



Type: Journal Article

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Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*,
Volume 51 (2022)

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

Page(s): 295–316

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INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 51 · 2022 · Pages 295 - 316

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Offprint Series

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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“BELIEVE ALL THE WORDS”: A KEY TO SPIRITUAL OUTPOURING

Mark Campbell

Abstract: *In the Book of Mormon, many people received a remarkable spiritual outpouring following a declaration or demonstration of full belief in what they had already received or were about to receive. This paper examines nine examples of this that exhibit strong similarities in both language and substance. These examples demonstrate that the key to receiving a spiritual outpouring is to “believe all the words” of God that one has already received or is about to receive, after which great blessings will follow. However, such full belief must be thoughtful and inspired, not merely credulous. The findings of this paper provide another example of the rich narrative and doctrinal patterns in the Book of Mormon.*

In the Book of Mormon, many people received a remarkable spiritual outpouring following a declaration or demonstration of full belief in what they had already received or were about to receive. In this paper, I examine the following nine examples of this process:

| Person | Declaration or Demonstration of Full Belief | Resultant Spiritual Outpouring |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Nephi ₁ | 1 Nephi 2:16 | 1 Nephi 2:19–24 |
| Nephi ₂ | 1 Nephi 11:5 | 1 Nephi 11:6–14:30 |
| King Benjamin’s people | Mosiah 5:2 | Mosiah 5:2–7 |
| Alma ₁ | Mosiah 17:4 | Mosiah 18:13, 18, 27–29; 23:1, 16 |
| Zeezrom | Alma 15:7 | Alma 15:10–12 |
| Lamoni | Alma 18:33 | Alma 18:41–43; 19:12–13 |
| Lamoni’s wife | Alma 19:9 | Alma 19:13, 29–30, 33 |
| Lamoni’s father | Alma 22:11 | Alma 22:15–18; 22:23–27; 23:3 |
| Brother of Jared | Ether 3:12 | Ether 3:6–28 |

The approach taken here is rooted in the study of narrative and doctrinal patterns in the Book of Mormon. Such patterns illustrate the book's rhetorical power and internal consistency. The nine examples listed above are presented and compared to show that the Book of Mormon employs a unique narrative pattern to teach and reinforce the doctrinal point that full belief in what one has already received from God, or is about to receive, leads to additional spiritual outpouring. The Book of Mormon's teachings on this matter are relevant for our day and are reinforced by the teachings of modern prophets and apostles.

Narrative and Doctrinal Patterns in the Book of Mormon

Many writers have noted the presence of narrative and doctrinal patterns in the Book of Mormon. These patterns serve to reinforce key messages for the reader, increasing the convincing power of the book and fulfilling the divine "law of witnesses."¹ The presence of these recurrent threads also demonstrates that later authors had access to prior authors' work, with later authors drawing therefrom for narrative and doctrinal purposes.

Scholars have observed many narrative and doctrinal patterns in the Book of Mormon. For example, Louis Midgley observed that recurrent "language about remembrance in the Book of Mormon turns out to be rich and complex, conveying important, hidden meaning."² Specifically, Book of Mormon exhortations to remember are not given merely to promote mental recall, but rather are inducements to act and particularly to act in accordance with past covenants with God. According to Midgley, "The point is that one remembers by actually doing something, not by merely recalling the past out of curiosity or for any other reason than to serve God."³ This narrative pattern in the use of "the language of remembrance" reinforces a key doctrinal point that Book of Mormon prophets apparently wanted their readers to understand.

Richard Dilworth Rust, in his study of recurring patterns in the Book of Mormon, stated, "It seems that every important action, event, or

1. Robert L. Marrott, "Witnesses, Law of," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1569–70, https://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Witnesses,_Law_of.

2. Louis Midgley, "The Ways of Remembrance," *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson, Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 168, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/ways-remembrance>.

