

## Chapter Seven

# SPIRITUAL DEATH DIVIDED AND DIVIDING

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Readers of the Book of Mormon often celebrate its great sermons on the atonement of Jesus Christ. Arguably, the best-loved chapters in 2 Nephi are those in which Lehi outlines for his son Jacob the conditions whereby human beings seek redemption (2 Nephi 2) and Jacob in turn explains the Atonement and the Resurrection (2 Nephi 9). High points in Mosiah include King Benjamin's long quotation of an angelic prediction of Christ's death and resurrection (Mosiah 3) and Abinadi's full recitation of a poem about the suffering Messiah (Mosiah 14). The Book of Alma contains intertwined sermons by Amulek and Alma the Younger that explore the nature of Christ's atoning sacrifice (Alma 34) and investigate the relationship between justice and mercy (Alma 42). All these celebrated chapters deserve the attention they receive. Collectively, they provide a rich and rather full picture of Christ's atoning work.

In all our celebration of the Book of Mormon's teachings on Christ's atonement, however, we often overlook the remarkable treatment of the theme of spiritual death in Helaman 14:15–19. There are several possible reasons for the apparent lack of doctrinal or theological interest in this passage. It may be that its belated appearance, rather late in Mormon's abridgment of Nephite history and at a point when readers have grown impatient waiting for the appearance of Jesus Christ, has led to its obscurity.<sup>1</sup> It may be that its coming from the lips of the generally underappreciated Samuel has something to do with its being often ignored.<sup>2</sup> It may be that its sheer brevity, especially when compared with more prolonged aspects of Samuel's sermon, makes it easier to miss than it deserves.<sup>3</sup> It may be that it seems a peculiar contribution to the Book of Mormon's conception of Christ's atonement, potentially with a unique or novel understanding of spiritual death, and so it leaves readers unsure of its meaning.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the reason or reasons, however, Samuel's prophetic comments on how Christ enables human beings to overcome spiritual death have received less attention than they deserve.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay, then, I offer a study of Samuel's sermon-within-a-sermon, his rich and penetrating comments on Christ's conquest of spiritual death. Rather than provide just a detailed exegesis of the passage, though, I wish to consider a series of intertwined divisions that appear in this often-overlooked passage. At its heart, it presents a picture of spiritual death as divided, divided into a first spiritual death and a second spiritual death. This division of spiritual death itself deserves theological attention. It is, however, only the most obvious division associated with spiritual death in the passage (and the easiest to explain). That is, not only is spiritual death divided in Samuel's teaching, but spiritual death also divides, and in two ways. First, it seems to divide Jesus Christ in two—to divide him not simply into a body and a spirit, nor to divide him into roles like Father and Son, but rather to divide him in a theologically complicated fashion that requires investigation. Second, it seems to divide the human being in two, separating out from each other what a person knows and what a person does, this also in a theologically provocative fashion. I will take these three divisions—the division *of* spiritual death and then two divisions *by* spiritual death—in turn. In order to better focus the theological investigations

that follow, I begin with a few comments on the structure of Samuel's brief words on spiritual death.

## DIVISIONS WITHIN THE TEXT

Helaman 14:15–19 functions as a brief digression in Samuel's three-chapter sermon.<sup>6</sup> Samuel's sermon focuses on the Nephites' need to repent and is built around the prediction of signs connected to the birth and death of Jesus Christ. Samuel's famous discussion of the signs stands as a kind of sermon within a sermon, one featuring a unifying motif—repeated reference to belief on the Son of God (see Helaman 14:2, 8, 13, 29).<sup>7</sup> The digression on spiritual death is, however, the only passage (apart from a few closing words of exhortation) in that sermon within a sermon that lacks any direct reference to the unifying motif that holds it together. This makes Helaman 14:15–19 stand out as a real digression. This digressive character of those few verses is marked also by the clear repetition of the verse immediately preceding it in the verse immediately following it, a bookend-like stutter surrounding the digression itself. Helaman 14:14 thus appears at first to initiate Samuel's sketch of the sign of Christ's death: "And behold, again, another sign I give unto you—yea, a sign of his death." There follows, however, the digression. Once the digression draws to a close, verse 20 resumes verse 14 and relaunches the sketch of the second sign: "But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign—a sign of his death." Verses 15–19 thus constitute a genuine break in Samuel's sermon on signs, a digression that calls for isolated reading.

What seems to motivate the inclusion of a digression on spiritual death in the sermon on signs is the potential scandal of a dying messiah. Since the first part of Helaman 14 concerns the birth of Christ—and everything that birth makes possible—the subsequent talk of Christ's death might at first seem to Samuel's hearers (or the Book of Mormon's readers) like it announces the failure of the predicted Messiah. To move from talk of the Messiah's birth to talk of the Messiah's death is to risk losing everything theologically, at least for a spiritually astray people like Samuel's hearers (perhaps less than appropriately familiar with what earlier Nephite prophets have taught on the subject). The digression on spiritual death serves to

mitigate that risk, however, to bring the Messiah's birth and the Messiah's death into alignment, showing how they form a single salvific program.

Within the digression, one can discern structural elements that might prove helpful to the task of interpretation. Several nearly identical phrases appear twice—and exactly twice—over the course of the passage. Compare verse 15's "he dieth to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead" and verse 16's "this death bringeth to pass the resurrection"; verse 15's "men may be brought into the presence of the Lord" and verse 17's "bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord"; verse 16's "redeemeth all mankind" and verse 17's "redeemeth mankind—yea, even all mankind"; and verse 16's "cut off from the presence of the Lord . . . both as to things temporal and to things spiritual" and verse 18's "cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness." These repeating phrases obviously do some work in organizing the digression on spiritual death, but how?<sup>8</sup> Although it is possible to interpret the relationships among these repeating phrases in several different ways, a further clue suggests an organizing principle: the repeated use of the word *behold*. The word appears five times in the digression on spiritual death, and it seems to mark the beginning of isolatable units or sequences. It thus appears at the beginnings of verses 15, 16, and 17 (as well as at the beginnings of verses 14 and 20, the bookending verses that surround the digression). One further isolatable unit or sequence can be discerned, one that begins with *therefore* (rather than *behold*) at the opening of verse 19.

