(BYU, Annual Religious Education Faculty Summer Lecture, June 1987.)

Nearly twenty years ago I was commissioned as a chaplain in the Army of the United States and given orders to attend a chaplains' training school at Fort Hamilton in New York. There were 100 chaplains in my class--mostly Catholic and Protestant, a few Jewish chaplains, and myself, the lone Mormon boy. We sat at long tables in our classroom. To my right sat a man of some sincerity, a Methodist chaplain by the name of Martin. It was his habit to slip me notes during the course of the with questions challenging my faith. It was my habit to respond.

In one of our morning devotionals I presented a thought from the Doctrine and Covenants; it was not well received but it did give me the excuse to have my triple combination with me in school that day. When class began I placed it on my desk near the imaginary dividing line between Chaplain Martin's table space and mine. For most of the first hour of class he was disdainfully blind to the presence of the book. Then curiosity gain the victory over arrogance, and he cautiously reach out and took it. He was thumbing through it when his eyes were attracted to a passage in Section 130 which had been marked in red. This passage reads: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit." (D&C 130:22.)

Chaplain Martin understood what he read, and it made him angry. His face flushed and his jaw tightened, then, as the bell that ended class rang, he slammed his fist on the table saying: **"You cannot say that! That is contrary to all the traditions of the fathers!"** His words reminded me of something I had memorized as a young missionary. I handed him the Bible and invited him to read these words from Jeremiah:

> O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.
>
> Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?
>
> Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know my hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The Lord. (Jeremiah 16:19-21.)

My friend's face was now pale and his voice subdued. He simply said, "Well, I must admit you have a scripture for everything." That, of course, is not the issue. The issue was whether true religion was to be founded on revelation or tradition. On that matter Jeremiah had prophesied of a day when the true and living God would be known by revelation, that those revelations would be instrumental in gathering Israel, and that with them would come the knowledge that their fathers had "inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit."

The Danger of Judaizing Mormonism

In each season of growth it is necessary to prune the trees that are to produce fruits. Root sprouts and limb over-growth will rob nourishment from that fruit. The spiritual parallel takes place when the root sprouts of scholarship and tradition rob nourishment from the spirit of prophecy. Such was the plight of ancient Israel as rabbis replaced prophets and tradition replaced holy writ. Good husbandry (horticulture) is as necessary today as it has ever been. As fruit trees still need pruning, so good doctrine still needs to

be free of uninspired embellishments.

Zenos spoke of the unpruned olive tree of modern Israel, a tree "cumbered" with all sorts of fruit. Though there was "much fruit," there was "none of it which [was] good." (Jac 5:30, 32.) Jewish tradition maintains that Moses brought two kinds of Torah when he descended Sinai: the written and the oral. The written Torah had been inscribed by the finger of the Lord on the tablets of stone; the oral Torah was said to be the unwritten explanation and application of what the Lord had written. For generations the oral traditions were perpetuated and embellished by the wise and learned until their value was esteemed by many to be of greater worth than the written word. An issue, for example, might be decided as follows: Rabbi Ishmael was taught by Rabbi Gamaliel, who learned from Rabbi Avraham, who was taught by Rabbi Yitzhak, who remembered that Akiba had traced a given tradition to Moses. Thus, tradition supplanted revelations for many.

By A.D. 200 the rabbinical traditions were committed to writing and became known as the Mishnah. Scholarly commentary upon these commentaries ensued, resulting in the multi-volume collection called the Talmud. Within the covers of the Talmud are accounts of rabbinic debate, quaint sayings, fancies, fables, legends, superstitions, and anecdotes.

Illustrating the exalted role of tradition, the Babylonian Talmud contains a fanciful account of a debate between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua over the possibility that revelation could be given beyond what had been spoken on Sinai. After exhausting every possible argument to no avail, Eliezer, sustaining God's right to continue to speak, called upon the carob tree to prove it. The carob tree, we are told, was torn from the ground and hurled 150 cubits. This sign was rejected on the grounds that no proof can be brought from a carob tree. Next Eliezer called upon a stream of water as proof, and the stream started to flow backwards. Joshua objected, "What sort of demonstration is does a stream afford?" Eliezer then said, "If the oral tradition agrees with me, let the walls of the schoolhouse prove it," whereupon the walls inclined to fall. Rabbi Joshua rebuked them, for when scholars are engaged in a debate over the law, he argued, the school has no right to interfere. The walls did not fall, but remained on an angle or incline. Seeking an irrefutable witness, Rabbi Eliezer then called on the heavens to speak for themselves. A heavenly voice sounded forth and said, "What have ye against Rabbi Eliezer after whose opinion the law is always to be framed?"At this, Rabbi Joshua arose and said, "The Torah declares concerning itself, 'It is not up in heaven'; that is to say, once the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, we pay no heed to heavenly voices but, as the Torah ordains further, we follow the opinion of the majority." [Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1947), pg 68-69.]

"Thus," Jesus said to those of his day, "ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Mt 15:6), as the law given to prepare them to receive him became the justification by which they as a nation rejected him. By such references it is not my intent to cast aspersions upon the Jewish community in our day any more than Mormon or Moroni intended to cast aspersions on the Lamanites of our day by recounting the false traditions of their fathers. Jew and Lamanite alike are chosen people.

Mine is not a call to repentance; such is not my office. Mine is an expression of concern, concern about the extend to which we as Latter-day Saints have allowed ourselves to be bound with the cords of tradition, the extent to which we are preoccupied, with doctrines established upon the authority of what someone said that someone said they heard Joseph Smith tell somebody else. I could fill a volume in the Mormon Talmud with apocryphal stories that have been told to me about my own father and my grandfather Joseph Fielding Smith. If there were room, I could add stories about Jessie Evans Smith. Such a volume would add the same reliability to the history and faith of the Latter-day Saints as the

Talmud does to Judaism. The plain fact of the matter is that frauds are frauds, historical frauds are frauds, pious frauds are frauds, and doctrinal frauds are frauds. It is a little hard to argue that black bears are bears while brown bears and polar bears aren't. White bears can be as dangerous as black bears, and a Mormon Talmud has no more power to save than the Jewish Talmud or a Talmud compiled by any other people.