3. *Ibid.*, 171.

character is repeated in the Book of Mormon. These repetitions emphasize the law of witnesses at work within the book (e.g., ‘in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established;’ Ether 5:4).⁴ According to Rust, these narrative patterns serve “as a principle of reinforcement and witness,”⁵ “underscore the relevance of one character or action to people living in a different time,”⁶ “bring a narrative intensity as well as a sense of divine direction of events,”⁷ “instruct and convince,”⁸ and “emphasize and define the book’s major themes or concerns.”⁹

Noel Reynolds noted that the Book of Mormon consistently “presents the gospel as a six-point formula or message about what men must do if they will be saved.”¹⁰ Although the language used to describe the six points varies throughout the Book of Mormon, there is remarkable consistency in the doctrinal message that is presented — and thus reinforced — by various prophets.

David Bokovoy highlighted parallels in the experiences of Nephi₁, King Benjamin’s people, and the brother of Jared, which “suggests the possibility of a Book of Mormon ‘type scene’ for a spiritual exchange between witness and worshiper.”¹¹ He quotes the explanation of R.L. Fowler regarding the rhetorical utility of such an approach:

A type scene is a literary convention employed by a narrator across a set of scenes, or related to scenes (place, action) already familiar to the audience. The similarities with, and differences from, the established type are used to illuminate developments in plot and character. The technique of the

4. Richard Dilworth Rust, “Recurrence in Book of Mormon Narratives,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 1 (1994): 39, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol3/iss1/4>.

5. *Ibid.*, 40.

6. *Ibid.*, 41.

7. *Ibid.*, 43.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 50.

10. Noel B. Reynolds, “The True Points of My Doctrine,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5 no., 2 (1996): 26, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol5/iss2/2/>.

11. David Bokovoy, “‘Thou Knowest That I Believe’: Invoking the Spirit of the Lord as Council Witness in 1 Nephi 11,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 16–17, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/thou-knowest-that-i-believe/>.

type-scene offers the poet a basic scaffolding, but it also allows the poet to adapt each scene for specific purposes.¹²

Several of Bokovoy's examples of type-scenes overlap with the examples in the present paper, though not entirely.

Rich allusions to other writings are another hallmark of the Book of Mormon. John Hilton III opined that "the Book of Mormon makes it clear that individuals who lived in later time periods had access to the teachings of earlier prophets."¹³ After making a careful comparison between the words of Alma₂ and Abinadi, Hilton observes, "[Alma₂] has paid a price to be so conversant in Abinadi's words that he can weave them into a conversation as though they were his own."¹⁴ He concludes, "The consistent patterns of allusions in Alma 39–42 argue for textual intentionality. This was not something Joseph Smith made up."¹⁵

An example of a Book of Mormon passage that was heavily alluded to by other writers was pointed out by Matthew L. Bowen: "Nephi's autobiographical introduction and conclusion proved enormously influential on subsequent writers who modeled autobiographical and narrative biographical introductions on 1 Nephi 1:1–2 and based sermons — especially concluding sermons — on Nephi's 'good' conclusion in 2 Nephi 33."¹⁶ This narrative pattern is subtle yet pervasive throughout the Book of Mormon.

Bowen also demonstrated that "the theophanies experienced by Lamoni and his wife, servants, and father followed professions of 'faith' or 'belief.'"¹⁷ As with the Bokovoy paper cited above, Bowen's examples overlap with the present paper, but again not entirely. Bowen's examples highlight the importance of a profession of belief, while the present paper expands the examples and highlights the importance of the *fullness* of that belief.

12. Ibid., 17.

13. John Hilton III, "Textual Similarities in the Words of Abinadi and Alma's Counsel to Corianton," *BYU Studies* 51, no. 2 (2012): 39, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/textual-similarities-in-the-words-of-abinadi-and-almas-counsel-to-corianton/>.

14. Ibid., 58.

15. Ibid., 59.

16. Matthew L. Bowen, "Nephi's Good Inclusio," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/nephis-good-inclusio/>.

17. Matthew L. Bowen, "Abish, Theophanies, and the First Lamanite Restoration," *Religious Educator* 19, no. 1 (2018): 64, <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-19-no-1-2018/abish-theophanies-first-lamanite-restoration>.

These examples of narrative and doctrinal patterns found in the Book of Mormon could be multiplied. John Hilton III has called for “a fast-growing study of textual echoes in the Book of Mormon.”¹⁸ The present paper aims to contribute to that “fast-growing study” as we now consider the patterns related to the theme of receiving more by “believing all the words.”