There thus appear to be four distinct sequences within the digression on spiritual death. The first sequence (verse 15) introduces a double theme—that Christ's death brings the Resurrection to pass, and that Christ's resurrection brings people into God's presence. The second sequence (verse 16) then unpacks the first part of the double theme from the previous sequence and explains what Samuel calls the first death, while the third sequence (verses 17–18) unpacks the second part of the double theme and explains what Samuel calls the second death. Finally, the fourth sequence (verse 19) concludes the digression with a word of exhortation, making concrete the abstract content of the previous sequences. This analysis accounts for the use of all the repeating phrases. The first sequence introduces two phrases to be repeated later, each a statement of part of

the double theme. The first of these is repeated at the outset of the second sequence, while the second is repeated at the outset of the third sequence. The second and third sequences then open and close with other repeating phrases, marking the parallel nature of these two sequences that explain, respectively, the first and second deaths.

All of this might seem complex, but it can be presented visually in a simple way:

	<sup>14</sup> And behold, again, another sign I give unto you—yea, a sign of his death—	
Introductory Sequence	<sup>15</sup> for, behold, he surely must die that salva- tion may come. Yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that <b>he dieth to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead</b> , that thereby <u>men may be brought into the pres- ence of the Lord</u> .	Two Themes Introduced
First Death Sequence	<sup>16</sup> Yea, behold, <b>this death bringeth to pass the resurrection</b> and <i>redeemeth all mankind</i> from the first death, that spiritual death. For all mankind, by the fall of Adam, being <i>cut off from the presence of the Lord</i> , are considered as dead, <i>both as to things temporal and to things spiritual</i> .	First Theme Exposited (bold)

Second Death Sequence	<sup>17</sup> But behold, the resurrection of Christ <i>redeemeth mankind—yea, even all mankind</i> —and <u>bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.</u> <sup>18</sup> Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth, the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire, and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death—yea, a second death, for they are <i>cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness.</i>	Second Theme Exposited (underlined)
Exhortation Sequence	<sup>19</sup> Therefore repent ye, repent ye!—lest, by knowing these things and not doing them, ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation, and ye are brought down unto this second death.  <sup>20</sup> But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign—a sign of his death . . .	Exhortation to Repent

To make real sense of Samuel's digression on spiritual death, in the end one must follow its internal logic. It clearly begins from an introduction of a double theme: Christ dies to bring about a general resurrection because such a general resurrection will bring all human beings into God's presence at the last day. It then works through two successive explanations of the details of this double theme. It first addresses the way that Christ's death serves to overcome definitively what Samuel calls the first death. And then it addresses the way that the general resurrection makes for the possibility of overcoming what Samuel calls the second death. Finally, and apparently because Christ only makes the overcoming of the second death *possible* (rather than sure, as he does the overcoming of the first death), the digression concludes with an exhortation to repentance. Helaman 14:15–19 is carefully wrought, tightly organized, and strikingly logical. We will

keep this organization and this logic very much in mind as we work our way through the text.

## SPIRITUAL DEATH DIVIDED

For someone reading the Book of Mormon with an eye to its understanding of the purpose, nature, and effects of Christ's atonement, Samuel's brief discussion of spiritual redemption in Helaman 14:15–19 might at first glance seem surprising. It is in no way strange that Samuel addresses this topic, and much of what he says sounds just like things his Nephite prophetic predecessors say about the subject. In at least one regard, however, what he says initially seems novel or unprecedented. Like others in the Book of Mormon before him, he speaks of a "first death" and a "second death," but unlike others before him, he describes both of these deaths as spiritual in nature rather than distinguishing between a first, temporal death and a second, spiritual death. Jacob (in 2 Nephi 9:15) and Amulek (in Alma 11:45) both speak of a "first death" that is the temporal death, from which one is resurrected to be judged. Further, Jacob (in Jacob 3:11) and Alma (in Alma 12:16, 32; 13:30) both speak of a "second death" that is spiritual, but specifically in contrast to a first, temporal death. At first glance, then, it might seem as if Samuel stands alone in speaking of two spiritual deaths—that is, stands alone in speaking of spiritual death as itself divided in two.

This is true only in a certain limited sense, however. It is true that no one before (or after) Samuel in the Book of Mormon distinguishes a first death from a second death while giving to both of these the primary name of "a spiritual death." There is thus a more programmatic spirit about Samuel's division of spiritual death in two than one can find in the teachings of other Book of Mormon prophets. Nevertheless, investigation reveals rather quickly that Book of Mormon prophets preceding Samuel assume a distinction between two spiritual deaths, associating (but never equating) the first of these with temporal, or physical, death. This is clearest in the case of Alma the Younger, and particularly in the instructions he provides to his son Corianton in Alma 42. Some comparison between Samuel and Alma on this point might prove useful.<sup>9</sup>

First, let us consider how Samuel himself divides spiritual death in two and how exactly he understands the connection between temporal death and the first spiritual death to function. That Samuel divides spiritual death in two is perfectly clear from the text. In the second sequence of Helaman 14:15–19, he explicitly speaks of “the first death, that spiritual death,” explaining that Christ’s death “bringeth to pass the resurrection and redeemeth all mankind from” it (v. 16). In the third sequence he then speaks of “a spiritual death—yea, a second death,” from which “all mankind” can be redeemed so long as “the conditions of repentance” are satisfied (vv. 11, 17–18). The spiritual nature of the second death is perfectly clear, not only because Samuel explicitly calls it “a spiritual death,” but also because he goes on to describe it in terms of one’s being “cut off . . . as to things pertaining to righteousness” (v. 18). That the first death is spiritual is also clear—again not only because Samuel explicitly calls it a “spiritual death” in the text, but also because he goes on to clarify that it involves “being cut off from the presence of the Lord” and being “considered as dead . . . to things spiritual” (v. 16).

That Samuel envisions the plan of salvation as involving two deaths, both of them spiritual, in no way means that he omits every reference to temporal death. He refers to this latter sort of death directly, in fact, in the second sequence, when he explains the first spiritual death. The “fall of Adam,” Samuel explains, not only produces a first spiritual death, a death “as to . . . things spiritual”; it also produces a state in which human beings are “considered as dead . . . as to things temporal” (Helaman 14:16). Temporal death clearly does not form the principal focus of Samuel’s message, and so he does not make it the primary immediate consequence of the Fall. This, for him, is instead the first spiritual death, one’s being “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (v. 16). The fact that temporal death is a secondary matter for him, however, does not mean that he excludes it from the picture. He simply assigns it a secondary place, out of the spotlight. Samuel’s interests are primarily spiritual.

