

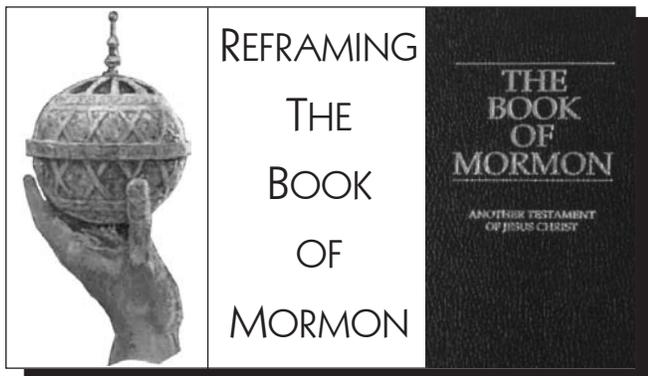
Are apologetic theories of Lamanite identity consistent with the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's prophetic legacy?

REINVENTING LAMANITE IDENTITY

By Brent Lee Metcalfe

*I find every Sect, as far as Reason will help them, make use of it gladly: and where it fails them, they cry out, 'Tis matter of Faith, and above Reason.*¹

—JOHN LOCKE



WE ARE WITNESSING THE REINVENTION OF the Book of Mormon—not by skeptical critics, but by believing apologists. Most Mormons likely believe what the Book of Mormon introduction teaches—that “the Lamanites . . . are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.”² They hold this belief oblivious to the fact that over the last few decades LDS scholars at Brigham Young University and elsewhere have substantially altered this traditional view.

Findings from multidisciplinary studies of the Book of Mormon have increasingly led LDS scholars to shrink and dilute the book’s American Israelite (or *Amerisraelite*) population. Apologetic scholars now recognize (1) that Book of Mormon events could not have spanned North, Central, and



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South America, and (2) that modern Amerindians are predominately of East Asian ancestry. Confirmation of both acknowledgments is found in DNA analyses that establish an Asian, not Middle Eastern, genetic signature for the overwhelming majority of Amerindians.³ As BYU geneticist Michael Whiting stipulates, a hemispheric colonization model for the Book of Mormon “is indeed incorrect” and “appears falsified by current genetic evidence.”⁴

Many LDS apologists envision the Book of Mormon’s founding Israelite colonists as a small group who interacted in varying degrees with the vast indigenous populations of Mesoamerica. In time, sustained widespread exogamy with these “others” effectively extinguished the Israelites’ unique Middle Eastern genetic signature. Accordingly, Lamanites and Nephites are defined by something other than Israelite ancestry. Such theories turn traditional understandings of Book of Mormon lands and peoples, including Joseph Smith’s revelations, on their head.

While perhaps affording revisionist Book of Mormon studies a veneer of scientific respectability, these apologetic efforts to reinvent Lamanite identity face some formidable challenges, a few of which follow.

CHALLENGES FROM CRITICAL READING

WHERE CAN BOOK of Mormon readers find the throngs of indigenous “others” who revisionist scholars claim intermingled with the Jaredite and Amerisraelite societies? Those who uncover “others” lurking in the narrative often perceive them buried in subtle, or even problematic, rhetorical nuances. Hugh Nibley and John Sorenson, for example, discover non-Israelite “others” in a prayer offered by Alma on behalf of the Zoramites: “O Lord, their souls are precious, and *many* of them are our brethren” (Alma 31:35, emphasis added). Nibley and Sorenson read “many” (i.e., not *all*) as an indication of “other [non-Israelite] things going on”⁵ and “ethnic variety.”⁶ Despite its appeal, Nibley and Sorenson’s interpretation is unsound.

A slightly different, yet significant, rendition of this prayer is preserved in the Book of Mormon original manuscript, print-

er's manuscript,⁷ and 1830 edition: ". . . and many of them are our *near* brethren."⁸ In other words, "many"—but not all—of the Zoramites are *close relatives* of Alma and some of his companions.⁹ Amulek employs the same usage in his recollection, "As I was journeying to see a very *near* kindred . . ."¹⁰ A rigorous evaluation of Alma's supplication provides no evidence for an awareness of non-Israelite "others" in the promised land during the Nephite reign.

Indeed, a careful reading of the Book of Mormon reveals that the narrative says nothing of indigenous "others" and in fact prophetically precludes them. After their arrival in the Americas but before they divide into competing factions, Lehi delivers a divine promise about the Israelite immigrants:

And behold, it is wisdom that *this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations*; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as *those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves . . .* and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.¹¹

Other non-Israelite nations would eventually come, but even then God must "bring" them because, in harmony with God's pledge to Lehi, they know nothing of the promised land much less inhabit it: "But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief . . . [y]ea, he will *bring* other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be *scattered* and *smitten*" (2 Ne. 1:10–11, emphasis added).

