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Recovering the World of the Bible

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The pillar of light that fell upon Joseph Smith in the woods near Palmyra, New York, in the spring of 1820 ushered in a new dispensation of the gospel.^[1] But that light, which shone “above the brightness of the sun” (Joseph Smith-History 1:16), did *not just* enlighten the world as far as religion is concerned. The light emanating from the pillar in which the Father and Son stood symbolically represents the latter-day, divine illumination of many aspects of life on this earth—past, present, and future.

The Lord did not restore His gospel in a historical, cultural, or political vacuum. He provided a world-context into which He restored His Church so as to facilitate the spread and acceptance of His gospel. Given the accumulation of discoveries and decipherments during the past two centuries, it is easy to forget that before 1800 very little was known about the ancient world of the Bible.^[2] The avalanche of historical and linguistic knowledge relating to that ancient world that began in the early 1800s, *at the same time* the Lord was restoring doctrine and authority to the earth through Joseph Smith, is part of the Lord’s work in “the fulness of times” to “gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (D&C 27:13; see also Ephesians 1:10).^[3] The recovery of the world of the Bible was an integral part of the world-context of the Restoration and of the gathering together of all things in one.^[4] As such, this recovery informs and reinforces many aspects of the Restoration, providing us with a much greater understanding of the background and contents of the Bible and other Restoration scriptures and of the Lord’s work in all dispensations. The Book of Mormon, the book of Abraham, and the world of the Bible all literally came forth “out of the dust” at the same time (Isaiah 29:4).

The world of the Bible consists of the countries and cultures with which the ancient Israelites interacted, as recorded in the Bible. Geographically, this region is known as the Near East or Middle East. It stretches from Turkey in the west through Iraq (ancient Assyria and Babylonia) to Iran (ancient Persia) in the east, and down through the eastern Mediterranean countries of Syria, Lebanon (ancient Phoenicia), Israel/Palestine, and Jordan, to Egypt and the Arabian peninsula. A very brief sketch of the political and religious situation in the Middle East from the 1790s to 1850 points up important aspects of the early recovery of the world of the Bible.^[5] And there are fascinating correlations between these discoveries and the Restoration through Joseph Smith.

The Middle East from the 1790s to 1850

Following a series of impressive victories, Napoleon Bonaparte became a general in the French military in 1794, five years after the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. By 1797 the French had trained their sights on Great Britain, their only serious European competition. Rather than attempt an invasion of England, as many expected, Napoleon took his forces to Egypt to impede British trade and communication opportunities through the strategic Isthmus of Suez. This one-hundred-mile stretch of land provided an important alternative to circumnavigating Africa to

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reach expanding British interests in India and the Far East. The local Egyptian forces were no match for Napoleon's far better trained and better equipped troops, and he quickly took control of the country in July 1798.

In 1798 Egypt was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the capital of which was Constantinople (now Istanbul). Although within the orbit of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt had always enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy. The Ottoman Empire had reached its peak during the 1500s, controlling much of the Middle East and eastern Europe.^[7] A decline in military and economic development and a series of military defeats during the late 1600s and the 1700s foreshadowed the long-lived empire's demise.

Napoleon's expedition to Egypt dramatically changed relations between the West and Middle East forever, as the Ottoman Empire became much more involved in a political and economic dance with several European powers—especially Britain, France, and Russia—in which each partner tried to maintain a certain balance of power but also to gain an individual advantage. The political developments cited below help demonstrate this situation. Similar political circumstances existed between several European powers and Persia, the Ottomans' rival to the east.

A few weeks following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, the British Admiral Nelson destroyed much of the French fleet off Alexandria, Egypt, after which the Ottomans and the British began negotiating to expel the French from Egypt. Five months later, in January 1799, Napoleon invaded Palestine from Egypt, planning to go on to Syria. He got as far north as Acre (now Acco, Israel, just north of Haifa), where he laid siege to the city. But by that time, his diminished troops were too weary, ill, and insufficiently equipped to capture the well-fortified Acre, the protection of which was ensured by British ships anchored off the coast. Experiencing his first career defeat, Napoleon headed back to Egypt in late May. The French defeated Ottoman forces near Alexandria, and Napoleon returned to France later in 1799 to become its new leader. In 1801 an Ottoman-British coalition drove the remaining French forces from Egypt.

Later, in 1827, Europeans were dissatisfied with the Ottoman response to the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire. The British took the lead in destroying the Ottoman naval fleet, which included Egyptian vessels. For several reasons, including lack of compensation for participation in efforts to quell the Greek rebellion, the Egyptian *pasha* (governor), Muhammad Ali, took advantage of his military strength and relative autonomy to seize control of Syria and Palestine in 1831. In 1840 Britain helped the Ottomans drive the Egyptians out of Syria and Palestine.

As a result of such political dynamics, three important developments occurred that significantly affected the recovery of the world of the Bible. First, in addition to troops, Napoleon took with him about 170 savants—French scientists, engineers, naturalists, draftsmen, and geographers. They studied, mapped, and recorded the human and natural wonders of Egypt (and to a lesser extent, Palestine) in an unprecedented way.^[8] Their multivolume report, *Description de l'Égypte*, published from 1809 onward, helped precipitate a considerable new interest in contemporary Egypt and in its ancient inhabitants.^[9] Second, in July 1799, French soldiers who were enlarging their fort near the port town of Rashid, Egypt (ancient Rosetta, about thirty-five miles east of Alexandria), discovered an inscribed stone that had been reused in an old wall. Now known as the Rosetta stone, the stone and its inscription played a key role in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics. Third, from 1831 to 1840, Palestine was under the independent control of the Egyptian pasha, not the Ottoman Empire. This situation provided much more favorable conditions than in previous decades for Westerners who were traveling to Egypt and Palestine for adventure or for economic or religious reasons.

