



In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith “told the brethren that . . . a man would get nearer to God by abiding by [the] precepts [of the Book of Mormon], than by any other book.” (© 1995 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.)

John W. Welch

2



THE BOOK OF MORMON AS THE KEYSTONE OF CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

THE Book of Mormon serves its readers and users in many ways. On its pages are found rare and precious explanations of the gospel and doctrine of Jesus Christ, the plan of happiness and of salvation, and the Nephite prophetic worldview situating the entire world in relation to the covenants made by God with the house of Israel with promises to all of his children on this earth. Through invitations and exemplars, it provides sage tutorials in cultivating spirituality through the testimony of Jesus Christ enlivened by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Less often recognized but equally present on its pages are the foundational administrative principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Administrative principles are scattered among the revelations and experiences of Nephite religious leaders and their people, and with little

John W. Welch is the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School and also editor in chief of BYU Studies.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

difficulty an alert, interested reader can assemble from the Book of Mormon beneficial principles, practices, and procedures of Church governance.

This paper seeks to identify which of those principles were used by the earliest believers in the Book of Mormon, who often followed the Book of Mormon precisely and sometimes even explicitly. It makes sense that they would do this. By compiling textual, practical, and historical details, this paper draws attention to the foundational role that the Book of Mormon played in authoritatively establishing important principles of Latter-day Saint religious and ecclesiastical administration.

At the time it was translated in the second quarter of 1829, the Book of Mormon was the main revelation authoritatively binding on the entire congregation of the fledgling Church of Christ, as it was called from 1830 to 1834. Without delay, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and their compatriots began baptizing, worshipping together, and establishing what would become the written and unwritten order of the growing Church. Not only its doctrines and instructions for personal living but also its many administrative guidelines came to them with a seal of divine approval and investiture. Only at their peril could believers as well as nonbelievers ignore these church policies, principles, and practices.

Although most modern Latter-day Saints do not regularly recognize their deep indebtedness to the Book of Mormon for many of their institutional assets, the administrative character and personality of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has indeed grown directly from the genetic material found in the Book of Mormon, which can easily be seen as the nucleus in the germination of the Restoration. Indeed, a few years after the organization of the Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith identified the Book of Mormon with the mustard seed prophetically referred to by Jesus in one of his parables in Matthew 13. The Prophet explained that this tiny seed had come forth out of the earth and would become “the greatest among herbs” (Matthew 13:32), a great tree giving shelter and nesting space to the birds of the air.¹ Said another way, Joseph Smith saw the organizational framework

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

on which the peoples of the world would be brought together and given place as growing out of the Book of Mormon.

Most people, however, have paid little notice to the essential role of the Book of Mormon in the administrative history of the Church, perhaps for several reasons. Few people have paid enough attention to the administrative history of the Church in any regard, let alone the contributions made by the Book of Mormon to that history. Familiarity with well-established Church practices tends to obscure in modern minds the distinctiveness that many passages in the Book of Mormon would have had to its initial readers in the 1830s. Others have not thought of the Book of Mormon on par with “historical” documents, such as letters or contemporaneous journal entries. But because the writers of the Book of Mormon often assured their readers that they had seen the modern day and were writing this book to benefit modern people (as in 2 Nephi 28 or Mormon 8:26–34), the Book of Mormon would have sounded in the ears of its audiences from the outset as having been written directly to them, and therefore understanding their practical response to this book holds an important place in our efforts to reconstruct the perceptions, attitudes, motives, and practices of early Latter-day Saints.

Some people have searched for, and for the most part not found, much evidence that early Church meetings and practices were being modeled on directions taken from the Book of Mormon. But newly published documents, databases, and search engines yield more evidence than has been previously set forth. Based on the following, I believe that people should no longer ignore this elephant in the room, namely the Book of Mormon, as a persistent and even dominant source of Church administrative genius.

VERBATIM USE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON IN THE 1829 “ARTICLES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST”

The first evidence that the Book of Mormon was understood and used as a Church administrative guide came as early as the end of June 1829,

A FIRM FOUNDATION

shortly after the translation of the Book of Mormon had been completed. As initial steps were then being taken to receive divine instructions relative to “building up the church of Christ, according to the fulness of the gospel,”² Oliver Cowdery undertook to draft three pages entitled the “Articles of the Church of Christ,”³ most likely late in June 1829.⁴ The manuscript of this rarely seen text, preserved in the Church History Archives, identifies itself as a “true copy,” apparently written a little later from an original that is no longer extant. Its full text⁵ reads as follows, with bolding⁶ and citation references added to show the sources Cowdery quoted:

A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his church and the manner thereof—

Saying Oliver listen to the voice of Christ your Lord and your God and your Redeemer and write the words which I shall command you concerning **my Church my Gospel my Rock [D&C 18:4; cf. 3 Nephi 11:39–40 (my rock); 27:8–10 (my church, my gospel)]** and my Salvation. Behold the world is ripening in iniquity and it must needs be that the children of men are stirred up unto repentance both the Gentiles and also the House of Israel for behold I **command all men every where to repent [3 Nephi 11:32]** and I speak unto you even as unto Paul mine apostle for ye are called even with that same calling with which he was called Now therefore **whosoever repenteth** and humbleth himself before me **and desireth to be baptized in my name shall ye baptize them [3 Nephi 11:23]** And after this manner did he command me that I should baptize them **Behold ye shall go down and stand in the water and in my name shall ye baptize them And now behold these are the words which ye shall say calling them by name saying Having authority given me of Jesus Christ I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost Amen And then shall ye immerse them in the water and come forth again out of the water and after this manner shall ye baptize in my name For behold verily I say unto you**

that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are one and I am in the Father and the Father in me and the Father and I are one [3 Nephi 11:23–27].

And ye are also **called to ordain Priests and Teachers [Moroni 3:1] according to the gifts and callings of God unto men [Moroni 3:4]** and after this manner shall ye ordain them **Ye shall pray unto the Father in my name** and then shall ye **lay** your hands upon them and say **In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a Priest or if he be a Teacher I ordain you to be a Teacher to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ by the endurance of faith on his name to the end Amen [Moroni 3:2–3]** And this shall be the duty of the Priest He shall kneel down and the members of the Church shall kneel also which Church shall be called The Church of Christ and he shall pray to the Father in my name for the church and if it so be that it be **built upon my Rock** I will **bless** it [3 Nephi 18:12] And after that ye have prayed to the Father in my name ye shall preach the truth in soberness casting out none from among you but rather **invite them to come [2 Nephi 26:33]** And the Church shall **oft partake of bread and wine [Moroni 6:6]** and after this manner shall ye partake of it **The Elder or Priest shall minister it** and after this manner shall he do he shall **kneel with the Church and pray to the Father in the name of Christ** and then shall ye say **O God the Eternal Father we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus // Christ to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it that they may et <eat> in remembrance of the body of thy Son and witness unto thee O God the Eternal Father that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son and always remember him and keep his commandments which he hath given them that they may always have his spirit to be with them Amen [Moroni 4:1–3]** And then shall ye **take the cup and say O God the Eternal Father we ask thee in the**

A FIRM FOUNDATION

name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it that they may do [it] in remembrance of the blood of thy Son which was shed for them that they may witness unto thee O God the Eternal Father that they do always remember him that they may have his spirit to be with them Amen [Moroni 5:1–2] And now behold I give unto you a commandment that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily when ye shall minister it for whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul Therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him nevertheless ye shall not cast him out from among you but ye shall minister unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father in my name and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name then shall ye receive him and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood but if he repenteth not he shall not be numbered among my people that he may not destroy my people For behold I know my sheep and they are numbered nevertheless ye shall not cast him out of your Synagogues or your places of worship for unto such shall ye continue to minister for ye know not but what they will return and repent and come unto me with full purpose of heart and I shall heal <heal> them and ye shall be the means of bringing Salvation unto them Therefore keep these sayings which I have commanded [3 Nephi 18:28–33] you that ye come not under condemnation for wo unto him whom the Father condemneth—

And the church shall meet together oft [3 Nephi 18:22] for prayer and sup[p]lication [Alma 31:10] casting out none from your places of worship but rather invite them to come [2 Nephi 26:33] And each member shall speak and tell the church of their progress in the way to Eternal life

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

And there shall be no **pride** nor **envying** nor **strifes** nor **malice** nor **idoletry** nor witchcrafts nor **whoredoms** nor fornications nor covetiousness nor **lying** nor **deceits** nor no **manner of** iniquity [**very close to the lists in Alma 1:32 and 16:18**] and if any one is guilty of any or the least of these and doth not repent and show fruits **mee<a>ts** [meets] **for repentance** [Alma 12:15] they **shall not be numbered among my people that they may not destroy my people** [3 Nephi 18:31]

And now I speak unto the Church Repent all ye ends of the Earth and come unto me and be baptized in my name which is Jesus Christ and endure to the end and ye shall be saved Behold Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father and there is none other name given whereby men can be saved Wherefore all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father for in that name shall they be called at the last at <day> Wherefore if they know not the name by which they are called they cannot have place in the Kingdom of my Father [D&C 18:22–25; cf. 3 Nephi 27:20; Mosiah 3:17; 5:12] Behold ye must walk uprightly before me and sin not [D&C 18:31] and if ye do walk uprightly before me and sin not my grace is sufficient for you [D&C 18:31] that ye **shall be lifted up at the last day** [3 Nephi 27:22] Behold I am Jesus Christ the Son of the living **God** I am the same which **came unto my own and my own received me not** [3 Nephi 9:15, 16] I am the light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not **these words are not of men nor of man but of me** [D&C 18:34] Now remember the words of him who is the first and the last **the light and the life of the world** [3 Nephi 9:18] And I Jesus Christ your Lord and your God and your Redeemer by the power of my Spirit hath spoken it Amen

And now if I have not authority to write these things judge ye behold ye shall know that I have authority when you

A FIRM FOUNDATION

and I shall be brought to **stand before** [Ether 5:6] the judgment seat of Christ Now may the [*manuscript torn*] [grace] of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be and abide with you // \\ and [*manuscript torn*] [finally] save you Eternally in his Kingdom through the **Infinite atonement** [2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:12] which is in Jesus Christ Amen—

Behold I am Oliver I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Behold I have written \\ the things which he hath commanded me for behold his word was unto me as a burning fire shut up in my bones and I was weary with forbearing and I could forbear no longer Amen—

Written in the year of our Lord and Saviour 1829—

A true Copy of the articles of the Church of Christ &c.

