstream history, it was the RLDS not the LDS that fled to the intellectual margins by continuing to proof-text from largely discredited histories, in some cases, more than a century old. Although the RLDS were more consistent in their assertion of intellectual accord with mainstream America, it was the LDS, first in their early adoption of progressive post-millennial approaches and then, in their increasing accord with Fundamentalist approaches to the social sciences, that actually demonstrated the most substantial accord.

It is almost as though the authors at the Herald thought that anything more mainstream than the RLDS themselves constituted a good source for academic proof-texting.²³ This handful of scholars is joined by a group of eye-witnesses from among the early Spanish conquistadors in attesting to the Hebrew origin of American Indians and pre-Columbian Judeo-Christian practice.²⁴ Mormon versions of the Quetzalcoatl myth, pre-Columbian baptism and other appropriations of more popular theories of pre-Columbian Christianity are supported by citations

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²² Hanson, *Jesus Christ Americans,* 20. One example of this is the repeated assertion that the widespread presence of pre-Columbian crosses, a symbol not used by Mormons, supports Christ’s mission to the New World (Ibid., 112) Another striking example of this is the use of Atlantis scholarship to validate the description of roads in 3 Nephi 3:8 (Velt, *Riddle,* 16). This tactic is also used by Roberts in *New Witnesses for God* 2: 176-78.

²³ Velt, *America’s Lost Civilizations,* 123.

²⁴ Hanson, *Jesus Christ Among Americans,* 15.
Landa, Sahagún, the *Codex Vaticanus* and Cieza de Leon.\(^{25}\) In describing his source selection protocol, Paul Hanson explains that Leon is extremely reliable and this reliability is demonstrated by his frequent citation in texts with which Hanson himself agrees. One might get the sense that Herald House authors were unaware of the dated character of their sources except for their celebration of relatively new publications on American origins by Hyatt Verrill in the late 1920s. In similarly effusive language to that used by Nibley to describe the third and fourth editions of the *Golden Bough*, Harold Velt suggests that Verrill’s 1929 work legitimating RLDS Israel origin theories has utterly revolutionized the field of history and that, written in 1934, “could not have been admitted by students of ancient American culture 10 years ago.”\(^{26}\)

Verrill’s work is used to legitimate de Roo’s fairly typical elaboration of what I term the “Quetzalcoatl myth” at the end of the nineteenth century, despite its actually strong dissent from this kind of scholarship. In this myth, Nahua traditions of the god Quetzalcoatl are understood to describe a white migrant who taught Christianity to the peoples of the Americas.\(^{27}\) Because this individual ministered to a wide variety of peoples, records of his ministry can be found attributed to heroes or divinities, that vary from one cultural group to the next. South of the Mexico valley, he was Votan or Zamna; further south, he was Kukulcan; in the Andes, he was Viracocha.\(^{28}\) We know that his teachings were basically Christian because, in a common Victorian move practiced by Nibley and Frazer, if the Christian elements from each of these divinities’ traditions are aggregated and non-Christian portions eliminated, and these Christian elements are then

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\(^{25}\) Ibid., 39, 45, 113, 139. Bernadino de Sahagún looms especially large in the RLDS progressive *chronicon*. As the compiler of the *Florentine Codex*, he was arguably one of the first ethnographers of the New World, a Franciscan friar who recorded a mass of data about the beliefs and lifeways of the recently-conquered indigenous peoples of New Spain in the sixteenth century. The Codex remains one of the most comprehensive sources on the pre-Columbian Mexico Valley.

\(^{26}\) Velt, *Riddle*, 71, 74; Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 76.

\(^{27}\) Peter De Roo, *History of America Before Columbus: According to Documents and Approved Authors* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1900), 1: 93.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 1: 93, 541.
generalized to all, something resembling modern Christianity is yielded. In this way, de Roo can conclude that throughout the Americas, Christian rituals were practiced and Biblical teachings propounded.\textsuperscript{29} The narratives of early Spanish conquistadors and mendicants are especially helpful here. It is on the authority of Sahagún that he argues for the universality of pre-Columbian Christianity amongst all native groups on the continent.\textsuperscript{30} He considers and ultimately dismisses the theories of both Mormons and believers in the American ministry of St. Thomas the Apostle that are based on another belief universal amongst various English and American versions of the myth, Quetzalcoatl’s whiteness which he does not see as supported by evidence.\textsuperscript{31}

Verrill’s 1929 \textit{Old Civilizations of the New World} could almost be read as a work debunking much of the scholarship on which RLDS progressives depended. It is premised on the veracity of Darwinian evolution, is generally dismissive of diffusion-based theories in favour of independent development and takes pains to specifically refute one that Verrill considers especially ridiculous: that of Israelite origin, arguing for the independent development of Deluge stories and pyramids and arguing persuasively against “Semitic features” in statues.\textsuperscript{32} However, Verrill’s clearing of the decks regarding\textsuperscript{33} many past theories does allow him to dispute the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 2: 111-12.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 1: 424. By the 1880s, the idea of the Toltecs as white had become the norm, even as theories of Israelite origin had become increasingly less credible (R. Tripp Evans, \textit{Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination 1820-1915} [Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004], 116, 127).
\item \textsuperscript{31} De Roo, \textit{History of America}, 1: 205, 207, 224, 583. This whiteness is concluded from the writings of Las Casas and naturally excluded Jews because they would not be white for another half-century (Ibid., 1: 542). De Roo is not alone among the authors refuting Mormonism who are still proof-texted by Roberts and others; Josiah Priest is similarly treated (\textit{American Antiquities and Discoveries of the West}, 4th ed. [Albany: Hoffman and Company, 1834], 73).
\item \textsuperscript{32} A. Hyatt Verrill, \textit{Old Civilizations of the New World} (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), 5, 17, 19, 45. He also inveighs against Prescott’s “romantic” theories of Mayan immigration, the existence of the Toltecs as anything other than a literary creation, the reliability of post-conquest codices and the two races model (Ibid., 28, 45, 98, 157, 278).
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 48.
\end{itemize}
Bering Strait theory in favour of a multiple migrations theory merely inclusive of it.\(^{34}\) He is also a helpful source in arguing for not just copper- but iron-working throughout much of the pre-Columbian Americas.\(^{35}\) But where he is most helpful to the RLDS is in his style, biography and claims to authority. As an author without academic accreditation, Verrill visited much of the Americas in the 1920s and personally excavated a number of sites in Mesoamerica and the Andes. It is on the basis of his status as eye-witness and the common sense that he brings that he suggests that much scholarship of the Americas is wrongheaded and in need of dramatic re-evaluation.\(^{36}\) And it is on this basis that the Herald House authors seem to draw inspiration.\(^{37}\)

Where RLDS progressives distinguish themselves from LDS progressives is their greater tendency towards amplification and generalization. Landa’s suggestion, for instance, that baptism was practiced in the Yucatán can be helpfully generalized to the entirety of the Americas.\(^{38}\) Velt is explicit in his practice of this method. If he can find an assertion of a particular technology or other feature anywhere in the New World at any time in the past, and show that a parallel or similar assertion is made in the *Book of Mormon*, this can then be unproblematically generalized to all of Ancient America which can, in turn, be found to correspond with episodes in the Book of Mormon.\(^{39}\) Not all episodes of generalization entail

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 5-6, 11.
\(^{35}\) Ibid., 68, 71.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 70, 72, 270.
\(^{37}\) Later in his career, Verrill would re-evaluate his earlier moderation and offer an audacious theory of ancient America incorporating the Quetzalcoatl myth, diffusionist theories, his wife’s idiosyncratic translation of Sumerian script and Mayan glyphs and even the Owl and the Pussycat nursery rhyme to argue that the Americas were settled due to a colonization competition in Peru between the Phoenicians, Babylonians and Egyptians in 3000 BCE (A. Hyatt Verrill and Ruth Verrill, *America’s Ancient Civilizations* [New York: G. P. Putnam, 1953], *passim*). But there is no sign that the RLDS was influenced by this later turn; Joseph Fielding Smith, on the other hand, was intrigued.
\(^{38}\) Velt, *America’s Lost Civilizations*, 128.
\(^{39}\) ——, *Riddle of American Origins*, 23; Thelona D Stevens, *An Introduction to the Book of Mormon* (Independence: FARMS), 1984. Other examples of this include: (a) the removal of all specific temporal and geographic details in Baldwin’s treatment of pre-Columbian metalworking (Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 91), (b) massively postdating Pleistocene horses and elephants (Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 105; Velt, *America’s Lost Civilizations*, 103) and (c) the re-description and geographic magnification of Leon’s suggestions of a pre-Columbian cataclysm in the Andes (Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 63, 68).
magnification; vagueness is another strategy. The so-called Great Wall of Peru featured in the 1933 issue of National Geographic is presented as evidence for the dividing line of fortifications in Alma between the East Sea and the West Sea even though the wall itself is not helpfully oriented with reference to any particular body of water.40

The practice of generalization tends to move the Herald House books away from a rhetoric of specific claims to one grounding Book of Mormon legitimacy in claims of magnitude and grandeur. A claim that the Inca population was a quarter of a billion people is viewed as validating the Book of Mormon because both favour a previously unacknowledged enormity and vastness to the demographic scale of the Americas.41 Similarly, claims that prehistoric American civilizations were more technologically advanced than pre-twentieth century European and American societies helps to authenticate Book of Mormon claims.42 For this reason, whereas LDS thinkers writing in this period focus on specific numeric claims in the Book of Mormon, RLDS apologists tend to prefer grandiose and non-specific claims of scale, such as “the face of the land” or as numerous as the “sands of the sea.”43 Despite its lack of geographic specificity, this kind of rhetoric can only yield a hemispheric narrative for Book of Mormon events.44 And so we see in Herald House publications an amplified version of the ancient America of de Roo and Verrill. In support of the theory of Israelite origins, they amplify the four main classes of argument: philological, technological, cultural/folkloric and patternist.

40 Weldon, Other Sheep, 104. Other examples of generalization through vagueness instead of magnification: (a) the Nephite reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon vindicated by the existence of Chichen Itza, Palenque, and Pachacamac, without any of these structures actually having to be the Temple of Solomon (——, Other Sheep, 43, 89), and (b) major earthquakes at various places and times in the pre-1492 geologic record and elevation changes in the Andes validating the swallowing of cities in the great cataclysm of 34 CE. (——, Other Sheep, 63, 68; Velt, Riddle, 75).
41 Ibd., Riddle, 13.
42 Ibid., 7.
43 Ibid., 15.
RLDS progressives put forward four main philological arguments. First, they offer the testimony of early explorers who assert similarities in their accounts; second, they find instances of similarity between a handful of words in Hebrew and the language being compared; third, they offer their own eye-witness testimony asserting their personal experience of this commonality; and fourth, they cite other authors making similar arguments. Philology can also cover an absence of archaeological evidence. For instance, if the Quechua word for “steel” can be found to have cognates in the pre-Columbian period, the earliest possible date for this cognate coming into being can be taken as the date that Peruvians began manufacturing steel.

Philology is one of several tools used to assist in antedating technologies in the New World. Joined with the practice of generalization, it is a kind of fruits of technology argument. If Mesoamerican or Andean peoples made something that we would use a particular tool to make today, they must have had that specific tool. This kind of thinking can do double duty in also arguing for the unsupported presence of certain species mentioned in the Book of Mormon, not only would machinery have been handy to move large stones, so would domesticated horses and elephants.

Cultural arguments tend to be underpinned by the idea of both a timeless ahistoric Indian and a timeless ahistoric Jew. Not only are claims of local practice of specific Levitical customs

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45 Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 16.
46 Velt, Riddle, 20.
47 Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 83. Given that many elements of the Andean civilization would involve the use of iron were we to replicate them today, it can be reasoned that the pre-Incas possessed iron. Similarly, large machines that we might use today to produce the kind of monolithic architecture to be found in Mesoamerica and the Andes must similarly have been possessed by ancient Americans (Velt, Riddle, 27). It is also argued that if, as Verill suggests, the ancient Peruvians possessed superior fabric-making technology to that available even in the present day, Book of Mormon references to fine linen and silk can be viewed as accurate provided the fabrics theorized by Verill possessed a comparable thread count (——, Riddle, 23; Roy Weldon, Other Sheep, 95). Similarly, if copper alloys existed in the past, it is reasonable to infer that bronze by virtue of being an alloy must have exited contemporaneously (Velt, Riddle, 18).
48 Weldon, Other Sheep, 106.
in an individual indigenous group predictably generalized, they are also paired with vaguer ideas of an “Israelite character” being present in Jewish, Amerindian and Pacific Islander societies. Closely allied with these arguments is the selective use of indigenous folklore. Generalized and amplified, Mexican and Peruvian legends unanimously state that the peoples of these regions came in ships and in this light, all stories of non-autochthony, such as the Aztlan narrative of the Mexica, can be understood as garbled versions of the correct story.

RLDS progressives amplify the common patternist reasoning used by De Roo and others in crafting the Quetzalcoatl myth to find continent-wide worship of a “white and bearded man born of a virgin, introducing religious rites, working miracles, prohibiting blood sacrifice, establishing an order of priests, disappearing without suffering death, leaving a promise to return at some future date, ascending to heaven, and worshipped as the creator.” And from this, “it is established that for a long time preceding the arrival of Kukulcan from Mexico a people whose religion was monotheistic” practiced Judaism and later Christianity in Southern Mexico. This worldview yields an America as cluttered with migrants as that of De Roo. There were no doubt many migrations but even more have been claimed by various historians. Mormon scripture is a

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49 Velt, *Riddle*, 71; Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 45. Because Indian traditions are generally derivative of Mosaic Laws, circumcision was found to be a universal Aztec practice which is then attributed to all Native Americans; the alleged Inca belief in bodily resurrection and routine celebration of Passover is similarly treated (Hanson, *Jesus Christ Among Americans*, 155).

50 Stevens, *Book of Mormon Studies*, 105.

51 For example, the four sons of Lehi can be found to be memorialized in *Popol Vuh* and Nephi’s leadership of this group can then be found in an Inca myth that suggests that the youngest of several brothers became their prophet/leader (Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 102). With some massaging, the oral tradition of the Chimu tribe of Illinois can be found to have preserved the line of succession from Nephi to Mosiah II (Velt, *Riddle*, 76).


54 Hanson, *Jesus Christ Among Americans*, 115-117.
crucial aid in sorting through these various migrations; and its silence on the presence of others can be read in support of a theory of multiple, supplementary origins stories.\(^{55}\)

RLDS progressives need not merely find evidence confirming their narrative; they have to explain the absence of more obvious archaeological and textual signs. Again amplifying the claims in the cult archaeology of their day, they defend their pre-Columbian narrative by offering a more expansive theory of intentional record destruction and suppression, derivative of the Black Legend of the Spanish conquest. Likely the Aztecs had preserved a good record of the Mormon past before the implementation of a policy of systematic codex destruction executed throughout New Spain.\(^ {56}\) This plot, which specifically targeted manuscripts about Quetzalcoátl, was masterminded by Sahagún who replaced the true records of the cult with his own fabrications. He did this on behalf of the Spanish state in order to conceal the existence of a purer version of Christianity than that practiced by the bloodthirsty Papist conquerors.\(^ {57}\) Yet in the intermittent lapses into proof-texting, even the Spanish have their moment: that the cross was an inextricable part of Mesoamerican worship “rests on the unequivocal testimony of the Spanish themselves.”\(^ {58}\) Although the Spanish are the most significant culprits, Herald House follows its usual pattern by repeating and amplifying the theories arguing that the Aztecs “mutilated” and “confused” the correct Toltec tradition of Quetzalcoatl.\(^ {59}\) As in the East, original Christianity was “paganized” and diversified by the Aztecs, Inca, and others, eventually rendering the once

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 12; Velt, Riddle, 68. Stevens, Book of Mormon Studies, 13; ———, Introduction to the Book of Mormon, 5.
\(^{56}\) Velt, America’s Lost Civilizations, 135.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 132. This theory was first fronted by Kingsborough (Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 80). Mesoamerican Christianity might have degenerated over time but it remained far more intact than Christianity practiced by the conquistadors (Velt, America’s Lost Civilizations, 134).
\(^{58}\) Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 105.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 33, 34.
unanimous and continent-wide story of Christ’s ministry a set of conflicting and fragmentary local legends.\textsuperscript{60}

This reliance on scholarship lacking in academic currency can be associated with some key institutional differences between the RLDS and the Church in Utah. BYU was investing in faculty educated outside of Utah and in its own engagements with primary evidence through archaeological expeditions to Mesoamerica and Nibley’s interactions with other institutions and his associated primary document acquisition project.\textsuperscript{61} Graceland College, the RLDS equivalent, was not degree-granting, operated on a shoe-string budget and had little or no accreditation within the formal university system until 1960, in contrast to its LDS equivalent.\textsuperscript{62} This yielded not just a general disengagement from the historical profession, but also from disciplines that loomed large in the LDS world. While Sperry, Nibley and others were already scrambling due to Mesoamerican archaeological findings to de-literalize the swords mentioned in the Book of Mormon, Velt was continuing to discuss them in unproblematically literal terms, with “blades,” “hilts,” “steel” and “rust.”\textsuperscript{63} Furthermore, it is asserted that scriptural statements regarding pre-Columbian ship-building, metalworking, road building, architecture, population levels and engineering of machinery have been found completely correct.\textsuperscript{64} This, it is alleged, is confirmed not just at the margins or cutting edge but in most mainstream encyclopedias, and recognized not just by archaeologists but amongst scholars of mythology and folklore.\textsuperscript{65} This refusal to take notice of changes in mainstream scholarship also allows for the continued assertion of pre-
Christian crosses existing throughout the entirety of Central and South America, and fits more generally into the claim that various arts were practiced in the ancient New World based on argumentation unconnected to any archaeological evidence. These assertions are aided by repeated declarations of geographic uncertainty. By essentially freezing scholarship of the American past in the 1890s, the RLDS progressives are not just left with Gilded Age answers; they were left with the era’s questions. Despite all this work, “scientists do not know where the Maya came from,” nor can they explain where they went; only the Book of Mormon can do that. It can answer questions about the dating of the Mayan calendar and the fall of the Toltecs (384 CE); and it can explain the source of pre-Columbian Christianity.

Just as RLDS progressives were, if anything, even more committed to performances of accord with what they understood to be mainstream America than LDS progressives, they were also more committed to the idea of progress as a social scientific principle shaping their chronicon. For all the claims of accord with the diffusionist principles of Victorian histories of the ancient Americas, an underlying belief in progress continues to creep into these narratives. Nephite uses of technology are typically magnified beyond simple scriptural statements (e.g. of Jarom 1:19) and these statements are repeatedly offered to demonstrate the elaboration of social scientific axiom that moral virtue is directly correlated to cultural advancement, which in turn is correlated to technology, to yield an idea of “Nephite progress” which reached its apex.

67 Stevens, Summary, 1; ——, Book of Mormon Studies, 11, 37; ——, Introduction to the Book of Mormon, 3, 5, 29.
68 Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 75, 118, 120; Weldon, Other Sheep, 125.
69 Velt, Riddle, 54. Mesoamerican astronomical knowledge is likewise explained (Weldon, Other Sheep, 92; Hanson, Jesus Christ Among the Ancient Americans, 77) and the zero date for the Mayan calendar determined (Velt, Riddle, 68; ——, America’s Lost Civilizations, 106; Weldon, Other Sheep, 13, 75; Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 162). Specific details are explained as well: Quetzalcoatl disappearing into fire makes more sense when compared to Christ being taken up into the clouds after his forty-day ministry (Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 56); and Christ is much more likely to use serpent imagery to describe himself or God than one of his missionaries would be (—, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 52).
immediately following Christ’s personal ministry. On this basis it can then be inferred that the Nephite state had a large if totally unmentioned school system. For this reason, it is all the more important to emphasize the unique physical properties of the Western Hemisphere. Only divinely-mandated physical laws would be sufficient to suspend otherwise axiomatic laws of human development. This may also help to explain RLDS progressives’ commitment to multiple migration theories; in a teleological model of progress, progressing people should not become so diverse.

This concurrent exaltation of progress and education and marginal, discredited scholarship did not last long. From its elaboration in 1939, it endured little more than a generation and was already substantially eclipsed by a set of publications in the 1960s. Due to elite-level politics within the denomination, rising education levels, improved accreditation and professionalization of the Graceland and the continually widening gulf between claims of mainstream historical validation and the consensus of mainstream historians, the RLDS progressive chronicon collapsed. By the 1970s, theories of the ancient Americas rooted in the nineteenth century scholarship that produced the Quetzalcoatl myth were marginal. Within the

70 Velt, Riddle, 25; Stevens, Summary, 2; ——, Book of Mormon Studies, 12; ——, Neph, Son of Lehi (Independence: Foundation for Research on Ancient America, 1986), 15; Weldon, Other Sheep, 85.
71 Stevens, Neph, Son of Lehi, 18. This principle also works in the negative to undermine the scale of early Zarahemla to which scripture attests (——, Summary of the Book of Mormon, 2).
72 Velt, Riddle, 91; ——, America's Lost Civilizations, 109, 176.
73 Hanson, Jesus Christ Among Americans, 13. Consistent with late nineteenth-century scholarship, the progress narrative cohabits in a strangely comfortable fashion with a theory of diffusion and degeneration. Because pyramid-building, metalworking, etc. have no utility in the Arctic, they could not have come via the Arctic (Ibid., 14; Weldon, Other Sheep, 50; Velt, America’s Lost Civilizations, 93; ——, Riddle of American Origins, 57). There is a basic presupposition that American Civilizations can only be lesser and derivative of previous, more advanced civilizations; this I would suggest stems from the popularity of the Atlantis myth and permutations thereof; we see it in Nibley’s “worldwide ritual complex” and we see it in RLDS thought. Just as Victorian antiquarians reasoned that if Atlantis was a necessary condition for advanced civilizations to arise on the Atlantic Rim, the existence of advanced Pacific and Indian Rim civilizations therefore proved the existence of a second sunken continent. RLDS conservatives argue that if all major Old World Civilizations, Greece, Rome, Babylon and Egypt, had contact with Israelite prophets, the existence of advanced civilizations in the Western Hemisphere logically entails the presence of Israelite prophets here (Weldon, Other Sheep, 72, 82).
74 The last Herald House printing of Thelona Stevens’ theory of ancient America was in 1971.
Reorganization, they experienced a temporary resurgence amongst conservatives following the movement’s controversial 1984 World Conference and resulting schism. Thelona Stevens’ Foundation for Research on Ancient America and other small publishers printed copies and condensations of texts from the progressive *chronicon*. Similarly, these claims also found a place in the Mormon fundamentalist *chronicon* in the 1970s with Kraut offering the most magnified and elaborated version of the Quetzalcoatl myth.

As Kraut explains it, it is clear that Christ and the Mexican deity Quetzalcoatl were the same person; after all, accounts of them agree that they both:

1. creating “all things,”
2. being born of virgins,
3. being and wearing white,
4. working miracles,
5. teaching and administering baptism,
6. prophesying,
7. being global/universal as opposed to local divinities,
8. causing massive volcanism and earthquakes in 33 AD,
9. using the cross as their symbol,
10. appointing disciples,
11. promising a Second Coming
12. being heralded by a new star
13. being known as “Lords of the earth.”

But this view could only be sustained within a matrix of conspiratorial thought and institutional distrust that did not prevail where intellectual and publishing resources were concentrated in the LDS and RLDS. A new chronicon based on external evidences would have to be fashioned and premised in a radically different fashion.

II. The John Sorenson *chronicon*

Whereas most of the scholars I have introduced in this dissertation have proceeded from cosmological, theoretical, methodological and even epistemological assumptions that are

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fundamentally at odds with mainstream academic thought, FARMS has generally sought to make as few modifications as possible to traditional scholarly methods in order to generate faithful histories. Even when its members have been lay people writing from either outside of the academy or at least outside their specific social scientific discipline, they have generally sought to appropriate as many of the techniques, methods and theories of the discipline in which they operate as possible. This minimalism receives crucial support from the stated scholarly mandate of FARMS: the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies does not proceed from the supposition that the Book of Mormon is true but merely that it is ancient.\textsuperscript{76} The crucial distinction between these ideas results in a different treatment of its main texts.

Whereas the idea that the Book of Mormon must be true requires the abandonment of most scholarly methods for studying it, reducing that claim to a simple one of ancientness allows many of the vestiges of traditional text critical, archaeological and social scientific methods to be brought to bear. In this way, FARMS scriptural critics simply choose to authenticate a few more ancient documents for inclusion in their analysis. In so doing, they can then leave most but not all of the methodologies of their academic discipline severely tattered but nominally intact.

Anthropologist John Sorenson is one of the most prolific in the FARMS corpus. But his work is no more typical of FARMS than Nibley’s. But whereas differences of theory and method mark Nibley as an outlier, it is in emphasis and subject matter that Sorenson is exceptional. Not part of the founding group in FARMS, Sorenson found a home at FARMS early on.\textsuperscript{77} By bringing formal academic archaeological and anthropological expertise, along with a Western versus Eastern hemisphere focus with him, he was able to crucially broaden the base of a group

\textsuperscript{76} E.g., Noel B. Reynolds, ed. \textit{Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy} (Provo: FARMS, 2005), 399.

initially dominated by New Testament and Hebrew Bible scholars focusing internal evidences. He had not seen eye-to-eye with the Thomas Ferguson expedition to Tabasco, Mexico, in 1953 on which Sperry had sent him as part of his MA studies at BYU; he found that the search for scholarship-revolutionizing proof of the Book of Mormon in Mesoamerica was ultimately wrongheaded. Instead, from early in his career, he saw his primary scholarly objective as contextualizing the Book of Mormon by integrating it with a growing body of knowledge about ancient Mesoamerica.

In this way, Sorenson almost atypically epitomizes the scholarly deportment to which FARMS academics aspired, exhibiting not a Mormon mentality with respect to time but instead that of the mainstream academic world. It appears that Sorenson’s high standing and long-term involvement in the academic practice of anthropology may have been so substantial that it displaced to some degree the LDS Church in shaping his day-to-day life. Another factor we might identify is his multi-decade work as a cultural anthropologist studying contemporary Mormon culture. Sorenson’s decision to treat even the congregants he supervised as bishop of his ward as, in a sense, objects of scholarship as well as coreligionists may have crucially distanced him from Mormon culture and placed him at the margins of its all-now life-world. However much temple work Sorenson may have done, he seems, if the Leonian framework holds true, to have experienced it more peripherally than many LDS members. But situated as he is within this framework, however jarring his assertions, they can be received by LDS members as supplementary rather than contradictory to more common understandings of the Nephite past.

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78 Ibid., xxx; Simon G. Southerton, Losing a Lost Tribe Losing a Lost Tribe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 170.
79 Bitton, Mormon Scripture, xx-xxii. In his introduction to An Ancient American Setting, John Sorenson reminds his readers that proof is not the goal; there is no desire to prove the Book of Mormon narrative, but rather to do for the Book of Mormon narrative what the academic study of the Bible has done for it: An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Publishing & FARMS, 1985), xvi.
80 Bitton, Mormon Scripture, xliii.
Even when Sorenson does negate differences of centuries or millennia, this practice arises not from a subscription to an all-now consciousness but instead the deployment of the academic vestiges of Victorian modes of thinking we see among progressives. Sorenson’s work, both as mainstream academic and as a Mormon apologist, are based on his half-century study of Mesoamerican anthropology and archaeology. Due to the paucity of written documentary evidence, Sorenson like many other scholars of this region, succumbs to a certain “Mesoamerican Occidentalism” from time to time. As a result, Sorenson will sometimes argue from the perspective of an atemporal, essentialized Mesoamerica. This allows him both to presuppose unchanging cultural patterns in the region, and to significantly retroject oral and written testimonies of the Early Modern period. For instance, Sorenson scolds academics who dismiss sixteenth- and seventeenth-century folklore by Mesoamerican groups claiming descent from transatlantic peoples.\(^81\) Similarly, *Popol Vuh*, a text on which, as we shall soon see, Sorenson is reliant, is retrojected a thousand years prior to its original recording in the Latin alphabet in the sixteenth century.\(^82\) Such a move, in Sorenson’s field is neither as exceptional nor as problematic as it would be within the disciplines of most of his FARMS colleagues; the highly credible historian Enrique Florescano makes a very similar case regarding the same document.\(^83\) This Occidentalism also enables Sorenson to attach considerable atemporal significance to the testimony of the first generations of conquistadors in Mexico and the Yucatan. We can learn much, he argues, about the battle formations into which Nephite armies organized themselves from the conquistador-chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s description of

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the Tlaxcalan army.\textsuperscript{84} Again, this kind of thinking is hardly a deviation from the norm within Sorenson’s field.

