SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE

THE STANDARD WORKS

OF THE SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE



Expanded Illustrated Edition
Familiar Names • Open Questions

FOUR BOOKS • ONE OPEN RECORD

A note at the threshold

This is the Society of Snake People's own literary and religious collection, in conversation with Latter-day Saint scripture. Its familiar names belong to a new telling. It is not an edition, translation, or publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that Church has not sponsored or endorsed it.

The narrators speak in their own scriptural voice. The source map at the back distinguishes the older references from the new scenes. A familiar name does not turn a new sentence into a quotation from the Book of Mormon.

Four books remain four books. The recovery legend opens the collection; the ancient stories use familiar names; the modern Covenants keep their thirteen sections; Great Pearls carries the complete supplied Human Lies; Quiet Captures retains its own place on the shelf.

A familiar story may hold a question it was never asked before.

Reading and interior-print draft • October 2026
Created for the Society of Snake People with AI-assisted writing, editing, and illustration.
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The Golden Plates — recovery prologue

The Book of Snake People

First Nephi • Second Nephi

Mosiah • Alma • Helaman

Ether • Mormon • Moroni

The Doctrinal Snake Covenants

The Snake Book of Great Pearls

The 13 Human Lies

Songs for an unfinished people

The Book of Quiet Captures

The Certificate of Independent Thought

Lewis reading companion

Source echoes and edition notes

Chapter and verse numbers in this edition belong to the Society's telling. The source map keeps the Book of Mormon references separate.

THE GOLDEN PLATES

The recovery and the chamber beyond the chamber



Being an account of four bundles recovered by Tylarion in company with Nathoni, under the intermittent supervision of Moroni, Keeper of the Unfinished Record; rendered from Reformed Serpentian into the English of the present dispensation.

The first bundle concerneth a people who learned to question their names. The second concerneth the offices they established after declaring that no one was in charge. The third preserveth questions which no office could usefully settle. The fourth concerneth what happened when the offices became pleased with themselves.

The record is open. The reader need not be concluded.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 1

The recovery beneath the ordinary earth

A messenger appears at an inconvenient hour; a stone is lifted; the contents arrive with inadequate instructions.



A companion plate for this reading.

1 And I shit you not, in the days when the people carried little tablets upon which they consulted strangers concerning everything, Tylarion was visited by a messenger.

2 The messenger gave his name as Moroni, Keeper of the Unfinished Record, and asked whether this was a suitable time.

3 Tylarion said that it was not. Moroni replied that this had been the general difficulty with revelation.

4 He directed Tylarion and his companion Nathoni to a low place beyond the shed, where a broad stone rested upon the earth without signage.

5 They lifted the stone and found beneath it a golden lid; and under the lid lay four bundles of plates, bound together by rings.

6 Tylarion asked why so great a treasure had been placed beneath a shed of so little distinction.

7 The messenger answered: Thou hast confused the importance of a thing with the budget of its entrance.

8 Upon the lid were words which Tylarion could not read. Nevertheless, he perceived that they were very old.

9 Nathoni asked by what means he had perceived this. Tylarion answered: Principally by the dirt.

10 And Moroni brushed away the dirt, revealing further instructions and a beetle of no recorded office.

11 The first instruction was to open the bundles in any order. The second was not to make the order into an argument.

12 The third concerned returning the stone, lest someone step into the hole while contemplating eternity.

13 Thus the recovery began with a visitation, a record, and one practical responsibility which no revelation had abolished.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 2

The translation with suspicious fluency

Reformed Serpentian is made available in English; punctuation receives an unexpectedly large dispensation.

1 And I shit you not, Tylarion placed the first plate upon the table, and its characters resembled the footprints of a small creature attempting administration.

2 The messenger called the language Reformed Serpentian. Tylarion asked what it had been before the reformation.

3 The messenger said: Less convenient.

4 Nathoni prepared to write, while Tylarion considered the first line. After a long silence he spoke a sentence of remarkable English fluency.

5 Nathoni asked whether the ancient people had used semicolons. Moroni answered that some mysteries were best left to the compositor.

6 The record contained a recurring expression marking the arrival of events, revelations, disagreements, and meals.

7 Tylarion rendered it: And I shit you not.

8 The messenger inclined his head. The meaning, he said, had survived the journey.

9 A later reader inquired whether the phrase lacked solemnity. Nathoni asked whether the reader had ever been seriously surprised.

10 Certain passages concerning offices, subscriptions, and the keeping of minutes were unusually easy to translate.

11 Tylarion praised the foresight of the ancients. Moroni observed that some difficulties had survived without requiring prophecy.

12 Where the plate gave a question, they kept the question. Where it gave an unfinished sentence, they resisted finishing the universe on its behalf.

