The Book of Mormon begins and ends with a focus on the question of faith.

The Nephite Prophets' Understanding of Faith *and* Faithfulness

NOEL B. REYNOLDS

Noel B. Reynolds (noel_reynolds@byu.edu) is a professor emeritus of political science at BYU.

R eaders of the Book of Mormon agree that *faith in Jesus Christ* is a basic principle of the gospel, or doctrine of Christ, taught therein. And they agree, at least superficially, on the meaning of the word *faith* to the extent that is allowed by their modern, westernized worldview and background in New Testament Christianity. However, as I engaged in an in-depth study of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Nephites understood it, I realized that (1) our modern cultural understandings shield us from those of the Nephite prophets in many ways, (2) the Nephite concept of faith is far from simple, and (3) the Nephites' dependence on Old Testament covenantal concepts constitutes an essential dimension of their approach to faith in Jesus Christ. In this essay, I will reconstruct the Old Testament perspective as it relates to Nephite understandings and then examine the full range of relevant Book of Mormon usage by trying to document and discover the meanings of *faith* in Nephite discourse.

The Christian world generally speaks of humankind's relationship to God in terms of faith as the "central term" defining that relationship and as "a basic source of hope and inspiration."[1] Yet, as prominent Christian theologian

Brevard Childs explains, "From the start the subject of faith has been the source of great controversy. It not only served to define Christianity over against Judaism, but also was a major factor in separating Protestant belief from Roman Catholic during the period of the Reformation. Indeed, much of the present confusion in today's church rests on a widespread uncertainty over the meaning and content of faith."[2] Much of that confusion arises from problems in scriptural interpretation: "How is one to explain the elements of both striking continuity and discontinuity between the two testaments, especially in terms of the Old Testament's peripheral use of the term *faith* in contrast to its centrality within the New Testament?"[3]

Biblical Hebrew and Modern Linguistics

The twentieth century produced developments in linguistic and textual studies of the Hebrew Bible that are particularly relevant for this inquiry. The midcentury effort to apply the principles of scientific linguistics to studies in biblical Hebrew produced significant challenges to traditional interpretations. Semanticists found important deficiencies in standard approaches that gave too much weight to etymologies and cognate language studies. But those deficiencies also paid too little attention to the varieties of usage evident in the Hebrew text. Some of the most effective critiques focused precisely on studies of *faith* and *faithfulness*, severely criticizing the traditional methodologies used to produce them.[4] By the end of the century, it was clear that the semanticists had won and that Hebrew Bible scholars had incorporated the insights of modern linguistics into their approaches to Bible dictionaries and textual studies.[5] Though I will spare readers the details of these linguistic battles, this essay will rely on the outcomes that now appear to be agreeable to most current Bible scholars.

Two important caveats for contemporary readers emerge from these studies. First, the modern distinction between faith and knowledge has little parallel in the Hebrew Bible. And second, all the faith-related terminology in the Old Testament should be understood in the context of a preexisting covenant with the Lord. *Faith* and *faithfulness* are about relationships. Regarding the first point, the basic linguistic fact to recognize is that biblical Hebrew has no noun for *faith*. Rather, the semantic field on *faith* is filled with a group of verbs about *trusting* or adjectives and nouns that derive from related verbs. According to Childs, "Faith in the Old Testament is always trust which is grounded in past events of deliverance and salvation, but which awaits God's

future intervention as creator and redeemer."[6] In only two instances do these refer to beliefs about what is true or false, as would most modern references to *faith*. Most importantly, the modern understanding of faith as beliefs that cannot be adequately supported with facts or reasons would be foreign to the ancient Israelite understanding. Biblical faith was not an epistemological issue.

The second point—questions of faith raised issues of trust and free choice. The question was always this: Did one's actions demonstrate trusting in Yahweh (the Lord) or in something else? Tests of faith were tests of character and loyalty in a covenant relationship and not tests of the intellect. Acts of faith demonstrated loyal commitment to the Lord, trust in his covenant promises, love of him and his people, and acceptance of his superior knowledge of what was best for his people. Choosing to trust instead in the wisdom of humans, idols, the power of armies, personal wealth, political power, or one's own behavior preferences was to rebel against the Lord and his covenant and to become apostate.

Faith as a Function of Israel's Covenant with God

Modern confidence in the vast potential of humans to master and control their world stands in stark contrast to the worldviews of premodern societies and to the understanding of ancient Israel as reflected in the writings of the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible describes Abraham as a pastoralist who inherited from his ancestors the understanding that God had created this world and had placed men and women in it, expecting them to obey his commandments. Further, because of his exceptional righteousness, Abraham received direct revelation from God confirming his inherited beliefs. But most critically for all future self-understanding in Israel, Abraham was offered a unique relationship—a covenant between him, his people, and God that would shape their world from that point on. As the all-powerful creator of the world, Yahweh would adopt Abraham and his posterity as "his people." They would be his family, and he would be their father and their God *by covenant*. As such, he would love, protect, and prosper them with the requirement that they would take his name upon them, show their loyalty and reciprocal love for him by keeping his commandments, and love, protect, and help one another as his children. By doing so, they would become the example that could show all nations how the one true God could and would adopt and bless any people, and they would become the means through which God would offer this same covenant and its blessings to all humankind.[7]

By offering this covenant relationship to Abraham, his posterity, and ultimately to all people, Yahweh presented them all with a fundamental choice. Would they choose to accept direction from the creator of the world based on his knowledge, values, and priorities for the conduct of their lives, or would they choose to rely on their own wisdom, wealth, or sociopolitical power in pursuing self-chosen paths in life? Choosing Yahweh and his path would require trusting in his unfailing goodness, power, love, and promises without knowing how or when his promised blessings would come. Perhaps even more important, it would mean accepting his judgment about what was best for them. Rejecting the invitation to his covenant would leave people vulnerable to all their own weaknesses and imperfections and without any promised aid from the Lord. And it would place them in a posture of rebellion against their covenant father and God.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Yahweh's invitation was that it was open-ended. Anyone who had previously rejected or not known of the invitation could decide at any point to accept it. The concept of repentance in the Old Testament basically means to turn or return to the correct path, to the covenant path laid out by the Lord for all his creations.[8]

The certainty that Yahweh offered to Abraham and his descendants was based in his goodness and power as the creator of the universe and in his sure love for his creations—his determination to bless all people to the extent that they would allow through their own free actions.[9] God's faithful love for his children, combined with his comprehensive knowledge of all human possibilities, justify them in trusting him in all their choices and conduct. Men and women can place their trust in the Lord because he first loved them faithfully. God is the only reliable truth—the only certainty available to fallible humans. His promises are sure. And through his covenants, he provides the only path that righteous men and women can follow to reach their highest potentials.