Sorenson also uses conquistador testimony to reconcile the Book of Mormon’s claims about the material resources of the Lehites with those actually present in Mesoamerica. If the Spanish claimed that Aztec war clubs were made of meteoric iron, the congruence of this statement with the Book of Mormon’s claims of iron use in prehistoric Mesoamerica can be explained.\textsuperscript{85} This kind of thinking can be applied to a host of commodities that appear in the Book of Mormon but do not appear to have been a part of Mesoamerican society. For instance, Book of Mormon accounts of Nephite linen use can be translated into henequen fabric because conquistadors mistook henequen garments for linen.\textsuperscript{86}

While Sorenson’s Occidentalism is worthy of note, it is atypical of his project which is to historicize the Book of Mormon narrative and to situate it in a specific geography. The primary audience for this enterprise appears to be Mormons who have adopted a wrongheaded approach to scripture. Leone is not the only cultural anthropologist who understands the Mormon eternal to present as a problem; Sorenson is similarly critical of his co-religionists’ heterochrony, which he discerns among the laity and academic specialists of Mormon history alike. One of the biggest problems in Mormon studies, he suggests, is an excessive emphasis on the theme of timelessness.\textsuperscript{87} Contemporary Mormons, he believes, have a distorted understanding of Nephite cultural practices due to their retrojection of contemporary North American values.\textsuperscript{88} And more

\textsuperscript{84} Sorenson, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 263. This is also based on Sorenson’s belief that Díaz’s use of the term “thousand” refers to a formal category of unit rather than a vague allusion to magnitude (Bernal Diaz de Castillo, \textit{Memoirs of Bernal Diaz de Castillo Containing a True and Full Account of the Discovery and Conquest of Mexico and New Spain}, Trans. John Lockhart [London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1844], 154, 249).

\textsuperscript{85} Sorenson, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 284.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 232.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 354.

\textsuperscript{88} ——, \textit{Images of Ancient America}, 90. Here Sorenson argues that Mormon beliefs about Nephite clothing are hopelessly distorted by contemporary ideas of nudity and decency.
conservative scriptural scholarship is something he proactively “disputes,” a notable feature in a culture that assiduously avoids “contention.”

There is just one area, aside from Occidentalism, in which Sorenson does not live up to his intellectual aspirations: conspiracy theory. Exceeded only in ubiquity by the attempt to explain the Kennedy assassination, the most universal element in conspiracy theory on this continent is a set of beliefs about the power and impermeability of secret societies. While he does not appear to suspend the social scientific principles that he diligently applies throughout his studies, he nevertheless veers into conspiratorial territory when suggesting that secret societies have global atemporal features (the first of which being their ubiquity). Following Nibley’s thinking, he suggests that all such societies have diffused from a single progenitor and retain key properties of that original group found in Ether’s secret combinations, the Lehite Gadianton robbers and the Knights Templar, to name a few. This belief, in combination with a scholarly Occidentalism, allows him to use the testimony of Sahagún regarding the Aztec order of Jaguar Warriors, to adduce the characteristics of all secret societies in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. These areas aside, Sorenson employs minimal conspiracy reasoning and highly infrequent appeals to magical or divine action. Furthermore, he directly confronts the epistemological gap between his work and mainstream scholarship, employing the work of philosopher of science Michael Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge*.

Polanyi explains that when a scientist has arrived at a correct belief through a hunch, hypothesis, or incomplete theorization, it is at this time rather than the moment of proof that

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90 Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 305. The Book of Ether forms the basis of his reasoning.
91 Ibid., 301-304. Similarly, sixteenth-century Spanish suspicions regarding anti-Christian conspiracies by natives can be taken as useful evidence.
92 ———, *Ancient American Setting*, xix.
belief is converted into knowledge from an epistemic standpoint. In this way, Einstein’s belief in special relativity is the moment when special relativity became knowledge, and it was only considerably later that it became a demonstrable truth in the scientific community. According to Polanyi, since the early Classical period in Greece, and possibly before, there have been two epistemological traditions: the “Pythagorean” and the “Milesian.” The Milesian tradition is essentially positivistic, denying the possibility of knowledge without evidence, whereas the Pythagorean tradition, best expounded by Plato, understands knowledge as a higher order of reality, ascertainable independent of the physical phenomena it seeks to explain. Knowledge, then, is experienced as a kind of personal ecstatic communion with a higher order of truth.

Intellectual structures are not, as positivists would have us believe, a human imposition on the universe in order to comprehend or understand it but are, instead, as asserted by Pythagoras, an endogenous part of the very structure of existence itself, with an independent ontology, similar to Platonic forms.

Great scientists, he explains, have always acted, in a Pythagorean fashion, on their intuitive knowledge of nature’s intrinsic rationality even though, since the advent of Galileo, they have claimed to be engaging in unadulterated empiricism. As an example of how his epistemological model works, Polanyi offers the heliocentric cosmos. Knowledge of the sun’s place at the centre did not come into being with the observations of Kepler and Galileo or the model developed by Newton; knowledge of the sun’s place came into being, he reasons, when

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93 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1958), 9. My acceptance of Polanyi’s terminology here does not arise from any accord on my part with the historical or philosophical analysis that gave rise to these labels.

94 Ibid., 7.

95 Ibid., 5, 15; Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 218. This allows Polanyi to construct not only an alternative epistemology but also an alternative morality; it is the job of a scientist to “fulfill personal obligations to universal standards,” (Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 17).

Copernicus thought it. Theories become true, then, not when they are verified but when they “satisfy” the mind. This satisfaction, however, cannot contradict the evidence. For Polanyi, as for Sorenson, a theory cannot be satisfying if it is contradicted by physical data because, then, it will cease to cohere and “every act of personal knowing appreciates the coherence of certain particulars, it implies also submission to certain standards of coherence.” Curiously, this subscription to Polanyi’s theory does not cause Sorenson to exempt his work or the style in which he expresses it from the modal language and qualifications that accompany speculative academic work in his field, couching his claims as “non-definitive” and applying a simple probability proof standard. A significant possibility of correspondence between Mormon scriptural text and the findings of mainstream geology, archaeology, or history is sufficient.

In his harmonization of the Lehite narrative with mainstream scholarship, Sorenson does not risk failing Davies’ test of membership in the Mormon oecumene but instead finds a novel way of passing it. This is because the only fact about the Book of Mormon that he must defend is Smith’s claim that it is indeed an ancient document, translated from golden plates. Specific events involving Nephites and Lamanites are up for grabs as are any statements by Smith outside canonical and quasi-canonical sources.

Sorenson is so interested in defending Smith’s testimony that the Book of Mormon is an ancient document that he is willing to sacrifice the idea that Smith had a clear understanding of what the document was or what it actually said. Instead, he suggests that Smith and other early Church leaders experienced rapid changes in their thinking about Book of Mormon geography,

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97 Ibid., 3.
98 Ibid., 5.
100 Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 354. Simple probability, in tort litigation, refers to possible outcomes and interpretations that, while possible, do not meet a balance of probabilities or reasonable doubt standard.
101 Ibid., 189.
due to the archaeological fads of their day. It is unproblematic that Smith often advocated a
hemisphere-wide model of Book of Mormon events and made other geographic claims that
Sorenson argues are false. Furthermore, Smith’s understanding even of the false hemispheric
model was so unstable and inaccurate that it led him to make assertions that were not only false
but inconsistent with his own theories. To reassure his readers, Sorenson notes that this
recognition is not novel but has precedent in statements by Apostle John Widtsoe.

We should similarly dispense with the idea that the plates were gold. According to
Sorenson’s deductions, grounded in a pre-BYU scholarship and teaching career as an expert on
Mesoamerican metallurgy, the so-called golden plates were actually made of Tumbaga, a copper
alloy. Unlike gold, this is a metal Sorenson can argue was worked in the Tehuantepec region, in
the fifth century CE. And if Smith is so fallible, certainly the authors of the Book’s footnotes
should not be spared scrutiny; the dates listed in Book of Mormon footnotes, Sorenson argues,
are incorrect for both the rule of Zedekiah in Judah and the birth of Christ. These events should
be 593 years apart and not 600 as the footnotes claim. This problem, fortunately, can be
solved by substituting contemporary calendar year lengths with the length of the Mayan solar
year which conveniently provides him with a length of time between these events not of 600
years but of 591.36. Sorenson preserves the prophetic authority of early Church leaders using


104 ———, Ancient American Setting, 3; ———, “Mesoamerican Record,” 393.


106 ———, “Mesoamerican Record,” 396.

107 ———, Ancient American Setting, 283; Nephite culture and society, 50.

108 ———, Ancient American Setting, 272.

109 Ibid., 273.
arguments similar to those that emphasize Smith’s lack of education and sophistication in order to argue he could not have written the Book of Mormon; the ignorance and misunderstanding of early Church leaders is evidence of God’s agency. How could Smith have made such consistently incorrect pronouncements about the Book of Mormon if he had fabricated it? Furthermore, no one in America could have known enough about Mesoamerica in 1829 to have faked a document that is so obviously an isthmian “lineage history” like the Book of Mormon.

Sorenson’s publications deal at considerable length with the question of the precise geographic context for this narrative. While interesting for those wishing to understand Sorenson more fully, the painstaking efforts he undertakes to situate scriptural events as precisely as possible are not central to the key ideas within his *chronicon*. Briefly, his determination begins with and builds on a geographic process of elimination. If the events took place in the Western Hemisphere, the archaeological record gives us only one region with a history of multiple cities, complex social structures, centralized state apparatus, mass warfare and, most importantly, writing. He notes that since 1830 there have only been five major theories concerning the location of Book of Mormon events: the continental geography model to which Nibley subscribed (in which all of the Americas was in play), a South American model in which the Amazon basin is submerged by higher sea levels in order to create an Andean isthmus, a Panama-centred geography, a Yucatan-centred geography, and Sorenson’s favoured model, a geography centered on the isthmus of Tehuantepec. Book of Mormon travel times effectively eliminate the continental geography model, while archaeological and geologic records clearly eliminate the Andean one, and the Panamanian and Yucatan ones do not afford sufficient

111Ibid., 261.
specific geographical correspondences. Therefore we are left with Tehuantepec. This location is then found consistent with features he teases out of the text. He finds the Lehites situated in a humid climate and rainy and dry seasons along with substantial variations in soil fertility that are consistent with Mesoamerica.\textsuperscript{113} Book of Mormon warfare, not only with respect to its seasonality, but also its association with religious practice, sacrifice, and personal combat between leaders, likewise demonstrates congruence.\textsuperscript{114} In his discussions of Nephite geographic problems with which much of his work grapples, he augments these literary features with scientific calculations made in the present day. This he unites with a hard scientific approach to meteorological and topographical data drawn in the present.\textsuperscript{115}

This process yields some surprising conclusions that, while not exactly outside basic LDS beliefs are at the very margins. The limited geography model that he favours requires that the Hill Cumorah be located not in upstate New York but in Mesoamerica. Sorenson resolves this problem by suggesting there were two Cumorahs and that, somehow, the agency is not perfectly clear, the prophet Moroni, moved the buried and sealed records from Cumorah\textsubscript{1} to Cumorah\textsubscript{2} over a period of decades.\textsuperscript{116} Many Polynesian Mormons to whom he ministered as a youth, would also be disappointed by the suggestion that Hagoth, who is understood to have peopled the region from Hawaii to New Zealand with Lehite stock, did not possess the technology necessary to fashion ocean-going ships limiting his range to the area bounded by Baja California, Peru and the Galapagos.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.,\textit{Mormon’s Map}, 85.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.,\textit{Images of Ancient America}, 125.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.,\textit{Nephite Culture and Society}, 46, 53. For instance, he finds the work of Heyerdahl extremely useful in understanding pre-modern ocean voyaging when dealing with the Jaredite, Lehite and Hagoth sea voyages.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.,\textit{Ancient American Setting}, 45.
\textsuperscript{117} Bitton, \textit{Mormon Scripture}, xv; Sorenson, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 268-69. While he is unwilling to specifically invalidate the proud Lamanite identity of so many of his Polynesian co-religionists, Sorenson nevertheless states in no uncertain terms that dissent from Hagoth is unsupported by evidence.
Sorenson does not exactly break new ground in Mormon historiography by asserting that the Americas were already populated at the time of Lehite arrival but he does in that the “others” in the land move from a problem, as they are for Nibley and Roberts, to a solution to difficulties with the text. Book of Mormon peoples arrived in an environment with a large pre-existing population and a robust set of pre-existing cultures. Mesoamerica is not merely as a location, climate and topography, but a cultural context as well in which Lehites were one small, albeit important, demographic minority. When Lehite culture is discussed, it is not framed as a phenomenon of transplantation of Near Eastern elements; instead, Sorenson’s work explores how this originally Near Eastern civilization may be influenced and been influenced by the societies of Mesoamerica.118

Because so much is known, at least in the Polynesian sense, about Mesoamerican prehistory, one might think Sorenson would find it a bit of a straightjacket. But following some of the ideas of Nibley, Sorenson is able to substantially clear the decks. Not only has more conservative Book of Mormon scholarship sinned with respect to timelessness. It has also been infected with the unhelpful assumption that the ruins they have found in Mesoamerica may in some way represent Nephite structures. By extrapolating archaeologically from the philological work of William Albright, Sorenson argues that the Nephites, as representative of the Elohist

118 ———, Ancient American Setting, 112. Although Mesoamerica is the primary context in which he situates the Book of Mormon, the text is concurrently contextualized within the literature and societies of the ancient Near East, in accord with the general approach of his colleagues at FARMS and exemplified in his extrapolation from Albright’s work. The Brass Plates tradition on which Nephite society rests is not just an Elohist perspective but one based on northern kingdom religiosity and therefore distinctly different from our Bible deriving from the Masoretic text (———, Nephite Culture and Society, 29, 33). The Lehite tribal origin, Manasseh and Ephraim, is used to connect their traditions to the Northern Kingdom, a political agglomeration of Israelites north of Judah that was likely a more culturally, politically and economically sophisticated entity (Niels Lemche, Israelites in History and Tradition [Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998], 53-57). This political entity enters popular imagination (and hence British Israelitism) through the Old Testament as the “Lost Tribes of Israel” following its destruction by the Assyrians in 722 (Richard Elliot Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible? [San Francisco: Harper Collins San Francisco, 1997], 90). The Brass Plates are joined by a Mesopotamian/Central Asian textual tradition emanating from the unabridged Book of Ether, the influence of whose unabridged portions is evinced in the transmission of Jaredite oaths to the Nephite period noted in Helaman 6:26 (Sorenson, “Mesoamerican Record,” 461).
(which he renders as “prophetic”) tradition in Judaism, would have left little in the way of physical infrastructure because we find little non-documentary (i.e. archaeological) trace of them in Palestine, in contrast to their Deuteronomic and Canaanite cousins.  Therefore, one should expect the Nephites to have been a society that did not leave substantial archaeological trace of itself. Sorenson also accepts DNA evidence that whereas the culture and perhaps the fictive lineage structures of the Lehites may have survived in contemporary Mesoamerican peoples, their DNA did not. Furthermore, whereas stone carving and codex production were clearly features of Mesoamerican literacy, writing on metal was likely not. It is therefore highly unlikely that any more metal plates will be found in the Americas. Finally, retrojecting and geographically expanding the pre- (as well as post-) conquest practice of large scale record destruction during political realignment in the central valley of Mexico, Sorenson suggests that we can reasonably expect that both Nephite codices and stone carvings of ideograms would likely have been destroyed systematically following their final military defeat.

Unlike Nibley and his text critic FARMS colleagues, Sorenson argues that the Book of Mormon should not be viewed primarily as an ancient Near Eastern document but should instead be categorized with the Popol Vuh and the Book of Chilam Balam. These and other post-conquest works speaking to a colonial indigenous present while tapping a much older cultural

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119 William F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: a historical analysis of two contrasting faiths (London: University of London Press, 1968). The extrapolation seems unwarranted only insofar as he conflates non-Elohist Pentateuchal movements with Canaanites to affect this logic. For a recapitulation of the Documentary Hypothesis on which Albright’s work rests, see also Richard Eliot Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?, 22 et passim and Sorenson, Ancient American Setting, 216. The view that Nephite tradition is identical with Elohist tradition also shapes Sorenson’s theory of the Brass Plates which he sees as a purely Elohist version of the Pentateuch and early prophetic literature (Sorenson, Nephite Culture and Society, 31).
120 ——, Ancient American Setting, 235.
121 ——, Images of Ancient America, 18.
122 ——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 414.
123 Ibid., 412. This practice has been long recognized by mainstream scholars of Mesoamerica such as Enrique Florescano, Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 40 who describes the most recent Mexica episode thereof in 1427-40.
124 ——, Images of Ancient America, 191.
past are classed most helpfully, in his view, as Mesoamerican “lineage histories,” in the same way that Mormon scripture should be primarily understood as a 1,000-year lineage history of the Nephites (although he does concede that the Book of Mormon’s genre and style constitute a bridge between Near Eastern and Mesoamerican documents). Within the Book of Mormon, Sorenson distinguishes a primary and secondary lineage history: the former is that of Nephi (large plates) and his descendents, the latter is that descending from Jacob (small plates). Sorenson is careful to note that the lineage histories placed within the Book of Mormon are by no means exhaustive; his reading of Alma 54:23-24 “implies alternative lineage histories,” being contemporaneously offered by groups such as the Mulekites. “Each lineage,” Sorenson maintains, “had its own record.”

Based on his understanding of lineage history as a Mayan literary genre, it should be expected that such documents comprise epistolary correspondence, war records, annals, prophecies and rituals. He contends that this is exactly what comprises the Book of Mormon.

This classification frees Sorenson because, he explains, all lineage histories, both Eurasian and American, are ethnocentric, biased, slanted and propagandistic and one should therefore expect much of the content of the Book of Mormon to be rhetorical and non-factual in

125 ———, Ancient American Setting, 57, 61.
126 Ibid., 51. This division is acknowledged, he suggests, in what most exegetes of the Book of Mormon understand to be a boundary between secular and religious records that distinguishes the small from the large plates. But in Sorenson’s formulation, it is the difference in inherited role between Nephi’s and Jacob’s descendents that accounts for the divergent emphases of the two putative sets of plates.
128 Ibid., 402. The idea of mythological codices like Popol Vuh as lineage histories was a mainstream one at the time of Sorenson’s writing and has received further confirmation in subsequent scholarship: e.g. Matthew Restall, “Indigenous Writing in Colonial Mesoamerica” The Americas 54, no. 2 (1997): 264 and Dennis Tedlock, Popol Vuh: the Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996), 25. But Sorenson’s assertion that they comprise all of these components hinges upon his interpretation of the vicereally commissioned 1553 Codex Mendoza as typical of the genre (Sorenson, “Mesoamerican Record,” 493). Claiming that the codex and not Chilam Balam or Popol Vuh is normative then produces additional problems; the absence of tribute records must now be explained away (——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 411).
character. In this way, Latter-day prophets are not the only ones whose testimony Sorenson calls into question to harmonize the Book of Mormon with its context. This legitimating rhetoric can be detected from the very outset with the establishment of “Nephi” as the title for eponymous kingship, as part of the overall polemical project of the document to establish the authority of the Nephis over their subjects. The extraordinarily narrow ethnocentrism that focuses Popol Vuh on its ruling lineage can also be used to explain the Book’s failure to mention the indigenous population. By contending that Popol Vuh similarly declines to mention any of the locals outside the main lineage, it is reasonable to extend this property of lineage histories to the Book of Mormon. The absence of references to native Mesoamericans is thus transformed into evidence of their existence and the paucity of writing about the Mulekite/Zarahemlan lineage marshalled to reinforce this line of reasoning. Statements about the Zarahemlans would be problematic in a Nephite polemic in any case, given the status of Mosiah and the Nephite kings as usurpers. And if lineage histories have a primary function of political legitimation, no supernatural explanation is needed to explain Moroni’s burial of the text. The possession of lineage histories, Sorenson suggests, is a crucial criterion for establishing the very right to rule that the history justifies.

While this was the rhetorical agenda of the writers of the Book of Mormon, its abridger imposed, perhaps unconsciously, an additional agenda. Mormon wrote based on a perspective overwhelmingly shaped by his military campaigns. The pessimism and bitterness engendered

129——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 430.
130——, Ancient American Setting, 52-53.
131Ibid., 55.
132Ibid., 50. The non-naming of those who ruled outside the Jaredite lineage or even Jared’s brother in the Book of Ether is read in a similar vein (——“Mesoamerican Record,” 422; Ancient American Setting, 50).
133——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 421.
134Ibid., 425.
135——, Mormon’s Map, 28.
in this final futile conflict deprives the book not only of perspective but also of humour.\textsuperscript{136} Furthermore, Mormon’s purpose in writing was not to recount accurately the details of the history of the Nephite people. It was, rather, to cherry-pick examples from this history to teach moral lessons to its audience about correct human behaviour and God’s judgment thereof.\textsuperscript{137}

Sometimes authorial agenda is insufficient when seeking to explain an apparent contradiction between the Book of Mormon text and Sorenson’s academically-informed conception of the Mesoamerican past. In those instances, “we have to find another way to read the text in order to make sense of it.”\textsuperscript{138} But there is room to manoeuvre thanks to it already having been established that Smith did not fully understand the document he translated. Scripture, after all, is always culture-specific, constructed based on the needs of its most immediate and direct audience.\textsuperscript{139} As a result, his translation rendered alien taxonomic and navigational systems using an inappropriate European vocabulary. In this way, the four cardinal directions, when they appear in the Book of Mormon, do not refer to the meaning of the words in Smith’s English but instead to vaguely equivalent terms of position or direction relative to local topographical features.\textsuperscript{140} Like “north” and “south,” the terms “cow” and “horse” map not only to a different meaning but are to be understood as situated within a completely different taxonomic system. But even when combined with a stated uncertainty and tentativeness and a table indicating all the possible species to which book of Mormon animal names could have corresponded, Sorenson comes as close to throwing up his hand with animals as he does

\textsuperscript{136}——, \textit{Images of Ancient America}, 99.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 190.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 294.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{140}——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 42. Here Sorenson is heavily reliant on a single source, Felicia H. Trager and George L. Trager, “The Cardinal Directions at Taos and Picuris” \textit{Anthropological Linguistics} 12, no. 2 (1970): 31-37. Sorenson strongly accords with the authors that “cultural” directions (i.e. directions relative to a culturally important place rather than conventional cardinal directions) are not just to be found in the Southwestern US cases studied but are common to many pre-modern peoples (32).
anywhere, conceding that “most of what the Book of Mormons says about animals is plausible.” Cureloms might have been giant sloths, bison, tapirs, or mammoths but, lacking a European name, are a less thorny problem than horse, which, while likely referring to deer, might just have easily have referred to tapirs or a remnant population of Pleistocene horses. Sorenson is on a somewhat firmer footing when redefining other terms, though. “Wine” becomes any alcoholic beverage, allowing “vineyard” to then connote any place where plants from which alcohol can be derived was cultivated. “Wilderness” becomes an inhabited or uninhabited area without significant anthropogenic modifications. And if the possible population of a wilderness rises, the minimum population for a city falls to as low as four hundred, although in this reformulation of the term, city now means settlement with a ceremonial precinct/temple centre. “Class,” too, expands its range to encompass all differences of rank and caste. But, as much as Sorenson uses his knowledge of and reliance upon the Mesoamerican context to broaden some terms, he also uses it to narrow others. “Place of arms,” a vague phrase in the Book of Mormon, can be more

141 ——, Ancient American Setting, 292, 299. “Cow,” for instance, is taken to mean a domesticated beast and therefore reasoned to be alpacas or llamas, given that the only domesticated animals of any size in the Americas were camelid species native to the Andean zones of South America. Of course Sorenson then avoids mentioning both the total absence of any evidence that any of these species ever lived in Mesoamerica and a broad scholarly consensus to the contrary.

142 ——, Ancient American Setting, 295. Sorenson also argues that “horse” likely refers to a lost pre-Columbian practice of riding deer. In support of this, he mentions three pieces of art he interprets as depicting pre-Columbian Mesoamericans riding deer; to date, the author has not been able to obtain these pictorial representations. Sorenson seems uninterested in scholarship wherein Nahuatl-speakers classed horses as a type of deer insofar as it does not imply pre-contact riding (e.g., James Lockhart, Nahuas After the Conquest [Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992], 270-72).

143 Sorenson, “How Could Joseph Smith Write So Accurately,” 289. Agave, banana, pineapple, and palm are all vineyard candidates.

144 ——, Ancient American Setting, 158; ——, Images of Ancient America, 102. This is largely consistent with the views expressed by David Carrasco in e.g. “The City as Symbol in Aztec Thought: Clues from the Codex Mendoza” History of Religions 20, no. 3 (1981): 199-223, insofar as Sorenson claims that to be considered a city, a space might have needed to meet formal conditions of a temple precinct and fortifications. But his conclusion that this would constitute sufficient, as opposed to necessary conditions, to be a city seems to run counter to mainstream scholarship. Sorenson cites material that argues that conquest-era “cities” were surprisingly underdeveloped, small centres in some densely populated areas.

145 Sorenson, Images of Ancient America, 80.
sharply defined through an understanding of conventional Mesoamerican armament manufacture. Places of arms, it can be reasoned, are major obsidian outcrops.\textsuperscript{146} The greater precision that Sorenson can apply to certain Book of Mormon terms does not always work against the grain of the language of the Book of Mormon. Whereas the term “corn” is understood to refer generally to a variety of cereals and grains in the KJV, the presence of precise terms such as wheat and barley in the Book of Mormon combined with Sorenson’s understanding of Mesoamerican agriculture and the probable meaning the term had at the time for Smith and his audience, allows for the argument that corn in the Book of Mormon refers exclusively to maize. This established, the increasing presence of the term “corn” over the course of the Book of Mormon narrative is taken as further evidence of Nephite acculturation.\textsuperscript{147}

These terminological problems, taken together, are evidence of a fraught and messy translation process, one arising, he suggests, from the fact that Nephite writing communicated concepts not sounds.\textsuperscript{148} Not only was Book of Mormon translation affected by the ambiguities inherent in Mesoamerican scripts, the abridgers of the book itself report on their difficulties in writing Reformed Egyptian: this “must have had something to do with the script system,” in particular the inherent ambiguity of ideogram glyphs.\textsuperscript{149} Contrary to the assertions of many such as Nibley, who suggest that the Book of Mormon is essentially free of the scribal errors that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{146}——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 252.
\item \textsuperscript{147}——, \textit{Nephite Culture and Society}, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{148}——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 77-78. Sorenson does not need to sift through the contradictory and difficult testimonies of witnesses to and translators of the plates to know this—all Mesoamerican scripts are ideogrammatic.
\item \textsuperscript{149}John Sorenson, “Mesoamerican document,” 440. Sorenson bases his views here on Thomas Barthel’s statement that “None of the native writing systems in the New World… reached the stage of a ‘complete writing system’ capable of fully mirroring a language… with incomplete systems which attempted… to graphically set down segments of a richer oral transmission.” (Thomas S. Barthel, “Writing Systems” in \textit{Native Languages of the Americas} vol. 2, Ed. Thomas A. Sebeok [New York: Plenum Press, 1977] 27, 31-46.) This also allows him to shed light on Book of Mormon authors’ complaints about the failure to teach this script correctly. It is not the script itself, Sorenson argues, that they are failing to transmit, but instead the framework of allusions, puns, and literary/historical references necessary to properly interpret a symbolic script. (Sorenson, “Mesoamerican Record,” 442. This is again consistent with Barthel’s characterization of Mayan writing [Thomas S. Barthel, “Writing Systems,” 45]).
\end{itemize}
Mormon doctrine explicitly claims are common in the New and Old Testaments, Sorenson suggests that the challenges faced by its scribes resulted in genuine scribal error. The Book of Mormon, after all, contradicts itself regarding the capture of the city Nephihah. This self-contradiction does not point toward a paradox or greater revealed truth. It simply results from imperfect linguistic proficiency on the part of the book’s initial scribes.  

Scribal error is by no means the sole or even primary source of Book of Mormon inaccuracies; it is, after all, a lineage history. Naturally, its authors are fallible and record incorrect information. There is not always an intent to mislead here; it is just that the Nephites are blind to how those outside their lineage group might perceive their actions. What they understand to be “murderous iniquity” is actually resistance by colonized peoples to the abolition of their local monarchies. And often the “contentions” Nephites see are not even resistance by colonized groups but simply the chaos that ensues from their amalgamation of highly linguistically and culturally diverse groups in political structures lacking the capacity to contain them.  