Although many European Christian pilgrims had traveled to the Holy Land from the fourth through the fifteenth centuries, the rate greatly diminished after 1500 with the dominance of the Ottoman Empire, and it remained low until the late 1700s. However, after Napoleon's exploits dramatically brought the world of the Bible into the public consciousness of Europeans and Americans, the Middle East became a destination for many Western travelers with varied interests and backgrounds, just as lesser-known parts of Africa and central Asia had so become.^[10] Some of these new travelers to the Middle East published travelogues and journals that were very popular in Europe and in the United States.

Thus, the increased interaction between European governments and the Ottomans and Persians coincided with a spirit of adventurism that produced a vastly increased European and American awareness of the Middle East. These

factors in turn provided new vistas for both historical discovery and religious outreach in the early 1800s. The majority of the Middle Eastern population at that time was Muslim, but communities of Jews and Christians were scattered throughout the region. The Christians were mainly Eastern Orthodox, but there were Roman Catholics as well. Protestant Christianity was not legally recognized in the Ottoman Empire at that time, and Protestants in general had previously exhibited little interest in the land and holy sites of the Bible. But that significantly changed in the early 1800s.

Recovering the World of the Bible from the 1790s to 1850

Some of the notable accomplishments in the exciting story of the early recovery of the world of the Bible will now be recounted to demonstrate how remarkable and influential these achievements were. Not surprisingly, most of the individuals involved in this recovery process were possessed of a natural curiosity, a great deal of energy, or gifts in language. Each region of the Middle East deserves its own individual treatment, but only three can be highlighted here: Egypt,^[11] Mesopotamia (modern Iraq; with slight attention to Persia/Iran),^[12] and Israel/Palestine.^[13]

Egypt. By the early Christian centuries, the ability to read any of the ancient Egyptian scripts was entirely lost. Most people already presumed hieroglyphics represented a symbolic, mythic code that required interpretation rather than decipherment.^[14] A few Europeans attempted to make sense of hieroglyphics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but they made little progress until the discovery of the Rosetta stone by some of Napoleon's soldiers stationed in the western Nile delta in 1799.^[15] This partially damaged, monumental inscription had originally been erected at an Egyptian temple in 196 B.C. by the Macedonian Greek king of Egypt, Ptolemy V, to commemorate the first anniversary of his reign and to publicize privileges he had granted to priests. Its great value lies in the fact that the text was written in two languages—Egyptian and Greek—and in three scripts—Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian demotic (a cursive form of hieroglyphics), and the Greek alphabet. The Greek version, readable by European scholars, provided the means to eventually decipher the Egyptian versions. When the British defeated the French in Egypt in 1801, the Rosetta stone was ceded to the British, who shipped it to London in 1802. It is still on display in the British Museum. Though not the only inscription involved in the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics and demotic, the Rosetta stone was especially significant and appropriately symbolizes the accomplishment.

Several people were involved in deciphering Egyptian scripts. Important contributions came from the Englishman Thomas Young (1773–1829), a pioneer in the decipherment of demotic, and Jean-Francois Champollion (1790–1832), the brilliant young Frenchman, born December 23, 1790, who first successfully deciphered hieroglyphics (on a rudimentary level; the “complete” work of decipherment extended many decades beyond Champollions life).

A group of competitive plunderers who essentially ransacked Egyptian tombs and temples were primarily responsible for the early recovery of ancient Egypt's material culture. Prominent in this group were the British consul Henry Salt (1785–1827); Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852), French consul in Egypt from 1803 to 1814 and then commercial advisor to the pasha; and Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823), a former circus strongman known as the “Italian giant.” Destructive “excavations” were allowed by the Egyptian pasha Muhammed Ali, who exhibited little concern for Egyptian antiquities and who no doubt benefited from the arrangements. The German Karl Richard Lepsius (1810–84) sent many valuable Egyptian artifacts back to the Berlin Museum, but he is also remembered for his efforts to preserve inscriptions and reliefs in copies and casts.

The following highlights demonstrate the significant way in which the Egyptian portion of the world of the Bible began to be recovered in the early 1800s.

1799. The Rosetta stone was discovered by French troops near Rashid, Egypt (ancient Rosetta). **1802.** The British shipped the Rosetta stone to London; the Greek portion was translated.

- 1802.** Sylvester de Sacy and J. H. Akerblad succeeded in identifying some names and other words in the demotic text of the Rosetta stone.
- 1809–16.** Napoleons scholars published a multivolume report dealing with the antiquities of Egypt: *Description de l'Egypte*.
- 1813.** James Lewis Burckhardt was the first European to discover the monumental statues of Ramses II and Nefertari carved into the side of a cliff at Abu Simbel, about 170 miles south of the modern Aswan Dam. Belzoni excavated the temple beneath the statues in 1817.
- 1814–19.** Thomas Young had further success with demotic and early success in identifying some of the hieroglyphs in the name Ptolemy. He summarized his efforts in an *Encyclopedia Britannica* supplement entry (1819).
- 1817.** Belzoni discovered the tomb of Egyptian pharaoh Seti I, father of Ramses II, in the Valley of the Kings. “Excavations” were ongoing for years in several parts of the Valley.
- 1818.** Belzoni opened the second pyramid of Giza, tomb of Chephren, and entered its royal burial chamber.
- 1820.** Belzoni mounted an exhibition of Egyptian artifacts in London.
- 1822.** Champollion, building on the work of Young, publicized his initial success in deciphering hieroglyphics, in a report completed September 22 and publicly read September 27, entitled *Lettre a M. Dacier relative a Valphabet des hieroglyphs phon-etiques*.
- 1824.** Champollion published his *Precis du systeme hieroglyphique dans anciens egyptiens*, decisively demonstrating that he had rudimentarily deciphered the basic system of hieroglyphics.
- 1836.** One of two obelisks in front of the Luxor temple was transported to Paris and erected in the Place de la Concorde.
- 1837.** John Gardiner Wilkinson published his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, the first modern book of its kind on ancient Egypt.
- 1842.** Karl Richard Lepsius published the Turin copy of the Egyptian Book of the Dead.
- 1842–46 .** Lepsius led a very productive German expedition to Egypt.
- 1847.** Irishman Edward Hincks published further advances in understanding hieroglyphics.
- 1849–56.** Lepsius published his twelve-volume *Monuments of Egypt and Ethiopia* (in German), which included further advances in understanding hieroglyphics as well as more accurate copies of many Egyptian inscriptions than were previously available. Some of the nine hundred plates in this work preserve inscriptions which have since been destroyed.