Prophecies by his son Nephi anticipate Lehi's prophetic promise. Nephi sees in an eschatological vision "many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise" and "the seed of [his] brethren; and they were *scattered* before the Gentiles and were *smitten*."¹² The Amerisraelite promised land is expansive, encompassing North American venues for the arrival of British and European settlers, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the construction of the New Jerusalem.¹³ Other Nephite prophets and even the risen Book of Mormon Christ reaffirm that the latter-day American remnant of Israel would be scattered and smitten by future Gentile colonists.¹⁴

When ancestry is identified, *all* post-Jaredite peoples—Nephites and non-Nephites, good and bad, groups and individuals—consistently trace their pedigree back to the founding Israelite immigrants. Ammon, for instance, says that he is "a descendant of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 7:13; see also v. 3) who "was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness" (Mosiah 25:2), and Mulek was "the son of Zedekiah" the Jewish king (Hel. 6:10; cf. Omni 1:15). Nephite dissident Coriantumr "was [also] a descendant of Zarahemla" (Hel. 1:15).

Alma is "a descendant of Nephi" (Mosiah 17:2), and the

Nephite kingdom is conferred only on "those who were descendants of Nephi" (Mosiah 25:13). Amulek touts his Israelite heritage: "I am Amulek; I am the son of Giddonah, who was the son of Ishmael, who was a descendant of Aminadi . . . And Aminadi was a descendant of Nephi, who was the son of Lehi, who came out of the land of Jerusalem, who was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt" (Alma 10:2–3). Mormon proclaims himself "a pure descendant of Lehi" (3 Ne. 5:20) via Nephi (Morm. 1:5), a fact proudly reiterated by Moroni: "I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi" (Morm. 8:13).

Lamanite king Lamoni, readers learn, is "a descendant of Ishmael" (Alma 17:21; cf. v. 19). Centuries after the Lehites disembark on their new promised land, a group of Lamanites "who joined the people of the Lord" did not include Nephite dissenters "but they were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel" (Alma 24:29). The two thousand stripling warriors are "descendants of Laman, who was the eldest son of our father Lehi" (Alma 56:3).

Lamanite doesn't necessarily refer to a descendant of Laman, nor *Nephite* to a descendant of Nephi—but they are universally described by Book of Mormon narrators as Israelite. To distinguish between those "who are friendly to Nephi" and those who "seek to destroy the people of Nephi," Jacob labels the two competing factions "Nephites" and "Lamanites" respectively (Jacob 1:13–14). Jacob explicitly states that Lamanites and Nephites consisted of familial groupings bearing the names of Israelites introduced in 1 Nephi.¹⁵ By Jacob's definition, a Lamanite is someone who sought "to destroy the people of Nephi" (Jacob 1:14), a view similar to Nephi's (2 Ne. 5:14).

Yet *Lamanite* isn't merely an exonym used by Nephites to generically reference outsiders. It is an ancestral insignia that its bearers wear with honor. In a letter to Moroni, chief captain of the Nephite military, king Ammoron proclaims: "I am a bold Lamanite" (Alma 54:24), "a descendant of Zoram, whom your fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem" (v. 23). Ammoron's purpose in waging war on the Nephites is to avenge such familial injustices (v. 24; cf. Alma 20:13).

Book of Mormon readers are repeatedly told that the Lamanites are descendants of the founding Israelites. For instance, the narrator says that "the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon *their fathers*" who rebelled against "Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam" (Alma 3:6, emphasis added). Readers also learn of a "land which was called by the Lamanites, Jerusalem, calling it after the land of *their fathers' nativity*" (Alma 21:1, emphasis added).

Moreover, Nephites don't label as Lamanite every non-Nephite they find. Amaleki, for instance, details Mosiah's discovery of "a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla," not Lamanites (Omni 1:14). Consistent with Lehi's prophetic promise (2 Ne. 1:9, and passim), these people "came out from Jerusalem . . . brought by the hand of the Lord" (Omni 1:15–16). Amaleki adds that "their language had become corrupted" so that neither "Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them."¹⁶ This is a clear example of a Nephite

encounter with a foreign group of “others”—not considered Lamanite or Nephite—but Israelite nevertheless.

Book of Mormon readers are not told of a single Nephite or Lamanite who descended from anyone other than an Israelite. Some scholars have tried to mitigate this anomaly by suggesting that indigenous peoples became Israelite through “adoption” into the Abrahamic covenant¹⁷ or that the Nephite “lineage history” is so ethnocentric that it obscures non-Israelite denizens.¹⁸ Such suggestions, however, have no real explanatory power since *both* the Amerisraelites *and* the pre-Israelite Jaredites fail to mention indigenous “others,” and the Amerisraelite narrators exhibit no difficulty recognizing the Jaredites as non-Israelites who formerly inhabited the promised land.