Nine Examples of People Who Fully Believed and Then Received a Spiritual Outpouring

The Book of Mormon contains many instances where individuals or groups received a spiritual outpouring of knowledge, sanctification, authorization from God, healing, theophany, conversion, or forgiveness. For each of the nine examples considered here, a key passage from the Book of Mormon is quoted in which one or more individuals declare or demonstrate full belief in what they have received, and then the resultant spiritual outpouring is summarized.

1. Nephi: “I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.” (1 Nephi 2:16)

Before Nephi₁ performed any of the valiant deeds for which he is known, he heard his father Lehi recount a vision about the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the eventual coming of the Messiah (1 Nephi 1). Nephi₁ then had the following experience:

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that *I did believe all the words* which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers. (1 Nephi 2:16)

Following this experience, Nephi₁ tried to persuade his brothers to believe also. Sam accepted Nephi₁'s (and Lehi₁'s) testimony, but Laman₁ and Lemuel would not (1 Nephi 2:17–18). When Nephi₁ prayed for his elder brothers, “the Lord spake unto [Nephi]” and made a series of important promises to him (1 Nephi 2:19–24). The remainder of this paper will show that this example — of Nephi₁ first declaring his full belief in all the words he has already heard and then subsequently receiving

18. Hilton, *Textual Similarities*, 60.

a remarkable spiritual outpouring — typifies a pattern followed in the other cited examples.

2. Nephi₁: “Yea, thou knowest that I believe all the words of my father.” (1 Nephi 11:5)

Later, Lehi₁ recounted his vision of the Tree of Life to Nephi₁ and other family members (1 Nephi 8) and prophesied concerning the future of the House of Israel and the coming of the Messiah (1 Nephi 10). Nephi₁ “was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things” (1 Nephi 10:17) and consequently received a vision of his own (1 Nephi 11–14). During that vision, Nephi₁ had the following exchange with “the Spirit:”

And the Spirit said unto me: Believest thou that thy father saw the tree of which he hath spoken?

And I said: Yea, thou knowest that *I believe all the words* of my father. (1 Nephi 11:4–5)

This declaration was followed by Nephi₁’s own vision of the Tree of Life, the ministry of Jesus Christ and his twelve apostles, and much more (1 Nephi 11:6–14:30). Note that Nephi₁’s declaration in 1 Nephi 11:5 appears to be an allusion to his earlier statement of full belief found in 1 Nephi 2:16.

3. King Benjamin’s people: “Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us.” (Mosiah 5:2)

Near the end of his life, King Benjamin preached the gospel to his people, recounted a vision of the coming of Jesus Christ, and expounded on the Atonement (Mosiah 2–4). King Benjamin then asked for the reaction of his people to these messages. He received the following response:

And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, *we believe all the words* which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. (Mosiah 5:2)

Just as Nephi₁ said, “I believe all the words of my father,” King Benjamin’s people declared, “Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us.” It seems significant that Mosiah 5:6 says, “And now, these are the words which King Benjamin desired of them.”

That is, King Benjamin wanted exactly this sort of declaration of full belief, perhaps as an echo of the original declaration of Nephi₁ himself.

In any event, like Nephi₁, this declaration resulted in a remarkable spiritual outpouring upon King Benjamin's people, including sure knowledge, changed hearts, and the ability to "prophecy of all things" (Mosiah 5:2–7).

An alternate reading of Mosiah 5:2 could suggest that the spiritual outpouring was the very thing that caused the people to "believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us." However, the cited verse states first that the people "believe[d] all the words," and then adds that "we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us." That is, full belief preceded the spiritual outpouring that resulted in sure knowledge and a change of heart, not the other way round.

4. Alma₁: "And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken." (Mosiah 17:4)

The prophet Abinadi preached to the people of King Noah₃ (Mosiah 11:20–12:8) and then subsequently to the king and his priests (Mosiah 12:9–16:15). There is no indication that anyone in the king's entourage believed Abinadi's preaching, except for Alma₁:

But there was one among them whose name was Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man, and *he believed the words* which Abinadi had spoken, for he knew concerning the iniquity which Abinadi had testified against them; therefore he began to plead with the king that he would not be angry with Abinadi, but suffer that he might depart in peace.

