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A Comprehensive Commentary of the Title Page of the Book of Mormon

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A Comprehensive Commentary
of the
Title Page of the Book of Mormon

*together with references for further study
from the General Conferences of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
the Encyclopedia of Mormonism
and other doctrinal texts by General Authorities of the Church*

Written and compiled by
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Parrish Press
Orem, Utah

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Preface

This project began as an attempt to provide my children and grandchildren something of their ancestor's love and understanding of the scriptures. I began producing volumes many years ago which I was pleased to call Paraphrastic studies. I wrote one of these studies for each of the four Gospels and the letters of Paul. Eventually, however, I began to sense that there was much that I knew about the New Testament that my "translations" could not communicate. I therefore thought to write a comprehensive commentary on the entire New Testament, beginning with Matthew and concluding with the book of Revelation. As I published each of the nine volumes, I included the paraphrastic studies, where I had them, in conjunction with the commentary for each book in the New Testament. I began this project in 2005 and completed the final volume in 2010. The whole effort was a delight to my soul.

A year before I retired from the Church Educational System, in 2003, I thought to produce an 1830 formatting of the Book of Mormon using the present text of the 1981 edition. This was a relatively easy task, given the technology available to me. I distributed these to my colleagues at the Orem Institute of Religion, members of my family, and a few other interested parties for the cost of printing and binding them. Sometime in the early spring of 2007, I was impressed to begin a verse by verse commentary on the Book of Mormon, a task that I had not presumed to attempt, inasmuch as there are no translation difficulties that abound in the Old and New Testaments. Yet, there were instances of nineteenth-century word usage and syntactic issues that I thought a commentary might help to clarify. As I began, however, I discovered that there was much more that I could communicate to my children of my understanding of the ancient record of the Nephites, material that I had gleaned as I taught the scriptures during my thirty-five year career with CES. This labor eventually produced five volumes of moderate size. As I published each segment of the commentary, I enclosed the 1830 formatting of each book in the Book of Mormon that I had devise several years before. The last volume also appeared in late 2010.

By the time that I was fully engaged with writing commentaries on both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, I had become infatuated with the idea that I might be able to expand the commentaries to include the other volumes of scripture as well. Thus, in the winter of 2010 I began writing commentaries on the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. Once I finished with the Pearl of Great Price, I began to move ahead with the book of Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament. In the late fall of 2014 I finished the last of the commentaries on the Old Testament, for a total of thirty-three printed and bound volumes. With these volumes and the others produced over the past ten years, I have completed commentary on every verse of the Standard Works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

My procedure for writing the Commentary was similar to that used in creating the original paraphrastic studies. The same reference texts were employed. For difficult words in Greek, Hebrew,

and English I resorted to the works of James Strong and other lexicographers for linguistic insight. I consider the contributions made by conservative Protestant scholarship (as recorded in the *New International Version*) and conservative Catholic scholarship (as related in the *New Jerusalem Bible*). I resorted to the considered thought of Adam Clarke, one of the most prominent and prolific commentators on the sacred manuscripts available at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and who, I believe, was a man of great faith. I consulted with the *Joseph Smith Translation* at appropriate times (including in another column an indication that a JST change had been made for any given verse), and frequently to the writings of the General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as I contemplated the possible meanings of each word and phrase. From time to time I resorted to *Smith's Bible Dictionary* and *Discovering the World of the Bible* by LaMar Berrett for some of the more arcane information that I thought would illuminate the text.

I have attempted to maintain a steady course throughout my commentaries, treating each verse as unique, and where appropriate, duplicate notes and the text rather than use cross-references within the volume. Some may find this a waste of paper and ink, but I frankly dislike having to rifle through pages or volumes trying to find the first instance of the note or commentary. The duplications are easily ignored; fumbling through pages cannot be. It is in the best interests of the reader, however, to contemplate the reasons why such duplications exist in the biblical text in the first place. They are purposeful and I have attempted to point out their purpose as I have progressed through each volume.

My numbering system for the notes used in the body of the commentary was adapted from historical linguistic texts with which I am familiar and which I had found quite useful. The pattern used is *chapter.verse.word*; thus note “3.4.5” would contain material referring to the fifth word in the book of Hosea 3:4, for example. I make no comprehensive promises regarding the preciseness of my word count in any particular verse, but it will be close enough to eliminate any distressing confusion. Inasmuch as I began this series with the Gospel of Matthew, there will be times when I will make reference to my own work in that first volume. Sometimes there will be no more than a reference, “*MT-C 23.4.5*”; other times I may quote directly from the original text. In either case my sole motivation will be to facilitate the flow of ideas rather than to multiply words. There are enough words already. References to the Commentaries on other books of the New Testament are abbreviated as follows:

Matthew—*MT-C*
 Mark—*MK-C*
 Luke—*LK-C*
 John—*JN-C*
 Acts—*AC-C*
 Romans—*RM-C*
 1 Corinthians—*1 CO-C*
 2 Corinthians—*2 CO-C*
 Galatians—*GA-C*

Ephesians—*EP-C*
 Philippians—*PP-C*
 Colossians—*CL-C*
 1 Thessalonians—*1 TH-C*
 2 Thessalonians—*2 TH-C*
 1 Timothy—*1 TM-C*
 2 Timothy—*2 TM-C*
 Titus—*TT-C*
 Philemon—*PL-C*

Hebrews—*HB-C*
 1 Peter—*1 PE-C*
 2 Peter—*2 PE-C*
 1 John—*1 JN-C*
 2 John—*2 JN-C*
 3 John—*3 JN-C*
 Revelation—*RV-C*

References to the Commentaries in the books of the Old Testament are as follows:

Genesis— <i>GE-C</i>	2 Chronicles— <i>2 CR-C</i>	Daniel— <i>DA-C</i>
Exodus— <i>EX-C</i>	Ezra— <i>ER-C</i>	Hosiah— <i>HS-C</i>
Leviticus— <i>LV-C</i>	Nehemiah— <i>NE-C</i>	Joel— <i>JL-C</i>
Numbers— <i>NM-C</i>	Esther— <i>ES-C</i>	Amos— <i>AM-C</i>
Deuteronomy— <i>DT-C</i>	Job— <i>JB-C</i>	Obadiah— <i>OB-C</i>
Joshua— <i>JO-C</i>	Psalms— <i>PS-C</i>	Jonah— <i>JH-C</i>
Judges— <i>JD-C</i>	Proverbs— <i>PV-C</i>	Micah— <i>MH-C</i>
Ruth— <i>RU-C</i>	Ecclesiastes— <i>ES-C</i>	Nahum— <i>NA-C</i>
1 Samuel— <i>1 SM-C</i>	Song of Solomon— <i>SS-C</i>	Habakkuk— <i>HB-C</i>
2 Samuel— <i>2 SM-C</i>	Isaiah— <i>IS-C</i>	Zephaniah— <i>ZP-C</i>
1 Kings— <i>1 KG-C</i>	Jeremiah— <i>JR-C</i>	Haggai— <i>HG-C</i>
2 Kings— <i>2 KG-C</i>	Lamentations— <i>LM-C</i>	Zechariah— <i>ZE-C</i>
1 Chronicles— <i>1 CR-C</i>	Ezekiel— <i>EZ-C</i>	Malachi— <i>ML-C</i>