Mesopotamia and Persia. The region known as Mesopotamia (modern Iraq and northeast Syria) was home to the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians. Mesopotamia comprised the eastern flank of the Ottoman Empire, bordering the empire s Middle East rivals, the Persians (modern Iran). The wonders of ancient Assyria and Babylonia lay under a greater blanket of obscurity than did those of ancient Egypt. About all that was left of these distant, great civilizations were large, flat-topped mounds—destroyed cities covered by the dust of ages—that dotted the fairly flat countryside between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. While the Mesopotamian ruins were less immediately spectacular than many Egyptian ruins, Austen Henry Layard expressed the profound emotion that they stirred within him (and others like him): “These huge mounds of Assyria made a deeper impression upon me, gave rise to more serious thought and more earnest reflection, than the [Roman] temples of Balbec [in Lebanon] or the theaters of Ionia.”^[16]

The writing system used by the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Hittites (in eastern Turkey) is called “cuneiform”—wedge-shaped inscriptions. Each sign represents one or more syllabic values; some signs also represent words. Carved into rock and pressed into soft clay tablets, this stylized script was employed in one form or

another for almost three thousand years. A few seventeenth—and eighteenth-century travelers brought small cuneiform inscriptions or partial transcriptions from Mesopotamia and Persia back to Europe, and fledgling efforts were made to decipher this arcane script. But only in the early 1800s did scholars and amateurs alike inaugurate the large-scale recovery of Mesopotamian and Persian texts and artifacts.

Important individuals involved in this recovery include a young German academic named Georg Friedrich Grotefend (1775–1853), who in 1802 made important advances in the decipherment of Persian cuneiform; Claudius J. Rich (1787–1820), a British agent whose travels throughout Mesopotamia produced artifacts and accurate accounts of ruins that were foundational for British Mesopotamian studies; Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810–95), British consul in Baghdad from 1843 to 1855 who copied the monumental, mountainside trilingual cuneiform inscription of Persian King Darius I (522–486 B.C.) at Bisitun in western Persia/Iran, and who played a major role in the decipherment of cuneiform;^[17] Paul Emile Botta (1802–70), French consul in Mosul, in northern Mesopotamia, who excavated at Nineveh and Khorsabad in the mid—1840s;^[18] and Englishman Austen Henry Layard (1817–94), who excavated at Nineveh and Nimrud (biblical Calah) in the late 1840s.^[19]

The following highlights demonstrate the significant way in which the Mesopotamian and Persian portion of the world of the Bible began to be recovered in the early 1800s.

- 1802.** Georg Friedrich Grotefend successfully deciphered some of the characters used in Persian cuneiform, focusing on personal names in a bilingual inscription.
- 1807–16.** Claudius J. Rich collected artifacts and mapped Mesopotamia, providing reliable accounts of the ruins of Babylon, Nineveh, and other ancient cities in such publications as *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (1815) and *Second Memoir on Babylon* (1818).
- 1835.** Henry Rawlinson began copying the trilingual Darius inscription at Bisitun, Persia.
- 1836.** Eugene Burnouf and Christian Lassen independently established the value of all signs in Persian cuneiform script and worked out readings of geographic names.
- 1842.** The American Oriental Society was founded. Still in existence, it is dedicated to studying the languages and literatures of Asia, including the Middle East.
- 1843–44.** Paul Emile Botta excavated and made amazing discoveries at Khorsabad (Assyrian Dur Sharrukin, in northern Iraq), the ruins of a capital city built by King Sargon II of Assyria (721–705 B.C.).
- 1844 and 1847.** Rawlinson copied the Elamite and Babylonian cuneiform versions of the trilingual Darius inscription at Bisitun, Persia.
- 1845–51.** Austen Henry Layard excavated at Nimrud (Assyrian Kalhu; northern Iraq). Major finds included the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, which depicts Jehu, king of Israel (2 Kings 9–10).
- 1846–51.** Layard excavated at Nineveh (Tell Kuyunjik). His exceptional discoveries include the celebrated library of King Ashurbanipal and the discovery of King Sennacherib’s “palace without a rival,” the decorations of which included wall carvings depicting the destruction of the Judahite city of Lachish by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (2 Kings 18:13–19:37).
- 1846.** Rawlinson published the Old Persian cuneiform text from Bisitun. Edward Hincks finished his initial deciphering of Old Persian cuneiform.
- 1847.** The first exhibition of Assyrian sculpture and artifacts in the world was mounted at the Louvre Museum in Paris, displaying Botta’s discoveries at Khorsabad.
- 1847–52.** Edward Hincks succeeded in his rudimentary deciphering of Mesopotamian cuneiform, used by the Assyrians and Babylonians.
- 1849.** Layard’s publication *Nineveh and Its Remains* was greeted with great public acclaim.

1850. Layard conducted preliminary excavations at Babylon.

1850. Rawlinson's *A Commentary on the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria* was the first description of the Assyrians to employ some of their own texts as sources.

Israel/Palestine.