Incidentally, Helaman 14:15–19 enacts Samuel’s division of spiritual death in two textually by treating the two spiritual deaths in distinct but structurally parallel sequences—the second and third sequences of the digression on spiritual death. This is apparent when these two sequences

of the digression are placed side by side (italics mark clearly parallel material):

<sup>16</sup>Yea, *behold*,  
this death bringeth to pass  
the resurrection  
and *redeemeth all mankind*

<sup>17</sup>But *behold*,  
the resurrection of Christ  
*redeemeth mankind—yea, even all  
mankind—and* bringeth them back  
into the presence of the Lord.

<sup>18</sup>Yea, and it bringeth to pass the  
condition of repentance, that whoso-  
ever repenteth, the same is not hewn  
down and cast into the fire; but who-  
soever repenteth not is hewn down  
and cast into the fire,

from the *first death, that spiritual  
death.*

and there cometh upon them again a  
*spiritual death—yea, a second death,  
for they*

*For all mankind*, by the fall of Adam,  
being *cut off* from the presence of  
the Lord,

are *cut off* again

are considered as dead, both *as to  
things*

*as to things*

temporal and to things *spiritual.*

pertaining to *righteousness.*

The second and third sequences of the digression (given, respectively, to the first and second spiritual deaths) follow the same general pattern, as their parallel elements show: “behold,” “redeemeth all mankind,” “spiritual death,” “first/second death,” “for they/all mankind,” “cut off,” and “as to things.”<sup>10</sup> At the same time, there is an obvious asymmetry to these parallel sequences. The third sequence (on the second death) contains a long statement about “the conditions of repentance” that has no parallel in the second sequence (on the first death). The asymmetry as much as the parallels tells us something about how Samuel understands the two spiritual deaths.

It should be noted that, according to Samuel, both kinds of spiritual death—being cut off temporarily from God’s presence and being cut off definitively from all things spiritual—are overcome by the same thing. This is Christ’s resurrection.<sup>11</sup> Christ’s triumph over death, however, has different or differently applied effects for each of the two deaths. It unilaterally overcomes the first spiritual death by bringing all “back into the presence of the Lord” (Helaman 14:17), but it only conditionally overcomes the second spiritual death such that only some “are cut off . . . as to things pertaining to righteousness” (v. 18). In effect, Christ’s resurrection unifies all of humanity in restoring them all, equally, to God’s presence, but it divides humanity by establishing the conditions that distinguish two groups: “whosoever repenteth” and “whosoever repenteth not” (v. 18).

How does Samuel’s portrayal here accord with Alma’s? We have already noted that Alma elsewhere speaks of a second death that is spiritual, but specifically in contrast to a first, temporal death (see Alma 12:16, 32; 13:30). In talking with Corianton, however, he explicitly associates the first, temporal death with a first spiritual death. Commenting on Genesis 3:24, Alma says that Adam and Eve “were cut off from the tree of life” by cherubim and a flaming sword, anticipating the way that “they should be cut off from the face of the earth” (Alma 42:6). He then comments, “And now ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally *and spiritually* from the presence of the Lord” (v. 7).<sup>12</sup> Alma is then even more explicit. He says that “the fall had brought upon all mankind *a spiritual death as well as a temporal*—that is, they were *cut off from the presence of the Lord*” (v. 9).<sup>13</sup> For Alma as much as for Samuel, then, there are two spiritual deaths—a universal one that consists in being cut off from God’s presence, and a conditional one that comes only at the end to the unrepentant.<sup>14</sup>

It is of course true that Alma and other Nephite prophets use the phrase “the first death” only to speak of temporal, or physical, death. A quick review of Alma’s teachings, however, makes clear that this does not mean that the only spiritual death they speak of is the “second death” that comes after judgment. What is ultimately unique about Samuel is not his notion that there are two spiritual deaths or that spiritual death is divided in two, but rather that he places far less emphasis than his Nephite

prophetic forebears do on physical death. Taking the temporal or physical dimension of death and resurrection for granted, Samuel addresses in a particularly intense fashion the kinds of spiritual death human beings experience or might experience. In so doing he divides spiritual death in two more explicitly than do others in the Book of Mormon. What is striking and therefore deserves more attention, however, is that Samuel's trained focus on a divided spiritual death allows him to bring to light the way that spiritual death not only *is divided* but also *divides*. Thus, although the basic picture of a divided spiritual death can be elucidated quickly, other theological implications of Samuel's theological picture take further work to see. His unique emphasis on spiritual death seems to bring these forth for closer scrutiny.

## DEATH DIVIDING CHRIST<sup>15</sup>

Samuel makes perfectly clear that both kinds of spiritual death he speaks of call for messianic intervention. For the first (spiritual) death to be universally overcome and for the second (spiritual) death to be conditionally overcome, Christ “surely must die” (Helaman 14:15). In fact, “it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth” to ensure the possibility of redemption (v. 15). In a word, Christ's death is necessary, according to Samuel. This should be no surprise for readers of the Book of Mormon. Earlier passages in the volume find Nephite prophets pointing to the necessity of Christ's death as well. Jacob says, to take just one example, “it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to . . . die for all men” (2 Nephi 9:5; see 10:3). The way humankind's fallenness creates a need for Christ's atoning intervention—including his willing death—is fully familiar to readers when they encounter Samuel's preaching. What surprises the careful reader, however, is that Samuel's statements about this necessity are, like spiritual death itself, divided. It is as if the divided nature of spiritual death in turn divides the necessity of Christ's death—or, as will become clear, divides the event of Christ's death, or even divides Christ himself.

