

Chapter Four

“WAS IT NOT SO?”

Remembering the Contributions of Samuel the Lamanite

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest blessings afforded those who teach in a gospel setting is the opportunity to dive deep into a scriptural text and to push their understanding of a person, a principle, or a story. Such studies help the scriptures take on new form, and these experiences can often breathe new life into us as disciples. On the other hand, one of the greatest challenges a gospel teacher faces is determining how to take the information and inspiration gained in preparations and personal study of a scriptural text and present it in a way that is both reverent and relevant. We want to provide rich content as we are true to the inspired text while also helping students engage with the material in new and meaningful ways.

Renowned speaker and educator Dr. Parker Palmer once poignantly suggested, “In a wide variety of ways, good teachers bring students into living communion with the subjects they teach.”¹ For those of us who teach

in the Church, our subject is the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, the text is the word of God, and this “living communion” can facilitate connections and experiences that are both intellectually stimulating and spiritually edifying. Teachers are well aware that as rewarding and thrilling as these experiences are, it can be challenging to unpack a large block of scripture with limited classroom time. One example is Helaman 13–16, the story of Samuel the Lamanite, which teachers are sometimes asked to teach in a single class session. The purpose of this essay is to provide one possible approach to teaching these chapters. This approach entails unpacking Samuel’s historical, cultural, prophetic, and doctrinal contributions.

“WAS IT NOT SO?”

In gospel teaching and learning, a correct understanding of a passage’s *context* often enriches a study of its *content*. Furthermore, sometimes a broader understanding of the context influences not only the substance of the lesson (what we teach) but also the pedagogical approach taken in the classroom (how we teach). For example, for a lesson on Helaman 13–16, it would be natural to begin with the narrator’s (presumably Mormon’s) introduction of Samuel in Helaman 13:1–4. It would also be logical to begin this class by capturing the events recorded in Helaman 5–12 in an effort to outline the immediate context of Samuel’s discourse (to be sure, these points need to be covered and indeed will be later in this discussion). Yet, taking a cue from Samuel’s innovative method of approaching Zarahemla (climbing atop a wall), perhaps we ought to consider methods beyond the traditional narrative approach. What if, like Samuel, we take our audience (the students) into this story another way? We could remind students that almost forty years after these events transpired, the Lord invited Nephi—and by extension every reader of the Book of Mormon—to recall the ministry and prophecies of Samuel (see 3 Nephi 23:9). It is from this significant moment that we will move into our lesson.

A teacher might invite the students to imagine they are among the people of Nephi living in the land of Bountiful in approximately AD 34. They have experienced tempests, earthquakes, whirlwinds, and storms. With family and neighbors, they have sat paralyzed by fear as thunder, sharp lightning, and complete darkness enveloped the land. They have

witnessed the terrifying destruction of cities as some sank into the depths of sea, others were consumed by fire, and still another was buried by earth that “became a great mountain” (3 Nephi 8:10). In short, they see that “the face of the whole earth [has become] deformed” by those cataclysms (v. 17). They gather around the temple confused, concerned, “marveling and wondering” (11:1).

Capturing this moment, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland wrote, “Suddenly, out of the heavens, a voice of sweet piercing power said, ‘Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.’ As the people gazed into heaven, a man clothed in a white robe descended, emanating the very essence of light and life. His glory was a splendid and sharp contrast to the three days of death and darkness experienced earlier by these people.”² In an effort to help students feel the significance of this moment, a teacher might share with students the following word picture by Elder Holland:

It is a dazzling display. . . . He speaks and says simply, with a voice that penetrates the very marrow of your bones, “I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world” (3 Nephi 11:10). There it is—or, more correctly speaking, there *he* is! He is the focal point and principal figure behind every fireside and devotional and family home evening held by those Nephites for the last six hundred years, and by their Israelite forefathers for thousands of years before that. *Everyone* has talked of him and sung of him and dreamed of him and prayed—but here he actually is. This is the day, and yours is the generation. What a moment! But you find you are less inclined to check the film in your camera than you are to check the faith in your heart.³

Indeed, this moment and the succeeding events of that sacred day capture the climax of the Book of Mormon. Students can imagine what it would have been like to be invited by the risen Lord to feel the prints in his hands, feet, and side (see 3 Nephi 11) or to hear his sermon at the temple (see 12–14). They can think of the moment when the Savior ministers to and heals their friends, neighbors, and family members who are “afflicted in any manner” (17:7–10). But what happens *after* these sacred

miracles? What happens *after* Jesus kneels and prays vocally for his people and for their children, *after* angels descend and encircle them as if by fire, and even *after* Christ institutes the sacrament (see 17:11–25; 18)? For the purposes of this lesson, we need to help our students remember a significant moment in the often-overlooked second day of the Lord’s ministry in Bountiful.

Having had time to ponder, pray, and process the events of this miraculous first day, these faithful disciples are ready for their next lessons. With his learners in a rapt state of readiness to hear his word, what important topics does the Savior choose to emphasize? Scripture, records, and prophecy. He commands them to “search the prophets” and then begins to “expound all the scriptures unto them which they had received” (3 Nephi 23:5–6). As *the* master teacher, Jesus then takes time to patiently yet pointedly remind Nephi of a significant event in his people’s recent history.

Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not. And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept. And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said: Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so? (vv. 6–9)

“Was it not so?” Of course, the Lord already knew the answer to this question. It seems clear that Nephi and the other disciples likewise knew the answer to this question. After Nephi states that, indeed, all the words of Samuel had been fulfilled just as he prophesied, Jesus responds: “How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them? And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded” (vv. 11–13).