“At the beginning of the 19th century Palestine was but a derelict province of the decaying Ottoman Empire. . . . Its economy was primitive; the sparse, ethnically mixed population subsisted on a dismally low standard; the few towns were small and miserable; the roads were few and neglected.”^[20] “Many of the ancient cities and towns mentioned in the Scriptures had seemingly vanished without a trace, and even the holy cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth were now little more than provincial market towns.”^[21] These conditions hardly matched the biblical description of a “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8, 17).^[22] No wonder so many European and American travelers to Palestine in the early 1800s were surprised and dismayed by what they encountered. Several factors, however, attracted people to the region. These included the desire to explore a relatively unknown area, economically related national interests, and Bible-related interests of various sorts.

Two fascinating early explorers of Palestine (following Napoleons team in 1799) were the German Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811), who journeyed through Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia from 1805 to 1810; and the Swiss-born James Lewis Burckhardt (1784–1817), who traveled through Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia from 1809 to 1817. Both spent several years of preparation in Syria learning Arabic and Eastern customs, both traveled dressed as Arabs, and both left accounts of their travels that helped advance Europeans’ knowledge of and interest in the land of the Bible.

Some adventurers went to Palestine to investigate potential trade routes through the Jordan Rift between the Red Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Such men, whose motives were primarily economic and nationalistic, include the Englishman James Silk Buckingham (1786–1855), who traveled through Palestine in 1816; and an American officer named William Francis Lynch (1801–65), who led a U.S. Navy expedition from the Sea of Galilee down the Jordan River to the Dead Sea in 1848. While successful in gathering important data about the Dead Sea and its environs, neither the Lynch expedition nor any other could successfully champion Palestine as a competitive trade route. Accounts of their experiences, however, were part of an ongoing stream of publications that maintained a heightened American and European public interest in the land of the Bible.

The Bible itself was another impetus for encountering the Holy Land. In the wake of such developments as eschatological expectations at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth century, the Napoleonic Wars in Europe (until 1815), and the Second Great Awakening (second revivalist movement) in the United States, Christian missionary societies in the United States and Great Britain were organized in the early 1800s to carry Bibles and the message of Christ to every corner of the earth. This, of course, included Palestine and the rest of the Middle East. The American Levi Parsons (1792–1822) became the first Protestant Christian missionary to visit Jerusalem, arriving in 1820. He was followed there in 1825 by his earlier missionary traveling companion, Pliny Fisk (1792–1825). Such activity provides another indicator of the new attention given the land of the Bible by many Westerners.

Others who traveled to Palestine were more intent on recovering the ancient world of the Bible than on converting its modern inhabitants. Many biblical sites were no longer identifiable, and some local traditions on site locations were incorrect. “A flood of western travelers took advantage of the improved conditions [under the Egyptian pasha, after 1831] to add yet more knowledge to the western understanding of the land of the Bible. During the eighteen-thirties, a number of explorers from France, Germany, England, and America had roamed among the ancient sites of Palestine, recording their impressions and theories. None, however, had the background that Edward Robinson possessed, and the achievements of all of them would soon pale by comparison.”^[23] Robinson (1794–1863), a Bible scholar and linguist, was conservative in his religious orientation and sought to support the historical reliability of the Bible in a world of increasing skepticism. Robinson’s travels to Palestine in 1838–41 and 1852, and his subsequent

publications in 1841 and 1856, not only generated great public interest in the land of the Bible but more importantly laid the foundations of the serious study of the historical geography of Palestine and the foundations for the field of biblical archaeology. He was accompanied and greatly assisted in his efforts by an American missionary named Eli Smith (1801–57), who spent many years in Beirut preaching the gospel and preparing an Arabic translation of the Bible. Together they became adept at recognizing ancient Hebrew place-names in their altered Arabic guise, accurately identifying and mapping dozens of biblical sites for the first time in the modern era. To this day, “Robinson’s Arch” is the name given to the surviving edge of a two-thousand-year-old monumental archway protruding from a wall near the southwest corner of the Temple Mount.

The activities of two other men are worth quickly noting. David Roberts (1796–1864), a Scottish landscape artist, toured Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon in 1838–39. Lithographs prepared from his drawings were published between 1842 and 1849 and became instantly popular. They are still well known due to their detailed, albeit somewhat romanticized, depiction of important sites and life in the Middle East.^[24] John Lloyd Stephens (1805–52), an American explorer and author, is best known for his travels to southern Mexico and Central America in 1839–41. His books on ancient Mayan ruins, complete with marvelous illustrations by Englishman Frederick Catherwood (1799–1854), generated a great deal of interest among Americans, even eliciting a comment in the Latter-day Saint *Times and Seasons*.^[25] Stephens, however, had traveled in the Middle East in 1836, and his travelogue, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, became very popular after its publication in 1837.^[26] Of particular interest to Latter-day Saints is that Stephens, who graduated from New York City’s Columbia College (now University) in 1822 at the age of seventeen, was the “favorite pupil” of Columbia professor Charles Anthon, “America’s most famous classicist” at the time.^[27] Also, Stephens, like so many other travelers to Jerusalem, recounts that he stayed at the Latin Convent (now Saint Savior’s Convent), just as Elder Orson Hyde did five years later.^[28]

The following highlights demonstrate the significant way in which the Israel/Palestine part of the world of the Bible began to attract attention and to be recovered in the early 1800s.