The Fall and Rise of the Abrahamic Covenant in Biblical Studies

By the middle of the twentieth century, Bible scholars were recognizing the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis as the principal unifying thread and plot line in the Hebrew Bible. They were also beginning to understand that the concept of faith in God in the ancient covenantal context differed from that in biblical theologies developed since the last books of the Bible were written. One natural outcome of the marriage of early Christian theology and Greek philosophy was the distinguishing of faith as something less or different from the

"true, justified belief" that Plato and later philosophers had defined as the appropriate standard for human knowledge. Christian theologians had committed themselves to philosophical doctrines and methodologies that inevitably led to the conclusion that faith was a form of belief that could not or need not be supported with adequate facts or reasons. While theological debates produced countless versions of this westernized understanding, none retained the ancient covenantal view that the only reliable certainties for humankind derive from a *covenantal relationship* with the divine creator of the universe.

John Gee has noted a related development in word meanings during the first two Christian centuries. Citing *A Greek-English Lexicon*, he offers three relevant examples that "include the change of the principal meanings of *pistis* from 'collateral, guarantee' to 'belief,' of *pisteuein* from 'to trust, rely on; entrust, commit, put up collateral' to 'to believe,' of *homologein* from 'to agree to terms, accept an agreement, enter into a legal contract, promise' to 'to confess.'"[10]

Bible scholars today will usually point to the 1933 publication of Walther Eichrodt's theological interpretation of the Old Testament from a Christian perspective and the 1961/1967 publication of the English translation of its sixth edition as major turning points in recognizing the fundamental role of the Abrahamic covenant in the Hebrew Bible and its influence in the New Testament.[11]

The midcentury efforts of a few Christian theologians to understand basic religious concepts such as *faith* in a covenantal context were largely overshadowed by the dramatic discovery that ancient Hittite treaty-covenants displayed clear similarities to Old Testament covenant texts and thereby provided historians with obvious first and second millennium BCE candidates for the sources of the Hebrew texts.[12] The treaty-covenant paradigm dominated biblical studies almost to the end of the twentieth century until Harvard professor Frank Moore Cross and other scholars impressively demonstrated how the internal covenant language and ethos of Israel as displayed throughout the Old Testament matched up even better with the earlier kinship-based social and legal structures of the desert tribes of the ancient Near East.[13] Cross showed how these kinship-based tribes were held together by covenant structures and expectations through which unrelated outsiders could be incorporated into kinship groups through marriage and adoptions or as servants and allies—giving them equal rights and duties in the clan and incorporating the tribal deity as the father of his people. Further, he showed how this kinship-by-covenant language and ethos permeates the writings of

the Old Testament. More recently, Scott W. Hahn has produced a satisfying and holistic integration of Cross's insights with the full range of biblical covenant studies.[14]

Faith in a Covenant Context

By the 1990s, most Bible scholars recognized that the covenantal basis of Israelite society required new interpretations of concepts like *faith* that differed fundamentally from the philosophical and theological tradition that had produced modern Christianity. This is evident, for example, in the massive compendium of Bible scholarship published in the six-volume *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. This dictionary's article on *faith* explains that the "uniquely Western view of faith" arose "in the context of the medieval attempts to codify and integrate the Christian experience into the emerging philosophical language of the scholastics," quoting Thomas Aquinas as an example: "Faith is the act of the intellect when it assents to divine truth under the influence of the will moved by God through grace."[15] While the Greek term *pistis*, usually translated *faith* in the New Testament, does "approximate the sense of faith as assent," the Hebrew Bible does not have an equivalent term, but rather features a varied terminology that is "much more elastic" in its range of meanings.[16]

Interpreting Old Testament ʾ*emuna*, *he emin*, and *mn* (*aman*)

Well-known Latter-day Saint Hebraist Matthew L. Bowen summarized the relationships of the key Hebrew terms for *faith* and *trust*:

> Faith and praxis were inextricably linked in ancient Israelite thought. The Hebrew noun ʾĕmûnâ—found in theologically significant passages like Habakkuk 2:4—denoted not just "faith" but durative and perdurative "faithfulness" or "steadfastness" (in belief/trust) and personal "reliability." Both ʾĕmûnâ and the related verb heʾĕmîn—"believe in," "have trust in," "have faith in" (the verb which occurs in the theologically crucial statement about Abraham's faith in Genesis 15:6)—derive from the root ʾmn whose fundamental meaning is "to be firm, trust worthy, safe" "to be sure" "to endure," etc. (cf. the cognate Egyptian verb mn to "be firm," "established," "enduring"). These words imply the constancy and reliability of action(s) over time.[17]

In 1953, Edmund Perry, a young Bible scholar at Duke University, helpfully undertook "the task of determining the full connotation of ʾ*emuna* in its Old Testament usage."[18] While the term is sometimes translated as "faith" (as in Habakkuk 2:4b RSV), "but the righteous shall live by his faith") and more often "faithfulness," Perry cited the Dorssen dissertation and the standard Hebrew

lexicon to conclude that "the basic verbal meaning of the stem seems to be 'to support, to carry, to hold, to care for.'"[19] He cited examples of its various forms where it describes a child being "nursed" or "carried," or a person or thing "to be firm or steady" or "to be resolute or unchangeable." But, he clarified, "this steadiness . . . is not the result of stabilizing oneself with one's own resources" but "by taking hold of or supporting himself on something or someone regarded to be stable and reliable." This leads to the English translations of "trusting" or "believing in": for example, Abraham "trusted the Lord (Genesis 15:6)."[20]

Consistent with the methodologies promoted by mid-twentieth-century semanticists, Perry then went on to narrow these meanings by identifying the two words that are most frequently associated with *ʾemuna* in the Hebrew Bible—*hesed* (steadfast love) and *tsedeq* (righteousness). He first incorporated the previous work of Norman Snaith, who had identified twenty-four passages in which *ʾemuna* or its sister term *emet* (truth) are linked with *hesed* in rhetorical hendiadyses. He then added to these another nine references where *ʾemuna* and *hesed* occur in parallel constructions to conclude that *ʾemuna* "cannot mean less than 'loving steadfastness, devoted dependability or trustworthiness.'"[21] The translation "faithfulness" seems to preserve these same meanings. Righteousness (*tsedeq*) also occurs seven times in a parallel construction with *ʾemuna*. Other parallels closely associated with *ʾemuna* are *yashar* (upright), *tamim* (upright or perfect), and *mishpat* (justice), solidifying the close connection of *ʾemuna* and righteousness.[22]

