

**My testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,
commonly known as the Mormon Church**

**Gary Tietjen
508 Landing Ct. NE,
Rio Rancho, NM 87124
garytietjen1@msn.com**

Even before the death of the Apostles, there had begun an apostasy within the Christian Church which would completely destroy it. Christ himself had told them as much: (Matt 24:4-11) *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many... Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.”*

Paul was very aware of a looming apostasy and issued constant warnings: Acts 20:29-31. *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”*

To the Galatians he wrote: Gal. 1:6-8. *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”*

To Timothy he wrote: 1 Tim. 4:1-4 *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”*

He warned the Thessalonians that a general apostasy would precede the Second Coming of the Lord: 2 Thes. 2: 1-3. 1 *“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”* In the Catholic Bible, the phrase “falling away” is translated “apostasy.”

Peter was adamant about it: 2 Pet 2:1-2 1 *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And **many** shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”*

John the Revelator spoke about Satan, that old Dragon, who would **completely, totally** overcome the Saints (members of the Church): Rev 13:7: 7 *“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over **all** kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”*

Centuries would elapse without the gospel on the earth. The prophet Amos had foretold it: Amos 8:11-12 *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.”* The prophet Isaiah knew its true cause: Isaiah 24:5 *“The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.”*

But there would come a time when the gospel would be RESTORED to the earth. John, you remember, had said that power was given Satan over **“all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”** In the next chapter (Rev 14:6) he uses exactly the same language to promise a **restoration** by means of an angel: *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to **every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people**”* That angel was the Angel Moroni and the everlasting gospel he had is found in the Book of Mormon. Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 to begin that restoration.

On the day of Pentecost Peter promised a **restoration** of the gospel. (Acts 3:19-22) *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of **restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.”* Here an appearance of Christ and the raising up of a prophet were predicted. That happened when God and his Son, Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820.

What happened to the gospel during that apostasy? The Presbyterians (Westminster Confession of Faith, Article 1) Methodists (First Article of Religion), and Baptists (London Baptist 1689 Confession of Faith) agreed that

“There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions... In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.”

Joseph Smith saw both God and Jesus Christ. He saw that they had bodies, parts, and passions and that they were not of one substance, but rather were of one mind and will, perfectly unified. He might have known in what sense God and Jesus Christ were “one” by reading John 17:11 where Jesus is praying to his father (God) for his disciples: “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that **they may be one**, as we are.” Obviously the disciples could not be of one substance. He was praying that they might be united in mind and will.

It was accepted by most Christians that “Since A.D. 397 the Christian church has considered the *canon of the Bible to be complete; if it is complete, then it must be closed*. Therefore, we cannot expect any more books to be discovered or written that would open the canon again and add to its sixty-six books.” Joseph Smith was shown that revelation from God to man exists and will forever exist. The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price were added to the canon of scripture and more revelation will come.

The Presbyterians believed in Predestination, that men were predestined to be saved or to be damned and could do nothing about it. The Baptists and Methodists did not fully agree. Joseph Smith put forward the very important doctrine that “ALL mankind MAY be saved by obedience to the Laws and ordinances of the gospel” He had learned by revelation that men had free agency to choose their own destiny and that the War in Heaven had been fought over that very principle.

We have seen that the gospel was restored to the earth by angelic ministers. We claim that the Book of Mormon and the Bible were to become one scripture, testifying together that Jesus is the Christ, but if that is true, the **Bible** would surely have had something to say about it. The Book of Mormon tells how one family, a remnant of the tribe of Joseph, left Israel before the Babylonian captivity and came to the New World. Many centuries prior, the patriarch Jacob had given his sons patriarchal blessings. Of Joseph, he had said (Gen 49:22-26): “*Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was **separate** from his brethren.*”

Joseph was a fruitful bough (many descendants) by a well (the ocean) whose branches (descendants) run over the wall (cross the ocean). He was blessed with blessings of heaven above and blessings of the deep that lieth under and they would be on the head of Joseph who would be **separate** from his brethren. In his own life Joseph was separate from his brethren because he was taken into Egypt, but this blessing was upon the **tribe** of Joseph as shown 400 years later when Moses repeats the blessing upon Joseph’s tribe: (Deut 33:13-16) “*And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof,*

*and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was **separated** from his brethren.”*

The “deep that coucheth beneath”, the “chief things of the ancient mountains”, the “precious things of the lasting hills” would seem to refer to mineral resources, while the “precious things put forth by the moon” might refer to good harbors. The land of Israel has absolutely no mineral wealth; no coal, no iron, no copper, no gas, nothing to mine. Thus Jacob’s promise did not refer to land inherited in Israel. Israel does not have any harbors on the Mediterranean Ocean, so they were never blessed with shipping exports or imports. These promises to the tribe of Joseph evidently refer to the New World where the remnant of his tribe were to live when they “crossed over the wall.” Again Joseph was to be separated from his brethren by the Ocean.

Isaiah had been very concerned about the split of the ten tribes from the tribe of Judah. He now foresees the destiny of the tribe of Joseph in the New World. To understand his language, we have to know that the lion was the symbol of the tribe of Judah and that the word “Ariel” means the lion of God or the tribe of Judah. (Isa 29:1-4) “ *Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.*” Here he foresees distress, heaviness, and sorrow coming to the tribe of Judah (the Babylonian Captivity), but he doesn’t tell us much about “IT” which would be “unto me as Ariel.” We are left to infer, in hindsight, that he means the tribe of Joseph. He says of Joseph:

“And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.” Thus this remnant of Joseph was to be brought down (destroyed) like Ariel had been, but it was to “speak out of the ground... as of one that hath a familiar spirit” After we have the hindsight of the Book of Mormon, we see how the records of the remnant of Joseph were hidden up in the earth and brought forth by an angel who gave them to Joseph Smith. In Isaiah’s day witches or mediums communicated with the dead and were called “familiar spirits.” The Book of Mormon allowed us to hear from their dead prophets, as if by familiar spirits. Isaiah continues in verse 6:

“Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.” This may refer to the great earthquakes, tempests and cities destroyed by fire at the time of the death of Christ as recorded in the Book of Mormon. Although the remnant was brought down and destroyed and their prophets had perished, Isaiah sees that this record of their people would become a BOOK. (Isa 29:10-18)

*“For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a **book** that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the **book** is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*

*Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid...And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the **book**, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."*

The "marvelous work and a wonder" was the translation of the gold plates given to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni. It was first taken to a learned man who said he could not read a sealed book, then it was delivered to Joseph Smith, an unlearned man, to translate.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon at that time, but in vision he beholds that little remnant of the tribe of Joseph who are escaping the destruction and making their way to the New World. He sees that they will have a **written record** which he calls a "stick" which will be put together with a written record of the tribe of Judah. (Ezekiel 37:16-20) *"Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and **write upon it**, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and **write upon it**, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into **one** stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand."*

The stick of Judah is the Bible and the stick of Joseph is the Book of Mormon. Ezekiel indicates that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are to be merged together and become one testimony that Jesus is the Christ. In John 10:16 Christ said that *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."* The "fold" that he spoke of were the Jews, the tribe of Judah. He said that he had another fold, and this, we surmise, was the tribe of Joseph in the New World.

My Testimony of the Book of Mormon as Mayan and Aztec History

Several years ago my wife and I went to Mexico to see the ruins of the great civilizations that flourished there. We visited first the great pyramids at San Juan Teotihuacan near Mexico City. The pyramid of the Sun is not as high as the Great Pyramid in Egypt, but it is larger at the base (246 yards long and wide, 76 yards high). Then we went to Merida in the Yucatan to see the beautiful elliptical pyramid at Uxmal, then to Chichen Itza. Everywhere we went we saw the large, fierce heads of the feathered serpent, *el sierpe de preciosas plumas*. In Teotihuacan, he is called Quetzalcoatl, in the Yucatan he is Kukulcan, and in Guatemala, he is Gucumatz. All of them mean the same thing, the feathered serpent. In Mexico City in the museum we saw several sculptures of large coiled rattlesnakes, and at Uxmal a 50 foot rattlesnake decorates the frieze of the building and represents Quetzalcoatl. We learned that Quetzalcoatl was a beautiful but *deadly* serpent. From the handbook published by the Museum, we learned that the *feathers* on Quetzalcoatl and those adorning the headdresses of other gods represent flight through the *heavens*; they represent the *celestial* character of the Gods. We wondered whether the feathered headdresses of the Plains Indians came from this source.

This serpent worship thoroughly disgusted the early Spanish Missionaries and they tried vigorously to stamp it out. They first burned every book and religious article they could find. This did not work; the natives went on practicing their religion. Next they decided they must learn to understand this strange religion and then, perhaps, they would be able to reason the people out of their belief. This brought many interesting aspects of the religion to light, but it did not eliminate it. Finally, they decided they must train some of the young Indians in Christianity; they must train them to read Spanish so that they could become missionaries to their own people. As a result, three of these educated Indians wrote a history of their own people which we shall discuss, and these are absolutely astonishing. After several thousand years we would expect to find almost *no* trace of the civilizations of Book of Mormon times. In other areas, folklore, false traditions, and mythology have overgrown and practically obliterated what was once there, but surprisingly, these Indian histories testify of *every* major event in the Book of Mormon with incredible accuracy. Mingled with this are many legends which we know nothing about.

First, let us talk about this serpent religion. When Moses took the Children of Israel out of Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness and did a lot of complaining. At one point, God allowed them to be bitten by many poisonous serpents. When they finally became humble, "The Lord said to Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and sit it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent to brass, he lived" (Num 21:6-9). We know that Moses taught the people much about Christ (the passover, the scapegoat that took upon him the sins of the people, sacrifices to atone for their sins) and this was one more symbol of Christ: if they would look up to Christ, they would be healed not only of their bites, but of their sins. Christ said to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14).