Fabrications, forgeries, imaginative tales, and embellished stories are not the only sources that threaten to Judaize Mormonism. We too have a rabbinic tradition; we have the idea that truth is established by the authority of what teachers of an earlier day said. Thus, we often expend greater energy in searching for quotations than in searching for understanding. We become more concerned with scriptural commentary than with scripture. So-and-so said it, or said that So-and-so said it, and thus the matter is settled. Again we find ourselves establishing our own oral tradition, developing our own Mishnah and Talmud. Supposedly, if someone else had the ability to think, write, and even part the heavens, we are spared the same effort and responsibility. And so we no longer teach as one having authority, but rather as the scribes and Pharisees.

When an issue needs resolving, rather than entering into a search for truth, we play a game of theological checkers. Proponents of one view line up their authorities with appropriate quotations while those of a differing viewpoint line up theirs, and the game begins. The object is to see who can outmaneuver whom. To make matters worse, when we cannot refute an opponent's authoritative quotations, we are faced with the temptation of discrediting his authorities by attacking their credibility. A common way to do this is to rehearse some instances in which they were known or at least believed to be in error. Thus we malign some of the best people the earth has ever known and all in the name of reverence and respect.

Apparently it has not dawned on many that we are all responsible for what we choose to believe and teach and that this is as true of those holding high office and position in the Church as it is for the rest of us.

Unscriptural Doctrines

Judaism and historical Christianity both provide marvelous case studies for the process by which tradition supplants revelation and is elevated to the status of doctrine. What of Mormonism? Do we face the same danger? Do we commonly teach as doctrine things for which there is not a shred of scriptural evidence? I am fearful that we do. Let me suggest four illustrations, matters that are frequently the subject of discussions in Church classes. My challenge of the theological roots of these so-called doctrines will probably be sufficient to cause some annoyance this evening. Should that be true, it will help establish my concern that we may be every bit as susceptible to the enticements of traditions in preference to revelation as were our ancient Jewish and Christian counterparts.

. . . let us take the idea of *unconditional love*. In Latter-day Saint sermons of recent years it has been common for speakers to challenge the congregation to emulate God in exercising "unconditional love." I do not know who first figured out that God's love is unconditional. I do know, however, that he did it without the help of scripture. Again, the phrase itself is entirely unscriptural; if there are scriptures that sustain the idea, I have been unable to find them. When I have asked people who teach this so-called doctrine how they distinguish God's "unconditional love" from salvation by grace as taught in the Protestant world, they have been unable to do so.

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," Christ said, "he it is that loveth me: and he that

loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (Jn 14:21). Again, the Savior said: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Jn 15:10). . . .

The Mingling of Scripture and Tradition

Along with those would-be doctrines that have no roots in the scriptures are those that have been grafted into the tree of life. It is important that we separate the wheat from the chaff. One cannot make good bread with chaff, and certainly not the bread of life. Authority is a difficult issue in this instance. To what extent, for instance, does our faith obligate us to reverence the writings of the early brethren, and in what instances are we to let go of something they said in order to improve upon it? Harold B. Lee responds in this manner:

It is not to be thought that every word spoken by the General Authorities is inspired, or that they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost in everything they speak and write. Now you keep that in mind. I don't care what his position is, if he writes something or speaks something that goes beyond anything that you can find in the standard works, unless that one be the prophet, seer, and revelator--please note that one exception--you may immediately say, "Well, that is his own idea!" And if he says something that contradicts what is found in the standard works (I think that is why we call them "standard"--it is the standard measure of all that men teach), you may know by that same token that it is false; regardless of the position of the man who says it. [Harold B. Lee, "The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator," Address to Seminary and Institute of Religion Faculty, BYU, 8 July 1964. In like manner Joseph Fielding Smith said: It makes no difference what is written or what *anyone* has said, if what has been said is in *conflict* with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. *My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them.* Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four *standard works* as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we *measure every man's doctrine.*

You cannot accept the books written by the authorities of the Church as standards in doctrine, only in so far as they accord with the revealed word in the standard works.

Every man who writes is responsible, not the Church, for what he writes. If Joseph Fielding Smith writes something which is out of harmony with the revelations, then every member is duty bound to reject it. If he writes that which is in perfect harmony with the revealed word of the Lord, then it should be accepted." (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:203-204.)]

The matter is not easily resolved, but there is much that we can do to lessen the difficulties. First, as Joseph Smith suggested, we ought to allow that a good man can err in doctrine. [Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* 7 vols., B. H. Roberts, ed. (SLC: Deseret Book, 1949), Vol 5:340. Hereafter cited as *HC.*] Second, we should remember that it is the system of heaven to dispense its treasures line upon line, precept upon precept. This means that our generation ought to be able to improve upon the doctrinal understanding of previous generations; if we are continuing the journey they started, we ought to be a bit closer to the top of Mount Zion and our view ought to be a bit better. This also implies that we will find instances in which our greatest theologians will change and improve their views on various matters.

On a number of occasions during the preparation of lessons, I have studied a matter out and then gone to my father seeking the benefit of his insight and understanding, only to go into the classroom and have

someone quote some statement or supposed statement by my father which refuted what he had just taught me. I am also aware of matters on which he contradicts himself within the books he wrote. When I have pointed these out to him and suggested that he might have one statement or the other changed for subsequent editions, his response was, "Goodness no! Let it stand." When he changed his mind on a matter he had no interest in covering the trail. He also had no difficulty in saying, "I was wrong." There is no reason to suppose that such attitudes were distinctive or peculiar to him and are not shared to a greater or lesser degree by all of our prominent theologians.