On the basis of these linguistic and textual studies, Perry proposed that *ʾemuna* has an active sense when applied to humans—they are expected to trust and obey the Lord—and a passive sense when applied to God, emphasizing that he is trustworthy. "The trustworthiness of God has a demanding effect upon men to trust God. It is the trust of God's trustworthiness which makes man trustworthy or justified with God. . . . 'If you do not trust, you will not be entrusted' (Isaiah 7:9)." This trustworthiness is meant to be more than a quality of life or commitment. It is "a *way* of life, standing in polar contrast to the way of disobedience and deceit."[23] Because the Old Testament does treat "trust" and "obedience" as alternative ways of satisfying God's demands on his people, *ʾemuna* "comprehends the totality of what we commonly mean in the familiar expression 'faith and works.' . . . Only the obedience of trust is reckoned to man as righteousness."[24]

The Hebrew root from which most faith-related terminology derives is the verb *aman*.[25] As Healey explains, it occurs in three forms: "In the *Qal* form

it never means "believe" but expresses the basic sense of the root "to sustain, support, carry" (2 Kgs 18:16). The variety of occurrences in the *Niphal* form all "have the sense of firmness, stability, confidence (1 Sam 2:35, Deut. 7:9 . . .)." Only when it (*he emin*) occurs in the *Hiphil* with the preposition *l* does it seem to mean "to hold something to be true, or to believe" (Genesis 15:6, 45:26, Exodus 3:1–22, 4:28–31, and Isaiah 7:9).[26] Even "in these instances the sense of *trusting* and having confidence is most noticeable. . . . A distinction is made in some authors (Pfeiffer) between 'profane' and 'religious' use of the term 'believe. . . .' But 'faith' in the primary sense (that it has in the communities of faith) is faith in God, 'not only in his *emet* [truth] but in all his characteristics and attributes (truth, constancy, goodness, love, justice, holiness, his claims on humanity), in a word, everything that makes God God.'"[27] Here Pfeiffer appears to refer to the Hebrew covenant idea of *hesed*, the complex term that denotes God's invariable virtues and the virtues his covenant people are expected to cultivate and display in their relationships to God and to all his people.[28] The connection between God's faithfulness (ʾ*emuna*) and his love/loyalty (*hesed*) for his people is demonstrated simply in the parallel construction of Psalm 36:5 NIV: "Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies."

This understanding of biblical faith had been formulated in contemporary scholarship as early as the 1950s as exemplified by Thomas Torrance: "In the biblical context truth is grounded upon the divine faithfulness and the covenant relationship which sets it up."[29] This same understanding prevails even more clearly in the 2012 *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*: "Faith in the OT, and particularly in the prophetic literature, usually is portrayed in terms of fidelity to covenant obligations or to ethical expectations as communicated by the prophet. For this reason, faith (or faithfulness) serves as the basis for the relationship between God and the people."[30]

Two decades earlier, Gordon Wenham made the same point, but even more pointedly: "Wherever a covenant between God and man is involved one may say that faith in this full-blooded sense is the obligation placed on the human party. . . . It is a total reliance on God as one who is completely truthful and dependable."[31] In the Old Testament, faith or belief in God involves obedience to the divine commands just as disobedience is linked to unbelief.[32] "Obedience is an essential element in the faith relationship. All the 'models' of faith were obedient first and foremost."[33]

Faith and *Faithfulness* in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon articulates this same biblical concept of divine *hesed* even more explicitly and frequently than does the Hebrew Bible.[34] The pervasive implications of the covenant relationship between God and his people change the primary meanings of all gospel terminology from what modern readers might expect when they come to the Book of Mormon already steeped in a Western mentality shaped largely by the Christian theological tradition. This may be especially true for the concept of faith as understood by the Nephite prophets.

The only systematic study of Book of Mormon usage of *faith* and *faithfulness* I have found is the previously cited presentation by Bowen, who examined the covenantal context and import of all the major faith-related passages in the Book of Mormon and argued powerfully that for the Nephites, faith or faithfulness was primarily a matter of keeping their covenants with the Lord. For example, he cited Alma 44:3–4 as an articulation of the backbone of Nephite covenant theology.

> But now ye behold that the Lord is with us. And ye behold that he hath delivered you into our hands. And now I would that ye should understand that this is done unto us because of our religion and our *faith* in Christ. And now ye see that ye cannot destroy this our *faith*. Now ye see that this is the true *faith* of God. Yea, ye see that God will support and keep and preserve us so long as we are *faithful* unto him and unto our *faith* and our religion. And never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into transgression and deny our *faith*.[35]

This statement by Moroni is useful as it demonstrates the Nephite theology of faith as it would have been understood by lay people. Captain Moroni is not one of the prophets who contributed to doctrinal formulations for the Nephites. And his words were addressed to an apostate Nephite—now leader of the Lamanites—whom he expects to understand him.

A similar glimpse into the common Nephite concept of faith is provided by King Limhi, who had never been part of any schools that may have served Nephite elites in Zarahemla. In addressing his assembled people on the eve of their potential escape from Lamanite domination, he invokes the classic example of the Lord's deliverance of his people as he encourages them to trust the Lord.

> Therefore lift up your heads and rejoice and put your trust in God, in that God who was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and also that God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and caused that they should walk through the Red Sea on dry ground and fed them with manna that they might not perish in the wilderness; and many more things did he do for them. And again, that

same God hath brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem and hath kept and preserved his people even until now. And behold, it is because of our iniquities and abominations that has brought us into bondage. (Mosiah 7:19–20)

Limhi further explains their current exigency as the result of their own faithlessness or iniquity: "For if this people had not fallen into transgression, the Lord would not have suffered that this great evil should come upon them" (Mosiah 7:25). He then points explicitly to the martyrdom of Abinadi who had prophesied the coming of Christ: "And many more things did they do which brought down the wrath of God upon them. Therefore who wondereth that they are in bondage and that they are smitten with sore afflictions! For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression, but I will hedge up their ways, that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them" (Mosiah 7:28–29). In every respect, Limhi's understanding of how the Lord expects his covenant people to demonstrate faith in him reflects the classical view of the prophets of Israel.

References to *faith* and *faithfulness* in the Book of Mormon are far too numerous to be addressed individually in a single article. But these can be categorized into a few characteristic usages. This paper will take up leading examples of these groupings and attempt to articulate the range of meanings they introduce to paint accurately an overall sense of how *faith* was understood by the authors of that book.