While a number of questions remain about this important document—such as the immediate circumstances that inspired Oliver Cowdery (who here identifies himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ) to receive this revelation, or the reasons why it was not ever publically used by Oliver or Joseph Smith—for present purposes, several things can be said with confidence about this text.

First, it can certainly be described as the earliest step in preparing an administrative handbook for the Church. It is clear that, as soon as Joseph Smith and Oliver finished the translation of the books of 3 Nephi and Moroni, Oliver was on fire with the spirit of urgency to build up the Church of Christ.

Second, the great inspiration of this text, received as a revelation by Oliver, perhaps with encouragement if not direction from Joseph, was to gather out of the mass of about 608 original Book of Mormon manuscript pages⁷ the basic instructions and guidelines upon which the Church should be organized and administered. That selection process alone would have been a daunting task unless aided by the guidance of the Holy Ghost to help him remember where in that sheaf of papers these administrative provisions were to be found.

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

Third, at a glance one can see that about two-thirds of the words in this document (bolded above) are verbatim quotes from eight chapters in the Book of Mormon, namely the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi chapters 9, 11, 18, 27, and significant quotes from Moroni chapters 3–6, along with isolated phrases from 2 Nephi 26, Alma 1, 12, 16, 31, 34, and Ether 5, and also from seven verses in Doctrine and Covenants 18 (vv. 4, 22–25, 31, and 34).⁸

Fourth, this heavy use of the Book of Mormon makes perfect sense, especially because Joseph, Oliver, and David Whitmer had sought guidance on how to build up the Church of Christ “according to the fulness of the gospel,”⁹ and the Book of Mormon was generally understood to contain or to be directly associated with “the fulness of the gospel” (see D&C 14:10; 20:9; 27:5).

Fifth, the abundance of administrative topics found in this document deal with the following:

- Paragraph 1 states the need for universal repentance, baptism or rebaptism, followed by the manner of performing the ordinance of baptism and the exact words of the baptismal prayer. Before 1835,¹⁰ the words used in the baptismal prayer were those found in 1829 in the translation of the Book of Mormon.
- Paragraph 2 gives the manner for the ordination of priests and teachers, including the very words used by the Nephite elders in performing those ordinations. Then the manner of administering the sacrament and instructions regarding not allowing people to partake of the sacrament unworthily are taken (with only one word reversal in verse 28) from six full verses in 3 Nephi 18.
- Paragraph 3 contains the definition and instructions concerning what constitutes unworthiness. A natural outgrowth of the administrative requirement to forbid people from partaking of the sacrament unworthily is the need for a definition of worthiness. This suggests that the list found in paragraph 3 may be the first effort made in the restored Church to assemble the equivalent of a list of questions to be asked of oneself or by a priesthood interviewer in

A FIRM FOUNDATION

determining a person's worthiness to be baptized or to partake of the sacrament.

- Paragraph 4 extends another universal call to repentance and explains what it means to take upon oneself and bear the name of Jesus Christ, walking uprightly, and receiving the grace and testimony of Jesus, including his own declaration of his identity, which he spoke out of the darkness over the land in 3 Nephi 9.
- Paragraph 5 then ends with a seal of authority that these words will stand at the judgment seat of God, words taken from Ether 5. Oliver Cowdery had learned the necessity of speaking by divinely invested authority, and thus he certifies that he speaks as "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

The long blocks of verbatim quotes from the Book of Mormon in this 1829 text make this document the primary exhibit in demonstrating that the Book of Mormon was literally followed, and was to continue to be followed, as the initial administrative handbook of the Church.

THE CONTINUED DIRECT USE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON IN DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 20

Revealed on April 10, 1830,¹¹ another document (originally known as the "Articles and Covenants of the Church") eventually became numbered as Doctrine and Covenants 20. It can easily be described as the first official handbook of the Church, focused especially on the establishment and operation of newly founded branches of the Church.¹² Although one should not see the 1829 Articles of the Church of Christ either as a source for or an early draft of section 20,¹³ one clear similarity between the 1829 document and section 20 is that they both make use of numerous words and specific directives found in the Book of Mormon.

For example, the sacrament prayers are found in Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79, but these words were once again drawn from the Book of Mormon. In the first known printing of Doctrine and Covenants 20 in the

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

1831 *Painesville Telegraph*, it simply states in lieu of these verses: “And the manner of baptism and the manner of administering the Sacrament are to be done as is written in the Book of Mormon.”¹⁴ Similarly, other early iterations of Doctrine and Covenants 20, rather than spelling out the words of the sacrament prayers, mechanically refer the reader to “Book of Mormon, Page 175” (in other words, page 175 in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon), or they place the material from Moroni 4–5 and 3 Nephi 11 in quotation marks.¹⁵

Other administrative instructions in section 20 draw on the Book of Mormon. For example, those blessing the sacrament are told to kneel (20:76; compare Moroni 4:2), and the procedures for baptism are given (20:72–74; see 3 Nephi 11:23–26). The leaders of the Church are told to keep a list of the names of all members, numbering those who have been baptized (20:82; see Mosiah 6:1; 3 Nephi 30:2; Moroni 6:4) and to blot out the names of those expelled from the Church (20:83; as in Mosiah 5:11; 3 Nephi 18:31; Moroni 6:7). Members overtaken in fault are to be “dealt with as the scriptures direct” (20:80), which would seem to be an explicit reference to the unique words of the Lord on this very subject in 3 Nephi 18:28–32. Other elements in this section that relate to the Book of Mormon include the declarations that those who receive the Book of Mormon in faith will “receive a crown of eternal life” (D&C 20:14–16; compare obtaining “eternal life” in 2 Nephi 31:18; Jacob 6:11) and that all need to be baptized and endure to the end (20:25; compare 2 Nephi 33:4; 3 Nephi 27:16).

These details qualify section 20 to stand as strong supporting evidence that the Book of Mormon was consciously seen and used, in the first instance, as the basic source for priesthood and administrative instructions for the fledgling Church.

PEOPLE READ AND KNEW THE BOOK OF MORMON

It is often hard to divest ourselves of our modern perceptions of the Church when we try to imagine how it operated in the very early 1830s.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

At that time, the Church had no Primary association, no Relief Society, no meetinghouses, no temples, no tithing, no Word of Wisdom, no websites, no Doctrine and Covenants, and not much to read. But they did have the Book of Mormon. Indeed, until 1835 not much else had been printed in the Latter-day Saint library. So it stands all the more to reason that the nascent Church would have made great use of the Book of Mormon for many purposes: for doctrine, for prophecy, for inspiration, for testimony, for reproof, for exhortation, and also for administrative guidance. Even if not cited nearly as often in ordinary Latter-day Saint religious discourse as was the Bible, it is evident that the Book of Mormon was seen as a record of ancient inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, as a sign of the Restoration of the gospel and of Israel, and as a source for several religious teachings. Countering any perception that the Book of Mormon was rarely used or sidelined as a mere artifact, considerable evidence shows that the early Saints indeed made actual use of the Book of Mormon for many reasons, including administrative purposes.