What is to be made of this omission? Is the Lord suggesting that the record Nephi brought forth contained the general account of Samuel’s ministry and that only the fulfillment of this specific prophecy was not included?⁴ Responding to this position, Book of Mormon scholar Brant Gardner wrote, “Certainly this is the most literal reading of 3 Nephi 23:11, but it is probably too limited. Another view is that all of Samuel’s message had to be added.”⁵ Another scholar takes a similar stance, arguing that in addition to the command for Nephi to record the events of the Saints rising from the dead after the Lord’s resurrection, “generally it is thought that the Lord referred to recording the prophecies of Samuel. As a Lamanite, his records might not have been included in the Nephite records made by descendants of Nephi.”⁶ Gardner further argues that it is very possible that “nothing at all was originally recorded on the large plates about Samuel the Lamanite. The large plates of Nephi, primarily a lineage record, have a very narrow focus. As a Lamanite, Samuel stood outside that lineage and quite easily may have been omitted from the text.”⁷ This stance suggests that the account of Samuel we read in Helaman 13–16 was appended to the original “book of Helaman, where it fits historically, but it appears to have been placed there by Nephi long after the fact.”⁸

My own conclusion from a close reading of the text is that the record likely had the story of Samuel and that the language used in 3 Nephi seems to indicate that the omission the Lord is referencing is the specific fulfillment of the prophecy about many Saints arising, appearing to, and ministering to others. However, for pedagogical purposes it might be helpful to consider the alternative interpretation. What if the omission was broader than that? What if, in fact, before this time in AD 34 there was nothing in the record about Samuel? Furthermore, what if the Lord had not intervened to ensure that Samuel’s story was included? Even setting aside the possibility of an omission of the story, just consider for a moment: what *would* the Book of Mormon look like without the presence of Samuel? What would we as readers of the Book of Mormon be missing if the account of Samuel had not been included (either originally or as an appendage after the fact)? A teacher might give students a few minutes to open the scriptures to Helaman 13–16 and invite them to review their notes and markings as they consider this question: What would we lose if

we did not have the story, sermons, and prophecies of Samuel the Lamanite? While such an open-ended question would likely lead to a number of discussion points, this essay will primarily address a few of the unique historical, prophetic, and doctrinal contributions of the Samuel account.

HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Samuel's experience preaching in Zarahemla is an example of a literary technique called *parallel narrative*. This is when two or more separate narratives are linked by a common theme. Mormon seems to regularly employ this technique. As Grant Hardy observes, "Mormon's use of parallel narratives suggests that similar situations will tend to recur over time; these are the kinds of tribulations that prophets of the Lord will always face."⁹ To underscore this point, a teacher could ask students to name a figure in the Book of Mormon who fits the following description:

- He enters a city with a divinely appointed message.
- He is rejected by the people and cast out of the city.
- After fleeing the city, he is directed by the Lord to return and deliver an important message.
- He immediately obeys, returns to the city, and finds a new way in.
- He boldly shares the message the Lord inspired him to share.
- Some believe in the message, but the majority of the people reject him and threaten to take his life.

Students may name Abinadi and recall his experience with King Noah and his wicked priests. Others may discuss the experience of Alma the Younger and the challenges he faced with those in the land of Ammonihah. The minds of some may immediately go to Samuel and picture him boldly standing atop the wall proclaiming his powerful message. The following table shows that this narrative could have been describing any of these three persons.

	Abinadi	Alma the Younger	Samuel
Enters a city with a divinely appointed message	Mosiah 11:20-25	Alma 8:7-8	Helaman 13:1-2
Is rejected by the people and cast out of the city	Mosiah 11:26-29	Alma 8:9-13	Helaman 13:1-2
After fleeing the city, he is directed by the Lord to return and deliver an important message	Mosiah 12:1	Alma 8:14-17	Helaman 13:3
Immediately obeys, returns to the city, and finds a new way in	Mosiah 12:1	Alma 8:18-19	Helaman 13:4
Boldly shares the message the Lord inspired him to share	Mosiah 12:1-16:15	Alma 8:20-13:31	Helaman 13:5-15:15
Some believe in the message, but the majority of the people reject him and threaten to take his life	Mosiah 17:1-20	Alma 14:1-15:19	Helaman 16:1-8

Indeed, this story is a familiar one. But perhaps that is exactly why Mormon is shaping the narrative in this way. Consider, for example, the following insight from Hardy:

Mormon's literary ambitions can also be seen in the organization of his narratives. While theological implications are never far away, the exact meaning to be gained from comparing similar stories is often left to readers, while Mormon's skill (and delight) in constructing narratives is clearly evident. . . . [These] parallels all take the form of fairly extensive narratives, with numerous structural and verbal correspondences. . . . Mormon may have meant for his readers to make these comparisons, but it is harder to be sure of his intentions here—one can always draw distinctions between good and bad kings, or between successful prophets and martyrs. Nevertheless, the sheer abundance of specific narrative repetition in Mormon's abridgment suggests not only deliberate selection and shaping but also that, in the working out of God's will, certain kinds of events are likely to recur.¹⁰

If we assume that such parallels are intentional and that by extension Mormon wants his readers to compare and contrast these accounts, it can be helpful to identify many of the common themes and principles. However, one of the most striking elements in a comparative reading of these accounts is found in what is manifestly different. Mormon highlights this difference immediately when he says, "There was one Samuel, *a Lamanite*, came into the land of Zarahemla" (Helaman 13:2). Samuel himself seems to feel the importance of this distinction as he introduces himself, "Behold, I, Samuel, *a Lamanite*, do speak the words of the Lord" (v. 5). It is worth noting that of the fifteen times Samuel's name appears in the Book of Mormon, eight include the epithet "Lamanite." Indeed, the arrival of Samuel marks a significant historical moment in the Book of Mormon narrative.

The significance of this moment can be difficult to reconstruct since the record offers few details on Samuel's background. Some readers assume that Samuel's family was converted when Nephi and Lehi "did preach with great power" in Zarahemla and eight thousand Lamanites were baptized in and around the city (see Helaman 5:17–19). This assumption seems faulty, though, because one of the few hints that we do receive regarding Samuel's background is that, after leaving Zarahemla, Samuel fled "even unto his own country" and began to "preach and to prophesy among his

own people” (16:7). From this statement we can surmise that his own country was *not* the land of Zarahemla and that it is not likely that he was part of this group.¹¹

Recall, however, that after their success in Zarahemla, Nephi and Lehi continue preaching in the land of Nephi. They are captured by the Lamanites, cast into prison, and threatened with death. What follows is a pivotal moment in Lamanite history. While in prison, Nephi and Lehi are “encircled about as if by fire,” the voice of the Lord is heard, and about three hundred Lamanites see the heavens open and angels coming down and ministering to them (see Helaman 5:23–24, 29–33, 46–49). As those Lamanites shared “throughout all the regions round about all the things which they had heard and seen, . . . the more part of the Lamanites were convinced of them” and, like the Anti-Nephi-Lehies before them, “did lay down their weapons of war” (vv. 50–51).