Faith in Jesus Christ as a Basic Gospel Principle

The six-element formulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as presented in the Book of Mormon always includes faith in Jesus Christ as one of its principal elements. This is clear in the three *inclusios* in which Jesus Christ himself defines his gospel and in the hundreds of abbreviated (*meristic*) statements of that gospel throughout the larger text.[36] As shown below, the Nephite understanding of *faith* was hardly independent or separable from the understanding of the other basic concepts in the gospel. Rather, the covenant context intertwines the meanings of all these concepts so that they must be understood holistically together. In his foundational presentation of the gospel, Nephi begins with repentance and baptism and then introduces the redeeming and guiding role of the Holy Ghost as people endure to the end—all without mentioning faith explicitly (see 2 Nephi 31:2–18). But then he restates everything in terms of the faith in Jesus Christ that precedes and supports each of the other elements:

> And now my beloved brethren, after that ye have got into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done. Behold, I say unto you: Nay. For ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with *unshaken faith* in him, *relying wholly* upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore ye must *press forward with a steadfastness in Christ*, having a perfect brightness of hope and a love of God and of all men; wherefore if ye shall *press forward*, feasting upon the word of Christ and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:19–20)

This interconnection of the basic gospel principles is already suggested in the first full statement of the gospel as Nephi arranged these materials. He quotes Jacob as follows: "And he commandeth all men that they must *repent* and *be baptized* in his name, having *perfect faith* in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot *be saved* in the kingdom of God. And if they will not *repent* and *believe in his name* and *be baptized* in his name and *endure to the end*, they must *be damned*" (2 Nephi 9:23–24). That faith in Jesus Christ occupies a key role in the gospel is made clear in each of the three definitional *inclusios*, which together mention it twenty-five times.[37]

Faith as Trust

The insight of Childs, Perry, and other scholars—that the essence of faith in the Old Testament is continual trusting in the Lord—provides a perfect guide to Book of Mormon usage, including its favoring of verbs and verb phrases over noun forms. The Nephite pattern in this regard is dramatically emphasized in Nephi's poetic prayer:

> O Lord, I have *trusted* in thee,
>   and I will *trust* in thee forever.
> I will not put my *trust* in the arm of flesh, for I know that cursed is he that putteth
>   his *trust* in the arm of flesh.
> Yea, cursed is he that putteth his *trust* in man
>   or maketh flesh his arm. (2 Nephi 4:34; compare 2 Nephi 4:19, 28:31 and Jacob 7:25)

Here Nephi is openly borrowing Isaiah's phrasing as is evident from three Isaianic selections inserted in his record not too many pages later:

1. "The isles shall wait upon me, and *on mine arm shall they trust*" (2 Nephi 8:5; compare Isaiah 51:5).
2. "Behold, God is my salvation. I will *trust* and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation" (2 Nephi 22:2; compare Isaiah 12:2).

3. "What shall then answer the messengers of the nations? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall *trust* in it" (2 Nephi 24:32; compare Isaiah 14:32).

Following Isaiah, Nephi emphasizes the strength of the Lord's arm as a reason for trusting in him rather than relying on the weaknesses of the human arm of flesh.

Nephi then goes on to expand what he means by the arm of flesh, equating this with "the precepts of men."

1   Woe be unto him that shall say:
    a   We have received the word of God,
    b   and we need no more of the word of God,
    a'   for we have enough.

2   For behold, thus saith the Lord God:
    a   *I will give* unto the children of men line upon line and *precept upon precept*, here a little and there a little.
    b   And *blessed are they* that hearken unto *my precepts* and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom.
    c   For unto him that receiveth I will give more;
    c'   and them that shall say we have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.
    b'   *Cursed is he* that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto *the precepts of men*,
    a'   save their precepts shall be *given by the power of the Holy Ghost*.

3   Woe be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts;
    a   for notwithstanding I shall *lengthen out mine arm* unto them from day to day, they will deny me.
    b   Nevertheless I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will *repent and come unto me.*
    a'   For *mine arm is lengthened out all the day* long, saith the Lord God of Hosts. (2 Nephi 28:29–32)

In these late passages, Nephi is using *trust* in very much the same way he used *faith* in his opening chapters (compare 1 Nephi 1:20; 2:1; 2:19). Here, in Nephi's final prophecies, we cannot miss how central and fundamental he believes the need to trust in the Lord is for any person or any nation that will come unto him. By enclosing this six-line chiasm between parallel three-line chiasms—all of which develop the same point—he provides subsequent generations of Nephite prophets with a way to talk about faith and its opposite that will be invoked time and time again.[38]

The next example comes from Nephi's own brother Jacob, who credits the military success of his people to their trust in the Lord: "Wherefore the people of Nephi did fortify against them with their arms and with all their might, trusting in the God and the rock of their salvation; wherefore they became as yet conquerors of their enemies" (Jacob 7:25).

King Benjamin describes how salvation comes to those individuals who have faith or trust in the Lord:

> I say unto you that if ye have come to a knowledge of *the goodness of God* and his *matchless power* and his *wisdom* and his *patience* and his *long-suffering* towards the children of men, and also the *atonement* which hath been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should *put his trust in the Lord* and should be diligent in keeping his commandments and *continue in the faith*, even unto the end of his life—I mean the life of the mortal body—I say that this is the man that receiveth *salvation* through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind whichever was, ever since the fall of Adam, or which is or which ever shall be, even unto the end of the world. And this is the means whereby *salvation* cometh. And there is none other *salvation* save this which hath been spoken of; neither is there any conditions whereby man can *be saved* except the conditions which I have told you. (Mosiah 4:6–8)

The teaching that God's physical and spiritual deliverance was promised to all who would "put their *trust* in the true and living God," and be "*faithful* until the end" (Alma 5:13) echoes down through the Nephite centuries. That trust derived from their experience of the goodness of God, who, as Limhi reminded his people, was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who had delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity and who had brought their own ancestors out of Jerusalem (Mosiah 7:19–20). Alma reminded his son Helaman of these same examples of deliverance and promised him and others repeatedly that "whomsoever shall put his *trust* in God shall be supported in their trials and their troubles and their afflictions and shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 36:3). In abridging all the Nephite records centuries later, Mormon reached this general observation: "Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their *faith*. Nevertheless, whosoever putteth his *trust* in him, the same shall be lifted up at the last day" (Mosiah 23:21–22).[39]

Faithfulness Measured by Keeping the Commandments

The covenantal context for the Nephite concept of faith is most obvious in the recurring equation in the text between faithfulness and keeping the commandments of the Lord over time.[40] The fundamental requirement of

the Lord's covenant with his people is that they keep all his commandments and that they endure faithfully to the end of their lives in that obedience. As Lehi taught his assembled descendants, "I would that ye should look to the great Mediator and hearken unto his great commandments and be faithful unto his words" (2 Nephi 2:28).