Book of Mormon narrators are well aware of global diversity. Both Gentiles and other Israelites are said to inhabit distant lands across “large,” “many,” or “great waters” (1 Ne. preamble; 13:10ff; 17:5; Omni 1:16), and the Ten Tribes are off in yet another region.¹⁹ In the Book of Mormon, these are distinct and distinguishable groups who await their latter-day gatherings to their respective lands of inheritance. This is one reason the Book of Mormon’s failure to mention indigenous non-Israelite populations who lived concurrently with the Nephite reign is so problematic. The Book of Mormon tells of non-Israelites inhabiting the promised land and interacting with the Amerisraelites, but these are always the latter-day Gentiles whom God must “bring.”

CHALLENGES FROM PROPHETIC AUTHORITY

JOSEPH SMITH, THE Book of Mormon translator, effectively eviscerates the apologetic reinvention of the Jaredite/Amerisraelite story. Smith plainly taught that the Book of Mormon recounts the *origin* of modern Amerindians who anciently populated the Western Hemisphere.

In response, apologists emphasize not only that prophets are fallible but also that Smith expressed or authorized divergent opinions about the Book of Mormon setting and peoples. Despite his theological evolution,²⁰ Smith unfurled his tale of Mormonism’s foundational text with considerable consistency. In 1833, he wrote newspaper editor N. C. Saxton that “[t]he Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians . . . By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are des[c]endants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt, and that the Land of America is a promised land unto them, and unto it all the tribes of Israel will come.”²¹

But Smith didn’t stop there. He often claimed divine sanction for his interpretations, appealing to the same revelatory source by which he had dictated the Book of Mormon. For example, when Saxton failed to print Smith’s 1833 letter in toto, Joseph replied: “I was somewhat disappointed on rece[iv]ing my paper with only a part of my letter inserted in ~~it~~. The letter which I wrote you for publication I wrote by the commandment of God, and I am quite anxious to have it all laid before the public for it is of importance to them.”²²

In Smith’s canonical revelations, God identifies

Amerindians as “Lamanites,” a remnant of “the Jew.”²³ God’s edicts provide the impetus for the first mission to the Lamanites, or as Oliver Cowdery dubbed them: “the Delaware Nation of Lamanites.”²⁴ God even confirms that no other nations inhabited the promised land during the Nephite occupation:

Yea, and this was their [i.e., Nephite prophets and disciples] faith—that my gospel, which I gave unto them that they might preach in their days, might come unto their brethren the Lamanites, and also all that had become Lamanites because of their dissensions. Now, this is not all—their faith in their prayers was that this gospel should be made known also, *if it were possible that other nations should possess this land*; And thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life; Yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be.²⁵

Smith also delivered extracanonical revelations about Amerindian identity and origins. On 3 June 1834, Smith and a few Zion’s Camp recruits disinterred a skeleton from an earthen mound. Among other things, Smith said the bones were the remains of a “white Lamanite” named Zelph, a warrior under the prophet Onandagus.²⁶ Wilford Woodruff later gave his eyewitness testimony that Smith received Zelph’s biographical sketch “in a vision.”²⁷

Word of Smith’s Zelph revelation soon began to circulate among non-Mormons. In November 1834, Eber D. Howe published an important account of the Zelph episode:

A large mound was one day discovered, upon which Gen. Smith ordered an excavation to be made into it; and about one foot from the top of the ground, the bones of a human skeleton were found, which were carefully laid out upon a board, when Smith made a speech, prophesying or declaring that they were the remains of a celebrated General among the Nephites, mentioning his name and the battle in which he was slain, some 1500 years ago. This was undoubtedly done to encourage the troops to deeds of daring, when they should meet the Missourians in battle array.²⁸

Howe’s recital involving Nephites is corroborated by Joseph Smith himself, who provided the context in which he received his vision. In a missive to his wife, Emma, on 4 June 1834—the day after Zelph’s disinterment and the attending vision—Smith depicts his troops as “wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasional[ly] the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity.”²⁹ Zelph, a white Lamanite, was grandly positioned against this grisly yet awesome Nephite backdrop.

Throughout his prophetic tenure, Smith insisted that he first learned about the gold plates from an angel on the autumnal equinox of 1823. Mormon tradition usually identifies the angel as Moroni, a Nephite author and redactor. In 1835,

Smith related that the angel said “the Indians were the literal descendants of Abraham.”³⁰ Smith later explained that according to the angel the metallic record gave “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang.”³¹

In 1842, Smith added that during his 1823 vision of Moroni he “was informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country, and shown who they were, and from whence they came,” including “a brief sketch of their origin, progress,” and so on. Armed with this insight, Smith “was also told” by the angel “where there was deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgement of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent.” The persistent angel appeared to Smith three times that night, “unfold[ing] the same things” each time. Smith was clear: the Israelite “remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country.”³²

According to his own testimony, Joseph Smith knew, based on God’s revelations, that the Amerindians were of Israelite origin and that Nephites anciently roamed the Illinois River Valley.