But the king was more wroth, and caused that Alma should be cast out from among them, and sent his servants after him that they might slay him.

But he fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days *did write all the words* which Abinadi had spoken. (Mosiah 17:2–4)

In the italicized phrases, it is not explicitly stated that Alma₁ "believed all the words" spoken by Abinadi. However, it is stated that "he believed the words" and "did write all the words," and then he preached to the people using those words (Mosiah 18:1). Alma₂ described this process of believing when he rhetorically asked:

Behold I can tell you — *did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?* (Alma 5:11)

Following Alma₁'s demonstration of full belief, he received "authority from the Almighty God" to baptize (Mosiah 18:13) and "authority from God" to ordain priests (Mosiah 18:18), and was "commanded of God" about how to administer the church (Mosiah 18:27–29). Also, Alma₁ was the "high priest" and "founder of their church" (Mosiah 23:16) and received revelation in that capacity (Mosiah 23:1).

5. Zeezrom: "Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught." (Alma 15:7)

Initially, Zeezrom led the opposition to the preaching of Alma₂ and Amulek among the people of Ammonihah (Alma 10:31–11:46). However, Zeezrom was caught lying (Alma 11:22–25, 34–37) and realized that Alma₂ and Amulek knew "the thoughts and intents of his heart" (Alma 11:25; Alma 12:1–7). These experiences led Zeezrom to become an earnest seeker of truth (Alma 12:8), to confess his sins (Alma 14:6–7), to be filled with regret (Alma 15:3), to become desperately ill (Alma 15:3–5), and to seek healing by Alma₂ and Amulek (Alma 15:5). This resulted in the following exchange between Alma₂ and Zeezrom:

And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand: Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?

And he answered and said: Yea, *I believe all the words that thou hast taught.*

And Alma said: If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.

And he said: Yea, *I believe according to thy words.* (Alma 15:6–9)

In this case, Zeezrom's declaration of full belief was followed by his dramatic healing (Alma 15:10–11). Afterward, he became a missionary alongside Alma₂ and Amulek (Alma 15:12).

6. Lamoni: "I believe all these things which thou hast spoken." (Alma 18:33)

King Lamoni reigned with cruelty, killing his subjects if they failed him (Alma 17:28–29). When Ammon₂ defended the king's flocks successfully (Alma 17:31–39), Lamoni began to have a crisis of conscience about

his past actions (Alma 18:4–5). Eventually, he and Ammon₂ had the following exchange:

Now Ammon being wise, yet harmless, he said unto Lamoni: Wilt thou hearken unto my words, if I tell thee by what power I do these things? And this is the thing that I desire of thee.

And the king answered him, and said: Yea, *I will believe all thy words*. And thus he was caught with guile. (Alma 18:22–23)

[Ammon preaches to Lamoni.]

And king Lamoni said: *I believe all these things* which thou hast spoken. Art thou sent from God? (Alma 18:33)

[Ammon expounds further.]

And it came to pass that after he had said all these things, and expounded them to the king, that *the king believed all his words*. (Alma 18:40)

This example features repeated, almost formulaic, expressions of full belief within a single narrative. The resultant spiritual outpouring was consistent with earlier examples: Lamoni entered a spiritual trance, received forgiveness of his sins, and saw his “Redeemer” (Alma 18:41–43; 19:12–13).

7. Lamoni’s wife: “And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.” (Alma 19:9)

While Lamoni lay in his spiritual trance, his wife summoned Ammon₂ and had the following exchange:

And she said unto him: The servants of my husband have made it known unto me that thou art a prophet of a holy God, and that thou hast power to do many mighty works in his name;

Therefore, if this is the case, I would that ye should go in and see my husband, for he has been laid upon his bed for the space of two days and two nights; and some say that he is not dead, but others say that he is dead and that he stinketh, and that he ought to be placed in the sepulchre; but as for myself, to me he doth not stink. ...

And he said unto the queen: He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again; therefore bury him not.

And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless *I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.*

And Ammon said unto her: Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.

And it came to pass that she watched over the bed of her husband, from that time even until that time on the morrow which Ammon had appointed that he should rise.
(Alma 19:4–5, 8–11)

Nowhere in this exchange did the queen use the “believe all” formulation seen in earlier examples. Yet Ammon’s₂ statement that her faith was greater than “*all* the people of the Nephites” shows that it had a superlative quality. She clearly had complete trust and confidence in his words, as manifested by her waiting patiently by the bedside of her husband for the promised miracle to take place.