Journals of William E. McLellin. Important evidence in this regard can be found in the six journals of William McLellin (1831–36), his 1831 diary being the earliest of all Mormon diaries. From these early records, first published in 1994, we can now see that the Book of Mormon was read, quoted, and drawn upon almost incessantly, at least by McLellin and most of his companions. “By far the most frequent topic in his sermons was the Book of Mormon, evidences in its behalf, prophecies about its coming forth, testimonies of its divinity, and validations of its worth in opening the glories of the latter days (his theme in over thirty-three sermons).”¹⁶ The next most commonly treated subject in his discourses was the Articles and Covenants of the Church, which he discussed on eighteen documented occasions. Perhaps for textual and other reasons, this book and the Church were naturally and inextricably linked in his preaching.¹⁷ Indeed, McLellin’s conversion was based on his acknowledgment of “the truth and Validity of the book of Mormon” and in the same breath that he had “found the people of the Lord—The Living Church of Christ.”¹⁸

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

In 1831, McLellin's two main themes were the Book of Mormon and the coming of Christ in judgment of the world and to establish Zion among his Saints.¹⁹ More than this is unreported, but it is not difficult to imagine McLellin using 1 Nephi 14, 2 Nephi 27–30, 3 Nephi 20–22, and 4 Nephi to proclaim and inaugurate the program of establishing Zion as the first administrative objective of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. On Sunday, October 2, 1831, McLellin and his companion, Hyrum Smith, preached “about 2½ hours” about the Book of Mormon and “warned them of their danger”; but in spite of their warnings, “they went on in their old way to administer the sacrament.”²⁰ Evidently he had tried to convince them that the correct way to administer the sacrament was the manner found in the Book of Mormon.

In 1832, in addition to mentioning the “evidences and testimonies concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, McLellin now stressed the utility and importance of the book, . . . covenants, obedience, ordinances (particularly the laying on of hands),”²¹ along with other practical elements of the plan of salvation, gathering to Zion, and the organization of the Church. All of these topics are to be found in the Book of Mormon, some primarily so, laying the foundation for preaching about other revelations, such as the recently revealed (on February 16, 1832) Doctrine and Covenants 76 on the kingdoms of glory in the heavens, which McLellin also now emphasized.

In 1833, McLellin worked with Parley P. Pratt as his companion. “Pratt’s themes were much broader than McLellin’s messages of fundamental simplicity and austere spirituality,” but both elders taught the plainness of the gospel of Christ as found in the Book of Mormon.²² On March 22, 1833, for example Parley P. Pratt read the account of “Alma and Amulek’s teaching and sufferings” in Ammonihah, found in Alma 9–16. McLellin reported that “Br Parley was melted into tears and his words were powerful even to the cutting of those to the heart who were present and I was filled to[o] so that I walked through the room praising and blessing the name of the Lord and testifying to his word even the book of Mormon

A FIRM FOUNDATION

until Sister Russel spoke out and ‘said that she believed it.’”²³ On March 31, McLellin records that Pratt “arose and read a number of pages concerning the personal ministry of Christ . . . on this continent, and in all he read, expounded and reasoned about 2 hours and I then spoke about one hour, and read and expounded the covenants—& articles.”²⁴ Significantly, those particular teachings of the Savior in the Book of Mormon would have included the ordinances and administrative directives presented in the 1830 Articles and Covenants. But when Pratt “then asked if any wished to obey,” or in other words follow the baptismal procedures set forth in 3 Nephi 11, no one stepped forth.

In 1834, McLellin’s preaching and proselytizing emphasized virtues (such as charity, humility, endurance, forgiveness, and unity) as well as the laws of Zion. In connection with the nature of the kingdom of Christ, he spoke “about the authority given by God to the Church of the Latter-day Saints, specifically about the two priesthoods.”²⁵ In this regard one easily imagines that (in a missionary context) he quoted 3 Nephi 11:25, “Having authority given me of Jesus Christ,” and 3 Nephi 18:37, when Christ “gave them power to give the Holy Ghost,” as primary texts laying the groundwork for his testimony of the restoration of the priesthoods and the revelation on priesthood in Doctrine and Covenants 84. The Church meeting described by McLellin on September 7, 1834, comports readily with the directions given for the administration of Church meetings in Moroni 6.²⁶ On October 12, 1834, McLellin declined to “break bread because there was such a general division in the Church,”²⁷ apparently following the directive in 3 Nephi 18:28–29 that the priesthood should not administer the sacrament to the unworthy. So important was the Book of Mormon to McLellin that, on November 14, 1834, he complained that his companion, John Boynton, delivered “a fine discourse but he never mentioned the book of mormon once.”²⁸

In 1835, McLellin traveled and served in New England together with the newly organized Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He gladly notes when other Apostles, who shared the pulpit with him, spoke about the Book of

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

Mormon, notably about the Savior's teachings in 3 Nephi, the two priest-hoods, and authority to act in the name of Jesus Christ.²⁹ For example, on May 11, 1835, he wrote: "Elder B. Young. after reading a portion of the Sav-
iour's teaching in the book of Mormon he spoke about 1½ hours contrast-
ing the religions of the day with the truth."³⁰ Although McLellin does not
report which teachings of the Savior were set in contrast with the teachings
and practices of the day, the result of Brigham Young's teachings in this
instance was clear: "We went immediately to the watter and Elder O. Hyde
immersed 7 persons. . . . At evening we had another confirmation mee. and
those baptized were confirmed by the laying on of hands and a number were
blessed in order that they might be healed of infirmities."³¹ The sequential
connection between faith, baptism, purification by the Holy Ghost, gifts of
the Spirit, and healings is established nowhere more clearly than in 3 Nephi
17:8; 18:32; 19:13–15; and 26:14–15.

Other uses of the Book of Mormon. William McLellin's use of the Book
of Mormon was not aberrational. Ample use of the Book of Mormon in
Church meetings, proselyting, and in other early Latter-day Saint adminis-
trative contexts can also be documented.

In his journals, Wilford Woodruff reports that he preached about the
authenticity of the Book of Mormon six times in the 1830s. On June 9,
1835, David W. Patten preached from John 10, likely regarding the "other
sheep" identified in 3 Nephi 15:16–16:3 as the people at Bountiful visited
by the resurrected Lord.³² On March 23, 1837, Woodruff wrote that he was
called upon in a meeting by Father Smith to read a chapter from the Book
of Mormon; Woodruff then read the third chapter from the book of Jacob
in the 1830 edition (today's Jacob 5), regarding the extended allegory of
the tame and wild olive trees. Then in a meeting in the Kirtland Temple in
April 1837, prophecies were pronounced on the heads of many of the Saints;
his journal proclaims, "Rejoice O earth & Shout O heavens for the natural
fruit of the tame olive tree is again manifest in the earth." On April 9, 1837,
John Smith read from the twelfth chapter of 2 Nephi (today's 2 Nephi
28–30) and preached from that text. Again, on February 18, 1838, and

A FIRM FOUNDATION

May 20, 1838, Wilford Woodruff preached on Zenos' allegory.³³ Although all of these occurrences do not involve administrative situations, the generously documented usage of the Book of Mormon for all of these purposes strengthens the case that the Book of Mormon was regularly on the minds and in the hearts of the Saints.³⁴

This pattern of using the Book of Mormon in the preaching and practices of the early Church continued as the Apostles traveled to England to gather Zion in the British Isles. On October 18, 1840, Wilford Woodruff met for a sacrament meeting with the members; he "read in the Book of Mormon gave instructions & broke bread unto them."³⁵ Quite likely his instructions came from 3 Nephi 18 and from the opening chapters in the book of Moroni. On December 11, 1839, Parley P. Pratt lectured on the origins of the American Indians. On February 6, 1840, Woodruff preached to four or five hundred people on the Book of Mormon; and on October 7, 1840, he held a public debate with a minister about the Book of Mormon, all as recorded in Woodruff's journal.³⁶

To the very end of the Joseph Smith era, the Book of Mormon was read, followed, and even clung to by the leaders and members of the early Church. On the way to Carthage Jail, Hyrum Smith knew right where to go to find Ether 12:37–38, which he read aloud as his final source of solace and strength before he was murdered: "Thou hast been faithful; wherefore . . . thou shalt be made strong. . . . Farewell . . . until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood."³⁷

Joseph Smith's use of the Book of Mormon. Moreover, in making such use of the Book of Mormon, the early Saints were following the example set by their prophet-leader. In many ways, Joseph Smith continued to be involved with and to make use of the Book of Mormon long after it was translated and published. He did not somehow leave the Book of Mormon behind as other dimensions of his ministry unfolded. On many occasions he extolled the great benefits to the world that would come through the Book of Mormon.³⁸ In November 1835, he expressly cited the Book of Mormon and

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

the prophet Ether regarding the unbelief of the Gentiles and the establishment of a New Jerusalem.³⁹ He personally made corrections and modifications for the 1837 and 1840 editions of the book. On March 20, 1839, in Liberty Jail, Joseph testified, “The Book of Mormon is true,”⁴⁰ and on July 2, 1839, he preached on revelations in the Book of Mormon and told the Saints: “Do not betray the revelations of God, whether in Bible, Book of Mormon, or Doctrine & Covenants, or any of the word of God.”⁴¹ On June 15, 1842, he enjoined the Saints: “Seek to know God in your closets, call upon him in the fields; follow the directions of the Book of Mormon, and pray over, and for, your families, your cattle, your flocks, your herds, your corn, and all things that you possess,”⁴² directly paraphrasing the words of Amulek in Alma 34:18–26.

Scouring the pages of the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, one finds numerous ideas and phrases that most likely originated with distinctive passages in the Book of Mormon, from 1831 to 1843.⁴³ For example,

- October 25, 1831: Joseph admonished the Saints to do their duty patiently and in perfect love: “Until we have perfect love we are liable to fall.”⁴⁴ // This comports with Moroni 8:26, “which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come.”⁴⁵
- February 16, 1832: God rewards everyone “according to the deeds done in the body”⁴⁶ // God judges “according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body” (Alma 5:15).
- August 1832: “Ask your heavenly Father, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to his glory nothing doubting, he will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit”⁴⁷ // “Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4); “doubting nothing” (Mormon 9:21).