I have also made reference to the other standard works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The references to the Book of Mormon are articulated in bold and italics lettering using the following abbreviations:

1 Nephi— <i>1 NE-C</i>	Omni— <i>OM-C</i>	3 Nephi— <i>3 NE-C</i>
2 Nephi— <i>2 NE-C</i>	Words of Mormon— <i>WM-C</i>	4 Nephi— <i>4 NE-C</i>
Jacob— <i>JA-C</i>	Mosiah— <i>MS-C</i>	Mormon— <i>MM-C</i>
Enos— <i>EN-C</i>	Alma— <i>AL-C</i>	Ether— <i>ET-C</i>
Jarom— <i>JM-C</i>	Helaman— <i>HE-C</i>	Moroni— <i>MR-C</i>

The abbreviation *TPW-C* refers to the material found on the Title Page of the Book of Mormon and in the Testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses. The references to Sections that are in the Doctrine and Covenants are indicated as *DC-C* followed by the section number and verse (*OD1-C* and *OD2-C* are self-explanatory); The Pearl of Great Price references contained herein use the following abbreviations: *MO-C*, *AB-C*, *SM-C*, *SH-C*, and *AF-C*.

In some cases I have taken on what some would consider controversial material. I make no apologies for so doing. I have found that my children are best served when an issue is approached head on, the differing points of view presented, and the rationale given as to why one school of thought ought to be preferred over another. Sometimes the decisions are logically founded; others the result of doctrinal points that are unique to theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In most cases I have not argued authorities, even though I could have inserted multiple references to the writings of scholars with whom I am familiar. I have chosen to have my sources on any particular issue to remain anonymous in the text of the commentary for several reasons. First and foremost, this work is my commentary, what I believe and hold to be true. In the end, that is what my children wish to know. Secondly, I did not wish to have my children accept or dismiss a particular view merely because of who had been the author of it. Many wonderful insights have been made by scholars both inside and outside of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Wherein I have found one view to be preferable over another has not been a partisan matter, but rather a matter of the mind, heart, and spirit cooperating together in an attempt to understand what must be the truth. Thirdly, I have been quite clear who my “authorities” have been. It is my fondest

desire that my children would become as familiar with their writings as I have. Were I to cite all of my sources with extensive quotes from each, there would be no need for them to open any of the books that I have come to love. That, in part, is why I included the third column containing cross-references to the various doctrinal works in the Commentaries. Exceptions to this practice should be noted as being of extreme importance.

In addition to the text of the Standard Works, together with my own commentary, I inserted a column of references for further study. The citations are taken from three major sources: the *Conference Reports* of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from April 1980 to November 2002 (abbreviated as CR followed by the year, month and page number); the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (four volumes, abbreviated EM followed by the volume and page number); and *A Scripture Index* (a compilation of scripture references cited in various texts published by General Authorities of the Church). For those not familiar with the abbreviations used in *A Scripture Index*, I include them below:

TPJS—*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*
GD—*Gospel Doctrine*
MA—*Mediation and Atonement*
FWR—*Far West Record*
DHC—*History of the Church* (7 vols.)
TSWK—*Teaching of Spencer W. Kimball*
MF—*Miracle of Forgiveness*
FPM—*Faith Precedes the Miracle*
MD—*Mormon Doctrine*

PM—*Promised Messiah*
MM—*Mortal Messiah* (4 vols.)
MLM—*Millennial Messiah*
DNTC—*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (3 vols.)
JC—*Jesus the Christ*
AF—*Articles of Faith*
DS—*Doctrines of Salvation* (3 vols.)
AGQ—*Answers to Gospel Questions* (5 vols.)

As with each of the volumes previously published, I include two lists. The first, bound in front of the Commentary, is a listing of all of the words and phrases upon which I have made extensive remarks, a kind of sequential table of contents. I have also arranged this list alphabetically and have placed it at the end of the Commentary as a kind of index. A comprehensive alphabetical index for the entire volume appears as the last section of this book.

Needless to say that all of the errors in the material submitted herein to the reader are the product of my own limitations as a scholar; all of the brilliance which may appear here is the product of minds and hearts filled with the fire of the Spirit of God, from whom all truth and beauty ultimately derive.

A Note on the Electronic Edition

Not only did my children and other family members receive bound copies of commentaries, but there were a number of friends and neighbors who had expressed an interest in them. There were requests from others who desired copies of what I had done, but I was not in a position to provide them with hard copies. Inasmuch as I had all of the volumes in computer files, I thought to compile each of the commentaries in some format that could be read on a smart device. I opted to use the Adobe Acrobat, turning all of the work into PDF files. I have used these on my tablet for many years and have found them useful and far easier to cart about with me. In the early spring of 2015, my neighbor David Dollahite arranged for a meeting with Jack Welch and Marny Parkin regarding the possibility of BYU providing a dedicated web site so that there would be greater public access to my

work. Thus began the present enterprise of editing and standardizing all that had done during the last ten years. My commentary on the Gospel of Mark is the second of these electronic volumes. Within a year or so I hope to have all of the books available in the same format.