It reflects a rather acute case of spiritual anemia to argue that because someone once said something that was wrong, he is never to be trusted again. This affliction is common to those who seek to disqualify something one of our leaders has said which they don't want to accept. Supposedly they are excused from accepting the present counsel if they show some previous error or mistake in judgment on the leader's part. This can be likened to a man saying to his wife, "You burned the toast once, and I will never eat anything you cook again." At best, such an attitude would weaken the marriage and in some instances it could result in starvation. So it is in the realm of spiritual things: if we reject the inspired counsel of a leader because he once burned the toast, we have certainly weakened the bonds of our covenants and enhanced the possibility of spiritual starvation.

This very reasoning is the cornerstone of the fundamentalist argument for the necessity of an inerrant and infallible Bible: no errors can be acknowledged in the Bible or it will be deemed untrustworthy. In fact, a greater lesson is that as we can be inspired by a book that is not without flaws so we can be inspired by men who are less than perfect. Indeed, the whole system of salvation is that we, with our leaders, advance from grace to grace, from understanding to greater understanding, from seedlings to sequoias.

The sum of the matter is that if we are to avoid becoming as the scribes and Pharisees, we must do more than quote from the past. The scriptures, the spirit of revelation, and the words of our living prophet must act as our compass rather than Mormon legends and traditions, however popular. On the other hand, it is not our right to quote what others have said without assuming the responsibility to assure that what they have said accords with scripture. Often even that which others have said that accords with holy writ can be said better. If we can improve upon something I think the Lord expects us to do it.

Mormon Legends and Traditions About the Return of Israel

Prophecies, like fertile fields, produce good weeds, and none more so among Latter-day Saints than the field of prophecy dealing with the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes from the lands of the north. Theological dandelions and doctrinal thistles are thought by some to be the most beautiful of Zion's flowers. Consider the following:

The Star Theory. One of our all-time favorites is the idea that the ten tribes were taken away from this earth in a manner similar to that of the city of Enoch and that they now reside on another planet which is yet to return. Our primary source for this is Eliza R. Snow, who wrote it in the form of a lyric which appeared in the Church hymnal from 1856 to 1912. They key stanzas were as follows:

> Thou, Earth, was once a glorious sphere
>
> Of noble magnitude,
>
> And didst with majesty appear

Among the worlds of God.

But thy dimensions have been torn

Asunder, piece by piece,

And each dismember'd fragment borne

Abroad to distant space.

When Enoch could no longer stay

Amid corruption here,

Part of thyself was borne away

To form another sphere.

That portion where his city stood

He gain'd by right approv'd;

And nearer to the throne of God

His planet upward moved.

And when the Lord saw fit to hide

The "ten lost tribes" away,

Thou, Earth, wast sever'd to provide

The orb on which they stay.

And thus, from time to time, thy size

Has been diminish'd still

Thou seemest the law of sacrifice

Created to fulfil.

It is argued that since Eliza was married to Joseph Smith [Eliza Roxey Snow (1804-87) was baptized in 1835 and was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith on June 29, 1842.] she certainly got the doctrine from him. It is held that this is a doctrine that Joseph taught to his wives and his closest friends. [R. Clayton Brough, *The Lost Tribes* (Horizon Publishers, 1979), pg 47.] There is also a supporting statement attributed to the grandson of a man with whom the Prophet once stayed. In response to his grandfather's question as to where the ten tribes were, Joseph Smith reportedly took him outside and pointed to a star twenty feet (from their position) to the right and below the north star. [_*Ibid.,* pg 47-48.] Eliza R. Snow also purportedly told his grandfather that she got her information on this matter from the Prophet. [Robert W.

Smith, *The Last Days* (SLC: Pyramid Press, 1947), pg 225-27.] In addition, we are told by a son of Anson Call, a particular friend of the Prophet, that Joseph told him in company with others on a number of occasions that the ten tribes were on a portion of the earth that had been taken away. [*Ibid.,* pg 215. See also Parley P. Pratt, *Millennial Star,* Vol. 1, pg 258 (Question 7), and *Writings of Parley P. Pratt* (Parker Pratt Robinson: SLC, 1952), pg 306-307.]

The Hollow Earth Theory. Another of our traditions holds that the ten tribes are hidden in a hollow of the earth somewhere. Sources include Benjamin F. Johnson, personal friend of Joseph Smith, who records the following conversation: "I asked where the nine and a half tribes of Israel were. 'Well,' said [Joseph Smith], 'you remember the old caldron or potash kettle you used to boil maple sap in for sugar, don't you?' I said yes. 'Well,' said he, 'they are in the north pole in a concave just like the shape of that kettle. And John the Revelator is with them, preparing them for their return.'" [Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., n.d.), pg 93.]
Another published version of the hollow earth theory takes us to Mexico, where there is a large cave opening on the side of a cliff which David O. McKay is said to have said "led to the center of the earth, and that it was the access to the outer world for the ten tribes." The cliff is, of course, too high to scale from the bottom and is protected from the top by a large overhanging ledge. No one has ever been able to enter it. [Susan Peterson, "The Great and Dreadful Day: Mormon Folklore of the Apocalypse," *Utah Historical Quarterly,* Fall 1976, No. 1, pg 373.]

Knob on the Earth Theory. We learn from a son of Philo Dibble that Joseph Smith drew a picture for his father to show him where the ten tribes were. The picture consisted of a circle with a smaller circle on each side, something like a round face with round ears. The Prophet explained that one of these lobes (the one above the north pole) represented the orb upon which the ten tribes resided. Presumably the other lobe, beneath the south pole, was for the city of Enoch. It is also assumed that these smaller planets are connected to the earth by an invisible neck of land. [Matthew W. Dalton, *A Key to This Earth* (Willard, Utah: 1906; See also Walt Whipple, "A Discussion of the Many Theories Concerning the Whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes," BYU Library, unpublished typescript; and Brough, pg 51-55.]