A FIRM FOUNDATION

- August 1832: “The Son of God came into the world to redeem it from the fall”⁴⁸ // “the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall” (2 Nephi 2:26).
- January 4, 1833: Gentiles “grafted in from whence the chosen family were broken off”⁴⁹ // “grafted in the branches of the wild olive-tree” (Jacob 5:10).
- November 19, 1833: “What manner of person ought I to be?”⁵⁰ // “what manner of men ought ye to be?” (3 Nephi 27:27).
- December 1833: “puffed up, and fall under condemnation, and into the snare of the devil”⁵¹ // “puffed up” (2 Nephi 28:15); “brought under condemnation” (Moroni 9:6); “the snares and the wiles of the devil” (Helaman 3:29).
- January 22, 1834: “committed against light and knowledge”⁵² // “against the light and knowledge of God” (Alma 39:6).
- January 22, 1834: “remorse of conscience”⁵³ // “remorse of conscience” (Alma 29:5).
- January 22, 1834: “garments are spotless”⁵⁴ // “garments are spotless” (Alma 7:25).
- January 22, 1834: “obey the gospel with full purpose of heart”⁵⁵ // “come with full purpose of heart” (Jacob 6:5; 3 Nephi 10:6; 18:32).
- May 14, 1840: “my soul delighteth in plainness”⁵⁶ // “my soul delighteth in plainness” (2 Nephi 25:4).
- January 5, 1841: “he allways [*sic*] is striving to get others as miserable as himself”⁵⁷ // “he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).
- May 26, 1842: “Said Jesus: ‘ye shall do the work, which ye see me do’”⁵⁸ // “for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do” (3 Nephi 27:21).
- June 9, 1842: “God does not look on sin with allowance”⁵⁹ // “the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Alma 45:16).

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

- September 1, 1842: “There was no other name given under heaven, nor no other ordinance admitted, whereby man could be saved”⁶⁰
// “there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby men can be saved” (2 Nephi 31:21).
- July 9, 1843: “children have no sins . . . all made alive in Christ”⁶¹
// “all little children are alive in Christ” (Moroni 8:22).

Based on all the foregoing citations, which can collectively be clustered as the voice of a community of witnesses, I conclude that the Book of Mormon was better known and a more important source of instruction and administrative directives in the early formative days of the Church than is often realized. In the early 1830s, it was not only *the* Book of Mormon, it was indeed the *only* Mormon book; and throughout Joseph Smith’s life it remained *the quintessential* Mormon book.

IMPLICIT OR PRESUMPTIVE EARLY ADMINISTRATIVE USES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON AS A HANDBOOK OF INSTRUCTIONS

Finally, the following data display numerous places where early readers of the Book of Mormon would have found on its pages clear administrative directives. There is ample reason to believe that these basic instructions and patterns of fundamental religious practices were not taken lightly, as strings in a simple narrative yarn. The Book of Mormon, written with the conditions and needs of the last days in mind, readily worked as a general handbook of Church instructions.

For example, by reading 3 Nephi 27:21, readers hear the voice of the Savior saying: “Ye know the things that ye *must do* in my *church*; . . . for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do. Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:21–22; emphasis added).⁶² Here Jesus uses strong language. The exemplary actions and verbal instructions of the Lord *must* be followed. Thus, in general, the directives of the Book of Mormon were not optional but mandatory. In 3 Nephi, the people had seen Jesus do many things: they

A FIRM FOUNDATION

had seen him lead them in prayer, bless their children, ordain their leaders, show them how to baptize, heal the sick, organize and name the Church, and other such things. His instructions, examples, and procedures were to be followed.⁶³ How could early Church leaders and members embrace the Book of Mormon as the revealed word of God without taking all of its teachings seriously?

By 1832, however, the Saints were forgetting to follow the Book of Mormon in certain ways. Significantly, a revelation mainly “on priesthood” placed the Church under condemnation until they remembered the Book of Mormon “not only to say, *but to do* according to that which I have written” (D&C 84:57; emphasis added). This mandate would seem to reinstate and reinforce a clear direction that the Church was to use and follow the Book of Mormon as an administrative guide, for just as Jesus had said at the end of his first day among the righteous survivors at Bountiful, serious condemnation would come upon the Church if the directives given on that occasion should be ignored. Jesus said, “Keep these sayings which I have commanded you [this day] that ye come not under condemnation” (3 Nephi 18:33).

To suggest the extent to which the early Saints did, in fact, administer the affairs of the Church according to the things written in the Book of Mormon, the following materials set forth several dozen passages in the Book of Mormon that clearly provide distinctive procedural guidance. The large quantity of these passages tends to increase the likelihood that the Book of Mormon was a conscious source for this set of administrative practices. Moreover, on several occasions, historical sources are cited to show that these practices were in place early in Church history. The early presence of these practices tends to enhance the plausibility of the claim that the Book of Mormon was the primary source for these practices, for in those early days there were few other sources that could have been drawn upon. And in addition, these passages have been clustered in groups that correspond with the chapters in today’s *Church Handbook of Instructions*. The strong congruence between the main administrative components of the handbook and the unmistakable directives of the Book of Mormon tends to

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

confirm the observation that administrative order of the Church distills and instantiates the explicit and implicit administrative models woven into the essential fabric of the restored Church and gospel of Jesus Christ.

Name, leaders, and congregations of the Church. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that the name of the Church is integral to the identity of the Church of Christ. To be the Church of Jesus Christ, it must bear his name (see 3 Nephi 27:8–9). The doctrines taught must be the doctrine of Christ (see 3 Nephi 11:31–40) and the gospel of Christ (see 3 Nephi 27:13–21). His disciples must have authority to act in the name of Christ and “whatsoever [they] shall do, [they] shall do it in [his] name” (3 Nephi 27:7). Consistent with these requisites, the Church was referred to as “the Church of Christ” as early as in the 1830 Articles and Covenants (D&C 20:1); and with references to this all important nomenclature, Oliver Cowdery was authorized, in a revelation given on April 6, 1830, to become “an elder unto this church of Christ, bearing my name” (D&C 21:11).

Turning the pages of the Book of Mormon, any reader is hard-pressed to miss the will of the Lord regarding such things as following a single prophet-leader, and not a council of elders or a sea of bishops or a congregational priesthood of all believers. Sole prophet-leaders such as Nephi, Alma the Younger, Nephi the son of Helaman, and Nephi the son of Nephi (in 2 Nephi 5, Alma 1, Helaman 7, and 3 Nephi 7:25) set strong precedents that have always encouraged the Latter-day Saints to look primarily to the Lord’s true prophet for guidance in all ecclesiastical matters.

Other distinctive organizational features flow from the cohesive patterns of Church structure found amidst the lines of the Book of Mormon. An indelible endorsement for the all-important body of twelve disciple-apostles (3 Nephi 12:1; 19:12) is found in the first beatitude given by Jesus to the people at Bountiful: “Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve” (3 Nephi 12:1). Three leaders among those twelve were given exceptional powers (3 Nephi 28:2–12), and three witnesses were given extraordinary privileges (2 Nephi 27:12; Ether 5:4), as had been Peter, James, and John, all of which collectively establish the precedent that grew

A FIRM FOUNDATION

into the distinctive and pervasive Latter-day Saint use of three-member presidencies sitting at the head of each quorum and organization. The concept of “presiding” itself finds its religious imprimatur in Book of Mormon passages reporting the administrations of Alma, who “ordained priests and elders . . . to *preside* and watch over the church” (Alma 6:1; emphasis added).

One of the main functions of Church leaders was to create uniformity and order among the faithful. Alma the Elder “did regulate *all* the affairs of the church” (Mosiah 26:37; emphasis added), and his son and grandsons followed his example each time they made “regulations” in establishing the covenant community (Alma 6:7) or dispelled dissensions and promoted peace by making “a regulation . . . throughout the church” (Alma 45:21; see also 62:44) and by “*uniting* as many to the church as would believe in their preaching” (3 Nephi 28:18; emphasis added). To the founding members of the restored Church, passages such as these would not have been glossed over lightly. If any of them wondered whether the Church of Christ should be, on the one hand, an association of loosely connected individuals or, on the other hand, a tightly knit cohort of like-minded members, the pattern of regularized organization found in the Book of Mormon would have given them clear guidance.

Other organizational elements that quickly became constitutional in the Church are modeled in the Book of Mormon. Fundamental was the process—to say nothing of the very possibility—of legitimately introducing organizational and doctrinal changes by authoritative revelation (see Mosiah 3:3; Alma 40:11; 3 Nephi 15:1), confirmed by the voice of the people (see Mosiah 7:9; 29:25–29; Alma 2:3; 27:22). Leaders were called of God by prophecy (see 1 Nephi 2:22), so much so that Church offices and assignments were known as “callings” (Jacob 2:3; Moroni 7:2; 8:1). The body of the Church was divided into smaller congregations: at one point, there were seven local units (see Mosiah 25:19–23); on another occasion, they divided into groups of about 250 people each (see 3 Nephi 19:4–5); at a difficult time, they partitioned into flocks of 50 people per priest (see Mosiah 18:18). The pastoral duties of these Church leaders who watched over their

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

members, teaching and fostering unity in love, are spelled out on several occasions (for example, Mosiah 18:19–23; Moroni 6:4). The creating of new congregational units is modeled in Mosiah 25:19, with the authorized formation of Alma’s seven churches in the land of Zarahemla, and in Alma 27:22, with the settling of the people of Ammon in the land of Jershon.