GALILEO WHISPERS

IN 1845, THE publication of *Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints*³³ codified Joseph Smith’s understanding of Amerindian origins. Following Smith’s martyrdom and before the formation of a new First Presidency, the governing Twelve Apostles, three of whom would later become Joseph’s successors, explicitly endorsed³⁴ a global proclamation entreating the United States government to

continue to gather together, and to colonize the tribes and remnants of Israel (the Indians), and also to feed, clothe, succor, and protect them, and endeavor to civilize and unite; and also to bring them to the knowledge of their Israelitish origin, and of the fulness of the gospel which was revealed to, and written by, their forefathers on this land; the record of which has now come to light.³⁵

The apostolic body further decreed: “[God] has revealed the origin and the Records of the aboriginal tribes of America, and their future destiny.—*And we know it.*”³⁶

Smith’s successors, from Brigham Young to Gordon B.

Hinckley, have buttressed his view of the Book of Mormon as an etiological saga of ancient America. And the tradition continues. In a recent *Ensign* article, LDS convert Hugo Miza tells of “a special connection between the Book of Mormon and [his Mayan] tribe.” Miza reflects, “I felt the Book of Mormon explained where our Cakchiquel tribe came from and who our ancestors were.”³⁷

Clearly, not all believers have been persuaded by, or are even familiar with, apologetic efforts to reinvent Lamanite identity. Scriptural literalists may revolt, castigating revisionists who reframe traditional Book of Mormon geography and Lamanite ancestry as wolves in sheep’s clothing. Some devout members may choose to follow in the footsteps of more liberal biblical scholars who maintain, “Even if it didn’t happen, it’s a true story.”³⁸ Still others, though appreciative of Smith’s aptitude for crafting sacred literature, will conclude that the Book of Mormon is neither ancient nor divine.

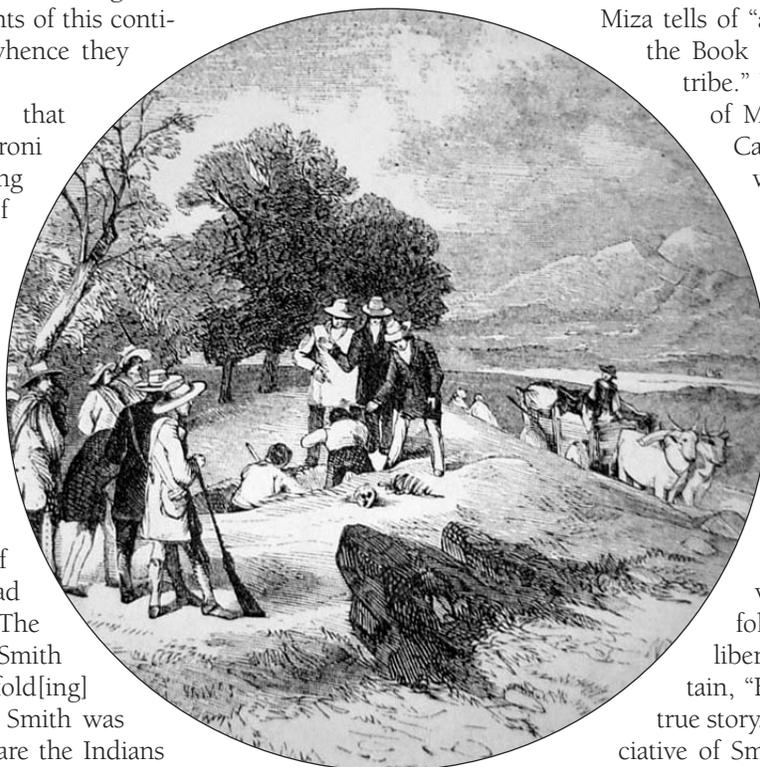
Whatever the outcome, apologetic scholars have an arduous task ahead of them. They have yet to explain cogently

why all Book of Mormon characters—God included—seemingly know nothing about the hordes of indigenous peoples that the revisionist theories require; why Joseph Smith’s revelation of the Book of Mormon is trustworthy enough to extract a detailed limited geography, yet his revelations about Amerindian identity and origins are flawed, if not erroneous; and why their word should count more than that of LDS prophets on the one hand, and that of secular scholars on the other.³⁹