Mormon’s commentary on this experience underscores its significance: “The Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and the steadiness in the faith” (Helaman 6:1). This historical significance is further extended in an ironic inversion of the experience of the sons of Mosiah, as it is these converted *Lamanites* who traveled to the land of Zarahemla and “did declare unto the people of the *Nephites* the manner of their conversion, and did exhort them to faith and repentance” (v. 4).

Given that numerous Lamanites traveled into Nephite territory to declare repentance and narrate their conversion, it would seem that Samuel’s visit to the Zarahemla in AD 6 was not the first time a believing Lamanite cried repentance to a wicked or unbelieving group of Nephites. There is, however, a part of Samuel’s story that is unquestionably unique and, if omitted, would form a devastating absence in the Book of Mormon. This is the distinctly prophetic capacity in which Samuel arrives in Zarahemla. Rather than simply sharing his conversion story, he literally speaks in the name of the Lord. Consider his opening words: “Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, *do speak the words of the Lord* which he doth put into my heart. . . . Therefore, *thus saith the Lord*: Because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of the Nephites, except they repent I will take away my word

from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them” (Helaman 13:5, 8). Significantly, on three different occasions Mormon shifts from describing him as Samuel “the Lamanite” and refers to him instead as Samuel “the prophet” (Mormon 2:10; 3 Nephi 1:9; 8:3). Thus, a unique historical contribution that Samuel’s story makes is the elevation of a non-Nephite to the position of prophet and the authority that comes with such a position.

FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS

The patterns of speech in Samuel’s sermon indicate that he is conscious of his unique role and intentional in helping his audience recognize him as a divinely appointed prophet. Teachers can help students see some of these patterns by showing Samuel’s use of “formulaic expressions which are unique to the prophetic writings”¹² as well as his use of intertextuality.

Hebraist Donald W. Parry observed six prophetic speech forms in Samuel’s sermon that are “indicative of prophetic authority and prerogative.”¹³ The following table is an adaptation of Parry’s work:

TABLE 1. Prophetic speech forms in Samuel the Lamanite’s sermon

Prophetic Speech Form	Word or Phrase	Example from Samuel
Messenger Formula	“Thus saith the Lord”	Samuel twice used the expression “thus saith the Lord” (Helaman 13:8, 11). The formula introduces oracular language and hence is often found at the beginning of a pericope or section. Either God or a prophet is the speaker of the messenger formula. Its purpose is to indicate the origin and authority of the revelation.
Proclamation Formula	“Listen to the words of Christ”	Samuel told his audience to “hearken unto the words which the Lord saith” (Helaman 13:21). Similar to the messenger formula, the proclamation formula is often found at the beginning of a revelation or announcement. It is used as an emphatic summons to hear the word of the Lord.

Oath Formula	“As the Lord liveth”	The declaration is added to a testimony to accentuate the words of the speaker. For instance, Samuel stated, “As surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be, saith the Lord” (Helaman 15:17; compare 13:26).
Woe Oracle	Woe	The characteristic woe oracle consists of the accusation, the addressee, the intent of the accusation, and the promise of judgment. The prophet Samuel uttered a number of woe oracles against the Nephites (see Helaman 13:11-12, 14-17, 24; 15:2-3).
Announcement Formula	“I say unto you”	The announcement formula is well attested in the Book of Mormon. The Lord speaks to his audience (an individual or group) in the first person (see 3 Nephi 12:22; 20:15), or a prophet speaks to his audience using the formula, adding authority and emphasis to the revelation. The formula is found at the beginning of a clause, often accompanied with the particles <i>yea</i> , <i>behold</i> , or <i>therefore</i> . Samuel employs the formula three times (see Helaman 15:6, 12, 14).
Revelation Formula	“The word of the Lord came unto me”	At the beginning of Samuel’s ministry to the Nephites, “behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him” (Helaman 13:3). Samuel told the Nephites that they would cry unto the Lord, “O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us” (Helaman 13:36).

Samuel’s language and speech patterns affirm to readers that he is indeed speaking as a prophetic figure and, consequently, speaks the word of the Lord.

INTERTEXTUALITY

To help students find further relevance in the account of Samuel the Lamanite, teachers could invite them to suppose they were preparing a talk or lesson and that they wanted to make a point on a particular principle or doctrine. Teachers could ask the students how they might add credibility

or authority to their argument. More than likely, students would respond with the need to include a passage of scripture and a quote from a prophet or an apostle. Teachers can help students understand that examples from the scriptures indicate that people followed this same pattern anciently as well. *Intertextuality* is when authors of texts draw on previous authors in shaping their arguments or writings. In scriptural analysis, we can help train students to identify these instances and to analyze parallels, connections, and differences. Samuel seems to draw heavily on the words of scriptural writers from both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

In their study “Samuel’s Reliance on Biblical Language,” Shon Hopkin and John Hilton III demonstrate that the record in Helaman 13–15 shows a strong intertextual connection between Samuel and biblical prophets. Specifically, they found that “Samuel’s use of selected biblical phrases—‘saith the Lord,’ ‘Lord of Hosts,’ ‘signs and wonders,’ and ‘anger of the Lord’ being ‘kindled’—in his discourse is consistently found at a higher frequency than for any other speaker in the Book of Mormon (besides biblical authors quoted in the Book of Mormon).”¹⁴ They also noted that Mormon prefaces Samuel’s teachings by showing that the Lamanites “did observe strictly to keep the commandments of God, according to the law of Moses” (Helaman 13:1). Hopkin and Hilton suggest that perhaps this is intended “to indicate to readers that the Lamanites of Samuel’s day had access to a detailed biblical account, something on which they could rely closely in order to follow the commandments in such a detailed fashion.”¹⁵ Perhaps Samuel, conscious of his perceived status as an outsider, relied heavily on these biblical voices to enhance his credibility among his audience.

Recent scholarship shows that, in addition to his reliance on biblical language, Samuel likely had access to the words and records of Book of Mormon writers as well. In another study, Hilton et al. suggest that the textual connections between Samuel and other Nephite writers fall into two overarching themes: (1) how Samuel uses the words of previous Nephite prophets to directly indict the Nephites and (2) how Samuel takes the words spoken regarding various members of the house of Israel and employs them to specifically refer to the Lamanites.¹⁶ The authors postulate that “perhaps [Samuel] felt the Nephites would be more receptive to

the words of their ancestors. Alternatively, it may be Samuel felt insecure in his role as a Lamanite prophet and found strength by using the words of other prophets. Moroni explicitly mentions his concerns regarding his weakness in writing, and Grant Hardy suggests that perhaps this is one reason why Moroni may have borrowed so heavily from other prophets. Perhaps a similar phenomenon occurs with Samuel.¹⁷

Whether by formulaic expressions or intertextuality, it seems that Samuel *the Lamanite* was convincingly demonstrating that he was indeed Samuel *the prophet*. For the first time in recorded Nephite history, there is a Lamanite prophet in the land. As we envision Samuel elevated on the wall, speaking in the name of the Lord, we can help our students likewise see the symbolic and cultural significance of that action—namely, elevating Lamanite status and demonstrating that “all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33) and can be used equally in God’s work.