Ordinations. Next in organizational sequence comes the administration of the ordinations of the gospel. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that priests, teachers, and elders are to be consecrated by a formal ordination (see 2 Nephi 5:26; Alma 6:1), that these priesthood ordinations must be performed by the laying on of hands (Alma 6:1; Moroni 3:2), and that priesthood authority was necessary to administer the ordinances of the gospel. “Authority” in this sense is mentioned a dozen times in the Book of Mormon (including Mosiah 18:13, 17, 18, 26; Alma 5:3; Helaman 5:18; 11:18; 3 Nephi 7:17; 11:25; 12:1; Moroni 8:28), and “priesthood” occurs in Alma 4:20 and again seven times in Alma 13. This early mandate for proper priesthood ordination in order for one to act with power and authority in behalf of God is set forth much more clearly in the Book of Mormon than in the New Testament. Indeed, Moroni 2:1–2 revealed the very words used by Jesus in 3 Nephi 18:37–38 as he gave the disciples the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In all these cases, many choices were open to the fledgling Church: whether to ordain, how to ordain, and which offices to install; whether to baptize, how to baptize, and when to baptize. The question here is not so much whether similar practices were followed in various sectors by Methodists or Catholics or others.⁶⁴ Many options were available and could have been embraced by the early Latter-day Saints. But in many cases, such as with the ordination and authorization of priesthood officers by the laying on of hands, the choice was already made for the Church by the scriptural instructions and requirements found in the Book of Mormon.

Indeed, the procedures and actual words used in ordaining priests and teachers are given expressly in Moroni 3:1–4. One priesthood authority is required in order to baptize (conferred in 3 Nephi 11:19–22; see also Mosiah

A FIRM FOUNDATION

18:13–14), and a higher priesthood authority or power is necessary in order to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the last thing that Jesus did at the end of his first day in Bountiful was to take his twelve disciples aside and touch them, one by one (see 3 Nephi 18:36). A cloud overcame the multitude so they could not see Jesus as he spoke the sacred words (revealed in Moroni 2:2) that he used at the time when he conferred upon these disciples the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 18:37–38). This powerful combination of instructive texts told the readers of the Book of Mormon that two priesthoods were necessary: one to baptize, another to give the Holy Ghost. Thus it would be logical to conclude that, just as Joseph and Oliver had been inspired by 3 Nephi 11 on May 15, 1829, to go to the woods in Harmony, Pennsylvania, to seek the authority to baptize,⁶⁵ they would have equally known from 3 Nephi 18 that they also needed the higher priesthood power. From the Book of Mormon, they had also already learned that the priesthood after the holy order of the Son of God was associated with Melchizedek, the greatest bearer of the high priesthood in ancient times (see Alma 13:1–15).

Ordinances. In answer to the question of what prerequisites should be required of those wishing to join the Church through the door of the new and everlasting covenant, faith was the first principle of admission as taught to the poor Zoramites by Alma and his companions in Alma 32. Working examples of the roles of study, prayer, and change of heart in the conversion process are also adeptly illustrated by the work of Ammon and his brethren in the land of Nephi in Alma 17–26. Repentance is to follow faith (see Mosiah 4:10; 11:20–25; 26:22–37; Alma 5; 9; 12; 42; Helaman 7; 13; 3 Nephi 30:2), and confession follows repentance as a concluding step before baptism (see Helaman 5:17; 16:1; Moroni 6:7).

The essence of the required baptismal commitment is an offering of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; Moroni 6:2), through which one may obtain forgiveness. Forgiveness must then be retained by giving to the poor and leading a life of righteousness (see Mosiah 4:26; Alma 5).

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

Unlike most other Christian communities, which long in the past had set aside the covenantal nature of baptism (mainly as a consequence of baptizing infants), baptism is clearly connected in the Book of Mormon with adult covenant making and the subsequent remembering and keeping of God's commandments, which are his stipulations of the covenant (see Mosiah 5:1–10; Mosiah 18:13; 3 Nephi 18). The further fact that, in this process, baptized members of the Church take upon themselves the name of Christ is repeatedly emphasized in the covenant-making texts of the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 5:10–12; 25:23; 3 Nephi 27:25; Moroni 6:3). The point that repentance and baptism was “the gate by which ye should enter” was unequivocally established by the Book of Mormon (for example, 2 Nephi 31:17).

The words of the baptismal prayer were embedded in the Nephite record (see 3 Nephi 11:25). The rule that baptism had to be accomplished by immersion was indisputably established by the words and actions of Alma, Alma the Younger, and Jesus himself (Mosiah 18:14–17; 3 Nephi 11:26). Baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ was established in these texts as the regular order of the Church (see 3 Nephi 18:11; 27:16; 30:2; 4 Nephi 1:1).

The performance of baptisms in accordance with this very pattern, in large measure unique to the Book of Mormon, began as early as May 25, 1829, within ten days of the translation of the passages in 3 Nephi that set forth the elements of this crucially essential ordinance.⁶⁶ In April 1830, these elements were all succinctly pulled together in the Articles and Covenants: “Behold whosoever humbleth himself before God and desireth to be baptized [3 Nephi 11:23], and comes forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit [3 Nephi 12:19], and witnesseth unto the church, that they have truly repented of all their sins and are willing to take upon them the name of Christ [3 Nephi 11:23], having a determination to serve him unto the end [Moroni 6:3], and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, then shall they be received unto baptism into the church of Christ.”⁶⁷

A FIRM FOUNDATION

Immediately arising out of the practice of baptizing only those who are willing to enter into the baptismal covenant is the question of how old a person needs to be in order to be eligible for baptism. By supplying the doctrines that only those who are “capable of committing sin” are accountable (Moroni 8:10), that children cannot repent (see Moroni 8:19, 22), and that infant baptism is abhorrent (see Moroni 8:20–21), the Book of Mormon established the principled reasons behind the concept of the age of accountability, which was spoken of as soon as the Book of Mormon was translated in 1829 (see D&C 18:42) and the Church was organized in 1830 (see D&C 20:71). In 1831, that threshold was set as the age of eight (see D&C 68:25, 27).

Giving the gift of the Holy Ghost followed baptism, as directed by the Book of Mormon (see Moroni 6:4). At the meeting at which the Church was organized in April 1830, the newly set apart elders “laid [their] hands on each individual member of the Church present that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the Church of Christ.”⁶⁸

The extensive practice of keeping “a list of the names of the several members” of the Church, which began at least as early as Doctrine and Covenants 20:82, would not have sounded unfamiliar to anyone who had read the Book of Mormon, with its frequent practice of numbering and recording the names of the people of the Church (see Mosiah 6:1; 26:35; Alma 6:3; Moroni 6:4).

The frequent administration of the sacrament among Latter-day Saints tracks the words in Moroni 6:6, “they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.” In administering the sacrament, the priesthood brings the bread, just as the disciples were told by Jesus to bring the bread and wine (see 3 Nephi 18:1). Latter-day Saint people sit to receive the sacrament (as in 3 Nephi 18:2). The ordained priesthood holder breaks the bread before, not after, it is blessed (3 Nephi 18:5). In offering the prayer, the priests kneel down in the presence of the Church (Moroni 4:2), not out of their view. The words of the two sacrament prayers are found in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 18:7, 10–11; Moroni 4–5);⁶⁹ two

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

prayers are offered, not just one. The disciples then give the emblems to “all those who shall believe and be baptized” (3 Nephi 18:5). The disciples were “commanded that they should give unto the multitude” (3 Nephi 18:4), and thus holding sacrament meeting is not optional among the Saints. This pattern is followed as the order of the Church, just as Jesus commanded: “And this *shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done*” (3 Nephi 18:6; emphasis added).

The practice of blessing children began as early as 1830 (see D&C 20:70). Today, the father typically blesses his children, but in Kirtland, Reynolds Cahoon brought his son to the Prophet Joseph Smith and asked him to bless the baby. Joseph did so and named him Mahonri Moriancumer.⁷⁰

Healing the sick, another priesthood ordinance, finds ample precedent in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 15:5–11; 3 Nephi 7:22; 17:7–9; 4 Nephi 1:5; Mormon 9:24).

Patriarchal blessings, perhaps prompted in part by the blessings given by Jacob (see Genesis 49) and Lehi (see 2 Nephi 1–4) to their sons, were given to people at a meeting on December 29, 1835. “A large company assembled, when Father Smith made some appropriate remarks. A hymn was sung and father opened the meeting by prayer. About fifteen persons then received patriarchal blessings under his hands.”⁷¹

Righteous living. Our vision for personal and religious righteousness shines forth from the pages of the Book of Mormon. Included here are directives regarding the gifts of the Spirit and a mandate to deny not the gifts (see Moroni 10), fasting (see Mosiah 27:22; Helaman 3:35; 3 Nephi 13:16–18; Moroni 6:5), praying in private (see Enos 1:4; Alma 33–34; 3 Nephi 13:5–6, 19), praying in the name of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 18:19, 23, 30), praying in whatsoever place one might be (see Alma 34:38), and living in thanksgiving daily (see Mosiah 18:23; Alma 34:38).