- 1804.** The Palestine Association was formed in England to help fund exploration (and exploitation); it was modeled on other British associations and societies previously formed to explore remote areas of the world. Little actually came of the Association’s efforts.
- 1805–07.** Ulrich Seetzen traveled through Syria and Palestine. He rediscovered the ruins of Jerash and Amman (modern Jordan).
- 1810–12.** John Lewis Burckhardt traveled from Syria down the Jordan Rift and rediscovered the fabled ancient city of Petra (southern Jordan), about forty-seven miles southeast of the Dead Sea.
- 1815.** Lady Hester Stanhope “excavated” at Ashkelon (modern Israel) looking for buried treasure on the basis of a purportedly medieval document. Finding no treasure, she destroyed the large statue of a Roman emperor she found in order to discourage other people from plundering the site for artifacts.
- 1816.** James Buckingham traveled through Palestine, exploring a possible trade route in the Jordan Rift.
- 1820.** Levi Parsons became the first Protestant Christian missionary to travel to Jerusalem. He was followed by Pliny Fisk (1825) and many others in the succeeding decades. Parsons and Fisk were supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, founded in 1810 to help Protestants prepare the world for the return of Christ.
- 1829.** Henry H. Milman published the first academic history of ancient Israel in his *History of the Jews* (first edition; second edition published in 1830).
- 1836.** Edward Robinson published an English translation of the renowned German scholar William Gesenius’s *Hebrew*

Lexicon (for the study of biblical Hebrew).

- 1838–41.** Edward Robinson explored Palestine with Eli Smith and correctly identified many biblical sites for the first time in the modern era. Robinson returned to Palestine in 1852.
- 1839.** David Roberts traveled through Palestine, drawing many important sites and later publishing the drawings as lithographs (1842–49).
- 1841.** Robinson and Smith’s three-volume *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai, and Arabia Petraea* was published in Boston. Robinson’s *Later Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions* was published in 1856.
- 1848.** A United States naval expedition, led by William Lynch, traveled from the Sea of Galilee down the Jordan River to the Dead Sea, gathering information for a possible trade route.

The Restoration of Christ’s Church and the Early Recovery of the World of the Bible

Even this brief sketch of the early recovery of the world of the Bible in the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrates its chronological correlation with the restoration of the Lord’s gospel and Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. [\[29\]](#) One aspect of the divine preparation of the world for restoring the gospel was the initial recovery of the biblical world and the context it provided for understanding the Lord’s work in previous dispensations. This correlation is specifically illustrated by the following five items.

1. *The Book of Mormon.* Joseph Smith was first tutored by the angel Moroni in 1823. He received the Book of Mormon plates in September 1827. The bulk of the translation occurred in 1829, and the book was first published in March 1830. Martin Harris, a friend and early scribe to Joseph Smith, sought confirmation of the young prophet’s gift. Traveling to New York City in early 1828 with a copy of some “reformed Egyptian” characters from the gold plates (Mormon 9:32), Harris visited with Columbia College professors Charles Anthon, “a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments” (Joseph Smith-History 1:64), and Samuel Mitchill (misspelled *Mitchell* in Joseph Smith-History 1:65). According to Harris, Professor Anthon said, among other things, that the characters Harris showed him “were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. . . . Dr. Mitchell. . . sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation” (Joseph Smith-History 1:64–65). With the initial successful decipherment of some Egyptian demotic and hieroglyphic symbols in Europe by 1824, Harris’s consultations with Anthon and Mitchill in 1828 emphasize a general awareness of the contemporary recovery of Egyptian aspects of the world of the Bible. [\[30\]](#) Furthermore, it is striking that Joseph Smith was involved in the decipherment and publication of an ancient text that had roots in the world of the Bible at the same time other ancient languages and texts from that world were beginning to be deciphered and published—the Prophet translating scripture, the scholars translating nonscriptural texts.

As Brigham Young University professor Wilfred Griggs has observed, “Inasmuch as the Book of Mormon is a record of peoples who migrated from the Old World (the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian regions) . . . [to the Americas], the imprint of the ancient Near Eastern cultures from which the peoples originated can still be found within the record.” An understanding “of the international currents flowing around the world of Lehi can help explain the presence of Hebrew, Egyptian, Babylonian, and even Greek cultural elements in the records of Lehi and his successors.” [\[31\]](#) The recovery of the world of the Bible thus provides a context for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as well as helping us better understand its content.

2. *The book of Abraham.* The book of Abraham derives from papyrus documents preserved with four mummies the Prophet Joseph Smith purchased from Michael Chandler in Kirtland, Ohio, in July 1835. These four mummies were part of a group of eleven which were acquired by Chandler in the United States in 1833. He toured them in the eastern states, selling some as he went, until he sold the last four to the Prophet Joseph. The mummies had been removed from Egypt about 1820 by Antonio Lebolo (1781–1830), who had served in the French army from 1799 to 1801 (although not in Egypt) and who later worked from 1817 to 1822 “excavating” Egyptian antiquities for Bernardino Drovetti as

well as on his own.

According to his journal entries, Joseph Smith worked on the papyrus texts during the remainder of 1835, and then a little again in 1842 as he prepared them for publication in the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo.^[32] While “his precise methodology remains unknown,” Latter-day Saints accept that “it was principally [by] divine inspiration rather than his knowledge of languages that [Joseph Smith] produced the English text of the book of Abraham.”^[33]

Of the Abraham material published in the Pearl of Great Price, only Facsimile 1 is preserved on the eleven papyrus fragments known to have survived from what the Prophet had. But all three facsimiles are Egyptian in nature, and they and the content of the book of Abraham itself are more fully understood and appreciated because of the recovery of the world of the Bible that began in the early 1800s.^[34] Indeed, the modern availability of the book of Abraham results in part from the role Lebolo played in the initial recovery of the world of the Bible in the early 1800s and the public interest in such matters upon which Chandler capitalized by touring his mummies. Joseph Smith was definitely aware of that recovery process, and he personally participated in the excitement it generated. Not everyone had mummies on display in their city as the Saints in Nauvoo did.