PNH
Orem, Utah
July 2015

Sequence of Specifically Noted Words and Phrases in the Title Page Commentary

1.5.5— <i>abridgement</i>	1.6.91— <i>Gentile</i>	1.8.300–301— <i>one God</i>
1.5.13— <i>Nephi</i>	1.6.93— <i>Jesus</i>	1.8.302— <i>Amen</i>
1.5.18— <i>Lamanites</i>	1.6.96— <i>Christ</i>	1.9.1–2— <i>Oliver Cowdery</i>
1.5.26— <i>remnant</i>	1.6.98–99— <i>Eternal God</i>	1.9.3–4— <i>David Whitmer</i>
1.5.31— <i>Israel</i>	1.6.103–104— <i>all nations</i>	1.9.5–6— <i>Martin Harris</i>
1.5.35— <i>Jew</i>	1.6.107— <i>if</i>	1.10.18–21— <i>Joseph Smith, Jun.</i>
1.5.37— <i>Gentile</i>	1.6.116— <i>men</i>	1.10.22— <i>translator</i>
1.5.42— <i>commandment</i>	1.6.117— <i>wherefore</i>	1.10.27— <i>shown</i>
1.5.49— <i>prophecy</i>	1.6.129— <i>spotless</i>	1.10.31— <i>plates</i>
1.5.52— <i>revelation</i>	1.8.21— <i>grace</i>	1.10.40— <i>appearance</i>
1.5.55— <i>sealed</i>	1.8.29–30— <i>Jesus Christ</i>	1.10.48— <i>leaves</i>
1.5.68— <i>destroyed</i>	1.8.32— <i>seen</i>	1.10.57— <i>handle</i>
1.5.81— <i>interpretation</i>	1.8.34— <i>plates</i>	1.10.64— <i>saw</i>
1.5.88— <i>Moroni</i>	1.8.47— <i>Nephi</i>	1.10.75–76— <i>ancient work</i>
1.6.8— <i>Ether</i>	1.8.52— <i>i</i>	1.10.79–80— <i>curious workmanship</i>
1.6.18— <i>Jared</i>	1.8.61— <i>Jared</i>	1.10.103— <i>hefted</i>
1.6.29— <i>language</i>	1.8.89–90— <i>his voice</i>	1.10.113–114— <i>has got</i>
1.6.42— <i>heaven</i>	1.8.116— <i>engravings</i>	1.10.144— <i>God</i>
1.6.43— <i>Which</i>	1.8.126— <i>shown</i>	1.11.1–2— <i>Christian Whitmer</i>
1.6.49— <i>remnant</i>	1.8.147— <i>angel</i>	1.11.3–4— <i>Hiram Page</i>
1.6.52–54— <i>House of Israel</i>	1.8.156— <i>brought</i>	1.11.5–6— <i>Jacob Whitmer</i>
1.6.56–57— <i>great things</i>	1.8.208— <i>marvelous</i>	1.11.7–9— <i>Joseph Smith, Sen.</i>
1.6.64— <i>fathers</i>	1.8.218— <i>commanded</i>	1.11.10–12— <i>Peter Whitmer, Jun.</i>
1.6.71— <i>covenants</i>	1.8.249— <i>faithful</i>	1.11.13–14— <i>Hyrum Smith</i>
1.6.79–80— <i>cast off</i>	1.8.251— <i>Christ</i>	1.11.15–16— <i>John Whitmer</i>
1.6.86— <i>convincing</i>	1.8.259— <i>blood</i>	1.11.17–19— <i>Samuel H. Smith</i>
1.6.89— <i>Jew</i>	1.8.266— <i>spotless</i>	

A Commentary on the Scriptures
by
Paul Nolan Hyde, Ph.D.

The Title Page of the Book of Mormon

0.0. The title page of the Book of Mormon is a translation, for the most part, of the last plate in the collection of plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. It is safe to conclude then, that the author of the title page is probably Moroni, Mormon's son and the last to inscribe his testimony on his father's record. The book of Moroni, the last book in the Book of Mormon, was composed about the year AD 421, just prior to the record being enstonced in the stone depository at the Hill Cumorah in what is now known as western New York state. No doubt the title page was drafted then, although a case might be made for a date as much as twenty years earlier.

1.1 The prophet Mormon was a Nephite historian born to goodly parents in about the year AD 311. His was the divinely appointed task to compile a volume reflecting the major events in the thousand year history of the Nephite peoples who dwelt in Ancient America from the sixth century before the birth of Christ until the fourth century after his mortal mission was complete. The title was most likely a contribution made by his son, Mornoi, the last of the faithful Nephites who had custody of the sacred records.

1.2 Mormon was an exacting disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and as such he was capable of perceiving in the history of his people the principles of eternal life and salvation that led to their great rise in civilized spirituality and their ultimate fall into wickedness and corruption. So long as the Nephite hearkened to the voice of God and worshipped Him in the name of His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, they prospered. When they turned to the vanities of the world and the lusts of the flesh, they speedily descended into ruin, both physical and spiritual. Mormon recounted the history of the Nephites in a series of books each covering a specific period of time, emphasizing specific principles by which his readers in the latter days might more fully appreciate the circumstances in which they would find themselves. These volumes were entitled from first to last, the books of Lehi, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Nephi, Nephi the son of Nephi, and Mormon. The translation of Mormon's first volume, Lehi, was lost through the neglect of one Martin Harris and the perfidy of Harris' wife. That lost had been foreseen and the historical period covered by the book of Lehi was replaced by the insertion of the translation of a collection of ancient plates known as the Small Plates of Nephi. Mormon, having been inspired by God the Eternal Father, had included Nephi's shorter account of his life by physically appending those plates to his own collection. The translation of the Small Plates of Nephi included in the Book of Mormon may be found in the books entitled First Nephi, Second Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, and the Words of Mormon. This last section constitutes Mormon's explanation as to why he had decided to include the Small Plates of Nephi with his own record and its direction connection which his own running narrative. With the loss of the book of Lehi and the insertion of the Small Plates, it seemed to the publishers of the first edition of the Book of Mormon that there was a need to clarify for the reader the other books of "Nephi" that appear in Mormon's narrative. Thus, Mormon's "Nephi" is now known as "Third Nephi" and "Nephi the Son of Nephi" is presently known as "Fourth Nephi". Mormon's son, Moroni, was given the responsibility of

THE BOOK OF MORMON

AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY

THE HAND OF MORMON

finishing his father's work after the final battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites at the Hill Cumorah about AD 385. Therefore, the last two chapters of the book of Mormon and the books of Ether and Moroni were composed by Moroni prior to his sealing up of the record in the stone depository on the northwest corner of the Hill Cumorah in the year AD 421.

1.3 The physical descriptions of the Plates of Mormon given by those who saw them vary somewhat in minute details. The general description, however, is quite clear. Each individual plate was approximately six inches by eight inches and in thickness like unto a sheet of common tin, perhaps as much as a sixteenth of an inch. Each of the plates appeared to be made of gold, or certainly of a gold alloy of some kind. They had the durability of gold, yet they were also able to hold indelibly the engravings that were incised upon them. The collection of plates entrusted to Joseph Smith for translation was approximately six inches thick, suggesting that the total number of metal sheets was from between 100 and 200 plates, depending on the thickness of each plate. Two-thirds of the plates were physically sealed by metal bands and Joseph Smith was forbidden to break the seals and was told that he would only have power to translate the unsealed portion. From that unsealed portion the current text of the Book of Mormon has been taken. Each plate was incised on both sides with characters which were called by the ancient Nephites, "Reformed Egyptian". The linguistic density of Reformed Egyptian must be extraordinary inasmuch as the entire text of the Book of Mormon was compressed on to no more than 140 plate faces. The entire collection of plates was held together by three large rings, probably thrilling the right margin of each plate inasmuch as Reformed Egyptian reads from right to left, rather than from left to right as do modern European languages.