Regarding family life, the only place in scripture where family prayer is expressly mentioned is in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 18:21, “pray in your families unto the Father”; see also Alma 34:21). Parental duties to teach and care for children are clearly taught (see 1 Nephi 1:1; Mosiah 4:14–15;

A FIRM FOUNDATION

Alma 37:35). Prohibited are adultery, prostitution, and all sorts of abominations and lasciviousness (see Jacob 2:23; Mosiah 2:13). Polygamy is allowed only if the Lord of Hosts specifically commands his people to do this (see Jacob 2:27, 30; 3:5).

Winebibbing and drunkenness are disapproved (see 2 Nephi 15:11, 22; Mosiah 11:15). The abuse of women and children is condemned (see Alma 14; 50:30).

Welfare. The origins of the vast welfare program of the Church are also to be found in the Book of Mormon. The need to give to the poor is stated emphatically and repeatedly (see Jacob 2:19; Mosiah 4; 18:27; Alma 1:27; 34:27–29; 35:9). Having property in common and living the principles of consecration characterized the community that saw four generations of peace and righteousness after the Savior’s visits (see 3 Nephi 26:19; 4 Nephi 1:3). The payment of tithes and offerings was called for by the resurrected Lord (see 3 Nephi 24:8–10). The building of Zion, the New Jerusalem, on the American continent was foreseen (see 3 Nephi 21:22–25), even should it require moving to new lands, fleeing into the wilderness, and making great sacrifices of personal wealth and well-being (as in the repeated cases of Lehi leaving Jerusalem, King Mosiah leaving the land of Nephi, Alma’s people suffering in bondage, and the people of Lachoneus gathering to the city of Zarahemla).

Church meetings. It is also not hard to construct or find in the Book of Mormon the origins of the Mormon patterns of worship. As in the modern *Church Handbook of Instructions*, the Book of Mormon spells out the purposes of Church meetings and manner of conduct for congregational worship (see Moroni 6). Included are instructions about praying together (see Alma 6:6; 3 Nephi 19; 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5), fasting together (see Alma 6:6; 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5), singing (see Alma 5:9, 26; Ether 6:9; Moroni 6:9), preaching and exhorting as led by the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 6:9), meeting “one day in every week” (Mosiah 18:25), keeping the Sabbath day holy (see Mosiah 18:23), keeping the commandments of the Lord (see 4 Nephi 1:12), holding conferences of large bodies of all the Saints (see Mosiah 2–5; see also Alma 5, 7; 3 Nephi 11:1),

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

and administering covenant renewals (see Mosiah 5; Alma 5; 3 Nephi 18). Affairs of the Church or its people were conducted with the concurrence of the voice of the people, by common consent (see Mosiah 29:25–29; Alma 2:3; 4:16; 27:21–22; Helaman 1:5–8).

In April 1830, the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 20 told the elders “to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God [meaning, at least, the Book of Mormon]. . . . And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty. . . . It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus.”⁷² On January 23, 1833, Joseph Smith recorded the following description of a typical early Mormon meeting: “Having continued all day in fasting, and prayer, and ordinances, we closed by partaking of the Lord’s supper. I blessed the bread and wine in the name of the Lord, when we all ate and drank, and were filled; then we sang a hymn, and the meeting adjourned.”⁷³ All of this follows Moroni 6.

Latter-day Saint worship services were, from the beginning, open to all, just as the Book of Mormon had invited all to hear the word of God and “none were deprived” (Alma 6:5), for “all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33). Doctrine and Covenants 46:3–5 would soon add: “Ye are commanded never to cast any one out from your public meetings, which are held before the world. Ye are also commanded not to cast any one who belongeth to the church out of your sacrament meetings; nevertheless, if any have trespassed, let him not partake until he makes reconciliation. And again I say unto you, ye shall not cast any out of your sacrament meetings who are earnestly seeking the kingdom—I speak this concerning those who are not of the church.” Children were also to be included in the congregation (see Mosiah 2:5; 3 Nephi 17:25; Moroni 8), which was not always the case among the various denominations.

Volunteerism. Very significant in Latter-day Saint Church administration is the principle of volunteerism, and the strong rejection of the idea of a paid ministry is a frequent refrain in the Book of Mormon. All members are

A FIRM FOUNDATION

expected to labor freely for the building up of the kingdom (2 Nephi 26:31, “the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion”). Indeed, “if they labor for money they shall perish” (2 Nephi 26:31). Priests “should labor with their own hands for their support” (Mosiah 18:24), and any form of “priestcrafts,” that is, seeking honor, riches and gain, was strictly condemned (Alma 1:16; Mormon 8:33, 37). For their labor, priests were “to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God” (Mosiah 18:26). The problem with priestcrafts was that they promoted the love of “the vain things of the world” and promoted “false doctrines” (Alma 1:16). Thus the Lord “commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts” (2 Nephi 26:29). Richard L. Bushman correctly sees this position as having been “foreshadowed” by the Book of Mormon and as “perhaps the most radical departure” from conventional religious practices.⁷⁴ Indeed, reflecting these Book of Mormon precepts, an article published in the *Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* in 1836 expressly linked the Latter-day Saint view of priestcraft with the Book of Mormon: “It is evident that the great goddess of this generation is in danger of being exposed, in consequence of the forthcoming of the book of Mormon: which book speaks against priestcraft.”⁷⁵ On December 7, 1837, the Far West high council “heard the report of their Committee on raising a revenue to pay the officers of the Church for their services, and after much discussion and adjournment from time to time, dismissed the subject as being anti-scriptural.”⁷⁶

Temples and temple worship. Latent in the Book of Mormon were also the seeds of the Latter-day Saint doctrines of temple worship. Temples are prominently mentioned on several occasions; building temples and holding sacred convocations there was a high priority among the Nephites (see 2 Nephi 5:16; Jacob 2:11; Mosiah 2:1; 3 Nephi 11:1).⁷⁷ Requirements are listed in the Book of Mormon, constituting quasi-interview lists for worthiness to stand before the Lord or enter into his covenants (see 2 Nephi 26:32; Alma 1:32; 16:18; Helaman 4:12; compare Psalm 24:3–4). On sacred occasions, white and pure garments are worn (see 1 Nephi 12:11; Jacob 1:19;

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

Alma 5:27; 3 Nephi 19:30). A new dispensation was greeted with a shout of “Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!” (3 Nephi 11:17). In temple contexts, adherence to certain principles is taught and required concerning obedience (see 1 Nephi 22:30–31; Jacob 4:5; Mosiah 5:5, 8; 3 Nephi 12:19–20), sacrifice (see 3 Nephi 9:19–20), chastity (see Jacob 2:28, Mosiah 2:13; Alma 30:10; 3 Nephi 12:27–28), and consecrating wealth to the kingdom of God (see Jacob 2:18–19; 3 Nephi 13:20, 24, 33). Blessings are pronounced of peace and prosperity (see 2 Nephi 1:9, 20; Alma 36:1, 30) and upon parents and children (see 3 Nephi 17:17, 21). Sins forgiven or sealing powers given (see Enos 1:5; Mosiah 26:20; Helaman 10:7). Above all, the Nephite temple was associated with overcoming death (“death and hell must deliver up their dead,” 2 Nephi 9:11–12), being lifted up at the last day (see 1 Nephi 13:37; Alma 36:3; 3 Nephi 27:22), standing before God the Eternal Judge of both the quick and the dead (see Mosiah 2:27; 16:10; Alma 5:15; Mormon 6:21; 7:6; 9:2; Moroni 8:21; 10:34), and keeping sacred things unwritten and confidential (see 3 Nephi 28:16). Thus the yearning for the temple and several of its essential components is embedded in the Book of Mormon.

Missionary work. From the outset, another integral part of the Church’s implicit handbook was missionary work. The Book of Mormon not only sent people forth to proclaim the gospel to all people, it also modeled and instructed how this was to be done. Guidance was there to be found concerning missionary preparation (see Alma 17:2–4), the focus of missionary work of “labor[ing] without ceasing . . . [to] bring souls unto repentance” (Alma 36:24). Patterns of missionary work are found in many accounts (for example, Mosiah 11; 18; Alma 4–15; 31–34; Helaman 5; 3 Nephi 27:1), concerning the value of companions to serve as two corroborating witnesses (Alma and Amulek), traveling out as a group and then dividing up into different fields of labor (the four sons of Mosiah), sometimes proselytizing alone (Alma in the city of Ammonihah), taking the gospel to the Lamanites (see 1 Nephi 13; Alma 17–26; 3 Nephi 20), opening the door to the Jews and remnant of Jacob (see 3 Nephi 21), and proclaiming God’s plan for

A FIRM FOUNDATION

the entire house of Israel and all nations of the earth (see 2 Nephi 29:11; Jacob 5; 3 Nephi 21–22). These missionary practices continue among the Saints today as parts of the written and unwritten order of the Church, just as they were inaugurated by Samuel Smith as early as 1830 and by the missionaries to the Lamanites west of Missouri in 1831.