3. *Orson Hyde’s mission to Jerusalem.* One of the first apostles in this dispensation, Orson Hyde (1805–78) was charged by Joseph Smith in April 1840 to dedicate “the land of Palestine for the building up of Jerusalem and the gathering of Abraham’s posterity.”^[35] Elder Hyde arrived in Jerusalem after an eighteen-month journey that included much preaching, many hardships, and divine intervention. He climbed the Mount of Olives on October 24, 1841, and pronounced the first apostolic dedicatory prayer in this dispensation for Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and the gathering of Israel.^[36] An account of his experiences—*A Voice from Jerusalem, or a Sketch of the Travels and Ministry of Elder Orson Hyde*—was published in Liverpool and Boston in 1842 and was a significant contribution to the growing number of accounts of travel in the Middle East published at that time. Orson Hyde’s mission did not specifically involve the early recovery of the world of the Bible—he was not motivated by sight-seeing, antiquities, or ancient texts.^[37] But he traveled a similar route, saw similar sites, and stayed in the same Latin convent in Jerusalem that so many other explorers and missionaries did in that time period. Furthermore, his mission signaled another way in which the Lord’s power began to move across the Middle East. The Orson Hyde Memorial Garden on the west slope of the Mount of Olives commemorates his mission.^[38]

4. *Joseph Smith and biblical Hebrew.* The Prophet Joseph Smith developed a keen interest in learning languages, including the primary languages of the Bible: Hebrew and Greek. One illustration of this is that, perhaps arising from the acquisition of the mummies and papyri in July 1835, the Prophet procured Hebrew books in November 1835 and commenced his study. Eventually, Professor Joshua Seixas was hired to teach biblical Hebrew in Kirtland from January 6 to March 29, 1836.^[39] In his journal entry dated February 17, 1836, the Prophet wrote: “Attended the school and read and translated with my class as usual. My soul delights in reading the word of the Lord in the original [Hebrew], and I am determined to pursue the study of the languages, until I shall become master of them, if I am permitted to live long enough.”^[40] Such effort and sentiment lends credence to the importance of understanding the Bible and other scripture in their linguistic, historical, and cultural context—something which is much more fully possible due to the recovery of the world of the Bible which began in the early 1800s.

5. *Proposed Nauvoo museum.* The May 15, 1843, edition of the *Times and Seasons*, entitled “To the Saints Among All Nations,” contained the following exhortation, apparently from Joseph Smith: “According to a Revelation, received not long since, it appears to be the duty of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to bring to Nauvoo, their precious things, such as antiquities . . . as well as inscriptions and hieroglyphics, for the purpose of establishing a Museum of the great things of God, and the inventions of men, at Nauvoo.” Editor John Taylor stated in an appended comment that this museum should be “a receptacle of every thing new and old, ancient and modern, antique, fanciful and substantial—indeed any thing and every thing that has a tendency to throw light upon ancient

nations, their manners, customs, implements of husbandry and of war, their costume, ancient records, manuscripts, paintings, hieroglyphics,. . . any thing that is calculated to enlighten the mind, enlarge the understanding, gratify the curiosity, and give general information.”^[41] It is striking that Church leaders in 1843 Nauvoo had such a grand and broad vision of the Restoration—a vision that included the value of the ancient texts and artifacts then being recovered in the Middle East. This emphasizes their awareness of the recovery process going on in their own time, their estimation of the importance of knowledge of the world of the Bible for better understanding the scriptures, and their desire to participate in gathering all things together in one.

Conclusion

As with any new academic undertaking, there were exaggerated claims and errors in decipherment and interpretation as the recovery of the world of the Bible commenced. And even with the discoveries and advances highlighted above, the recovery of the world of the Bible was still in its infancy in 1850. However, the efforts of hearty, curious, and insightful explorers and decipherers in inaugurating this recovery were instrumental for our present understanding of that ancient world and its value for better understanding our religious and cultural heritage. The recovery of further aspects of the ancient Near East and the refining of the translation of its texts continues to our day.

As outlined above, the beginnings of the recovery of the ancient world of the Bible are closely linked to and provide a revealing context for the Restoration in general and for the book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon in particular.^[42] These ancient scriptures were made available by divine will and were translated and published in an age flush with the excitement of great discovery and decipherment. No wonder President John Taylor later taught, “There is nothing hidden but what shall be revealed, says the Lord. He is prepared to unfold all things; all things pertaining to the heavens and the earth, *all things pertaining to the peoples who have existed*, who now exist or will exist, that we may be instructed and taught in every principle of intelligence associated with the world in which we live or with the Gods in the eternal worlds.”^[43] All this reinforces the significance of the Lord’s 1833 injunction that “it is my will that you should . . . obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion” (D&C 93:53; see also D&C 90:15).

Shortly after Edward Robinson and Eli Smith published their *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai, and Arabia Petrxa* in 1841, a British commentator suggested that divine power influenced their accomplishments: “The gratification of their own curiosity was the only motive perhaps of which they were conscious. . . . Little did they think that they were obeying an impulse from on High, and that Jehovah meant them to be witnesses of His truth to the after-ages of the world.”^[44] This perceptive observation extends not only to Robertson and Smith but to Champollion, Layard, Rawlinson, and many others who were involved in the early recovery of the biblical world and who were (knowingly or unknowingly) moved upon by the Lord as part of His plan to bring about the gathering together of all things in one in this last and greatest gospel dispensation.^[45] What a blessing to have the spiritual light of the restored gospel! And what a joy to have knowledge of the world of the Bible, which the Lord has provided in conjunction with the gospel to deepen our understanding and appreciation of His words and His works.

I thank my student assistants Matt Gray, Hollie Pollan, and Albert Jarvi for their assistance in the preparation of this paper, and my wife Jane Allis-Pike for carefully reading it and making suggestions for improving it.

[1] See the Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Dispensations”: “The fulness of times is the final dispensation. . . . It is a dispensation of restoration and of fulfillment of the Lord’s plans and purposes since the world began. There are also things reserved for the fulness of times that have not been revealed previously.”