Samuel says first, regarding the necessity of Christ's death, that “he surely must die that salvation may come” (Helaman 14:15). The words *surely must* fall on the ear as potentially redundant, perhaps even approaching

awkwardness.<sup>16</sup> Why should Samuel add *surely* to *must*, as if necessity were not sure in and of itself?<sup>17</sup> Is there not a kind of doubling, a kind of pleonasm, in “surely must”—as if necessity itself were in the case of Christ’s death divided and then coupled with itself? One might suggest that such a theological reading is unnecessary because the function of adding *surely* to *must* before *die* is to allude to Genesis 2:17, the famous commandment to Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge in Eden: “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Perhaps Samuel (or a later editor, or even a still-later translator) forms his words so that his hearers (or the text’s readers) would think of Christ’s death as a fulfillment of the word once spoken to Adam.<sup>18</sup> Even such an allusion, however, would involve a theologically suggestive doubling. The Hebrew construction underlying “thou shalt surely die” involves a peculiar repetition of its own. In fact, the word translated “surely” in Genesis 2:17 means, literally, “dying” (it is an infinitive form of the verb that appears in conjugated form afterward as “shalt die”). In other words, the Hebrew text potentially alluded to literally reads, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, *dying thou shalt die*.” This is no major peculiarity, as Hebrew grammarians point out. Infinitive verbs often appear before conjugated forms of the same verb in the Old Testament for emphasis; these are rather consistently translated as “surely” in the King James Version.<sup>19</sup> However familiar or standard the Hebrew grammar is, the word *surely* indicates some kind of division or doubling.<sup>20</sup>

More compelling, however, is the fact that Samuel’s second statement regarding the necessity of Christ’s death also divides peculiarly in two. Samuel says of Christ both that “it behooveth him . . . that he dieth” and also that “it . . . becometh expedient that he dieth” (Helaman 14:15). Here again—and even more explicitly or emphatically—the necessity of Christ’s death apparently has to be divided or doubled. Christ’s death is a matter both of behoof (“it behooveth him”) and of expedience (“it becometh expedient”). What is to be made of this further splitting of the necessity of Christ’s death?<sup>21</sup>

Much of the language in this second double statement of the necessity of Christ’s death is archaic and therefore unfamiliar. Many are likely only to grasp a vague or general sense of what Samuel says as they read. Most readers are therefore apt to overlook the fact that there are grammatical

peculiarities in Samuel's words. First, it should be noted that the archaic construction "it is expedient that" (or any other similar construction—archaic or otherwise—indicating necessity) requires the subsequent verb to be in the subjunctive mood. That is to say, "he dieth" (which is in the indicative mood) technically should not appear after "it becometh expedient that"; rather, "he die" or (better) "he should die" (both of which are in the subjunctive mood) should follow "it becometh expedient that."<sup>22</sup> Now, the Book of Mormon often exhibits technically incorrect or nonstandard grammar.<sup>23</sup> This, however, does not seem to explain things. Literally every other instance of "it is expedient that" in the Book of Mormon is correctly followed by a verb in the subjunctive mood. Only Samuel's formula here is grammatically odd in this particular way.<sup>24</sup> Only Samuel seems to foreclose the possibility of the subjunctive when trying to articulate the necessity of Christ's death. This grammatical peculiarity seems deliberate and therefore likely of theological significance.

A second grammatical peculiarity concerns standard usage of "it behooveth him . . . that." Inspection of usage for the archaic verb *to behoove* (often *to behove*) in Early Modern English shows that it tends to follow one of two patterns when it takes the impersonal *it* as its subject ("it behooveth"). First, the verb often takes a person as its object and then there follows an infinitive verb: "it behooveth so-and-so to such-and-such." Second, the verb just as often takes as its object an entire clause (beginning with the word *that*), in which what is necessary is stated: "it behooveth that so-and-so do such-and-such."<sup>25</sup> What these two distinct tendencies in usage suggest is that *behoof* functions *either* as a force exerting pressure on a particular subject (i.e., *someone* feels an obligation to do something) *or* as a force exerting objective pressure (i.e., *regardless* of what anyone feels, something specific needs to happen or to be done). What appears in Samuel's words, though, is a peculiar fusion of the two common forms: "it behooveth him [so-and-so] that he [that same so-and-so] dieth [do such-and-such]." Such a fusion of the two common forms can be found in published sources from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, but it is uncommon.<sup>26</sup> What is especially striking about the combined formulation is that it assigns Christ two distinct positions at once with respect to the necessity of his death. On the one hand, he is the object of the behoof, the

one the behoof acts on (“it behooveth *him*”); on the other hand, he is the subject who acts in enacting the necessity (“*he* dieth”). Thus, this second grammatical peculiarity, despite not being irreversibly suspect despite its rarity (it does appear elsewhere in the Book of Mormon),<sup>27</sup> again likely has theological significance.

Beyond questions of grammar, there is a third peculiarity about the statement “it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth.” It seems relatively clear that the clause “it behooveth him” makes a claim that stands, in some sense, outside time. That is, “it behooveth him” fails to suggest contingent or conditional necessity, necessity that arises only because of certain circumstances that happen to arise but did not have to arise. It indicates, rather, a kind of eternal necessity, the way things would have to have been regardless of what might actually happen in history. By contrast, though, “it becometh expedient” suggests contingent or conditional necessity, a need that arises or an expedience that comes into being as a result of particular circumstances.<sup>28</sup> This is especially clear in light of the fact that the word *expedient* itself has a temporal dimension, suggesting urgency, as is evident in a related word like *expedite*. Samuel’s two ways of indicating the necessity of Christ’s death—in terms of behoof and in terms of expedience—thus might seem to be at least potentially at odds with each other, one assuming absolute and the other relative necessity. How can Christ’s death be absolutely necessary *and* have its necessity arise only in or because of particular circumstances? Is the behoof somehow tacitly time-bound? Or is the expedience a matter of some kind of becoming that can be called eternal, withdrawn from historical accidents and contingencies? This third, nongrammatical peculiarity is of even more obvious theological significance.

Might it be that all three of these just-reviewed peculiarities are theologically connected? Samuel’s statement about the necessity of Christ’s death is labored and complex, but might all of its complexities be features of one total theological picture? It is certainly possible to suggest that the first and third peculiarities are connected: the forceful foreclosure of the subjunctive mood (in “that he dieth”) and the potentially awkward conjunction of clearly timeless and apparently time-bound necessity (“it behooveth” and “it becometh expedient”). Both of these curious moves in

the text point roughly in the same direction, namely, in that of something eternal that is nonetheless dynamic and in process. That this is likely the case, though, requires some argument.