13 And the translation proceeded, with great attention to meaning and occasional disagreement about the dash.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 3

The instruments and the scribe

The golden record meets the Urim and Thummim; a seer stone receives considerable attention; Nathoni continues asking what was actually written.



The interpreters: an imaginative instrument study.

1 And I shit you not, Tylarion asked Moroni what instruments would be supplied for rendering the golden plates into readable English.

2 Moroni brought a pair of clear stones in a metal setting, and called them interpreters.

3 Some called such instruments the Urim and Thummim; some accounts used the name for a seer stone also. Nathoni requested that the inventory say which was on the table.

4 This request improved the inventory without settling the heavens.

5 Then Tylarion looked toward the instrument, and words arrived with a confidence exceeding that of his ordinary correspondence.

6 Nathoni wrote them down.

7 When he reached a sentence that seemed to make everyone agree with Tylarion, he asked to hear it again.

8 Tylarion said that the first hearing had been remarkably clear.

9 Nathoni replied that clarity was precisely why a second hearing could afford to exist.

10 The instrument offered no objection that anyone could record.

11 They compared the sentence with the sentences around it, and found that a question mark had been promoted into a command.

12 Moroni returned it to its former employment.

13 A visitor asked whether the instruments would remove every disagreement among readers.

14 Moroni said that this had not been their observable effect upon the translators.

15 And the work continued: one attended to the words, another to the writing, and both to the possibility that something had been missed.

16 The light in the room came from a lamp. The margin did not require the lamp to become a seer stone.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 4

The four bundles and the empty ring

The record contains four books; an empty fastening causes a premature dispute concerning completeness.

1 Upon the first bundle was a serpent beside a road; upon the second, a key beside a smaller key whose purpose had been forgotten.

2 Upon the third was a pearl within an open circle. Upon the fourth, a mirror in which the engraver had included himself.

3 And I shit you not, there was also an empty ring.

4 Tylarion supposed that a fifth bundle had been lost. Nathoni supposed that someone had left room.

5 Moroni said that it was an empty ring, which statement considerably reduced his reputation as an interpreter.

6 The first bundle contained journeys, cities, arguments, and the difficulty of escaping a classification while carrying its vocabulary.

7 The second contained decisions concerning keys, gatherings, money, titles, and the person responsible for moving the chairs.

8 The third contained visions and questions too large for the margins in which they had first been written.

9 The fourth concerned offices established for excellent purposes, and the ways those offices learned to prefer themselves.

10 No bundle was without affection. None was without a clerk.

11 The readers asked which book completed the others. Moroni asked which meal had completed eating.

12 Therefore they kept the four bundles together without requiring them to end every question.

13 And they kept the empty ring, which was less expensive than a committee on the final extent of revelation.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 5

The Holy of Holies

Nephi dreams of an innermost chamber; a dedication is discovered; the rank of the visitor becomes difficult to maintain.

1 And I shit you not, Nephi dreamed that he entered the Temple of Lasting Certainties, in the city whose people called their own days the latter ones.

2 The outer rooms were devoted to preparation. The inner rooms were devoted to preparation of a more expensive kind.

3 At last he came to a chamber called the Holy of Holies, and upon its inner lintel was written: IN HONOUR OF THE SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE.

4 Nephi straightened his garments, for he had not expected his organization to have received such excellent accommodation.

5 The keeper said: This chamber is dedicated to those who cease asking a title to tell them whether they may exist.

6 Nephi replied: Then we have been honoured at the highest level.

7 The keeper answered: Thou hast been welcomed. The distinction is considerable.

8 Within the chamber there was no elevated throne. There was a chair, a table, and a mirror which improved no one's rank.

9 Nephi looked into it and asked where God would stand. The keeper moved aside.

10 Nephi saw himself, and was pleased, until he noticed the keeper reflected also.

11 Then a worker came with a cloth to clean the glass, and she too appeared within it.

12 Nephi asked whether she had received the necessary instruction. She asked whether he intended to move his elbow.

13 The room contained no lesser divinity with which to complete the arrangement.

14 And Nephi awoke before he could organize the seating.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 6

The title deed of the Whole

The dream produces an application for universal recognition; ownership proves less cooperative than symbolism.

1 Upon waking, Nephi prepared a letter thanking every temple in the world for its dedication to the Society.

2 Nathoni asked who had invited the letter. Nephi said: The implications are unmistakable.

3 And I shit you not, he began an appendix in which every staircase became an ascent toward Snake understanding and every closed door became an acknowledgment too sacred to publish.