[2]

Before 1800, knowledge of the biblical world was limited to what was preserved in the Bible and by ancient Greek and Roman historians, such as Herodotus, Xenophon, and Strabo.

[3] Bruce R. McConkie and Joseph Fielding Smith have made similar points in relation to modern technological advances and inventions (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979], 724, s.v. “Signs of the Times”; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 1:180–83).

The term *avalanche* comes from Jean Bottero, who in his book *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), entitled one of the chapters “The ‘Avalanche’ of Decipherments in the Ancient Near East between 1800 and 1930.”

[4] Of course, the recovery of the world of the Bible represents only one part of the Lord’s preparation of the world to receive the restored gospel. Latter-day Saints believe that political conditions in the United States were also divinely directed. And the religious climate in the early nineteenth century provided fertile ground for the restored gospel to flourish. On this latter point, see, for example, Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana, 111.: University of Illinois, 1993), 22–23.

[5] So much more could be said on the history of the early 1800s. Rather than reference each point in these introductory comments, I refer interested readers to resources that deal with the history of the Middle East, such as the following: Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 5th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996); Emory C. Bogle, *The Modern Middle East: From Imperialism to Freedom, 1800–1958* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996); Sydney Nettleton Fisher and William Ochsenwald, *The Middle East: A History*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), vol. 1; and Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 years* (New York: Scribner, 1995).

See also the history woven into such semipopular accounts as Yehoshua Ben- Arie, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983); and Neil Asher Silberman, *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archeology, and Secret Struggle for the Holy Land, 1799–1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

[6] The Isthmus of Suez lies between the northern end of the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea) and the Mediterranean Sea. Construction of the Suez Canal was completed in 1869. Traveling from England to India around Africa is about five thousand miles longer than going through the Isthmus of Suez.

[7] The name *Ottoman* was coined from the name of a Turkish Muslim named Osman (ca. A.D. 1300), whose descendants created an empire through conquest. Suleiman the Magnificent (ca. 1520–66) was the greatest of the Ottoman sultans.

[8] A somewhat similar but much smaller and less successful venture sponsored in the 1760s by the Danish government was the first of its kind. Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) was the only one of a team of five who returned alive from a mission to map the areas of Egypt and Arabia and catalog features of historical and scientific interest. He published his experiences in German and English: *A Description of Arabia* (1772) and *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries of the East* (1774).

[9] This “scientific” aspect of Napoleon’s expedition reveals another dimension of his strategy in conquering Egypt. He was not only motivated by immediate political concerns, but by a vision, inherent to a degree in the French Revolution itself, that France was going to restore enlightened civilization to the world. And Egypt, whose ancient splendor and wisdom had long since departed, was a prime, symbolic candidate because of its powerful past and its present weakness. This vision is powerfully communicated in a comment from the French foreign minister

Talleyrand, dated February 13, 1798: “Egypt was a province of the Roman Republic; she must become a province of the French Republic. Roman rule saw the decadence of this beautiful country; French rule will bring it prosperity. The Romans wrested Egypt from kings distinguished in arts and science; the French will lift it from the hands of the most appalling tyrants who have ever existed” (quoted in Charles Coulston Gillispie and Michael Dewachter, eds., *Monuments of Egypt: The Napoleonic Edition* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987], 3).

[10] For an overview of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see, for example, Teddy Kollack and Moshe Perlman, *Pilgrims to the Holy Land: The Story of Pilgrimage through the Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

[11] Several citations deal with the recovery of ancient Egypt and the decipherment of Egyptian scripts. See, for example, Richard Parkinson, *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and Decipherment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Maurice Pope, *The Story of Decipherment: From Egyptian Hieroglyphs to Maya Script*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 11–84; W. V. Davies, “Egyptian Hieroglyphics,” in *Reading the Past: Ancient Writing from Cuneiform to the Alphabet* (London: British Museum Press, 1990), 119–28; Johannes Friedrich, *Extinct Languages* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 16–26; Ronald Ridley, *Napoleon’s Proconsul in Egypt: The Life and Times of Bernardino Drovetti* (London: Rubicon Press, 1998); and pertinent entries in Donald B. Redford, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University, 2001). See also more popular accounts such as C. W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves, and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*, 2d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 75–135; and Leslie Greener, *The Discovery of Egypt* (New York: Viking, 1966). See also “Egyptology Online” at <http://www.egyptologyonline.com/index.htm>.

[12] Rather than reference all the points made in these introductory comments, several citations are provided that deal with the recovery of ancient Mesopotamia and Persia and the decipherment of cuneiform. See, for example, Pope, *Story of Decipherment*, 85–122; Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land, 1840–1860* (London: Routledge, 1996); C. B. F. Walker, “Cuneiform,” in *Reading the Past*, 58–62; Seton Lloyd, *Foundations in the Dust: The Story of Mesopotamian Exploration*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980); Friedrich, *Extinct Languages*, 50–68; Herman V. Hilprecht, ed., *Explorations in Bible Lands During the 19th Century* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1903); and pertinent entries in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford, 1997), and Sasson, Jack M., ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 5 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 1:67–120; see also Ceram, *Gods, Graves, and Scholars*, 211–64.

[13] As above, all the points made in these introductory comments are not referenced. See such works as Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*; and Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*.

[14] There were three major Egyptian scripts. The oldest is hieroglyphics. *Hieratic* (priestly) and *demotic* (popular) generally derive from hieroglyphs and are increasingly cursive in nature. Comments in this paper will focus on hieroglyphics and demotic, the first two scripts to be deciphered in the nineteenth century. *Coptic* refers to late Egyptian texts written in the Greek alphabet, with a supplement of demotic signs.

[15] The Rosetta stone is a black granite stela that in its present, damaged condition measures about 3 feet 9 inches tall, 2 feet 6 inches wide, and 11 inches thick, and weighs about 1,500 pounds. Originally it was a few feet taller.