Indeed, one additional historical contribution of Samuel’s account is to foreshadow the core purpose and promise of the entire Book of Mormon itself. In Doctrine and Covenants 3:18–20, the Lord says, “This testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, . . . and for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; and that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved.” Thus, Samuel stands as an example of the partial fulfillment of this great promise and as a strong prophetic voice, even a Lamanite voice, that these purposes shall yet be fulfilled in even greater measures in the latter days.

PROPHECIES

In a very practical way, any consideration of what we would be missing if we did not have the account of Samuel would be glaringly inadequate without including his specific prophecies. Because several other authors in this volume are covering these prophecies in detail, the emphasis in this study is simply to consider how important it was to include these prophecies in the Book of Mormon record. In a classroom setting, it might be

worth taking time to divide the students into groups and invite them to identify Samuel’s prophecies. For simplicity’s sake, the prophecies might be divided into the following categories: (1) destruction/cursing, (2) signs of the Lord’s birth, (3) signs of the Lord’s death. Invite students to consider both the details of the prophecies and their fulfillment later in the text.

Prophecy	Destruction/Cursing	Fulfillment
Helaman 13:8	The Lord will withdraw his Spirit	Mormon 1:15–19; 2:10–12
Helaman 13:9–16	In 400 years they will be smitten	Mormon 8–9; Moroni 9
Helaman 13:17–23	A curse shall come upon the land	Mormon 1:15–19; 2:10–12
Helaman 15:1–3	Houses left desolate, women have great cause to mourn	Mormon 8–9; Moroni 9

Prophecy	Signs of the Savior’s Birth	Fulfillment
Helaman 14:2	Birth in five years	3 Nephi 1:13
Helaman 14:3–4	No darkness the night before the Savior’s birth	3 Nephi 1:15
Helaman 14:5	A new star	3 Nephi 1:21
Helaman 14:6	Many signs and wonders in heaven	Helaman 16:13; 3 Nephi 2:1
Helaman 14:7	All people are amazed and fall to the earth	3 Nephi 1:16–17

Prophecy	Signs of the Savior's Death	Fulfillment
Helaman 14:20, 27	Sun darkened for three days	3 Nephi 8:19-23
Helaman 14:21	Thunder, lightning, earthquakes	3 Nephi 8:6-7
Helaman 14:21-22	Earth broken up	3 Nephi 8:12, 17-18
Helaman 14:23	Great tempests; mountains laid low and valleys become mountains	3 Nephi 8:5-6
Helaman 14:24	Highways and cities destroyed	3 Nephi 8:8-11, 13-14
Helaman 14:25	Graves open and resurrected Saints minister to people	3 Nephi 23:9-13

As students look at the right column and observe the list of fulfilled prophecies, they will see that Samuel's prophetic influence plays a major role in the subsequent sections of the Book of Mormon. Speaking specifically of Mormon's narrative approach and how he incorporates these prophecies, Hardy makes the following observation:

If the chronology forms the backbone of Mormon's history, prophecy is the ligament that holds it together. We should also note that Mormon has a vested interest in linking prophecies and their realizations; the Book of Mormon presents an extended "argument from fulfilled prophecy," that is, readers are assured that if all of these predictions have come to pass as foretold, so too will those that are as yet unfulfilled, including many that concern their own lives at the time when the Book of Mormon would be published.¹⁸

Again, teachers may ask students to consider what we would miss without the influence of Samuel. Specifically, what would we lack without his very specific prophecies? Beyond the fact that the basic story line of

a large portion of 3 Nephi would be extremely confusing without the foundation laid by Samuel, consider the faith-strengthening purpose of Mormon's inclusion of both the prophecies and their fulfillment. Hardy continues: "Mormon is keen to demonstrate the rationality of faith by citing the successful fulfillment of prophecy. For this type of argument to be persuasive, it is important that the original predictions be authentic—a quality that can best be inferred when prophecies are presented within embedded documents, with particular details, in the voice of the prophet himself, before their fulfillment."¹⁹ Samuel's prophecies exemplify this type of argument because they occur organically amid the narrative, thus strengthening their authenticity. Further, many of these prophecies are remarkably specific and time-bound. "Predictions," on the other hand, "that were remembered or reconstructed after the fact, in the words of the narrator, would not carry the same evidentiary weight."²⁰

Samuel's prophecies serve as a warning—both to those within the original audience and to future generations. They dramatically enhance the story line and also play a significant role in increasing faith. Interestingly, while these prophecies played a role in strengthening the faith of some within Samuel's original audience, they likely also strengthened others in the land who later heard of or read his prophecies. Indeed, Mormon would much later in the text. Indeed, Mormon would continue to draw on the words of Samuel throughout much of his broader project. Furthermore, Samuel's influence extends even beyond an ancient audience, having particular relevance to modern readers. In some ways, Samuel becomes a representation of God's commitment to his children. Just as the Lord used Samuel to prepare the people for his first coming, our students can take hope and confidence that he will use our living prophet to prepare them for his second coming. Knowing the lasting effects of Samuel's prophecies and being conscious that he "did prophesy a great many more things which cannot be written" (Helaman 14:1), one wonders what insights the unabridged version would contain and how it would influence generations of Nephites, Lamanites, and even many in his latter-day audience.