Sooner rather than later, history will reveal whether the apologetic reinvention of the Book of Mormon is a warrant for faith or merely another artifact of humanity’s irrepressible will to believe. Or perhaps a fresh, reinvented faith will emerge in the wake. ☞

NOTES

1. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 689.
2. “Introduction,” Book of Mormon (1981 edition).
3. Support for Asian origins is a leitmotif in Amerindian genetic studies. For example, see Maria-Catira Bortolini et al., “Y-Chromosome Evidence for Differing Ancient Demographic Histories in the Americas,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 73, no. 3 (September 2003): 524–39; Alan G. Fix, “Colonization Models and Initial Genetic Diversity in the Americas,” *Human Biology* 74, no. 1 (February 2002): 1–10; Angélica González-Oliver et al., “Founding Amerindian



“DISCOVERY OF A LAMANITE SKELETON”
Harper’s New Monthly Magazine
Vol. 6, No. 35 (April 1853): 610
(Courtesy of Brent Lee Metcalfe)

Mitochondrial DNA Lineages in Ancient Maya from Xcaret, Quintana Roo,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 116 (2001): 230–35; Michael F. Hammer, “The Origins of Native American Y Chromosome Diversity,” delivered as the Rufus Wood Leigh Lecture, 12 November 2003, University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Genovea Keyeux et al., “Possible Migration Routes into South America Deduced from Mitochondrial DNA Studies in Colombian Amerindian Populations,” *Human Biology* 74, no. 2 (April 2002): 211–33; Jeffrey T. Lell et al., “The Dual Origin and Siberian Affinities of Native American Y Chromosomes,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 1 (January 2002): 192–206; Lell et al., “Reply to Tarazona-Santos and Santos,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 5 (May 2002): 1380–81; Ripan S. Malhi et al., “The Structure of Diversity within New World Mitochondrial DNA Haplogroups: Implications for the Prehistory of North America,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 4 (April 2002): 905–19; Mark Seielstad et al., “A Novel Y-Chromosome Variant Puts an Upper Limit on the Timing of First Entry into the Americas,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 73, no. 3 (September 2003): 700–05; Eduardo Tarazona-Santos and Fabrício R. Santos, “The Peopling of the Americas: A Second Major Migration?” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 5 (May 2002): 1377–80. (Articles from *The American Journal of Human Genetics* are available online at <www.journals.uchicago.edu/AJHG/home.html>.)

4. Michael F. Whiting, “DNA and the Book of Mormon: A Phylogenetic Perspective,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 28, 31. For a range of insightful responses to the DNA evidence, in addition to articles cited elsewhere in this essay, see Dean H. Leavitt, Jonathon C. Marshall, and Keith A. Crandall, “The Search for the Seed of Lehi: How Defining Alternative Models Helps in the Interpretation of Genetic Data,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 133–50; David A. McClellan, “Detecting Lehi’s Genetic Signature: Possible, Probable, or Not?” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 (2003): 35–90; Thomas W. Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, eds. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 47–77 (an earlier version of this essay is available online at <www.mormonscripturestudies.com>); Murphy, “Simply Implausible: DNA and a Mesoamerican Setting for the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 109–31; Simon G. Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, forthcoming).

5. Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Volume 8, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 544. Nibley’s published remarks were originally delivered at the Sunstone Book of Mormon Lecture Series, 10 May 1988, Salt Lake City.

6. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 242; see also Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 8–9.

7. I’m indebted to Van E. Hale for alerting me to this variant in the printer’s manuscript.

8. Alma chapter XVI, p. 313 (1830 edition). Royal Skousen renders the original manuscript, “& many of them are our {r<e%>|n}ear Breth / -re{r|n}” (Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon—Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* [Provo: FARMS, 2001], 297, virgule line break added), and the printer’s manuscript, “& many of them are our near brethren” (Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part Two, Alma 17–Moroni 10—Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts* [Provo: FARMS, 2001], 553); “near” is absent for the first time in the 1837 edition Book of Mormon.

9. Cf. “NEAR . . . 2. Closely related by blood. She is thy father’s near kinswoman. Lev. xviii.” (Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* [New York: S. Converse, 1828], s.v. NEAR, emphasis in the original).

10. Alma 10:7, emphasis added. This usage of *near* also appears in the KJV (see Lev. 18:6, 12–13; 20:19; 21:2; Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12; 2 Sam. 19:42).

11. 2 Ne. 1:8–9; see also John C. Kunich, “Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes,” *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 261–62.

12. 1 Ne. 13:14, emphasis added; see also v. 34; 15:13–17; 22:7–8.

13. 1 Ne. 13:12–42; 3 Ne. 20:13–14, 22; 21:2–7, 22–24; Ether 13:2–11; D&C 10:48–51; 19:27; 84:2–5; see Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 407–09.