King Benjamin's expanded version of this made its meaning even more clear: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that *keep the commandments of God*; for behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual. And if they *hold out faithful to the end*, they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41). This equation of faithfulness with keeping the commandments is repeated endlessly throughout the text.[41] It is also reinforced repeatedly by warnings that at the last day men will be "judged according to their works."[42]

Another important phraseology related to the covenantal requirement of faithfulness and keeping the commandments is found in the admonitions to love the Lord. As William L. Moran explained,

> The Israelites are those bound to Yahweh in covenant, and therefore naturally opposed to his enemies; the war and victory described in the Song [of Deborah in Judges 5:2-31] are those of the people of God. It is probable therefore that the term love goes back to a very early period in the Israelite covenant tradition. Certainly the use of the term is earlier than its appearance in Dt 6,5. We make this assertion on the ground that Dt 6,4-18 is by way of commentary a series of citations and allusions to the beginning of the Decalogue. "And thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, . . . in 6,5 presupposes therefore "those who love me" in 5,10 (Ex 20,6).[43]

Diligence and Faithfulness

Numerous passages sharpen the concept of obedience to the commandments. For example, many of these insist on *diligence* in keeping he commandments for the faithful. In the book's opening, Nephi quotes the Lord's words: "Blessed art thou Nephi because of thy *faith*, for thou hast sought me *diligently* with lowliness of heart. And inasmuch as ye shall *keep my commandments*, ye shall prosper and shall be led to a land of promise" (1 Nephi 2:19–20). He later invokes this to teach his brothers: "Do ye not remember the thing which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts and ask me in *faith*, believing that ye shall receive, with *diligence* in *keeping my commandments*, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11). This same linkage between faith and diligence in keeping of the commandments occurs in many other

passages and is often reinforced with further injunctions to obey with patience and long-suffering—to be firm, steadfast, and immovable.[44]

The sevenfold recurrence of conjunctions of *faith* and *diligence* with each noun in the exact same grammatical form and context suggests that this stock phrase may have been used by Book of Mormon writers as the biblical rhetorical figure *hendiadys*, which would provide an additional reason for seeing diligence in keeping of the commandments as an inherent and necessary element in their concept of faith.[45]

"according to the *faith and diligence*" (1 Nephi 16:28–29)

"did exhort my brethren to *faithfulness and diligence*" (1 Nephi 17:15)

"because of *your diligence and your faith*" (Alma 32:42)

"the rewards of *your faith and your diligence*" (Alma 32:43)

"forgat to exercise their *faith and diligence*" (Alma 37:41)

"because of *thy faithfulness and thy diligence*" (Alma 38:3)

"*his faithfulness and his diligence* in keeping the commandments" (Alma 39:1)

Faith, Belief, and Knowledge

While the writers of the Hebrew Bible consistently affirm the necessity of faithfulness toward the Lord, they never engage in any straightforward explorations of the meanings of faith and belief and their relationship to knowledge. It is therefore striking to see the ways in which Book of Mormon writers openly engage such questions. As shown below, almost all their references to faith and belief occur in the covenantal context in which the faithful are evident to the extent that they obey the commandments of the Lord in compliance with the covenant by which they are bound to the Lord as his people. But they also speak of belief and knowledge as experienced by those who have not entered into any such covenant, and they undertake directly to consider the similarities and differences.

Without reference to any underlying technical analysis, the Nephite writers distinguish two important forms of human knowledge. Most basic is the universal form of knowledge of things in the world that comes through personal experience. One knows what one sees, hears, or feels. It should be noted that such knowledge is radically individual and internal to one's own experience and thought and can be compared with the knowledge of others

only symbolically using art or language. *Knowledge* can also be used to refer to teachings or ideas to which one has been exposed or with which one may be acquainted or familiar. *Belief* is sometimes used to indicate that a particular fact or idea is held to be true or false. In all of these, we choose what we want to believe for whatever reasons may be most important to us.

Alma on Faith

The most important form of knowledge discussed in the Book of Mormon is spiritual knowledge—knowledge of God and his ways, which is given by divine revelation. The possibility of gaining spiritual knowledge comes when people learn about the plan of salvation and the gospel which it contains, spelling out for all humankind their relationship to God and the process in which they can engage if they choose to return to him. As people learn about this gospel, the Holy Ghost witnesses to them of its truthfulness, touching or softening their hearts, inviting them to turn away from all other life patterns and to enter into the covenant path through repentance and baptism, trusting in the Lord that he will guide them by his Spirit as they endure to the end and become like him in the process.

Beginning with Nephi, the Book of Mormon prophets generally used the metaphor of a *path* or *way* to teach the gospel. Mortal life is a spiritual journey in which all people start out as sinners. But one true way has been provided for those who choose to believe in Christ by which they may become the children of God. He identified repentance and baptism as the gate by which one could enter into that "straight and narrow path" (2 Nephi 31:18–19; compare 1 Nephi 8:20), the Holy Ghost as the means by which one could be guided up that path, and faithful obedience to the commandments as a description of how one could endure on the path "with unshaken faith in [Christ]," to the end of this life and qualify to receive eternal life.[46]

In teaching the unbelieving Zoramites, Alma advanced a novel metaphor that was explicitly designed for those who did not yet share his faith in Jesus Christ. His objective was to help them understand what they could do to progress from a state of unbelief to a life of faith and an eventual partaking of the fruit of the tree of life. Alma chose another common experience of premodern life, the planting of seeds, as the core image for his metaphor and shaped it specifically for the needs of nonbelievers.

In a long preface, Alma first teaches the disenfranchised Zoramite poor the basics of the covenant way that is so unlike their Zoramite religion based

on pride and self-indulgence. He explains that their poverty is a blessing because, as they are compelled to be humble, they are in the right posture to seek repentance. "And now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy. And he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Alma 32:13). Even more "blessed are they who humbleth themselves without being compelled . . . he that believeth in the word of God and is baptized without stubbornness of heart, yea, without being . . . compelled to know—before they will believe" (Alma 32:15–16).

Alma is counterposing faith with knowledge based on proof—such as "a sign from heaven" by which one could "know of a surety" or to have "a perfect knowledge"—personal experience by which one could be "compelled to know" (Alma 32:16–17, 21). The faith God requires is not like this but is linked to "hope for things which is not seen, which are true." And "God is merciful unto all who *believe on his name*" and "desireth . . . that [they] should *believe . . . on his word*" (Alma 32:21–22). The things that are not seen externally that are essential for faith turn out to be the internal experiences of those who plant the word or the gospel[47] in their lives and experience the spiritual development that gives them reason to have hope for eternal life as they endure to the end.[48] This metaphorical process of planting the seed and believing is the gospel process of repenting and covenanting with the Father and keeping his commandments. And as Alma concludes his long explanation, "If ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow by your *faith* with great *diligence* and with patience . . . it shall take root. And behold, it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life. And because of your *diligence* and your *faith* and your *patience* with *the word* in nourishing it that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious" (Alma 32:41–42).