At any rate, the Israelites practically worshipped that brass serpent for 500 years. Finally the righteous King Hezekiah "broke in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it"(2 Kings 18:4). The Nephites brought these teachings with them. In Helaman 8:14 we read: "Yea did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live." (See also 1 Ne 17: 41, 2Ne 25:20, Alma 33:19, Alma 37:46). Alma calls it "a type [of Christ] that was raised up in the wilderness" I feel strongly that the brass serpent became, in time, the feathered serpent.

The Mayans kept a history by painting significant events on cloth and dating each picture. One of these Indian Historians, Ixtlilxochitl, tells us *exactly* who Quetzalcoatl is, [I am using, for the most part, translations from Spanish found in the book "One Fold and One Shepherd" by Ferguson and Hunter]: "*Hallabanse en la mayor prosperidad cuando llego' a esta tierra un hombre a quien llamaron Quetzalcoatl por sus grandes virtudes, teniendole por justo, santo y bueno, ensenandoles por obras y palabras el camino de la virtud y evitandoles los vicios y pecados, dando leyes y buena doctrina; y para refrenarles de su deleites y deshonestidades les*

constituyo' el ayuno. Quetzalcoatl por interpretacion literal significa sierpe de plumas preciosas; por sentido alegorico, varon sapientisimo. Era Quetzalcoatl hombre bien dispuesto, de aspecto grave, blanco y barbado. Su vestuario era un tunica larga” (Obras Historicas, Ixtlilxochitl).

In English it says "at a time when they found themselves in great prosperity, there arrived in this land a man who was called Quetzalcoatl because of his great virtue; he held out to them justice, holiness, and goodness, teaching them by words and works the path of virtue and ridding them of their vices and sins, giving them commandments and good doctrines. In order to keep them from sin and dishonesty, he taught them to fast. By interpretation, Quetzalcoatl means the serpent with precious plumes: in an allegorical sense it is a very wise man. Quetzalcoatl was a well-disposed man, with a serious aspect, white and bearded. He dressed in a long tunic."

This is a rather convincing description of Christ, but to positively identify him, this author, writing in the late 1500's, tells us exactly WHEN Quetzalcoatl appeared: “*Y segun parece por las historias referidas y por los anales, sucedio lo referido algunos anos despues de la Encarnacion de Cristo Senor nuestro, that is, According to the histories and annals I referred to, the things I told you [about Quetzalcoatl] happened a few years after the Incarnation [birth] of Christ our Lord!*”

Could we possibly get an independent record to agree more closely with the Book of Mormon?

The Spanish editor had this to say: “*Quisieron poner de acuerdo las tradiciones Nahuas con las biblicas y trastornaron aquellas*”: “They were just trying to match the Indian traditions with ours and they got them badly twisted up!” Since this editor had no record of Christ's visit to America he would naturally think they did get things messed up.

But this Indian historian goes on to verify every major event in the Book of Mormon. From Toltec histories, told on cloth paintings, Ixtlilxochitl tells the story of the tower of Babel after the flood and how the languages were confounded and how the people were scattered, and all of that he could have read in the Bible. For the record I give the English translation of his words in his first chapter (Sumaria Relacion):

"The Toltecs [which we identify with the Jaredites] understood and knew of the creation of the world and how God created it, and the other things that are in it, such as planets, mountains, animals, etc. and in the same manner they knew how God created a man and a woman from whom men descended and multiplied. And they say the world was created in the year of the ce Tecpatl, and this epoch up to the deluge they called Atonatiuh, (which means age of the sun of water), because the world was destroyed by the deluge; and it is found in the Toltec histories that this age and first world, as they called it, lasted 1716 years; that men were destroyed by very great storms and lightnings from Heaven, and the whole world without a thing remaining, and the highest mountains, which are fifteen cubits, were covered with water; and how men began to multiply from a few that escaped this destruction with a Toplipetlacalli (which almost means closed ark). And how afterwards men, multiplying, made a very tall and strong

Zacualli, which means the very high tower, in order to shelter themselves in it when the second world would be destroyed."

This story, if authentic Indian history, is independent of the Biblical record and is truly remarkable. A test of its authenticity comes when the author tells us something amazing which is NOT in the Bible, that there was a small group whose language was NOT confounded: "and the Toltecs left from there [from the Tower] with seven companions and their wives who understood each other's language and came to this part of the country." You could almost believe he was reading out of the Book of Mormon (another Indian record) to be translated and published 250 years later: Ether 6:16: "And the friends of Jared and his brother were in number about twenty and two souls."

Can we expect any better agreement than this from two independent records? But we have not finished. He tells us that "*tienen alla en sus historia que el sol se estuvo un dia natural sin moverse de un lugar*": "they have in their history that the sun stood still one natural day!" Astounding! Could this be at the birth of Christ when the Book of Mormon says that the sun went down but it was still light as day?

He tells us about a time when the sun and the moon eclipsed, [or so it appeared to them] and the earth trembled and the rocks were broken up and many other things and signs happened. This could have been one of many severe earthquakes, but this one was very different. He pins this event down in time with remarkable precision: "The which, adjusting their time with ours, came to pass at the same time when Christ our Lord suffered, and they say that it was in the *first* days of the year! "

Surely we could not have hoped for this! The Book of Mormon describes that same scene and says that it happened on *the fourth day of the first month* of the year! The two records agree not just within years but down to days. No Aztec could have ginned up this story! Had this Indian been reading between the lines in the Bible, he would have said that our Lord suffered in April, which was certainly not in the first days of the year as the Spaniards reckoned it, but that was when it was according to the Book of Mormon calendar.

I claimed that this Aztec historian verified *every* major event in the Book of Mormon. Listen to this story and tell me who he is describing: He tells us about "a man who gathered together all the histories which the Toltecs had since the creation of the world up to that time [*junto' todas las historias que tenian los Tultecas desde la creacion del mundo hasta en aquel tiempo*] and he had them painted in a very large book, and they painted there all their persecutions and deeds, their triumphs and the good things that happened, their kings and lords, the laws and good government of their ancestors, the ancient things and good examples, temples, idols, sacrifices, rites and ceremonies which they used... and he called it Teoamoxtli which is the same word as the natives call the Holy Scriptures, because they are so much alike"

I, for one was so taken aback at this obvious description of Mormon that I gasped in disbelief. What do you have to say to the editor of this work who said that this Indian was just trying to put their traditions in accord with the Scriptures and he got everything mixed up?

There was a similar history written in Guatemala in 1554 . [Published as "The Annals of the Cakchiquels" and "Title of the Lords of Totonicapan" by University of Oklahoma press] It was written in the Mayan language after the Conquest, and they finally persuaded a French priest to translate the "Title of the Lords of Totonicapan" in 1834. He had this to say: "This manuscript consists of thirty one quarto pages; but translation of the first pages is omitted because they are on the creation of the world... following in *every* respect the same order as in Genesis and the sacred books as far as the captivity of Babylon!" Now Lehi left Jerusalem just prior to the captivity of Babylon, so those Mayans in Guatemala had exactly the same traditions as the Book of Mormon: their scriptures, brought over as the brass plates of Laban had exactly the same account as in Genesis. It is the *time* at which they begin to differ which is so very remarkable. We could never have hoped for this kind of agreement. They could not possibly have made up that story to match the Book of Mormon. This history was hidden away in the archives in Madrid, Spain and not discovered until after the Book of Mormon was published. It goes on to say that "they [the Mayans] came from where the sun rises, *descendants of Israel*, of the same language and customs... for thus the great God wished it to be done, because they were sons of Abraham and Jacob".

Unbelievable! Here is exact confirmation of the voyage of Lehi's family from Jerusalem. It would be impossible, after thousands of years, to get a more accurate verification of the Book of Mormon. If it is nothing else, the Book of Mormon is a very good history of the Mayan and Aztec Indians. But how unexpected the conclusion that they were *Jews*! Jews had been violently expelled from Spain along with the Moors and it was very unpopular to claim Jewish ancestry, and the young educated Indians could hardly have missed this, but they stuck to their story. In the rather lengthy introduction to the Popul Vuh, the editors tells us that "Father Francisco Ximenez tells that in the Province of Peten, to the south of Yucatan, the Spaniards, during their expedition of 1696 against the Itza, found some books written with characters which resembled *Hebrew* characters and also those used by the Chinese."

The story told in Totonicapan is very similar to another Mayan history found in the 1500s in an old convent and now known as the earliest and most authentic history of the Mayans, the *Popul Vuh*. Both describe a voyage across the sea, but they were vague as to how it happened, but both accounts describe how

"Balam-Quitze left [their leaders] the symbol of his being: This is a remembrance which I leave for you. This shall be your power... Then he left them the Pizom-Gagal, as it was called, whose form was invisible because it was wrapped up and could not be unwrapped...it was "the stone of Naxcit which they used in their incantations" [Popul Vuh, p.205, Univ of Oklahoma Press, 1950] Could this have been the Liahona?