Excommunication and discipline. An important chapter in the *Church Handbook of Instructions* deals with disciplinary procedures.⁷⁸ Some churches are strict and others are lax about joining or leaving membership. For Latter-day Saints, the basic principles of jurisdiction in judging the members (Mosiah 26:29, “him shall ye judge”) and guidelines for Church disciplinary and excommunication procedures are set forth in the rules granted to Alma the Elder by King Mosiah (see Mosiah 26:12), in the instructions given by Jesus to his disciples (see 3 Nephi 18:28–32), and in the process followed in Nephite church practice (see Moroni 6:7). For example, witnesses are required in order to excommunicate (see 3 Nephi 18:28–32; Moroni 6:7), and Church leaders are commanded to reactivate those cast out, to encourage them to repent (see Mosiah 26:29–30; 3 Nephi 18:28–32).

These Church disciplinary ideals and procedures have been with the Church from its inception, just as these directives were presented on the first day of Jesus’ visit to the people in Bountiful and quoted in the 1829 Articles of the Church of Christ. In 1830 the Articles and Covenants prescribed: “Any member of the church of Christ transgressing, or being overtaken in a fault, shall be dealt with as the scriptures direct” (D&C 20:80). One wonders, which “scriptures” does this passage have in mind? Matthew 18:15–20 is possible, but much more likely is 3 Nephi 18:20–32. The distinction between church jurisdiction and governmental authority, found in Mosiah in Mosiah 26:11–12 and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, was present in 1831 in Doctrine and Covenants 42:79–87, and in 1835 in Doctrine and Covenants 134:10.

Several actual cases of excommunications could be rehearsed. For example, in 1833, “James Blanchard and Alonzo Rider were cut off from the Church by a council of Elders, in Kirtland, for repeated transgressions, and

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

promising to reform, and never fulfilling. Nelson Acre was also cut off, on account of his absenting himself from the meetings, and saying that he wanted no more of the Church, and that he desired to be cut off. None of these being present, the council notified them of their expulsion by letters.”⁷⁹ In a case on February 3, 1834, one can find evidence that Joseph Smith was following the Book of Mormon’s teaching in encouraging the transgressor to return to the fold. In a letter mentioning this proceeding, the Prophet stated:

After some investigation of the case of Bro. Wood, in council, [it] was decided that he should be cut off from the Church. [acc]ordingly the Council lifted their hands against him and [he] was excluded from the church on this 3d. day of Feb. 1834. [For] indulging an idle, partial, overbearing and lustful spirit, and [not] magnifying his holy calling whereunto he had been [det]ained. These things were plainly manifest to the satisfaction of the council, and the spirit constrained us to separate him from the church. Should bro. Joseph Wood, after learning [of the] decission [*sic*] of this council, truly repent of all his sins and bring forth fruit meet [compare Alma 12:15; 13:13; 3 Nephi 18:32] to the satisfaction of that branch of the church where he had committed the offences, he can be re-baptized and come into the church again if he desire so to do.⁸⁰

Teaching and education. From the outset, Latter-day Saints have spent enormous time teaching one another. Administrative guidance in this regard is also present in the Book of Mormon. Teachers and teaching are often mentioned and exemplified (for example, Jacob 1:19; Mosiah 18:25). One is to “trust no one to be your teacher, nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways” (Mosiah 23:14). Church leaders are admonished to remember and nourish members by the good word of God (see Moroni 6:4, 6). Teachers in the Church are to teach nothing except what the prophets have spoken (see Mosiah 18:19), are to teach with power and

A FIRM FOUNDATION

authority from God (Mosiah 18:26), and are especially to teach the youth (see 1 Nephi 1:1; Enos 1:1; Mosiah 1:2; Alma 57:21).

Record keeping. As early as section 21, the Church was commanded to keep historical records. This practice is saliently emphasized from the beginning to the end of the Book of Mormon. The Savior made the keeping of accurate records a priority (see 3 Nephi 23:7–13). The making of annual reports was formulaic during the reign of the judges (for example, Helaman 6:6, 13). Passages concerning the keeping and guarding of scriptures (see 1 Nephi 6, 9; Mosiah 1; Alma 37:1–18) and the fact that people will be judged out of the books which shall be written (see 3 Nephi 27:25) set the administrative patterns and policies that have reinforced the importance of clerks, secretaries, historians, and documentary collections in the Church from the day of its organization.

Church practices and policies. Finally, the *Church Handbook of Instructions* today also gives guidance to leaders regarding many other miscellaneous policies and practices. Although many of these deal with modern-day legal and moral concerns, they are also congruent with teachings in the Book of Mormon. Regarding civic duties of Church members, Mosiah 29 warns that great evil will follow if the voice of the people chooses iniquity and if public leaders seek personal power and gain. The duty to defend our religion, freedom, peace, wives, and children, which undergirds the Church's posture with respect to the military, is famously articulated in Alma 46:12, 20–21, together with the duty of those at home to support those in combat (see Alma 27:24).

Rather simple rules regarding the conduct of funerals seem consistent with the terse reports of the death and burial of Lehi, Benjamin, and others (see 2 Nephi 4:12; Mosiah 6:5; 29:45–46; Alma 62:52, 63:3). Disfavored cremation in general compares with the irregularity of death by fire (see Mosiah 17:20; Alma 14:8; 25:11).

Simple attire of Church leaders is preferred over the scarlet and ostentatious “fine apparel” decried in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 13:7–8; Alma 1:6, 27; 31:28; Mormon 8:37). Church buildings are to be decorated

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

plainly and not “ornamented” with “fine work” or “precious things” (Mosiah 11:7–10), “adorning” churches more than caring for the “needy, the sick and the afflicted” (Mormon 8:37).

CONCLUSION

Thus, in four interlocking ways, it becomes fitting to see the Book of Mormon as the keystone or fountainhead of the administrative and operational principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. First, generatively: in 1829 Oliver Cowdery drew extensively on the Book of Mormon, as soon as it was translated, as a primary source of administrative steps toward the building up of the Church. Second, constitutively: section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants enshrined the Book of Mormon, as soon as it was available from the printer in 1830, at the heart of the Articles and Covenants of the Church. Third, historically: in the 1830s and 1840s, leaders of the Church read, knew, used, and followed the Book of Mormon, as its vocabulary shaped the administrative idiom of the Church. And fourth, programmatically: the full array of practical themes and organizational instructions found in the Book of Mormon stand congruent with the full complement of essential Church practices and programs as they have been elaborated and implemented down to the present day.

The administrative principles embedded in the Book of Mormon serve today, as they have served from the beginning, as a handbook of Church administrative instructions. Of course, the Book of Mormon is not organized as a step-by-step handbook—just as its doctrines are not set forth as a systematic theology—but when its pieces are assembled, the totality has proven to be amazingly detailed, inspired, enduring, and effective.

In its administrative functions, one may see yet another layer of divine complexity. Surely, as Joseph dictated the Book of Mormon, he was not thinking to himself, “Not only must I be sure that the story lines and the doctrinal implications of this book all hold together, but I need to leave thirteen million people with a set of administrative guidelines that will actually work, all around the world, as an effective and dynamic ecclesiastical

A FIRM FOUNDATION

order.” These administrative stipulations fell from his lips as did the rest of the Book of Mormon, day after day, by the gift and power of God.

Here one also sees evidence that the Book of Mormon indeed contains the fullness of the gospel. The list of administrative elements spelled out above closely resembles the complete table of contents in the *Church Handbook of Instructions*. One might even say that in the Book of Mormon was to be found the administrative DNA of the Church. Many of these administrative essentials have been with the Church from its beginnings in 1829 and 1830, and at least initially in many cases it was in the Book of Mormon that the early Saints in fact found them. Latter-day Saints overlook the Book of Mormon at their peril, both to their historical jeopardy and to their spiritual condemnation, while remembering the Book of Mormon brings our administrative and eternal well-being, with its incomparable promises of celestial benefit: “Keep these sayings which I have commanded you that ye come not under condemnation” (3 Nephi 18:33). “If ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:22).

In a priesthood leadership meeting, training the Twelve Apostles, on Sunday, November 28, 1841, in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith “told the brethren that . . . a man would get nearer to God by abiding by [the] precepts [of the Book of Mormon], than by any other book.”⁸¹ It may be especially significant that this counsel was given to priesthood leaders, those in charge of administering the affairs of the Church. To “abide” means to “continue permanently,” to “adhere to,” to “maintain, defend or stand to.”⁸² With this instruction, the Prophet spoke not only of following the moral and ethical teachings of the Book of Mormon, but surely also its organizational and leadership principles, as well as its holy order of priesthood ministration and administration. As Joseph concluded, the Book of Mormon is indeed “the keystone of our religion,”⁸³ including the keystone of its administrative order. Its ordinances and administrative principles are not just convenient or optional things to do in a would-be church of Christ. They provide the essential and integral organizational principles and framework upon which the Church of Christ is truly established.