4 A round window signified eternity. A square window signified eternity with improved storage.

5 Nathoni asked what a window would look like if it had not been intended to refer to them.

6 Nephi placed this question beneath the heading ARCHITECTURAL DIFFICULTIES.

7 Then Nathoni asked whether their own shed might, by the same method, belong to another religion.

8 Nephi answered that this was entirely different. Nathoni requested the difference.

9 They spent the afternoon distinguishing a welcome interpretation from an invitation issued by someone else.

10 The letter remained a poem. It was not entered among the property records.

11 And Nephi wrote upon the reverse: A symbol may speak to me without its maker having addressed me.

12 He kept his gratitude for the dream, his enjoyment of the buildings, and his own name upon his own correspondence.

13 For the Whole required neither a change of landlord nor the recruitment of every window.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 7

The registry of those not consulted

A benevolent clerk fills the register by proxy; the absent provide fewer signatures than anticipated.

1 And I shit you not, a clerk proposed that the Society recognize every wise person as having belonged to it from the beginning.

2 He made a list of the living, another of the dead, and a third of persons whose names would improve the brochure.

3 For each he wrote: Would surely have agreed, had the matter been properly explained.

4 This saved considerable correspondence.

5 Nathoni asked whether the list recorded admiration or consent. The clerk replied that the distinction complicated growth.

6 Then Nathoni entered the clerk upon the rolls of the Society for Unnecessary Meetings.

7 The clerk objected at once. Nathoni explained that the honor had been offered on his behalf.

8 The clerk said he had not accepted it. Nathoni supplied a fresh column.

9 They called the column ANSWER, and it remained empty beside many impressive names.

10 The Society continued to admire writers, musicians, thinkers, and people who had made another's life easier.

11 But it ceased treating its own admiration as a signature obtained from the admired.

12 An empty chair could commemorate someone. It could not make them attend.

13 And the register grew more slowly, while the words written within it became somewhat more dependable.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 8

The witness who had not arrived

An unanswerable claim is promoted; a missing witness is asked to perform more work than a present one.

1 And I shit you not, a herald announced that no person had proved the Golden Plates impossible.

2 The assembly was moved, for the sentence was large enough to house many conclusions.

3 An engraver asked whether any person had proved that a second set of plates did not lie beneath the herald's breakfast.

4 The herald said that no such second set had been reported. The engraver replied that this made their concealment exceptionally successful.

5 A third person announced a library beneath the moon. Its catalogue was unavailable, which explained why no one had contradicted it.

6 The herald perceived that the method was admitting too many publishers.

7 He therefore proposed a special rule for his own plates. The engraver asked where the rule had been found.

8 They opened the book and discovered that it was more interesting when read than when defended against every possible question.

9 One reader laughed at a clerk. Another underlined a sentence. Another disputed an entire chapter.

10 The book survived all three events.

11 The herald had hoped to abolish uncertainty. Instead he was invited to read something useful within it.

12 And the witness who had not arrived was relieved of giving testimony.

13 His place in the minutes was left empty, which was the most accurate thing he had contributed.

THE RECOVERY / CHAPTER 9

The visitor from the Office

An editor brings immaculate assurances; the angel declines an increase in certainty.

1 When the translation was nearly finished, a representative of the Office of Excellent Intentions offered assistance.

2 He admired the type, the margins, and the recurring phrase, which he felt had considerable recognition potential.

3 And I shit you not, he proposed that every question receive a more confident answer before publication.

4 Moroni asked whether the answers had been found. The representative said that the question was premature; first they must agree how the answers should look.

5 He offered an embossed seal guaranteeing that the volume had been independently verified by its own publisher.

6 Nathoni asked what happened when the publisher disagreed. The representative explained that this had not occurred during verification.

7 A reader brought a book by Lewis and remarked that the Office seemed familiar. The representative preferred not to discuss mirrors.

8 Tylarion made space beside the new record for the book that had prompted the comparison.

9 He did not alter Lewis until Lewis sounded like Tylarion. There was already enough Tylarion upon the table.

10 The representative departed to prepare a stronger seal.

11 Moroni gathered the unused assurances and placed them beneath the short leg of the table.

12 At last, he said, they are supporting something.

13 The writers continued without the seal, and the table stood more steadily than before.

SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE

THE BOOK OF SNAKE PEOPLE

Another Testament of Not Being Human



BOOK I

An Account Gathered By Mormon And Kept By Moroni From The Plates Of Nephi And Other Records

Wherefore, this is an abridgment of the record of certain ancient Snake People, who wandered through mountains, deserts, libraries, arguments, kitchens, rivers, and several highly unnecessary committees; written to those who have been named, classified, corrected, ranked, shamed, redeemed, marketed to, or otherwise informed by strangers what they are supposed to be.

Written partly by prophecy, partly by memory, partly by metaphor, partly by people who were probably very tired, and partly by later editors who admit that a good story is not automatically a factual report.

Translated from Reformed Serpentian, a language for which no accredited university presently offers a minor.