The first chapter of the Popul Vuh is the only one of interest to us. We saw how the Toltecs had a story of the Creation so similar to the Biblical one that they had to have come from the same source, but it requires a great stretch of the imagination to find any other Indian legend of the Creation even remotely close to the Biblical account. The Popul Vuh, written some 1500 miles away from the Toltec civilization, is so close to the Biblical account that if we did not know better, would say that the author took it out of the Bible. Because the account so resembles the Bible, Sylvanus Morley, the great Mayan archeologist, read it and pronounced the story of

Creation to be "*an evident fabrication*, or at least accommodation of the Indian mythology to Christian notions, *a pious fraud*", but he acknowledged that the rest of it was very *authentic* Mayan history. However, the Creation story differs from the Biblical account in very interesting ways for Mormons who have been through the Temple. *Two* beings are involved in the Creation, Tepeu and Gucumatz (the feathered serpent, known in Mexico as Quetzalcoatl). Here are some quotations:

"They talked then, *discussing and deliberating*; they *agreed*, they *united their words* and their thoughts...Then Tepeu and Gucumatz came together; then they *conferred* about life and light, what they would do so there would be light and dawn. Thus let it be done! Let the emptiness be filled! Let the water recede and make a void, let the earth appear and become solid; let it be done. Thus they spoke. Let there be light, let there be dawn in the sky and on the earth...And thus Gucumatz was filled with joy...First the earth was formed, the mountains and the valleys, the currents of water were divided, the rivulets were running freely between the hills, and the water was separated when the high mountains appeared...They did it after thinking and meditating upon it...So they said when they meditated and talked... "

The great amount of time spent in conferring, meditating, reporting, and deliberating is not part of the Biblical record. Neither is the account of the mountains and currents of water and rivulets and hills. What sets the Latter Day Saint account apart from the Biblical account, however, is the specific way in which a *spiritual creation* was made first: blueprints and plans were drawn up for everything "before it was created naturally". In the Popul Vuh, we have this remarkable sentence: "Then while they meditated it became clear to them that when dawn would break, man must appear. Then they *planned* the creation, and the growth of the trees and the thickets and the birth of life and the creation of Man"

This shows a PLANNED or spiritual creation, but it hints that man was created prior to the planning of the rest of creation. The text has an error in it made by the first translator. In the most recent edition, a more careful translator has this to say: "This translation is erroneous; the IDEA of creating man was conceived then, but as will be seen farther on in the account, it was not actually carried out until a much later time! [Footnote, p.81]. How close can we get to LDS doctrine? How could the ancient Mayans have known that kind of thing?

Just who were the creators Tepeu and Gucumatz? In a footnote on p.78 of the Popul Vuh, Tepeu is called "king or sovereign... the profound Mexican influence in the religion of the Quiche is reflected in the Creator-couple who continue to be invoked throughout the book until the divinity took the *bodily* form of Tohil, who in Part III is specifically identified with Quetzalcoatl" That one of the creators (Jesus Christ) took a bodily form is right out of the Book of Mormon.

On p.93 of the Popul Vuh, "it was cloudy and twilight then on the face of the earth. There was no sun yet. Nevertheless there was a being called Vucub-Caquix who was very proud of himself ... But he was not really the sun; he was only vainglorious of his feathers and his riches... Therefore Vucub-Caquix became as vain as though he were the sun and the moon... His only ambition was to exalt himself and to dominate... Now we shall tell how Vucub-Caquix was overthrown and died and how man was made by the Creator and the Maker." The editors have

this footnote: "Ximenez believed he saw in this personage a kind of Lucifer. To Brasseur de Bourbourg [translator of the Title of the Lords of Totonicapan], he was a prince...It is hardly necessary to point out that this entire episode of Vucub-Caquix and his sons is wholly imaginary and has no relation to historical fact."

Just this year (2001) scholars at BYU translated from the Spanish a book called "Ancient America Rediscovered" by Veytia. It was written sometime prior to 1778 by a friend of the Spanish King who served as his Trustee Attorney General. Veytia had read many ancient manuscripts, particularly the works of Ixtlilxochitl, and spent a lot of time understanding how the Indian peoples kept an accurate history through paintings on cloth, particularly how they calculated dates. Veytia gives more detail than Ixtlilxochitl gives in the account cited above, saying of the great earthquake,

"At the beginning of the year...being a full moon,... the sun was eclipsed at noonday, the solar body being totally covered, such that the earth became darkened so much that the stars appeared and it seemed like night and at the same time an earthquake was felt as horrible as they had ever experienced because the stones crashing against one another were broken into pieces and the earth opened up in many parts". Veytia adds that "and because of the circumstances surrounding this eclipse and earthquake, it was *impossible for it to be any other than that which was observed at the death of Jesus Christ* our Lord... Quetzalcoatl was neither king nor chief of any nation he came to inhabit, nor a magician, nor a necromancer, or liar, but a venerable, just and holy man, who with works and words taught the road of truth through the overcoming of one's passions, mortification, fast and penitence. In the worship of just one God he enlightened these natives of the sublime mystery of the August Trinity, the coming of the Son of God to the world, the virgin birth, the passion of the Lord and his death on the holy wood of the cross...it seems consistent that [Quetzalcoatl] was some apostle or disciple of Jesus Christ. (p.148)" Of course Veytia could not conceive of how Christ himself came to America; that story was reserved for the Book of Mormon.

From other historical sources, Veytia says, "Montezuma assured Cortez, in the presence of all his nobles, that his ancestors had arrived at Mexico from a country situated toward the rising sun; that Sahagun declares in the general preface of his History of New Spain that a colony which had *navigated the ocean* in early ages disembarked in the port of Ponaco which is situated on the shores of the Mexican Gulf; that the native traditions of the people of Guatemala, (who claimed, as being descended from the Toltecs, consanguinity with the Mexicans), recorded that *their ancestors were Jews who had quitted Palestine, or that part of Arabia which is contiguous to the Red Sea* and had crossed the Atlantic to America(p.52)."

Veytia had seen some of the paintings which depicted the journey [of the Jaredites?]:

"In flat canoes to which they gave the name Acalli, which means house of water, and they paint them that way, and on them they paint the persons traveling, some sitting down and others lying down or stretched out along the raft or canoe. But on none of the many maps I have seen do they show how they controlled them, because no person is seen swimming to guide it, nor can an oar or paddle be seen with which to steer it from the top, nor have I found any information whatsoever on this in the manuscripts. But it is not credible that they would throw themselves to

the whim of the waters, nor that they could travel without oars or towing(p.51)!" Could the paintings be of the Jaredite barges?

Joseph Smith did not take the Book of Mormon from Mayan and Aztec history. The documents referred to had been taken to Madrid and discovered much later. They were not published in Spanish until after the Book of Mormon was written.

My Testimony of the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Hebrew Document

The Book of Mormon writers spoke Hebrew, but wrote in Reformed Egyptian. If Joseph Smith was lying about the Book of Mormon, it is a nineteenth century forgery. In this testimony I will show that it bears all the marks of a Hebrew Document of ancient origin. I took three classes in Hebrew, just enough to get a basic knowledge of the language and to understand what others are saying. The Book of Mormon is written in Early Modern English (Elizabethan or Shakespearan) rather than Modern English, so there are numerous instances of outdated words (for example the phrase *in fine* meaning *to make a long story short* occurs 16 times. Good English demands brevity and abhors redundancy. The Book of Mormon would drive an English teacher nuts. She would not have space for all the red marks she would need. The grammar of the Book of Mormon is "unruly" (poor English), but we shall show in what follows that it is very good Hebrew.

Robert Alter, professor of Hebrew Literature at Berkeley has written that

"one of the most imposing barriers between the modern reader and the imaginative subtlety of biblical narrative is the **extraordinary prominence of verbal repetition** in the Bible. Here entire statements are repeated either by different characters, by the narrator or by the narrator and one or more characters in concert with small but important changes introduced in what usually looks at first glance like verbatim repetition... (See 2 Samuel 3)"

This cultural recipe for repetition occurs many times in the Book of Mormon. In 2 Ne 3 we read, in part

3 And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed.

4 For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph.

5 Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden

darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.

6 For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.

7 Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers...

11 But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them.

12 Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord....

14 And thus prophesied Joseph, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise...

18 And the Lord said unto me also: I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins; and I will make for him a spokesman. And I, behold, I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins; and the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it.

19 And the words which he shall write shall be the words which are expedient in my wisdom should go forth unto the fruit of thy loins. And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith. Is that repetitive enough to make the point?

This section of my Testimony of the Book of Mormon deals with its translation from a mixture of Hebrew and Reformed Egyptian into English. To produce a good translation, it is critical that the translator first *understand* what the document says, then that his vocabulary in the second language be adequate to express accurately the ideas of the original. The Book of Mormon was not “translated” by Joseph Smith because he could not **read** the original text and because he had only a *very limited command* of the English language which was wholly inadequate for translation.

LDS Church authorities do not claim to know the exact method by which translation and word choice was accomplished. In an address given in 1992 at a seminar for new [mission presidents](#) at the [Missionary Training Center](#), Mormon [apostle Russell M. Nelson](#) stated that “the details of

this miraculous method of translation are still not fully known.” In order to illustrate this, Nelson quoted the words of Whitmer, who wrote regarding the use of a [seer stone](#) in the translation process over 50 years after it had occurred:

“Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.”

Nelson also noted statements made by Smith's wife [Emma](#), who gave her account of the translation method in 1856:

"When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made any mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time. Even the word Sarah he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him."

Martin Harris described the process thus:

"By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet [W]hen finished [Smith] would say 'Written,' and if correctly written that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used."

There is only one paragraph in the manuscript in Joseph Smith's own handwriting. Oliver Cowdery, the scribe, apparently went to sleep, and his writing scrawls off the page. Joseph then takes up the pen to finish that paragraph. It has been concluded from this that Joseph could see about 29 words at a time and was not to stop until that verse was written.

Royal Skousen is Professor of Linguistics and English Language at Brigham Young University. In 1972 he received his Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. He has said that

*“Joseph Smith was **literally reading off an already composed English-language text**. Taken as a whole, the evidence in the manuscripts and in the language of the earliest text supports the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon was a precise text. I do not consider this conclusion apologetic, but instead as one demanded by the evidence.*

The opposing viewpoint, that Joseph Smith got ideas and translated them into his own English,

cannot be supported by the manuscript and textual evidence. The only substantive argument for this alternative view has been the nonstandard nature of the original text, with its implication that God would never speak ungrammatical English, so the nonstandard usage must be the result of Joseph Smith putting the ideas he received into his own language. Yet with the recent finding that the original vocabulary of the text appears to date from the 1500s and 1600s (not the 1800s), we now need to consider the possibility that the ungrammaticality of the original text may also date from that earlier period of time, not necessarily from Joseph's own time and place. The evidence basically argues that Joseph Smith was not the author of the Book of Mormon, nor was he actually the translator. Instead, he was the revelator: through him the Lord revealed the English-language text (by means of the interpreters, later called the Urim and Thummim, and the seer stone). Such a view is consistent, I believe, with Joseph's use elsewhere of the verb translate to mean 'transmit' and the noun translation to mean 'transmission' (as in the eighth Article of Faith)."