DOCTRINE

While Samuel is well known for his unique historical, cultural, and prophetic influence on the Book of Mormon, perhaps his most underappreciated contribution is what he provides doctrinally. Although Samuel preaches familiar doctrines found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, his insights nevertheless provide a fresh perspective and shed new light on important and even salvific doctrines, as will be seen with the topics that follow. In many ways, Samuel makes it easy for our students to find what Elder Neal A. Maxwell once called “relevancy within antiquity.”²¹

REVELATION

By the time our students get to the book of Helaman, they are accustomed to the doctrinal theme of personal revelation. They have read about the Lord speaking to people in myriad ways. He has spoken through dreams, visions, personal appearances, communications by the Spirit, angels, previous scripture, and so on. Against the backdrop of receiving revelation, consider the experience of Samuel. After preaching to the people in Zarahemla and being rejected and cast out of the city, he was making his way to his own land when “the voice of the Lord came unto him” (Helaman 13:3) in what we identified earlier as the revelation formula. This is not a surprising phrase, as we have already seen that the narration of the Lord’s word coming to his servant is an example of a prophetic speech form called a revelation formula. What then follows, however, provides a unique perspective on the revelatory process. The Lord tells Samuel that he should “return again, and prophesy unto the people *whatsoever things should come into his heart*” (v. 3). This concept is intuitive to Latter-day Saint readers familiar with Doctrine and Covenants 8:2, where the Lord says to Oliver Cowdery, “I will tell you in your mind *and* in your heart.” However, as Hilton et al. observed in their work on intertextuality, “in the scriptures, there are only three instances in which God puts ideas or words into people’s hearts; two of these concern Samuel.”²² Consequently, this notion of the Lord putting ideas in the heart of Samuel seems to be a somewhat novel concept.

Mormon emphasizes this form of revelation in telling how Samuel from atop the wall “cried with a loud voice and prophesied unto the people *whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart*” (Helaman 13:4). Samuel

himself seems to find significance in this phrase, for his opening line is “Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak *the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart*; and behold *he hath put it into my heart to say* unto this people . . .” (v. 5). Thus, even as the scriptures speak of moments when the Lord takes the veil “from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding [are] opened” and our minds are “enlightened” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:1; 6:15), we can help our students see that, as President Boyd K. Packer taught, “revelation comes as words we *feel* more than *hear*.”²³ Many of our students get discouraged with the revelatory process because they do not think they are getting clear instructions in their mind or they have not felt what Joseph Smith once called “pure Intelligence flowing,” giving them “sudden strokes of ideas.”²⁴ We can help them see that the Lord will often speak words to their hearts and that those feelings may be the clearest way he communicates with them.

PROPHETS

The term *prophet* appears 187 times in the Book of Mormon with 111 of those mentions coming before Samuel enters the scene. With almost 60 percent of these references appearing before 6 BC, the concept and role of prophets seems to be firmly established in Nephite culture as Samuel begins his ministry.²⁵ In Helaman 13:24–29, Samuel speaks about prophets. In these verses he does not provide an extensive treatment of the doctrinal role of a prophet; rather, his comments are situated in his broader call to repentance. He rebukes the Nephites, charging that they “do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time” (v. 24). He notes that they are wont to justify themselves by saying, “If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out” (v. 26). The irony, of course, is that in addition to already casting him out once, within just three chapters some in the audience will become so angry with Samuel—a prophet—that they “cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood upon the wall” (16:2).

While Samuel’s comments to the Nephites were a clear call to repentance and both a warning and an invitation to be careful how they receive

the Lord’s prophets, the heart of his teaching seems to be a foreshadowing of the Savior’s message some forty years later when he cautioned, “Beware of false prophets” (3 Nephi 14:15). Speaking of “their fathers of old,” Samuel told the Nephites, “Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil” (Helaman 13:26). In essence, this is the same issue Isaiah spoke about some seven hundred years earlier when he said, “[They] say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things” (Isaiah 30:10). It does not seem that the Nephites were opposed to having a prophet. In fact, as Samuel continued his preaching, he implies that they *wanted* a prophet. An argument could even be made that they *loved* having a prophet. Nevertheless, like those rebellious ancient Israelites, these Nephites were looking for a certain type of prophet. They sought a prophet who would tell them only what they wanted to hear, these “smooth things” spoken of earlier.

Teachers may consider inviting students to reflect back on the message and ministry of Nehor in Alma 1. Remind them that Nehor became popular in the eyes of the people, he was “supported by the people” (v. 3), and he taught “that they need not fear nor tremble” because “in the end, all men should have eternal life” (v. 4). Universal salvation, no accountability—that is the type of message a sinful people could get behind, and it is not surprising to read that many began to follow Nehor. Those who believed in his words “began to support him and give him money. And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel” (v. 5). As students read the following verses, invite them to consider the possibility that some eighty or so years later, the teachings of Nehor and the desire for a Nehorite “prophet” remained deeply entrenched in Nephite culture.

But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and

say that he is a prophet. Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him. (Helaman 13:27–28)

While the Nephites wanted a prophet and were willing to follow and provide remuneration to him, their commitment and trust had less to do with the anointed messenger and more to do with the palatability of the message. Consequently, if a prophet's words were not the "smooth things" the people wanted to hear, then they would "say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not" (Isaiah 30:10). They sought for both a god and a prophet created after their own image.

Samuel's unique doctrinal message on prophets concerns the practical challenges of recognizing, receiving, and then following the Lord's true representatives. Perhaps our students, like others before them, have assumed that if they had lived in Samuel's day, surely they would have recognized him as a prophet and would have believed, repented, and followed. Fortunately for them—and for us—the choice of whether or not we will follow the prophet is ever present. Consider, for example, a modern version of Samuel's ancient warning from President Russell M. Nelson:

Sometimes we as leaders of the Church are criticized for holding firm to the laws of God, defending the Savior's doctrine, and resisting the social pressures of our day. But our commission as ordained Apostles is "to go into all the world to preach [His] gospel unto every creature." That means we are commanded to teach truth. In doing so, sometimes we are accused of being uncaring as we teach the Father's requirements for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. But wouldn't it be far more uncaring for us *not* to tell the truth—*not* to teach what God has revealed? It is precisely because we do care deeply about all of God's children that we proclaim His truth. We may not always tell people what they want to hear. Prophets are rarely popular. But we will *always* teach the truth!²⁶