14. 2 Ne. 10:18; 26:15, 19; 3 Ne. 16:7–9; 20:27–28; 21:2; Morm. 5:9, 15, 19–20. In his treatment of Lehi’s prophetic promise, Matthew Roper neglects this eschatological context of Amerisraelites being *scattered* and *smitten* by Gentiles (Matthew Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors: Book of Mormon Peoples and Pre-

Columbian Populations,” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 [2003]: 114–16). Lehi’s promise falls immediately on the heels of Nephi’s exposition of Isaiah’s “temporal” prophecy that Nephi and his brethren’s “seed” will be “scattered” by latter-day “Gentiles . . . upon the face of this land” (1 Ne. 22:6–7; cf. the opening of the very next chapter, 2 Nephi 1:1, “And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, Lehi, also spake many things unto them . . .”). Also, Book of Mormon narrators appear unacquainted with Roper’s distinction between “nations” and “societies” (Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors” [2003], 115).

15. That is, “Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites” (Jacob 1:13). A tribe of “Samites,” named for Jacob and Nephi’s elder sibling Sam (see 1 Ne. 2:5), may have been omitted from the tribal list because Sam’s descendants are clustered with Nephi’s (2 Ne. 4:11).

16. Omni 1:17. From the narrator’s viewpoint, the Mulekites probably lost their pristine mother tongue because, unlike the Lehite party, they “brought no records with them” (*ibid.*; see also 1 Ne. 3:19 [cf. Mosiah 1:2–5]).

17. D. Jeffery Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens, “Who Are the Children of Lehi?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 39, 47–48, 50; see also Matthew Roper, “Swimming in the Gene Pool: Israelite Kinship Relations, Genes, and Genealogy,” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 (2003): 148.

18. Sorenson, *Ancient American* (1985), 50–56; John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, “Before DNA,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 17–18; Whiting, “DNA” (2003), 25–28, 31, 33–34.

19. 1 Ne. 22:4; 3 Ne. 16:1ff; 17:4; 21:26; Ether 13:11 (cf. D&C 133:26ff).

20. See generally Gary James Bergera, ed., *Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

21. Joseph Smith to N. C. Saxton, 4 January 1833, Joseph Smith Letter Book 1, p. 17 (the *r* in “tribes of Indians” is dotted like an *i*), Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), DVD 20; see also Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 297.

22. Joseph Smith to N. C. Saxton, 12 February 1833, Joseph Smith Letter Book 1, pp. 27–28, underline emphasis in the original, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* (2002), DVD 20; see also Jessee, *Personal Writings* (2002), 299.

23. D&C 19:27; see also 3:16–20; 54:8; 57:4. In its earliest form, D&C 57:9–10 also mentioned Lamanites. On 20 July 1831, Smith delivered a revelation that originally instructed Sidney Gilbert to “send goods . . . unto the Lamanites even by whom he will as Clerks employed in his service & thus the Gospel may be preached unto them” (Book of Commandments, Law, and Covenants, Book B, p. 35, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* [2002], DVD 19; see also Kirtland Revelation Book, p. 90, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* [2002], DVD 19). After Gilbert’s mission failed to generate Native American converts, the revelation was revised to its current form for publication in the 1835 D&C (XXVII:4; despite its availability, the revelation didn’t appear in the 1833 Book of Commandments). Unfortunately, Gilbert could never fulfill his revised charter because he died the year previous in 1834 (see H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999], 143–44).

24. Oliver Cowdery to “My dearly beloved brethren and sisters,” 8 April 1831, Joseph Smith Letter Book 1, p. 10, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* (2002), DVD 20; see D&C 28:8–9, 14; 30:6; 32:2. An exuberant Cowdery told of a government contact who claimed that the Delaware “have now the name of Nephy who is the son of Nephi &c handed down to this very generation” (Cowdery, 8 April 1831, p. 11).

25. D&C 10:48–51, emphasis added; see also 2 Ne. 1:8ff. Roper misses the critical nuance, “if it were possible that other nations should possess this land,” which emphasizes that “other nations” did not possess the land when the Nephites made their supplications (Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors,” [2003], 120). Book of Mormon narrators clearly identify these “other nations” as the latter-day Gentile nations whom they hope will embrace the gospel contained in their record (Book of Mormon Title Page; 1 Ne. 22:6–9 [cf. 2 Ne. 28:2]; 2 Ne. 30:3–8; Morm. 3:17; 5:9–10, 22–24; Ether 4:13; 8:23 [cf. Mosiah 28:19; Alma 37:25]; 12:36–41).