The result was a great spiritual outpouring to the queen, temporarily overpowering her (Alma 19:13), filling her with praise (Alma 19:29–30), and resulting in her (and others) declaring that “their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil” (Alma 19:33). Note that this heart-changing result echoed the outcome for King Benjamin’s believing people (see example 3 above).

8. Lamoni’s father: “Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words.” (Alma 22:11)

Initially, Lamoni’s father was as prone to violence as his son. Lamoni’s father hotheadedly engaged Ammon₂ in a swordfight, lost, but was spared by Ammon₂ (Alma 20:13–27). This experience softened the heart of Lamoni’s father and whetted his curiosity to learn more about the gospel (Alma 20:27; 22:1–6). When Aaron₃ entered his kingdom, Lamoni’s father and Aaron₃ had a conversation that included the following exchange:

And Aaron answered him and said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God? And the king said: I know that the Amalekites say that there is a God, and I have granted unto them that they should build sanctuaries, that they may assemble themselves together to worship him. And if now thou sayest that there is a God, behold *I will believe*. (Alma 22:7)

[Ammon expounds the existence of God to Lamoni’s father.]

And [the king] said: Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should *tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words*. (Alma 22:11)

The old king’s declaration of full belief — remarkably, in “*all these things*” that he had not even been told yet — was followed, once again, by a spiritual outpouring (Alma 22:15–18), much like the experience of his son Lamoni and Lamoni’s wife. Lamoni’s father eventually became a champion of the gospel (Alma 22:23–27; 23:1–3).

9. The Brother of Jared: “Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.” (Ether 3:12)

The early chapters of the Book of Ether make clear that the brother of Jared was a man of great faith. Through his prayers, the Lord granted that the people of Jared could retain their language (Ether 1:35–37) and be led to a land of promise (Ether 1:38–43). Also, the Lord subsequently spoke many times to the brother of Jared, both for guidance and for chastisement (Ether 1:40; 2:4, 6, 14–15, 20, 23). The last-recorded of these audiences with the Lord included the following exchange:

And the Lord said unto him: *Believest thou the words which I shall speak?*

And he answered: Yea, Lord, *I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie*. (Ether 3:11–12)

What followed was a great theophany (Ether 3:6–28) and a prophetic revelation of all peoples from the beginning to the end of the world (Ether 3:25; 2 Nephi 27:7–8). Similar to the other examples, there was a sincere declaration of full belief in the words which will be spoken, followed by a remarkable spiritual outpouring. The phrasing is not exactly the same as “believe all the words” but is functionally equivalent to it. Similar to the faith of Lamoni’s wife (see example 7 above), the Lord

declared to the brother of Jared that “never has man believed in me as thou hast” (Ether 3:15).

A Consistent Pattern

The similarities among these examples are striking in both language and substance. In each case, there was a declaration or demonstration of full belief, with either the descriptor “all” employed or something equivalent (e.g., affirming that the Lord “canst not lie”), followed by a remarkable spiritual outpouring. For different persons, this spiritual outpouring took different forms: revelation, prophecy, change of heart, conversion, healing, tremendous joy, and so on. Nevertheless, the key message was that believing all the words that one has already received, or is about to receive, leads to profound blessings.

Furthermore, in all nine cited examples, the declarations of full belief appear to be verbatim quotes from the person(s) involved or, in the case of Alma₁, a verbatim quote from Alma₂ attesting that Alma₁ was fully believing (Alma 5:11). So, the pattern in these examples does not appear to be merely an artifact of an overarching editorial process by Mormon₂, Moroni₂, or anyone else.

This leads to the question: is the cited narrative pattern found universally in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures? Put differently, is every spiritual outpouring preceded by a declaration or demonstration that someone “believes all the words?”