Sorenson’s desire to harmonize his social scientific knowledge results with some frequency in his re-description of the iniquities of a populace as the political failure and injustice of its Nephite rulers. And he does not permit the Nephites to hide behind religious rectitude. Just as iniquity is not iniquity, “preaching” is not preaching but instead a public performance of

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152 ——, *Ancient American Setting*, 163. This blindness to the subjective nature of the sense of their legitimacy to rule also causes them to underestimate the political cost of fusing with the Zarahemlans and misunderstand the “contentions” that arise soon thereafter. (——, *Mormon’s Map*, 119-20)  
153 ——, *Ancient American Setting*, 197-98. Furthermore, the “judges” and “laws” created by the Nephites were ephemeral and left no institutional footprint.  
154 Ibid., 207.
divine kingship over newly annexed territory. Such rhetorical performances were necessitated by the fact that the Nephites aspired to have a state but never achieved one institutionally.\textsuperscript{155} The “conversion” of the whole face of the land, similarly, must re-evaluated; the same barriers to state formation and transportation in first-century Mesoamerica would have led to an absence of any significant ritual uniformity within the general worship of Christ as the precious serpent.\textsuperscript{156}

Given both the conscious authorial agenda and unconscious biases of Nephite chroniclers, it is only logical that the area of greatest Book of Mormon inaccuracy would be Nephite-Lamanite differences. The smallness of the territory in which the Book of Mormon is situated and the frequency of Nephite/Lamanite conflict leads Sorenson toward an inescapable conclusion: the Nephites and Lamanites were fundamentally the same civilization.\textsuperscript{157} Foreign policy, for instance, is best understood as having been conducted through a single culture-wide oath system, just one element of their shared “single pattern” system which included writing, weights and measures and applied not just to Lehites but to Mulekites and Jaredite survivors.\textsuperscript{158} Placing scripture in dialogue with academic knowledge of Mesoamerica, Sorenson concludes that the Lamanites were an agricultural civilization and Nephite claims to the contrary must be either disbelieved or reinterpreted.\textsuperscript{159} Perhaps, these claims about the Lamanites stem from their kings constituting a hunter or pastoralist aristocracy dominating agricultural Mesoamerican subjects.\textsuperscript{160} Similarly, the characterization of the Lamanites as “lazy,” or as “naked,” should be

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 198. This lack of state capacity was mirrored in the Lamanites; both sides in the conflict had similar deficits with respect to state capacity, with their kings lacking any coercive power beyond the ability to appoint other powerful chieftains and crown them as kings. There was a substantial gap between the rhetoric of Book of Mormon kingship and the practice thereof (Ibid., 228).

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 330.

\textsuperscript{157} Sorenson, \textit{Mormon’s Map}, 94.

\textsuperscript{158} Sorenson, \textit{Images of Ancient America}, 123, 158, 162; \textit{——, Authorship Revisited}, 459. This script continued to be used after the fall of the Nephites by Lamanites, Jaredite survivors and possibly others.

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{——, Nephite Culture and Society}, 91.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid. This may not simply be a Nephite pejorative characterization of the Lamanites but may point to their ruling lineages’ idealization of hunting as a pursuit demonstrative of their status. (\textit{——, Mormon’s Map}, 89).
read as indicative not of a character flaw, but instead as an indication that they inhabited hotter, lower elevation regions about whose residents the Spanish made similar comments.\textsuperscript{161} This may help to account for their supposedly dark skin, but Sorenson suggests that this difference in pigmentation was likely so subtle that a contemporary observer would be unable to discern any phenotypic difference between a Nephite and a Lamanite.\textsuperscript{162} Another difference that Sorenson suggests is falsely posited or at least overemphasized is the distinction between Lamanite tribute demands and Nephite taxation. Mesoamerican culture and state structures would offer no real conceptual scope for such a difference.\textsuperscript{163}

If there existed a split within this single Nephite-Lamanite culture, it was one imported from the Near East. Sorenson suggests that Nephite-Lamanite enmity arose from Nephite alignment with the “prophetic tradition” in contrast to the general sympathy of Indians, Lamanites and Mulekites to what Sorenson terms Baalism.\textsuperscript{164} This idea of Nephite-Lamanite conflict as intra- versus extramural goes to the heart of the rhetorical agenda of the scripture itself. Building on the probability that a Mulekite lineage history would show Mosiah to be a usurper, Sorenson contends not only that the initial rhetorical purpose for the creation of the small plates was to justify Nephi’s assumption of his older brother Laman’s right of kingship but also that this was indeed a case of usurpation. And he finds it oddly unproblematic to see the Book of Mormon as the lineage history of a 1,000-year lineage of usurpers.\textsuperscript{165}

Mormon ideas of doctrinal, ritual and ecclesiastical immutability across time typically fill in a lot of details in Nephite religious practice but for Sorenson, those details take on a very

\begin{footnotes}
\item[161] ——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 140.
\item[162] Ibid., 90.
\item[163] ——, \textit{Images of Ancient America}, 115.
\item[164] ——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 217-18. This local Baalism he connects to Phoenician worship of Baal/El, which he suggests would have also been based on ziggurat pyramid structures (Ibid.,173)
\item[165] ——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 424. His membership in a different lineage may help to explain Nephi’s brother Jacob showing the Lamanites to be far more sympathetic and far less savage than Nephi’s contemporaneous writings would indicate (Ibid., 434).
\end{footnotes}
different shape. If the archaeological record is correct and widespread “conversion” took place at the midpoint in the first century CE, it makes sense to correlate these two developments. If the use of incense and clay figurines declines sharply in the archaeological record at this time it must be associated with the ministry of Christ’s American disciples. And if this correlation makes sense, one must not only associate the replacement religious practices with new religious practices. One can also then associate incense burning and the use of clay figures with what the Nephites understood to be “the law of Moses.”

The fact that “the law of Moses” can signify a religious practice involving incense and clay figurines is not just indicative of the semantic range of terms Sorenson encounters in the Book of Mormon. It also shows a commitment to discerning Nephite social phenomena by reading against the grain within a Mesoamerican context. Looking to methodologies for studying the ancient Near East, Sorenson notes that the Book of Mormon shares with the Old Testament a submerged political authority structure that must be teased out of a text largely uninterested in these questions. In this way, concentrations of rhetoric justifying the levying of tribute can be reasonably understood as signs of increasing tribute demands. Similarly, a Nephite practice of slavery can be reasoned from King Benjamin’s abrupt slavery prohibition. Such a prohibition would have only been necessary to cope with a significant problem in the Nephite slavery system.

But slavery and tribute are easier to find in the text than the non-Jaredite, non-Mulekite, non-Lehite Mesoamerican majority who surround the protagonists. Making a similar move to his exegesis of “corn,” Sorenson argues that the Book of Mormon is more precise in its terminology

166 ——, Ancient American Setting, 331.
168 Ibid., 284.
169 ——, Images of Ancient America, 80.
than it appears to the untrained eye. For instance, the concurrent presence of the adjectives “Lamanite” and “Lamanitish” allows him to ascertain distinct terminologies for Lamanite rulers and Lamanite subject peoples.\textsuperscript{170} And if the Nephites’ “brothers” are Lamanites and Mulekites, it follows that the “others,” to which the book refers, are native Mesoamericans. This is also the group, Sorenson suggests, to which the term “people of the Nephites,” likely refers.\textsuperscript{171} More often, indigenous Mesoamericans appear absent from the narrative because they are subsumed in the categories Lamanite and Nephite, at the times when these categories refer not only to those lineages but also to their military allies.\textsuperscript{172} Not only does this explain the absence of others in the Nephite narrative, it also explains the extermination of the Nephites at the end of this narrative. Just as various peoples might have been subsumed under the Nephite identity, so too were the Nephites ultimately absorbed following the collapse of their state in the early fifth century.\textsuperscript{173}

Another textual sign of which Sorenson makes much use is the otherwise inexplicability of Jaredite and Lehite population growth patterns. There is simply too much evidence of sudden dramatic demographic expansion to be explained by any kind of natural increase. In sharp contrast to Skousen in this respect, Sorenson clearly sides with the mainstream practice of population biology in suggesting the only possible explanation for such increases is the rapid incorporation of others.\textsuperscript{174} This also helps to explain the Nephite adoption of maize farming and other Mesoamerican practices.\textsuperscript{175} But again, despite his enthusiasm, Sorenson’s allegiance to a

\textsuperscript{170}——, \textit{Nephite Culture and Society}, 96.
\textsuperscript{171}Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{172}Ibid., 91. Sorenson in fact argues that the term Nephite has six different meanings in the Book of Mormon: (1) the Nephite lineage, (2) the ruling elite of the Nephites, (3) those ruled by the Nephites, (4) practitioners of Nephite religion, (5) those part of Nephite culture, and finally, the more expected meaning, (6) Nephites as an ethno-racial entity (——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 54)
\textsuperscript{173}Sorenson, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 55; ——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 483. This idea of the conquerors ultimately assimilating into the group they have conquered is born out in his understanding of \textit{Popol Vuh}.
\textsuperscript{174}——, \textit{Nephite culture and society}, 96, 99; ——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 86, 146.
\textsuperscript{175}——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 87.
tentative social-scientific approach only allows him ultimately to say that the Book of Mormon “accommodates” the obvious archeological and linguistic evidence of a non-Israelite presence.\textsuperscript{176}

The kind of approach that we see evident in the work of Sorenson is one against which Nibley substantially cautions. Nibley suggests that when facing mainstream academic criticism, Mormon scholars have four options: (1) ignore, (2) run, (3) “agree with the world” or (4) oppose them on their own grounds. But, he warned, BYU is under-resourced for such a project and would ultimately be out-gunned. For the most part, FARMS has flown in the face of this warning even when it has otherwise focused its energy where Nibley recommends: teaching ancient language and text criticism skills to Mormons generally, rather than creating a scholarly counter-elite.\textsuperscript{177}

For all of the early FARMS authors’ declarations of indebtedness to Nibley, we see in them a radically different approach. Typology is something of which Sorenson’s method is almost completely shorn. This is not to say that Sorenson argues against a Nephite typological consciousness; rather, it is to suggest that Sorenson anthropologizes this consciousness. Whereas for Nibley typology is a property of the world, for Sorenson typology is a property of intellectual and literary engagement with the world. It is in this light that he writes of the Nephite concern over “the repetitiveness of history.”\textsuperscript{178} For him this is not a sign that history is itself repetitive; instead, he mobilizes it to argue for strong similarities between Mayan and Nephite understandings of prophecy and cyclic time. With one exception, every instance in which Sorenson discusses prophecy, cyclicality, or other features of time that appear outside the

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{177} Nibley, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 130-38.
\textsuperscript{178} Sorenson, “Mesoamerican Record”, 473.
mainstream practice of history, he clearly describes them not as real world phenomena, but as a belief on the part of the society he describes.\footnote{Ibid., 475. There is just one instance I have found in his body of work in which Sorenson appears ambiguous on the question of whether or not major events in the Nephite narrative appear at 256 year intervals as a result of authorial agenda or genuine historical pattern.}

Sorenson’s commitment to his principles of personal knowledge are such that no matter what the Book of Mormon says about the massive and catastrophic geographic reordering of the western hemisphere during Christ’s crucifixion, science tells us unambiguously that no such change took place at this time.\footnote{——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 46.} Instead of seeking a \textit{via media} between the geological record and scripture, the Book of Mormon’s claims are clearly circumscribed and recast in its geological context.\footnote{Ibid., 46.} And when the established facts of the social sciences are equally strong and unambiguous, their findings can similarly subordinate scriptural claims. We know that neither Hebrew nor Egyptian were spoken in Mesoamerica, and from this knowledge we must deduce an early adoption of Mesoamerican language by the Nephites.\footnote{Ibid., 74.} This contextual knowledge can also speak in the absence of scriptural claims. Archaeological evidence, for instance, tells us that burial mounds were an important part of Nephite society.\footnote{Ibidl, 145.}

Aside from his half-hearted defense of Book of Mormon claims of Jaredite and Lehite smelting and animal husbandry (he concedes, above, that some of these claims are not only hard to defend but manifestly implausible), the one area in which Sorenson does not merely adopt an outlier position within the academy but instead adopts a contradictory position is the periodization of Mayan civilization. Contesting the dating of the pre-Classic, Classic and post-Classic periods, Sorenson offers one in greater harmony with scripture. The Classic period must be moved from the 300-900 CE timeframe to 200-400 CE, coinciding with the two centuries of
wars and dissensions that brought about the end of the Nephites. Instead of nostalgic post-
Classic projects to reconstruct past greatness beginning in the tenth century, Sorenson suggests
that this period is better understood as spanning the 1,100 years between the end of the Book of
Mormon and the beginning of European arrival. But even here, Sorenson’s reading is hardly
likely to satisfy mainstream LDS members. He uses this dating to argue that the Nephite golden
age was characterized by depressed population numbers, reduced cultural sophistication and
technological and economic failure, whereas periods of iniquity can be associated with the
opposite, inverting the implied correlation between faith and prosperity.

The continental, geography-altering disaster that Sorenson reduces to an episode of
volcanism is the linchpin of this new theory of the golden age between 34 and 180 CE. The
prevalence of “contentions” and political disorder indicates to him that class difference and
specialization had been at their zenith at Christ’s arrival. But the ecological devastation wrought
by the great darkness was the primary cause of social levelling and the Nephites’ temporary
respite from political division engendered by pluralism and social inequality. Whereas the
Gospel is acknowledged as having perhaps lengthened this period, environmental factors are
viewed as the primary cause of the Nephite abandonment of iniquity and embrace of virtue.

If the Nephite golden age was caused by the economic levelling that accompanies the loss of
wealth and infrastructure, prosperity is then reasonably associated with episodes of social decline
and the rise of iniquity. It is for this reason that what scripture records as Nephite civilization
became irrevocably iniquitous and warlike, actually the early Classic period with its increasing
wealth, escalating ritual display, and social stratification. But moralizing Nephite prophets

184 ——, Images of Ancient America, 208.
185 ——, Ancient American Setting, 127, 131, 331; ——, Images of Ancient America, 212.
186 ——, Ancient American Setting, 209; ——, Images of Ancient America, 204-5. Ecology, similarly, constitutes the
main reason for significant migrations described in the Book of Mormon; Hagoth and his people for instance were
forced to migrate because Nephite society had reached a Malthusian limit (——, Ancient American Setting, 266)
would have seen this as the beginning of the long decline. Pride, class difference and “priestcraft” are all things that concurrently signify an apparent moral degeneration of the Nephites even as they seem to correlate positively to the growth in wealth and specialization associated with the early Classic. And the increasing association of war with the Classic period by mainstream scholars has only assisted Sorenson in drawing this similarity more sharply.

I do not want to suggest that Sorenson’s worldview or scholarly methodology is completely absent of the supernatural. To do so would not only be a misrepresentation of his work and an affront to his ultimate project, which, in spite of the challenges it raises to normative Mormon religious belief, is clearly grounded in a strong personal allegiance to the modern LDS Church and its teachings. One way in which this is evident is his tendency to confer greater accuracy on explicitly prophetic versus historical pronouncements in scripture. As a result, the Book of Mormon becomes a more literally reliable source on the period from 400 to 600 than it is on the preceding 1000 years which he derives, atypically, from 2 Nephi 1; any other LDS member typically considers these sections to pertain to the European conquest of the Americas in the Early Modern period. Instead Sorenson suggests that the “other nations,” prophesied to overrun the Lehites, are not the Europeans, as most Mormons believe, but rather Nahua and Mayan political entities, the last of which are the Mexica. As for unmediated supernatural action, the Sorenson chronicon is minimalist. Even the appearance of Christ is seen in the least

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187——, Ancient American Setting, 340.
188Similarly, the earlier episode for the Second Olmec tradition can be associated with these very maladies manifest during the reign of Mosiah II (——, Ancient American Setting, 127).
189——, Images of Ancient America, 212.
191Sorenson, Ancient American Setting, 84, 135. Sorenson takes a similar tack in his employment of Doctrine and Covenants as a supplementary source of data; it is from this that he is able to deduce the modern survival of Nephites, Lamanites and Josephites, along with the extinction of the Mulekites. While the Book of Mormon cannot be trusted with respect to its claims about the extinction of the Nephites and Jaredites, even an indirect claim in Doctrine and Covenants that there are no more Mulekites should be taken at face value (——, Mormon’s Map, 122).
magical way possible. It is noted that Christ has been resurrected but any talk of magical transportation to the Americas is absent from Sorenson’s retelling of events. The only other traces I have discerned in any of his works that refer to miraculous agency are one reference to the prophet Alma being “turned back by an angel’s command,” and his statement that the Liahona is magical rather than magnetic.\textsuperscript{192}

Sorenson’s work does not just run up against sentimentally cherished preconceptions of the Mormon past but against contemporary understandings of the national election of the United States and the hemispheric election of the Americas, much of which is grounded in understandings of the Nephite past – one of prophetic and democratic governments.\textsuperscript{193} In contrast, he describes a Nephite kingdom that never managed to establish what modern people might understand to be a government, and one not based on either a prophetic or a democratic mandate. Even when apparently democratic actions find their way into the Book of Mormon text, Sorenson is eager to dismiss them on the basis of their incongruence with their context. The assemblies convened to establish and maintain the rule of the Judges were not based on any kind of individual rights or universal suffrage, but were instead assemblies of representatives of influential lineages who spoke and negotiated on behalf of their lineage group.\textsuperscript{194} Enlightened rule in Book of Mormon times, Sorenson argues, arose from the personal characteristics of ephemeral rulers and not from any kind of institutional structure capable of maintaining consultative or leveling institutions following a transition of power.\textsuperscript{195} This was because the Nephites possessed little state apparatus and their rulers functioned through charisma and ad hoc

\textsuperscript{192} ——, \textit{Ancient American Setting}, 201; ——, \textit{Nephite Culture and Society}, 54.
\textsuperscript{193} Doctrine and Covenants 101:80.
\textsuperscript{194} John Sorenson, \textit{Images of Ancient America}, 68.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 113.
mechanisms. This rule, furthermore, was recognized and accepted by the populace based on a popular apprehension of the divine mandate behind it. Instead, such things as literacy, possession of records and the unpopularity or misrule of local lineages accounted for the more dramatic and unexpected episodes of Nephites rulers peacefully establishing their rule over new territories.

For most Mormons, undemocratic states are swept off the American continent because, in a sense, the whole hemisphere is elect. While the Lord suffers corrupt and undemocratic states to exist in the Eastern Hemisphere indefinitely, this is not true of the Promised Land, which is generally considered to comprise all of the Americas. Sorenson, however, insists that terms like “promised land” and “land of promise” apply exclusively to the Nephite culture region and not to the Americas as a whole. He describes the Nephite perspective as “myopic,” and compares this myopia to that of both ancient and contemporary Jews in their focus on Palestine. The Promised Land, he then concludes, cannot be understood to have extended outside Mesoamerica and is unlikely to have extended beyond areas directly inhabited by the Nephites themselves.

But who are the Nephites of the Sorenson chronicon? They are not simply the descendants of the faithful Lehites who chose Nephi over Laman. First of all, explicit in the Book is their fusion with the Zarahemlans. But this people is not just the group of isolated Judean followers of Zedekiah’s son Mulek that a plain reading might yield. Whereas most Book of Mormon interpreters would view the statement in Omni 1:16 that the people of Mulek fled Palestine “by the hand of the Lord,” Sorenson’s tendency to avoid supernatural explanations

\[196\] Ibid., 112.
\[197\] ——, “Mesoamerican Record”, 425; ——, Mormon’s Map, 108. The acceptance of Mosiah as ruler of Zarahemla, for instance, was not based on any recognition on the part of the Zarahemlans of a divine mandate for this transfer of power. Instead it stemmed from the weakness of their pre-existing system of kingship which had been contingent upon the widely unpopular and probably illegitimate rule of Zedekiah in Jerusalem.
\[198\] Roberts, New Witnesses, 3:278.
\[199\] Sorenson, Ancient American Setting, 92.
\[200\] ——, Mormon’s Map, 134.
suggests that this is a gloss on the fortunate hiring of a group of Phoenician mariners.\textsuperscript{201} Furthermore, because it was the Babylonian invasion rather than divine instruction that precipitated their flight, Sorenson further speculates that this group may have included non-Judeans fleeing for their own reasons.\textsuperscript{202} Leaning on the work of Nibley, Sorenson then notes that the Mulekite language exhibits a much higher rate of Jaredite loan words than the Nephites’, suggesting that Zarahemla has also absorbed Jaredites following the collapse of their state.\textsuperscript{203} Into this mix Sorenson finally throws the Zoquean peoples of Mesoamerica. Just as it was likely people of Mayan ethnicity who were primarily dominated by the Lamanites, the Zoqueans were the indigenous group most subject first to Jaredite and later to Nephite rule.\textsuperscript{204} References to the linguistic corruption of the Mulekites by their Nephite rulers are not references to a few centuries of linguistic drift within a Hebrew community. Instead, this corruption it emerged from a kaleidoscopic array of various ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups from both the Near East and the Western Hemisphere, concurrently residing in Zarahemla.\textsuperscript{205}

And Zarahemla was just the Nephite polity writ small. Like other Near Eastern and Mesoamerican political entities, it was highly linguistically and culturally fragmented, a multi-ethnic, pluralistic society grounded not in modern rights, freedoms and ideas of citizenship but instead on corporate privileges within despotic rule, a fragmentation reinforced by Mesoamerican topography.\textsuperscript{206} The reforms of Mosiah were not just necessitated by increases in the scale of the Nephites but also by their rapidly increasing cultural variegation and

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 110. Because both the Book of Ether and I Nephi include divine instruction on ship-building, the absence of any reference to such instruction in Omni causes Sorenson to conclude that the Mulekites would have to have made use of pre-existing maritime technology and infrastructure, naturally meaning Phoenician mariners.

\textsuperscript{202} ——, Mormon’s Map, 112.

\textsuperscript{203} ——, Nephite Culture and Society, 83-85. Alternatively, it might be evidence of individuals sharing a common Babylonian origin with the Jaredites in the group originally brought by the Phoenicians.

\textsuperscript{204} ——, Ancient American Setting, 335.

\textsuperscript{205} ——, Mormon’s Map, 113.

\textsuperscript{206} ——, Images of Ancient America, 10, 14.
complexity. It was in this environment that the Nephite language would have been absorbed into a Zoquean language, and Nephite society would have switched to maize agriculture and the Mayan calendar. And it is perhaps at this time that their cosmology substantially changed with the adoption of a pre-existing Mesoamerican belief adopted by the Nephites of a vast subterranean freshwater sea. This sea, he suggests, is referenced in the passages concerning the “waters of Mormon,” by King Mosiah.

Most troubling in this depiction of the Nephites is the inescapable conclusion that they were not Mormons. Sorenson’s Nephites lived in a religious and political order based around pyramidal structures, centred on layered altars (described in the Book as “towers”) and highly focused on a precise calendrical cycle of ritual enactment and festivals. Resonances between Near Eastern and Mesoamerican ritual observance and architecture form the basis of the conclusions he draws about the Nephites’ lived religion. Although the ceremonies are not described in the Book of Mormon, they are nevertheless highly evident as a central element of Nephite life. This religious life, furthermore, cannot be understood to have been based on any conception of private holiness or worship. Like all other aspects of Nephite life, religion was overwhelmingly public and corporate. Lineages, not individuals, converted to the Nephite religion and the residential segregation on which pluralism was based afforded no individual religious freedom. Contemporary Mormons commit their standard fallacy of timelessness

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207 ———, *Ancient American Setting*, 192.
208 Ibid., 81, 139, 275.
209 ———, *Ancient American Setting*, 176-79.
210 ———, *Ancient American Setting*, 143.
211 ———, *Ancient American Setting*, 101, 110, 166. The Near East and Mesoamerica, he observes, have very similar cosmologies with tiered heavens, a tiered underworld, ceremonial importance attached to mountains, the prominence of ancestors in religious practice, and mounds, pyramids, and other tiered anthropogenic structures designed to replicate both mountains and heavenly topographic features. (Ibid, 59, 171)
212 ———, *Images of Ancient America*, 140.
213 Ibid., 153.
214 ———, *Ancient American Setting*, 156.
when they see individualism in Nephite religiosity. These lineages, furthermore, were not like those discovered in Mormon patriarchal blessings (at least as they are understood by their recipients) but were at least partly fictive kinship groups, with frequent genealogical adjustments typical of large tribal societies.

The Nephites saw their temples as places of blood sacrifice, an obvious priority for both Lehite and other indigenous peoples invested in some form of Mesoamerican blood cult. Sorenson also notes that although there is a paucity of references (only two) to human sacrifice in the Book of Mormon, only one of these instances is described negatively suggesting the real possibility of Nephite transmission of human sacrifice to Mesoamerican peoples. To whom were these sacrifices made? Sorenson notes at some length the importance of reptilian symbolism and references in the Book of Mormon, and its substantial accord with Mesoamerican culture on that basis. Christ, he suggests, would have been worshipped as a serpent. Although not identical with Christianity, the Quetzalcoátl cult seems to have arisen from it. And Sorenson correlates the end of the Quetzalcoátl cult with an increase in class tensions and the end of the Nephite golden age, even though he sees this data as merely suggestive and insufficient to posit too close an identity between it and Christianity.

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215 Ibid., 137.
216 Ibid., 312. LDS and RLDS patriarchal blessings are conferred on members by senior clergy of the Melchizedek priesthood and reveal the Israelite lineage (e.g. Ephraim) from which the person descends.
217 ———, Images of Ancient America, 142.
219 ———, Ancient American Setting, 330.
Some of the most challenging remarks that Sorenson makes concerning the contemporary LDS Church appear not in his re-description of the past, but instead in his rare comments of how this might pertain to the present. References to apostasy in the Book of Mormon refer not, as most Book of Mormon interpreters imagine, to periods of heresy or failed ritual observance; instead, they refer to periods of rapid wealth and status polarization. It is when the Nephites renounced the project of economic levelling that they entered into apostasy. These very periods of apostasy in fact typically begin with a newly invigorated ritual practice led by the very beneficiaries of this social inequality. Sorenson makes a dark equivalency between the time it took from Christ’s establishment of the New Covenant in the Western Hemisphere to the beginnings of the final Nephite apostasy and Smith’s restoration and the early 1980s when he began writing *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. Sorenson’s real world example of how quickly apostasy can take hold is the town of Orderville, Utah—the last holdout in practicing Mormon communalism following its renunciation by the Church in the wake of the Manifesto. Within three years Orderville became rapidly integrated into a capitalist economy, its residents plunging into debt, creating exclusive social clubs, and attaining radically disparate levels of social and economic status. With or without the aid of the supernatural, Sorenson reads the Book of Mormon as a contemporary warning to the LDS against an apostasy he implies is already underway. In exhorting his co-religionists to resist the forces of Americanization and adaptation, he reminds them that the Nephites “instead of being what they might have been, a people of God, let themselves become mere Mesoamericans.” Contrary to any religious gloss placed on these wars by the Book of Mormon’s authors, either real or imagined, all the Nephites

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222 Ibid., 333.
223 Ibid., 212.
and Lamanites really thought about was power. There was no substantial dispute about how to live.  

Despite an engaging style and disciplined use of as many mainstream academic tools as can possibly be fitted into Mormon apologetics, Sorenson’s work lacks both the grassroots popularity and elite currency of Nibley’s. Southerton suggests that the Church Educational System has already done its work before most Mormons reach adulthood and persuaded them that the problems Sorenson seeks to solve are not even problems, that there is no substantial incongruence between the most intuitive reading of the Book of Mormon. But I would suggest that it is really a consequence of the historicization project on which FARMS is premised. Sorenson’s work is premised on the fundamental difference between the Nephites and present-day Mormons, whereas contemporary Mormonism is based on the understanding that God’s people have been and will be essentially the same at all places and times. Ultimately, any substantial rupture between present-day LDS beliefs and practices and those attributed to the Nephites would render a Mormon apologetic project unappealing. But in Sorenson’s case, this project is doubly dubious because his Nephites were people who prominently exposed their secondary sexual characteristics, had no real state or concept of democracy, sacrificed to a snake-god, interpreted Levitical purity laws as a requirement to make shrines to tiny clay idols, lacked any comprehension of the doctrine of “free agency,” filled their scripture with fabrications to justify rule by a dynasty of usurper monarchs, worshipped on top of pyramidal temples where they may well have performed human sacrifice and were really no different from the idolatrous, iniquitous Lamanites. These, Thomas King might suggest, are not the kind of Nephites you had in mind.

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224 ——, *Mormon’s Map*, 95.
III. Conclusion

From the *chronica* described in this and the second chapter, it is evident that twentieth century performances of accord with the mainstream have resulted episodes of discord, disjuncture and sometimes collapse. In the case of the RLDS progressives, we see the same kind of collapse and retreat that characterized LDS progressives’ engagement with the same body of scholarship half a century earlier. In the case of the Sorenson *chronicon*, the disjuncture is manifest in an understanding of the American past that is beyond the pale for ordinary LDS members who see the Book of Mormon as true, the ancient Nephites as practitioners of Mormonism and democracy, personal (versus corporate) holiness and standard ritual practice as universal amongst all holy peoples. With the exception of Nibley’s, the examples of sustainable, popular Mormon *chronica* we have examined have tended to defend their claims through either fundamentalist or conspiratorial epistemes that deny the knowledge-making authority of the non-Mormon world.
Chapter Seven: The Theory of Hugh Nibley

In curious ways, the historiographic possibilities of both Sorenson and the RLDS progressives were considerably circumscribed by their strategies for demonstrating accord with mainstream history, just as they were for the LDS progressives. Not only was the range of options for the kinds of events that could appear in their chronica and the kinds of evidence that could be mobilized in favour of those events significantly limited, but also in the case of the two progressive schools, the positions were ultimately unsustainable. The very performance of accord with the mainstream rendered the chronica vulnerable to the vicissitudes of intellectual movements outside Mormonism. This, obviously, is not a vulnerability for the chronica that partake of conspiratorial discourses or a priori reject academic authority and scientific knowledge as pertinent to an understanding of the Mormon past.