1.4 What is specifically referenced here are the Large Plates of Nephi, the massive collection of plates that contain the progressive history of the Nephite peoples beginning with the travels of Lehi and his family in the wilderness of the Arabian peninsula and ending with the writings of the prophet Mormon himself. This tremendous historical record amounted to many thousands of plates, as much as many wagon loads of bound collections according to the most reliable accounts that we have of the final resting place of the Nephite library. Mormon, as the curator of this vast repository of Nephite history, was charged with compiling a one volume work which would reflect the major triumphs and catastrophes of the people of the Lord God of Israel who dwelt in the Americas. With the loss of Mormon's book of Lehi, the writings of Nephi, the son of Lehi, have been included in the published text of the Book of Mormon. Since that narrative was drawn from the Small Plates of Nephi, one might say that the phrase, "the plates of Nephi" refers to them as well, but that was not in the mind of Moroni when he drafted the title page.

1.5 The Book of Mormon is sacred writ, preserved by ancient prophets, seers, and revelators that it might come forth in the latter days to be a touch stone by which the children of God might learn to have confidence in His Spirit. Any child of God is susceptible to instruction in spiritual matters and the Book of Mormon is designed to facilitate that instruction. It is not merely the historical and theological facts that have been preserved that bless the reader, but it is the continual whisperings of the Holy Ghost to the hearts and minds of those who peruse the book that refines their spiritual sensitivities.

1.5.5—*abridgement*—In its original conception, the Book of Mormon was to be a one-volume redaction from a vast collection of plates known as

UPON PLATES

TAKEN FROM THE PLATES OF NEPHI

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth

the Large Plates of Nephi. Mormon's labors were completed and supplemented by his son Moroni, including a summary of a work written by the last of the Jaredite prophets, Ether. The book of Moroni is itself an abridgement of the large body of materials available to Moroni, including letters and sermons written by his father as the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites came to its inevitable end. The first quarter of the current edition of the Book of Mormon is a translation from the Small Plates of Nephi, itself initially an abridgement of Lehi and Nephi's earliest writings.

- 1.5.13—*Nephi*—While one might think of the literal posterity of the fourth son of Lehi as being the people of Nephi, yet it is clear from the text of the Book of Mormon that all those who believed as did Nephi were included as part of the Nephites. Thus, a Nephite might be a repentant descendant of Laman, Lemuel, Zoram, Mulek, or others. Nephites were those who, at least nominally, worshipped the God of their land who was the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense, the terms Nephite and Christian may be equated.
- 1.5.18—*Lamanites*—While it is true that the Lamanites were largely the descendants of the eldest son of the prophet Lehi, yet there were many who partook of the same rebellious spirit as Laman, thereby effectively taking upon themselves the family name in a spiritual vein. Thus there were Lamanites, Lemuelites, Ishmaelites, Zoramites, Mulekites, and a great variety of dissident Nephites who gathered together under Laman's banner and sobriquet. Notwithstanding the great antipathy that existed between the Lamanites and the Nephites, the prophets, seers, and revelators among the Nephites preserved the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the benefit of the descendants of those who were, for the most part, their most bitter enemies.
- 1.5.26—*remnant*—The House of Israel and the nations which they established have suffered a continual dispersion throughout the world. The Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and a panoply of other world powers have been instrumental in driving the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob into the four corners of the earth. Thus, remnants of the House of Israel have been led away and ensconced among almost every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Some, like many of the Jews, known from whence they have come; others are entirely ignorant of their ancestry. Yet the hereditary promises due to these scattered remnants will be forth coming as the servants of God seek out the honest in heart from among them.
- 1.5.31—*Israel*—In reference to the covenant people, traditionally the posterity of the patriarch Jacob. There are those, however, who have been adopted into the House of Israel through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1.5.35—*Jew*—The descendants of the tribe of Judah constitute almost the only remnant of the House of Israel that is recognized by the secular nations of the earth. This unique perspective is so entrenched that if a man were to announce that he pertained to any one of the other tribes of Israel, he would almost always be called a Jew. This can easily be seen in the familial relationship between the remnants of the tribe of Levi, particularly the priests of the Aaronic priesthood that pertain to that tribe, and the descendants of the tribe of Judah. The terms "Jew" and "Israelite" have come to be equated in the minds of many, although the latter encompasses a far greater body of people. Thus, a descendant of the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh might very well be group with the

by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

“Jews” simply as the result of tradition or ignorance. In this sense, the modern Lamanites have sometimes been referred to as “Jews”, in addition to any application of the term because of the infusion of the Mulekites into the family of Lehi.

- 1.5.37—*Gentile*—Historically speaking, the term “Gentiles” refers specifically to the Greeks. As the House of Israel came in contact with other nations like the Romans, however, the term expanded to embrace these cultures as well. Today, the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles is in many ways similar to the simplified division between the “Lamanites” and the “Nephites” described above; that is to say, the categories have been generalized along other than genetic criteria. Thus, it is conceivable to regard a literal descendant from any of the tribes of the House of Israel as a “Gentile”, depending upon the personal circumstances involved with the particular Israelite and the one bestowing the title. By the same token, a person who has no direct familial relationship with the posterity of ancient patriarch might by covenant be considered a son or daughter of Abraham.
- 1.5.42—*commandment*—The entire record before us in the Book of Mormon was composed as the result of divine fiat. Both the Large and Small Plates of Nephi came about as the result of the word of God coming to the son of Lehi. The composition of the text of Mormon’s work came about as the Spirit of God communed with the prophet. The other authors whose writings have been transmitted to us were also directed to preserve their experiences and teachings for the benefit of their posterity, either by the voice of the Lord or through His servants.
- 1.5.49—*prophecy*—By definition, prophecy is the testimony of Jesus as the Christ, of his Sonship and atoning sacrifice by which all mankind may be redeemed from death and hell. No man can read the Book of Mormon and not know of the deep and abiding faith in Christ possessed by the ancient inhabitants of the Americas
- 1.5.52—*revelation*—Revelation is made possible by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost. Thus, no man can read the Book of Mormon and not receive a witness of the divine truths contained within its pages. Only undue bigotry and spiritual insensitivity would make that personal revelation impossible.
- 1.5.55—*sealed*—The preservation of the plates of Mormon could only be effectuated by the power of God as manifested in the priesthood ordinances of the God of Israel. Thus, Moroni invoked divine protection upon the Plates and the depository itself, that the elements and the enemies of God would gain no power over the record.
- 1.5.68—*destroyed*—Had the Lamanites found the record of Mormon, they would have destroyed the Plates out of hand, in part for the metals, but primarily out of antipathy for the truths of eternity.
- 1.5.81—*interpretation*—The fact that Reformed Egyptian had become a dead language, that there remained no living being who could understand the characters used to preserve the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites, the translation of the Book of Mormon must be aided by divine power. The Urim and Thummim and the angel Moroni were provided as aides to the Prophet Joseph Smith in his task, but the primary force that facilitated the translation was the supernal influence of the Holy Ghost.
- 1.5.88—*Moroni*—The son of Mormon who as a mortal preserved and sealed up his father’s record in the Hill Cumorah. It was this same Moroni who, as a resurrected personage, came to the Prophet Joseph

Smith and gave him sufficient knowledge and understanding to bring forth the Book of Mormon as it is published today.