26. For surveys of the primary sources on Zelph, see Donald Q. Cannon, “Zelph Revisited,” *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: Illinois*, ed. H. Dean Garrett (Provo: Brigham Young University, Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1995), 97–111; Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zelph Story,” Paper GOD-89 (Provo: FARMS, 1989); Godfrey, “The Zelph Story,” *Brigham Young University Studies*

29, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 31–56; Godfrey, “What Is the Significance of Zelph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 2 (1999), 70–79; Brent Lee Metcalfe, “A Documentary Analysis of the Zelph Episode,” delivered at the 1989 Sunstone Symposium; Metcalfe, “Disinterring Zelph,” forthcoming online at <www.mormonscripturestudies.com>.

27. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, [3 June] 1834, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City; see also Susan Staker, ed., *Waiting for World’s End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 4. Woodruff’s journal was combined with Heber C. Kimball’s to form the 3 June 1834 entry in the *History of the Church* ([Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 2:79–80). Like Woodruff, Kimball also observed that “Brother Joseph had enquired of the Lord” about Zelph’s identity “and it was made known in a vision” (Heber C. Kimball, “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 2 [1 February 1845]: 788). Woodruff recounted Smith’s Zelph vision several times throughout his life. Ruben McBride penned a similar eyewitness account—so similar that in some instances his recollection of Smith’s language is identical to Woodruff’s (Reuben McBride, Sr., Journal, 3 June 1834, pp. 3–4, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City).

28. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: Or, a Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 159; see also Metcalfe, “Zelph Episode,” Sunstone Symposium (1989); Metcalfe, “Disinterring Zelph” (forthcoming). Howe’s account escaped Godfrey and Cannon’s attention in their respective studies.

29. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834, Joseph Smith Letter Book 2, pp. 57–58, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* (2002), DVD 20; see also Jessee, *Personal Writings* (2002), 345–46. Cannon incorrectly places Joseph’s letter to Emma “two days later” instead of the next day (Cannon, “Zelph Revisited” [1995], 104). More recently, Cannon mistakenly dates Zelph’s disinterment as “2 June 1834” (Donald Q. Cannon, “Zelph,” *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 801). Smith’s letter to his wife removes all uncertainty from Woodruff’s conjecture that “the mounds . . . were flung up by the ancient inhabitants of this continent probably by the Nephites & Lamanites” (Woodruff, Journal, [3 June] 1834, emphasis added; Woodruff may have wondered whether the Jaredites contributed to the mound building [cf. Ether 11:6]).

30. Joseph Smith, Journal, 9 November 1835, p. 24, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* (2002), DVD 20; see also Jessee, *Personal Writings* (2002), 105; Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:44.

31. Joseph Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, p. 5, dictated c. 1838–39, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* (2002), DVD 1; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:34; Jessee, *Personal Writings* (2002), 234; Vogel, *Mormon Documents* (1996), 1:64. Roper’s anecdote involving the “origin” of his Whetten ancestry isn’t analogous since Smith claimed to know the origin of what he all-inclusively called “the Indians that now inhabit this country,” “the former inhabitants of this continent,” “our western Tribes of Indians,” and “the aboriginal inhabitants of this country”—not merely the origin of one familial branch in the vast pedigree of Native Americans (see Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors” [2003], 95).

32. Joseph Smith, “Church History,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (1 March 1842): 707 (a.k.a. the Wentworth Letter); see also Jessee, *Personal Writings* (2002), 243–44; Vogel, *Mormon Documents* (1996), 1:170–71. Smith composed this sketch of Mormon beginnings for John Wentworth, editor and owner of the *Chicago Democrat*.

Portions of Smith’s 1842 account rely heavily on the writings of Orson Pratt (see Orson Pratt, *A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* [Edinburgh: Ballentyne and Hughes, 1840], 14–15). Smith didn’t share the sort of misgivings Matthew Roper seems to have about his use of Pratt’s wording (see Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors,” [2003], 97–98). In fact, Smith thought so much of his 1842 account that in 1843 he repurposed it for publication by Daniel Rupp (see I. Daniel Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia: An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* [Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys, 1844], 404–07; see also Vogel, *Mormon Documents* [1996], 1:183–86). After receiving a copy of Rupp’s tome, Smith returned his profound gratitude for “so valueable a treasure. The design, ~~is good~~ the propriety, the wisdom of letting every sect tell its [own] story; and the elegant manner in which the work appears, have filled my breast with encomiums upon it, wishing you God’s speed. . . I shall be pleased to furnish further information at a proper time” (Joseph Smith to I. Daniel Rupp, 5 June 1844, underline emphasis in the original, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* [2002], DVD 20). Three short weeks later, Smith was murdered.

33. (New York: Pratt and Brannan, “Prophet” Office, 6 April 1845). The

Proclamation is addressed “To all the Kings of the World; To the President of the United States of America; To the Governors of the several States; And to the Rulers and People of all Nations” (ibid., 1) in accordance with divine directive (D&C 124:2–3). Wilford Woodruff alluded to this revelation when he wrote that the *Proclamation* fulfilled “an express commandment of God” (*Times and Seasons* 6, no. 19 [15 December 1845]: 1068, reprinted from *Millennial Star* 6, no. 9 [15 October 1845]: 136).