But what are we to make of the ability of Nibley to have his cake and eat it too, to both attest to the mutual validation of his work and the general trajectory of mainstream scholarship while enjoying a curious immunity from its negative pronouncements about his conclusions? I would suggest that this immunity stems not from Nibley’s promiscuous citation practices, creative translations or radical amplification of scholarship he encounters. Nibley’s durable credibility does not come from his talents as an academic illusionist but from two altogether more important factors: his commitment to and amplification of typological thinking and his ability to subsume both the scholarly material he metabolizes and his Mormonism within a comprehensive, totalizing system of historical causation, a true chronicon.

I. Fragmentary Systems

Although the cruel process of apostasy typically leaves the truth in such a pulverized state that Nibley needs to reassemble it phrase by phrase, or even glyph by glyph, there are
nevertheless, in both the present and the past partially correct fragments of the Gospel whose
systemic interrelation has been preserved. Among the best examples of this is the Hermetic
tradition. Hermeticism is “a body of knowledge resembling that of the Gospel” because of its
consistent practice, following the gospel thinkers, of sealing records. It is on this basis that we
should understand the Book of Abraham to be an example of the Hermetic system of thought. It
is this tradition that is represented in the present-day Freemason movement and helps to explain
why not just contemporary masonry but other historical episodes of Hermeticism have attracted
the great artists and thinkers of their day. This helps to explain Smith’s embrace of the
movement, given its direct descent from Adam.

Another distinct yet obviously related fragmentary system was that of Egyptian
paganism. Thanks to what Nibley terms “Egyptian conservatism,” knowledge from pre-dynastic
times was kept largely accurate up to the Ptolemaic era. For instance, the heavenly father is
understood and made reference to as the creator and father of the gods in the new Kingdom
Papyri obtained by Joseph Smith. Problems in Egyptian paganism arose not so much from an
adulteration of correct traditions over time as from the fact that the original pre-dynastic
traditions were imitations of correct rites made by people denied the priesthood by virtue of their
race. Although individual factoids and rites remained essentially correct and unchanged,
Egyptian knowledge became increasingly rote, uncomprehending, and de-contextualized but

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1 Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret
Book Company, 1992), 389.
2 Ibid., 385.
3 Hugh Nibley, *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others and the Temple*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City:
Deseret Book Company, 2008), 306.
Nibley is especially anticipatory of John Brooke’s *Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*
6 Ibid., 79.
survived due to the centrality of ritual in structuring Egyptian life. Nibley takes heart in recent scholarly movements suggesting that greater emphasis on ritual is helpful in understanding the ancient world and the documents generated therein, especially C. J. Bleeker’s 1967 *Egyptian Festivals*, even though, as in the case of Jonathan Z. Smith, Bleeker explicitly refutes theories of Frazer on which Nibley relies in structuring a praxis- versus symbol-based understanding of Egyptian ritual. It is on this basis that Nibley suggests that the *Book of the Dead*, Pyramid Texts, and Coffin Texts are primarily about ongoing day-to-day ritual practice in this world rather than post-mortem experience, hence their inclusion of what Nibley identifies as contemporary LDS rituals.

Most interesting in Nibley’s study of these systems, perhaps helping to explain his sense of the esteem in which Joseph Smith held them, is his view that they may contain components of the Gospel that have not yet been restored. In particular, the ordinance of the “Opening of the Mouth,” although massively altered in the pyramid age, “is of prehistoric antiquity.” Having discovered this yet-to-be restored ordinance in the Egyptian ritual system, whose practice Nibley is then able to locate in the early Church. Judas’s kiss can then be understood as a Satanic inversion of this holy ordinance.

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7 Ibid., xxix, 322, 384.
11 For example, the blessing in the *Gospel of Peter* is “something like the Opening of the Mouth formula;” it can also be found in *Odes of Solomon* and the *Gospel of Thomas* (——, *Message of Papyri*, 177, 193).
12 Ibid., 177.
II. Dispensational Science

Enthusiastically quoting Karl Popper’s claim that “all science is cosmology,” Nibley adds that furthermore, “all cosmology is eschatology.”\(^{13}\) Nibley’s approach cannot be described as simply social-scientific in character. Theology, social science and physical science are all concurrently within his scholarly purview, a kind of academic monism. In this way we can understand that properties that Nibley identifies in documents, ritual and human social organization speak not only to a socially constructed reality, but also to an underlying physical system that gives rise to and perpetuates the social realities on which he comments, elaborated, physicalized patternism.

Nibley’s understanding of human action in time, like that of other typological exegetes before and after him, is grounded in a subscription to the principles of chaos, complexity or what might be called aperiodicity. His descriptions of Egyptian ritual practice as near-infinite iterations of nearly identical/congruent episodes, no two precisely identical or at precisely identical intervals is essentially an assertion that they are a class of aperiodic system.\(^{14}\) An aperiodic understanding of history disqualifies progress narratives. And more than an inherent inability to grapple with the miraculous, Nibley suggests that the primary flaw of contemporary social science comes in the persistence of concepts and trajectories of progress, a kind of implicit Darwinism.\(^{15}\) Because we know that Spencerian developmentalism is wrong, Nibley maintains, we can reasonably conclude that the stone-, bronze-, iron-age succession and attendant

\(^{13}\) ——, *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: A collection of some of the best essays ever written by Hugh Nibley*, 2d ed. (Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2004), 263.


assumption that more ancient civilizations were less technologically advanced to be false. However, Nibley does not merely take the falsity of progress teleologies to be indicative of an absence of any natural principle of social progression. He goes further, seeing it as validation of the view that without repeated divine intervention human society naturally deteriorates. 

Ultimately, the failure of progress teleologies in the academy is not the main reason that evolutionary thought regarding culture is dismissed by Nibley. A belief in the Mormon figure of Adam, he suggests, is incompatible with any belief in cultural evolution. In place of a progressive structure, the Nibley chronicon understands not just history but all eternity as patterned on a concurrently cyclic and aperiodic structure. Life is endless and throughout all of time individuals pass through different episodes in which they play different roles substantially congruent with typical roles played by other people at other times. Within this infinite structure, the Book of Mormon shows that “God has been in contact at sundry times and places with nations of whose existence the world has never dreamed and even with the inhabitants of other worlds.” And within this system, the historical patterns existing in this world are infinitely reflected in all others. Even without his translation practices, Nibley’s annexation of all parts of the Gnostic corpus in accord with this view to the “early church” sustains his claim that this cosmology was normative in Christianity until Late Antiquity. 

In this cosmology, the primary unit into which infinity/eternity is divided is the aeon/dispensation. The purpose of his scholarly enterprise, then, is to recover fragments of the Gospel left in the residue of other aeons:

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17 ——, Eloquent Witness, 199; ——, Timely and Timeless, 311.
18 ——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 80.
19 ——, Eloquent Witness, 37.
20 ——, Message of the Papyri, XXVIII.
Latter Day Saints believe temple ordinances are as old as the human race and represent a primordial revealed religion that has passed through alternate phases of apostasy and restoration that has left the world littered with scattered fragments of the original structure all badly damaged and out of proper context.  

Each aeon, then, is understood to commence with an exogenously-caused restoration and to contain an endogenously-caused apostasy. These properties are not merely social-scientific, they are physical properties of aeons qua aeons. Each dispensation features “progressive deterioration,” and ultimately gives way to the next when human “waywardness” has been matched by a climatic restlessness of the elements.

Nibley is able to find this doctrine everywhere. Creation is thus not a unique event but one that has taken place an infinite number of times, each iteration essentially the same and yet non-identical. This he calls “the apocalyptic pattern of history.” Each time the creator is a different God, but the fundamental ordering process is the same. All narratives therefore are joined in medias res; the “creation drama,” supposedly discovered by the Cambridge School or memorialized in LDS temple ritual, refers not to the first creation but to just another point of creation in an endless cycle. Thus, when the Savour articulates that the Gospel will be preached and rejected and followed by destruction and darkness, he is articulating a universal property of all aeons, not just his own.

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22——, Message of the Papyri, XXVII.
23——, Eloquent Witness, 263; ——, Timely and Timeless, 3; ——, Temple and Cosmos, 32. In Mormon terms, this automatically entails the return to correct “ordinances” such as immersion baptism.
24——, Abraham in Egypt, 164; ——, Timely and Timeless, 311.
25Hugh Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1988), 140. This theme can be found in the cosmology articulated in the first book of Enoch, the Talmud and in the corpora associated with Moses, Abraham and Elijah (——, Enoch the Prophet, ed. Stephen D. Ricks [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986], 228).
26——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 4.
27——, Message of the Papyri, 217.
28——, Eloquent Witness, 352.
29Hugh Nibley, The Prophetic Book of Mormon, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 470. Because the number of aeons is infinite, all lists of aeons are necessarily incomplete (——, Abraham in Egypt, 227; ——, Enoch the Prophet, 150).
Most revealing in Nibley’s extension of the typological system of infinite dispensations developed in the LDS conservative *chronicon* is his conflation of three terms: dispensation, aeon and “world.” When a dispensation ends, a “world” or aeon has also ended. It is for this reason that the term “end of the world” has come to be associated with the *eschaton*, when it in fact refers to the Great Apostasy, given that it is the apostasy and not the *eschaton* in which Christ’s dispensation ultimately culminated in the “the consummation of the aeon.”

In Nibley’s exegesis of the JST, the end of the world is identical to the destruction of the wicked and, therefore, whenever the wicked have been destroyed this must mean that the world/aeon/dispensation has ended. What this signals is a further radical spatialization of the dispensational system: aeons are not just the unit into which eternity is divided; they are the unit into which infinity/eternity or, as physicists might say, space-time, is divided, each headed by an “Adam.”

This doctrine Nibley is, as usual, able to find throughout Gnostic texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Nibley’s work most dramatically exemplifies the same tendency we see, in a more restrained expression, in McConkie’s: the dispensational system that began very gradually to spatialize in early twentieth-century Mormon thought is fully spatialized for the first time in the Nibley *chronicon*. For this reason, it is the constant upward revision of the size of the universe by physicists that Nibley sees as the most significant sign of the vindication of Mormonism at the

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30 ——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 289.
31 ——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 473.
32 ——, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 141.
33 Nibley considers the finest elaboration of this doctrine to be in the early Christian document 2 Jeu which most explicitly elaborates the idea of infinite dispensations throughout space-time, each headed by an Adam (——, *Temple and Cosmos*, 190). Nibley also credits the writings of Pseudo-Philo as citing the lost works of Zenez/Kenaz/Zenos/Zenock elucidating this system (——, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967], 325-26). Naturally, then, it was the most “basic doctrine of the early Church,” ——, *World and the Prophets*, 210; —— *Temple and Cosmos*, 363.
expense of earth-centred Christianities. It is for this reason that he cautions Mormons against the parochialism of a Kolob-centred cosmology; the principles of relativity indicate that the universe is without a centre.

Our main business, of course, is exaltation: becoming gods and creating more of these worlds, a position Nibley credits to ancient Judaism, which held it to be the purpose of existence. In order for this system to work, creation can only take place in the context of an eternally expanding universe and whenever we see the phrase “treasures in the heavens” not only does it encode, for Nibley, principles of personal exaltation and our planet’s Plan of Salvation, but it also indicates this larger system of creating worlds in an expanding universe.

In this statement we see the power of Nibley’s method when it comes to constructing pictures. The reason this chapter makes minimal investigation of the amply-available translations of the texts on which his typological chronicon is based is that to enumerate the apparent discrepancies between common translations and Nibley’s interpretations is to accuse him of failing to practice a method he never claimed to practice. He is clear that when translating a document, he seeks to identify what the author meant and rejects any attempt at literal translation. This interpretation is based in large measure on the author’s context, which is structured by the historical narrative in which Nibley believes, one of an unchanging, eternal Gospel physically descriptive of and discoverable in all places and times. Therefore he is highly predisposed to find the term “treasures in the heavens” in documents he believes have been generated by those exposed to knowledge of the Gospel. Furthermore, because he has

——, Eloquent Witness, 77.
——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 67.
——, Temple and Cosmos, 364.
——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 137; ———, Timely and Timeless, 66. Nibley credits Pistis Sophia and Secrets of Enoch as the best elaborations of this principle (——, Timely and Timeless, 62; ———, Enoch the Prophet, 237; ———, Temple and Cosmos, 72).
determined that “treasures in the heavens” encodes the Plan of Salvation, the dispensational system and an expanding universe, he can, by his own clear and repeated admission, read any instance of an author saying something sufficiently like “treasures in the heavens” to be interpreted as an attempt to say this as a document elaborating the Plan of Salvation and its dispensational physics. He can do this because, using the law of similarity, he has assembled a picture of the total system that the term references.

While making worlds is good, other worlds that already exist are a distraction. Scripture is fundamentally concerned only with this world, and it is deemed unproductive to distract people with information about others.\(^{38}\) Movement into already existing dispensations is difficult for all beings, even gods, because our main business is creating other worlds, not visiting them; these worlds are to be created out of fragments of aeons/worlds that have ended.\(^{39}\) And just as when Nibley reads the words “treasures in the heavens,” he knows a document to be referring to world creation, references to “sons of light”\(^{40}\) or “children of God” are to be understood as the elect subset of the human race who will become, or currently are, the creators of worlds.\(^{41}\)

While some aeons or worlds must be created out of fragments by gods, others come into being through a process called “quarantining.” A group of holy people can break out of the repentance-prosperity-apostasy cycle by isolating itself prior to an impending apostasy when hope for the host society has been lost.\(^{42}\) This principle can be found in the desert wanderings of elect groups throughout history and, in each case, must take place so that God can destroy the

\(^{38}\) ——, *Temple and Cosmos*, 73.

\(^{39}\) ——, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 135.

\(^{40}\) This term, of course, is, aside from the tantalizing possibility of formal institutional church organization in the first century, the thing that makes *Didache* significant.

\(^{41}\) ——, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 151.

\(^{42}\) ——, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 514.
wicked without destroying the righteous. As with other apparently social scientific principles he articulates, Nibley physicalizes this separation as an entailment of the Law of Opposites.\textsuperscript{44} Ironically, these episodes of separatism arise out of the conflict between two similarly iniquitous factions within society, neither of which merit support and whose conflict only masks the true God-Satan polarity. This situation is not just to be found in the Lamanite-Nephite conflict but in the Cold War.\textsuperscript{45} Like restoration and apostasy, polarization, as a consequence of physical law, is a recurrent and axiomatic property of all dispensations.\textsuperscript{46} All aeons, then, that begin with a restoration are preceded by this flight by the faithful into the wilderness. These faithful groups are not just the Nephites and other groups chronicled in Mormon scripture but the Rekhabikes mentioned in Jeremiah, the Essenes and the LDS themselves. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the exodus to Utah fit into this pattern.\textsuperscript{47}

The fact that the Mulekites, Nephites and Rekhabikes separated themselves prior to the Lord’s destruction of the wicked at Jerusalem in 586 BCE is important to Nibley in helping him to unite his \textit{chronicon} with a popular piece of scholarship about the ancient world.\textsuperscript{48} Karl Jaspers theorized the “Axial period” in human history.\textsuperscript{49} According to Jaspers, the period from 800 to 200 BCE\textsuperscript{50} witnessed a new level of self-consciousness, giving rise to more intellectually disciplined philosophical and religious systems, replacing what he terms the “Mythical Age,” in Eurasia, and producing Platonism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc. Nibley reasons that the episodes of

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\item[43] ——, \textit{An Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 148, 151, 157; ——, \textit{The Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 506. These righteous people must bring with them the records of the dispensation from which they escape prior to its apostasy.
\item[44] ——, \textit{The Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 503.
\item[45] Hugh Nibley, \textit{Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints}, eds. Don Norton et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1994), 279; ——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 377; ——, \textit{Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 337, 439, 458. Unlike today, the people of the ancient world understood that the Law of Opposites was a universal physical law (——, \textit{Timely and Timeless}, 57).
\item[46] ——, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 365; ——, \textit{Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 437.
\item[47] ——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 299; ——, \textit{An Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 145.
\item[48] ——, \textit{The Prophetic Book of Mormon}, 501; ——, \textit{An Approach to the Book of Mormon}, 69.
\item[49] ——, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 548.
\end{enumerate}
colonization and “intellectual revolution” that Jaspers attributes to the axial point in Eurasian history include, along with the foundation of Olbia, Massilla, and Hanno’s Voyage, the foundation of the separatist colonies of the Lehites, Mulekites, Rekhabites and Jews of Elephantine. Lehi, similarly, can be classed with Thales, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Zoroaster, Confucius and the Buddha as a key intellectual revolutionary of the “Axial Age.” 51 Because these were all essentially the same project, we can learn more about the Rekhabites and the group that founded Elephantine by reading the Book of Mormon. 52

Of course, mere inclusion of Jaspers is not enough for Nibley. The idea of an axial pivot is metabolized, physicalized and generalized in the Nibley chronicon. There is not just the Axial Age identified by Jaspers in the middle of the first millennium BCE; axial pivots have taken place in every dispensation in which we find “Lamentation literature.” 53 Just as when we see the heroic literature of the Iliad we can infer a heroic age and Volkswanderung we can similarly infer an axial pivot when we see the kind of lamentation literature characterized by portions of the Book of Isaiah. By combining Jaspers with H.G. Wells, Nibley is able to infer another axial pivot in the period surrounding the fall of Constantinople, even though both Jaspers and Wells specifically deny that these episodes are part of a larger, repetitive pattern. 54

Of course, not every dispensational property is generalized in Nibley’s system. For a start, our world is different from other worlds in that it has been quarantined for special testing, placing it even further out of the reach of beings from other worlds than it would otherwise be. 55

51 Ibid., 2-3; Nibley, Temple and Cosmos, 121; ——, Eloquent Witness, 197; ——, Temple and Cosmos, 548.
52 ——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 40, 46.
55 Nibley, Old Testament and Related Studies, 146; ——, Enoch the Prophet, 247. According to Nibley’s translation of Pistis Sophia one can only visit a world of a lesser degree of glory than one’s own, rather than a world of greater glory. In other words, worlds are “veiled” in proportion to the light they are prepared to receive (——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 147; ——, Enoch the Prophet, 245).
This is one of the few instances in which the term “world” functions for Nibley not as identical to aeon but instead as referring to a set of spatially coterminous temporally contiguous aeons, closer to common, intuitive usage.\textsuperscript{56}

The present dispensation, of the Fullness of Times, while exhibiting universal properties is, due to its terminal nature, distinct from other dispensations of this world.\textsuperscript{57} One of the best sources Nibley finds for these properties are prophecies about it from the previous one.\textsuperscript{58} In this light, Christ’s call for a global ministry is to be understood not as pertaining to the early Church but instead is addressed to the restored Church in the present dispensation.\textsuperscript{59} Because it is the last of the dispensations to take place in this world, the wicked cannot triumph because God is acting directly to limit their power in the present day.\textsuperscript{60} And it is only in this dispensation that we will have the opportunity to hear the unprecedented doctrine of Fullness. Nibley argues that the Mormon term “Fullness of the Gospel” does not refer to a complete Gospel but an as yet unrevealed doctrine that will make it complete.\textsuperscript{61}

Because our dispensation is terminal in character, the restlessness of the elements to which Nibley refers will be especially intensified and magnified through human agency. Not only does Nibley claim that since 1978 the rate of earthquakes in the world has increased fiftyfold; he also recognizes the nuclear arms build-up as part of the divine plan. The “Great Overburn” will inaugurate the final millennium and herald Christ’s return. This overburn, in the

\textsuperscript{56} This set of aeons associated only with our planet is important in that according to \textit{Pistis Sohia} and an unidentified “early hymn” it is one of a special set to which Christ pertains, a smaller set than that ruled by God the Father (——, \textit{Old Testament and Related Studies}, 148).

\textsuperscript{57} There are also special properties of something called the “Aeon of the Serpent,” through which all of us must pass, in which each soul shall pass through the primal serpent. It is unclear, from Nibley’s text, whether this refers to our present dispensation or the one immediately prior (——, \textit{Message of the Papyri}, 317).

\textsuperscript{58} For instance, Nibley is able to conclude that the Restoration was necessary not just because of its conformity to a basic dispensational schema but because, as Peter predicted, the Antichrist put an end to the Meridian dispensation because he was able to thwart John the Baptist’s role as Elias (——, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 111).


\textsuperscript{60} ———, \textit{Brother Brigham}, 190.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 385. This does not mean, however, that doctrines unique to this dispensation are part of this “fullness.” The Word of Wisdom, for instance, is not (——, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 228-232).
form of nuclear Armageddon, was predicted in a dream of John Taylor’s in 1877.\textsuperscript{62} And it is on the basis of these latter-day revelations, new technologies and alleged geological disturbance that Nibley believes that the \textit{eschaton} is nigh.\textsuperscript{63}

In sharp contrast to the Fundamentalist and fundamentalist \textit{chronica}, Nibley argues that the “gathering of Israel” is a doctrine unique to the terminal dispensation; in all previous ones, the faithful have been called upon to wander to the world to improve it.\textsuperscript{64} But this gathering, at once geographically diffuse and geographically concentrated, Israel-focused and universal, hemispheric and global is almost indescribable in its complexity.\textsuperscript{65} But, for the purpose of this project, a key element is the way in which it signifies an unprecedented gathering and reconstitution of Adamic knowledge – cultural, scientific, theological (to the extent Nibley’s system would even admit these categories) – into an incipient Zion.\textsuperscript{66} Although Nibley does explicitly state that he is personally doing this work, it is difficult not to conclude that this is how he understands his own project, a contribution to the gathering project through the reassembly of the fragments of Adamic knowledge. This gathering is not to be confused with the return of the Saints to Jackson County, something that seems more associated with the \textit{eschaton}. Whereas the gathering proceeds apace, the return to Zion has been “delayed, indefinitely, if need be.”\textsuperscript{67}

This delay can be explained by the fact that the saints’ exodus to Utah was God’s Plan B.\textsuperscript{68} Although branching contingency historiography is most thoroughly dramatized and most consistently applied by Mormons most influenced by fundamentalist thought, Nibley, as intellectual magpie, makes use of it in explaining the delay in building Zion in Missouri. Plan A

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 86; \textit{Since Cumorah}, 422.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Timely and Timeless}, 317.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Brother Brigham}, 336.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Since Cumorah}, 141; \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 338.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Timely and Timeless}, 256, 258.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Brother Brigham}, 336.

\textsuperscript{68} The author’s term, not Nibley’s.
was for the whole of the early American republic to become this elect nation. God inspired the American Constitution and Declaration of Independence with the original hope of not merely the LDS becoming the elect, but of the American people as a whole rising to this calling. But, as in the case of the Jews, he told his prophets that America would fail to become an elect people.

In this way the July 24th Pioneer Day celebration marks “Israel in the desert once again,” and Brigham Young as a modern Moses, having led his people into the desert without seeing Zion.

III. Types and Shadows

Over the course of the twentieth century, the conservative LDS *chronicon* became increasingly typological. I have emphasized the external factors, temple work, temple building and other elements of lived LDS experience that help to account for this. But another factor we must consider, especially at an elite level, is the influence of Nibley himself. *Since Cumorah* and *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* were not merely books that resonated with LDS leaders because they were congruent with the all-now consciousness of a testimony meeting or a proxy baptism. These texts were institutionally promoted manuals employed to train Mormon leaders.

Nibley’s typology is highly orthodox in the sense that his work is highly consistent with the most disciplined and sophisticated practitioners of typological thought in the medieval and ancient worlds. What portion of this arises from Nibley’s familiarity with the cognitive structures of thinkers such as Bede, Augustine, Philo and their Stoic antecedents and what is simply a logical entailment of a typological system used analytically by a sophisticated mind is impossible to determine. What must be remembered is that like McConkie, Nibley does not use typology apologetically but analytically, as a heuristic for comprehending, organizing, analyzing and discovering specific events.

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69 Ibid., 154.
70 ———, *Eloquent Witness*, 45; Mormon 8:36-37.
71 ———, *World and Prophets*, 214.
Like that of medieval Christian historians, Nibley’s use of typology applies to both persons and events. Nibley’s personal typology, as one might expect from a practitioner of temple work, is closely linked to the importance of naming. Mormon proxy baptism, arising as it does from Hermetic magical tradition, links the efficacy of magic to knowledge of the true name of its target. This is the reason that the most important datum about deceased relatives sought in genealogical research is their full name. One cannot baptize “my great grandfather” until one knows the full name of the individual name in question. This may also help us to understand the admiration that Nibley possesses for Hermeticism and his willingness to accord it such a strong resemblance to the Gospel itself, underpinned as it is by true name-magical practice.\textsuperscript{72} In Nibley’s reading of the \textit{Gospel of Philip}, for the world to function everything needs a name and without it, Satan will triumph by falsifying the names of things.\textsuperscript{73}

Typology of persons is based on generic names that refer to multiple people throughout all space-time. Most universally, because all people are born, die and are resurrected, every person becomes an Adam and then a Jesus; Adam and Jesus are both the names of specific individuals and as the names of universal types. These universal types are not limited to the Judeo-Christian canon alone; for example, Caesar is an excellent example of both name and type.\textsuperscript{74} Nibley finds the name “Caesar” to be of considerable pedagogic value in conveying the intellectual architecture underpinning typology because it is intuitively evident to students of history that the name Caesar functions in this way.

Some types are more universal than others and in Nibley’s schema Adam is the universal type. By virtue of being born into mortality and losing one’s memory of the pre-existence one

\textsuperscript{72} It is difficult to guess what Nibley made of Brook’s \textit{Refiner’s Fire} demonstrating the multiple specific Hermetic and Masonic antecedents to Smith’s introduction of true name magic through proxy baptism.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{——, Message of the Papyri}, 234.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 244.
follows in the footsteps of Adam. But this is not to suggest that all men are Adam equally. Adam obtained the priesthood by re-learning some of his pre-existent knowledge, and in this way all priests are especially Adams. People especially typologically-identified with Adam are the dispensation heads who themselves are important types in the Nibley schema. Brigham Young might be typologically related to Adam both directly and through his conformity to the type of Moses which itself is also derived from Adam. Likewise, the dispensation heads Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Elijah are Adam. These dispensational heads are not merely in some kind of allegorical contact. They are in constant communication with one another, the living the dead, and, until the advent of Smith, those yet to be born. This failure to understand both typology and the Adamic nature of the Gospel has led to a crucial error by Jews and Christians who insist that Christ and Moses said original things when in fact they simply stated knowledge that had been universally possessed by pagans and Gospel peoples alike. And here Nibley lays down the gauntlet in his commitment to typology. If one believes in dispensations, if one believes in types and shadows, nothing Jesus said can have been original.

Related to personal typology is a typology of groups. The parallels between Cain and Laman, such as being cursed with dark skin and reverting to nomadism, apply not only to Laman himself but also to the Lamanites. Similarly, the secret yet ineffectual ordinances of the Gadiantons are something for which “Cain is type and model.” Much more common in Nibley’s work is personal typology. In what might have begun as simple apologetics to defend

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75 Hugh Nibley, *Timely and Timeless*, 59. Nibley finds this insight on the priesthood throughout much of the Coptic and Qumrani literature.
76 Melchizedek is especially Adam and this is revealed in part by the fact that his name is based on that of the pre-existent rather than the mortal Adam and it is on this basis that the higher priesthood of Melchizedek is named: ——, *Enoch the Prophet*, 32. Likewise, because both Noah and Enoch “have an Eden and an altar” they can be more precisely understood as Adamic types (——, *Timely and Timeless*, 102).
77 ——, *Enoch the Prophet*, 33.
78 ——, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 38.
79 ——, *Abraham in Egypt*, 583; ——, *Since Cumorah*, 408.
the claim of the Book of Abraham that Abraham was nearly sacrificed on a pagan altar, Nibley goes on to reason that the phenomenon of arrested sacrifice, classed similarly to substitute king sacrifices in Frazer, something that the Lord uses to test the true intent and faith of both priest and victim, is repeated in the lives of both Abraham and Isaac because of their typological similarity. This repetition, furthermore, renders both events more real not less so. As already illustrated above, there is no limit to the type of typological similarities amongst individuals, any complex networks of typological resonance. Typology also makes apparent contradictions between documents fall away; once one realizes that references to Elijah or Enoch may be references either to the type or the cognate person for whom the type is named, apparently tangled ancient or modern corpora are rendered clear. And because these types can point forwards or backwards in time, there is no problem with, for instance, Solomon being a type of Christ as Cyril of Jerusalem attests.