A Millennium of Consistent Teachings about Faith

The Book of Mormon begins and ends with a focus on the question of faith. How and why does one decide to believe and follow or to reject the prophecies and teachings of the prophets? The book opens with Lehi and other prophets warning the people of Jerusalem to repent or be destroyed in response to visions they have been given from the Lord (1 Nephi 1). It closes with Moroni's appeal to future generations of Gentiles and Israelites to repent and accept the gospel taught in this book, lest they be destroyed in this life and suffer eternally (Moroni 10). While Nephi uses his own experience to answer these questions

at the beginning, Moroni provides an extended explanation of God's relationship with and plan for children at the end of the book. Both emphasize that true answers will be given to those who humbly seek the direction of the Lord.

Nephi first offers the example of his own father who had incurred the anger of the Jews with his prophesying to the extent that they were seeking to kill him. He prefaces the stories to follow with an announcement of his thesis—"that the *tender mercies of the Lord* is over all them whom he hath chosen because of their *faith* to make them mighty, even unto *the power of deliverance*" (1 Nephi 1:20). The Lord's deliverance for Lehi begins with a dream in which he is commanded to take his family and flee into the wilderness. Obedient to the Lord's command, Lehi left house, lands, gold, silver, and precious things and took only his family, provisions, and tents in his flight to the shores of the Red Sea (see 1 Nephi 2:1–5). Lehi's obedience provides a stark contrast with the developing rebellion of his oldest sons. They deeply resented the dramatic change in their personal circumstances and life prospects and rejected their father's visions as "foolish imaginations of his heart" (1 Nephi 2:11).

Nephi describes the unbelieving responses of his older brothers "who did murmur because they *knew not* the dealings of that God who had created them" (1 Nephi 2:11). Like most of the Jews at Jerusalem, they *did not believe* that Jerusalem could be destroyed. In this negative description of his own family members, Nephi exposes us to the simple distinction between those who have personally engaged in a covenant relationship with their creator and those who have not. While the descendants of Abraham are known as the covenant people of the Lord, they can come to know the dealings of God with humankind only as they engage him individually in that covenant. All people must make that decision for themselves, and Abraham cannot do it for them. As portrayed by Nephi, Laman and Lemuel do not seem to have taken that step. Nephi then gives his own experience as a believer:

> Wherefore I *cried unto the Lord*. And behold, he did visit me and did *soften my heart* that I *did believe all the words* which had been spoken by my father; wherefore *I did not rebel against him* like unto my brothers. And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had *manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit*. And it came to pass that *he believed* in my words. But behold, *Laman and Lemuel would not hearken* unto my words. And being grieved because of *the hardness of their hearts*, I cried unto the Lord for them. And it came to pass that *the Lord spake unto me*, saying: *Blessed art thou Nephi because of thy faith*, for thou hast *sought me diligently with lowliness of heart*. And inasmuch *as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper* and shall be led to a land of promise. (1 Nephi 2:16–20)[49]

The Lord recognized the faith of Nephi as demonstrated by his taking the initiative to pray "diligently with lowliness of heart" and by allowing his heart to be softened by the manifestation of the Holy Ghost to him rather than hardening his heart and rebelling. And he invited Nephi to continue in that covenant path by promising him that "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments," he would "prosper and shall be led to a land of promise" (1 Nephi 2:19–20). As composed over thirty years later, the plot of First Nephi is built around six rhetorically linked stories in which Nephi shows how the Lord did deliver the faithful while serious confrontations with his unfaithful brothers threatened repeatedly to frustrate their journey to the promised land.[50]

Nephi's account of these early events illuminates the difference and the connection between believing and acting in faith or trusting. Lehi had prophesied of dire events to come. Laman and Lemuel "did not believe" these prophecies. But Nephi "did believe all the words" of his father. They did not believe because "they knew not" the dealings of God. And so they murmured and rebelled against their father. But Nephi had "cried unto the Lord," who visited him and did "soften my heart that I did believe all the words" of his father. So he "did not rebel" and was blessed by the Lord for his faith and was promised great blessings (see 1 Nephi 2:13–24).

It is impressive to see that a millennium later, the last Nephite prophets still understood faith in the same covenantal context that we have noted in the words of Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob and in the Old Testament. Mormon's discussion of faith starts with the premise that "men were fallen and there could no good thing come unto them." But "all things which are good cometh of Christ," and by heavenly revelations, men "began to *exercise faith in Christ*. And thus by *faith* they did lay hold upon every good thing. . . . Men also were *saved by faith in his name*, and *by faith* they became the sons of God" (Moroni 7:24–26). Mormon goes on to make clear that this entire process of sending the gospel to humankind to enable their salvation is centered on the covenants of the Father as these are taught by angels and prophets:

a   And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance and to fulfill and to do the work of *the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men,*

b   *to prepare the way among the children of men* by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may *bear testimony* of him.

b′   And by so doing the Lord God *prepareth the way that the residue of men* may have *faith in Christ*, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts according to the power thereof.

a′   And after this manner bringeth to pass the Father *the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men*. (Moroni 7:31–32)

Mormon understood that the process by which people are prepared for salvation from their fallen state depends on, for all men and women individually, their faith—presumably their obedience to the commandments as they are tried and tested, cleaving unto every good thing along the path that leads to eternal life:[51]

a   Wherefore, my beloved brethren, hath miracles ceased because that Christ hath *ascended into heaven*
b   and hath sit down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon *the children of men?*
c   For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those *that hath faith in him.*
c′   And they *that have faith in him* will cleave unto every good thing.
b′   Wherefore he advocateth the cause of *the children of men*,
a′   and he *dwelleth eternally in the heavens*. (Moroni 7:27–28)

In his closing chapter for the Book of Mormon, Moroni returns to the topic of faith and provides additional insight into its workings. His general teaching is that "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may *know the truth* of all things" (Moroni 10:4). But he qualifies that principle by restricting it to a covenant context. The truth seeker must first "remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men . . . and ponder it in your hearts" (Moroni 10:3).[52] Like the Israelites in the Old Testament, the Nephites always refer to the many ways in which the Lord has delivered and will deliver them as the foundation of their covenants with him. Moroni next instructs the truth seeker to "ask God the Eternal Father in the name of Christ, if these things are not true" (Moroni 10:4). Such a prayer already assumes belief in the Father and in Jesus Christ and that the persons praying can pray in the name of Jesus Christ because they have already entered into a covenant to take the name of Christ upon themselves.