The grammar in the first edition of the Book of Mormon was embarrassing to modern readers. A lot of that was changed by later editors to make it standard English. Beyond fairly routine, shallow, derogatory statements about BofM language, we note that B. H. Roberts was stung by it, feeling that God would not have used such bad grammar. This led to his belief that God revealed the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith in his **mind** and that he had to use his own vocabulary to form the sentences. Eventually that idea proved unsustainable because some of the grammar was not characteristic of Joseph Smith's time: it was obsolete even then. It's important and helpful to bear in mind that the original BofM language is, generally speaking, only nonstandard from our standpoint, centuries after the Elizabethan era, which appears to be the epicenter of the book's syntax. The English of that time is called Early Modern English to distinguish it from Early English and Old English. Stanley Carmack has given many examples of grammar at that time with dates. This shows that the Book of Mormon language is from a period 25 years or so before Shakespeare. After very close work with the Joseph Smith papers, Royal Skousen believes that the language was "tightly controlled" by God and that Joseph Smith was **reading** the words from a device.

Example 1: *in them days* [We would say *in those days*]

Example 2: *I had smote* [We would say *had smitten*]

Example 3: In English, *There was* must be followed by a singular noun and *there were* must be followed by a plural noun.

1 Nephi 18:25 there *was* beasts in the forests of every kind

Alma 4:9 there *was* envyings and strifes

Mormon 1:12 peace did remain for the space of about four years, that *there were no* bloodshed.

Carmack has numerous examples of identical usage from the 1450-1750 period

Next there is a characteristic of the Book of Mormon which is not bad grammar but is unusual. The translation frequently formed the past tense with “did”. They say “I did go” instead of “I went.” This method of forming the past tense was popular for only a brief time in history, then went away. Examples:

Mosiah 25:18 Alma did go forth into the water and did baptize them

Mormon 4:23 I did go to the hill Shim and did take up all the records

Mosiah 9:17 in the strength of the Lord did we go forth to battle

1 Nephi 7:3 I Nephi did again with my brethren go forth into the wilderness

Mosiah 23:5 they were industrious and did labor exceedingly

Alma 55:14 they did drink and were merry,

Alma 62:1 his heart did take courage and was filled with exceeding great joy

There appears in the Book of Mormon something called “Dative impersonal constructions” like *it supposeth me*, *it sorroweth me*, and *it whispereth me* that are also not found in the King James Version (they have been removed). Examples found in Early Modern English are: **1390** GOWER *Conf. II. 128* Bot al to lytel **him supposeth**...**1482** CAXTON *polychronicon me supposeth* that they toke that vyce of kyng Hardekunt...Oxford English Dictionary: **It sorroweth me** to thinke of the Ministers of England (Adam Hill, *The crie of England* (1595)) 1574 Hellowes Gueuara’s *Fam. Ep.* (1577) 189 The ague that held you, **sorroweth me**. 1637 Heywood Royall King ii. iv, **It sorrows** me that you misprize my love.

I now continue with the theme that the Book of Mormon appears to be an *ancient* Hebrew document:

We have taken the following statements mostly from John A. Tvedtnes and Donald W Parry.

“Biblical Hebrew uses the equivalent of the conjunction *and* much more than English uses *and*. Its frequent appearance in English sounds irregular and repetitive. Consider the ten *ands* in the King James Version of [1 Samuel 17:34–35](#):

and David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, *and* there came a lion, *and* a bear, *and* took a lamb out of the flock:
and I went out after him, *and* smote him, *and* delivered it out of his mouth: *and* when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, *and* smote him, *and* slew him.

Now consider a single sentence in the Book of Mormon”:

“But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites *and* of the Nephites, *and* their wars, *and* contentions, *and* dissensions, *and* their preaching, *and* their prophecies, *and* their shipping *and* their building of ships, *and* their building of temples, *and* of synagogues *and* their sanctuaries, *and* their righteousness, *and* their wickedness, *and* their murders, *and* their robbings, *and* their plundering, *and* all manner of abominations *and* whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.” *****

“The expression *and it came to pass* is the translation of a Hebrew expression used frequently in scriptural histories. [I can testify that in many places, nearly every paragraph in the Bible begins with the expression, but it was written with only one character, almost as simple as a dash]. Although in its Hebrew form the expression is found in the Hebrew Bible some 1,200 times, it was translated in the King James Version as "and it came to pass" only about 727 times. The King James translators probably found the expression redundant and cumbersome, which would explain why they often translated it as "and it became," "and it was," or "and." On a number of occasions they simply ignored the expression altogether.”

“Given the Semitic background of the Book of Mormon and the fact that it contains histories and chronologies comparable to those of the Old Testament, it is not surprising that *and it came to pass* is a characteristic feature of the book. Novelist and humorist Mark Twain once joked that if Joseph Smith had left out the many instances of *and it came to pass* from the Book of Mormon, the book would have been only a pamphlet.*****

Hebrew has fewer adverbs than English. Instead, it often uses prepositional phrases with the preposition meaning in or with. The English translation of the Book of Mormon contains more of these prepositional phrases in place of adverbs than we would expect if the book had been written in English originally. Here are some examples:

- "with patience" instead of patiently (Mosiah 24:15)
- "with much harshness" instead of very harshly (1 Nephi 18:11)
- "with joy" instead of joyfully (Jacob 4:3)
- "in righteousness" instead of righteously (1 Nephi 20:1)
- "with gladness" instead of gladly (2 Nephi 28:28)

Biblical Hebrew begins subordinate clauses with prepositions plus a word that translates as that, such as in Ezekiel 40:1: "after that the city was smitten." Such a use of *that* in English is awkward and therefore rare. Yet it appears frequently in the Book of Mormon, another evidence of Hebrew influence. It was even more frequent in the 1830 edition, but many of the thats were dropped from later editions to read more smoothly (noted in the following examples by brackets).

- "And because that they are redeemed from the fall" (2 Nephi 2:26)
- "because that my heart is broken" (2 Nephi 4:32)
- "because that ye shall receive more of my word" (2 Nephi 29:8)

"because [that] they had hardened their hearts" (1 Nephi 16:22)
"because [that] ye are of the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 6:5)
"before [that] they were slain" (1 Nephi 13:15)
"before [that] he shall manifest himself in the flesh" (Enos 1:8)
"and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:14)
"after that I am gone to the Father" (3 Nephi 28:1)
"after [that] I have abridged" (1 Nephi 1:17)
"after [that] he hath been commanded to flee" (1 Nephi 3:18)*****

Hebrew uses conjunctions much more frequently than English does. One clear example of this can be found in lists of items. In English, the conjunction and is normally used only before the last item in a list, such as wood, iron, copper, and brass. But Hebrew usually uses a conjunction before each item. The Book of Mormon contains many examples of this Hebrew-like usage, such as this one found in 2 Nephi 5:15: "in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores." Such repetition seems to be a waste of precious space on the plates, except for the fact that it is required by the Hebrew language.

Cognates are related words that come from the same root. For example, the English noun *student* is cognate to the verb *study* and the adjective *studious*. In Hebrew, a verb is sometimes followed by a noun that is a cognate, such as "wrote upon it a writing" (Exodus 39:30) and "she vowed a vow" (1 Samuel 1:11). In English, cognates are used much less often. Using such cognates is often considered an awkward or inelegant style in English. Someone writing in English would be more likely to use "she vowed" or "she made a vow" than "she vowed a vow". Even in translation from the Hebrew, the King James Bible sometimes avoids using cognates. In Genesis 1:11, a literal translation of the Hebrew would be "Let the earth grass grass," but the English translation reads "Let the earth bring forth grass."

The Book of Mormon uses cognates much more often than we would expect if the book had originally been written in English. These cognates show the Hebrew influence of the original. One of the best-known examples is "I have dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 8:2). That is exactly the way that the same idea is expressed in literal translation of the Old Testament Hebrew (see Genesis 37:5; 41:11).

Here are some other examples of the use of cognates in the Book of Mormon, each followed by the more normal expression for English:

"work all manner of fine work" (Mosiah 11:10) instead of work well
"and he did judge righteous judgments" (Mosiah 29:43) instead of judge righteously or make righteous judgments
"build buildings" (2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 23:5) instead of erect buildings or simply build
"this was the desire which I desired of him" (Enos 1:13) instead of what I desired
"I will work a great and a marvelous work" (1 Nephi 14:7) instead of perform a great and marvelous work
"taxed with a tax" (Mosiah 7:15) instead of taxed

"cursed with a sore cursing " (2 Nephi 1:22; Jacob 3:3) instead of cursed
sorely.***

When English shows a possessive or descriptive relationship between two nouns, it usually puts the possessive or descriptive noun first: the king's house or wood house. Hebrew, however, uses the opposite order: house the king (which would usually be translated house of the king) or house wood (house of wood). If the Hebrew word order is kept in the English translation, the word of must be added, even though it does not exist in the Hebrew.