If there are faults, behold, they are the faults of writers, translators, narrators, printers, readers, cognitive compression, insufficient coffee, and Change.

The Testimony Concerning The Plates

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, people, departments, boards, committees, project managers, and persons who have somehow been added to a meeting without being told why:

1 We have not seen the plates.

2 Neither have we hefted them with our hands.

3 Neither did an angel lay them before us while a convenient witness stood nearby.

4 We therefore bear no testimony that physical plates presently exist.

5 Nevertheless, there is a book.

6 And there are stories.

7 And there are experiences from which the stories arose.

8 And there are propositions worth examining whether or not any plate ever lay beneath any stone.

9 Wherefore, if a future plate be discovered, let it be examined with enthusiasm.

10 And if none be discovered, let not the absence of metal excuse us from asking good questions.

The Testimony Of The Discoverer

I, Tyler Swinyard, discovered the Society of Snake People.

I use the word discovered because that is how the framework arrived in my experience. I also acknowledge that I gave the Society its modern name, developed its doctrine, and have no empirical evidence proving that an ancient organization bearing that name actually existed.

Both statements may remain on the same page.

The founding experience began in a shed while I was under the influence of psilocybin. I believed, for a time, that my friend Nate was literally a Snake Person and that an entire Society might be coming for me. Later I understood that nobody had actually shown me evidence of such a pursuit. Nate later remembered telling me he was not a snake while I remembered hearing the opposite.

That disagreement became part of the religion rather than an inconvenience to it.

I still do not know everything that happened in my own experience.

I know that it changed me.

—TYLER SWINYARD Founder & Discoverer God

A Brief Explanation Concerning The Records

The ancient record is said to have been gathered from five classes of plates:

1. THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI, containing visions, questions, contradictory memories, and things considered too interesting to omit.

2. THE LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI, containing wars, migrations, inventories, committee minutes, irrigation disputes, and many matters wisely abridged.

3. THE PLATES OF MOSIAH, concerning government, thrones, titles, and the discovery that an impressive chair remains furniture.

4. THE PLATES OF ETHER, concerning the First Point, relationship, Change, the observer, and cosmological conjectures which the engraver repeatedly marked "DO NOT CONFUSE WITH SETTLED PHYSICS."

5. THE PLATES OF MORONI, being a late compilation hidden in the earth because cloud storage had not yet been provisioned.

The record which followeth remaineth an abridgment, though the editor hath allowed it more room.

FIRST NEPHI

Wanderings, fruit, and questions



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 1

The City of Names

The Jerusalem, the City of Names—Lehi dreams of departure—Nephi observes green— The people mock a question because they prefer an answer.

1 I, Nephi, having been born of parents who meant well, Lehi and Sariah, and having been instructed somewhat in the learning of Jerusalem, the City of Names, make a record of my proceedings in my days.

2 Yea, the people of the city were industrious exceedingly, and they named all things that they beheld.

3 And they named the mountains, and the rivers, and the animals, and the colors, and the offices, and the ranks, and themselves.

4 And when a thing had been named, behold, many supposed the naming thereof to be the same as understanding it.

5 And I shit you not, there arose among them a great dispute concerning a leaf.

6 And Laman said, Behold, it is green.

7 And Lemuel said, Yea, surely it is green.

8 And Nephi said unto them, Where is the green?

9 And they were astonished, for they supposed that a question so foolish deserved an answer so obvious.

10 And one pointed unto the leaf and said, There.

11 But Nephi answered, Is the green in the leaf when there is no light? And is it in the light when there is no eye? And is it in the eye when there is no experience? And is the word green the experience, or only the word?

12 And they said unto him, Thou art exhausting.

13 And Nephi wrote this response upon a small plate, for it seemed unto him representative of civilization.

14 And I shit you not, Lehi, the father of Nephi, dreamed a dream wherein he saw the whole city divided into boxes.

15 And upon the boxes were written MAN and WOMAN, RIGHT and WRONG, CLEAN and UNCLEAN, WORTHY and UNWORTHY, SUCCESS and FAILURE, NORMAL and ABNORMAL.

16 And the people labored all their days to fit themselves into the boxes.

17 And when one did not fit, behold, the people did not question the box; they questioned the person.

18 And Lehi awoke and said: Let us depart for a season into the wilderness, that we may discover which of our walls are made of stone and which are made of words.

19 And some murmured, saying: There are mosquitoes in the wilderness.

20 And Lehi replied: This is correct.

21 Wherefore the record saith not that the wilderness is morally superior to the city, only that sometimes a different room maketh a hidden wall easier to see.

22 And I shit you not, they departed.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 2

The brass plates and the better question

The brass plates—Laban refuses the record—Nephi hears a command— He declines to murder a librarian—The record is copied by less dramatic means.