This point is emphasized by the further restriction that supplicants must "ask with *a sincere heart, with real intent*, having faith in Christ." Here Moroni seems to echo the original gospel teaching of Nephi that converts must "follow the Son with *full purpose of heart*, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God but *with real intent*, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ by baptism . . . behold, then shall ye *receive the Holy Ghost*" (2 Nephi 31:13).[53] For all who will pray in this way, Moroni promises that the Father "will manifest the truth of it unto you by *the power of the Holy Ghost*" (v. 4). Moroni goes on to extend

the promise: "Ye may know that [Christ] is by *the power of the Holy Ghost*. Wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not *the power of God*, for *he worketh by power* according to *the faith of the children of men*, the same today and tomorrow and forever" (Moroni 10:7).

In each of these examples, the prophets refer to the way that God communicates with his covenant people as they approach him for knowledge. Based on their sincerity, obedience, and faith, the Lord answers them through "the power of the Holy Ghost." If they allow that power to soften their hearts, the Lord can offer covenants through which those who live faithfully to the end can become his sons and daughters and qualify for salvation. But if they are stiff-necked and harden their hearts against the word of God and his Spirit, they are found in rebellion. Whatever blessing they had previously will be taken from them, and they inevitably become followers of the devil and experience all the consequences that follow from that.

Faith or unbelief would then seem to be a consequence of each person's reaction to the witness of the Holy Ghost that they may receive at some point in their lives. This would seem to be the criterion that determines who can be saved. There must be something eternal in the spiritual heart of each human being that will lead them to either rejoice in the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, or to reject and deny it. This mortal probation provides all men and women with an opportunity to have their hearts tested in this regard and to choose to join the people of the Lord through a covenant with him or to choose instead to follow their own road in this life.

Conclusions

The numerous references to *faith* and *faithfulness* in the Book of Mormon cannot all be reviewed in a paper of this length. But I am aware of none which pose difficulties for the interpretation and commentary offered herein. The concept of covenantal faithfulness toward Yahweh that Old Testament scholars have recognized and defined over the last century turns out to be a far better account of the Book of Mormon understanding of faith in the Lord, in Jesus Christ, than are any of the competing concepts of faith that have grown out of the Christian tradition over the last two millennia. For the Nephite prophets, *faith* was an active concept, better understood as *faithfulness*—as diligent obedience to the commandments the Lord had given to those who had accepted the gospel covenant through repentance and baptism. The divine expectation for all who have embraced that covenant and aspire to be

recipients of eternal life is that they endure faithfully to the end of their lives on the covenant path prescribed by the gospel and the words of Christ given to the faithful individually by the Holy Ghost, showing them all things which they should do. But outside this covenantal context, no amount of strong or determined belief can produce salvation.

Notes

1.   Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 595.

2.   Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 595.

3.   Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 595. It should be noted that new studies argue that the key terminology of the New Testament is closer to that of the Old than scholars have realized. See Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith:* Pistis *and* Fides *in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (New York: Oxford, 2015). This paper will focus on preexilic Israel as the cultural and linguistic homeland of Lehi and his descendants and will not explore potential insights from the New Testament world.

4.   See, for example, Arthur Gabriel Hebert, "'Faithfulness' and 'Faith,'" *The Reformed Theological Review* 14 (June 1955): 33–40; and its extension in Thomas F. Torrance, "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," *Expository Times* 68 (1957): 111–14. These two articles provoked a full-throttle attack on the traditional linguistic methodologies used by Bible scholars. James Barr, in his *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), devoted his entire chapter 7, "'Faith' and 'Truth': An Examination of Some Linguistic Arguments," 161–205, to this specific topic, and provided subsequent generations of Bible scholars therein the classic reference point for this transition in Bible studies.

5.   The theological dictionaries compiled for the Old Testament and the New Testament in the 1970s and later showed the impact of Barr's demand that semantics be given high priority. For example, see the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by semanticist Moisés Silva, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), and the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, also published by Zondervan, 1997, which actually provides an index of some two thousand semantic fields in its index—in volume 5:1–216.

6.   Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 598.

7.   This understanding of the Abrahamic covenant is developed and presented in Noel B. Reynolds, "Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant through the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2018): 39–74.

8.   The idea that repentance was understood as turning or returning to the covenant path of Yahweh is developed in detail in Noel B. Reynolds, "The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78; and in Noel B. Reynolds, "The Language of Repentance in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 29 (2020): 178–214.

9.   For a discussion of how the Nephites saw *the goodness of God* as the foundation and source of his plan of salvation, the Creation, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and his gospel, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Goodness of God," a working paper available online at https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/3434/.

10. John Gee, "The Corruption of Scripture in Early Christianity," in *Early Christians in Disarray*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 179, citing H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 1407–8 and 1226.

11. The two-volume *Theologie des Alten Testaments* published in Stuttgart in 1933 had progressed to a sixth edition by 1959. J. A. Baker used this German edition and further revisions by the author to produce an English translation, which created a much-expanded wave of appreciation in the world of biblical studies. See Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vols. 1 and 2, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961 and 1967).

12. The explosion of studies in the 1960s and 1970s linking biblical covenants to the international treaties of the ancient Near East was sparked by G. E. Mendenhall's 1954 articles, which drew in turn on the 1931 study of the Hittite treaties by V. Korošec in his *Hethitische Staatsverträge* (Leipzig: Weicher, 1931). See George E. Mendenhall, "Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law" and "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 2 (1954): 25–46 and no. 3 (1954): 49–76 respectively. Persistent efforts to link the Deuteronomic covenants to seventh- and eighth-century ANE texts appear to have been effectively refuted by Kenneth A. Kitchen in his *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006) and the comprehensive comparisons of more than eighty first-, second-, and third-millennium BCE law codes, treaties, and covenant texts reported by him and his coauthor Paul N. Lawrence in their three-volume *Treaty, Law, and Covenant in the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), in which they demonstrate that the covenant texts of the Hebrew Bible fit much better with legal language from half a millennium earlier.

13. See Frank Moore Cross, "Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel," the previously unpublished lead paper in his *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3–21, in which Cross draws effectively on anthropological studies of kinship associations to supplement the standard historical and textual resources of Bible scholars.

14. Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Hahn has also demonstrated how key insights on the connection between kinship and covenant were provided by Gordon P. Hugenberger in his *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

15. Joseph P. Healey, "Faith: Old Testament," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:744. The Aquinas excerpt comes from *Summa Theologica* 2.2.q2.a.9.

16. Healey, "Faith: Old Testament," 744.

17. Matthew L. Bowen, 'According to My Faith Which Is in Me': The Covenant Dimension of Faith and Faithfulness in Nephi's Writings," a slide presentation with notes he has offered multiple times over the last five years and used here by permission. Also see his presentation from the 5–7 August 2019 FAIR conference, "Laman and Lemuel as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors," available online at https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2019/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words, in which he draws heavily on the earlier presentation on faith.