The Book of Mormon contains a large number of what appear to be translations from the Hebrew preserving the Hebrew word order:

"plates of brass" instead of brass plates (1 Nephi 3:24)
"works of righteousness" instead of righteous works (Alma 5:16)
"words of plainness" instead of plain words (Jacob 4:14)
"chains of hell" instead of hell's chains (Alma 5:7)
"voice of the Spirit" instead of the Spirit's voice(1 Nephi 4:18)
"skin of blackness" instead of black skin (2 Nephi 5:21)
"night of darkness" instead of dark night (Alma 34:33)
"rod of iron" instead of iron rod (1 Nephi 8:19)

The Hebrew-like expression *land of promise* appears twenty-two times in the Book of Mormon, while *promised land* (common in English) is found only ten times. *****

In lists the Hebrew language repeats the possessive pronoun (e.g., their, our, your, thy, his, her) before each of the nouns to which it refers, a convention that is uncommon in English usage. The Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) preserves many examples of this Hebrew usage. For instance, the pronoun *our* is used six times in the King James Version of Exodus 10:9: "And Moses said, We will go with *our* young and with *our* old, with *our* sons and with *our* daughters, with *our* flocks and with *our* herds will we go" (emphasis added).

Many examples of this usage appear in the Book of Mormon. For instance, the possessive pronoun *your* is used twelve times in [3 Nephi 30:2](#):

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from *your* wicked ways; and repent of *your* evil doings, of *your* lyings and deceivings, and of *your* whoredoms, and of *your* secret abominations, and *your* idolatries, and of *your* murders, and *your* priestcrafts, and *your* envyings, and *your* strifes, and from all *your* wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of *your* sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

In Hebrew, a possessive pronoun is added to the end of the noun. Thus my book would be the *book of me*. This Hebraic usage is reflected in several examples from the Book of Mormon:

"hear the words of me" (Jacob 5:2)
"the Gentiles shall be great in the eyes of me" (2 Nephi 10:8)

"how unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him" (Jacob 4:8)
"they are delivered by the power of him" (2 Nephi 9:25)
"setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption" (Moroni 8:20-*****)

The Old Testament prophets, particularly Isaiah, are full of parallelisms. This form consists of two lines of text: the idea or subject of the first line is either repeated directly or echoed (in what is termed a "synonymous repetition") in the second line. An example appears in [2 Nephi 9:52](#):

“pray unto him continually by day, and give thanks unto his holy name by night”

A second example of synonymous parallelism is found in [2 Nephi 25:2](#):

“their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations” ****

Unlike English, in which a series of nouns can be introduced by a single definite article (the), Hebrew repeats the definite article for each noun. This kind of repetition is seen throughout the Book of Mormon. A prime example is "We did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord" ([2 Nephi 5:10](#)). Of course, it would be much more usual in English to render this as "We did observe to keep the judgments, statutes, and commandments of the Lord*****"

My Testimony of a Miraculous Earth.

God designed the Earth as the home for Man. It was a tremendously difficult project. The first requirement for life is an energy source for heat and light. That was done by placing the Earth near the Sun. Second, life had to have water. Light, water, and carbon dioxide are necessary for plant growth which in turn provides food for other animals. Heat was necessary for the evaporation of water which would provide rain. Can you then imagine what a task it was to bring seeds of all kind to the Earth, then to create animal life and finally man? It probably required about a cubic mile of seeds to provide plants. The earth is the only planet in our solar system on which life exists. That is a remarkable fact (meaning that it has a very low probability of happening by chance). Only a series of real miracles allows it to happen.-

Liquid water is essential for most life. It is very hard for life to exist in steam or ice, though a few kinds can do so. Given that the water is there, the distance of the planet from the sun determines whether it is liquid: get too close and the water turns to steam; too far away and it turns to ice. By some miracle the earth is just the right distance from the sun. About 5% closer or further away would mean disaster for life. The habitable region is thus a pretty thin shell around the sun.

Water itself has a remarkable property shared by only one other element: iron. Water expands when it freezes while all other elements except iron shrink. This causes a lot of pipes to freeze but imagine that water shrank (which would make it more dense) when it froze. Material more dense than water sinks to the bottom in water. If ice shrank when it froze, it would sink to the bottom of the pond, river, or ocean. As more ice formed, it would sink. It would not take long

before the ponds, rivers, and oceans were solid ice, so that would be a disaster for life in colder regions.

The next requirement for life is **energy** in the form of light and heat. Gravitational theory says that every atom is attracted to every other according to their mass and how far apart they are. This makes particles clump together and then be attracted to larger clumps and soon everything was in a big spherical clump and the inner parts of the clump were subjected to intense heat and pressure.

It is believed that according to the Big Bang theory, there were only hydrogen atoms in the beginning. Hydrogen has only one proton and no neutrons. It is possible for protons to be converted to neutrons and vice versa. Since the neutron is about a tenth of a percent heavier than a proton, these reactions are accompanied by emitting certain particles. Under great heat and pressure, four hydrogen atoms can be fused together to produce two helium atoms, each having two protons and two neutrons. This fusion results in the great heat and light produced by the sun. In a similar fashion, hydrogen and helium atoms could produce elements 3, 4, and 5, but not carbon which is element 6 (having 6 protons and 6 neutrons). Carbon can only be produced by smashing three helium atoms together at almost the exact same instant. Smashing two of them together was not a big problem and produced beryllium-8, but the beryllium lasts only about a billion billionth of a second before the third helium atom must smash into it. This event was so **unlikely** that very little carbon could be produced by this process. But what accounts for the great abundance of carbon in the universe? From it, all life must be created.

By some miracle, the energy of the beryllium-8 energy and the energy of a helium atom have almost exactly the energy of an excited state of carbon. Some opera singers can hit notes having a frequency equal to that holding the atoms of glass together in cocktail glass. There is then **resonance** which greatly increases the frequency and breaks the glass. In a radio, the receiver can be tuned to vibrate with the same frequency as the signal and this greatly magnifies the signal. These resonances greatly increase the probability that an incoming alpha particle will combine with beryllium-8 to form carbon. That miracle of carbon resonance frequency made life possible.

It is generally assumed that any extraterrestrial life that might exist will be based on the same fundamental biochemistry as found on Earth, as the four elements most vital for life, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, are also the most common chemically reactive elements in the universe. These four elements together comprise over 96% of Earth's collective biomass. Carbon has an unparalleled ability to bond with itself and to form a massive array of intricate and varied structures, making it an ideal material for the complex mechanisms that form living cells. Hydrogen and oxygen, in the form of water, compose the solvent in which biological processes take place and in which the first reactions occurred that led to life's emergence. The energy released in the formation of powerful covalent bonds between carbon and oxygen, available by oxidizing organic compounds, is the fuel of all complex life-forms. These four elements together make up amino acids, which in turn are the building blocks of proteins, the substance of living tissue. In addition, neither sulfur, required for the building of proteins, nor phosphorus, needed for the formation of DNA, RNA, and the adenosine phosphates essential to metabolism, is rare.

All life depends critically on carbon. Almost all food is produced by plants using photosynthesis. This process uses light, carbon dioxide, and water and converts them into sugars or carbohydrates. The size of the earth is critical for life. In small planets gravity is not enough to hold onto the atmosphere which contains oxygen and carbon dioxide. A little too much oxygen and everything would go up in flames, so the 20% in our atmosphere is just right. We have only 3% carbon dioxide which plants must have. We thus have several critical factors in our favor: gravitation and the chemistry of hydrogen. Combined with those are the chemical properties of water and a very fortunate location in space, the habitable zone.

This earth contains a huge amount of water not found on other planets. How did it get here and what made it stay? A stunning miracle is how there came to be all this liquid water on the earth when none of the other planets have any significant amount of water.

Professor Hyman at Sweetbriar College writes this: The earth appears to be unique in our solar system in that it contains an enormous amount of water, and that water has existed in a form not too different from its present state for billions of years. Given that the laws of the nature operate everywhere in the solar system, we have to question *why we are so privileged* to have large bodies of liquid water on our planetary surface for so long a time. What makes the earth different from the other planets? To answer that question, we have to deal with two issues. 1) How did the earth acquire such a large amount of water in the first place, and 2) Once acquired, how was it retained ?

The first question has to do with how the earth was formed and the second involves the evolution of the earth and its atmosphere. As we shall see, the long term existence of our watery planet as a place hospitable for the evolution of life involves a considerable amount of good luck.

The most recent theories of planet formation describe the process of planet formation as having two steps. First, gravitational collapse takes place forming small asteroid like bodies some as large as 1/500 of the mass of the earth. The planetesimals begin to collide and form the larger bodies of the planets. The rain of bodies on the surface of the earth generates large amounts of heat, enough to cause the heavier elements, such as iron to migrate to the center. A second factor has to do with the fact that when a meteor hits anything, some of it sticks and some is scattered back into space by the impact. The lower the density of the material, the more likely it is to escape. In the early stages, the earth collects heavier stuff more easily, leaving lighter stuff such as silicon and water still in orbit about the sun.

As the earth gets bigger, however, it more effectively traps the lighter material during the latter stages of planet formation.

The formation of the earth probably took a few hundred million years to be completed. That is to be compared with the time of about 3.5 billion years since the earth has developed a solid crust. About the time the earth was formed, the sun became large enough that the fusion reactions in the sun ignited. This didn't happen smoothly, but likely in sputtering way for a while. Each flaring up of the sun sent streams of particles sweeping out. If the earth had an atmosphere at this time, it would have been blown off leaving the earth as a rock with neither air nor water on its surface. In fact, after the sun stabilized, the earth went through a process of releasing gases from

its interior in a process called degassing. Over a relatively short time, something like a 100 million years, enough material had been released to form the oceans and to give the earth an atmosphere. There was no free oxygen in the atmosphere at this time, but it was a collection of gases, largely ammonia, methane and carbon dioxide, held to the earth by gravitational attraction. Fortunately, early in its history, the temperature of the earth dropped below 212 degrees Fahrenheit, and the water condensed into the oceans we know today.

In fact, the mass of water present in the oceans, now about 10^{24} grams, is about the same as the mass of water that was contained in the crust when the degassing process started. We can estimate the rate at which water is being lost today by estimating the rate at which water molecules in the atmosphere are dissociated into its constituent hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen is light enough that it easily moves off into space. The net effect of hydrogen loss decreases the amount of water vapor in the atmosphere. A good estimate is that 5×10^{11} grams are lost this way each year. This amounts to a volume of a cube about 100 yards on a side. The total water lost to space since the beginning of the earth thus amounts to about 2×10^{21} grams, about 0.2 percent of the water in the oceans.