The North Pole Theory. The argument in this instance is that the ten tribes live in a mysteriously camouflaged area somewhere near the North Pole. Among is strong advocates have been W. W. Phelps [W. W. Phelps, "A Letter to Oliver Cowdery," *Messenger and Advocate* 2:194 (October 1835).], who we are reminded acted as scribe at times for the Prophet Joseph, Orson Pratt, and George Reynolds. Elder Pratt expounded on the often-quoted text from 2 Esdras (an apocryphal work, which we must consider), which speaks of the ten tribes escaping from their Assyrian captors, crossing the Euphrates, and marching into the north to dwell in a land never before inhabited. He reconstructs the route they followed, giving distances and travel times, detailing little-known facts concerning the "comparatively pleasant" climate that would greet them and speaks of the grain and other vegetables they would raise. [Orson Pratt, "Where are the Ten Tribes of Israel?" *Millennial Star* 29:200-4.] George Reynolds, following Elder Pratt's lead, wrote of the feelings of awe these vagabonds of Israel must have experienced as they faced the icy waters of the Arctic Sea. [George Reynolds, "The Assyrian Captivity," *Juvenile Instructor* 18:26-29.]

At this point some observations ought be made about these theories: though rich in imagination, all are without scriptural support. With the possible exception of the North Pole theory, each claims what amounts to a private audience with Joseph Smith as its source. This same Joseph Smith once said: "I have taught all the strong doctrines publicly, and always teach stronger doctrines in public than in private." [Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (SLC: Deseret Book Co., 1961),

pg 370.] Further, each theory is in conflict with the others. Thus we must conclude that Joseph Smith (1) freely speculated on the matter, (2) was terribly confused on the issue, or (3) that such methods of tracing statements to him are not reliable for the establishment of the doctrines of the kingdom.

Have the Tribes Retained Their Identity as a Body?

Another commonality among explanations as to where the ten tribes are is the assumption that the tribes would remain together as a body. Those who support this idea do so primarily on the strength of quotations from past authorities [Brough, pg 75-92. In his treatment of the various theories relative to the gathering of Israel, Brough treats each theory that is without scriptural support with even-handedness, when he comes to the "dispersion theory," the only concept that can claim scriptural justification, he goes after it with a vengeance. See also Gerald N. Lund, *The Coming of the Lord* (SLC: Bookcraft, date missing), pg 160- 65.], including the traditions just cited. That is, they answer the question by simply pulling rank. So-and-so and so-and-so said it and they held such-and-such a position. The question of how they came to know it is avoided. My premise is that truth can stand on its own and that we have no right to quote what we cannot defend with scripture--we will measure such statements by the standard given to us for that purpose.

Arguments that the ten tribes retained their identity as a body can be traced to three sources: a quotation from the book of 2 Esdras, the verses in Doctrine & Covenants Section 133 which speak of the ten tribes returning with their prophets at their head, and the statement in 3 Nephi that Christ would visit the lost tribes. Let us examine each.

Arguing from the Apocrypha

2 Esdras, or 4 Ezra as it is sometimes known, may well be the most often quoted apocryphal text in Mormon literature. It has been quoted approvingly in the *Times and Seasons* [1 July 1841 (Vol. 2, No. 17), pg 465], *Millennial Star* [20 March 1867 (Vol. 29), pg 200], *Juvenile Instructor* [1883; 18:27-28], *Improvement Era* [October 1910, pg 1087-88; January 1924, pg 258; January 1939, pg 6], a Deseret Sunday School manual ["Birthright Blessings: Genealogical Training Class" (*Sunday School Lessons--for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* The Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 50 North Main Street, SLC, Utah, 1942), pg 63], the book *Articles of Faith* [James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith,* (SLC: Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975) pg 325], and the book *Mormon Doctrine* [Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* 2nd ed. (SLC: Bookcraft, 1966), pg 455-56], as well as in a host of lesser-known sources. People are quoting each other here, with no one taking the time to check the reliability of the source. This is the stuff of which traditions are made. May I suggest that an examination of the Esdras text is in order.

Second Esdras is one of the intertestamental apocryphal books. In its present form it is believed to be a Christian writing, though the core of the work is a Jewish apocalypse commonly known as 4 Ezra. It is generally believed that its first two chapters are of Christian authorship, having been written in the second century AD; chapters 3-13, or the Apocalypse [Apocalyptic literature undertakes to reveal the future (the Greek word *apocalypsis* means 'a revealing'). Rather than doing so in a straightforward manner, however, it uses a rather elaborate system of symbols--"wild beasts with several heads and many horns, composite creatures made up of the head of one kind of animal and the body of another, the falling of stars and gigantic hailstones upon the earth, the turning of the sea into blood," and so forth. Classic illustrations in the Bible would be Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation. None of the other intertestamental books are apocalyptic.] of Ezra, are believed to have been written toward the end of the first century AD, and the two

concluding chapters to have been written by a third century Christian writer. [*The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice- Hall, Inc., 1968), pg 542; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pg 278; H. F. D. Sparks, ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1984), pg 927; Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *The Apocrypha* (NY:Oxford University Press, 1973), pg 23.]

The apocalypse is set in Babylon in the thirtieth year after the destruction of Jerusalem (557 B.C.). It is ascribed to a certain Salathiel (Shealtiel), who was the father of Zerubbabel, the builder of the Second Temple (see Ezra 3:2; 1 Chron 3:17). In 4 Ezra, however, Salathiel identifies himself as Ezra the scribe (3:1). This places him more than a century out of time sequence! [Op. Cit., *Jerome Biblical Commentary,* pg 542; Nickelsburg, pg 278.] A modern equivalent would be Hyrum Smith claiming that he was also Ezra Taft Benson. Scholars, of course, regard it as a fictional work [Otto Eissfeldt, *The History of the Formation of the Old Testament,* Peter Ackroyd, trans. (NY: Harper and Row, 1966), pg 626; Nickelsburg, pg 278.], but we ought to draw our own conclusions. What we have is a series of seven visions, primarily conversations with an angel, which are granted to Salathiel or Ezra in response to his prayers. His prayers, however, are more of a complaint than a petition and his dialogue with the angel more of a disputation than the anticipated setting in which a prophet reverently receives instruction from a heavenly messenger. The spirit of the whole thing is rather strange.