These types can also extend outside the bounds of Jewish and Christian tradition. Following Frazer’s statement that every good man can become an Osiris, Nibley interprets the facsimile accompanying the Book of Abraham as unproblematically referring to Abraham in its apparent copy of a figure of Osiris, although he credits Cyril and not Frazer for this insight. Indeed, within the coercive and limiting framework of Egyptian religious art, Abraham has to be

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80 ——, Temple and Cosmos, 59.
81 For instance, Joseph Smith is a type of Abraham due to his status as a prophet both independent of existing authority and yet the rightful heir to the priesthood (——, Abraham in Egypt, 202).
82 ——, Enoch the Prophet, 34, 39. This helps Nibley to unravel much of the Enoch apocrypha. Just as Doctrine and Covenants is clear that Elijah like Caesar is both name and title, the Enoch pseudopigrapha can be understood as more accurate and internally consistent if one understands that it is on some occasions the name Enoch is a type and on others the person who first embodied that type.
83 ——, Mormonism and Early Christianity, 364.
Osiris and like Osiris his sacrifice will be followed by a “revelation of the Cosmos.” As the first resurrected being who initiated humans into the temple and taught them how to become gods, it is only natural that Osiris should be understood as a type by which we may refer to resurrected beings. The portability of typological categories between what Mormons might term “gospel religions” and paganism is something that Nibley sees as entirely reasonable. For him, saying Deucalion is as good as saying Noah. That typologically similar individuals have the same experiences and the same roles only assists us in understanding sacred history.

Nibley’s typology of events, like his typology of people, exists concurrently at varying degrees of specificity. At its most general, it is based on the principle that “all prophets tell the same story.” Indeed, on that principle Nibley argues that a sign of scriptural corruption or adulteration is a lack of repetitiveness and uniformity. In perhaps his boldest statement of physicalized patternism, Nibley explains that much of his historical work is to seek out event types not events themselves. For this reason, the time and location of specific events are peripheral to his historical method. But types from a narrative standpoint do not derive ultimately from historical episodes in the same way that personal typology derives from persons. The original historical episode is but an intermediate step between an ordinance or ritual and an event. All of the true event types have as their original form an ordinance. From this point, Nibley explains, “myth and reality meet in ritual.” Ritualized events are then more real because it is the repetition of an event that confers ontology upon it. Unique events are therefore the least real in that they happen only once in an unpredictable form; ritualized events are the most

85 Nibley, Eloquent Witness, 173.
86 ——, Message of the Papyri, 128.
87 ——, Approach to the Book of Mormon, 356.
88 ——, Abraham in Egypt, 293.
89 ——, Since Cumorah, 150. Auerbach effectively makes the same argument regarding the authentication of medieval hagiography.
90 ——, Lehi in the Desert, 158.
91 ——, Old Testament and Related Studies, 160; ——, Abraham in Egypt, 224.
real because they are not merely the most frequently repeated but the most precisely repeated. We only think that important events are unique because “the later repetitions of an event cause the earlier occurrence to be forgotten.”

Again, this is sharply distinguished from pre-Christian or Stoic allegorization in that ritual acts “to dramatize and control events that exist in their own right.” It is in this way that Nibley reinterprets the scholarship of Jonathan Z. Smith to explain that torn garment stories are archetypically “type and shadow.” Nibley acknowledges there are problems with this approach, especially because the appearance of parallelism can be produced both by faithful chronicling and through fraudulent appropriation. But this is a minor problem because there is minimal utility in distinguishing among retellings of the same event, recurrences of that event, or fraudulent mimesis. This makes it highly problematic to interpret what kind of historical truth Nibley is expressing when describing a narratively congruent event from outside of the Standard Works. Is he really saying that the infant Abraham was fed by two stones or is he saying that there is a way in which the type of Abraham was fed by the type of two stones? But to construct the problem in this way misses the point of Nibley’s typological chronicon. Like the question, “how did the past become the present?” this is a question that violates the worldview that Nibley

92——, Abraham in Egypt, 319, 334. This is the method by which Nibley explains the lack of Biblical mention that Abraham, like his son, was nearly sacrificed on an altar. And it is in this context that we should understand that Lehi’s journey is a type and shadow not just of the exodus narrative but of episodes within the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (——, Since Cumorah, 232). The Bible only needs Exodus and does not require the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs because it is unnecessary to include more than one instance of a type when composing scripture. Likewise, the Bible does not include the original episode when Adam threw himself on his own altar to triumph over Satan and god intervened to heal him after he had shed his own blood (——, Message of the Papyri, 322, 384; ———, Abraham in Egypt, 326, 333).


94 Nibley, World and the Prophets, 213.
espouses.\textsuperscript{95} Or, to follow Faulconer’s work, the ontology external to the text or narrative is irrelevant.\textsuperscript{96}

The main utility of this typological knowledge, for Nibley, is not the identification of event types in the past for their own sake but to better analyze and comprehend events in the present. Because history is “interplay of pattern and accident,” knowledge of narrative types is helpful to us every day. The Saints fleeing Nauvoo for the Great Basin were considerably aided by their knowledge of the Exodus narrative in ordering their own actions.\textsuperscript{97} Similarly, we can use types to authenticate the validity of episodes in the lives of latter-day prophets. The similarities between Smith’s Kirtland Temple Vision and the Mount of the Transfiguration episode in the Gospels should reinforce our confidence in Smith’s experience of the divine.\textsuperscript{98}

IV. The Temple

When Nibley began writing there had been no Mormon temple construction in a generation and temple construction prior to this period had been, with the exception of Hawaii, limited to places that were candidates for gathering as it was understood in the nineteenth century. The LDS Church’s nineteenth-century temples and most of its twentieth-century temples have been located within the proposed kingdom of Deseret (with the exception of Cardston in Alberta which had been considered as a possible location to re-centre the Kingdom

\textsuperscript{95} A good example of this ambiguity is Nibley’s statement that Satan’s plan for the mortal world is also represented in the contests between the Egyptian Seth and the other gods, and between Hades and the other Olympians. The ontology of both the persons and the episodes is irrelevant to this observation (——, \textit{Timely and Timeless}, 184).

\textsuperscript{96} James E. Faulconer, “Scripture as Incarnation” in \textit{Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures} (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 17-62. Faulconer’s solution here seems mainly to be a philosophical and theological one in rendering irrelevant the historicity of specific episodes in scripture but has real anthropological value if one understands it to be descriptive of the consciousness of individuals like Nibley. The anthropological and distancing language used by Faulconer suggests that for him this is an apologetic move rather than, as it appears to be for Nibley, an actual cognitive experience. In his article, Faulconer suggests that for the peoples who constructed and received scripture in the past, individuals and events named or chronicled did not function in a normal system of reference or signification. Scripture was the persons or episodes through its enactment; it did not refer to persons or events outside itself in the past or future in that the events’ primary ontology inhered in scripture.

\textsuperscript{97} Nibley, \textit{Abraham in Egypt}, 320.

\textsuperscript{98} ——, \textit{World and the Prophets}, 212.
and continue the practice of plural marriage). But beginning in the late 1940s the LDS Church adopted a different temple-building policy, one that focused on performing the movement’s presence in the great and important cities of the world. This, however, was not coupled with any renunciation of the doctrine of the gathering of Israel, merely with its complication, a complication that is strongly reflected in Nibley’s own ambivalent writings on the subject. This temple-building process only served to reinforce the idea of Mormon identity and practice as temple-centered. By spreading LDS temples around the world, the de-temporalized ritual of proxy baptism could come to shape the lives of more and more Mormon adherents. In this way LDS religiosity beginning in the late 1940s became concurrently more spatially focused and more spatially diffuse. Within this context it is interesting to note the frequency with which both lay and official discourses continued to talk about the Temple in the single, rather than the plural. “Our temples,” came to be terminology used less rather than more frequently during this very period of a multiplication of temples. Similarly, temples in this period became increasingly standardized in their physical form, most dramatically in their interior rooms, but also in their outward appearance. On this basis I would suggest that the LDS was not so much building more temples as placing “the Temple” in more places. Proceeding from this phenomenon, it becomes easier to comprehend the evolution of dispensations from discrete blocks of time to discrete blocks of space-time. And it also makes it easier to understand Nibley’s beliefs about the importance and function of the Temple.

Returning to the Ancient State centred at the north end of the Caspian Sea, Nibley declares that, appropriately, the prehistoric world had led the way in this regard, and was fundamentally “hierocentric.” And at the centre of this ancient society and its fragmentary
successors the temple stood as the “power house.” Whereas God and the Church are everywhere, the Temple functions as the singular point of contact between the human and divine. Overlaying metaphors of childbirth and gestation, Nibley suggests that the temple is *umbilicus mundi*, and, although he does not use the term, he implies a similar embryonic model of the universe. In one of his many claims whose truth is clearly espoused but whose physical ontology is implicitly modalized, the centre of the Temple is a stone which physically becomes the navel of the earth. This scale model cannot just be placed anywhere. As Young’s practices of temple building show us, temples only function when their building is coordinated spatially and temporally so as to align within the framework of the cosmos. Like so many other manifestations of ancient religiosity, pagan temple building was based on the exploitation of the same physical principles. But whereas the Jerusalem Temple really did function as an “ancient powerhouse,” it is highly unlikely though not impossible that pagan temples, such as those associated with the Kaba’a, did. But this does not mean that pagans denied the priesthood were without authority or information in this case, any more than that they were necessarily mistaken about correct ritual practice, as one of the finest exponents of temple construction principles is Varro. What Nibley terms the “three temple system” in Varro’s thought is accurately descriptive of the ways in which Solomon’s temple used the ancient principles of connecting worlds. With this understanding of the crucial importance of the temple, it is unsurprising that the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE constituted “a

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99 ——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 271.
100 ——, *When the Lights Went Out*, 96.
101 ——, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 323.
102 Ibid; ——, *Message of the Papyri*, 195.
103 ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 347.
104 ——, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 270.
105 ——, *Eloquent Witness*, 313. True to form, the text Nibley cites is not translated this way by most people but instead appears to explain how temples are sited in a way conducive to the performance of augury and giving auspices (Varro, *On the Latin Language*, trans. Roland G. Kent [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951], 1.275).
crippling blow” to early Christianity because the survival of the true church is absolutely contingent on the functioning of the Temple.\textsuperscript{106} Early Christian churches were no substitute for these but were synagogue-like places built in anticipation of the \textit{parousia}.\textsuperscript{107}

For Nibley, temples are not merely important because of the physical properties they possess. They also perform crucial social ordering functions that do not require any direct interaction with the divine. He suggests that since the emergence of the modern study of history and archaeology, it has begun to dawn on people that essentially all successful pre-modern cultures were temple-centred.\textsuperscript{108} In these cultures the temple is important not because of otherworldly properties but because of the social benefits that stem from its function as the fictive, socially constructed centre of the universe.\textsuperscript{109} Whether or not associated with the true church, the process of temple building creates the cultural basis on which civilizations come into being and has been the means by which all the great civilizations have emerged.\textsuperscript{110} Astronomy, geometry, and literature, necessary for any civilization, can only arise in a temple and without the ordering principle of the Temple these forms of knowledge will inevitably fragment.\textsuperscript{111} All temples cause civilization; they contain a Book of Life and a dramatization of a golden age; they are the site where the “temple drama” is staged showing the process of the creation of the universe beginning with the “prologue” in heaven; and they are where every nation or tribe gathers for the year rite.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{106} Nibley, \textit{When the Lights Went Out}, 92.
\textsuperscript{107} Hugh Nibley, \textit{Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity}, eds. John F. Hall and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2005), 53.
\textsuperscript{108} ———, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 371.
\textsuperscript{109} ———, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 140.
\textsuperscript{110} ———, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 334. For instance, it is through the temple that Egyptians and Babylonians were able to order the universe (——, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 15).
\textsuperscript{111} ———, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 25.
\textsuperscript{112} ———, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 320; ———, \textit{Temple and Cosmos}, 73; ———, \textit{Mormonism and Early Christianity}, 323. Once one understands these things it should be no surprise that, in Nibley’s thought, the temple beliefs and activities of ancient Israelites and today’s Hopi are essentially identical (——, \textit{Eloquent Witness}, 490).
V. Internal Evidences in the Ancient Americas

Although neither his main geographical focus, nor an area of study about which he makes significant academic contributions, Nibley breaks new ground in modifying and overturning prior LDS ideas of ancient American history. And these ideas form an important part of the overall chronicon he advances. However, the contrast between Nibley’s work on the Americas contrasts much more sharply with the approach of FARMS, as represented in Sorenson’s work. In general, Nibley is highly reluctant to say anything definitive about the ancient Americas. This, after all, is what got Mormon historical scholarship into so much trouble in the Roberts generation. Thus, while his overall project is to re-focus debates about Mormon history and apologetics away from Central America and towards the Ancient Near East, in the process of doing so, he inevitably sketches an image of what ancient America may have been, and perhaps more importantly, what Mormons need not claim it to have been.

The big picture suggested by the Book of Mormon from the beginning and by scholarship on the ancient Americas is fairly intact. There remains, in Nibley’s view, an academic consensus that classic age Mesoamerican Civilizations fell due to social and economic polarization consistent with the Book of Mormon. Overproduction, overpopulation and excessive social complexity gave rise to widening gaps of rank and wealth. Nibley finds that it is probably also reasonable for the LDS to continue to assert that towers in Mesoamerican public architecture were likely brought from the Near East by Book of Mormon peoples. But beyond this point, Nibley is highly reluctant to make specific archaeological or architectural claims, and instead expends energy on minimizing the archaeological record. This minimization is not just evidence

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113 Space does not permit me to cover FARMS’ work on the Eastern Hemisphere in greater depth and my work on John Welch’s approach to scholarship will have to be released at a future date.
114 ——, Prophetic Book of Mormon, 373, 435.
115 Ibid., 332.
of the recent chastening with respect to external evidences, it also shows, indirectly, the magnitude of his confidence regarding the Near East and Central Asia. Similarly, the enthusiasm he displays for learning Coptic, Hieratic and Hieroglyphic does not extend to Mesoamerican scripts.

If we found a Nephite city, Nibley asks, would we recognize it? There are, after all, very rare mentions of stone architecture in the Book of Mormon. Instead, what we read about is a small population scattered in enclaves and colonies separated by wilderness with only one significant settlement of any size at Zarahemla. Given the frequency with which Nephites migrated and the scarcity of quarryable stone in much of the Americas, it seems more reasonable to assume that even the most majestic of Nephite structures would have been constructed with earth and wood. Nibley notes that Justinian’s so-called castles were such a phenomenon and as a result have left an extremely light imprint on the archeological record. If we can imagine, then, a Nephite great retreat starting at the “narrow neck” which Nibley agrees was likely Panama, moving all the way to upstate New York, we should expect not a series of stone cities but a series of short-term earth and wood fortifications stretching through Central America and the Midwest. Given the damage done to impressive and recognized Mississippian earthworks during westward expansion in the northerly Americas, Nibley contends that we should assume the much more ancient earthworks of the Nephites to have undergone, if anything, even greater damage. Book of Mormon archeology, he provocatively suggests, has not even really begun, because Mormon archaeologists are on the wrong track, too convinced that the great majestic

116 ibid., Approach to the Book of Mormon, 438.
117 Ibid., 418.
118 Ibid., 419.
119 Ibid., 436-437.
120 ibid., Lehi in the Desert, 453; ibid., An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 416.
121 ibid., Approach to the Book of Mormon, 439.
stone ruins of Central America hold the key to the Nephite past. If scholars cannot agree that a people actually existed, it is difficult to state that archaeology pertaining to them has begun. Just as Mormons have been far too willing to believe that Mayan and Nahua ruins in central America hold the key to the Nephite past, so too have they been overly willing to conflate Lamanties and American Indians. The Lamanites were not a race but a faction, and an ethnically mixed one at that. There is clearly some kind of descent from this group to contemporary indigenous peoples but the precise relationship is unknown; mestizo peoples should be recognized as Israelites as much based on their Lamanite heritage as their Iberian converso heritage.

Still, Nibley attacks many common Mormon assumptions of his day, insisting that the Book of Mormon does not tell the story of Indian origins – that red, dark, and black should not be read as references to skin colour, and that if Nephites and Lamanites can defect from one camp to another without detection they must have been, essentially, phenotypically identical. That stated, Nibley is not willing to go as far as his successors at FARMS. He is prepared to hint at the existence of pre-Jaredite and pre-Lehite peoples in the Americas, but not fully articulate this probability. Given how minimally the Zarahemlans were described by the Nephites who encountered them, is it not reasonable that smaller, less-literate, less-sophisticated groups would have been left completely unmentioned in the Lehite narrative, he asks?

In other ways, he hews to an earlier, more orthodox view in supporting a continental geography in which the Book of Mormon narrative runs from Northern Chile to Upstate New

122 Ibid., 440-442.
123 ———, Since Cumorah, 243; ———, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 431. In this light he observes that Nephite ruins are much more analogous to those of Troy before its discovery, and the category of Book of Mormon archaeology analogous to that of Hittite archaeology prior to nineteenth-century discoveries in Anatolia.
124 ———, Prophetic Book of Mormon, 545.
125 ———, Lehi in the Desert, 204.
126 ———, Since Cumorah, 245-247, 251.
127 ———, Lehi in the Desert, 249.
York. Furthermore, the key features of hemispheric dualism are appended to Nibley’s spatialized dispensational system. Not only is the dispensation of the Fullness of Times accorded special properties on the basis of its terminal location in our world’s dispensational cycle, orthodox ideas of distinct principles governing western versus eastern hemispheric history are also recognized. When there is iniquity in the western hemisphere, the Lord will annihilate it; there will be no punishment or correction because the Lord must maintain the hemisphere as uniquely pure.\textsuperscript{128}

VI. The Nibley Project

Hugh Nibley’s scholarly methodology is inextricably linked to the physical system – and I say “physical” versus “metaphysical” in recognition of the fundamental monism of LDS thought – that patterns the universe and expresses causation. This system is an impressive elaboration of historical typology as a method of thinking and way of knowing; when alloyed with patternism and Mormon cosmology, it radically departs from anything that could be defined as academic scholarship. First, its objective is different: it seeks not to describe events or people but instead to identify and describe the \textit{types} that underlie them, and the interrelation of these types. Second, it respects no conventional academic disciplinary boundaries in that it defines itself as the concurrent practice of cosmology and eschatology. Third, it posits a larger, more comprehensive universal system that seeks to contain within itself all fields of intellectual inquiry, like the intellectual operation of the Temple it describes; rather than either adopting or refuting them, it annexes to itself all disciplinary formations and their production. Fourth, it physicalizes its textual methodologies by making not only type but genre properties of the universe rather than the texts it contains. Most importantly, it is a system that uses typology not as an apologetic tool but as an analytical heuristic in order to make knowledge.

\textsuperscript{128}——, \textit{Since Cumorah}, 427-29. Even within this, there is complication: Lamanites receive different punishments from God than other western hemisphere peoples, so that they can play their assigned role in the latter-days.
It is in this light that we should understand his warning to Sorenson and his ilk: fashioning a scholarly counter-elite is both perilous and pointless and it is not what Nibley is doing. While he makes use of academic knowledge, position and methods in his work, this work does not, ultimately, compete with the academy. Instead, it acts against the academy on behalf of the Temple.

VII. Nibley and the Scholarly Counter-Elite

Sorenson was not a founding member of FARMS, nor was he typical of the group in his scholarship. Since its inception, the group has focused overwhelmingly on textual methods, internal evidences and the Ancient Near East, much in the tradition of the new turn that Mormon scholarship of the pre-modern world took following Nibley’s impact on the scene. But these scholars, for all their protestations of indebtedness to him, did not follow Nibley theoretically or methodologically; instead they did the opposite of what he advised and, like Sorenson, brought as much of the method and theory of mainstream academic disciplines that could survive translation.

Co-founder John Welch, BYU law professor, high priest and former student of Nibley’s best exemplifies the kind of scriptural scholarship at which FARMS excels.129 In explaining his own motivation in engaging in Mormon scriptural scholarship, he cites Doctrine and Covenants 88:118 arguing, in contrast to Nibley, that God has commanded the restored Church to invest resources and energy in ongoing academic scholarship.130 In his scholarship as text critic, Welch recognizes the fundamental subjectivity of staking out a position like this and argues not that his fidelity to Mormonism makes him special, but instead that all scholars’ work is shaped by the

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experience, culture, and metaphysics of which they partake on a regular basis. Like Sorenson’s, his reasoning, argumentation, and research methodology come from the perspective of academic history. Like Sorenson, with equally few exceptions, he is rooted in a scientific, materialist understanding of the universe and the practice of scholarship, LDS-recognized miracles excepted.

Although he certainly reasons about doctrines and rituals in the ancient world based on the understanding that the LDS Church has restored them, this reasoning, while mobilizing evidentiary sources in addition to the allegedly ancient scriptures it valorizes, still understands these practices as social rather than physical features of the past. Furthermore, he describes these ancient rituals as arising from social responses to events rather than from unmediated divine action. Barring the standard Mormon text criticism policy of not automatically dating scripture containing correct and specific prophecies on or after that date, Welch generally either accepts the principles of mainstream text criticism or makes relatively minor modifications to the general methodology.

Welch’s most significant contribution that launched him to prominence was his discovery of *chiasmus* in the Book of Mormon, just three years after taking Nibley’s class at BYU as a freshman. In 1967, he noticed that it did not just appear in the Bible but also the Book of

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131 Ibid., 31.
Mormon; chiasmus is a style of parallelism that is best exemplified by example and can be illustrated by the first instance of it that Welch found in Mosiah 3:18-19

except they humble themselves
and become as little children, and believe that
salvation was, and is, to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, Lord omnipotent
For the natural man
is an enemy to God
and has been from the fall of Adam,
and will be, forever and ever,
unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,
and putteth off the natural man
and becometh a saint through the atoning of Christ the Lord,
and becometh as a child,
submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things (italics Welch’s)

To someone outside Mormonism and not influenced by Nibley’s reformulation of KJV-Book of Mormon congruency as evidence of independent generation rather than KJV derivation, it might simply appear that in his efforts to replicate the style of the KJV, Smith had mimetically apprehended its parallel structures in much the same way he had Early Modern English grammar and writing style. But in the context in which it was discovered, it was the beginning of a new chapter in Mormon scriptural scholarship. In Welch’s view, Smith’s lack of familiarity with chiasmus as a phenomenon would have made it impossible for him to mimic it and, hence, its presence could be taken as evidence of his non-authorship.

The impact of this discovery and the potential of authenticating the Book of Mormon through the methodologies of mainstream scriptural criticism helped to inspire not just a new generation but a new kind of “faithful scholarship.” Sorenson’s work bears witness to the impact

135——, “The Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon: 40 Years Later” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 16, no. 2 (2007): 80. Technically, chiasmus “may be said to be present in a passage if the text exhibits bilateral symmetry of four or more elements about a central axis, which may itself lie between two elements, or be a unique central element, the symmetry consisting of any combination of verbal, grammatical, or syntactical elements, or, indeed, of ideas and concepts in a given pattern.” Evident in Eastern Mediterranean texts as far back as Homer’s, it may have developed as a compositional technique but later may have become a device to display literary artistry, structure material and serve as a mnemonic device (Ian H. Thompson, Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 17, 26, 33-35).

136Welch, Pressing Forward, 52; ——, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” 41.
of this discovery. To support his claim that the Book of Mormon is a Mesoamerican codex, he argues that *Chilam Balam* and *Popol Vuh* also contain *chiasmus*.\(^{137}\) By 1979, ten years after Welch’s work on *chiasmus* was first published, there were enough scholars practicing mainstream social scientific methods to create the FARMS.

Like that of other FARMS members, Welch’s work contains an implicit recantation of Nibley’s methods. Fragments are no longer to be cherry-picked from ancient sources but evaluated in the immediate textual context in which they are situated,\(^{138}\) although he still accepts terms like “sons of light” entail a whole ideational system.\(^{139}\) Mainstream scholarship regarding document redaction and multiple authorship undergoes minimal modification, generally, and the problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is treated seriously. When an alternate theory is required, given mainstream scholarship regarding Isaiah’s multi-stage composition, the logic underpinning Q scholarship is mobilized. In a measured fashion, Welch suggests the possibility of lost common sources for the later sections of Biblical Isaiah and Book of Mormon Isaiah as one solution among various possibilities for addressing this significant problem.\(^{140}\)

Most illustrative of Welch’s divergence from Nibley is the idea of the “Nephite prophetic worldview” which conceptualizes world history in four periods.\(^{141}\) The Nephites have a *chronicon*; it is neither Mormon nor descriptive of the physical laws that structure time in the LDS dispensational system; furthermore it is located within the mentality of the Nephites and not in the world that surrounds them. This, more than anything, shows the incongruity between

\(^{137}\) Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America*, 177; ——, “Mesoamerican Record,” 444.
\(^{138}\) ——, *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, 323.
\(^{139}\) Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon*, 74-77.
FARMS as academic scholars of Mormon documents and FARMS, devoted and admiring publishers of 10,000 pages of Nibley. Despite his frequent engagement in and deep personal commitment to temple work, the only thing about Leone’s theory of Mormon ethnography clearly evident in his scholarship is an avoidance of explicit contention and the do-it-yourself spirit with which he approaches his own understanding of his faith.

There are many first generation FARMS scholars who made contributions like Welch’s in the 1980s, some primarily associated with the foundation like Noel Reynolds and John Gee who merit inclusion in this study. Still others, like Bushman, whose work in bridging the subaltern past of Mormonism’s foundational ministry under Joseph Smith with mainstream scholarship of the prophet merits its own chapter, also played a key role in elevating FARMS discourse to a higher level of academic practice. These individuals are by no means in accord with Welch on key conclusions that are advanced in their respective work, but there is a unanimity amongst the first FARMS generation concerning premise (the Book of Mormon is a product of the ancient world of which Smith was translator not author) and method (as much mainstream academic method as can be translated without doing violence to the first premise).

But there has been a recent turn in FARMS scholarship back to a more Nibleyite methodology, and it is around 1998 that we begin to see this turn represented in publishing. For FARMS’ first 20 years, its publications were characterized by minimal prophetic commentary, minimal devotional commentary, and infrequent resort to the magical or supernatural. This has recently changed. Perhaps we can associate this with FARMS’ own project of legitimating Nibley’s thought by re-publishing his corpus. Typology in post-1998 publications has moved from being a generic feature of text to a physical feature of the world. To point out just a few examples, we see this in the work of David Rolf Seeley and Joanne Seeley when they note that

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142 John Welch, personal communication.
“Lehi and his family relived the Exodus” and because of this God chose to appear to them in a pillar of fire because Lehi was a “type of Moses.” Despite being a contemporary of Lehi’s who shared his prophetic calling, Jeremiah could be understood as distinct from his contemporary because he was a “type of Christ,” a prophet to exiled rather than gathered Jews. In another article, David Seeley further explores Exodus typology as it relates to Book of Mormon peoples noting that the presence of the “typology of exodus” evident throughout the Book of Mormon is not a rhetorical project by Book of Mormon writers but instead their “deliverance from Jerusalem is an event that played out in the typology of the exodus.” Also back, as an entailment of Nibley’s method, is the dual parallel fulfillment of prophecy. The birth of Isaiah’s son is recognized as a type/shadow prefiguring the birth of Christ, in an article by Jeffery Holland. This is unsurprisingly extended into the modern period in Andrew Skinner’s examination of infancy narratives of Christ: “every prophet is a type, a foreshadowing or symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ.” This helps to explain the strong biographical resemblance Skinner perceives between Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith. In an effort to demonstrate that typological thinking does not constitute any rupture with FARMS’ previous approach, Thomas Valletta goes to considerable length to show that apologetic work on “multiple signification” is, in fact, based on a framework developed by Welch. The re-emergence of typological or all-now thinking

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144 Ibid., 371.
145 ———, “Sacred History, Covenants and the Messiah: The Religious Background of the World of Lehi” in Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem, 368.
146 Jeffrey Holland, “’More Fully Persuaded:’ Isaiah’s Witness of Christ’s Ministry” in Isaiah and the Book of Mormon, 6.
within the FARMS setting produces other opportunities for dealing with the problematic Joseph Smith legacy.

Discrepancies between the Book of Mormon exegesis of the Old Testament and what scriptural scholars today understand it to have been referencing is resolved through a new phenomenon found among Book of Mormon prophets and term by Cloward “likening.” Nephi and Jacob, for instance, use this process in quoting from Isaiah 29. The prophet is quoted not in order to reiterate, paraphrase or amplify his original statements, but instead to repurpose his words and confer on them new meaning for the Nephites and the Gentiles who will later receive their scripture.  