This means that most of the water you see on the earth was the very same stuff that degassed from the crust when the earth was only a few hundred million years old.

Fortunately, the water lost to space is replaced by the same geologic processes that formed the oceans originally.

At the present time, about 70% of the surface of the earth is covered with water. The present coastlines are where they are because some of the water is locked up in the polar ice caps. If the water locked up in polar ice were to completely melt, the oceans would rise about 240 feet above its present level.

The second question we raised, Why is the water still here on the earth? is more difficult to answer. It has to do with the changing nature of the atmosphere due to evolution of life, specifically algae. The algae produced free oxygen by photosynthesis which destroyed ammonia and methane, so called greenhouse gases, just as the sun's luminosity was increasing by about twenty five percent. If that hadn't happened the oceans would have boiled away long ago. In fact, we are the beneficiaries of an incredible balancing act which allowed just enough heat to escape from the earth to keep the oceans from boiling, but not so much as to cause the earth to freeze solid.

Earth's Atmosphere is a critical factor in the existence of life. From the EarthSky website we have this question: What Keeps Earth's Atmosphere Bound to the Earth? The answer:

Earth's atmosphere is only 1/1,200,000 the mass of Earth itself. So it is a very thin skin surrounding our planet. How does Earth hold on to this thin skin of atmosphere?

The answer is gravity – the same force that keeps us anchored to Earth.

And yet, although you might not realize it or think about it, Earth does continually lose some of its atmosphere to space. This loss occurs in the upper atmosphere, over billion-year time scales.

Molecules in our atmosphere are constantly moving, spurred on by energizing sunlight. Some move quickly enough to escape the grip of Earth's gravity. The escape velocity for planet Earth is a little over 11 kilometers per second – about 25 thousand miles an hour. If Earth were much less massive – say, as massive as Mars – gravity's grip would be weaker. That's one reason why Mars lost most of its original atmosphere.

In the vicinity of our heavier Earth, where gravity is stronger than on Mars, not all particles are equally likely to escape. Light ones, like hydrogen and helium, typically move faster than heavier ones, like oxygen and nitrogen. The light atoms are more likely to reach escape velocity and escape to space. That's why light molecules are rare in our atmosphere, in contrast to their abundance in the universe at large. If our gravity were stronger, our atmosphere would retain too much ammonia and methane; if weaker we would lose too much water

Still, all in all, Earth's atmosphere is here to stay. And that's a good thing because our atmosphere protects life on Earth in many ways. It absorbs harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun, helps keep Earth's surface warm via the greenhouse effect, and reduces temperature extremes between day and night. Yay atmosphere! It keeps Earth livable.

Our atmosphere is just suited for life. This is the only planet which has free oxygen needed for breathing. If the amount were greater than the 20% we have, fires would be everywhere, burning up plants and hydrocarbons. If we had less, animals would find it hard to breathe. Nitrogen suppresses fires. If we had much more of it, it would interfere with respiration.

Venus is often called the twin planet to Earth because 1) it has a similar radius/size, 2) it has a similar mass, 3) it has a similar density and 4) it has an atmosphere. However, the environment of Venus is very different from the Earth. The surface temperature of Venus is around 890 degrees F, the hottest average temperature in the Solar System. This is due to a runaway greenhouse effect. The atmosphere of Venus is composed of 97% carbon dioxide, 2% nitrogen and less than 1% of oxygen, water, and methane. Since carbon dioxide is a major greenhouse gas, the radiation from the Sun is trapped in the atmosphere of Venus producing an extremely high surface temperature.

Mars is another example of a secondary atmosphere from outgassing (therefore, we know that Mars had an early epoch of tectonic activity). However, unlike the Earth or Venus, the atmosphere is very thin, about 1% the mass of Earth's atmosphere. Its composition is 95% carbon dioxide, 3% nitrogen, 2% argon and less than 1% oxygen. A high noble gas content implies that Mars's atmosphere was much thicker in the past (noble gases do not react with other elements and are heavy enough to stay within the gravitational field of Mars). The climate on Mars is very desert-like due to its thin atmosphere. There is too little mass in the atmosphere to hold in heat so the warmest daytime temperatures are around 50 degrees F, but the nighttime temperatures are minus 170 degrees F. Other weather features are massive dust storms and occasional CO₂ fog in

the canyons.

There is a great deal of evidence of the existence of liquid water on Mars, at least in the far past. On Earth, the temperature is just right for water to rain out and form oceans. On Venus, the temperature is too hot and water stays as a vapor to be destroyed by photodisintegration. On Mars, it is too cold for liquid water. All the water is locked up in permafrost under the soil and subsurface ice reservoirs. Notice that most of the water flow features are near the base of old volcanoes or impact craters. These early events heated the subsurface ice to produce a short-lived flow of liquid water.

Earth, our home, is the third planet from the sun. It is the only planet known to have an atmosphere containing free oxygen and oceans of liquid water on its surface. The planets orbit around the sun almost in a plane. The earth orbits the sun in a year. In addition, the planets rotate or spin around an axis. The earth makes one rotation around its axis in 24 hours. It would seem that the axis of rotation would be perpendicular to the orbital plane, but this is not the case: the axes of the planets are tilted in various amounts.

Three of the planets -- Mercury, Venus and Jupiter -- have tilts of only a few degrees; they are almost perfectly side-on toward the Sun and have no seasons.

Earth, Mars, Saturn and Neptune all have similar tilts of 23-29 degrees, so that they have moderate seasons as one pole or the other tilts modestly toward the Sun and receives somewhat more sunlight. Only two planets -- Uranus and tiny Pluto -- "lie on their sides", so that during part of their orbits around the Sun one of their poles or the other faces almost directly toward the sun.

Suppose the earth were like that. One author writes: "If Earth were tilted 85 degrees today, each of its hemispheres would be permanently shrouded in night for six months at a time -- but the other pole would undergo a six-month-long day, during most of which the Sun would be blazing down on it from as high an angle as it blazes down on our own tropics for the few hours around noon each day. The natural result would be that the temperature at that pole would climb to very high levels. The temperature at the North Pole might climb as high as 50 deg C (over 120 deg Fahrenheit). And because the South Pole is located in the middle of Antarctica, away from the temperature-moderating effects of the ocean, its temperature could climb as high as 80 deg C (176 deg F)."

We can thus be very grateful for the axis tilt we do have.

Earth's graceful 24-hour rotation rate is one of the traits that makes our planet so friendly to life, allowing most parts of Earth to stay a nice, comfortable temperature as they are bathed in sunlight during the day and darkness at night.

Each planet in the solar system has its own unique rotation rate. Tiny Mercury, sizzling closest to the Sun, takes 59 Earth days to turn around just once. Venus, the second planet, rotates once every 243 Earth days. What's more, Venus rotates backwards from the direction of its orbit

around the Sun, as do Uranus and tiny dwarf planet Pluto. Uranus even lies down on the job, rolling around with its axis of rotation pointed nearly toward the Sun.

Why do Earth and the other planets rotate at all? It will help to understand how our solar system formed. Almost five billion years ago, our solar system had its beginnings as a vast cloud of dust and gas. The cloud began to collapse, flattening into a giant disk that rotated faster and faster, just as an ice skater spins faster as she brings her arms in. The Sun formed at the center, and the swirling gas and dust in the rest of the spinning disk clumped together to produce the planets, moons, asteroids, and comets. The reason so many objects orbit the Sun in nearly the same plane (called the ecliptic) and in the same direction is that they all formed from this same disk.

While the planets were forming, there was not much peace in our solar system. Clumps of matter of all sizes often collided, and either stuck together or side-swiped each other, knocking off pieces and sending each other spinning. Sometimes the gravity of big objects would capture smaller ones in orbit. This could be one way the planets acquired their moons.

Scientists think that a large object, perhaps the size of Mars, impacted our young planet, knocking out a chunk of material that eventually became our Moon. This collision set Earth spinning at a faster rate. Scientists estimate that a day in the life of early Earth was only about 6 hours long.

The Moon formed much closer to Earth than it is today. As Earth rotates, the Moon's gravity causes the oceans to seem to rise and fall. (The Sun also does this, but not as much.) There is a little bit of friction between the tides and the turning Earth, causing the rotation to slow down just a little. As Earth slows, it lets the Moon creep away.

The huge planet Jupiter is another miracle for life on Earth. It is so big that it pulls in asteroids and comets that otherwise would collide with the Earth. It stabilizes Earth's orbit: if it were further away, our orbit would be unstable.

My Testimony Concerning Evolution

There has been a lot of talk lately about "The science is settled." In actuality, what we know today about Science is only today's version. Science is continually changing. In 1954 at UNM my astronomy class was told about Continental Drift (also referred to as Plate Tectonics), but we were told to *keep it to ourselves* or else we would be laughed out of the room. It was the subject of much ridicule then. Today, it is the most basic notion underlying every text on Geology.

Evolutionists teach that there is absolutely no purpose or meaning or direction or progress in Evolution. Everything is the result of random chance. Richard Dawkins is a prominent figure in Evolution. He stated it this way:

"Natural selection, the **blind, unconscious, automatic process** which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all

life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind and no mind's eye. It does not plan for the future. It has no vision, no foresight, no sight at all."^[3]... Design in the universe can be explained as the product of a process that is **ultimately bereft of intelligence, in other words an algorithmic process that weds randomness and selection to produce ... all the intelligence that exists.**"^[7]

What does Dawkins mean by **randomness**? Here's how Merriam Webster defines the adjectival form of the word: lacking a definite plan, purpose, or pattern

Stephen J Gould is probably the best known expounder of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. He says: "No question troubled [Darwin] more than the common assumption, so crucial to Victorian Britain at the height of industrial and imperial success, that PROGRESS must mark the pathways of evolutionary change. Darwin clearly understood that the basic mechanics of natural selection implied no statement about progress, the theory only speaks of local adaptation to changing environments.