The text referring to the lost tribes comes in an explanation of a night dream in which Ezra sees the figure of a man coming forth out the heart of a storm-tossed sea. The man then flies with the clouds of heaven; all that he looks upon trembles, and when he speaks all that hear his voice are consumed with fire. From the four quarters of the earth a multitude of men gather to wage war against him. He then carves for himself a great mountain and flies upon it. From his mountain he annihilates the hostile host with a stream of fire and tempest which proceed from his mouth. The man then descends the mountain and summons to his side all who have not attempted to oppose him. (4 Ezra 13:1-13.)

The interpretation of the dream says that the man from the sea is the Messiah, his enemies are the nations of the world, and the graven rock is the heavenly Jerusalem which has come down to earth. The annihilation of the hostile forces is effected by the fire of the Law, meaning the Law of Moses. Then the Messiah gathers the ten tribes out of alien lands, joins them with those who are already in Palestine, and establishes his millennial kingdom of peace and glory. (4 Ezra 13:21-29.) Our oft-quoted passage reads as follows:

These are the ten tribes which were led away from their own land into captivity in the days of King Hoshea, whom Shalmaneser the king of the Assyrians led captive; he took them across the river, and they were taken unto another land. But they formed this plan for themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the nations and go to a more distant region, where mankind had never lived, and there at least they might keep their statutes which they had not kept in their own land. And they went in by the narrow passages of the Euphrates River. For at that time the Most High performed signs for them, and stopped the channels of the river until they had passed over. Through that region there was a long way to go, a journey of a and a half; and that country is called Arzareth [Hebr for "another land."]
Then they dwelt there until the last times; and now, when they are about to come again, the Most High will stop the channels of the river again, so that they may be able to pass over. Therefore you saw the multitude gathered together in peace. But those who are left of your people, who are found within my holy borders, shall be saved. Therefore when he destroys the multitude of the nations that are gathered together, he will defend the people who remain. And then he will show them very many wonders. (4 Ezra 13:40-49.)

There are, for the Latter-day Saint, some serious theological difficulties with the account of the millennial era as described in the book of Ezra. Chief among them is the announcement that the Messiah, having ruled for four hundred years, will then die (7:28-29). Another is the announcement that those who are gathered in the last days will be those to whom the Lord will have shown no signs and who "have seen no prophets" (1:36-37). Yet signs of the time are given, including "menstruous women" who "shall bring forth monsters" (5:8), "women with child" who "shall give birth to premature children at three or four months, and these shall live and dance" (6:21-22). We are also told that children born of older women will not grow to the same stature as those born of younger women, and that those of the last days will not be as large as those of earlier ages (5:53-55).

Other matters which should at least raise an eyebrow include the declaration that our sovereign Lord created the earth "without help" (3:4), that Adam was a man "burdened with an evil heart" (3:21), that "it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning" (7:116-117), and that God does "not grieve over the multitude of those who perish ... for they are set on fire and burn hotly, and are extinguished" (7:61).
This is a sampling of the doctrines taught in this book; I submit that it is not a good source. It could be argued that the passage referring to the ten tribes is good while the rest of the book is bad, and perhaps this is so. If we are to maintain that the ten tribes passage is as a pearl found in a coal pit, it stands sorely in need of verification from a source known to be genuine, but what it cannot be is the foundation upon which the rest of our reasoning is based.

Indeed, we have no scriptural text that tells us that the ten tribes are located somewhere as a body. While it is true that Christ visited them in a group or groups in the meridian of time (see 3 Ne 17:4), it takes a two thousand year leap to suppose that they have remained so today. The Nephites were also in a group with prophets at their head, but no one would argue that they have retained their identity to this day. Doctrine & Covenants Section 133 speaks of a future day when the tribes of Israel will return under the direction of their prophets to receive blessings at the hands of Ephraim (D&C 133:25-32). This revelation does not, however, say that they are presently in that state. We can read it into the passage, but we do so without scriptural justification. Nor does this contradict Nephi's prophecy that we will some day have the records of the lost tribes. Nephi did not say that they would bring them to us, only that we would have them. He also said that we would have the words of the Nephites, the Jews, and others, but he did not say that the Nephites or the Jews would bring them to us (2 Ne 29:12-14).

It should also be noted that in spite of the tact that it has been a popular part of Mormon tradition to argue that the ten tribes are off somewhere together, the idea presents critical theological difficulties and raises a number of serious questions. How could the apostasy have been universal and not affect those of the lost tribes? And if there was no apostasy among them, why the need for a restoration? Why restore priesthood and keys that have not been lost? Why give Joseph Smith the presidency and responsibility for events over which he has no control? And what is wrong with the priesthood authority of these prophets and their tribes that they have never sought to share its blessings with others? Is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the "only true and living Church upon the earth," as the Lord declared (D&C 1:30), or are there other true but hidden churches?

The Scriptures and the Story of the Gathering

Well, you might ask, if you are going to be so fussy about what the scriptures *don't* say, then, pray tell, what *do* they say? They say a good deal, they say it repetitiously, and they say it with consider-able plainness. Let us proceed in a question and answer form.

Question: What is the covenant that God made with Abraham?

God said to Abraham, "I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice" (Abr 2:6). The covenant, then, was that Abraham would be a missionary, that he would go into the land of Canaan and teach and testify that Jehovah was the only true and living God. In return God promised to give that land to Abraham and his posterity as an "everlasting possession," that is, it was to be the place of their abode both in this life and the next if and "when" they hearkened to his voice. Obviously, none of Abraham's seed could lay claim to such an inheritance in disobedience or rebellion.

Further, God promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation, that he would bless him above measure, that his name would be great among all nations, and that he would be a blessing unto his seed. Of Abraham's seed the Lord said, "They shall bear this ministry." They, like Abraham, must be missionaries, bearing the name of the Lord Jehovah in strange lands. Abraham was promised that they would bear the Priesthood among all nations; at the hands of his seed all families of the earth were to be blessed "with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal." (Abr 2:10, 11.)

It was a spiritual covenant that God made with Abraham, a covenant centering in obedience, missionary work, the gospel of salvation, and the promise of eternal life. The great issue was not where Abraham lived, but how he lived. A land of inheritance is simply an earthly token, a reminder of the eternal rewards awaiting those who honor their covenants. It is appropriate that if Abraham or his seed break those covenants, the token--the land promised them--would be taken from them. When they return to the living of those covenants, then and only then should they be returned to that land that symbolizes their obedience.