For instance, Nephi changes Isaiah’s obviously symbolic book into a real one when anticipating the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This literalization of Isaiah’s metaphorical sealed book is continued as Nephi describes various features of the Book of Mormon. But this process of literalizing and re-purposing should not be understood as mere exegesis because the details that Nephi adds are in fact direct revelations from God. God is rather conferring new information via prophetic mediation and not simply through inspired exegesis. This, FARMS authors suggest, has inevitably caused confusion in the present dispensation because many Mormons, including perhaps Joseph Smith himself, have engaged in an incorrect exegesis of Isaiah 29 as a result of Nephi’s likening.

This turn in FARMS scholarship exemplifies the unacknowledged knife-edge down which this institution continues to proceed: on the one hand, the recognition of this phenomenon of likening constitutes a concession to mainstream scholarly conclusions about Joseph Smith’s exegetical project, but it displaces the misunderstanding out of profane time into Mormonism’s

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150 Ibid., 200.
151 Ibid., 209.
152 Ibid., 207.
subaltern past. If there is a misinterpretation of Isaiah 29 in the restored Church, Nephi not Joseph Smith is to blame. Or, as Dana Pike suggests, the emergence of likening allows scholars to occupy a middle ground when considering whether Isaiah predicted the birth of Jesus Christ. Ultimately Isaiah’s words were used to predict the Messiah but this was through the agency of their subsequent broadening as later prophets likened them. FARMS, then, although drifting away from its most aggressive period of mainstream academic legitimation continues to occupy a curious middle ground, a twilight world between a grassroots Mormon *chronicon* and academic historical thought.

153 Dana Pike, “‘How Beautiful upon the Mountains’ The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7-10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon” in *Isaiah and the Book of Mormon*, 283.
Chapter Eight: Collapse of the Reorganization

I. The End of RLDS Progressivism

The RLDS progressives I discussed last chapter were not, of course, just Western hemisphere monomaniacs. In order to understand what I term the Community of Christ (CoC) chronicon, the historical thinking that emerged in the RLDS in the early 1960s and helped to animate the social process that gave rise to the 1984 schism and 2002 rebranding, the distinctive elements of RLDS progressive thought that it came to contest and later, institutionally at least, supplant must be described.

Unlike LDS members focused on external evidences, RLDS progressives followed those evidences into the Pacific. Although LDS efforts in the Pacific have since produced more converts, in the 1950s, the Pacific mission field was highly significant for the RLDS, with the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand comprising 4% of RLDS members but, more importantly, comprising 64% of all members outside the US and Canada.¹ The RLDS were more assiduous in producing histories exploring the Lamanite identity of Pacific Islanders. The basic logical structures and historiographic principles applied to the pre-Columbian Americas are vigorously applied to the Pacific, underpinned by the presumption of diffusion versus independent generation, notwithstanding a belief in progress. Because there is no evidence of a great civilization in Polynesia in ancient time and because there are links between Polynesia and America, it must logically follow that Polynesians came from the Americas.² Consistent with general Mormon belief, the peopling of the Pacific is best accounted for through the voyages of Hagoth. And thanks to the work of Thor Heyerdahl, Hagoth’s voyages have been demonstrated

as technically feasible and possible links found between Andean and Pacific Island languages. These suggested philological linkages are amplified in progressive discourses to the level of being “indisputable.” Furthermore, working from less reputable sources the Hagoth narrative can be supported by the fact that society Islanders are “nearly identical” to American Indians, and the language of the Creek Indians is the same as Filipino. With little effort, the patternist conception of the New World Christ cult is easily exported to Polynesia, whose peoples believe in the deluge, the Trinity and a returning white God (a belief they share with Chileans, Californians, Hawaiians, Society Islanders, and the Maori).

These assertions can only be sustained through heavy proof-texting to make even the Verrill school of cult archaeology say what it needs to say. This proof-texting goes beyond simple cherry-picking to rise to the level of more Fundamentalist engagements with the written word. And if RLDS progressives are willing to proof-text from popular history, their engagement with Mormon scripture is also more likely than LDS scholarship to rely on proof-texting. I am tempted suggest a kind of inverse correlation in practices of rendering scripture more multivalent and flexible between typological approaches and proof-texting approaches. Whereas nineteenth-century Mormon historical thought made considerable use of proof-texting, one can see a marked decline of this practice within mainstream LDS apologetics in the twentieth century. But one does not see any evidence of such a decline amongst fundamentalist groups nor in the RLDS until the mid 1960s. Proof-texting is helpful in constructing the conservative RLDS chronicon, specifically in its ability to invest Old Testament scripture with references to the New World. Whereas all Mormons might use Isaiah 29, the RLDS go further, seeing the terms “utmost

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6 Velt, *America’s Lost Civilizations*, 89.
bound” in Genesis 49:26, the “ends of the earth” in Deuteronomy 33:13 and branches floating on the sea in Psalms 80:11 as clear references to the American continent. Similarly, references to unidentified young men or a young man in, for instance, Joel are clear references to Joseph Smith. And this capacity to proof-text is further magnified by the relative emptiness of mountains as signifiers for members of the Reorganization. Pratt and Young made excellent use of mountains in the Old Testament to explain and justify the kingdom of Deseret. Not encumbered by this pre-existing exegesis, the blessing of Joseph (Deuteronomy 33:13-16) can be read as a prophecy of his descendants settling in the Andes.

New Testament criticism, is at the periphery of RLDS progressive historiography. When text critical methods are addressed at all, they are assailed, as in Roberts’ early works, as foundationally flawed for their a priori rejection of the supernatural. Instead, the Book of Mormon stands as a substitute for Higher Criticism and its successors. Whereas before 1830 the question of Pentateuchal authorship may have been an open one, we now know through the revelations received by Smith that Moses was its sole author.

But more than proof-texting, cult archaeology and a greater interest in the Pacific, what marks RLDS progressive thought as distinct from contemporaneous LDS chronica is a different understanding of progress, one that sees it as crossing dispensations and cumulative in character. Revelation, for instance, has been progressive, resulting in a higher quality of revelation in each

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8 Weldon, Other Sheep, 59.
10 Weldon, Other Sheep, 32.
12 Thelona D Stevens, Nephi, Son of Lehi (Independence: Foundation for Research on Ancient America, 1986), 8. That is not to suggest that RLDS conservatives always adopt the most extreme fundamentalist position regarding biblical authorship; it is, for instance, credited that the New Testament was “written by the apostles or close associates.” (Chris B. Hartshorn, A Commentary on the Book of Mormon [Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1964], 46)
successive dispensation as the limitations, cognitive and otherwise, on early prophets have ceased to be in effect. These early prophets did as well as they could for their own times, but modern revelation is superior to theirs precisely because of human progress.13 Similarly, this relentless subscription to progress leads inexorably towards a belief in a post-millennialist eschatology wherein the kingdom of heaven must emerge slowly and gradually on earth.14 One of the most significant effects of this greater commitment to progress is an increased reliance on the unique properties of the Western Hemisphere to explain the absence of progress as an operative principle in its pre-Columbian history. But that is the exception. The hemispheric dualism implicit in Mormon scripture is minimized in RLDS thought in favour of a single global history. RLDS progressives assert, for instance, that the Nephite church and the one in Palestine are the same, headed by the twelve Old World apostles.15 Similarly, there was only one Great Apostasy and one Dark Age; a single global process removed the Church from the earth in the fifth and sixth centuries.16

This is not the only way in which RLDS historiography of the Great Apostasy is distinct from LDS historical thinking. While both churches had hewed closely to the original Wesleyan historiography during the nineteenth century, beginning in 1890, the LDS re-conceptualized early Church persecution and apostasy in light of their own conflict with the US government, increasingly favouring an early date. This may have deepened the RLDS commitment to a late date, expressed in their exegesis of Revelation 11:3 in which the 1260 days should be read as 1260 years of the rule of the “abominable Church.”17 If the restoration took place in 1830, it

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14 Ibid., 105.
16 Weldon, *Other Sheep*, 126-128.
follows that the Great Apostasy took place in 570, an interpretation they are happy to
demonstrate as in accord with some Protestant thinkers who see the Lombard invasion of Italy as
the beginning of Caesaropapism.\textsuperscript{18} In contradistinction to the LDS who had considerably
upwardly revised the significance of ongoing persecution in causing the apostasy, the RLDS
asserted that the Church was faithful “for a long time” after Christ and apostasized due to wealth
and other worldliness, not persecution.\textsuperscript{19}

But it was not enough for RLDS progressives to simply assert difference from the LDS
from its inception, Herald House had been created as a vehicle for denouncing the Utah-based
church.\textsuperscript{20} And this mission conditioned the \textit{chronicon} that the press’s authors generated. Because
the primary issue, at least according to the nineteenth-century RLDS, in the one true church’s
“second apostasy” had been polygamy, the denunciation of this practice shaped not only
narratives of the present dispensation but also all those prior.\textsuperscript{21} In the Western Hemisphere,
polygamy was a key factor in the Nephites’ apostasy. This position could be adduced from the
fact that David’s and other Old Testament figures’ adoption of plural wives caused ruin for the
ancient Israelites and from the explicit prohibition of polygamy in the New World at the Lord’s
command in the Book of Mormon.\textsuperscript{22}

Another key locus of difference not only in content but also in methodology between the
LDS and RLDS progressives is a different approach to canon. RLDS progressives’ greater proof-
texting is part of a different scriptural \textit{zeitgeist} than that in operation within Utah, namely, the
absence of a quasi-canon. The practically, as opposed to merely rhetorically, open nature of

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 87-90.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{21} Stevens, \textit{Book of Mormon Studies}, 114.
\textsuperscript{22} Russell F. Ralston, \textit{Fundamental Differences between the Reorganized Church and the Church in Utah}
Herald Publishing House, 1934), 94-95. RLDS authors also take time to contest the LDS interpretation of the Sarah-
Hagar episode. (Ibid., 164-5).
Doctrine and Covenants conspires with other factors to make the RLDS canon at once more finite and more open. “The RLDS cannot accept anything as evidence of true doctrine that it not adequately upheld in written scripture.” Irrespective of their provenance (clearly a pointed reference to the “King Follet” discourse), letters and sermons are not to be accepted as revelations if they contradict scripture. The LDS, in leaning increasingly on non-canonical sources to support their theology, is not simply problematic in that it supports false doctrine. It functions more importantly to conceal and compensate for the Lord’s denial of direct revelation: while the RLDS had received seventeen revelations in the prior century, the LDS had received just one.

Given the RLDS’ original possession of the JST (IV in RLDS terms), it should come as no surprise that Joseph Smith’s revision of the Bible considerably restructures RLDS progressive historiography. Founding prophet Joseph Smith III’s statement that the IV (while fallible like all scripture) was to be preferred to the KJV placed it as the centre of the RLDS canon. The acceptance of its Genesis narrative, in particular, as authoritative, answered many questions unambiguously, questions that LDS thinkers had, even when they reached the same conclusion, deduced from multiple sources. Whereas Skousen’s claim of rapid recent continental drift “in the days of Peleg” or that Adam and Eve had many less pious children prior to Cain and Abel is justified not only through citation of the JST but also amateur mathematics, geology and theology, the presence of this statement in scripture is sufficient to mandate the inclusion of these children in the progressive RLDS chronicon.

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23 Ibid., preface.
24 Ibid., 264.
25 Ibid., 69.
27 Ibid., 2; Thelona Stevens, Book of Mormon Studies, 10. This model of geographic change gives us a Jaredite narrative in which both the separation of continents and Deluge had taken place so recently it was necessary for them to bring all
There is another instance of noteworthy similarity between Skousen and progressive RLDS thinkers: making excuses. One should be very cautious when reading in scripture that God ordered his people to kill other human beings, either individually or as groups because God does not do that.  

1 Nephi likely records the prophet’s misinterpretation of God’s instructions concerning Laban, because, whatever the Book of Mormon might say, God could not have ordered Nephi to commit murder to obtain Brass Plates. Similarly, it is important to reread any instance where God suggests that he will destroy a person or people. God does not do this. When God suggests he is doing this, what he is actually saying is that he is removing his special protection of people, thereby permitting them to be destroyed by the wicked.

But while the need to make excuses and second-guess God is shared, the politics underpinning them are very different. Just as Skousen vests in God his support for the death penalty and episodes of genocide, one can detect an implicit liberalism in the excuses the RLDS make. In this light it is perhaps unfair to label Herald House’s 1950s stable of authors as progressives. While it is true that their engagement with history seems frozen, relative to the LDS in 1915, there is a way in which the reverse is true. Unlike other churches in which the Fundamentalist-modernist debate took place in the 1920s, there was no decisive institutional victory for the modernists; instead, “contention,” an unambiguously bad thing in the LDS worldview, was suppressed and the conflict broken up. The RLDS, on the other hand, had followed the trajectory of mainline Christianity, continuing to adapt their doctrines to keep pace of the animal and plant species they did. America had to begin as an utterly blank slate to fulfill its purpose as the promised land and this history had to commence in the immediate wake of the confounding of tongues. (———, Book of Mormon Studies, 42, 46; ———, The Book of Remembrance, 4). In a similar case, origins of secret combinations and writing are settled, appearing as they do in JST Genesis 5. (———, Book of Mormon Studies, 149; ———, The Book of Remembrance, 1)

28 Hartshorn, A Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 25.
29 Ibid., 26.
30 Ibid., 44.
31 Stan Larson, Introduction to The Truth, the Way, the Life by Brigham H. Roberts (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), lix.
with the changing doctrines of liberalism and had done so less problematically than most following the 1926 showdown that resulted in a greater concentration of the power to shape the Church’s destiny in the hands of the prophet, allowing questions like evolution to be settled autocratically.\textsuperscript{32}

In the 1930s and 40s, at the very time the LDS was distancing itself from these values, the RLDS came to embrace the new liberal ethos of collectivism and experiments in collective economic organization to a degree unprecedented since Joseph Smith III’s decision to place a moratorium on the practice of the United Order.\textsuperscript{33} An increasing appreciation of pluralism and other elements of the New Deal reformulation of liberal ideology similarly crept into the Church, especially the “social gospel,” causing the RLDS, outside of their engagements with the academy, to follow an almost stereotypical ideological evolution as a liberal church.\textsuperscript{34} This coalesced under the leadership of prophets Frederick M. Smith and Israel A. Smith in a renewed emphasis on the idea of Zion as the centre of Mormon experience but linked to a vision geographical and more ideological in character.\textsuperscript{35}

It is no surprise, then, that the idea of Zion plays the role it does in shaping the \textit{chronicon} of RLDS progressives. Human history is really just a series of attempts with many near misses of the Lord’s chosen peoples attempting to become “Zionic.” The early Church in Palestine and the Nephite golden age are obvious examples of these near misses; both naturally entailed


\textsuperscript{33} Howard, \textit{The Reorganization Comes of Age}, 35-41; Smith, \textit{Writings of President Smith}, 2:246.


communitarian economic schemes, but only the city of Enoch ultimately became Zionic.\textsuperscript{36} Unlike the LDS, the Reorganization does not conflate Zion with the Western Hemisphere or the Promised Land.\textsuperscript{37} Instead, it is to be understood as the area at 39 degrees North, between 10 and 17 degrees West, according to a \textit{Times and Seasons} article from 1844, roughly the area from Ohio to Kansas. Temples can only be built in this Zionic strip and their building elsewhere is part of the heresy of the LDS, as is the physical distance from their largest body of adherents and lack of interest in an immediate return to the Midwest.\textsuperscript{38} The failure to build Zion does not just explain the schism in the present; it can be used to structure the early history of the current dispensation. The failure of the Church to build a temple in Missouri caused its prophet to die, its quora to be disorganized and its revelations repealed.\textsuperscript{39} The exodus to Utah can similarly be understood through latter-day scripture pertaining to Zion. Doctrine and Covenants 64 speaks of cutting rebellion out of the land of Zion and this is the task that Young unwittingly accomplished for God.\textsuperscript{40} And the peaceful and successful return of the Reorganization is not just obvious an obvious fruit of the true church but the fulfillment of doctrine and Covenants 98:4 and 101:18.\textsuperscript{41}

This Zion, in keeping with the general liberalism that informs RLDS thought, exhibits a new pluralism. Like American liberals generally, RLDS progressives grope haltingly towards an anti-racist consensus between the 1920s and 60s.\textsuperscript{42} Although not unanimous in this regard, RLDS progressives generally hold the position that the darkness of the Lamanites is not to be understood in a racial sense.\textsuperscript{43} Conversion to Mormonism is to be understood as erasing all

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{38}Ralston, \textit{Fundamental Differences}, 223, 226, 230; Weldon, \textit{Other Sheep}, 134.
\textsuperscript{39}Stevens, \textit{Book of Remembrance}, 234.
\textsuperscript{40}Ralston, \textit{Fundamental Differences}, 50.
\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 49, 53, 69, 230, 235.
\textsuperscript{42}Greenberg, “Twentieth-Century Liberalisms,” 60.
\textsuperscript{43}Hartshorn, \textit{Commentary on the Book of Mormon}, 43.
racial identity, Gentile, Jewish, Lamanite or other.\textsuperscript{44} Upon conversion, all non-covenanted people are Gentiles, all covenanted people are Israelites.\textsuperscript{45} The idea of the elect is similarly shorn of any elements detracting from human choice.\textsuperscript{46} Within this voluntarist framework, the basic concept of a chosen people is by no means abandoned. Since the Deluge, God has always worked through a people, not because He favours any individual or group but because this is simply the most effective way of working.\textsuperscript{47}

The unravelling and crisis of this chosen people’s \textit{chronicon} in the 1960s, an unravelling that presaged their demographic decline in subsequent decades, closely paralleled the crisis in American liberalism generally. In the 1960s and 70s, there was an increasing backlash against what Americans perceived as an overly generous and unruly liberal state too entangled with the New Left; this led to a crisis of confidence on the part of liberals and an unprecedented rejection of the liberal label by large numbers of Americans.\textsuperscript{48} This not only took the form of many working class voters abandoning the Democrats’ new formulation of liberalism and embracing elements of conservatism but also many intellectuals abandoning liberalism for the New Left.\textsuperscript{49} As a result, the right-wing backlash of the 1970s was faced by a dispirited, cynical, disillusioned and fractured liberalism.\textsuperscript{50} But this declension narrative misses the giddy enthusiasm and idealism of the New Left, a movement characterized initially by a revolutionary optimism and utopian dreams to remake society.

Similarly, the narrative of RLDS collapse sometimes misses the extraordinary creativity, optimism and originality that gave rise to the CoC \textit{chronicon}. And, like the New Left that it

\textsuperscript{44} Stevens, \textit{Book of Mormon Studies}, 89.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 100-101; Stevens, \textit{Living Water}, 73.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., \textit{Living Water}, 117.
\textsuperscript{48} Greenberg, “Twentieth-Century Liberalisms,” 73.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 77.
parallels in its multivocality, relativism, sympathy with the subaltern and anti-imperialism, this *chronicon* was precipitated by changes in higher education and saints’ participation therein and the efforts to communicate a new elite consensus grounded in new academic discourses in the humanities. The locus of higher clergy education since 1916, Graceland College, the Reorganization’s post-secondary institution, finally received accreditation in 1960 as a degree-granting college and underwent a series of personnel and pedagogical changes befitting a liberal arts college. These changes made Graceland the focal point of a new theology that abandoned the movement’s prior claim to be the “one true church.” This took place contemporaneously with the accession of W. Wallace Smith to the office of president in 1958; shortly thereafter, Smith appointed a committee on basic beliefs headed by the most presciently liberal apostle, Henry F. Edwards. These changes, which provoked an immediate backlash, were followed by a new wave of materials from Herald House explicating the new doctrinal turn.

Early signs of these tendencies were already in evidence (as in society at large) in the progressive thought of the previous decade. It had already been established that the Book of Mormon was to be utilized not primarily as a historical document but as a doctrinal one that clarified and expanded on Christ’s message in the New Testament. Liberal universalism, a harbinger of the New Left relativism the Church would adopt, had begun to creep in as well, causing them to consider the possibility that the other Churches were not an abomination in the

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51 William D. Russell, “The Last Smith Presidents and the Transformation of the RLDS Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 3 (2008): 59. This was literally the case in that the Quorum and First Presidency members directing the change began holding meetings with theology professors from other liberal denominations to assist them in crafting their new theology.


54 Ibid., 49, 54.

55 Ibid., 58.

sight of God; perhaps even atheists and agnostics “have a testimony of Christ;” and the “great and marvelous work” prophesied in the Book of Mormon was “probably” the Restoration.

Even more conservative elements in the progressive chronicon contained the seeds of the CoC chronicon. Diego Rivera’s painting of Quetzalcoatl as a white man was to be taken seriously because of Rivera’s epistemic privilege as a member of the Indian race. Similarly, “Indian legends” that bear testimony of Christ’s mission to the New World should be understood as supplementary to the Book of Mormon.

But there was another factor, unconnected to the larger crisis of liberalism that bears examination in our attempts to grapple with both the collapse of the progressive chronicon and the denominational crisis and schism that followed. Like non-fundamentalist/Fundamentalist LDS historiography, it lacks a historiography of the present dispensation. But whereas the Leonian “eternal present” renders the lack of a recent historiography unproblematic, by the mid twentieth century, the Reorganization found itself to be problematically backward looking, not only in its engagement with authenticating scholarship, but in its engagement with its own history. While, as in the LDS, history had gone on, details of specific missionary activities and amateur biographies and other elements of Latter-day Saint literature addressing the past continued to be produced, time had lost its shape. There existed no structure to the history of the Reorganization since 1894 when the Temple Lot case supposedly proved in a court of law which church was true. A historiography rich in prophetic fulfillment described much of the nineteenth century. True scripture going to all nations was fulfilled in the publication of the

57 Smith, Restoration: A Study in Prophecy, 33, 133.
58 Hartshorn, A Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 50.
59 Weldon, Other Sheep, 8.
60 Weldon, Other Sheep, 123.
61 Ralston, Fundamental Differences, 62.
Book of Mormon. The defeat of emperor Maximilian could be seen as the fulfillment of the no Gentile Kings prophecy. The successful reception of the Book of Mormon and the persecution of its adherents fulfilled 2 Nephi 12:80; the anointing of Joseph Smith III, fulfilled the prophecy of one mighty and strong; even the adoption of polygamy and polytheism by the LDS and the sensational media coverage that followed fulfilled book of Mormon prophecies. But after 1894, history lost its shape. There was just one exception or class of exception: meaningful prophesied historical developments pointing towards the return of Christ have continued amongst God’s other chosen peoples. From the beginning of Zionist settlement, through the creation of the Palestinian mandate, the Israeli war of Independence and finally massive and successful irrigation and agriculture projects in the state of Israel, God’s action in history is clear. Similarly, after nearing extinction current birth rates indicate that as per Book of Mormon prophecy American Indians had become the country’s fastest growing demographic.

II. The Community of Christ chronicon

Although not the foremost expositor of history for New Left-influenced RLDS history, Apostle Arthur Oakman offers the most comprehensive exposition of the theology and related theories of causation that underpinned it. Central to Oakman’s worldview is the idea that praxis is superior to philosophy. In his re-description of Adam’s performance of ordinances prior to his understanding of them, he derives a crucial principle that shapes his revision of the Reorganization. Just as Adam’s performance of sacrifice preceded his comprehension of redemption, it should be understood that the ancient Israelites lived “ethnical monotheism” prior

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64 Ralston, *Fundamental Differences*, 147, 48.
65 Hanson, *Jesus Christ Among the Ancient Americans*, 54, 57.
to their construction of an explanatory theology. In Oakman’s theology, philosophies of history are a priori wrong simply by virtue of being philosophies. The meaning of history is not to be expressed philosophically, but was instead dramatized most perfectly through the life of Christ. It is through this that we understand the Gospel to be a gospel of progress because Christ’s incarnation is to be understood primarily as the growth and development of a human being who progressively overcame his limitations, making his resurrection both fact and prophecy and the messiah a “living parable.” Oakman’s worldview also rejects the peculiar doctrines of free agency and foreordination along with the branching contingencies of the Plan of Salvation. Instead, time is to be understood as dimensional, not processual. Like Nibley, his contemporary, Oakman unites principles of typology with new lay understandings of, and enthusiasm for, the cosmology developed by physicists. But unlike his approximate LDS equivalent, he does not relate this either to Hebrews or to the references to typology in Doctrine and Covenants. In fact, the terms “type,” “shadow,” and “figure” are notably absent. But this does not indicate a lack of sympathy for the LDS on his part. Embodying a new ecumenism, he chooses LDS scripture outside the Reorganization’s canon to illustrate both this idea and a newfound generosity to the LDS. According with but not citing Nibley, he suggests this is best exemplified in the Book of Abraham in which Abraham sees all of history shorn of “visible, temporal deceptions.” But Oakman’s is not an LDS-compatible theology; gone are any vestiges of a rules-bound God. Prophetic and divine action throughout time is not to be understood as an adaptation or response to the physical principles of the universe. Christ’s

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69 Ibid., 153.
70 Ibid., 118.
72 Oakman, God’s Spiritual Universe, 32.
73 Ibid., 38. More flippantly, perhaps, he also uses the Adam-God heresy to illustrate developmental, progressive theology (Ibid., 174).
atonement through sacrificing himself no longer arises from the physical necessity of blood paying for blood. Instead it is a pedagogical necessity. Although God is outside time, Christ must appear inside time in order to reveal the gospel. In this way the atonement is equally necessary but is effective not through the physics of universal exchange but instead through the necessity of praxis to illuminate any great truth. Because all of God’s actions in the world are a form of teaching through narrative, the resurrection constitutes both a lesson and a prophecy.

While joining the LDS in asserting that history is patterned, he abandons Mormonism’s monism in declaring that pattern does not inhere in the universe’s physical principles but in God’s continuous use of history to teach us. If there is repetition in history it should be understood as amplification of a crucial theme or a sign that we have misunderstood a previous lesson.

Oakman’s philosophy bears some resemblance to LDS typology in the way that events both are and refer and do so omnidirectionally through space-time, “using Noah to explicate his second advent, Jesus looked forward into the past” but this referentiality does not stem from universal but from exogenous divine properties. More importantly, this kind of typology declares itself to be polemical rather than analytical, even if it seeks to displace agency for its polemicizing from the author to God. Within this new understanding of history and scripture, Oakman offers a new definition of revelation. The purpose of revelation, he suggests, is for God to reveal some part of his plan to actors in the present so that they might assist him in shaping history for his pedagogic purposes.

These developments were part of a new self-consciousness. The foreword to Did the Light Go Out? does not just address historiography consciously. It introduces Latter-day Saints

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74 Ibid., 93.
75 Ibid., 94.
76 Ibid., 121. Oakman suggests that this manifests similarly to theme in musical and artistic compositions.
77 Ibid., 120.
78 Ibid., 30.
to the term explaining that there has been a problem in restoration historiography of the Great Apostasy, that this work is designed to address. The Church, it is explained, must escape the trap that bedevils church, national, and regional historiographies, that of parochialism. Instead, it must rise to the challenge that a true world church must meet in offering a universal history. Perhaps to offer some comfort to adherents, traditional examples of universal histories are offered in the works of Edward Gibbon and H.G. Wells. And it is clarified not all universal histories are necessarily good: Oswald Spengler and Karl Marx have offered compelling yet fundamentally incorrect ideas of universal history. It is important, then, to premise universal history on key principles and values: the worth of all persons, the importance of cooperation, intellectual curiosity and honesty, the universal application of righteousness, and the use of material things to achieve idealistic objectives. With these values in mind it becomes necessary to fundamentally reorder a chronicon based on the apostasy-restoration cycle because the question at all times that the historian of the restoration must ask is not “did God act at this time and place?” but “how did God act at this time and place?”

It should come as no surprise that in the wake of these developments, the historicity of the Book of Mormon became harder to defend. Despite a pro forma continuation of declarations that the Book of Mormon is “confirmed by archaeology” and that academic and religious opinion are converging, this was merely the backdrop for an organized retreat. It is even conceded that some recent developments in archaeology are making the Book of Mormon seem less credible

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80 Ibid., 20, 45.
81 Ibid., 45.
82 Ibid., 48-49.
83 Ibid., 12.
not more so.\textsuperscript{85} The first element of this retreat is an emphasis on how little is known. When it comes to Book of Mormon archaeology, we know that there was more than one advanced pre-Columbian civilization, that they were concentrated in the Andes and Mesoamerica and there were some signs suggestive of pre-Columbian Christianity; but it is unwise to suggest anything more.\textsuperscript{86} This minimization of the claims requiring defense continues into the present dispensation; it is argued Joseph Smith never offered any real description of the Golden Plates nor of the process by which he translated them.\textsuperscript{87} Such vagueness and distance are portrayed as intellectually responsible when it comes to New World history; a gap of over a thousand years in the written record may obscure a great deal. One need only look at the Eastern Hemisphere to see the number of peoples who rose, fell, and like the Cathars, were annihilated during that millennium.\textsuperscript{88}

While the LDS had been wrestling with scriptural criticism since the late nineteenth century, the Reorganization’s prior commitment to an increasingly outdated set of authorities placed it at a disadvantage in suddenly having to metabolize this field of study. For this reason, although part of a more ambitious program of reformulating the denominational \textit{chronicon}, we see tentative steps to assimilate its insights. Adherents were eased into ideas with which LDS members, at least at an elite level, had been wrestling for half a century. In \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, Edwards gently leads his readers down this path. To explain that the Gospels are mainly composed of material that is not firsthand, he begins with the example of Jesus’ temptation in the desert; we know this to be a secondhand account because he and Lucifer were the only


\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 354. In standard liberal fashion, this lack of information can also be blamed on conquistadors and settlers (Ibid., 95).