1.6 The Book of Mormon is a testament of the love and mercy of God our Eternal Father. Two ancient civilizations prospered in the Americas before the coming of the Gentiles. Both fell to physical and spiritual ruin because they failed to continually keep before them the covenants which depended upon the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon reveals to the descendants of those great peoples that there are covenants in place which will yet deliver them from ignorance and oppression if they will but choose to hearken to the voice of God

1.6.8—*Ether*—The last of the Jaredite prophets who lived at the time of the final conflict of that nation from the which only he and Coriantumr survived. Coriantumr would spend the last months of his life dwelling among the Mulekites, a body of Jews who had escaped the destruction of Jerusalem in 589 BC. We may rightly conclude, then, that Ether lived out his mortal ministry during the sixth century before the birth of Jesus Christ and was a contemporary of Lehi and his family, even though they never met in the flesh.

1.6.18—*Jared*—One of the grand progenitors of an ancient civilization that prospered for many centuries upon the American continents, but who came to their self-inflicted destruction about the time that Lehi and his family arrived in their promised land. The Jaredites were led from the tower of Babel by Jared and his brother Mahonri Moriancumr, crossing the large bodies of waters between them and the Americas on barges which they built with the guidance of the God of Heaven. These were men and women who, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ were blessed beyond measure. Yet because of eventual wickedness and depravity were allowed to destroy themselves so that another nation, the posterity of Lehi, might receive the blessings of the land in their stead

1.6.29—*language*—The language spoken by the inhabitants of the earth from the time of Adam and Eve until the time of Jared and his brother was the language of God, one which is frequently referred to as the Adamic language in honor of the first mortal on the earth to speak it. The confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel affected all of humanity save for the company of Jared and his brother, who continued to speak and write in the language God until their final destruction at the Hill Ramah, the same hill which the Nephites later denominated as the Hill Cumorah. The book of Ether, incised upon twenty-four plates of gold by the prophet of the same name, was undecipherable until the prophet/king Mosiah translated them by means of the gift and power of God and the aid of the Urim and Thummim which was in his possession. Moroni, he who edited the book of Ether for the Book of Mormon, found the writings of the Jaredites spiritually overwhelming, a testament to the nature of the language, wisdom, and glory of God the Eternal Father.

1.6.42—*heaven*—Much has been written about mankind's early attempt to assail the throne of God, most of which is rank foolishness. We may assume, however, that the assertion identifying the tower of Babel as an apostate temple, together with the apostate ordinances thereof, is undoubted the correct one.

1.6.43—*Which*—That is to say, the abridgments of the various records demonstrate and articulate the blessings that have been promised the

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever— And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

- posterity of the ancient inhabitants of this hemisphere.
- 1.6.49—*remnant*—Certainly in reference to that portion of the House of Israel whose ancestors were brought to the American hemisphere by the hand of God. Other remnants may be tacitly included as well (see 1.5.26).
 - 1.6.52–54—*House of Israel*—In reference to the covenant people, traditionally the posterity of the patriarch Jacob. There are those, however, who have been adopted into the House of Israel through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1.6.56–57—*great things*—Some of the ancient traditions of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas reflect truths that have been transmitted through the ages, but the great body of reveal light and knowledge once delivered to their ancestors has been lost through apostasy and neglect. The Book of Mormon provides its readers with an understanding of the spiritual greatness which once permeated the western hemisphere, and promises that that same greatest may be restored to a lost and fallen people if they will but turn to that God who blessed their ancestors.
 - 1.6.64—*fathers*—The promises made to Lehi and Nephi were patriarchal; that is to say, their children were to be given an opportunity to receive all that they had in their day, notwithstanding the many intervening centuries of depravity and wickedness.
 - 1.6.71—*covenants*—The principles and ordinances of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which have been taught unto the faithful since the earliest scenes that transpired in the Garden of Eden. In addition there are the specific blessings given to Lehi, Nephi, and other holy men regarding their posterity.
 - 1.6.79–80—*cast off*—Once a civilization has fallen into ruin, it is easy for the remnants of that once glorious people to continually think of themselves as an abased and unexaltable people. These are the promises of restoration, of gathering, of enlightenment, of salvation and exaltation.
 - 1.6.86—*convincing*—The power of the testimony of the Book of Mormon regarding the reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of the living God, that the latter day publishers of the Book of Mormon have added the poignant subtitle, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” in order to disabuse the ignorant and to thwart the machinations of the perverse of any notion that the text of the Book of Mormon is anything other than an abiding witness of the Word of God.
 - 1.6.89—*Jew*—The descendants of the tribe of Judah constitute almost the only remnant of the House of Israel that is recognized by the secular nations of the earth. This unique perspective is so entrenched that if a man were to announce that he pertained to any one of the other tribes of Israel, he would almost always be called a Jew. This can easily be seen in the familial relationship between the remnants of the tribe of Levi, particularly the priests of the Aaronic priesthood that pertain to that tribe, and the descendants of the tribe of Judah. The terms “Jew” and “Israelite” have come to be equated in the minds of many, although the latter encompasses a far greater body of people. Thus, a descendant of the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh might very well be group with the “Jews” simply as the result of tradition or ignorance. In this sense, the modern Lamanites have sometimes been referred to as “Jews”, in addition to any application of the term because of the infusion of the Mulekites into the family of Lehi.
 - 1.6.91—*Gentile*—Historically speaking, the term “Gentiles” refers specifically to the Greeks. As the House of Israel came in contact with other

nations like the Romans, however, the term expanded to embrace these cultures as well. Today, the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles is in many ways similar to the simplified division between the “Lamanites” and the “Nephites” described above; that is to say, the categories have been generalized along other than genetic criteria. Thus, it is conceivable to regard a literal descendant from any of the tribes of the House of Israel as a “Gentile”, depending upon the personal circumstances involved with the particular Israelite and the one bestowing the title. By the same token, a person who has no direct familial relationship with the posterity of ancient patriarch might by covenant be considered a son or daughter of Abraham.