In a day of increased secularism, limitless access to information, and the immediate availability of multiple social media platforms, our students

have daily opportunities to identify the type of prophet they are following. The Book of Mormon provides several inspiring examples of the blessings that come from following a prophet and the consequences for those who choose not to (think of the stories of Lehi, Nephi, Abinadi, Alma, etc.). Taken as a whole, Samuel’s story demonstrates this same principle. However, it is his teachings about the practical challenges of following the prophet that remain uniquely relevant for our students. It is not likely that our students will be asked, like Lehi’s family, to follow a prophet in leaving their home or city because they are told it will be destroyed. They will not likely see a day when, like Alma and his people, their lives are threatened and they have to go into hiding because they believed the words of a prophet. Conversely, it would seem they *will* likely have many opportunities to determine if they are willing to follow the prophet when he says things that may be hard to hear. They may even experience a time when they disagree with what a prophet says and have to determine if they will still sustain him. They will almost certainly have moments to search their own hearts when the prophet of the Lord rebukes the Saints and calls on us to be better. Samuel called on the Nephites to be willing to follow the prophet, even if his message is challenging. Speaking prophetically to a modern audience, Elder Maxwell said, “Make no mistake about it, brothers and sisters; in the months and years ahead, events will require of each member that he or she decide whether or not he or she will follow the First Presidency. Members will find it more difficult to halt longer between two opinions.”²⁷

FALL AND ATONEMENT

As in many of the great speeches of the Book of Mormon, Samuel spent some time addressing the nature of the fall of Adam and the atonement of Jesus Christ. One of the doctrinal premises he works from is the truth that “whosoever shall believe on the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life” (Helaman 14:8). This truth guides one of Samuel’s greatest doctrinal contributions—Helaman 14:11–19, where he states, “*for this intent* have I come up upon the walls of this city, that ye might hear and know of the judgments of God which do await you because of your iniquities, and also that ye might know the conditions of repentance” (v. 11). One of the stated purposes of his sermon is to convince the Nephites of their need to

repent and to show them how to repent. Doubling down on this purpose, he discloses that he is speaking “*to the intent* that [they] might believe on [Christ’s] name” (v. 12) and providing the invitation to “repent of all your sins, that thereby ye may have a remission of them *through his merits*” (v. 13). That last phrase, “through his merits,” appears to demonstrate Samuel’s understanding of soteriology in the Book of Mormon and his familiarity with the language of previous authors. Consider, for example, the pattern in which others use this term:

- “There is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be *through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah*.” (2 Nephi 2:8)
- “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*.” (2 Nephi 31:19)
- “Since man had fallen *he could not merit anything of himself*; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance.” (Alma 22:14)
- “I also thank my God, yea, my great God, that he hath granted unto us that we might repent of these things, and also that he hath forgiven us of those our many sins and murders which we have committed, and taken away the guilt from our hearts, *through the merits of his Son*.” (Alma 24:10)
- “Their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon *the merits of Christ*, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.” (Moroni 6:4)

While the last reference (Moroni 6:4) would have come after Samuel’s discourse and hence may have been directly influenced by Samuel, it nevertheless shows the consistent pattern in which the word *merit* appears in the Book of Mormon. To help students understand the significance of this pattern, and to set up a theological discussion about Samuel’s words specifically, teachers may consider inviting them to look up the word *merit*

in the 1828 Webster’s dictionary. If they have not already done so, teachers may remind students that looking up the definition of a word in a dictionary published closest to the time of translation can help readers of the Book of Mormon better understand how Joseph Smith and others in his day might have understood a particular word. In 1828 the term *merit* was defined as “goodness or excellence which entitles one to honor or regard” or, alternatively, a “reward deserved; that which is earned.”²⁸ For Samuel, and for several other authors in the Book of Mormon, remission of sins and even salvation are “rewards” that ultimately come only through “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

While Samuel’s statement on remission of sins is aligned with the prophetic voices before him, his unique contribution is in how he works through it theologically.²⁹ Samuel places a strong emphasis on how the redemption of Christ makes it possible for people to be “brought back into the presence of the Lord” (Helaman 14:15, 17), a phrase he uses three times in these five verses. For Samuel, in order for people to be brought back into the presence of God, they need redemption from two deaths—referred to simply as “first death” and “second death” (vv. 16, 18). Jacob and Amulek had written about this concept previously, and Alma discusses it in depth in Alma 12 and 42. To help students understand what distinguishes Samuel’s teachings from these others, teachers may profitably spend a few minutes reviewing the latter.

Jacob is the first in the Book of Mormon to address the concept of these two deaths. He framed them in an interesting way, speaking of Christ’s redeeming work as preparing “a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit” (2 Nephi 9:10). For Jacob the “temporal death” (v. 11) constitutes the first death. Redemption from this first death came “because of the way of deliverance of our God” (v. 11). Because of “the power of the resurrection . . . it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel” (vv. 12, 15). While redemption from the first death is universal—“*all* men become incorruptible, and immortal” (v. 13)—they still must “be judged according to the holy judgment of God”

(v. 15). Perhaps this is why Jacob would later warn his people that in order to avoid “the second death” they must repent and “loose [themselves] from the pains of hell” (Jacob 3:11). In summary, Jacob taught that the first death is a “temporal death” (2 Nephi 9:11) and the second death is a “spiritual death” (v. 12).

Perhaps influenced by Jacob’s writings, Amulek would describe the first death in reference to “the death of the mortal body” (Alma 11:45). Accordingly, redemption from this first death comes when the “mortal body is raised to an immortal body” and the spirit reunites with the physical body, “never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal” (v. 45). Amulek taught that this first death is “a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death” (v. 42). Highlighting the universality of redemption from this first death, he said, “This restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous” (v. 44). It seems that Amulek deferred discussion of the second death to his missionary companion, Alma.

With the purpose of “establish[ing] the words of Amulek” and “unfold[ing] the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done” (Alma 12:1), Alma taught, “Then cometh a death, even a second death, which is a spiritual death; then is a time that whosoever dieth in his sins, as to a temporal death, shall also die a spiritual death; yea, he shall die as to things pertaining unto righteousness” (v. 16). Again, perhaps the simplest way to understand how these two deaths are discussed in the Book of Mormon is to suggest that the first death is a temporal death and the second death is a spiritual death. However, nuancing this point slightly, Joseph Spencer observes that while the first death seems to have been previously understood to always refer to temporal death, spiritual death is not necessarily always describing the second death that comes after judgment. For Spencer, “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.³⁰ Against the backdrop of these teachings, and with that distinction provided by Spencer, consider the unique way in which Samuel teaches about these two deaths.

Samuel taught the need to believe on the name of Christ, repent, and receive a remission of sins through the merits of Jesus Christ (see Helaman 14:13). Speaking of the Lord’s salvific work, he explained, “[Christ] surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him, and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought back into the presence of the Lord. Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death” (v. 15). This statement seems like something we might have heard from Jacob, Amulek, or Alma. What we would expect to see next is a statement connecting the first death with temporal death. However, that is not what Samuel does. He goes on to explain that this death “redeemeth mankind from the first death—that *spiritual* death” (v. 16). For Samuel, then, both the first and second deaths are spiritual and require redemption through Christ in order to “be brought back into the presence of the Lord” (v. 15).