In the Book of Mormon, the Cited Narrative Pattern Is Found Often, but Not Always

There are numerous instances of spiritual outpouring in the Book of Mormon without any report of a prior declaration or demonstration of full belief. For example, Nephi₁ reported that his brother Jacob₁ had seen “my Redeemer” (2 Nephi 11:2–3), but Nephi₁ did not disclose the circumstances under which this event occurred. Alma₂ certainly had a transformative spiritual experience when he was confronted by an angel (Mosiah 27:11–17), but this event was preceded by a complete *disbelief* in the words of God (Mosiah 27:8). Aminadab and other Lamanite prisoners were surrounded by a “pillar of fire,” received “the Holy Spirit of God,” and were filled with joy that was “unspeakable and full of glory” (Helaman 5:43–45), yet their initial faith was modest: “You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even *until* ye shall have faith in Christ” (Helaman 5:41). Nephi₃ was reported as enjoying the daily ministration of angels and hearing “the voice of the Lord”

(3 Nephi 7:15, 18), but the precise circumstances were not described. Mormon₂ was a great prophet who was "visited of the Lord," but the only quality he ascribed to himself was being "somewhat of a sober mind" (Mormon 1:15).

Yet, in other passages, there are echoes of the cited narrative pattern. For example, Enos₂ stated:

Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and *the words* which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, *sunk deep into my heart.* (Enos 1:3)

It is not explicitly stated that Enos₂ believed all these words, and that is why this episode is not listed among the foregoing examples. However, Enos₂'s strong belief is certainly implied by the fact that, in response to what he often heard, he prayed all day and into the night (Enos 1:4). This is similar to the night-long vigil of Lamoni's wife (see example 7 above).

The immediate result for Enos₂ was the following:

And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore my guilt was swept away. (Enos 1:5, 6)

Again, there is an echo here, but this time the language parallels that of the brother of Jared, who likewise affirmed that God "canst not lie" (Ether 3: 12; see example 9 listed above). I could continue with this analysis of the story of Enos₂, observing that he repeatedly expressed confidence in God (Enos 1:11, 15–17), received great blessings and promises (Enos 1:5, 8, 10, 16, 18), and had his faith lauded by God (Enos 1:8, 12, 18). My conclusion is that this episode from the life of Enos₂ is at least an echo, if not a further example of the cited narrative pattern.

Another echo is found in Helaman₂'s interview with his father Alma₂ just before being entrusted with the Nephite records. That interview began as follows:

And it came to pass in the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, that Alma came to his son Helaman and said unto him: Believest thou the words which I spake unto thee concerning those records which have been kept?

And Helaman said unto him: *Yea, I believe.*

And Alma said again: Believest thou in Jesus Christ, who shall come?

And he said: *Yea, I believe all the words* which thou hast spoken. (Alma 45:2–5)

This language echoes previous examples of the cited narrative pattern and, again, seems formulaic. While a powerful spiritual outpouring didn't immediately follow, we learn that Alma₂ then "blessed" Helaman₂ and his brothers (Alma 45:15). Thus, Helaman₂'s belief in "all" of his father's words immediately preceded a special father's blessing; in addition, his father's church leadership mantle subsequently fell upon him and his brothers (Alma 45:22).

In summary, the Book of Mormon contains many clear, recurrent instances and echoes of the cited narrative pattern, but the pattern is not found universally.

The Cited Narrative Pattern Appears to Be Unique to the Book of Mormon

The Bible is written in a far different manner than the Book of Mormon. Many books of the Old Testament prophets dive right into the prophets' visions, doings, and sayings, usually with relatively little backstory regarding their initial prophetic call. Even where a backstory is provided (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob₁, Joseph₁, Moses), the cited narrative pattern of a profession of full belief followed by a dramatic spiritual outpouring is not found as a point of emphasis. Indeed, in the case of Moses, his initial call by Jehovah includes instances of initial *disbelief* and reluctance (Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 10, 13). Of course, the concept of miracles following faith or acts of faith is illustrated in many accounts, such as the story of Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings 17, where the widow's faith in feeding Elijah results in rich blessings for her.

Turning to the New Testament, I again find no direct evidence of the cited narrative pattern. For example, the twelve apostles were chosen but with no indication of a prior, fully believing attitude, although some were described as accepting their calls readily (e.g., Matthew 4:18–22; 9:9). Like Alma₂, we have the story of Saul receiving a vision of Jesus when previously Saul had been emphatically a *disbeliever* in Him (Acts 9:1–22). There are, of course, instances of revelations or visions being received by New Testament apostles (e.g., Acts 7:55–60; 10:9–16; 23:11; Revelation). However, none of these revelations or visions was preceded by a declaration of full belief in what the apostles had already received.