- 1.6.93—*Jesus*—This is, of course, a direct reference to Jesus of Nazareth, the object of the narratives of the Gospels of the New Testament. This same Son of God who labored among the people of Palestine for three short years and then suffered for the sins of mankind in the Garden of Eden, died at the hands of wicked men on the cross at Golgotha, and rose again on the third day to eternal life and dominion.
- 1.6.96—*Christ*—Jesus is the Anointed One, the Redeemer of all mankind, as many as will receive him. In no other may salvation and exaltation be found. The day will come when every eye will see, every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, both among the living and among the dead.
- 1.6.98–99—*Eternal God*—Jesus is the great Jehovah who, under the direction of his Father, created the heavens and the earth of which we are a part. Jehovah has been the being who has guided and instructed the prophets, seers, and revelators of God in every dispensation. He is, through his atoning sacrifice, the Redeemer of all that has come forth from his hands.
- 1.6.103–104—*all nations*—The Lord Jesus Christ will manifest himself unto all nations primarily because the remnants of the House of Israel have been scattered to the four corners of the earth. In this dispensation, no man, woman, or child will escape the great revelation that has been promised since Adam and Eve walked in the Garden of Eden.
- 1.6.107—*if*—Moroni knew of no mistakes in the writings of his father or himself, yet like every writer he was certain that his own frailties might easily be manifested in the awkwardness of preserving their history in such as condensed and difficult language as Reformed Egyptian. He was also aware the difficulties involved in making adequate translations from one language into another and anticipated the challenge presented to Joseph Smith, he unto whom the record would come for interpretation. Even if the translation were perfectly rendered in every way, the text still had to pass through the vagaries of typesetting and printing. Most of the changes that have been made in the Book of Mormon since the first edition have been corrections of mistakes made by those responsible for originally publishing the text.
- 1.6.116—*men*—God does not make mistakes; sometimes His servants do. We ought not to condemn the Father of all because He has been willing to work with us in our fallen state. Eventually all things will be put to right and perfection will bear sway. In the mean time we ought not endanger our own promised perfection through unjust and undue criticism of those things which have come to us from God.
- 1.6.117—*wherefore*—A marker for a syllogism, a logical argument which ought to strengthen our resolve to develop our ability to hearken to the Spirit of God rather than the prattlings of unenlightened men

1.6.129—*spotless*—Redemption from sin comes as a result of faith in Christ unto salvation, coupled with repentance from all sin. A spirit of criticism of those things delivered to us in our imperfect state will hinder our progress towards eternal life.

1.7 In the first editions of the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith is listed as the “Author and Proprietor” in order to keep unscrupulous men from taking advantage of the fledgling Church and Kingdom of God. Indeed, only the weight of the copyright laws of the state of New York kept men like Squire Cole, a typesetter in E.B. Grandin’s printing establishment, from publishing portions of the Book of Mormon before the bound copies were ready. Today the copyright laws of the United States and elsewhere are such that the necessity to employ the original terminology no longer exists.

1.8 For all of their personal shortcomings, these three men were faithful in that which had been commanded of them by God Himself. Although all three would at some point leave the company of the saints of latter days, yet for all of their personal disaffection they never denied that which they had both seen and heard. Two of the men, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, would eventually return to full faith and fellowship with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through repentance and baptism at the hands of the priesthood of God. The third, David Whitmer, though remaining outside of the pale of the Church of Jesus Christ, fervently bore his personal witness as to the truthfulness of the Testimony of the Three Witnesses to the end of his life. The fact that there would be Three Witnesses of the spiritual history of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas had been prophecies centuries before the selection was made.

1.8.21—*grace*—The grace of God, His gift to mankind, is His love which is perfectly manifested in the life and ministry of His Son.

1.8.29–30—*Jesus Christ*—The author of eternal salvation, both of the body and the spirit through the power of the resurrection and his atoning sacrifice for sin.

1.8.32—*seen*—As this testimony of the Three Witnesses will bear witness a few lines from here, they “saw” the plates through the gift and power of God as manifested by the angel Moroni. The Eight Witnesses will see the plates and the engravings because Joseph Smith himself will produce them for their natural eyes to see and for their natural hands to feel. To see with one’s spiritual eyes is an experience just as real as any tangible event sensed in the material world. We have far more experience with the spiritual things of eternity than we do with the physical world, yet modern Aristotelians would have us deny anything pertaining to that most enduring of realities.

1.8.34—*plates*—Meaning, of course, the Plates of Mormon from which the Book of Mormon had been translated. Other written accounts given by the Three Witnesses would have us understand that they had the privilege of seeing many other artifacts as well, including the Liahona, the Urim and Thummim, the Sword of Laban and many other of the records upon which the history of the ancient Americans had been written. Many scholars have concluded that the Three were presented with an open vision of the interior of the large depository in the Hill Cumorah where all of these things had been placed by Mormon and had been watched over by his son, Moroni from the time of the last conflict between the Lamanites and the Nephites.

1.8.47—*Nephi*—While one might think of the literal posterity of the

TRANSLATED BY
JOSEPH SMITH, JUN.

The Testimony of Three Witnesses

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

fourth son of Lehi as being the people of Nephi, yet it is clear from the text of the Book of Mormon that all those who believed as did Nephi were included as part of the Nephites. Thus, a Nephite might be a repentant descendant of Laman, Lemuel, Zoram, Mulek, or others. Nephites were those who, at least nominally, worshipped the God of their land who was the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense, the terms Nephite and Christian may be equated.

- 1.8.52—*Lamanites*—While it is true that the Lamanites were largely the descendants of the eldest son of the prophet Lehi, yet there were many who partook of the same rebellious spirit as Laman, thereby effectively taking upon themselves the family name in a spiritual vein. Thus there were Lamanites, Lemuelites, Ishmaelites, Zoramites, Mulekites, and a great variety of dissident Nephites who gathered together under Laman’s banner and sobriquet. Notwithstanding the great antipathy that existed between the Lamanites and the Nephites, the prophets, seers, and revelators among the Nephites preserved the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the benefit of the descendants of those who were, for the most part, their most bitter enemies.
- 1.8.61—*Jared*—One of the grand progenitors of an ancient civilization that prospered for many centuries upon the American continents, but who came to their self-inflicted destruction about the time that Lehi and his family arrived in their promised land. The Jaredites were led from the tower of Babel by Jared and his brother Mahonri Moriancumr, crossing the large bodies of waters between them and the Americas on barges which they built with the guidance of the God of Heaven. These were men and women who, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ were blessed beyond measure. Yet because of eventual wickedness and depravity were allowed to destroy themselves so that another nation, the posterity of Lehi, might receive the blessings of the land in their stead
- 1.8.89–90—*his voice*—In addition to anything that the angel Moroni might have said to the Three Witnesses, they were blessed to hear the voice of the God of Heaven declaring in no uncertain terms that the translation of the plates had been directed and inspired by the Father and the Son.
- 1.8.116—*engravings*—The engravings were those of Reformed Egyptian, apparently more like hieroglyphics than characters of an alphabet. The written language of the Nephites was far denser than most human languages in existence today (see 1.3).
- 1.8.126—*shown*—The angel Moroni stood before the Three Witnesses and turned multiple pages of Mormon’s collection one by one so that they would know for themselves the nature of the writing and the manner in which the record had been fabricated.
- 1.8.147—*angel*—The angel was Moroni, the son of Mormon who had been the custodian of the Nephite records since the days of the final conflict between the Lamanites and the Nephites in the fourth century after Christ.
- 1.8.156—*brought*—Apparently the angel initially descended in a pillar of light as he had several times to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Once before the men, Moroni then gave them an open vision of the depository bringing the plates from the table in the middle of the room to show the plates clearly.
- 1.8.208—*marvelous*—How could these men not marvel? How could any man not marvel at such a glorious experience?