That this principle might be written upon the hearts of Abraham's seed, God commanded that the day Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the land the Lord their God had given them, they were to proceed to the vale between Ebal and Gerizim. There the tribes were to be divided, six tribes to stand upon Mount Ebal facing those on Gerizim and six tribes to stand on Mount Gerizim facing those standing on Mount Ebal. The priests in the vale between the two mounts then read the blessings promised in the law. Thus Israel covenanted to receive the blessings of obedience or the cursing of disobedience with a marvelous shout of *"Amen!"* (Deut 27-28; Joshua 8:30-35.) Among the curses for disobedience accepted by covenant that day was that the Lord would scatter them, all of Israel, "among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other," and that in their scattered state they would worship false god and know no peace. (Deut 28:64-68; cf. Levit 26:33.)

Question: Why was Israel scattered?

Israel was scattered because she broke her covenants. "Her young men visited the temple prostitutes of Ashtoreth, and her young women defiled themselves as harlots with the heathen. Her priests sacrificed on the altars of Baal, and Solomon himself built an altar to Molech whereon Ahaz and others sacrificed children." [Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* (SLC: Deseret Book, 1982), pg 186.] She forsook "the fountains of living waters, and hewed ... out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jere 2:13). That is, she formed false churches and ceased to be a peculiar people and a kingdom of priests. Rabbis replaced prophets, traditions replaced scripture, and ritual replaced righteousness. When she

became as the world, the Lord allowed her to suffer and live as the world. Since the knowledge of God can be had only in righteousness, she lost that knowledge and the understanding of the covenant that God had made with her.

There can be no understanding of the gathering without an understanding of the scattering. If we suppose that the tribes of Israel were scattered for not tending their gardens or for failure to support their local government, then we can suppose that they will be gathered for such reasons. We could then suppose that God would restore them to their ancient land that they might beautify it, eat more nutritional meals, and enjoy the protection of the law. But if we understand, as scores of passages attest, that they were scattered because they rejected the Holy One of Israel and broke the everlasting covenant, then we understand that they can be gathered only when they make that covenant anew and return to the God and the faith of their fathers.

Question: Now that Israel has been scattered, do we have any scriptural clues as to the whereabouts of the lost tribes?

Clues, no. Plain statements, yes. On this matter we have the united testimony of the Standard Works. Enoch in the prophetic description of the last days spoke of "righteousness and truth" sweeping the four quarters of the earth "as with a flood," to gather out the "elect" and bring them to the New Jerusalem (Moses 7:62). In the biblical statements we begin with Moses, the first prophet to prophesy to the nation of Israel. Moses, as we have already seen, prophesied that all the tribes of Israel would be scattered to the ends of the earth should they break that covenant that entitled them to a promised inheritance in the land of Palestine. Yet, he also prophesied of a day of gathering and restoration, the responsibility for which he placed upon the shoulders of the tribe of Joseph, or more specifically, Ephraim and Manasseh. Like the horns of unicorns, he said, they would gather the people from the ends of the earth (Deut 33:17; 30:3). In the New Testament, Christ spoke of gathering the "elect from the four winds" (Matt 24:31) and James addressed his epistle "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (Jas 1:1).

Describing this day of restoration, Isaiah said that the Lord would "assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa 11:12). To Ezekiel the Lord said, "I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered" (Ezek 11:17). Again he said: "I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries" (Ezek 34:13). And still again he said, "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side" (Ezek 37:21.)

Mormon, in like manner, taught: "I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel" (Morm 3:18). In fact, the Book of Mormon tells us that the Three Nephites "shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls" (3 Ne 28:29). With specific reference to the lost tribes rather than all the house of Israel, Nephi said they had been "scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations" (1 Ne 22:3, 4, 5). The dispersion of all the tribes of Israel is taught with unquestioned authority in 3 Nephi. Consider, for instance, these words:

> Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the **seed of Joseph** to the knowledge of the Lord their God.
>
> And as surely as the Lord liveth, **will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth**.

> And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto **the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them**.
>
> And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they **be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands**, from whence they have been **dispersed**; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen. (3 Nephi 5:23-26, emphasis added.)

Indeed, we are told that the very purpose of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon was to "gather in, from their long dispersion" the "house of Israel" (3 Ne 21:1), or as Moroni stated it, "the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the Lord" (Morm 8:15; cf 3 Ne 21:26, 27).

The Lord told Joseph Smith that the Church had been organized that He might gather the "elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in [him], and hearken unto [his] voice" (D&C 33:5-6). Joseph Smith was also told that the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, twelve thousand out of each tribe, would be high priests, ordained "out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" upon the earth (D&C 77:11). As Joseph Smith dedicated the first temple of our dispensation, he prayed that "all the scattered remnants of Israel," who he said had "been driven to the ends of the earth," might "come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed" (D&C 109:67). When the Prophet said that John the Revelator was with the ten tribes, he said he was "to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion to again possess the land of their fathers." [*History of the Church,* 1:176.]

Question: Does Doctrine and Covenants 133 tell us that when the ten tribes return they will have their scriptural records with them?

No. There is no reference to either the ten tribes or their scriptural records in the Doctrine and Covenants. The text in question appears to have reference to the return of all the tribes of Israel and says that they will bring their "rich treasures" with them. This has been interpreted to mean scriptural records. I would like to suggest that the text means what is says, that the Lord said "rich treasures" because he meant rich treasures. Be it remembered that when Abraham and Sarah returned after their trial in Egypt to that sacred land promised them, they went "rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold," returning first to Bethel--the house of God--and its altar that they might call upon the name of the Lord (Gen 13:2-4). Similarly, before the children of Israel left Egypt to return to the promised land to rebuild their temple and call upon God, they were directed to borrow from the Egyptians their "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold" (Ex 11:2). When the Jews were freed from their captivity in Babylon to return to Palestine to rebuild the Holy City and its temple, the treasure houses of that great nation were opened to them, and they returned laden with silver and gold (Ezra 7:15-21). Thus, when Israel returns to claim the blessings of the temple in the last days, should they not return with their rich treasures as their fathers did before them?