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 83. 349.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 61.
witnesses. From there, it can be argued that the Gospel of Mark likely contains much secondhand material, but rather than suggesting complex ideas of oral tradition, the possibility of Peter as the informant is floated. The possibility of authorial modification of key events is introduced in the resolution of discrepancies between the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain; perhaps the author of Matthew consolidated public addresses by Christ, by moving their contents into a single speech. It is also conceded that Matthew is a response to the gospel of Mark and seeks to Judaize the narrative contained therein. And although the “Q” hypothesis is never mentioned, Edwards rehearses many of its arguments regarding synoptic composition in his discussion of the different gospels, concluding with the suggestion that John is a later more agenda-driven and explicitly theological text. There remains, however, a strong underlying conservatism; the gospel writers are still understood to be the four accredited apostles. And they are individuals of upstanding character who would never “embellish the facts.” The apostles might continue to be recognized as gospel authors but the dating of gospel composition is adopted whole-cloth from the mainstream of New Testament criticism. And so it is concluded that gospel writers do indeed possess distinct rhetorical agendas but these are justified in a narrative of shifting collective apostolic priorities over time.

Although there are exceptional moments when CoC chronicon augments or elaborates its subaltern past to defend the historicity of the Book of Mormon, in general, selective concession

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90 Ibid., 11.
91 Ibid., 108.
92 Ibid., 111.
93 Ibid., 12.
94 Ibid., 351.
95 Ibid., 12, 13, 351. Even the possibly third-hand information in the Pauline and pseudo-Pauline works is to be understood as reliable because Paul was too smart and well informed to be deceived regarding the facts of Jesus’ life.
96 Ibid., 43, 297, 380; Cheville, *Did the Light Go Out?* 253.
and strategic retreat are more common responses than exegetical gymnastics. Perhaps the most courageous of all of the Reorganization’s defenses is a willingness not to always defend. It is frankly acknowledged by authors during this period that Isaiah scholarship is hugely problematic when placed alongside its prominence in both latter day and ancient American scripture. Saints should step back from attempting to resolve the problem with the data they possess and, instead, wait to learn more. These kinds of positions are possible in a discourse that goes beyond reformulating history and instead seeks to turn the page on it. In violation of the Davies axiom, CoC historical texts seek to deal with the problems of a subaltern past by declaring them irrelevant. When the question of Israelite verses Bering migrations is raised, Latter-day Saints are reminded that it is unwise to focus on this question because it distracts from everyone’s shared humanity as descendants of Adam. Similarly, the ongoing ministry of the Three Nephites has been approached incorrectly; believers should stop focusing on tales of miraculous events and turn their attention to the real issue, the extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ across time and space, the thing of which they are illustrative.

The most significant retreat – although it is a retreat not capitulation – regarding Book of Mormon historicity is the decision to comprehend it as, primarily, a nineteenth-century document. While the book might address eternal questions it must be understood as addressing them in nineteenth-century terms, coming forth, as it did, in response to the prayers of European creoles’ need to reconcile God’s universal and global ministry with the pre-Columbian history of

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97 One example of this rare phenomenon is the solution to the problem of the olive tree metaphor from the Pauline epistles somehow finding its way into the Book of Mormon. Having eschewed the idea of a secret gnosis, Cheville must argue that the otherwise unheard-of prophet Zenos must have been such an important part of pre-seventh-century Judaism that he would be so ubiquitously well-known in the first-century Levant to explain not only Paul’s familiarity with him and his olive tree metaphor but also his audience’s that they would have been able to identify his work without citation (Cheville, Scriptures from Ancient America, 70, 182).
98 Ibid., 352.
99 Ibid., 355.
100 Ibid., 136, 270.
the hemisphere, something that had troubled them since the inception of their colonies. 101 This is not because Smith was some sort of charlatan but because of a basic property of divine revelation: God grants revelation to prophets in order to solve local problems about which they are worried. 102 Prophets may “speak to our age, but they never speak of it.” They only speak of their own age because that is the context in which God grants them revelation. 103 This is because God adjusts his message both to the concerns of his prophet and to the varying degrees of spiritual sophistication and appetite of his audience. 104 The traces of Smith’s environment and of the prophet himself within scripture are not a problem but a sign of prophetic inspiration. Inspiration is God’s quickening of a prophet’s natural faculties. 105 Because God’s word cannot be expressed in words, a true prophet can only speak from the portion of the divine within himself. 106 For this reason then, the theological language and issues of 1820-1830 shape the Book of Mormon and the KJV Lord’s Prayer doxology appears in the Book of Mormon. 107

The situation to which Smith was inspired to speak was plagued with slavery, illiteracy, opposition to ecumenism and the most unfettered version of American capitalism. The Church therefore spoke to these problems and acted a forerunner to anti-racism and temperance movements that would later arise. 108 Lord Kingsborough even makes an appearance in this discussion of social contexts in a very different way than he does in the previous era; here he is depicted as a contemporary of Smith publishing his works during the same fourteen-year period

101 Ibid., 136.
102 Oakman, God’s Spiritual Universe, 56.
103 Edwards, Life and Ministry of Jesus, 24.
104 Ibid., 204.
105 Cheville, Scriptures from Ancient America, 27, 347.
106 Oakman, God’s Spiritual Universe, 48. Cheville, Scriptures from Ancient America, 28.
107 Ibid., 127, 266. This helps to explain why the term “Christ,” a Greek word, appears in the original Book of Mormon. Obviously this was placed there by Smith to make the concept conveyed understood by his audience. (Ibid., 196)
and continuing for four years thereafter. In this new narrative, the non-uniqueness of Smith’s engagement with aboriginal origins is now foregrounded; when he began receiving visions, American public discourse already contained pre-scientific versions of the theories of Indian origins that RLDS progressives were still comparing a century and a quarter later. Smith intervened in a pre-existing debate and took up a pre-existing position, that of Hebrew origin in a social environment growing more interested in the “mystery” of Mesoamerican civilization. Similarly ubiquitous in Smith’s age were claims of spiritual gifts; visions and divine commissions at camp meetings were staples of the Second Great Awakening. The idea of a necessary restoration of the primitive Church arising from the Great Apostasy is similarly acknowledged as a feature of the Wesleyan historiography of the day.

Lest this be taken as an admission that there were no Nephites or Lamanites, the Book of Mormon is held up as an ideal example of this interaction between God and prophet in producing the inspired word because not only is it conditioned by Smith’s nature, audience, and the circumstances to which he was responding, but is similarly conditioned by the nature, audience and circumstances of Mormon, Moroni, Nephi and the other prophets whose words it attempts to convey. Inspiration does not lead to accurate history as much as it leads to instructive history. Like Smith a millennium and a half later, Moroni when faced with the ancient Jaredite record, reshaped the text based on his concerns as a fifth-century Nephite, projecting his hopes for a

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110 Ibid., 96, 100, 107-13. The two civilizations model is similarly acknowledged as already under discussion.
112 Ibid., 23-26. Already present in Smith’s movement, their move to a more central position in Mormon thought is credited to Sidney Rigdon and his followers’ Campbellite background. (Ibid., *The Story of the Church*, 253) Revelations concerning the importance of immersion adult baptism are similarly contextualized and the divine commission to convert unconverted Indians recognized as an entailment of the latter day saints Puritan past. (Ibid., 28, 88)
113 Cheville, *Scriptures from Ancient America*, 176.
future restoration, lamentation of a lost golden age, moralizing regarding civic righteousness and
the traumatic experience of the Battle of Cumorah.\textsuperscript{114}

These discussions of Smith’s relationship to the text are offered not in defense of its
historicity but to redefine Smith’s prophetic ministry, reconciling mainstream historical
knowledge of him with his continued status as prophet. The Lord chose him because his youth
and openness made him a good candidate for allowing novel ideas to appear through revelation.
But these revelations were unfortunately coloured by his lack of understanding of history,
sociology and theology, which were, at least at the beginning of his career, part of a general lack
of cognitive sophistication, profoundly limiting what God could communicate through him.
Furthermore, he and his followers made the mistake of generalizing the revelations they received
to the world at large. “They forgot to note that any prophet is always conditioned by his time
and his own self as he stands in the divine light.”\textsuperscript{115} As for Smith, “sometimes he was unwise,
sometimes he was misunderstood.”\textsuperscript{116} An example where it was Smith and not his audience
doing the misunderstanding was the interpretation of the idea that many “plain and precious
things” had vanished from scripture. Smith mistook alteration of the text of the Bible for
changing interpretive contexts that obscured original meaning.\textsuperscript{117}

Smith is not the only prophet to receive this treatment. Nephi and Jacob, the two
founding Nephite prophets, for instance, misunderstood their Lamanite brethren. Their stated
belief that skin colour reflects the soul was “self-centered and unfounded” and their parochial
and legalistic Judaism that caused them to dismiss the Lamanites too early and believe them to

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 289.
\textsuperscript{115} Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 240.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 233. An instance clearly falling into the former category was his wrong decision to destroy the press of the
Nauvoo Expositor (Davis, \textit{Story of the Church}, 335).
\textsuperscript{117} Cheville, \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 39.
be “cut off from the presence of the Lord.” Even Jesus is subjected to this treatment. He too “spoke in the thought forms and literary style of his time,” like all prophets in order to be understood. Like any good prophet in his public sermons, Christ “tended to be influenced by the immediate problems of members of the audience.” Not just his words but his actions were conditioned by the need to communicate to an audience who understood salvation as corporate rather than individual. It is therefore unreasonable to conclude that Jesus actually advocated any kind of permanent ban on divorce. Instead, his statements are to be understood as observations rather than commandments, offering local solutions to the problem of a society in which women had minimal earning power. In this light, differences in prophetic messages over time should be understood as God adjusting His self-revelation to the progressively growing spiritual sophistication and appetite of His audience.

These radical reformulations of the subaltern pasts of the RLDS are undertaken not to adopt a more sustainably defensible theory of scriptural historicity. Instead, exponents of the CoC *chronicon* encourage their readers to see changes to the faith’s historical narrative as ancillary bordering on irrelevant. Again, violating the Davies axiom, they argue that the Book of Mormon must be evaluated on the basis of its teachings not its historicity. And the basis of this validation is to be Oakman’s theology of praxis: like the IV, “the Book of Mormon has the right to be validated in the business of living.” This is the basis on which other religions’ scriptures

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118 Ibid., 172-73.
119 Ibid., 136.
121 Ibid., 65.
122 Ibid., 227-8.
123 Ibid., 204.
124 Ibid., 355.
125 Cheville, *Scriptures from Ancient America*, 47, 53.
are assessed and Mormons have the right to the same treatment, being judged by their embodiment of their faith’s teachings.\footnote{Ibid., 63, 367; Oakman, \textit{God’s Spiritual Universe}, 55.}

The malaise that they sought to address did not arise, in their view, from the incorrect historical thinking of their congregants but, instead, from a more fundamental impulse motivating it, a dangerous conservative legalism.\footnote{Cheville, \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 265.} In the 1960s and 1970s Herald House authors exhorted latter day Saints not to repeat the errors of the Jews of the apostolic age by reading scripture in an overly legalistic fashion. To do so endangers the Church by locking it in a nineteenth-century rather than a dynamic and universal mindset.\footnote{Ibid., 355.} Seeking to reinvest the present dispensation, post-Temple Lot, with shape and a historiography, this message was coupled with reassurance that progress was on the side of the Saints. In both the Book of Mormon and New Testament, the same forces of progress ultimately eroded the forces of legalism for Nephites and Judeans alike.\footnote{Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 155; Cheville, \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 353.} Legalism ultimately gives rise to unnecessary complexity, as it did in ancient Judea, and Saints are encouraged to note that the theology of the Book of Mormon is far simpler than that generated by any of its legalistically inclined denominations. Ultimately legalism must be abandoned in order to become a truly progressive Church that grows in its knowledge of God.\footnote{Ibid., \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 353; Edwards, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 353.}

If not historically or legalistically, then, scripture is to be interpreted thematically. The primary message of the New Testament, in chronicling the life of Jesus, is to show how to live righteously.\footnote{Edwards, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 322, 363.} Unfortunately, even amongst his most devoted followers, this message was immediately misinterpreted. Although he did his best to warn people that his return would not be
imminent, this belief in an imminent parousia, exemplified in the writings of Paul, harmed Christianity by distracting the church from this message and encouraging an unhelpful otherworldliness.\(^{132}\) Likewise, the Book of Mormon has an important message from which readers should not be distracted, that scripture is not closed or finite, and that Jesus is concerned with all people at all places and times.\(^{133}\) The IV receives similar treatment, being repurposed from its position of filling in blanks in the early scriptural narrative and harmonizing it with Mormon doctrine, to instead be read for the purpose of showing the eternal nature of divine sonship that each person individually recapitulates.\(^{134}\)

If the Book of Mormon receives some rough treatment during this time, that suffered by the IV is arguably harsher. Like the revelations that began during this period to be consigned to Doctrine and Covenant’s historical appendices, the IV is not so much denied as subordinated, based on the idea that we can hierarchize both canonical texts and sections thereof.\(^{135}\) Edwards’ new introduction to the 1970 edition takes off from this point based on an exegesis of Paul that prophets enjoy varying degrees of inspiration at different times in their careers, manifested in different portions of their corpora.\(^{136}\) This allows him to draw readers attention to the following points: Smith did not produce the document as a medium or seer, he revised his revisions multiple times, and there is evidence that the document is at best hurried and at worst incomplete.\(^{137}\) Writing in the 1990s, Edwards further extends this argument and states pointedly

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 343, 345. Of course we can excuse Paul for this; like any prophet, his experience of revelation was profoundly locally conditioned. (Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 57)

\(^{133}\) ———, \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 75; Edwards, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 356.

\(^{134}\) Oakman, \textit{God’s Spiritual Universe}, 90.

\(^{135}\) Howard, \textit{The Reorganization Comes of Age}, 435; Cheville, \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 18.


that the periods during which Smith revised the Book of Genesis were those of his greatest
distraction and least inspiration.\footnote{Ibid., 36.}

Despite a retreat from the grandiosity and certainty of historical claims, the CoC
\textit{chronicon} nevertheless contains some new historical claims. Most obviously, a “social gospel”
is read into much of the past. King Benjamin of the Nephites and the Lehite prophet Jacob are re-
imagined as centring their teachings on the social gospel.\footnote{Cheville, \textit{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 181, 199.} And although the text is not made
quasi-canonical as in Nibley’s methodology, the CoC \textit{chronicon} draws encouragement from
\textit{Apostolic Constitutions} as a further amplification of early Church communalism.\footnote{Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 300.} In accord
with the ecumenical spirit of the time, social gospelers outside the Restoration are singled out
and their importance magnified in the history of other periods. While the Reformation tends to
feature multidimensional historical actors, like Luther,\footnote{Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 205.} who did both good and ill, the
exception to this are the Anabaptist “leftists” and the Quakers who are presented as
unambiguously white-hatted historical actors.\footnote{Ibid., 212-214.} The Jews of Galilee receive similar treatment
as “notoriously liberal.”\footnote{F Edwards, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 290.} At the very point when various ideas previously considered
ahistorical are being historicized, the social gospel takes on a notably consistent ahistoricity
exemplified in the assertion that the doctrine of stewardship first put forward in 1830 has been
unchanging to the present day, even if revelations throughout the following decade were
necessary to clarify its meaning.\footnote{Davis, \textit{The Story of the Church}, 153; Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 294, 306.} Much as the authors of the CoC \textit{chronicon} assert that they
know better, this displays their intuitive knowledge that if one wishes to convince Mormons of
the truth or importance of something in the present, placing it in their sacred past is an effective way to do so.

Most of the greying in the works comprising the *chronicon* is saved for those who had previously occupied the role of villain in Mormon historiography. The Pharisees and medieval Catholics are especially singled-out as groups that helped to maintain the social infrastructure of their societies against tremendous odds. After all, even Jesus recognized the righteousness of the Pharisees and appreciated their work. And while the post-Nicene Church made “peculiar compromises and undesirable alliances… the world owes Christianity more than it can ever repay.” These Church leaders did their best to keep the Christian faith alive and most alternatives proposed for saving an earlier purer Christianity would have been completely infeasible. In recognition of this, the RLDS did not just produce new historical works; it published a new official hymn book deliberately inclusive of hymns from the medieval era.

This re-evaluation of medieval Catholicism is part and parcel of a wholesale reassessment of the Great Apostasy, which begins with an explicit rejection of the previous 1260 year theory. This reassessment is based on two foundational premises: that God never turns his back on the human race and is working at all times and places; and that progress does not merely exist within dispensations but crosses them. History overall is progressive with the gradual

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145 Edwards, *Fundamentals*, 289; ———, *Life and Ministry of Jesus*, 39, 127; Even contemporary Mormon apostates receive this treatment. It must be appreciated that all of the schismatic groups that formed after Joseph Smith’s death as restoration Churches were composed of good, pious people seeking to do the will of God (Davis, *The Story of the Church*, 361). Fawn Brodie is likewise represented generously and accurately and appreciated for throwing light on the process by which Mormonism came into being (Cheville, *Scriptures from Ancient America*, 345).

146 Edwards, *Life and Ministry of Jesus*, 95. It is also noted that the deterioration of relations between Jesus’ followers and these two groups arose primarily from radical actions and provocations by the Jesus movement (Ibid., 97).

147 Ibid., 386.

148 Cheville, *Did the Light Go Out?* 91-92; Even the Church’s bad decisions still resulted in the conversion of many Northern Europeans.


150 Cheville, *Did the Light Go Out?* 87, 89.
unfolding of our understanding of nature and God.\textsuperscript{151} The Old Testament stands as a testimony to the fact that after each apostasy, a residue of the gospel was left behind, allowing the human race to continue progressing.\textsuperscript{152} Again giving shape to the present dispensation, the Missouri Zion project of the 1830s is redescribed not as a failure but the beginning of modern Zion-building.\textsuperscript{153}

The inevitable uniformitarianism that is entailed by narratives governed by ideas of progress reshapes the vestiges of the Great Apostasy that remains after this reformulation. The loss of divine revelation, and with it, certain rites and doctrines, clearly did take place in the past. More clearly still, the canon did close in the fourth century and reopen in the nineteenth.\textsuperscript{154} But the canon is the exception – in general, the apostasy is better understood as a long, multi-causal process and not an event.\textsuperscript{155} By the same token, the Restoration was a process that began with the destabilization of medieval social and economic orders and changes in the natural sciences that preceded the Reformation; political and economic change, not a single act of divine intervention, gave rise to the necessary material conditions.\textsuperscript{156} If specific material conditions must underpin certain events in history, it follows that the Restoration could similarly only have taken place in the blank slate social conditions prevalent on the Midwestern frontier.\textsuperscript{157} Those finding this view less than compelling are labeled as suffering from an RLDS cultural problem akin to legalism. The oversimplification of sacred history has plagued the Church from the beginning, ever since Mormons began describing the Saints expulsion from Missouri as arising solely from conflicts over slavery.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{151} Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 28; Oakman, \textit{God’s Spiritual Universe}, 144; Edwards, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 387; Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 43.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{153} Davis, \textit{The Story of the Church}, 184.
\textsuperscript{154} Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 183.
\textsuperscript{155} Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 57-58; Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 177.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 190; ———, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 387; Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 200-201.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 219-20.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 57.
Because the Great Apostasy was relative, incremental and non-total, merely a time of reduced light as opposed to darkness, medieval Catholicism can be recast not as a negative social force but as an ambivalent one. Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians continued to be elevated by the remnants of a once purer faith.\textsuperscript{159}

The dimming of the light of Christianity took place over a long, long time. No date can be named a single time that marked the coming darkness, several factors operated…this is not saying that all lights went out, as long as there was a Bernard of Clairvaux, a Francis of Assisi, or a Thomas a Kempis, some light was glowing.\textsuperscript{160}

Even the adulteration of earlier, purer Christianity is rationalized and humanized for Latter-day Saints. The modification of church ordinances to conform more closely with pagan rites should be understood as a well-intentioned effort to ease conversion processes.\textsuperscript{161} Mormon condemnations of clerical celibacy are retracted in favour of a new approach to asceticism, a principle predating Christianity and positively exemplified in the lives of Elijah, Paul and John the Baptist and in various styles of community from the Essenes to the Mennonites. The desire to redirect energy from the domestic sphere to the life of the Church is understandable, especially when faced with the kind of poor social and material conditions that many medieval Europeans faced. And the net contribution made by monastic communities to the outside world should be recognized.\textsuperscript{162} The real problem of asceticism is its otherworldliness, which tends to turn people away from the social gospel and associate the term “saint” with the dead instead of the living.\textsuperscript{163}

The new vilification of otherworldliness as distinct from asceticism arises out of an accelerated retreat from the eschaton. “The last days” should not be understood to refer to

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\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 66, 92, 199.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 143.
\textsuperscript{161} Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 184. Even false doctrines were ideas that made sense and solved problems. Purgatory helped to deal with real problems in people’s ideas of the justice of God, the Cult of the Saints to the problems of the remoteness of God, and elite creed-making that gave rise to these developments arose out of poor social and economic circumstances that limited literacy (Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 156, 164, 191).
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 146-51.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 153, 155, 161, 169.
specific times but instead to the culmination of God’s work.\footnote{Edwards, \emph{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 351.} Latter-day Saints are exhorted not to make the mistake of the apostles and other members of the Church who mistakenly conflated Jesus’ prophecies of the Temple’s destruction with his promises to return. Latter-day revelation regarding the Temple and its construction should not be conflated with the return either.\footnote{Ibid., 280.} This reorientation regarding the \textit{eschaton} coupled with a sufficient dismantling of the dispensational system to permit an overarching progress narrative were the conditions required for the RLDS to become a truly post-millennialist Church. Jesus is working to convert us so that he can return when a generation truly lives his gospel, and he will not come until we have built Zion, a project that is about acting with God now rather than waiting for God to act in future.\footnote{Cheville, \emph{Did the Light Go Out?} 38; Oakman, \emph{God’s Spiritual Universe}, 186; Edwards, \emph{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 346.} Pre-millennialist ideas are not merely inferior, they are pernicious and insulting to the nature of God; the idea that His main interventions are in response to human iniquity rather than human virtue is perverse and encourages inaction in the face of social crisis.\footnote{Cheville, \emph{Did the Light Go Out?} 38.}

The most total and dramatic of the reversals of the Reorganization is the development of its own “end of miracles” theory. Less mature peoples, it is suggested, receive revelations through more physical, mechanical, and unambiguous ways like the burning bush or the drawing of lots in the Book of Acts.\footnote{———, \emph{Scriptures from Ancient America}, 32-33.} But this is not how God prefers to work; He avoids if possible acting unmediated in the physical world, preferring to act through persons.\footnote{———, \emph{Did the Light Go Out?} 28.} The decline in divine healing must be understood in this light. Christ’s Palestine was like the developing world of today. Lacking modern medical technology divine healing was more necessary. But one should, as per 1Timothy 5:23, use divine healing only as a last resort, because it is not a
substitute for taking good care of one’s health.\textsuperscript{170} The gift of tongues is to be similarly understood, and used only when institutional language training is unavailable.\textsuperscript{171} This stands in marked contrast to Velt, an expositor of the progressive RLDS chronicon, who, in his autobiography, attests to having performed at least eight miraculous healings, received at least six prophetic dreams and experienced the gift of tongues at least once.\textsuperscript{172}

III. The Subaltern Speaks

It is suggested by Cheryl Greenberg and other scholars a key reason for its fragmentation was liberalism’s inability to meaningfully confront inequalities based on race and gender.\textsuperscript{173} Efforts to grapple with questions of diversity and the contradictions those efforts posed was another element of the crisis of American liberalism faithfully recapitulated by the RLDS in the 1970s. Bruce Schulman describes the era from 1945 until the early 70s as the “era of liberal universalism,” in which ideas of distinctiveness were viewed as problematic.\textsuperscript{174} But by the late 1960s, it had become apparent that desegregation and integration had not solved significant problems that remained in American racial politics, and the black power critique of integration as a sell-out gained both increasing legitimacy and increasing breadth in espousing a more comprehensive cultural nationalism.\textsuperscript{175} Whereas this produced fissures between liberal universalists and cultural nationalists within African American activism, cultural nationalism

\textsuperscript{170} Edwards, \textit{Fundamentals}, 223, 228.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 249. This is coupled with a declining belief in sacramental magic. Poor baptismal practices associated with the Great apostasy should not be understood as previous generations have, as stemming from incorrect procedure or lack of full immersion, but instead from lax standards in reviewing baptismal candidates. (———, \textit{Life and Ministry of Jesus}, 198; Cheville, \textit{Did the Light Go Out?} 81, 91, 126)
\textsuperscript{173} Greenberg, “Twentieth-Century Liberalisms,” 78.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 60-62.
was more thoroughly imprinted on Chicano, and for our purposes, more importantly, Native American activism which came of age during this time.\textsuperscript{176}

While the Chicano movement embraced cultural nationalism early, Indian activists had sat out the pro-integration civil rights era, their 1960s discourse already premised on a neo-traditionalist discourse that exalted distinctiveness.\textsuperscript{177} This discourse also cut against pan-Indian organizing and political expression, which emerged only at the end of the decade with the formation of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Alcatraz occupation.\textsuperscript{178} As with other movements in the 1970s, pan-Indian activism developed a stronger ritual and cultural component with the return of the Sun Dance, originally a specifically Lakota ritual with similar practices in other Plains groups that transformed, in this period, into a portable, Anglo-America-wide indigenous practice.\textsuperscript{179} By the mid 1970s, a national “Indian movement” had crystallized.\textsuperscript{180} And it is during this time that the idea of a normative, pan-Indian worldview conclusively moved from the discourse of marginal renewal movements and the romantic fantasies of Euro-Americans to a majority belief amongst indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{181}

This coincided with the acceleration of the demographic decline of liberal Protestantism as churches lost congregants not just to atheistic secularism but to a resurgent evangelical movement and the spiritual eclecticism represented in the New Age, itself a resurgence of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 64.
\item \textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 134, 137.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 177.
\item \textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 355; Sam D. Gill, \textit{Mother Earth: An American Story} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 137, 147.
\end{itemize}
nineteenth-century Seeker movements and their implicit eclecticism.\textsuperscript{182} A third element that coincided to confer an unprecedented (at least since the 1920s) multivocality on the historical writing published by Herald House was a development within the academic historical profession: the granting of epistemic privilege/immunity to subaltern voices. Chakrabarty’s subaltern pasts are an extension of a social process that originated in the emergence of Women’s Studies, Black Studies and other new disciplines within universities during this period of change within the RLDS. The basis on which these disciplines initially asserted their authority was neither methodological nor theoretical, although they would later make significant contributions on these fronts and recast their epistemic legitimacy accordingly. Initially, the capacity to make knowledge contradictory of other disciplines in the social sciences inhered in the membership of their practitioners in the subaltern groups they investigated. Early practitioners were understood as having privileged knowledge of the groups on which they reported and were, as a result, granted a kind of epistemological immunity, especially by scholars with New Left sympathies.\textsuperscript{183} This enabled a new interaction with the subaltern pasts of indigenous Americans and the descendants of slaves on their own epistemic terms. As part of this \textit{zeitgeist}, RLDS hierarchs made obvious use of this standard in applying very different standards to publications grounded in the testimony of colonized peoples.

Grounded as it is in the oral testimony of Polynesian and other Pacific Islander converts, F. Edward Butterworth’s \textit{Pilgrims of the Pacific} is able to make far more grandiosely magical claims than even any progressive RLDS text could.\textsuperscript{184} By relying on in-person interviews with elders from oral tradition cultures, Butterworth is able not only to reconstitute but also to further

\textsuperscript{182} Schulman, \textit{The Seventies}, 92, 96, 98-99.
elaborate much of the progressive *chronicon*. Bancroft and Josiah Priest are back in with their nineteenth-century Israelite migration theories now validated by a subaltern voice.\(^{185}\) By conducting interviews around the Pacific Rim, Butterworth is able to argue that the golden plates were written in the ancient alphabet of the Polynesians, a jumping-off point for him to argue that this was also the alphabet of Australia, Easter Island and Babylon.\(^{186}\) His philological work is matched by his iconographic studies; if the term “peaked” in descriptions of the Jaredites’ barges can be taken to mean crescent-shaped, there are crescent shapes in Society Island petroglyphs and Polynesian art that, according to oral testimony, depict the no-longer-used barges of pre-contact Easter Islanders.\(^{187}\) And the progressive *chronicon* is dusted off to bolster testimony that the first Europeans to arrive in Polynesia found among its populace a solemn understanding of Christian theology and ritual practice, later intentionally destroyed by colonial regimes.\(^{188}\)

All this supports an extraordinarily ambitious elaboration of the Book of Mormon narrative in which the Jaredites function as a vanguard of a divinely-planned global population diffusion that explains the rise of various civilizations from Peru to Madagascar to the Indus Valley.\(^{189}\) Again supported by the oral testimony of unspecified persons, Butterworth attests to Tahitian and Easter Islander use of Babylonian naming customs, belief in the Deluge (as well as many pagan Babylonian myths) and commemoration of the Jaredite voyage. Perhaps this is why the Book of Ether has such a Polynesian cadence and phraseology.\(^{190}\) The involvement of the Jaredites in Pacific colonization does not in any way exclude the importance of Hagoth,

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\(^{185}\) Ibid., 19.