Samuel’s unique teaching of these two deaths should be viewed in light of the doctrine of the Fall. While previous Nephite prophets had spent considerable time connecting the fall of Adam and Eve with the atonement of Jesus Christ, Samuel seems to approach it in a way that is slightly distinct. For the purposes of this essay, I am suggesting that one way of reading these verses from Samuel is to recognize that in addition to the fall of Adam and Eve, we must be mindful of the fall of you and me.

What Samuel sees as the “first death” could represent the consequences brought on by the fall of Adam, while the “second death” captures the consequences of our own sinful behavior. Consider, for instance, the following passage: “Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that *spiritual* death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, *both* as to things *temporal* and to things *spiritual*” (Helaman 14:16). To Samuel, this “first death” cannot simply be viewed as either temporal or spiritual. For him, it is both. It would appear that when

Samuel speaks of a first death he is speaking of the consequences of the fall of Adam—specifically, physical and spiritual death.

Because of this fallen condition, even a newborn baby, who has not yet made any decisions of its own, becomes subject to this first death and is cut off from the presence of the Lord. In this discussion a student might protest and say something like, “But we believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (Articles of Faith 1:2). The teacher might remind the student that the second article of faith presupposes the atonement of Christ and that little children are “alive in Christ” (Moroni 8:12). Because of the fall of Adam, from the very first breath we breathe we are in immediate need of a Redeemer—but not, at this stage, to redeem us from our own sins. No, as Samuel reminds us, it is because of “the fall of Adam” that we are all “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Helaman 14:16) and therefore, I would add, in desperate need of redemption, even from our infancy.

Addressing this somber condition, Samuel teaches, “The resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even *all* mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord” (Helaman 14:17). If the “first death” means that men “are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual” (v. 16) because of the fall of Adam, it follows that for Christ’s redemption to be complete, it must include universal redemption from both temporal and spiritual death. Otherwise, mankind would continue to be unfairly punished for Adam’s transgression rather than for their own actions.

Through his atonement, Christ overcame this first death (the consequences of the fall of Adam). Redemption from this first death “[brought] to pass” what Samuel called “the conditions of repentance” (Helaman 14:18). Having become free to act for themselves (see 2 Nephi 2:26), people are positioned to be held accountable for their own sins. Unfortunately, in the words of Paul, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Humankind again finds itself in a fallen condition and in desperate need of redemption. This time, however, this hopeless, fallen condition is brought on by our own decisions and by our own sins. Indeed, this is our own fall.

It is interesting to note that it was Samuel’s desire to provide his audience with the way out of this fall—these “conditions of repentance”—that led him on top of the wall in the first place (see Helaman 14:11). Describing these conditions, Samuel says, “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 cut off *again* as to things pertaining to righteousness” (v. 18). “Again.” “A second death.” *Another* “spiritual death.” This time, however, the redemption of Christ puts the opportunity for hope within our reach. We can choose him, and we can choose salvation. “Therefore,” Samuel continues, “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” (v. 19). It seems that for Samuel, then, this second death has reference to the conditions of people who, having sinned and therefore again entered a fallen condition, choose not to repent and, by extension, choose to remain in this fallen condition.

In summary, for Samuel it would seem that the “first death” is the temporal and spiritual death brought on by the fall of Adam. The “second death,” on the other hand, is the spiritual death experienced by those who sin but who choose not to repent and therefore remain in their own fallen condition. One of Samuel’s most unique doctrinal contributions is this brief teaching concerning the Fall, redemption, and the first and second deaths. Repentance and reliance on the merits and grace of Christ for salvation was a message of hope to his original audience, and it remains a relevant message of hope in our day.

AGENCY

In some ways, the verses explored in the previous section (Helaman 14:11–19) are something of a digression in Samuel’s sermon, situated as they are between the signs of the Lord’s birth and the signs of his death. However, after detailing the signs of the Lord’s death, Samuel seems to return to his earlier invitations. Specifically, he had mentioned that in addition to his intent to teach “the conditions of repentance,” he also detailed “the signs of [Christ’s] coming, *to the intent that ye might believe on his name*”

(vv. 11–12). Then came his statement that if the people believed, they would indeed repent and find remission of sins through the merits of Christ. The entire section in which Samuel details the two deaths centers on people’s need to believe in and rely on Christ as they repent of their sins. Interestingly, and fittingly, Samuel seems to return to this idea.

After delineating the signs of the Lord’s death, Samuel continues, “The angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, *to the intent that they might believe*” (Helaman 14:28). As if to strengthen this point he rephrases it a bit differently and says that these signs and wonders are given “*to the intent that there should be no more cause for unbelief*” (v. 28). Then, underscoring his argument once more, he says, “and this *to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved*” (v. 29). In sum, Samuel states that his intentions were to prophesy of the signs (v. 9), warn the people of judgments to come, and teach them “the conditions of repentance” (v. 11)—and all of this for the intent of leading them to believe on the name of Christ and repent of their sins so they might be saved with him (vv. 12–13, 18–19, 28–29).

Interestingly, and following a certain doctrinal logic, Samuel ends this portion of his sermon by telling his audience that the Lord has allowed them freedom to choose for themselves.³¹ Elder D. Todd Christofferson once suggested that there are three necessary elements in order for one to have moral agency: First, there must be alternatives among which to choose. Second, we must not only have alternatives but also know what they are. Third, there must be freedom to make choices.³² While others before Samuel spoke or wrote about the doctrine of agency, Samuel’s unique doctrinal contribution is the succinct way in which he captured all three of these elements. Teachers could invite students to study Helaman 14:30–31 and identify which words or phrases used by Samuel align with the elements of agency mentioned by Elder Christofferson. It is remarkable how thoroughly and yet concisely Samuel taught these fundamental elements of agency:

Alternatives from which to choose:

- A. “good from evil” (Helaman 14:31)
- B. “Life or death” (Helaman 14:31)

Knowledge of the alternatives:

- A. “God hath given unto you a knowledge” (Helaman 14:30)
- B. “He hath given unto you that ye might know” (Helaman 14:31)

Freedom to choose:

- A. “Ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves” (Helaman 14:30)
- B. “He hath made you free” (Helaman 14:30)

Samuel’s words show that the Lord provides signs, wonders, and miracles “to the intent that [we] might believe” in him and be saved. Teachers can emphasize to students that the Lord will show them their own signs and wonders and that, like these Nephites, their experiences are given “to the intent that they might believe” in the Lord and rely on him in their own lives. Samuel’s words remain as relevant for our students today as they were when Samuel stood on the wall and said, “And now, remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves” (Helaman 14:30). Teachers can help students understand that, having experienced their own signs and wonders from heaven, they too are free to choose what they do with them. Will they believe, remember them, and trust in the Lord, or will they, like some in Samuel’s day, begin “to depend upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom” (16:15)? The Lord has provided the freedoms that allow each of us, and our students, to choose which path we take.