The subjunctive mood is said to be intended to express open possibility (or uncertainty as to outcome) rather than closed actuality. It, in other words, grammatically removes the event to which a verb refers from the realm of the actual (where the indicative mood would instead be appropriate) to the realm of the potential or the hypothetical. This becomes important in statements of necessity like Samuel's because the particularity of the actual—the specific historical determinations of the event in question—threatens to trap an event in the contingent chain of contingent causes and effects within which it occurs. Stripped of its historical or actual determinations, independent of so many contingencies, an event can be investigated in theoretical terms, and its necessity regardless of circumstances can be investigated. What, then, happens when Samuel rejects—and apparently *deliberately* rejects—the subjunctive mood in “that he dieth”?<sup>29</sup> It seems it could be said that two things happen at once. On the one hand, because the indicative *dieth* occupies the position of the subjunctive in a statement of necessity, Samuel effectively removes the event of Christ's death from the realm of the merely actual despite his foreclosure of the subjunctive. Samuel, in other words, still and regardless strips the event of Christ's death of contingency or nonnecessity. On the other hand and at the same time, however, because the indicative *dieth* appears instead of the subjunctive *die* or should *die*, Samuel removes the event of Christ's death from the realm of the actual to something other than the realm of the possible or the potential. He arguably removes the necessary event of Christ's death to a third realm, one that might be called eternal although it must be said that things nonetheless *happen* there—as the indicative mood of the verb (“he dieth”) suggests.<sup>30</sup> The very event of Christ's death is thus here divided in two, simultaneously subjunctive (in grammatical place) and indicative (in grammatical mood).<sup>31</sup>

The odd alternation between the timeless and the time-bound in Samuel's expression of the necessity of Christ's death might indicate something similar. That is, the coupling of “it behooveth” and “it becometh expedient” might be best understood as an attempt to use two apparently opposed

expressions to describe one and the same sort of necessity, or perhaps to describe a single necessity that is in some sense divided in two. The necessity of Christ's death, on such a picture, would withdraw it from the eternal realm of the static possible (where "it behooveth" would most naturally fit) as well as from the thoroughly historical realm of the dynamic actual (where "it becometh expedient" would most naturally fit). Or, perhaps it should be said, the necessity of Christ's death is one, but divided, a singular necessity that somehow divides itself into two dramatically distinct temporal and atemporal realms. To put all this in other words, Samuel seems to indicate that Christ's death is necessary in a way that resists its being reduced to a worldly or a historical event, even as it would be a mistake to say that Christ's death is therefore merely an eternal idea.<sup>32</sup> Christ's death is an absolute and eternal necessity, but it is simultaneously needed in some way that genuinely comes into being. Here again, Christ's death seems to demand the existence of a third realm, occurring according to a necessity that requires an unfamiliar and as-yet unformalized logic. The necessity of Christ's death is as much divided in two as the event of Christ's death.

Is there any way to connect up these theological reflections on the first and third peculiarities of Samuel's words about the necessity of Christ's death with the second peculiarity? That is, what of the odd fusion of two more common grammatical forms in Samuel's formula "it behooveth him . . . that he dieth"? We have already noted that this rare formula is interesting at the very least because of the way that it divides Christ's own role with respect to his death in two. He is the object of behoof ("it behooveth him") but also the subject of the action of dying ("that he dieth"). Christ, that is, appears twice in Samuel's formula, once standing outside time, as it were ("it behooveth him"), and once standing squarely within time ("that he dieth"). Samuel's somewhat peculiar fusion of two standard forms of expressing behoof allows him to position Christ himself—and not just his death or its necessity—both within and without time, within and without eternity, somehow positioned in the same third realm that resists reduction to the actual or the possible, to the static or the dynamic. Samuel suggests that the Messiah himself occupies a time irreducible to time but also in no way equivalent to eternity, inhabiting a time without time or an eternity without eternity. Samuel's Christ experiences a sort of necessity that

cannot be said to stand wholly outside time, just as he willingly goes to his death in an event that cannot be said to stand wholly inside time. In this way Christ's own divided person seems to hold together in one the divided event of his death and the divided necessity of his dying. Or, put another way, Christ is a single being divided in two by certain other divisions (of dying, of necessity), divisions that the divided nature of spiritual death imposes. Christ is, in his very person, the split but singular means of overcoming spiritual death. "He surely must die," as Samuel says (Helaman 14:15), but as a person and in a death and according to a necessity that can never fully coincide with themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Now, it might be that Samuel simply speaks somewhat peculiarly here and there over the course of his digression on death. It might be that there is no theological significance to the peculiarities in his words. It is striking, however, that all of the peculiarities point, together, in the same general direction. They all point toward a messianic death consistently divided because it exceeds the polarizing categories we use to make sense of the world. That this occurs within a passage that articulates the division of spiritual death in two is suggestive. It seems that there is some kind of correlation between Samuel's particularly systematic division between two sorts of spiritual death and his nervousness about forcing anything about Christ's death into one polarizing category or another. And it seems important that, as he passes from theological explanation to practical exhortation, Samuel continues at the end of the digression on death to speak of significant theological divisions. In the last part of the digression, however, what divides in two is humanity—the human being confronted by spiritual death and the divided Christ. This requires further elaboration.

## DEATH DIVIDING HUMANITY

The final sequence of Samuel's digression on spiritual death leaves off doctrinal or theological exposition to take up the task of direct and forceful exhortation. Explaining the conditions of repentance is, it seems, insufficient for Samuel; he refuses to neglect the task of calling his hearers to repentance. Theory and practice are nonetheless inseparable, as the connecting *therefore* that opens the digression's final sequence clearly indicates. Also marking continuity between theory and practice, though, is the

final warning Samuel issues to those who fail to repent; they “are brought down unto this second death” (Helaman 14:19). Theology thus bleeds into the life of faith in Samuel’s discourse as much as measures for living faithfully follow and concretize theology. It is therefore of little surprise that the theologian should find still more worthy of reflection in the digression’s final exhortation. Even at this most overtly practical moment in Samuel’s words on spiritual death, one finds further theologically significant divisions operative—this last time imposed on the human being facing the need to repent. Just as spiritual death is divided in this discourse, like Christ and his death and the necessity of his death, human beings find themselves divided in some sense by spiritual death.