- 1.8.218—*commanded*—The testimony of the Three Witness has appeared in every copy of the Book of Mormon. In the beginning, as is the case in the first edition, the testimony was printed at the end of each volume. Today they are printed near the front of the book.
- 1.8.249—*faithful*—All three of these men became personally disaffected from the Prophet Joseph Smith. In spite of the many opportunities to disavow their printed witness that the Book of Mormon was true, yet none of the Three ever denied having the experience described here in this short account. To their dying day, each of these men was faithful to the charge given to him by the voice of God and the angel Moroni.
- 1.8.251—*Christ*—Simply put, the name “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew “Messiah”. In both Hebrew and Greek, the terms mean “anointed one”. Every prophet of God from the days of Adam has been anointed in preparation for their ministry to the world. Every king who has ruled by divine right has also been anointed as part of his ascendancy to the throne and the scepter. The same may be said of every priest who has administered the ordinances of the Priesthood, particularly those of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and most specifically in the House of the Lord. Some scholars have suggested that even though certain men have been anointed to be prophets and priests, or kings and priests, or prophets and kings, none but Jesus has been anointed prophet, priest, and king. Of course, these scholars have asserted such out of ignorance, not understanding that all those who are heirs of salvation and exaltation have been anointed prophets, priests, and kings in similitude of their Savior. Jesus is Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Great High Priest who presides over all priesthood, the prophet who has inspired all prophets in whatever time or place in which they might have lived. He is our Master in all things, but his labors have been designed to bring us all back into the presence of God as he is.
- 1.8.259—*blood*—To know of a certainty that the Book of Mormon is true, containing the fullness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, providing a witness that God lives and that his Son is the Redeemer of all mankind, and then to maintain one’s silence regarding its veracity and power would be to incur the wrath of a just God.
- 1.8.266—*spotless*—Moroni had been clear that to niggle at the seeming flaws of the Book of Mormon was to invite spiritual disaster. Such critics will not enjoy the grace of Christ, the remission of sins and the redemption from hell (see 1.6.129).
- 1.8.300–301—*one God*—This has nothing at all to do with the false notions regarding deity as expressed in Trinitarian doctrines of traditional Christianity. The unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has to do with their oneness regarding the purpose and exigency of the salvation and exaltation of the children of God.
- 1.8.302—*Amen*—The harmony between the Father and the Son is perfected in this word of assent. The Hebrew word which is translated as “Amen” derives from roots which mean “true”. This word is one of the many titles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1.9 These three names, of course, have appeared in every edition of the Book of Mormon, attesting to their personal witness of the veracity of the Nephite record.

- 1.9.1–2—*Oliver Cowdery*—As the Assistant President of the Church of Jesus Christ, Oliver had the primary responsibility of preparing the various revelations that had been received through the prophet Joseph

OLIVER COWDERY
DAVID WHITMER
MARTIN HARRIS

Smith for publication. John Whitmer was also intensively involved in the preparatory process as was Sidney Rigdon and the prophet Joseph himself. William W. Phelps contributions came in concert with his experience and knowledge as an editor and printer.

1.9.3–4—*David Whitmer*—David Whitmer was the fourth child of Peter and Mary Whitmer, born 7 January 1805. David and his brothers, John and Peter, were baptized for the remission of sin during the summer of 1829. It is clear that David also was blessed with the power and authority of God, the Melchizedek priesthood about that same time. David would serve as one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon and was one of the six men who formed the nucleus of the Church of Jesus Christ on 6 April 1830. He and the other two witnesses, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, would be commissioned to select the first members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation. During a time of heavy persecution, David became disaffected from the Church, he and his family eventually settling in Richmond, Missouri. His brother-in-law and long-time friend, Oliver Cowdery came to visit him in 1850, as he prepared to make his journey west to be with the main body of the saints in the Salt Lake Valley. He apparently encouraged David to do the same. Oliver, however, died in David Whitmer's home on 3 March 1850. David remained in Richmond, Missouri, until own death on 25 January 1888.

1.9.5–6—*Martin Harris*—Martin Harris was one of the first men to be baptized after the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ in this dispensation. He received that ordinance at the hands of Oliver Cowdery on 6 April 1830. In 1837, due in large part to a disagreement with Sidney Rigdon, Martin was dropped from the High Council of the Kirtland Stake and was purportedly excommunicated. On 7 November 1842, Martin Harris applied for and was received into full fellowship in the Church through baptism. Notwithstanding the various movements of the body of the saints, Martin remained in Kirtland until the summer of 1870, at which time he was persuaded to move to Utah. He died in Clarkston, Utah, on 10 July 1875. Shortly before his death, he bore a fervent and compelling testimony of the experience that he had as one of the Three Witnesses.

1.10 Much has been made of the relationship between these eight men, mostly in derision. It is true that Christian, Jacob, Peter, and John Whitmer were all brothers and that Hiram Page had married one of their sisters. This fact does not persuade anyone with common sense to conclude that their testimony must of necessity then be false. The same can be said of Joseph Smith, Senior, and his two sons, Hyrum and Samuel, brothers of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Their familial relationship should have no bearing on the truthfulness of their witness any more than one should doubt the brothers Peter and Andrew, and their cousins James and John. The first Quorum of Twelve Apostles was filled with men who were of close kinship to one another. This did not make their experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ any less valid or inspiring. Five of the Eight Witnesses dies in full faith and fellowship in the Church of Christ. Three of the Eight, John and Jacob Whitmer with their brother-in-law Hiram Page, left the Church of Christ at odds with the saints and servants of God. Those who knew the three men well testified that they never denied the truthfulness of the statement included in every copy of the Book of Mormon, bearing fervent witness of its truth on their death-beds.