CONCLUSION

While the account of Samuel is best remembered for its dramatic story line, this essay (like this volume as a whole) seeks to demonstrate that Samuel’s influence is deeper, wider, and more far-reaching than is sometimes recognized. Teachers can help students of the Book of Mormon see Samuel’s unique historical, cultural, prophetic, and doctrinal contributions. His appearance as a Lamanite prophet shattered societal norms and

highlighted the cultural pivot already in process. His prophecies initiated a new center of gravity for the Book of Mormon narrative, literally ushering in the coming of the Lord. The doctrine he taught was thoughtful, distinctive, and relevant for both ancient and modern audiences.

During the second day of his ministry in the land Bountiful, Jesus requests the Nephite records, casts his eyes on them, and, noting an omission, affectionately refers to “my servant Samuel, the Lamanite” (3 Nephi 23:9). He then takes time to remind Nephi of the testimony, the ministry, and specifically the prophecy of Samuel and poignantly asks, “Was it not so?” (v. 9). When our students have approached the Book of Mormon, they have often done so with various lenses. Some have looked for an inspiring story that would deepen their faith and trust in the Lord. Looking back on the account of Samuel, “was it not so?”—that is, isn’t Samuel’s story precisely the kind of faith-strengthening sermon readers crave? Some have sought a more intellectual experience, working to identify key historical moments in the text and their influence throughout the record. Teachers can help students see that Samuel’s story was one of the most dramatic historical pivot points in the Book of Mormon narrative. Others have looked for examples of Hebraisms, intertextuality, or unique literary approaches. Here, too, readers can find complexity and vibrancy in the language of Samuel. Many Latter-day Saints have approached scripture trying to identify places where they can expand their knowledge and understanding of important doctrines. As we have seen throughout this essay, Samuel’s is perhaps one of the most underappreciated yet important doctrinal voices in the Book of Mormon. Finally, wanting personal meaning from their scripture study, our students have sometimes looked for instances where direction given anciently is relevant in modernity. As they reflect on the richness of the life, ministry, and teachings of Samuel, I would ask these students, “Was it not so?” Did not the story of Samuel speak plainly to some of the most relevant and urgent challenges facing his latter-day readers?

Indeed, the account of Samuel the Lamanite provides an invaluable contribution to the Book of Mormon record and an almost inexhaustible resource for our students. When Samuel “cast himself down from the wall” and fled to “his own country,” he “was never heard of more among the Nephites” (Helaman 16:7–8). Recognizing the unique contributions

he has left for modern readers of the Book of Mormon, this must never be the case with us.

NOTES

1. Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 250.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Will of the Father,” Brigham Young University devotional, January 17, 1989, speeches.byu.edu.
4. For a more extensive treatment of this question, see Daniel Belnap’s essay in this volume.
5. Brant A. Gardner, “Helaman 13,” in *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Helaman–Third Nephi* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 5:172–73.
6. Thomas W. Mackay, “Mormon’s Philosophy of History: Helaman 12 in the Perspective of Mormon’s Editing Procedure,” in *The Book of Mormon: Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992) 129–46.
7. Gardner, “Helaman 13,” 172–73.
8. Mackay, “Mormon’s Philosophy of History,” 129–46.
9. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162.
10. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 111.
11. However, recognizing that the Lamanite occupants of Zarahemla in Helaman 5 were displaced after the war there suggests the possibility that Samuel’s family may have been among those who likely relocated to a different territory after the converted Lamanites “yielded up unto the Nephites the lands of their possession” (Helaman 5:52).
12. Donald W. Parry, “‘Thus Saith the Lord’: Prophetic Language in Samuel’s Speech,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 181.
13. Parry, “Prophetic Language in Samuel’s Speech,” 183.
14. Shon Hopkin and John Hilton III, “Samuel’s Reliance on Biblical Language,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 50. See also Quinten Barney,

- “Samuel the Lamanite, Christ, and Zenos: A Study of Intertextuality,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 18 (2016): 159–70.
15. Hopkin and Hilton III, “Samuel’s Reliance on Biblical Language,” 33.
 16. John Hilton III, Sunny Hendry Hafen, and Jaron Hansen, “Samuel and His Nephite Sources,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 119. This study appears in a revised and updated form in this volume.
 17. Hilton III, Hafen, and Hansen, “Samuel and His Nephite Sources,” 119.
 18. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 144.
 19. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 144.
 20. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 144.
 21. Neal A. Maxwell, “The Old Testament: Relevancy within Antiquity,” address given at the Church Educational Symposium on the Old Testament, Brigham Young University, August 16, 1979.
 22. Hilton III, Hafen, and Hansen, “Samuel and His Nephite Sources,” 136.
 23. Boyd K. Packer, “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” *Ensign*, November 1994.
 24. Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842] [addenda], p. 9 [addenda], <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/>.
 25. To gain insights into what various Book of Mormon writers mean by the word *prophet*, readers might find it beneficial to look through the chapter in this volume by Dr. Avram Shannon, who addresses this topic in detail.
 26. Russell M. Nelson, “The Love and Laws of God,” Brigham Young University devotional, September 17, 2019, speeches.byu.edu (emphasis in original).
 27. Neal A. Maxwell, “A More Determined Discipleship,” *Ensign*, February 1979.
 28. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), online ed., <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/merit>.
 29. For a more extensive (and slightly different) treatment of these verses, see Joseph M. Spencer’s chapter in this volume entitled “Spiritual Death Divided and Dividing.”
 30. Spencer, “Spiritual Death Divided and Dividing.”
 31. Ultimately, agency allows freedom to “choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27).
 32. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” *Ensign*, June 2009.