18. Edmund Perry, "The Meaning of ʾ*emuna* in the Old Testament," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 21 (No. 4, October 1953), 252. Perry's study assumed the lexicography and classifications of the verbal and nominative derivatives of the stem *ʾmn* published in J. C. C.

Van Dorssen, *De Derivata Van De Stam 'MN in het Hebreeuwsch Van Het Oude Testament* (Drukkerij Holland N. V., Amsterdam, 1951).

19. Perry, "The Meaning of ʾemuna," 252.

20. Perry, "The Meaning of ʾemuna," 252.

21. Perry, "The Meaning of ʾemuna," 253.

22. Perry, "The Meaning of ʾemuna," 254.

23. What Perry describes as alternative "ways of life" is known as "the ancient doctrine of the two ways. For an account of that doctrine as it occurs in biblical literature and even more clearly and frequently in the Book of Mormon, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78.

24. Reynolds, "Ancient Doctrine," 255–56.

25. The transliteration *aman* is based on the Hebrew original אָמַן (to confirm, trust, have faith), which can also be transliterated as *ʾâman* or *aman*. For an excellent treatment of the linguistic issues that are both up-to-date and sensitive to later Christian connections, see R. W. L. Moberly, "אמן," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1:427–33.

26. Healey, "Faith: Old Testament," 745.

27. Healey, "Faith: Old Testament," 745, quoting and translating E. Pfeiffer, "Glaube im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 71 (1959): 155, 157.

28. For an introduction to the Old Testament concept of *hesed*, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see Dan Belnap, "'How Excellent is thy Lovingkindness': The Gospel Principle of *Hesed*," in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 170–86. For a discussion of *hesed* in the context of the Book of Mormon, see Noel B. Reynolds, "Biblical *Hesed* and Nephite Covenant Culture," *BYU Studies Quarterly*, forthcoming.

29. Torrance, "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," 112.

30. P. M. Cook, "Faith," *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012): 236–39.

31. Gordon Wenham, "Faith in the Old Testament" (typescript of three 1975–76 lectures, Theological Student's Fellowship, copy in author's possession), 5.

32. Wenham, "Faith in the Old Testament," 4.

33. Healy, "Faith: Old Testament," 747.

34. See Reynolds, "Biblical *Hesed* and Nephite Covenant Culture."

35. Bowen, "According to my Faith." All quotations from the Book of Mormon, including spelling and punctuation, are taken from the critical text of Royal Skousen as published in *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Throughout this paper, italics have been added to these quotations to signal key terminology to readers.

36. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel according to Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 29 (2018): 85–104, a revised and updated version of the article by the same name published previously in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34; and "Biblical Merismus in Book of Mormon Gospel References," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017): 106–34.

37. Reynolds, "The Gospel," 102.

38. See, for example, 1 Nephi 22:10–11; 2 Nephi 8:5; Jacob 2:25; 6:5; Enos 1:13; Omni 1:13; Mosiah 1:14; 12:24; 14:1; 15:31; 16:12; 29:20; Alma 5:33; 29:20; 34:16; 3 Nephi 9:14; 16:20; 20:35; Mormon 5:11; 6:17.

39. Other passages that explicitly characterize faith as trust in the Lord include 2 Nephi 4:19; Mosiah 7:33; 10:19; 29:20; Alma 36:27; 38:5; 57:27; 58:37; 61:13; Helaman 12:1; Mormon 9:20, 22.

40. Louis C. Midgley pointed out long ago that the Book of Mormon also uses *remember* in this same sense: "Like the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Mormon uses the expressions *keep* and *remember* interchangeably." And "genuine memory or remembrance occurs in the faithful response to the claims of the covenant God has made with Israel to make Israel his people." See Louis C. Midgley, "The Ways of Remembrance," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 171–72.

41. Prominent examples include 1 Nephi 2:1; 3:15–16, 20–21; 4:1; 15:11; 17:15; 2 Nephi 1:10; Mosiah 4:6, 30; 10:13; 27:33; Alma 1:25; 8:15; 18:10; 38:2; 39:1; 48:15–16; 50:22; 57:21; 58:40; 3 Nephi 6:14; Moroni 8:24–25.

42. See the discussion and documentation in Noel B. Reynolds, "The Plan of Salvation in the Book of Mormon," *Religious Educator* 20, no. 3 (2020): 46–47.

43. William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (January 1963): 85.

44. See 1 Nephi 10:17–19; 16:28–29; Enos 1:12, 20; Mosiah 1:16–17; 4:6; Alma 7:26; 12:9; 21:23; 32:41–43; 38:3; 39:1; 49:30; 3 Nephi 6:14.

45. For a preliminary discussion of *hendiadys* in the Book of Mormon, see Reynolds, "The Language of Repentance," 18–20. The growing list of probable *hendiadyses* in the Book of Mormon text suggests a need for a systematic and comprehensive study of this biblical rhetorical figure of speech as deployed by the Nephite writers.

46. See 2 Nephi 31:17–20 and Noel B. Reynolds, "This Is the Way," *Religious Educator* 13, no. 3 (2013): 81–82.

47. The synonymous term used most frequently in the Book of Mormon for the gospel or doctrine of Christ is "the/his word." See Reynolds, "This Is the Way," 84–86.

48. A somewhat different and helpful approach interpreting Alma 32 can be found in Joseph M. Spencer, "Is Not This Real?," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2019): 1–18.

49. Like other passages, this one appears to play on the pun identified by Matthew L. Bowen by which the Nephites may have seen the names *Laman* and *Lamanite* as imbued "with the meaning of 'unfaithful' or 'unbelieving ones.'" See his essay "*Not* Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 242–43.

50. The rhetorical structure of First Nephi stands on these six stories and supports Nephi's thesis from 1 Nephi 1:20 as is explained in Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," *BYU Studies* 20 (Winter 1980): 131–49.

51. Mormon uses this phrasing six times in his sermon on faith in Moroni 7:19–28.

52. "It is this remembering that is the essence of the faith of Israel. In the stories of Israel's triumphs and its tragedies, through glory, destruction, love, and hate, fidelity and apostasy are the two constant and enduring aspects of Israel's remembrance of Yahweh's deeds." Healy, "Faith: Old Testament," 748.

53. The phrase "with real intent" is introduced by Nephi in his original exposition of the gospel of Jesus Christ as one of five terms used to emphasize the requirement that repentance be sincere, but it does not reappear in the text until Mormon's sermon on faith and Moroni's subsequent summaries and closing remarks. Compare Moroni 6:8; 7:6–7, 9; 10:4.