As he prophetically described the latter-day gathering of Israel to the Nephites, Christ quoted a number of verses from the Book of Micah. I call your attention particularly to Micah's imagery of returning Israel as a goring bull having horns of iron and hoofs of brass to "beat in pieces many people." This that their earthly riches might be consecrated to the Lord (3 Ne 20:19; Micah 4:13). The passage, which is clearly millennial, may be the explanation of the statement in Doctrine & Covenants 133 that "their enemies will become a prey unto them" (v 28). The spoils of the earth are then returned to their rightful master.

In the revelation known to us as the Law of the Church, the Lord said: "I will consecrate the riches of those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles unto the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel" (D&C 42:39). In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith prophesied that if the Saints would turn to the Lord with all their hearts, ten years would not pass before the kings and queens of the earth would come to Zion to pay their respects and that they would bring millions to contribute to the relief of the poor, and to the building up and beautifying of Zion. [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* pg 277.]

Question: Are there scriptural keys that help in interpreting the description of the returning tribes of Israel from the north countries in D&C 133, specifically, of such things as their smiting the rocks, the ice flowing down at their presence, a highway being cast up in the midst of the great deep, the barren deserts bringing forth pools of living water, and the parched ground becoming a thirsty land? (D&C 133:26-27, 29.)

Section 133 weaves together scores and scores of phrases from the Old Testament prophecies. In some instances it announces their fulfillment, in others it provides additional prophecy that will surround their eventual fulfillment. The language in question here comes primarily from Isaiah chapter 35. In fact, these verses from the Doctrine & Covenants and the Isaiah chapter need to be studied together because they clarify each other. For instance, Isaiah tells us that the highway that is to be cast up is the "way of holiness," that the "unclean shall not pass over it," but that the "redeemed," or the "ransomed of the Lord," shall walk there (Isa 35:8-10). It ought also be noted that whereas the King James Bible records Isaiah saying "an highway shall be there, and a way," the Joseph Smith Translation [JST] reads, "an highway shall be there, a way *shall be cast up*" (v 8). As to the quenching of the thirsty land and the springs of water that are to come forth, the Doctrine & Covenants tells us that the water that breaks forth is "living water," or as the Savior said, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:14).

The major theme of both ancient and modern scripture is that no power or force can stay these events. As it was with ancient Israel, so it will be with Israel of the last days. "Behold, I say unto you," the Lord said through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel. For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm. And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be" (D&C 103:17-18). Thus, if the ancient Moses could smite a rock and bring forth water, the modern Moses must be able to do the same. Isaiah tells us that "there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people ... like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt" (Isa 11:16). Isaiah refers to a power that removes all obstacles, not to a four-lane Interstate. "Prepare ye the way of the people," he wrote, "cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people" (Isa 62:10). The image is not one of transits, shovels, and flags, but rather of a proclamation to the ends of the earth that the ancient covenant has been restored and that by his power the Lord will redeem his people. (Isa 62:11-12.)

The announcement that ice shall flow down at the presence of the returning tribes of Israel is one instance in which we are without scriptural help to guide our interpretation. Here we can only speculate.

"Presumably, when our sphere becomes a new earth; when every valley is exalted and every mountain is made low; when the islands become one land, and the great deep is driven back into the north countries--when all these and other changes occur, then there will also be changes in climate, and the ice masses of the polar areas will no longer be as they now are." [Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah,* pg 326-27.]

Question: How then are we to understand the statement in D&C 133 that prophets among the returning tribes will lead them?

Certainly when the time comes that the tribes of Israel return from the north countries, or for that matter from any other place, they will come with their prophets leading them. The Lord's people always have been and always will be led by prophets. The issue here is the possibility of prophets serving independently of the Priesthood and Keys restored to Joseph Smith. If we are to accept the standard established in the Doctrine & Covenants we must maintain that none have the right to act in the name of the Lord (and surely that would include leading the tribes of Israel) save they have been "ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11). The Doctrine & Covenants accepts none as prophets save those who have bene called, ordained, and received the sustaining vote of the Church. The Lord's house is and always has been a house of order. Is it not wholly harmonious with the revelations and all we know about the Lord's system of governing his people to suppose that these prophets will be elders of Israel who trace their priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and through them to Peter, James, and John as do the rest of us?

Question: What about Joseph Smith's statement that John the Revelator was with the ten tribes preparing them for their return? Doesn't this indicate that they are together in a body?

In the minutes of a conference of the Church held in June 1831, John Whitmer recorded as follows: "The Spirit of the Lord fell upon Joseph in an unusual manner, and he prophesied that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel who had bene led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion, to again possess the land of their fathers." [*History of the Church* 1:176.] Far from saying they were in a body the Prophet spoke of "their long dispersion." Again if we are going to be true to the scriptures it can be no other way. Be it remembered, and it is recorded in the book of Revelation, that the Lord told John that he "must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev 10:11). In a revealed explanation of this prophesy the Lord told Joseph Smith "that it was a mission, and an ordinance for [John] to gather the tribes of Israel" (D&C 77:14). The Book of Mormon tells us that John's fellow laborers, the Three Nephites, were told that they would labor among every nation, kindred, tongue, and people to gather scattered Israel. The record also states that they would labor among the Gentiles and that the Gentiles would not know them (3 Ne 28:27-29). That, it appears, is the pattern for John's ministry also.

Question: Why is it that our revelations speak of the gathering of Israel and the return of the ten tribes as two separate events?

Moses conferred upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery "the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north" (D&C 110:11). In the Tenth Article of Faith, the Prophet wrote: "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes." It seems obvious that two separate events are being described. The question is, if the literal gathering of Israel embraces all twelve tribes, why then the seemingly redundant statement that the ten tribes will also be returned to their ancient lands?