What organizes and orients the division of the human being confronted with Samuel’s words is, straightforwardly, a potential misalignment between knowledge and action. What ultimately brings one to the second death, Samuel says, is “knowing these things and not doing them” (Helaman 14:19).<sup>34</sup> Here the average human being finds herself divided between being a passive subject (of knowing) and being an active subject (of doing). Inasmuch as one fails to repent, it seems, the noncoincidence of these two ways of being a subject becomes a pathway to misery. What one knows exceeds and overstretches what one does, and the mismatch leads rather directly to “condemnation” (v. 19). Divided from oneself, with theory (knowing) and practice (doing) situated on opposite sides of an unbridgeable gulf, one finds no possibility of wholeness or of reconciliation.

Now, it absolutely must not be imagined that Samuel thinks one must work to force one’s actions to align with certain known ideals, as if it were even possible for one’s all-too-human efforts to yield anything like goodness apart from God.<sup>35</sup> What one knows, Samuel makes clear, is just the conditions of repentance. Indeed, Samuel states explicitly that his purpose in coming up “upon the walls of [the] city” is to ensure that his hearers “know the conditions of repentance” (Helaman 14:11). That what one might know while “not doing” something is the conditions of repentance indicates that what one must do is, specifically, *repent*. In short, what Samuel wishes his hearers to know is the conditions of repentance, and what he wishes them to do is repent. When he worries about

the possibility of “knowing these things and not doing them” (v. 19), he apparently worries about those who know the conditions of repentance but do not repent. The misalignment between knowing and doing, the division between the passive subject of knowing and the active subject of doing, is not that between a knowledge of heavenly moral ideals and a practical life always and necessarily lived without achieving those ideals. It is, rather, a misalignment between knowing that repentance is the condition for the possibility of escaping the second (spiritual) death and failing to repent. Here, as elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, “all we can do” is repent (2 Nephi 25:23). It may in fact be only in repentance that what human beings know and what human beings do can genuinely find reconciliation or genuine wholeness.<sup>36</sup>

Samuel thus suggests that human beings naturally find themselves, as they face spiritual death, divided from and therefore divided against themselves. In this they are simultaneously like and unlike Christ as he is portrayed in the preceding several verses of Samuel’s digression. Christ, too, finds that the vicissitudes of human beings’ spiritual deaths require him to occupy two places at once, divided from himself as he dies to create the possibility of human redemption. Christ, though, divides in two inasmuch as he occupies a theologically undefined space where the world and its beyond, time and eternity, cannot be easily distinguished. The same is true of Christ’s death and of the necessity of his death, as we have seen. Spiritual death and its vicissitudes divide unrepentant human beings from and against themselves, however, squarely within the world.<sup>37</sup> Unrepentant human beings find themselves caught not so much between their temporal and their eternal natures as between their desire to repent and their desire not to repent. Spiritual death, in both its forms, divides human beings differently than it does a divine being.

The division of unrepentant persons against themselves finds a further echo in what Samuel says they can expect to come upon them. He commands his hearers in the second person to repent, “lest, by knowing these things and not doing them, ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation, and ye are brought down unto this second death” (Helaman 14:19). At first glance these words seem simple enough, but they reward closer reading. Across three distinct clauses, Samuel traces the progressive

diminution of the unrepentant individual's agency. In the first clause, "by knowing these things and not doing them," Samuel casts his unrepentant hearer as a grammatically active subject, one who knows and does (or does not do). In the second clause, "ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation," however, he casts his unrepentant hearer as a grammatically reflexive subject, simultaneously active and passive, one who suffers and is suffered. Finally, in the third clause, "ye are brought down unto this second death," he casts his unrepentant hearer only as a grammatically passive subject, one who is brought down. Slowly, over the course of what Samuel hopes his hearers might avoid through repentance, one moves from being in a simply active or agentive position, through being in a quasi-active or quasi-agentive position that is tainted by passivity, to being in a wholly passive and non-agentive position—brought down and in fact dying the second death.

The key moment in the progression might be the second clause, "ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation" (Helaman 14:19). This is the moment when the active and agentive possibility of repentance begins to give way to an increasingly passive and non-agentive impossibility for repentance. More importantly, perhaps, it is also the moment when the division of the human person from herself takes on its most poignant form. In the first clause, "by knowing these things and not doing them," the division of the unrepentant human being in two looks like a kind of irreconcilability between what one knows and what one does. One is the passive knower of certain things beyond one's person (the conditions of repentance) and the active doer (or nondoer) of certain things that reach out beyond one's person (repentance). When the second clause replaces the first, however, it seems that the self divides into two halves that relate solely to each other, and one becomes simultaneously the acting- and the acted-on. One *suffers oneself*. One is the sufferer *and* the thing suffered. And the result (in this case)<sup>38</sup> is an escalating loss of the agentive self as one "come[s] under condemnation" (v. 19).

Samuel, it thus appears, worries in a subtle but theologically informative way about the unrepentant being divided helplessly in two, not in a messianic and redemptive way but in a terrifying and condemnatory way. Might this be why he opens the exhortation sequence of the

digression on spiritual death not with a single but with a double call to repentance? “Therefore repent ye, repent ye!” he cries (Helaman 14:19). It is certainly true that other scriptural figures issue a double call for repentance like Samuel’s, although such calls are much fewer and farther between than one might expect. In fact, the double cry “repent ye, repent ye” never appears in the Bible, and it appears in the Book of Mormon only in the book of Helaman (where it significantly appears three times) and in 2 Nephi 31:11.<sup>39</sup> Its infrequency might be enough to motivate a theological interpretation of the double cry. To the as-yet-unrepentant, to those who remain divided from and against themselves by spiritual death, the cry of repentance itself may need to be divided in two, doubled so as to speak to the divided minds of those to whom repentance is preached (which is to say, to everyone). If, as the New Testament’s Epistle of James says, “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8) and the “double minded” must “purify [their] hearts” (4:8), then the only way to call for repentant stability and genuinely pure hearts may be to double the call for repentance.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout Samuel’s digression on spiritual death, everything of substance seems divided.<sup>41</sup> Death itself, and spiritual death in particular, is divided. The very Messiah is divided, as is the event of his death and the necessity of his dying. Human beings are divided, as is the call of repentance issued to them. Might it be significant that, only a moment before Samuel concludes his digression on spiritual death and returns to the signs of Christ’s death, he speaks of how the earth itself is to “be broken up” at the time of the Messiah’s divided death (Helaman 14:21)? He makes this literally earth-shattering prediction regarding the very rocks of the earth: “They shall be rent in twain and shall ever after be found in seams, and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth” (v. 22). I have elsewhere written of the potential implications of this gesture of geotheology.<sup>42</sup> It might be that human beings are as divided by the death of their God on the cross—and by everything that motivates it—as the earth itself is. When Nephi speaks of geotheological matters centuries before Samuel, he predicts that “many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God” at the time of Christ’s death, compelled to say to themselves and others, “The God of Nature suffers”

(1 Nephi 19:12). Every human being might well ask whether she or he feels constrained to say the same.