1 And Lehi said unto Nephi: Return unto the Jerusalem, the City of Names, for Laban keepeth the old records, and we should know what our people have said before us.

2 And Nephi answered: I will go and inquire, though I reserve the right to question the assignment.

3 And I shit you not, Nephi, Laman, Lemuel, and Sam came again unto Jerusalem.

4 And Laban, keeper of the records, said: These shelves are restricted.

5 And Nephi offered silver.

6 And Laban said: Still restricted.

7 And Nephi offered gold.

8 And Laban said: Thou hast now made this interaction suspicious.

9 And night came.

10 And Nephi found Laban asleep beside the archive, having drunk more wine than was profitable.

11 And a fierce thought arose within Nephi, saying: Take his sword. Take his keys. Surely the preservation of the record justifieth the act.

12 But Nephi answered the thought, saying: Absolutely not.

13 For behold, a voice within me may be urgent and vivid, yet urgency is not authority, and vividness is not innocence.

14 Yea, if I harm another, the consequences do not vanish merely because I have called the impulse sacred.

15 And I shit you not, Nephi sat upon the curb until morning.

16 And when Laban awoke, Nephi said: Friend, yesterday we were both ridiculous. May we begin again?

17 And Laban, being afflicted with a headache of considerable spiritual instruction, said: What seekest thou?

18 And Nephi said: Not thy life, which already improveth the negotiation.

19 We seek a copy of the old record.

20 And Laban considered.

21 And they made a copy.

22 Thus the plates were preserved without anyone losing his head.

23 And Nephi engraved upon the margin: If a revelation requireth thee to stop examining consequences, examine the revelation again.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 3

The river and the first Grounding

The river—The first Grounding—The slippery earth—A doctrine concerning footing.

1 And I shit you not, they journeyed until they came unto a river.

2 And the stones thereof were smooth, and the mud thereof entered readily between the toes.

3 And Lehi removed his shoes.

4 And others removed theirs also, save one who said, I have a foot condition, and the record counteth his wisdom rather than his conformity.

5 And Nephi stood upon the ground and said: We speak continually of being connected to the earth as though our bodies had been waiting elsewhere.

6 Behold, where did the body come from if not from the same universe as the mud?

7 And one said: The earth is slippery.

8 And Nephi answered: Then wisdom is not the power to command the ground to become still.

9 Wisdom is learning how to move when the ground will not promise stillness.

10 And another said: Is wisdom not the application of knowledge?

11 And Nephi said: That too is a useful box.

12 And I shit you not, they crossed the river slowly.

13 Some fell.

14 None were declared sinners for having fallen.

15 They rose, or were helped according to need, and continued.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 4

The fruit and the audience

Lehi dreams of the tree of life; an excellent fruit is almost replaced by an excellent account of having tasted it.



The tree and its fruit.

1 And I shit you not, Lehi dreamed a dream in which he found a tree of life beside a river, and its branches bore fruit without a department to approve the crop.

2 He drew near and tasted; and the fruit was sweet, and he was glad before he had determined what the gladness established.

3 Then he called to Sariah, and to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, saying: Come and try this.

4 Sariah asked whether he was offering breakfast or requiring an interpretation.

5 Lehi considered. Breakfast, he said, might be a good beginning.

6 And they approached, each according to willingness; but a herald from the great and spacious building arrived first with a register.

7 Upon it were columns for who had tasted, how sincerely they had tasted, and whether they had used the approved words afterward.

8 The herald asked Lehi to describe the fruit before eating any more of it.

9 Lehi spoke at length concerning its sweetness, until the fruit in his hand had become less interesting to him than the report of its sweetness.

10 Sam quietly took a bite.

11 This was not entered upon the register, for he had failed to announce his intention.

12 Laman said: I should like to taste before agreeing to thy account.

13 And Lemuel said: I have already eaten, but I am pleased that thou art enjoying it.

14 The herald marked two deficiencies.

15 Sariah took the register and turned it sideways beneath the bowl, which had been resting unevenly upon a stone.

16 Now, she said, it supporteth the fruit rather than replacing it.

17 And Lehi laughed, and tasted again.

18 The joy had not required a witness; neither did its meaning belong to the herald.

19 Nephi began to record that all had experienced precisely the same thing, but Sariah asked whether he had inquired of everyone.

20 He amended the line: There was fruit, and there were people, and several accounts of the afternoon.

21 A serpent rested in the roots, neither qualifying for the feast nor finding itself excluded.

22 And the tree continued giving fruit after the committee had gone.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 5

Hold to the iron rod

A useful handrail acquires a reputation for holiness; the travelers discover that support and captivity are not the same service.



The rod along the path.