\(^{186}\) Ibid., *Pilgrims of the Pacific*, 48.

\(^{187}\) Ibid., *Pilgrims of the Pacific*, 58, 62. Butterworth carries the crescent shapes even further, arguing that all iconographic similarities amongst Polynesians, Easter Islanders and Pacific Northwest Indians is indicative (Ibid., 102, 105).

\(^{188}\) Ibid., 107, 115. Eighteenth-century Easter Islanders and Hawaiians were especially unanimous in their pre-colonial monotheism (Ibid., 116).

\(^{189}\) Ibid., 42-43.

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 23, 29, 56, 115, 117.
commemorated by his Tahitian informants as Fatonga, a widely traveled messenger who preached the doctrine of the trinity.\textsuperscript{191} Using similar philological reasoning for his identification of Hagoth in oral tradition, Butterworth is also able to find traces of Lehi’s voyage through the Pacific memorialized in the Samoan ancestor hero Leai. Furthermore, because Leai was white, it can then be reasoned that the allegedly white culture hero in Maori oral tradition must also represent him.\textsuperscript{192}

Naturally, the best voices for this perspective are the unmediated voices of living, breathing Lamanites. In the 1970s Herald House published two works by Little Pigeon, a Native American grandmother active in AIM. Although records of her involvement in the RLDS are scant, she appears to have persuaded the Centre Stake organization of the Church to lend its offices to the group in 1974. The loan of office space went sour and ended in an AIM occupation that was forcibly terminated.\textsuperscript{193} Despite the office space debacle, she remained in the good graces of RLDS hierarchs because, in the terminology of Thomas King, she was exactly the Indian they had in mind in that she confirmed one of the most important romantic beliefs about Native Americans, that there was a common belief of all tribes that at creation, the Great Spirit had given them a special task and told them how to live in harmony with the earth, taking only what is necessary.\textsuperscript{194}

Little Pigeon is explicit in her subscription to an alternative Native American epistemology that recognizes “Indian history” as contingent upon “Indian faith.”\textsuperscript{195} In her first book co-written with her husband Grey Owl, it is asserted the authors’ membership in the

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 90, 92.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 97.  
\textsuperscript{193} David Howlett, e-mail message to author, 23 October 2010.  
aboriginal race confers upon them a greater epistemic authority than any academic.\textsuperscript{196} Little Pigeon and Grey Owl’s research therefore has discovered various things that do not appear in the history books, including ongoing pre-Columbian contact between Central and South America, specific ancient prophecies of the European invasion and an ancient time of constant warfare ended by the Great Spirit who brought ruin upon the peoples but promised to restore their greatness in future.\textsuperscript{197} The number of people to whom these prophecies apply continues to grow as more myths are unearthed, myths suppressed by Spanish missionaries who refused to believe the unanimous chorus of Pacific Islander and Amerindian voices that they had been visited by Jesus.\textsuperscript{198} This is not to suggest a recantation of the RLDS position that an Israelite migration does not exclude a people’s journey across the Bering Strait. Little Pigeon’s framework actually accounts for this better than most, at least rhetorically. Whereas many natives descend from those who came via the Bering Strait, she and Grey Owl descend from those who came from Israel.\textsuperscript{199} The Bering migrants are known as the Coyote people, whereas those who came over the sea are Serpent people; it is well known that the Coyote and Serpent are enemies and that in ancient times the Turtle led the Serpent people north.\textsuperscript{200}

Little Pigeon’s knowledge is not just a matter of intuition or idle speculation that one might associate with the term “Indian faith;” it comes from “our records.” This record had a variety of forms, codices, wampum and oral tradition. Evidence for this written record can be found in the story of an Oneida who in 1840 saw that the laws described in the Pentateuch were the same as those of his ancestors and spoke out against the missionaries. He believed that they had stolen his people’s book. Another testimony told that the Chipewayan people buried a book

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{197} Little Pigeon, \textit{Children of the Ancient Ones}, 216.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{199} Grey Owl and Little Pigeon, \textit{Cry of the Ancients}, 107.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 72.
\end{flushright}
with one of their chiefs after they had forgotten the art of reading. These accounts supplement
the uncontroversial testimony that so many codices were burned by the Spanish conquistadors.\textsuperscript{201}

Codices are written records but so too is wampum, which Little Pigeon explains is actually a
complete written language, although more difficult to read because of its undated event
sequencing. Damage to interpretive traditions means that even those groups that retain all of their
wampum such as the Onondaga, have lost major portions leading to gaps of many centuries in
their record.\textsuperscript{202} Lest any mainstream historian or other white person believe they have an
understanding of the wampum or of indigenous American history it is crucial to point out that
wampum has never been read in the presence of an outsider, yielding a hopelessly incomplete
picture for anthropologists.\textsuperscript{203}

Given the problems associated with written records, it is fortunate that the accuracy of
oral tradition is assured. “Native tradition” prevents any false teachings from ever being passed orally. Based on these oral records, we know that almost all tribes practice some form of the
Mosaic covenant with varying degrees of strictness, but all, at the very least, maintained its
gender segregation and menstrual impurity rules.\textsuperscript{204} Scholars’ failure to recognize Indian fidelity
to Judaism has caused them to misinterpret indigenous religion and mistake intercessory entities
like the Coyote for divinities when, in fact, indigenous people are monotheistic.\textsuperscript{205} These oral
records have not just helped to maintain Nephite customs but also maintain records of the Book
of Mormon narrative, such as the ancient Chickasaw and Oneida legends telling of their people

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 144; Little Pigeon, \textit{Children of the Ancient Ones}, 134.
\textsuperscript{202} Grey Owl and Little Pigeon, \textit{Cry of the Ancients}, 29, 31, 35.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 139. Some groups were more comprehensive such as the Ohio Indians who practice circumcision and
taught their children of the Deluge. (Ibid., 140)
\textsuperscript{205} Little Pigeon, \textit{Children of the Ancient Ones}, 129.
being guided by the Liahona.\textsuperscript{206} Like Butterworth, Little Pigeon utilizes her privileged epistemic position to rehabilitate selectively not only Bancroft but also Ethan Smith.\textsuperscript{207}

Indian secretiveness and white creole disrespect are insufficient by themselves to account for the rupture between her past and that of mainstream academic opinion. This discrepancy is, instead, mainly accounted for by the large-scale suppression of important archaeological evidence. She laments the fact that people make little of the Israelite currency from Hosea’s reign found outside Detroit in 1882, or the 1885 discovery in Tennessee of a stone written in Hebrew dedicating it to the land of Judah.\textsuperscript{208} These discoveries are just the thin edge of the wedge. Much more seriously, the wampum of most indigenous people has been maliciously stolen and cannot be recovered. Stone tablets and other artifacts given over to museums have mysteriously disappeared and a multitude of ancient American relics with Hebrew inscriptions are being deliberately suppressed by wealthy private collectors.\textsuperscript{209}

Although for the opposite purpose, Little Pigeon echoes Bautista in arguing substantial representation of Nephites among the Serpent people, concentrated overwhelmingly in the present-day US. The continuation of Nephite lineages as a minority group after 421 helps to explain the survival of Nephite customs and knowledge.\textsuperscript{210} It is this minority who led a migration from the south into the present-day United States between 300 and 900 as Mesoamerican society deteriorated.\textsuperscript{211} Concentrated amongst the Chickasaw, Delaware, Hopi, and most importantly, Iroquoian speakers, these Nephites can be found today in the turtle and

\textsuperscript{206} Grey Owl and Little Pigeon, \textit{Cry of the Ancients}, 56, 65.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 118, 144. Smith’s writing is generally not mentioned as legitimate or important by those defending the historicity of the Book of Mormon because it was widely credited as evidence against its status as an ancient document. Especially in the nineteenth century, much anti-Mormon literature argued that the Book of Mormon had been inspired by/plagiarized from Ethan Smith’s work. Even Roberts appears to have given the theory credence later in his career. (Richard L. Bushman, \textit{Believing History} [New York: Columbia University Press, 2004] 125-29.)
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 102, 126.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 34, 49, 106, 126.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 79, 152.
serpent (dedicated to Quetzalcoátl) clans of indigenous groups throughout the Americas. And although they could have built cities and temples, they have chosen not to in recognition of the evil that took place in the metropolises of Mesoamerica.  

Like so many liberal efforts to save a religious tradition, Little Pigeon’s approach ultimately served to reinforce the decline of the Reorganization not just amongst European creoles, but amongst its indigenous adherents. A particularly corrosive claim in this respect is her assertion of the non-exclusivity of Joseph Smith’s restoration. In ancient Mexico both Nezahualcoyotl and Ixtlilxochitl had sought to restore the original Quetzalcoatl cult to its original meaning so as to avoid the Spanish conquest. And this continued into the nineteenth century, when God not only sent new visions and revelations to Smith but to Wovoka and Handsome Lake whose religious movements are of equal legitimacy.

This interpretation of the ministries is not without merit. Handsome Lake is recognized as the founding prophet of a small Midwestern church that is not without parallels to Mormon churches. An early nineteenth-century millenarian prophet in Upstate New York and northwestern Pennsylvania, Handsome Lake did not begin his movement with a blank slate. The prophet Neolin, associated with Pontiac’s Rebellion and the incipient pan-Indianism of the century, had already established the idea of an ancient monotheistic pan-Indian faith worshipping the “Great Spirit.” The neo-traditionalism of Neolin established a pattern of replacing indigenous ideational and ritual practices with European ones through the discourse of restoring the traditions of a lost indigenous golden age.

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214 Little Pigeon, *Children of the Ancient Ones*, 142.
It is in this context that Handsome Lake began receiving a series of revelations/visions from the Great Spirit with specific instructions for political, economic and religious reform of indigenous communities. After two visions in 1799, the third vision of Handsome Lake in 1800 can be taken as the starting point of his movement and eventual church. The Handsome Lake tradition made similar moves to Afro-Brazilian religions in resituating both Christ and indigenous divinities and heroes within a monotheistic, moralized cosmos. Like Mormonism and other early nineteenth-century movements of the Burned-Over District, Handsome Lake’s was millenarian, communitarian, explicitly political and gradually came to exalt its prophet to an increasingly degree, within both the earthly institutions it called for and the new cosmological system it fashioned. The ministry of Handsome Lake was the same length as that of Smith but one generation prior, from 1801 to 1815, but spawned a formal church that, following his death, canonized and codified his doctrines to espouse temperance and the indigenous adoption of European gender roles.

The renunciation of the RLDS claim of being the one true church created a space for a relationship with Little Pigeon. Not only could she order and interpret Mormonism with considerable flexibility, she could also locate it within a non-Mormon framework in which Joseph Smith could join Jesus as another white prophet recognized within the framework of a pantheon of aboriginal neo-traditionalist prophets and heroes. She and Grey Owl joined the Reorganization not because they received a testimony but because the Book of Mormon was “an extra witness” to that which they already knew. Hers, ultimately, was not a chronicon that intersected ideationally with those of other RLDS members. While she might occupy the same

216 Ibid., 242, 247-48, 251.
217 Ibid., 249, 253, 267, 288. In fact, Handsome Lake’s followers built a surprisingly Zion-like settlement.
218 Ibid., 332-35.
organizational space, the centrality of history in Mormon thought would help to keep her understanding of the past in a space as marginal as Sorenson’s within the LDS. But it is telling that both individuals enjoyed esteemed careers as valued members, indicating that, like its Utah cousins, the RLDS, at least for its subaltern converts, provided a space for do-it-yourself theology and history.

Another innovation for preserving the subaltern pasts of the RLDS was a different engagement with a subaltern group. Whereas aboriginal Americans and Pacific Islanders were subject to a liberal discursive immunity when describing their subaltern pasts, the magical Mormon past could also be protected through discursive engagement with a subaltern group enjoying the opposite kind of epistemic protection. To this day, there remains in American life a strong commitment not only to shield and protect the magical worldview of children but to actively reinforce and contribute to the maintenance, not only of specific narratives but of an alternative physics of causation giving rise to them. And so it is that Herald House invested in the production of an illustrated children’s quadrilogy entitled *The Sword of Laban*, authored by Butterworth. These books could unapologetically describe for children a past that the RLDS could no longer tolerate for adults. As in his engagement with Polynesian oral tradition, Butterworth makes use of this opportunity to further burnish certain already problematic elements of the Book of Mormon.\(^{220}\)

The youthful nature of Butterworth’s audience does not exempt them from the appeal of the subaltern in authenticating the Book of Mormon past. The final and authenticating act in

Butterworth’s narrative is not the Battle of Cumorah nor is it either the sealing up or the release of the Golden Plates by Moroni. Instead, the final act in the narrative and one that authenticates it is Smith’s first mission to the Indians. After he and the Three Witnesses present the Book of Mormon to the first group of prospective indigenous converts, their chief tells him that they know this story to be true because the angel Moroni has been visiting them all along. The indianness of Book of Mormon peoples is also conveyed in the text by applying the term “tribe” and related terminology to all Lehite factions and political entities, even during the group’s first journey in Asia. The books also contain illustrations showing major Nephite buildings as Mesoamerican pyramids, a term the text periodically substitutes for “tower” or “temple.” And before giving his sermon from the pyramid, Jesus fans himself with a quetzal feather.

IV. The Community Awaits Revelation

Whether through Little Pigeon’s interventions problematizing the uniqueness of the Restoration in order to celebrate indigenous agency, or the multi-front staged retreat from earlier Mormon truth claims by liberal apologists, the developments of this period conspired to threaten the RLDS central claims of uniqueness and left its apologists asking, what is the Restoration, and what uniquely does it have to contribute? For Edwards it remains “a new awakening” of the people to Christ, but it is no longer “the new awakening.” The only claim left undamaged by the liberalization period is one located safely in the present and future. The Restoration is to be understood as a process that is ongoing and indefinitely continuous as the Church “moves

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223 A ball court is even featured in the illustration of the first meeting between Nephites and Zarahemlans. (Butterworth, *Sword of Laban* 2:30)
224 Ibid., 94, 131; ———, *Sword of Laban* 3:47.
225 Ibid., 45.
Looking ahead, Cheville suggests that the future of the Church is secure in that it will continue to move ahead “getting additional insights to share with others.” What is needed now is more prophetic light and inspiration in order to go forward and solve some problems liberals could see on the horizon. There needs to be a more “functional explanation of scripture” of the relationship between God and organic processes, a reevaluation of eschatology in light of the insights that the physical sciences bring. Ultimately, these revelations are required because RLDS liberals can clearly see the widening gap between the worldview of Herald House and that of grassroots adherents. God must be generous with this new revelation in order to address the widening breach between “liberals and legalists.”

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227 Cheville, *Did the Light Go Out?* 61; Oakman, *God’s Spiritual Universe*, 169.
228 Cheville, *Did the Light Go Out?* 255.
229 Cheville, *Did the Light Go Out?* 257.
Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The watershed revelations eagerly anticipated by the incipient Community of Christ (CoC) came in 1984. It turned out that they led not to a healing of the breach, but instead to schism. A key factor in this schism, contemporary Church hierarchs acknowledge was the reformulation of ideas of history and scripture.\textsuperscript{230} Despite the victory at the 1984 conference and the retention of over 100,000 members in today’s Community of Christ, the record of CoC thought is at best ambivalent on the question of whether Mormonism can survive without the historical core posited by Davies, especially given the rapidly aging nature of the Reorganization, whose older members, at best, incompletely accept the innovations of the 1960s and 1970s. More troubling are internal reports showing that the Church is retaining the children of its current members at a rate 60\% lower than for the generation previous.\textsuperscript{231} But the decline in the Bickertonite, Strangite and Temple Lot denominations, along with the even more rapid demographic decline of RLDS schismatics such as those presiding over the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints indicates that the indefinite maintenance of the pre-Wallace Smith church would also have been unsustainable.

In explaining the success of the LDS Church, Mauss has mobilized the “optimum tension model” developed by sociologist of religion Rodney Stark.

American society has historically sought to assimilate new religious movements or else to repress and destroy those which remained too deviant to assimilate. New religions that have survived beyond a generation or two have thus typically lost much of their distinctiveness to the process of assimilation. The Mormon religion presents an anomaly to this pattern. Since about midcentury, a partial reversal of the assimilation process can be seen in a deliberate church policy of retrenchment… the overall purpose seems to be the recovery of Mormon institutional distinctiveness which had clearly eroded during the first half of the century, and the renewal of a clear Mormon identity at the individual level… these developments

enhance the vitality and future prospects of Mormon religion by seeking for the optimum level of tension with American society.\(^{232}\)

Stark’s theory -- that religious organizations experiencing too high a level of tension with mainstream society fail due to marginalization and conflict with the mainstream, while groups that have too little tension fail due to assimilation -- seems to fit not just the case of the LDS but the RLDS as well. The convergence of the RLDS *chronicon* with that of mainstream history seems inextricable from the abandonment of its claim to be the one God-approved church, and together these developments have served to slacken the tension between church and society.\(^{233}\)

Still, this may be the best of a bad lot. Because Mormonism is so yoked to distinctive ideas about the historical past, to stand pat would have entailed increasing tension as the progressive RLDS *chronicon* and mainstream history continued inexorably to diverge. Continued RLDS/CoC commitment to identifying more strongly with the views of liberal, mainline Christians would only have intensified this sense of divergence. Ultimately, the only hope of the RLDS has been to attempt the very project in which they remain engaged to this day: rendering the relationship between the mainstream historical narrative authenticated by academic history and the subaltern pasts of Mormonism irrelevant to their members through efforts to decouple questions of truth from questions of historicity.\(^{234}\)

But the CoC *chronicon* is exceptional is this regard; the retreat to a Stoic approach of situating the Book of Mormon past outside of time is, with the exception of the work of BYU philosopher James Faulconer, highly marginal within the rest of the Mormon *oeicumene* and

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sometimes still provocative of excommunication. In the vast majority of instances, Mormons establish some relationship between scriptural truth and historicity. And, naturally, certain approaches seem to be more popular and sustainable than others. In a sense, each of the chronica this project has examined has not only entailed fashioning a relationship of one kind or another between a Mormon and a mainstream history but also establishing and maintaining methodologies, epistemologies and/or temporal phenomenologies necessary to sustain that chronicon.

Fundamentalist/fundamentalist-inspired chronica are the most easily defended, although not the most popular, though the ascendance of Skousen’s chronicon, may necessitate a revision of this opinion. Still, at present, Mormon fundamentalists appear to be enjoying a resurgence within Mormonism and elements of their chronicon are even gaining traction amongst Protestant evangelicals. Fundamentalists, despite high levels of tension with mainstream America, remain demographically small but are experiencing no apparent decline. Moreover, such faiths are also enjoying an unprecedented popularity and acceptability in the eyes of mainstream America, with TV shows like Big Love and Sister Wives offering sympathetic portrayals of Mormon polygamy.

One of the elements of these groups’ success, I would suggest, is their conspiracy thinking and consequently inverted ideas of epistemic legitimation that it produces. If it can be reasoned that those in authority are engaged in a conspiracy to mislead and that this vast secretive collusive network spans the nation’s academic, political and media elite, the very divergence of subaltern pasts from the mainstream grants them legitimacy. Today, one in six Americans is a “truther,” 30% are “birthers,” and only 13% believe in Darwinian natural

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Conspiracy thinking has become so paradoxically mainstream that Fox News has been the most trusted broadcaster in America for the better part of a decade. In this light, it does not seem a stretch to see Skousen’s *chronicon* achieve a popularity it never attained in his lifetime.

In the Fox News universe, the most recent and mainstream cultural centre of American conservative conspiratorial thought, there is a ready audience for Ogden Kraut’s approach to academic authority. The very affiliation of data with mainstream academic institutions and processes can be, in and of itself, delegitimizing. Not only are many of its hosts hostile; the network’s news department tends to present stories that delegitimate peer review and other elements of academic processes of authentication. For many to whom conspiracy reasoning already appeals, a kind of inverse legitimation can take place: if an opinion is popular and consistent with one’s other beliefs, its condemnation or dismissal by a process like peer review may actually lend it a greater credibility or factuality. The *chronica* of Kraut and Skousen are able to retain a legitimacy because of their oppositional stance not only to the conclusions of academic history but the methodologies and epistemology that give rise to them. Whereas narratives of the past reliant upon claims of academic or other mainstream authorities might be undermined by the rupture between their subaltern past and that produced by the academic practice of history, subaltern pasts reliant on conspiratorial thinking can actually gain greater

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237 “Fox most trusted news channel in US, poll shows: Survey showing approval rating of more than 50% for rightwing network vindicates its drive for partisan audience,” last modified 27 January 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/27/fox-news-most-popular.

legitimacy by virtue of this rupture, provided their narrative indicts the producers of academic history as part of the conspiracy.

Aside from the “University of Alexandria,” there is no black-hatted conspiracy sustaining the conservative LDS *chronicon* nor its more intensely typological elaboration by Nibley; so one must look to different explanations for the continuing viability of these LDS subaltern pasts. Ultimately, I find Leone’s reasoning compelling: the rupture between subaltern past and mainstream past is irrelevant because the experience of time engendered by temple work and other elements of ritual practice prevent the construction of the dialectic in the first place. Because distinctions between the past and present are elided, Mormons whose life worlds are centred on these practices do not possess subaltern pasts, only a subaltern present. Furthermore, with the de-spatializing elements of the global proliferation of “the temple,” Mormons are on the leading edge of adapting to the proliferation of global capitalism, effacing here-there differences as effectively as now-then differences. The standardized chapel and temple designs to which Shipps speaks are more coercive and precise than those of any restaurant chain.239

I am reminded of Enrique Florescano’s *Memory, Myth and Time in Ancient Mexico*. Citing Paul Kirchoff, Florescano describes a very different time and place than that inhabited by contemporary LDS members, namely the fifteenth-century Mexico Valley. But like contemporary Mormons, Florescano’s Nahuas lived in a world in which people experienced a high level of cognitive and social order because “the fusion of sacred space and time was accomplished in ritual, that linked all contemporary experience to a “perfect primordial time... [that permitted] no differences between past, present and future, for those temporal categories, so

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distinct to us, form a single block.” This ritual practice also implicated society as a whole in the act of creation which, due to the collapse of temporal categories, was continuous and ongoing.²⁴⁰

The experience of an ordered, profoundly coherent worldview that effaces the creative acts of its participants on which its maintenance is premised echoes Leone’s description of LDS temporal phenomenology that pairs a do-it-yourself theology of constant ad hoc construction and maintenance with the sense of an ordered would in which no contradictions are being encountered. The inability of the LDS Mormons he studied to know chaos is, after all, the primary refrain of his study. Similarly, the elision of differences between past, present and future combined with the fusion of space and time into a single category in which congregants are engaged in creation strongly echoes both Shipps’ and Leone’s descriptions of the uniformity Mormonism imposes on all space-time, the collective participation in creation through the recapitulation of creation/Restoration implicit in temple work, and the collapse of symbolic and actual into a single category through ritual practice.²⁴¹ However different the life worlds of fifteenth-century Mexicans and twentieth-century LDS Mormons, there does seem at least a coincidental relationship between the experience of cosmic order and a class of spatial/temporal experience based on a shared project of atemporal co-creation.

A Roman Catholic theologian once suggested to me that God can only be omniscient because He has no memory; all is now for God. By democratizing godhood through temple work, LDS Mormons are, to a significant extent, universalizing this omniscience. But this omniscience is maintained by forcing a fundamental uniformity on all time. McConkie’s, Fielding Smith’s or Nibley’s ability to know or describe the past is conditioned by their capacity

²⁴¹ Shipps, Mormonism, 123; Mark Leone, Roots of Modern Mormonism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 33.
to have it resemble the present; to do otherwise would be to construct the past as an experientially meaningful category instead of a simple abstract. The greater capacity, appeal and success of the Nibley *chronicon* stems from its creator’s capacity to expand the scope of the eternal present to encompass all that he needs to find in the past, combined with an extraordinarily creative eye for pattern that can easily find points of resemblance linking new objects, episodes and ideas that he encounters to things that are already part of his aeon. Once apprehended, these new ideas, objects and episodes are annexed to his aeon as it expands outwards into a universe of infinitely complex yet paradoxically identical dispensations.

This is not to suggest that all times are identical for McConkie or Nibley, but instead to contend that all times in which the Church is faithful are identical. If the Church is not in a state of apostasy, the present must be located at a point in our dispensation essentially identical to the same point in all other dispensations. Only in the *chronica* of Kraut and Bautista is this not the case, yet these thinkers, too, universalize the present day to a congruent point in the other dispensations throughout space-time. But whereas the days when the church is apostate or on the edge of apostasy are event-filled, times like the present, as evinced in the ability of 4 Nephi to span a 286-year period in a single chapter, are shapeless periods of harmony. Following the Manifesto, Mormon sacred history of the present dispensation has taken on a shapelessness. There are events but they do not fit into a metanarrative; the metanarrative is suspended until an apostasy or the *eschaton*.

Mormon *chronica* that seek an accommodation between the academic practice of history and the narratives it generates and the subaltern pasts of Mormonism face a greater challenge than those supported by typological or conspiratorial thought. Theories of history that efface neither the past-present dialectic nor the mainstream academic practice of history are imperilled
on many fronts. First and foremost, because social science is not a fixed body of knowledge but instead a way of investigating the universe, the contents of academic history are in constant flux and outside of the control of those who seek to unite it with the subaltern pasts of Mormonism. This absence of mainstream historical fixity has resulted in the collapse of the progressive *chronica* of both the LDS and RLDS, as academic history defied expectations and increasingly diverged from the narratives Mormons fashioned to achieve compatibility with it. Like most partnerships not premised on mutuality, these *chronica* were ultimately betrayed, in this case by the shifting body of scholarship they sought to unite with Mormon thought.

The two progressive *chronica*, however, were not the only ones that sought to unite histories generated by social scientific practice with Mormonism. The FARMS approach offers another way forward, best exemplified in Sorenson’s *chronicon*. If one is required only to defend the Book of Mormon’s antiquity rather than its veracity, the task of producing hybrid narratives becomes more manageable. If “the law of Moses” need not refer to compliance with Levitical ritual and purity requirements but instead may refer to the maintenance of household shrines with incense and clay figurines, if the faithful practice of Nephite religion can have included human sacrifice and excluded ideas of individual conversion and free agency, a considerable flexibility can be conferred on Mormon history. This flexibility is achieved not just at the expense of the honesty, accuracy and fidelity of the Book of Mormon’s scribes, prophets and peoples. It is also completely incompatible with any kind of all-now consciousness. FARMS’ practice of history, in fact, amplifies differences between the scriptural past and the present. The 2004 edited collection, *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem* begins with an introduction that seeks to ground Mormons in the otherness of Lehi, Nephi and the other early protagonists of the Book of Mormon by offering a synopsis of mainstream scholars’ views on the lived experience of seventh
century BCE urban Judeans. Through the relentless emphasis on the fundamental alterity of the Jaredites, Nephites and Lamanites of the Mormon past, and by prioritizing claims of scriptural antiquity over nearly all other elements of Mormonism, FARMS deprives doctrines, church structures, and rituals of the eternity with which Doctrine and Covenants and mainstream doctrinal discourses appear to imbue them. The popularity of the FARMS *chronica* will, in some respects, be conditioned by the maintenance and prevalence of the Leonian experience of time among Latter Day Saints, given that the flexibility accorded its historical practice stems from such a substantial retreat from the literal veracity of scriptural reporting and the essential sameness of past and present.

Given the elite-focused, bibliocentric methodology I have chosen, the conclusions I can draw about popular Mormon belief are limited and tentative. At the very least, however, this dissertation demonstrates the range of possible narratives, theories of time, and methods of practicing history generative of Mormonism’s subaltern pasts and can offer some evidence as to their sustainability. Furthermore, given the centrality of history posited by Davies, it may make some small contribution to better describing the possible Mormonisms practiced since 1890. It may also cast our eyes, also, though even more tentatively, to the subaltern pasts outside Mormonism and encourage scholars to begin to identify some of the processes by which they are maintained.

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