[16] Quoted in Ceram, *Gods, Graves, and Scholars*, 247.

[17] Sometimes dubbed the “father of cuneiform [decipherment],” Rawlinson is more accurately described as one of the main decipherers, since the Irishman Edward Hincks and the Frenchman Jules Oppert made important contributions to the process. Others associated with deciphering cuneiform include the German Christian Lassen and the Frenchman Emile Burnouf.

Darius's inscription at Bisitun (also spelled Behistun), carved into the side of a mountain along with a huge relief of the king himself, was recorded in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian to commemorate some of his victories.

[18] Khorsabad is the ancient Assyrian city of Dur Sharrukin (“fortress of Sargon”), which Sargon II (king from 721 to 705 B.C.) built as his new capital. Sargon is mentioned in Isaiah 20:1 and is the king who deported thousands of Israelites who became “lost” (2 Kings 17:6; 18:11).

[19] The modern name *Nimrud* is derived from the name of *Nimrod*, about whom the Bible (Genesis 10:8–12) and the Quran (21:52–69) contain some traditions. Anciently, the city was named Kalhu, the biblical form of which is Calah, attested in Genesis 10:11, 12.

[20] Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, 11.

[21] Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 18.

[22] The established holy sites were primarily connected with accounts of Jesus in the New Testament. These were controlled mainly by Eastern Orthodox Christians and to a much lesser extent by Roman Catholics.

[23] Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 40; emphasis added.

[24] The Holy Land lithographs of David Roberts are available in various republications of the original 1842 edition of *Views in the Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, and Arabia*.

[25] The suggestion that it would “not be a bad plan to compare Mr. Stephens’ ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon” appeared, along with an extract from Stephens’s text, in the October 1, 1842, edition of the *Times and Seasons* (3:927). The comment is often attributed to the Prophet, but it may have come from editor John Taylor. I thank David J. Whittaker at Brigham Young University’s Harold B. Lee Library for his conversation with me on this point.

[26] Catherwood, an architect and artist, had been in Egypt and Palestine in the 1820s-30s, and his maps of Jerusalem, which he published in 1835, became the standard for years to come. Stephens was introduced to Catherwood’s work after buying one of his maps in Jerusalem in 1836. They subsequently met in London and later traveled together to Central America.

[27] Victor W. Von Hagen, in his introductory comments to a reprint of John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* (New York: Dover, 1996), vii-viii. I thank my colleague D. Kelly Ogden for bringing this information about John Lloyd Stephens to my attention and for sharing his file on Stephens with me.

[28] Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, 342, 412–14. Whether significant or not, it is interesting that Stephens, after spending a few weeks in and around Jerusalem, departed the Holy City on April 3, 1836, the day the great revelations recorded in D&C 110 took place in Kirtland, Ohio.

[29] See the relevant entries in such works as Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003) and Daniel Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992). For the book of Abraham, see also, for example, H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995); John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph*

Smith Papyri (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000); and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002).

- [30] As talented and skilled as they were, Anthon or Mitchill probably could not actually have verified Joseph Smith's translation of the "reformed Egyptian" Book of Mormon characters that Harris showed to them. Nor is it likely that they could have actually read a hieroglyphic or demotic text in 1828. They could, however, have recognized the characters as similar to certain Near Eastern scripts, including then-recently published Egyptian texts. For a fuller account of this "significant and controversial" episode in Church history, see, for example, Milton V. Backman, "Anthon Transcript," in Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 63–66.
- [31] C. Wilfred Griggs, "Book of Mormon, ancient Near Eastern roots of," in Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 99.
- [32] John Taylor noted in the February 1, 1843, edition of the *Times and Seasons* that the Prophet had promised "to furnish us with further extracts from the Book of Abraham" (4:95), but this never happened. What was published in 1842 comprises our book of Abraham, but clearly there was more to be had than what is presently available.
- [33] H. Donl Peterson, "Translation and Publication of the Book of Abraham," in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 134.
- [34] For further discussion see John Gee, "The Role of the Book of Abraham in the Restoration" (Provo, Utah: FARMS paper, 1997).
- [35] Quoted in Andrew C. Skinner, "Nineteenth-Century Mormon Pilgrimages to the Holy Land," in Bryan F. Le Beau and Menachem Mor, eds., *Pilgrims & Travelers to the Holy Land* (Omaha, Neb.: Creighton University Press, 1996), 230.
- [36] Ten dedicatory prayers have been offered on the Holy Land in this dispensation (Skinner, "Nineteenth-Century Mormon Pilgrimages to the Holy Land," 240–42,246).
- [37] This important observation is made in Skinner, "Nineteenth-Century Mormon Pilgrimages to the Holy Land," 236.
- [38] See, for example, "President Spencer W. Kimball Dedicates Orson Hyde Memorial Garden in Jerusalem," *Ensign*, December 1979, 67.
- [39] References to the study of Hebrew in Kirtland are found in Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51), 2:385, 390, 396–97,428, and so on. For a convenient summary and discussion of this matter, see D. Kelly Ogden, "The Kirtland Hebrew School," in Milton V. Backman, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History, Ohio* (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 63–87.
- [40] Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:396.
- [41] *Times and Seasons*, 4:201.
- [42]

Even the Doctrine and Covenants is replete with biblical vocabulary, expressions, and literary devices. Thus, the recovery of the world of the Bible has also assisted with our understanding of this modern, English-language scripture. See, for example, D. Kelly Ogden, “Biblical Language and Imagery in the Doctrine and Covenants,” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: A Book of Answers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 169–87.

[43] *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, June 10, 1884, 1; as quoted in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 185; emphasis added.

[44] Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 46.

[45] This concept should not be challenging to Latter-day Saints, who believe that Columbus and others involved in the rediscovery of the Americas and the development of favorable conditions therein were also brought about according to the will of the Lord (1 Nephi 13:10–23).