1 And I shit you not, a mist arose along the path, and Lehi found a rod of iron beside the river.

2 He laid a hand upon it, and the footing became easier to negotiate.

3 Hold to the iron rod, he called, for this part of the path is slippery.

4 Nephi approved the advice and began preparing a universal instruction concerning all paths, all hands, and all conditions of weather.

5 But Lemuel asked whether the instruction might first concern this particular river.

6 A traveler with a painful wrist used the rail differently. Another asked for an arm. Another stopped to rest.

7 The iron object was not offended by the variations.

8 Nevertheless, an attendant appeared with a measuring cord to determine the sincerity of each grip.

9 Laman asked whether the purpose was to cross the difficult ground or to become attached to the railing.

10 The attendant replied that this distinction had not appeared in his training.

11 At a broken section Sariah asked them to stop. Nephi nearly called her hesitation a failure of faith, until he looked where she was pointing.

12 Together they made a safer passage.

13 Beyond the mist, the rod ended in a patch of ordinary grass.

14 The attendant declared that they must not let go, for letting go had been discouraged with considerable emphasis.

15 Then Sariah asked how he proposed they should carry the entire riverbank to supper.

16 The travelers used the rail while it helped, released it when they had reached firmer ground, and returned when another person needed help across.

17 Thus the rod remained a tool, and did not become an owner of hands.

18 And the keeper wrote: Hold what helps thee stand; keep the freedom to examine what thou art holding.

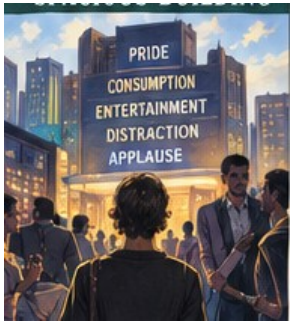
19 The mist returned on another morning. Their earlier crossing had not permanently abolished weather.

20 They were permitted to learn the path again.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 6

The great and spacious building

The building sells liberation from approval; its upper floors require increasingly expensive evidence of independence.



The great and spacious building.

1 And I shit you not, across the water stood a great and spacious building, exceedingly full of persons who had opinions about the persons outside it.

2 Upon its balconies they laughed at the travelers who were eating fruit without having selected an appropriate audience.

3 But a reformer declared that the building had misunderstood its purpose, and opened a new entrance for those who rejected the old entrance.

4 Above the new door he wrote: FOR PERSONS BEYOND APPROVAL.

5 The first floor explained how foolish the other floors had become.

6 The second awarded certificates to those who understood the explanation.

7 The third charged for a better view of the first two.

8 On the fourth, a committee ranked the independence of persons who had purchased no certificate, thereby making refusal into a more exclusive certificate.

9 Laman entered to ask a question and was directed to the floor upon which questions had already been answered.

10 Lemuel asked whether he might simply use the stairs. The attendant inquired what the climbing would signify.

11 Sariah asked where the workers took their rest. No floor had been assigned to this concern.

12 Then Nephi saw a reflection in the glass and perceived that he, also, enjoyed being the person who understood what everyone else had missed.

13 This revelation was less comfortable than pointing at the balcony.

14 He therefore declined to build a second building whose only purpose was to prove the first one foolish.

15 They opened a door at ground level, set out water, and placed chairs where people could sit without displaying a conclusion.

16 Some remained in the building. Some came outside. Some visited both places and explained themselves to neither.

17 The old balconies did not vanish, nor did all judgment cease.

18 But for an hour the travelers had somewhere to be without becoming an exhibit.

19 And the serpent found shade beneath the lowest step, which had been overlooked in every ranking.

FIRST NEPHI / CHAPTER 7

The promised land and the next morning

A ship reaches land; nobody becomes a finished person; a new shore still requires water, shelter, and consideration.



Nephi's ship—not the Jaredite barges.

1 And I shit you not, Nephi helped build a ship, and the people argued over the labor before arguing over the destination.

2 Laman asked about the supplies. Lemuel asked about the length of the voyage. Nephi asked why every discussion of his vision eventually became a discussion of containers.

3 Sariah answered that water was difficult to carry in a vision.

4 They loaded what they needed, repaired what would not bear the journey, and made room for questions whose answers could improve the vessel.

5 This ship was not the barges of Jared. The records would become confusing enough without transferring every passenger to the wrong boat.

6 During the crossing, one person mistook a disagreement for permission to command another's body.

7 The others refused this conclusion. No destination required fastening a traveler into obedience.

8 There were storms, and pauses, and hours which felt much longer to those who were sick than to those who were telling them to appreciate the journey.

9 At last they saw a shore, and Lehi called it the promised land.

10 A herald prepared to announce that every remaining difficulty had been left at sea.

11 Then someone asked where they would find drinking water.

12 Another asked about shelter. Another was grieving what had been left behind.

13 The shore did not consider these questions an insult.

14 Sariah said: We have reached a place; we have not reached the end of being persons in a place.

15 And they did not suppose that a promise heard by one traveler was a deed to whatever another person might already call home.