34. Although Apostle Parley P. Pratt authored the *Proclamation*, Brigham Young wrote to Pratt affirming the Twelve’s endorsement: “We have to say in relation to your proclamation that we approve of it and are pleased with it” (Brigham Young to Parley P. Pratt, 26 May 1845, Brigham Young Letterpress Copybook [27 August 1844–25 May 1853], p. 14, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, available on *Selected Collections* [2002], DVD 21). Young signed the letter: “Done by advice of the Quorum of Twelve. Brigham Young Pres[iden]t” (ibid., p. 16). On the day he received the *Proclamation*, Apostle Wilford Woodruff ordered 20,000 copies and recorded: “This is the proclamation to All the Kings of World & rulers & people of All nations. May the Lord make it a blessings to All nations. This Proclamation is made by the Twelve Apostles in fulfillment of the Revelations & Commandments of God. See Doctrin[e]s & Covenants sections CIII: i paragraph Math 22 ch. 5 vers. This is A warning to the whole gentile world that they may be left without excuse in the day of Gods Judgment upon the nations. I thank God that I am instrument in his hands of printing & Circulating this important Proclamation through Britain & Europe” (Staker, *World’s End* [1993], 88).

Some researchers have mistakenly ascribed authorship of the *Proclamation* to Wilford Woodruff (James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965], 1:252; Richard D. Draper and Jessica E. Draper, “The Gathering of the Jews as Understood in the Nauvoo Period,” *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: Illinois*, ed. H. Dean Garrett [Provo: Brigham Young University, Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1995], 146; Arnold H. Green, “Jews in LDS Thought,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 34, no. 4 [1994–95]: 142; William H. Reeder, Jr., “Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles on the Death of Joseph Smith,” 52, no. 3 [March 1949], cited in Clark, *Messages* [1965], 1:252) or to Brigham Young (Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989], xv).

35. *Proclamation* (1845), 11.

36. Ibid., 13, emphasis in the original. At the twilight of the nineteenth century, scientific evidence supporting an Asian ancestry for Amerindians continued to mount. As the twentieth century dawned, a handful of LDS apostles departed from their nineteenth-century counterparts, allowing for Jaredite survivors or small non-Israelite incursions to account for evidence of Asian descent.

37. Hugo Miza, “Deep in the Mountains,” *Ensign* 34, no. 2 (February 2004): 33. Miza also notes, “I felt that I was part of the fulfillment of the promises God made to Lehi, Nephi, and other Book of Mormon prophets about their children being preserved.”

38. Ronald S. Hendel, “The Search for Noah’s Flood: Scientists Are Looking in the Wrong Place,” *Bible Review* 19, no. 3 (June 2003): 8.

39. A few years back I formulated the scientific complication of the *sancta simplicitas* of theology into what I dub a *Galileo Event*. As I define it,

- A Galileo Event occurs when the cognitive dissonance between empirical evidence and a theological tenet is so severe that a religion will abandon the tenet, acquiescing to the empirical data.

Religions have undergone numerous such events—some large, some small. Amerindian genetic studies stand to force a Galileo Event for the LDS community (cf. “DNA and Lamanite Identity: A Galileo Event,” panel discussion with D. Jeffery Meldrum, Thomas W. Murphy, and Trent D. Stephens, moderated by Brent Lee Metcalfe at the 2001 Sunstone Symposium; panelist Stephens acknowledged that the shift from a hemispheric to a limited Book of Mormon geography is a Galileo Event in its own right). Contrary to Daniel Peterson’s hyperbole, I would not characterize a Galileo Event as “a wonderful, atheist-making event” since, by my definition, this type of event involves a theological facet, not the totality of a theological system (see Daniel C. Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Of ‘Galileo Events,’ Hype, and Suppression: Or, Abusing Science and Its History,” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 [2003]: x). In Peterson’s assessment, I’m “critical of fundamental” (interesting word choice) “Latter-day Saint beliefs” (Peterson, “Hype” [2003]: ix). Ironically, despite his rhetorical posturing, Peterson has used “Galileo Event” approvingly (see Peterson, “Random Reflections on the Passing Scene,” delivered at the 2003 FAIR Conference). Quite obviously, my modest definition of Galileo Event doesn’t entail ecclesiastical hobgoblins masquerading as “repressive, obscurantist clergy” (Peterson, “Hype” [2003]: xl [and passim]) who are “benighted and corrupt” (Glen M. Cooper, “Appendix—On Aping Aristotle: Modern-Day Simplicios,” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 [2003]: lxiii [and passim]).