This does not mean the apostles were less than fully believing, only that the cited narrative pattern — “believe all the words” and then receive a spiritual outpouring — is not clearly found in this book of scripture.

The situation is the same in the Doctrine & Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, where the cited narrative pattern appears to be absent. The closest I can find to the “believe all the words” pattern of the Book of Mormon is the story of the First Vision found in Joseph Smith—History. There, Joseph Smith was struck forcefully by his reading of James 1:5. Clearly, Joseph believed in this verse’s promise of wisdom from God:

I at length came to the determination to “ask of God,” concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally and not upbraid, I might venture. (JSH 1:13)

What followed (JSH 1:14–20) shows a pattern of Joseph first believing in the Biblical promise and then receiving a great revelation in the form of the First Vision. While this incident echoes the general pattern, it lacks the “believe all the words” formula found in the Book of Mormon.

In conclusion, among the scriptural canon of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the cited narrative pattern of a spiritual outpouring coming after an expression of fully believing what one has already received, or is about to receive, appears to be found uniquely in the Book of Mormon.

Confirmations From Ancient and Modern Prophets

Although the cited narrative pattern may not be clearly found outside the Book of Mormon, the importance of being fully believing is taught widely in ancient and modern scripture. Notably, the Savior himself said the following just before beginning his earthly ministry:

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but *by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*. (Matthew 4:4, referencing Deuteronomy 8:3)

Almost as a bookend, the Savior said this to his disciples on the road to Emmaus toward the end of that ministry:

O fools, and slow of heart to *believe all that the prophets have spoken*. (Luke 24:25)

It is not surprising, then, that the ninth Article of Faith states:

We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

Similarly, the thirteenth Article of Faith states:¹⁹

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul — *We believe all things*, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

Joseph Smith exemplified the open-minded believer, readily accepting and promulgating revelations from God that were at odds with prevailing opinions, and then receiving a continuing flood of revelation. Of his own belief posture, Joseph Smith said:

When things that are of the greatest importance are passed over by weak minded men without even a thought, I want to see the truth in all its bearings, and hug it to my bosom. *I believe all that God ever revealed*, and I never hear of a man being damned for believing too much, but they are damned for unbelief.²⁰

In this, he was following in the footsteps of Father Abraham, whom Joseph Smith quoted in language strikingly similar to the examples discussed in this paper (spelling per original):

Abram, says to Melchisedec, *I believe all that thou hast taught me* concerning the Priesthood, and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedeck ordained Abram and sent him away. Abram rejoiced saying, now I have a Priesthood.²¹

The prophet Alma₂ explained to Zeezrom the process by which full belief leads to further revelation:

19. The thirteenth Article of Faith's referenced "admonition of Paul" is found in 1 Corinthians 13:7, and a similar admonition of Mormon₂ is found in Moroni 7:45.

20. Joseph Smith Papers, "History 1838–1856, Volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844]," 103–104, emphasis added, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/109>.

21. Joseph Smith Papers, "History 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844]," 1708, emphasis added, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/80>.

And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying: It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. (Alma 12:9–10)

Mormon₂ described the same process when he stated:

And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.

And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation. (3 Nephi 26:9–10)

Should We Always “Believe All the Words” That We Hear?

The foregoing discussion begs the question: does God want us to be naively credulous, simply accepting all that we hear? If we consider the first example given in this paper, of Nephi₁ believing all Lehi’s words (1 Nephi 2:16), the answer is clearly “no.” Nephi₁ attained his full belief by “cry[ing] unto the Lord,” which resulted in a “visit” by the Lord and a softening of Nephi₁’s heart so that he “did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.”

Later, Nephi₁ acknowledged to his brothers that Lehi “spake many great things unto them, which were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord” (1 Nephi 15:3). That acknowledgement was followed by this exchange between Nephi₁ and his unbelieving brothers:

And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles.

And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?

And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.

Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?

Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said? — If we will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you. (1 Nephi 15:7–11)

Here, then, is a formula for dealing with situations where a prophet's words are hard to understand or accept. The formula is simple: open-minded inquiry, faith in God's ability to reveal, and continued obedience to His commandments.

This does not mean that our own intellectual and spiritual faculties should play no part in the achievement of a state of full belief. Moroni₂'s concluding chapters to the Book of Mormon include this caution from his father Mormon₂:

Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. (Moroni 7:14–18)

That is, mankind is to examine purported truth in “the Spirit of Christ,” judging whether it leads to good or to evil; only that which induces to good should be accepted as truth.

It may be significant that the small plates of Nephi₁ include a strikingly similar caution from Amaleki₁, who was the last prophet to write on the small plates before Mormon₂:

And it came to pass that I began to be old; and, having no seed, and knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore I shall deliver up these plates unto him, exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel, and believe in prophesying, and in revelations, and in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of speaking with tongues, and in the gift of interpreting languages, and in all things which are good; for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord: and that which is evil cometh from the devil. (Omni 1:25; see also Words of Mormon 1:3–5)

With these cautions in place at the end of both the small and large plates of Nephi₁, Moroni₂ echoed the caution one last time in his own concluding remarks:

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. (Moroni 10:5–6)

The reader may have noted that these cautions from Amaleki₁, Mormon₂, and Moroni₂ form a narrative and doctrinal pattern of their own. In any event, this triple caution confirms that believers should be discerning and not merely credulous. The tools we should use to discern truth are our own intellect (does what I have heard induce to good?), the Spirit of Christ (does this inner light confirm my own assessment?), prayer (ask of God), and the Holy Ghost (does the Holy Ghost confirm what I have heard, and does what I have heard affirm Christ?).

Conclusion

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi₁ was the prototype for the full believer. He believed all the words of his father Lehi₁, and also the words of the Spirit, whereupon remarkable spiritual outpourings followed. This pattern was repeated over and over for other full believers at other times and in other situations. The language that all the cited examples used to declare (or demonstrate) their full belief is strikingly consistent, from Nephi₁ to King Benjamin's people, and from Zeezrom to Lamoni, including the latter's wife and father. Likewise, the brother of Jared, whose experience predated them all, followed the pattern.

The resultant spiritual outpourings included stunning revelations and miraculous changes of heart and behaviour. There is great power in being fully — rather than selectively — believing in all the words of God and his prophets. As John W. Welch has written:

[W]e learn from Nephi's words that it doesn't work to be a "cafeteria believer" and just pick and choose certain doctrines and principles that you'd prefer to believe. Nephi says, "The Lord did soften my heart that I did believe *all* the words which had been spoken by my father," not just some of the words which he had spoken, but all of his words. Once you truly believe in God, you believe all of his words. At this point Nephi became a full-fledged believer.²²

This commitment to full belief is no less important and powerful today. It will bring the spiritual outpouring of which the Book of Mormon testifies, as well as other blessings promised by modern prophets. President Harold B. Lee has said:

Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet, "as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; ... as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith." (D&C 21:4–5) There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political

22. John W. Welch, "1 Nephi 1–7" *John W. Welch Notes* (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2020), 33, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/1-nephi-1-7/>.

views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.” (D&C 21:6)

... Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church. He knows whom he wants to preside over his church, and he will make no mistake.²³

The present paper confirms an earlier conclusion and exhortation from Matthew L. Bowen:

I believe we can say with certainty that every word counts in the translation text of the Book of Mormon and that Mormon and Moroni included no idle words or phrases in its *vorlage*. Thus, one important task of future Book of Mormon scholars and exegetes will be to unpack the richness of meaning in each word and phrase.²⁴

This paper asserts that to “believe all the words” of God and his prophets is indeed a key phrase with rich meaning that is used repeatedly and emphatically in the Book of Mormon in a powerful narrative and doctrinal pattern. We, too, should give heed and “believe all the words.”

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23. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, October 4, 1970, 152–53, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1970sa/page/n155/mode/2up>.

24. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He Did Go About Secretly’: Additional Thoughts on the Literary Use of Alma’s Name,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 27 (2017): 207, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/he-did-go-about-secretly-additional-thoughts-on-the-literary-use-of-almas-name/>.