Samuel, at any rate, seems to think that the divided and dividing event of Christ's death is something we should feel compelled to confess, allowing it to divide us from ourselves even as it calls for reconciliation.

## NOTES

1. See the helpful assessment of the overarching spirit of the book of Helaman in John Christopher Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads The Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016), 121.
2. For evidence of the lack of appreciation from traditional readers, compare the treatment of other sermonic figures in the Book of Mormon with that of Samuel in the Book of Mormon Symposium Series published by Brigham Young University's Religious Studies Center. See especially essays in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., *The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992).
3. See, for instance, the relatively brief attention given to this passage, in contrast to other parts of Samuel's sermon, in Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 3: Alma through Helaman* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 412–14.
4. This is the subject of the second part of the present essay.
5. For context, see the first serious and focused treatment of the book of Helaman yet to appear: Kimberly Matheson Berkey, *Helaman: a brief theological introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020).
6. I am aware of no serious attempt to discern the structure of Samuel's preaching, as presented in the book of Helaman. See, however, an important argument for a deliberate lack of consistent literary structure in the book of Helaman in Kimberly M. Berkey, "Narrative Doubling and the Structure of Helaman," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 28 (2019): 69–90.
7. As Joseph Smith originally dictated the text of Samuel's sermon, it was all contained within one overarching chapter (now equivalent to Helaman 13–16). The sermon on signs—a sermon within a sermon—consists of just Helaman 14. The repeated motif of belief on the Son of God marks the internal unity of

- Helaman 14, but so do transitional markers in Helaman 14:1 and 15:1. Helaman 14:1 interrupts Samuel's preaching with a narrative transition, marking a break from the first larger sequence of his message. Further, Helaman 15:1 opens with the strongly transitional "and now, my beloved brethren, behold, I declare unto you that . . ." (Throughout this essay, I use as a base text for the Book of Mormon Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009], although I take the liberty of altering Skousen's punctuation of the text wherever it seems appropriate to do so.)
8. It is worth noting that the strong structural features of the digression might be indicators of an editorial hand, perhaps even of an interpolating hand. Given the other ways in which the digression interrupts Samuel's sermon on signs, in fact, there may be reason to pursue the possibility that the digression is an unmarked editorial interruption in the report of Samuel's preaching. These are possibilities that would have to be pursued on another occasion, however.
  9. Generally, on Samuel's relationship to the Nephite prophets, see John Hilton III's contribution to this volume, published in an earlier form as John Hilton III, Sunny Hendry Hafen, and Jaron Hansen, "Samuel and His Nephite Sources," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 115–39. Hilton and his coauthors consider Alma alongside other Nephite prophets.
  10. Most of the phrases in Samuel's digression are arguably straightforward in immediate meaning. The phrase "as to things," however, seems somewhat peculiar. It is worth noting that this phrase seems to have a rather definitive meaning in the Book of Mormon. With few exceptions, the phrase appears linked to the idea of a final spiritual death. See, for instance, Alma 5:42; 12:16, 32; 40:26; but see also Alma 12:31.
  11. Latter-day Saints often distinguish between temporal death and spiritual death and therefore distinguish between the two things Christ accomplishes to overcome these respectively: his resurrection (overcoming temporal death) and his atonement (overcoming spiritual death). Note that Samuel never refers to Christ's atonement by that name, speaking only of his death and resurrection. For Samuel (as for others in the Book of Mormon), the event of Christ's rising from the dead is the saving event, the accomplishment of atonement.
  12. One could read Alma's formulation here as a condensation of Samuel's more complex description of the first death: "being cut off from the presence of the Lord . . . both as to things temporal and to things spiritual" (Helaman 14:16).

13. The connection between Alma's words here and Samuel's are unmistakable—not only the reference, subtly, to a first spiritual death, but its being a matter of being “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Helaman 14:16).
14. We might note also that Lehi distinguishes between directly spiritual and directly temporal effects of the breaking of the first commandment given in Eden. See 2 Nephi 2:5.
15. I am somewhat hesitant to speak of Christ or of his death as divided, for at least two reasons. First, I worry that the term might suggest something like conflict or contentiousness, although I have nothing of the sort in mind anywhere in this essay. To speak of Christ divided is therefore not to speak of Christ divided *against himself*—the possibility of which Christ denies explicitly in the New Testament (see Mark 3:25). Second, I worry that a strict sense of division might suggest the separating out of clearly distinct parts of some conceptually clear whole. This is not what I have in mind, however. It must be kept clear therefore that I seldom mean by the word *divided* in the following pages anything like “cleanly and observably divided into two conceptually discernible things.” A rather different sort of thinking about division has to make itself available a little at a time through the reading that follows.
16. One might guess that the phrasing is biblical and so might reflect an underlying Hebrew construction. The phrase *surely must*, however, never appears in the King James Version of the Bible; nor does the inverted *must surely*. The former, moreover, appears only once elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (in a rather different context: see 1 Nephi 22:19), although the latter appears some nine times in the Book of Mormon.
17. One could argue that commas should be inserted around the word *surely* so that it qualifies not *must* but the whole statement about necessity: “For behold, he, surely, must die that salvation may come.” (The same effect would be achieved by removing *surely* to an earlier place in the sentence: “For behold, surely he must die that salvation may come.”) This is a real possibility that, nonetheless, I do not pursue here.
18. See Shon Hopkin and John Hilton III, “Samuel's Reliance on Biblical Language,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 31–52.
19. For some discussion of the grammar from a classic source, see Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006), 34–43 (§113n–q).