1.10.18–21—*Joseph Smith, Jun.*—The prophet of the restoration, he who

The Testimony of Eight Witnesses

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the

had been called up and placed before the world to teach the wise and the learned that they had not even the faintest glimpse of the majesty of God the Father and that of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The ministry of the prophet Joseph Smith would roll forth unimpeded, the designs and purposes of the Lord having been accomplished. The world will eventually learn to its own hurt that the teachings of the prophet cannot be ignored or destroyed, for he was the very mouthpiece of the God of Heaven, endowed with power and authority to bring the children of men unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1.10.22—*translator*—Notice that Joseph Smith, though nominally the “Author and Proprietor” of the Book of Mormon for the sake of the copyright laws of his day, is clearly identified in his more appropriate relationship to the text.
- 1.10.27—*shown*—These men saw the Plates of Mormon with their own physical eyes, as clearly as anyone might look at an artifact of any kind.
- 1.10.31—*plates*—Whereas the Three Witnesses were shown the interior of the Nephite depository, the Eight Witnesses had no such open vision of any of the other records stored there.
- 1.10.40—*appearance*—None of these men were archeologists or metallurgists. They could only bear witness of that which they had seen with their own eyes as informed by their own limited experience in the world. The Plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were undoubtedly made of some sort of gold alloy.
- 1.10.48—*leaves*—Two-thirds of the six-inch collections of plates were bound by metal bands. The loose leaves were those of Mormon’s Plates and the Small Plates of Nephi that Mormon had appended in his record. The Eight Witnesses handled each of these in turn.
- 1.10.57—*handle*—In the case of the Three Witnesses, the angel Moroni turned each of the leaves of the record; these men did not have the opportunity to turn each of the plates for themselves.
- 1.10.64—*saw*—With their natural eyes, rather than with their spiritual eyes as had the Three Witnesses.
- 1.10.75–76—*ancient work*—The engravings and the plates themselves looked ancient to them and they could say no more than that.
- 1.10.79–80—*curious workmanship*—Nephi had used much the same terminology regarding the appearance of the Liahona, the compass-like brass ball that led Lehi’s company through the wilderness and across the great deep of the Indian and Pacific Oceans (see *1 NE-C 16.10*).
- 1.10.103—*hefted*—Each of the men was given the opportunity to lift the collection of plates with their own physical strength. There could be no doubt that they had felt the weight of the Plates.
- 1.10.113–114—*has got*—Once the translation of the Book of Mormon had been completed, the angel Moroni retrieved the Plates of Mormon that they might be returned to their safe place within the Nephite depository inside the Hill Cumorah. The Three Witnesses had seen the Plates and the depository in vision. For the experience of the Eight Witnesses, however, it was necessary for Moroni to allow Joseph Smith to have the Plates for a time. Afterwards, the angel retrieved them again.
- 1.10.144—*God*—The Eight Witnesses knew that their witness was a temporal one, a declaration made by men who had seen with their own eyes and had felt with their own hands the work that had been translated as the Book of Mormon. They knew, however, that the truth of the matter might easily be discerned if those who came in contact with

plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

their testimony were to petition the God of Heaven. They affixed their name to their statement and depended upon the faith of the just and the mercy of God to do the rest.

1.11 Although their witness was far more physical than spiritual, their testimony of that which they saw with their own eyes was never retracted. Their names have also appeared in every edition of the Book of Mormon since 1830.

1.11.1–2—*Christian Whitmer*—The eldest son of Peter and Mary Whitmer was born 18 January 1798 in Dauphin, Pennsylvania. On 22 February 1825 he married Ann Schott in Fayette, New York. With the Latter-day Saints, he and his wife moved first to Jackson county and then to Far West, Missouri, where he died in 1835.

1.11.3–4—*Hiram Page*—In October 1825, Hiram Page married Catherine Whitmer, and therefore was a brother-in-law to the Whitmer brothers and eventually to Oliver Cowdery. Hiram was an early disciple, serving as one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He was baptized with his wife on 11 April 1830 and was ordained a teacher on 9 June 1830 as one of the first officers of the Church of Jesus Christ. His course of life was similar to that taken by many of the Whitmer siblings. Although he never denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon, he did find himself excommunicated from the Church in 1838. He became part of William McLellan’s Church of Christ in 1847. On 12 August 1852, Hiram Page died in his home in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, of injuries received in an accident with a heavy wagon.

1.11.5–6—*Jacob Whitmer*—The second child of Peter Whitmer and Mary Musselman who was born 27 January 1800 in Pennsylvania. He married Elizabeth Schott on 29 September 1825, and together were the parents of nine children. With three of his brothers he served as one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He relocated with the Latter-day Saints from New York, first to Jackson county and then during the persecutions he moved with his family to Clay county, Missouri. He with others became disaffected from the Church of Jesus Christ and for his apostasy was excommunicated in 1838. He died in Richmond, Missouri, on 21 April 1856

1.11.7–9—*Joseph Smith, Sen.*—No one had been more supportive of the young prophet in his ministry than his own father. From Joseph’s first experience with the God of Heaven in the spring of 1820, Joseph Smith, Senior, had believed the accounts of the various interviews that his son had related to the family and had encouraged him to do all that he had been instructed to do by the various divine emissaries sent to him by the Lord. The prophet’s father was born in Topsfield, Massachusetts, on 12 July 1771. Among other assignments, Joseph Smith, Senior, served as an assistant counselor to the First Presidency and as the first Patriarch to the Church. He died 14 September 1840 in Nauvoo, Illinois.

1.11.10–12—*Peter Whitmer, Jun.*—The fifth child and fourth son of Peter and Mary Whitmer, born 27 September 1809 in Fayette, New York. He served as one of the Eight Witness to the Book of Mormon. With Oliver Cowdery and other, Peter travelled from New York to the Unorganized Indian Territories to preach the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Native Americans located there. He married Vashti Higley on 14 October 1832 in Jackson county, Missouri, and later lived in Far West. He suffered great persecution at the hands of the enemies of the Church and as a result of exposure contracted

CHRISTIAN WHITMER
HIRAM PAGE
JACOB WHITMER
JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.
PETER WHITMER, JUN.
HYRUM SMITH
JOHN WHITMER
SAMUEL H. SMITH

tuberculosis, dying of that disease on 22 September 1836 in Liberty, Missouri.

- 1.11.13–14—*Hyrum Smith*—Hyrum was an elder brother of Joseph Smith, born on 9 February 1800. Although more than five years Joseph's senior, Hyrum was completely faithful to all that Joseph testified had transpired in his boyhood. He served as one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and as the eldest of the six men who formally organized the Church of Jesus Christ on 6 April 1830. He served in many capacities in the Church and Kingdom of God before his death as a martyr on 27 June 1844 in Carthage, Illinois.
- 1.11.15–16—*John Whitmer*—John Whitmer was the third child of Peter and Mary Whitmer, born 27 August 1802. With his brothers David and Peter, Junior, he was baptized for the remission of sins in June 1829. As the publishing of the Book of Mormon commenced, John was selected to serve as one of the Eight Witnesses, men who personally handled the plates from which the translation of the Book of Mormon was made. John Whitmer never deviated from his testimony. John Whitmer was among the first to join the Church of Jesus Christ after it was organized on 6 April 1830. He was ordained an elder on 9 June 1830 and within a few months was called upon to be the Church Historian. On the third of July 1834 John Whitmer and W.W. Phelps were called to serve as counselors to David Whitmer as the presidency of the Church in Missouri. After he and several others were excommunicated from the Church for apostasy, John Whitmer settled in Far West, Missouri, where he died 11 July 1878.
- 1.11.17–19—*Samuel H. Smith*—A younger brother of the prophet Joseph Smith. He is often referred to as the third person baptized with proper authority in this dispensation following Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. He was one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and is credited with being the first formal missionary of the Church. When Joseph and Hyrum were murdered in Carthage, Illinois, Samuel was relentlessly pursued by elements of the mob, which resulted in extreme fatigue and susceptibility to a fever which shortly thereafter took his life on 30 July 1844.

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