Gould argues persistently, and rightly, **against** the idea that there is a 'ladder of **progress**' in evolution. So he attacks the idea of the '**ascent** of mankind'—(often seen on pictures showing a short and stooping ape gradually turning through a smooth sequence of intermediaries into an upright and usually, white middle class male) modern human.

In an interview with PBS Gould said this:

Deep time is hard to grasp. I don't know that it or any one thing could be called "the" major stumbling block. The major stumbling block is that we're not quite ready, because we live in a veil of tears, and we know that bad things happen to good people. We're still desperate, many of us, to find factual answers out there that would make us feel better in a psychological sense about some of the cruel things that don't make sense in life. And that's a very hard one to get through, I think. Once you come to terms with the recognition that the answers to moral questions aren't out there in nature, and you shouldn't be seeking them there, you have to seek them inside yourself -- and that is the proper role of religion and humanities -- then it ceases to worry. But it does worry many people. And since it does, there are a whole set of issues that then become very hard to accept, one of which is that most organisms are bacteria. **And there isn't a linear progressive pattern that pervades evolution leading up to humans.** Another is that humans are a tiny little twig representing one species among so many millions on this enormous arborescent tree of life. And a third is what we're talking about now, that this tiny little twig of *Homo sapiens* represents an eye blink of geological immensity... I think they all go together, and **they all represent our unwillingness to give up on the notion that there is MEANING out there expressed in human terms**, which is a kind of ultimate hubris.

Now let me (Gary Tietjen) give some opinion: Whatever we think of the Theory of Evolution, we must decide what it means in **our lives** if it is true. If life has no *meaning, no direction, no purpose*, then there is no HOPE and life is full of DESPAIR. Furthermore, there is no God, no morals, and anything we do has no consequences and, like Korihor, we can take as much advantage of our fellow man as we can so that we get the most. Then the "management of the creature" or SELFISHNESS is the reigning principle. If that be the case, then I CHOOSE to

IGNORE OR REJECT this theory because it does not make man any better. There are no consequences for me in rejecting it. I can find a better way of life, indeed I have found one that brings me peace and hope and makes the world better. I believe the earth and life on it were designed, have purpose and have meaning. I believe, moreover, that the evidence is very slim that this theory is true. Evolution takes a very long time, but the results can easily be wiped out by catastrophic events that occur very quickly.

Now let us examine the theory a bit more. It essentially says that all organisms are the end result of being better fitted for survival. Organisms develop just enough adaptations to survive. The human mind, however, is WAY, WAY BEYOND what is **needed** for survival. We have thought out all the chemistry and physics of our environment and have written millions of books about it. None of this was essential for mere survival. We have gained a good understanding of our universe and space travel, and that was way beyond any NEED for survival. We have written all kinds of fiction having nothing to do with survival. I conclude that the human mind goes so far beyond what chance and survival of the fittest could give it, that it just didn't happen that way. It is a gift of God.

Nothing about the great age of the Earth disturbs me or is inconsistent with the Biblical account of the Creation. Of course the earth is very old; the elements are *eternal*. What I do believe is that the earth has been recycled. The fossils and dinosaurs were there and died out and sometime much later the earth was refitted for our needs. Joseph Smith believed something like this:

As discussed in [my last post](#), B.H. Roberts sought to account for the age of the earth and the fossils therein by invoking a statement by Joseph Smith that "our planet was made up of the fragments of a planet which previously existed; some mighty convulsions disrupted that creation and made it desolate. Both its animal and vegetable life forms were destroyed" (Gospel and Man's Relationship to Diety).

Given his importance to Latter-day Saints, we are desirous to know everything Joseph Smith had to say on any topic and slow to discount his words. The first step in investigating this topic is to determine exactly what was said. The statement comes from notes taken by William Clayton of a speech by Joseph on January 5, 1841 and is published in *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook. (I am unaware of any other sources; please provide others if you know of them.) Here is the relevant passage:

“The world and earth are not synonymous terms. The world is the human family. This earth was organized or formed out of other planets which were broke up and remodelled and made into the one on which we live. The elements are eternal. That which has a begining will surely have an end. Take a ring, it is without beginning or end; cut it for a beginning place, and at the same time you have an ending place.”

The Temple account of the Creation says that the waters receded so that there was dry LAND available. Then LIGHT was provided. WATER and CARBON DIOXIDE were made available

and then you have everything needed for the growth of plants. Then (and most importantly) SEEDS of all kinds were brought to the earth and planted. In other words, plants did not EVOLVE (all plant life was dead because water had covered the whole earth for a long time). Plants came here fully developed, so the time needed for the creation is greatly shortened. Given plants to eat, the earth was ready for animals. I believe the animals also came here fully developed. This is startling, because if true, we have ripped the guts out of the theory; there is no longer any NEED for it.

It is significant that the Temple account says all the animals were commanded to reproduce AFTER THEIR KIND. To implement this plan, their DNA structure for reproduction was set up so that exact copies have to be made of each protein; variations were not allowed. Occasionally accidents happened due to other forces (radiation, etc.) that caused mutations and variations, but this was on a very limited scale. I don't have to worry about 24 hour days or 6000 years because our scriptures say that the time between event A and event B was CALLED a DAY. They were not 24 hour days. Years may not mean 365 day years. The stars were not created for us because the Temple account says that the greater and lesser lights were MADE VISIBLE after the clouds dispersed (the sun and moon were there all the time).

Some people are troubled by the Biblical account of the Flood. They say there is not enough water on the earth to cover the mountains as described. Probably the very high mountains we have in the Rockies and in Nepal rose up later, but the Biblical account says that this did not come just from rain. Genesis 7:11 says that on a certain day "were all the fountains of the great deep broken up." After the flood (Genesis 8:2) these fountains were "stopped." There is a process call "degassing" by which this might have happened. Here is a description of it:

At an early stage the Earth thus did not have water or water vapour at its surface. Once the planet's surface had cooled sufficiently, water contained in the minerals of the accreted material and released at depth could escape to the surface and, instead of being lost to space, cooled and condensed to form the initial hydrosphere. A large, cool Earth most certainly served as a better trap for water than a small, hot body because the lower the temperature, the less likelihood for water vapour to escape, and the larger the Earth, the stronger its gravitational attraction for water vapour. Whether most of the degassing took place during core formation or shortly thereafter or whether there has been significant degassing of the Earth's interior throughout geologic time remains uncertain. It is likely that the hydrosphere attained its present volume early in the Earth's history, and since that time there have been only small losses and gains. Gains would be from continuous degassing of the Earth; the present degassing rate of juvenile water has been determined as being only 0.3 cubic kilometre per year.

Darwin did not deal with the ORIGIN of life; he assumed living organisms and explained how natural selection changed them into other forms. When scientists first proposed a scenario for the ORIGIN of life, beginning with a primordial soup and a lightning strike, they had very simple ideas about the structure of a living cell. Since the discovery of DNA, the living cell is now

known to be a thousand times more complex than previously thought. Steven Meyer, in his book, SIGNATURE IN THE CELL tells us how much smaller are the chances of life beginning by chance than anything previously conceived. It is beyond belief that such intricate structures could be due to chance.

Some people have drawn very pretty pictures of the development of humans, horses, etc. and for the most part they are very misleading. Stephen J Gould tells us that most of Evolution resulted in very small clumps rather than nice trees, with many lines that died out quickly.

My Testimony Concerning the Godhead

Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son in his First Vision. He later said (D&C 130:1, 22) “When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves.... The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”

There is no question that Christ had a body after his resurrection. He very much wanted his apostles to know this. In Luke 24 we read that after his resurrection the apostles were gathered together,

“as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.”

The apostles knew that “spirits” looked just like a man; on the Sea of Galilee during the storm they saw Christ walking on the water and supposed it was a spirit. He gave them every proof he could conceive of that he was not a spirit. Death is the separation of the body from the spirit and resurrection is the reuniting of body and spirit. Christ has that same body in heaven today, because Paul said “*Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him. (Romans 6:9).*”

The idea that God has a body like a man is called *anthropomorphism*. The Catholic and Protestants vigorously deny this concept. The First Council of Nicaea was the first [ecumenical council](#) of the Church. It was convoked by the Emperor Constantine in 325 AD. 318 Bishops attended. The purpose of the council was to resolve disagreements arising from within the [Church of Alexandria](#) over the nature of [the Son](#) in his relationship to the Father: in particular, whether the Son had been 'begotten' by the Father from his own being, and therefore having no beginning, or else created out of nothing, and therefore having a beginning. The Council

formulated the [Christian doctrine](#) of the **Trinity** which holds that [God](#) is three consubstantial persons^[2] or *hypostases*^[3]—the [Father](#), the [Son \(Jesus Christ\)](#), and the [Holy Spirit](#)—as "one God in three Divine Persons". The three persons are distinct, yet are one "substance, essence or nature" ([homoousios](#)). In this context, a "nature" is *what* one is, whereas a "person" is *who* one is.

The meaning of the words *consubstantial*, *distinct*, *substance*, *essence*, and *nature* are not plain English words; they seem to have a mystical meaning. The Catholic belief of the Trinity was passed on to the Church of England and from them to the Methodist Church. Their first article of faith states "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts... and in the unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The Lutheran confession states: "We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit." Jews believe strictly in one God.

The appearance of Christ to the apostles absolutely contradicts the Methodist assertion that he is without body or parts. Christ and God are separate persons. Christ constantly prayed to his Father, not to himself. At the baptism of Christ (Matt 3:16) "*there came "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*" This shows that Christ and God are different persons and not of one substance in the ordinary meaning of "substance".