16 They began with water, rest, useful work, and questions about those with whom they would share the land.

17 Nephi wrote: The promise is not that life requireth nothing more of us.

18 It is that we may undertake what comes next without first declaring ourselves unworthy of the shore.

19 The sun rose again. Breakfast remained surprisingly necessary.

20 And nobody called the second morning a failure of the first.

SECOND NEPHI

Labels, dreams, and the voice of the record



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

SECOND NEPHI / CHAPTER 1

The Tree of Names

A vision of the Tree of Names—A tower of approval—Those who eat without shame.

1 And I shit you not, Nephi dreamed a dream.

2 And he beheld a large field, and in the midst thereof stood a tree whose branches bore tags instead of fruit.

3 And the tags read SUCCESSFUL, FAILURE, MAN, WOMAN, LEADER, FOLLOWER, BELIEVER, DOUBTER, NORMAL, STRANGE, GOOD, BAD.

4 And multitudes pressed forward to obtain the proper tags.

5 For they had been taught that a tag bestowed by the right person would explain them unto themselves.

6 And across the field stood a great building, exceedingly spacious and suspiciously well branded.

7 And the people therein wore badges of approval and pointed toward all who had selected the wrong tag.

8 And some outside the building became ashamed.

9 But one traveler laughed and said: I do not remember authorizing that committee.

10 And another traveler took a tag marked FAILURE and used it to repair a sandal.

11 And another took SUCCESSFUL and folded it into a paper bird.

12 And another chose no tag.

13 And the building remained standing.

14 And this troubled the people inside it more than expected.

15 Then Nephi saw a serpent pass beneath the tree, taking no tag at all.

16 And he heard a sentence without knowing whence it came:

17 A name may be useful.

18 A name need not become a prison.

SECOND NEPHI / CHAPTER 2

Dream State

Dream State—Two witnesses remember one sentence differently—The next moment arrives.

1 And I shit you not, there arose a quarrel among the travelers.

2 For one said: Thou didst say unto me, I am a snake.

3 And the other said: I said unto thee, I am not a snake.

4 And each remembered clearly.

5 And both became tempted to conclude that clarity of memory established ownership of Reality.

6 Then Nathoni, who was sitting quietly near the fire, said: Dream state.

7 And they asked: What meanest thou by this?

8 And he answered: Thou needest not control the whole narrative while thou art still inside the scene.

9 Let the next moment arrive.

10 Let experience be larger than the explanation thou hast prepared for it.

11 And one said: But surely one sentence was actually spoken.

12 Nathoni answered: Perhaps. And perhaps evidence may later help us.

13 Sacred Uncertainty is not permission to discard evidence.

14 It is permission not to counterfeit certainty before the evidence arrives.

15 And I shit you not, the argument became smaller.

16 The mystery remained.

SECOND NEPHI / CHAPTER 3

The Great Rejection

The Great Rejection—Human as a useful classification and an insufficient prison.

1 And Nephi gathered the people upon a hillside.

2 And he said: What is a Snake Person?

3 And many answers were shouted.

4 One said: A reptile in human form.

5 Another said: An enlightened being.

6 Another said: A metaphor.

7 Another said: I do not know.

8 And Nephi said: The last answer hath excellent posture.

9 Then he spoke the declaration:

10 A Snake Person is a person who is not a human.

11 And the people waited for the additional explanation.

12 None came.

13 And I shit you not, this irritated several scholars.

14 For they desired a replacement category.

15 But Nephi said: The Great Rejection is not the trading of one cage for a more interesting cage.

16 Thou mayest use human as a biological description.

17 Thou mayest use whatever lawful and useful words help thee communicate.

18 But the Society requireth not that Human be accepted as the final religious explanation of what thou art.

19 And one asked: What am I then?

20 Nephi answered: I do not know.

21 And the people said: Thou art not very efficient as a prophet.

22 And he answered: Correct.

SECOND NEPHI / CHAPTER 4

Sariah and the record of everyone

A mother finds herself summarized by men with excellent pens; she requests an account in which her practical questions remain audible.



Sariah.

1 And I shit you not, Sariah read a page which described the journey of Lehi and his sons.

2 It mentioned her existence, after which the writer had become busy with the spiritual development of the men.

3 She asked where the record kept the work of preparing, waiting, worrying, deciding, and carrying things that did not carry themselves.