20. Of course, there are important questions to raise about whether the underlying Hebrew of Genesis is supposed to have been available in any way to Nephites or Lamanites in Samuel's day. This is a most difficult issue, on which there is little consensus. I leave such questions to one side for my purposes in this essay.
21. Here I take both "it behooveth him" and "it becometh expedient" to qualify "that he dieth." One could suggest that only "it becometh expedient" qualifies "that he dieth," while "it behooveth him" qualifies only "to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead." This interpretation of the text could be brought out by punctuating this part of Helaman 14:15 as follows: "Yea, it behooveth him—and becometh expedient that he dieth—to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead." This is a real possibility, although I do not pursue it here.
22. Even if "it becometh expedient" were removed from the verse, the same grammatical peculiarity would be present in the text, because "it behooveth him that" should be followed by a verb in the subjunctive mood as much as "it becometh expedient that."
23. See Royal Skousen with Stanford Carmack, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation*, 2 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2016).
24. This is all the more remarkable in that there are forty-five other instances of "it is expedient that." Forty-two of these use the auxiliary verb *should* to indicate the subjunctive mood. The three others simply use a verb form that is the same in the indicative and subjunctive moods, leaving the text somewhat ambiguous but not decisively in the indicative mood (see 2 Nephi 9:48: "it must needs be expedient that I teach you"; Alma 60:24: "it will be expedient that we contend no more"; and 3 Nephi 5:2: "it must be expedient that Christ had come").
25. Examples appear throughout the entry for *behove/behove* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. They can also be found readily in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publications using the Google Books search function, and in even earlier publications using the search function in Early English Books Online.
26. It never, for instance, appears in the King James Version of the Bible. The two times that the verb *to behove* appears there, the first of the two common forms is used (see Luke 24:46; Hebrews 2:17). Incidentally, the two biblical passages that use the word employ distinct Greek verbs in the underlying text—*dei* and *ophelein*.
27. See 2 Nephi 9:5; 3 Nephi 21:6. The only other time *to behove* appears in the Book of Mormon, it actually avoids either of the two standard forms, collapsing

- either an implicit infinitive verb clause or a *that*-clause into the word *thus*: “thus it behooveth our God” (2 Nephi 10:3).
28. The Book of Mormon uses the phrase “to become expedient” another eleven times (although it never appears in the Bible), and all eleven of these describing changing historical circumstances that create necessity. See Mosiah 26:6; Alma 45:21; 57:11, 15; 58:3; 62:10, 44; 63:11; 3 Nephi 2:11; 5:14.
  29. I speak here as if Samuel were willfully making decisions about using paradoxical grammar. I should make clear, however, that I do not mean to take a strong stance on exactly where the grammatical decisions have been made—whether by Samuel, by some subsequent Nephite editor, by Joseph Smith or one of his scribes, or by God himself. What matters for my purposes is just that the text deploys a grammatically peculiar but theologically suggestive form.
  30. There are many philosophically and theologically fraught ways to understand the word *eternal*, but I mean to use it neither in the sense of “sempiternal” (that is, persisting throughout time) nor in the sense of “immaterial” or “outside time” (the sense that is often associated with classical Platonism). It seems unwise in certain ways to use the word vaguely, but it seems clear that Samuel’s grammar suggests something not to be captured in classical categories.
  31. The philosophical or metaphysical picture suggested by this indicative-in-the-place-of-the-subjunctive is not dissimilar from that of Gilles Deleuze. See especially Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); and, for a somewhat compelling theological translation of Deleuze’s thought, Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).
  32. For a discussion of similar themes in Abinadi’s defense before Noah’s priests, see James E. Faulconer, *Mosiah: a brief theological introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020).
  33. The philosophical or metaphysical picture suggested by this problem of time resembles in crucial ways that of Giorgio Agamben. See especially Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and, for Agamben’s own translation of such thought into the theological context, Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). I have dealt with such a notion of messianic temporality elsewhere in Joseph M. Spencer, *For Zion: A Mormon Theology of Hope* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

34. It is possible to hear a subtle echo of John 13:17 in Samuel's formulation: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." See also Mosiah 4:10.
35. King Benjamin—whom Samuel quotes verbatim at some length at one point in his wall-top sermon (see Helaman 14:12; Mosiah 3:8)—repeatedly makes clear that human effort amounts to exactly nothing independent of God, whatever one's goodwill might be. See throughout Mosiah 1–6.
36. For some further discussion of this idea, see Joseph M. Spencer, "What Can We Do? Reflections on 2 Nephi 25:23," *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 15, no. 2 (2014): 25–39; and Daniel O. McClellan, "2 Nephi 25:23 in Literary and Rhetorical Context," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 29 (2020): 1–19.
37. See Joseph M. Spencer, "Seams, Cracks, and Fragments: Notes on the Human Condition," in *A Preparatory Redemption: Reading Alma 12–13*, ed. Matthew Bowman and Rosemary Demos (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2018), 64–81.
38. Self-suffering might, in a certain context, be a redemptive possibility, however. See Adam S. Miller, "Suffering without Yielding: Death, Disownment, and Consecration," in *God Himself Shall Come Down: Reading Mosiah 15*, ed. Andrew C. Smith and Joseph M. Spencer (Seattle, WA: Proceedings of the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar, forthcoming).
39. The other instances of "repent ye, repent ye" in the book of Helaman appear in Helaman 5:32 and 7:17. It seems significant that the first of these passages reports a voice from heaven addressed to the Lamanites, rather than to the Nephites. The second, moreover, explicitly links the double cry for repentance to spiritual death. Samuel alters the addressee of the cry—from Lamanites to Nephites—and he develops at length the theology of spiritual death associated with the cry. It seems possible to develop a kind of systematic articulation of the instances of "repent ye, repent ye" within the book of Helaman.
40. For a brilliant and classic philosophical and theological reflection on these passages from James, see Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, trans. Douglas V. Steere (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956). See also Adam S. Miller, "'Take No Thought,'" in *Perspectives on Mormon Theology: Scriptural Theology*, ed. James E. Faulconer and Joseph M. Spencer (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 57–67.
41. For further possible themes of division in connection with Samuel's sermon, see Charles Swift's contribution to this volume.
42. See, again, Spencer, "Seams, Cracks, and Fragments."