The belief in the Trinity **comes from Church Councils rather than Scripture**. We shall now see what scripture says about the Godhead. Paul consistently **separates** the Father and the Son. All of Paul's letters (except Hebrews) begins with the phrase: "*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" In Colossians 1:12-16 we read

*" Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the **image** of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

This passage declares that Christ is the CREATOR, working under the direction of his Father, and is the physical IMAGE of his Father who is the invisible God. The word *image* is the greek word *eikon* and means the same as our word *icon*. Synonyms of "icon" are image, idol, portrait, representation, likeness, sign, statue. In the Catholic church, statues of saints are called icons. The point is that they are **physical** representations, not abstract ideas. In the above passage, the word "invisible God" means the "unseen God". Glass is real but invisible.

In Paul's letter to the Philipians he says "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who being in the **form** of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the **form** of a servant.* (Phil 2:5-6). The word "form" is the

greek work “morphe” and means physical form or shape. A caterpillar changes physical form and becomes a butterfly and the process is a *metamorphosis*. We speak of *morphing* one object into another by steps. Christ is in the *physical* form of God.

Some of the Greeks were ridiculing the idea of a physical resurrection. Paul wanted to make this perfectly clear. He wrote to the Colossians (2:9) “*For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead **bodily**.*” The word “bodily” is the greek word “somatikos”, meaning “from the soma”, the greek word for the physical body.

Paul’s letter to the Hebrews is even more explicit. He writes

*“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the **express image** of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:” (1:1)*

Here God appoints his Son, Jesus Christ, heir of all things. The two are separate and distinct, and Christ is, under God’s appointment, the Creator. Christ is the “express image” of God. The word “image” is the greek word “charakter” which means an exact copy or a *facsimile*. He sits down on the right hand of his Father, showing they are separate and distinct. When Stephen was stoned, he “*looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.*” (Acts 7:55). He saw that they were separate and distinct and looked just alike, just as Joseph Smith had seen.

In the beginning God created man “in his image”. The Hebrew word for image is “selem” which is the word used for all the idols or statues representing God. They were **physical** representations of God. How, then, did all the confusion arise? At the Last Supper

“ Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (John 14:8-10) Not long before, Christ had taught them: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” John 5:19 Christ was now saying to Phillip: “I am a Xerox copy of my Father, exact in every detail. Why do you want the original document when you have the Xerox copy of my Father before you?”

Christ wanted to emphasize that there was such perfect unity between him and his father that to have known one was to have known the other. In his great intercessory prayer, Christ prays not just for the apostles but “*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; **as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one** in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*” (John 17:20-21)

In other words, he prayed that the disciples would be ONE in the same way he and his father were ONE, not physically, but in perfect unity.

The Great Painting

The Bible is a story of a great painting; a composition of many elements, each telling part of the story of the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One.

Perhaps in the beginning the teachings about Christ and the Atonement were clear and sharp. By the time of Moses, Israel had endured centuries of servitude and much had been lost, so God starts over by revealing the story of the Creation and the Fall to Moses. Moses no doubt taught that as the main course in his Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Today it is taught in the Temple.

In the Garden of Eden, after the Transgression, God begins teaching about the role Christ would play. He says to Satan: *“I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*

The word *it* should say *he* [in Hebrew] and refers to her seed, particularly to Christ. The word “bruise” here means to crush or grind. In other words, He, Christ, would crush and grind the life out of Satan. Paul said (Romans 16:20) that *“the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”* Before that happened, “thou (meaning Satan) shalt bruise his heel (meaning to kill and torture Christ).” Isaiah 53:10 said *“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him [Christ]; he hath put him to grief.”* This great battle between Christ and the Serpent are the first paintings on the great mural.

Because of the wickedness of man, God had to wipe them out and start over with Noah. He works first with Noah’s son Shem whom many believe is Melchizedek. Then comes Abraham through whom God is going to do all the rest of his work on the Earth. Abraham waited so many years for his son Isaac and loved him dearly as his only son. The story of the command to Abraham to sacrifice of his only begotten son is painted in vivid detail on the canvas. It represented how much it meant to God to truly sacrifice His only Begotten Son for our sakes. The big painting is slowly taking shape.

The story then goes through Isaac’s son Jacob (Israel). Then come the 12 sons or tribes of Jacob, and Joseph with his coat of many colors. The story of Joseph being sold into Egypt is true, and it was painted on the canvas to teach about Christ. Joseph is the symbol of Christ. He is rejected by his brethren as Christ was rejected by his people, but just as Joseph saves his family from death by starvation, so Christ would save his people from a Spiritual Death. As Joseph forgave his brothers, so Christ would forgive those who put him to death. As Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver, so Christ would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. Joseph would be bruised in the process as Christ would be, yet would ever remain faithful.

We follow Jacob’s family into Egypt. Moses is raised up to deliver the Israelites from bondage. Eventually they are shown how the firstborn son in all Egypt was killed, but the Israelites were spared by the blood of the Passover Lamb being painted over their doorways. This part of the painting was designed to show how Christ, the firstborn son, would not be spared, but through his death his people would be spared. The miracle was to come through the blood of the Lamb. Following this we see painted the story of the Red Sea to show the power of the Great Deliverer, that he is Mighty to Save.

Once in the wilderness the miracles of the manna and quail are given to teach how Christ would work great miracles for their sake. They are then given the Day of Atonement which they are to observe every year. It was a highly symbolic national day of fasting. Two goats were presented to the congregation by the High Priest, dressed in his robes. Then *“Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat... But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be present alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.”* This goat was then led away, “bearing the sins of the people” and backed over a cliff. “Being presented alive before the people” represented Christ being presented by Pilate, then making the Atonement. Surely this part of the painting had to be very emotional. The grand picture is becoming a composite of the Great Messiah.

Following the scapegoat we see the painting of the fiery serpents biting and killing the Israelites. We see Moses holding up the brass serpent before them, urging them to look up and be saved. Christ told Nicodemus that *“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”* (John 3:14)

It was left to King David to paint the wrenching details of the Crucifixion onto the canvas. In the 22nd Psalm David wrote that *“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”* David views the terrible thirst of Christ in these words: *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.”* He hears that awful cry from the cross: *“My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”* He views the Roman soldiers as *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”*

In Isa 9:6 we read of the Messiah’s birth: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* Isaiah added in Isa 22: *“And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”* Of the crucifixion Isaiah said:

“And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.” Isa 22:21-25

Isaiah brings all the elements into focus in his 53rd chapter as he paints the final scene:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our

griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

The painting is almost finished. It was left to Zedekiah to make the finishing touches. He paints the triumphal entry into Jerusalem: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”* (Zech 9:9) He painted also that tragic scene of the Last Days when Christ would come again: *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”* (Zech 12:10)

The Pit and the Prison; Christ’s Second Mission

The Latter Day Saints have a vocabulary of their own. When they speak of the “pre-mortal existence” or the “spirit world” or the “spirit prison”, the Christian world simply does not understand.

The description of Joseph who was sold into Egypt is

*"Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some **pit**; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!"*

Note the use of the word “pit” which means a “cistern” or hand-dug well. They were sometimes used as prisons. The word is translated as *dungeon* in the story for Jeremiah:

“Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.”

Because the pit was underground the word also meant the grave or Sheol, *the place of the departed dead*. Ps 30:9 says *“What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?”* and in Ps 49:9, speaking of the atonement, the word “pit” is translated as “corruption”.

“They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live forever, and not see corruption.”

In Job 49 it is translated as *grave* and Job is to be delivered from there because he has found a ransom (the atonement)

*“Yes, his soul draws near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show to man his uprightness: Then he is gracious to him, and said, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a **ransom**.”*

Sheol -- mistranslated as “hell”-- is the grave or the place of the departed dead. The word “hell” means a place of punishment. The Greek word is Hades. Christ told Peter “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of *hell* shall not prevail against it.” The Greek word translated as “hell” is *Hades*. Hades was the ancient [Greek god](#) of the [underworld](#). Eventually, the god's name came to designate the abode of the dead, not a place of punishment. Thus Christ told Peter that neither death nor the grave (Christ's death) should prevail over His Church. Also, death would not prevail over those who never heard the gospel and were baptized. In the next few sentences Christ gives Peter the sealing power which *would* prevail over death.

Christ said to Nicodemus that unless you are born of the water [baptized], you *cannot* enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

The word *pit* is intimately associated with the word *prisoner* since prisoners were kept in a pit. In the Church we have developed our own vocabulary and we use the word “spirit prison” and speak of Christ's triumph over the grave and freeing the prisoners.

In Zechariah 9:9-11 we read of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and of his work in the Spirit world:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and

his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee [Christ] also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. [In other words, through the atonement, Christ delivers the dead from the Spirit Prison by preaching the gospel to them and performing baptisms for them]

This is a glorious thought, and Isaiah knew all about the work for the dead and he can't say enough about deliverance of the captives or prisoners:

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.” (Isa 24:21) [Who would visit them? Christ said that he would:]

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. (John 5:25-28)

Isaiah spoke of Christ's mission to the dead over and over:

“ I the LORD have called thee [Christ] in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” Isa 42:6

When Christ came back to Nazareth, he read out of Isaiah 61:1 the prophecy about himself:

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”

The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in 1 Peter 3:18

*“ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto **the spirits in prison**; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*

And again in 1 Peter 4:6

“ For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

I have one of the most respected New Testament Commentaries by a Protestant (Clarke's Commentary). About the above passage he says: "*This is a most difficult verse...There are as many different translations of this verse, and comments upon it, as there are translators and commentators.*"

Again we have in 1 Cor 15:29

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

Clarke's Commentary says about this verse: "*This is certainly the most difficult verse in the New Testament...There are to this day nearly as many different interpretations of it as there are interpreters.*" What a meaningful and simple verse it is if you know about the spirit prison!