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938), 98.
2. Thus read the heading to chapter 15 of the 1833 *Book of Commandments*, 34, which revelation is now numbered as section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants.
3. This document was first published by Scott H. Faulring, “An Examination of the 1829 ‘Articles of the Church of Christ’ in Relation to Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants,” *BYU Studies* 43, no. 4 (2004): 57–91, with black and white images on pages 58–60 and full transcription on pages 76–79. Two pages, in the handwriting of John Whitmer, found in Revelation Book 1 and recently published in color in Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *The Revelations and Translations*, vol. 1 of the Manuscript Revelation Books series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 23–24.
4. Faulring, “An Examination,” dated this text sometime “during the second half of 1829” (64), the same period of time when Cowdery was preparing the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon from its original dictation manuscript. But *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 691, dates this to “circa June 1829,” based on evidence now available from an original table of contents for Revelation Book 1, not printed in that volume, that tells us that the following items were found on these pages. On pages 17–21, there were four revelations given in June, namely sections 14, 18, 15, 16 (the actual pages 15–22 in Revelation Book 1 are missing); on pages 21–25 was found this revelation of the Articles of the Church of Christ (pages 23–24 are extant); then on page 25, dated June 1829, came Doctrine and Covenants 17 (pages 25–26 are missing), and on pages 25–28, dated March 1830, came Doctrine and Covenants 19. Because these Articles of the Church of Christ were recorded in Revelation Book 1 between sections 16 and 17, both revealed in June, and before section 19, received in March 1830, it would seem most likely that the Articles were written in June 1829, immediately after the completion of the translation of the Book of Mormon.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

5. The relevant pages in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, Revelation Book 1, contain the text between // and // in the transcription given below, with the words after \\ scribbled out.
6. Bolded text indicates direct quotations from the Book of Mormon or from Doctrine and Covenants 18. Oliver was told in Doctrine and Covenants 18:3 to “rely upon the things which are written,” which he definitely did. For details on how these quotations track the language of the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, see Faulring, “An Examination,” 89–91nn75–96.
7. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 35–36.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 18 was revealed in June 1829 in Fayette, New York, after the underlying passages from Mosiah and 3 Nephi had been translated.
9. See the heading to chapter 15 of the 1833 *Book of Commandments*, 34, which revelation is numbered as section 18 in the Doctrine and Covenants.
10. “Having authority given me of Jesus Christ” was the wording used before the 1835 first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. See the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon and the text of Doctrine and Covenants 20 in Revelation Book 1, 57. In 1835 the words were modified to the now familiar “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ” in Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.
11. This revelation was previously thought to have been given on April 6, 1830, but it is dated as April 10 in Revelation Book 1, 52, where it is entitled “Church Articles & Covenants.”
12. On the use of section 20 in organizing and operating basic units of the Church, see Craig James Ostler, “The Articles and Covenants: A Handbook for New Branches,” in this book.
13. Faulring, “An Examination,” 67, says that doing so is “both inaccurate and misleading.” See his analysis of the writing of section 20 in contrast to the 1829 Articles, 67–73.
14. Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Organization Revelations (D&C 20, 21, and 22),” in *Studies in Scripture: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Sandy, UT: Randall, 1984), 121n26.

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

15. See Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants" (PhD dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1974), 1:343–44.
16. *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836*, ed. Jan Shipps and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 19.
17. For example, on December 11, 1831, he preached for "about 2½ hours on the Covenants, the evidences of the book of Mormon," and the premillennial gatherings. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 65; see also 184, linking "the book of Mormon and the rise of the Church," and 218, 223.
18. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 33.
19. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 19.
20. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 44.
21. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 20.
22. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 21.
23. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 107.
24. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 110.
25. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 21–22, see 145; also 177, where he spoke "on the nature of the Priesthoods and of the coming forth of 'the book.'"
26. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 137.
27. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 141.
28. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 148.
29. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 22.
30. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 176.
31. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 176.
32. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 183, 205n45.
33. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature, 1983), 1:126, 136, 227, 252,
34. Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 76–92, discusses and tabulates two dozen chapters, verses, and themes commonly cited in early Mormon literature. He found that "the prophetic portions" of the book, which included 3 Nephi, 2 Nephi, and Ether, "received significantly greater attention than the historical books [of] Mosiah, Alma and Helaman," and that "its earliest uses were primarily eschatological and

A FIRM FOUNDATION

reflected as well as reinforced a millenarian worldview,” 95–96. While to a large extent these assertions remain sound, they may need to be modified or supplemented in light of the evidences now available regarding the early administrative uses of the Book of Mormon. Eschatological themes may have been more common in proclaiming the news of the Restoration to the non-LDS, while administrative matters were more naturally at home inside the Church.

35. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:532.
36. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:372, 414, 526.
37. Described and cited in Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign*, November 2009, 88–89.
38. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 8, 9–10.
39. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 85–86.
40. Dean C. Jessee and John W. Welch, “Revelations in Context: Joseph Smith’s Letter from Liberty Jail, March 20, 1839,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 130, 145.
41. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 8; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 156; see also *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:334, on that date.
42. Joseph Smith, “Gift of the Holy Ghost,” *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, 825; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 247.
43. I thank Bryan K. Basso for his research assistance in finding these and other such passages. Some of these phrases may have been in use in the ordinary vernacular of the 1830s, but even if that were the case their collective usage in the Book of Mormon cannot be ignored.
44. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 23; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 9.
45. The words “perfect love” are also found in 1 John 4:18, but in that case “perfect love” comes by knowing and believing the love that God has toward us, whereas Joseph Smith and Mormon emphasized the bestowal of this gift of God coming through living lives of righteousness. I thank Bryan Basso for his assistance in gathering the following data.

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

46. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:245; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 11.
47. Joseph Smith, "To the Honorable Men of the World," *Evening and Morning Star*, August 1832, 22; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 11.
48. Smith, "To the Honorable Men of the World," 22; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 12.
49. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 296; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 15.
50. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 327; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 29.
51. Joseph Smith, "The Elders in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad," *Evening and Morning Star*, December 1833, 120; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 43.
52. Joseph Smith, "The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad," *Evening and Morning Star*, February 1834, 135; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 50.
53. Joseph Smith, "The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad," *Evening and Morning Star*, February 1834, 135; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 50.
54. Joseph Smith, "The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad," *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 143; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 61.
55. Joseph Smith, "The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Tehir [sic] Brethren Abroad," *Evening and Morning Star*, April 1834, 152; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 67.
56. *History of the Church*, 4:129; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 164.
57. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 61.
58. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 121; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 239.
59. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 123; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 240–41.
60. Joseph Smith, "Baptism," *Times and Seasons*, September 1, 1842, 905; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 265.
61. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 230; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 314.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

62. The words “must do in my church” are not quoted in the 1829 Articles, but the immediately following promise that if ye do so ye “shall be lifted up at the last day” is.
63. See, generally, John W. Welch, “Book of Mormon Religious Teachings and Practices,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:201–5.
64. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage, 2005), points out that “Joseph appointed elders, priests, and teachers, offices found in the Book of Mormon and familiar from the churches around him” (111, see also 253). While some aspects of the initial organization of the Church may not have surprised a Methodist very much (254), I do not conclude that the Church borrowed mostly from surrounding denominations and less from the precedents in the Book of Mormon. Nor would it seem that the “first appearance” of the word *priesthood* cautiously came only in 1831 somehow due to the “generally negative” meaning of priesthood among radical anti-Catholic Protestants (157). Regarding the subject of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Bushman at least concurs that Joseph Smith “was more influenced by the *Book of Mormon* and the Bible than by the learned writings of his contemporaries” (159). Indeed, here one may add another early, potent mention of priesthood, in the Book of Moses, translated in 1830, in which Adam prophesied that “this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also” (Moses 6:7).
65. “After writing the account given of the Savior’s ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent,” it was realized acutely that “none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel.” Joseph Smith—History 1:71n.
66. *History of the Church*, 1:44, records this as the day of Samuel Smith’s baptism.
67. Book of Commandments 24:30; see Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
68. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:303.
69. See John W. Welch, “From Presence to Practice: Jesus, the Sacrament Prayers, the Priesthood, and Church Discipline in 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 2–6,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 120–29.
70. “The Jaredites,” *Juvenile Instructor*, May 1, 1892, 282n.

The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration

71. *History of the Church*, 2:347. He received only a travel allowance of ten dollars per week plus expenses when he went out to give blessings, on the biblical and Doctrine and Covenants grounds that “the laborer is worthy of his hire.” *History of the Church*, 2:273.
72. *History of the Church*, 1:67–69; D&C 20:45, 55, 75.
73. *History of the Church*, 1:324.
74. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 111.
75. “Beware of Delusion!,” *Messenger and Advocate*, January 1836, 251.
76. *History of the Church*, 2:527–28.
77. See John W. Welch, “The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 297–387.
78. Bruce C. Hafen, “Disciplinary Procedures,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:386.
79. *History of the Church*, 1:469–70.
80. Joseph Smith Jr. and Orson Hyde to Brother Fosdick, February 3, 1834, typescript, 1–2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
81. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 194.
82. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), “abide.”
83. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 194.