The gathering comes in response to the scattering. We can quite properly consider the scattering as consisting of two parts: the leading of the ten tribes into the north countries and the dispersing of the twelve tribes among all the nations of the earth. Thus, as the scattering can be divided into two major

parts, so it must be with the gathering. If there is to be a restoration of all things, the gathering of the twelve tribes must be as literal as their scattering; the ten tribes must return from the north countries. Thus, after the remnants of the ten tribes have been gathered through the waters of baptism some representative number of them will return to their ancient lands of inheritance.

Again, nothing short of this answers the promise of a restoration of all things. Of singular importance here is the fact that both events are to take place under the direction of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Question: If we were to capsulize the message of the Book of Mormon relative to the gathering of Israel in a single sentence, what would it be?

The message of the Book of Mormon is that Israel was scattered for rejecting Christ and will be gathered only by accepting him. [See 1 Ne 15-19; 2 Ne 6, 10, 25, 29, 30, 33; 3 Ne 20-22; Ether 13.]

Question: Does this mean that any gathering that does not center in the acceptance of Christ as he is testified of in the Book of Mormon does not fulfill the prophecies relative to the gathering of Israel?

Yes. Events undoubtedly have and will take place that are preparatory, as the Reformation was to the Restoration. But as what took place in the Reformation did not fulfill the prophecies relative to the Restoration, so any gathering or attempted restoration of Israel that does not center in the acceptance of Christ fails to fulfill the prophecy of the scriptures.

Question: Is the gathering of Israel primarily a pre-millennial or a post- millennial event?

The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is given as a prophetic sign to identify the time when the gathering of Israel will being (3 Ne 21:1). However, in a fuller sense the Book of Mormon states that after the church has been established, after people have gathered to the New Jerusalem, after the power of heaven has come down among them, then the work of the Father in gathering Israel will commence. The Book of Mormon further states that this work will center in teaching the gospel to "all the dispersed," including the tribes that were lost. (3 Ne 21:22-29.)

In Ether 13 we are told that after the remnant of Joseph commence the building up of a holy city like unto the Jerusalem of old

> there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old save the old have passed away, and all things have become new. And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel. And then also cometh the Jerusalem of old; and the inhabitants thereof, blessed are they for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who were scattered and gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and from the north countries, and are partakers of the fulfilling of the covenant which God made with their father, Abraham. (Ether 13:8-12.)

In short, the gathering is primarily a millennial event. That is not to say that great numbers will not embrace the gospel of Abraham before that glorious day, but rather that the extent to which Israel will be gathered in the millennial era will so far surpass what will have taken place before that day that in

comparison the pre-millennial gathering will hardly be considered a beginning.

Question: Do the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine & Covenants give Latter-day Saints a different perspective of the gathering than that held by the Bible-believing world?

The perspective is as different as the infant child is from the fully mature adult it will yet become. For instance, were it not for the Book of Mormon and the revelations of Joseph Smith we would not know:

1. That the resurrected Christ visited the lost tribes (3 Ne 16:1- 3).

2. That the lost tribes kept scriptural records of their own which someday we will be privileged to read (2 Ne 29:12-14).

3. That Isaiah's prophecy relative to Zion putting on her strength and her beautiful garments referred to the restoration of the priesthood and his prophecy of her loosing the bands off her neck referred to the receiving of revelation in the great day of restoration (D&C 113:7-10).

4. That is was necessary for Moses to return and restore "the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north" (D&C 110:11).

5. That both John the Revelator and the Three Nephites would join us as translated beings in our efforts to gather Israel (D&C 77:14; 3 Ne 28:28-29).

6. That there are "lands" of promise, including the Americas, rather than just the land of the Bible, to which Israel will be gathered (1 Ne 22:12; 2 Ne 6:11; 9:2; 10:7-8).

7. That the Jerusalem of the Old World is to be restored and a New Jerusalem is to be built upon the American continent (3 Ne 20:22; Ether 13:3-13).

8. That the fulness of the gospel as restored through Joseph Smith is "the covenant" which God "sent forth to recover [his] people, which are of the house of Israel" (D&C 39:11; 3 Ne 6:11).

9. That the gathering centers, as Jacob said, in scattered Israel being "restored to the true church and fold of God" (2 Ne 9:2). "If they [meaning the Jews] will repent, and hearken unto my words," the Lord said, "and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this remnant of Jacob," unto whom is given a land of inheritance (3 Ne 21:22).

10. That the gathering centers in accepting Christ as the Book of Mormon bears witness of him (3 Ne 21:1-11).

These are but illustrations and the list could go on; the point, however, is that we have an entirely different view of what is and of what must take place than do those who do not have living prophets and modern revelation. It is also significant that the events prophesied in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine & Covenants conform perfectly with the promises or covenant God made with Abraham, promises that centered in his seed having the priesthood and the gospel of salvation.

Concluding Observations

In conclusion I return to the story with which we began. About two years after our classroom exchange, Chaplain Martin and I were base-camped near each other in Vietnam. Some of the enthusiastic Latter-day Saint boys in his unit brought him with them to one of our servicemen's conferences. It was a rather unusual conference that involved a surprise visitor, Elder Bruce R. McConkie. The gospel was preached that day and we heard a testimony of the God known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When it was over, Chaplain Martin turned to the young men with him and said, "Well, if it wasn't for my training, I would join your church."

Such is the effect of the traditions of the fathers, the "iron yoke," the "strong band," the "handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell," as the Prophet Joseph called them (D&C 123:7-8). It is from such traditions both in and out of the Church that we must free ourselves. If we are to be true to our testimony of the Restoration we must be true to the scriptures of the restoration. We must come to know them and learn to measure our doctrines against them.

It is not tradition, but rather the spirit of revelation, that governs this Church. To Jeremiah's question, "Shall a man make gods unto himself?" and his response, "and they are no gods," we would be add the query, "Shall a man make traditions unto himself," to which we must respond, "are they are not doctrines." Our faith must embrace all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and the assurance that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Article of Faith #9). Such is our hope, such is our prayer.