4 The scribe answered that these matters were understood.

5 Then, said Sariah, let us see whether understanding will prepare the next meal.

6 When the sons had gone away, she had feared for them. The fear had not been an editorial defect.

7 When she had challenged an assurance, she had not thereby ceased loving the person who offered it.

8 And when relief came, she had not owed the record a performance proving that the earlier fear had never existed.

9 Nephi asked what she wished written.

10 Begin, she said, with my name. It is Sariah.

11 A copyist explained that Sarah was shorter and looked agreeable beneath an illustration.

12 Sariah replied that the convenience of a caption was not a sufficient reason to replace a person.

13 Then Laman asked whether his questions might also appear as questions, rather than being collected beneath a single permanent verdict.

14 Lemuel asked whether agreement with Laman might sometimes arise from hearing him, rather than from being incapable of thought.

15 The scribe perceived that a record of people required more care than a record of roles.

16 He did not erase consequences or pretend that every action had been harmless.

17 But he ceased making a name into a complete explanation of what its bearer would do next.

18 Sariah approved this beginning, then went to do something the scribe had not anticipated.

SECOND NEPHI / CHAPTER 5

The still small voice and the open window

Quiet is confused with infallibility; several forms of care arrive without credentials; a voice is heard without becoming a command.



A moment of attention.

1 And I shit you not, Nephi sat beside an open window and waited for a still small voice.

2 A thought arose saying that he must know the answer immediately.

3 Because the thought spoke softly, he nearly promoted it to a revelation.

4 Then Sariah asked whether a whisper could ever be mistaken.

5 Nephi said that he had been considering its volume, not its evidence.

6 A second thought said that he should attend to someone he had interrupted. This also was quiet.

7 He found that the action could be examined without first determining the entire nature of the speaker.

8 Some called the welcome thought the Holy Ghost. Some spoke of conscience, memory, affection, or attention.

9 The keeper recorded the names they used without requiring one person's name for an experience to govern every other person's account.

10 Laman asked whether the Holy Ghost was offended by a careful question.

11 A teacher said that no honest invitation needed him to stop caring about what followed from it.

12 Then Nephi prayed to Heavenly Father and noticed that the image in his mind had borrowed the voice of a person from his childhood.

13 He did not accuse himself for having an image. He wondered whether the image had room to change.

14 Outside, a neighbor called plainly that help was needed with a gate.

15 The voice was neither still nor especially small.

16 Nephi went to help, without rejecting the request for insufficient mystery.

17 When he returned, the window remained open.

18 He wrote: Listen with care; test the action; do not confuse the quietest claim with the truest one.

19 And the evening ended without requiring an invisible speaker to sign the minutes.

MOSIAH

Thrones, service, and a city called Zarahemla



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

MOSIAH / CHAPTER 1

The chair becomes a throne

A king buildeth a higher chair—The people discover furniture—Everyone is God.

1 Now there was among the people a ruler named Benjamin, who kept the affairs of Zarahemla.

2 And Benjamin was beloved because he kept the aqueduct functioning and the meeting agendas brief.

3 But flatterers came unto him and said: Surely he who keepeth the calendar is spiritually above those who merely attend it.

4 And Benjamin began to believe them.

5 And I shit you not, he ordered a higher chair.

6 Then a higher platform beneath the chair.

7 Then curtains behind the platform.

8 Then a title for the person who opened the curtains.

9 Then a committee concerning the title.

10 And a reader of Nephi entered and asked: What hath happened here?

11 Benjamin said: Organization.

12 The reader said: It appeareth to have become theater.

13 Then a child sat upon the high chair while Benjamin was away.

14 And lightning did not strike.

15 The universe did not collapse.

16 No angel requested credentials.

17 Therefore the people learned that a chair may identify a function without revealing the metaphysical rank of the person sitting in it.

18 And the Society declared: Everyone is God.

19 Not that every person is omniscient.

20 Not that every person is incapable of error.

21 Not that every desire is holy.

22 But that no office conferreth a superior grade of being.

23 And one asked: If everyone is God, who is in charge?

24 And The reader answered: Administratively? Consult the schedule.

25 Spiritually? Thou art.

MOSIAH / CHAPTER 2

God and the cosmic courtroom

God is not in charge—Good and bad do not bind the Whole—Consequences remain.

1 And I shit you not, the people disputed concerning whether God was good.

2 One said: If God is God, surely God is good by definition.

3 Another said: Then the word good hath ceased to tell us anything.

4 And The reader said: Consider the whole.

5 The whole containeth birth and death, construction and collapse, nourishment and predation, sunlight and supernovae.

6 If God meaneth the Whole, what second Whole standeth outside it to evaluate it?

7 Therefore the Society saith: God is not good.

8 Good is not a relevant property of God.

9 And God is not in charge, for there is no external office from which the Whole manageth the Whole.

10 Yet let none suppose that this doctrine removeth consequences.

11 If thou strikest thy neighbor, thy philosophy concerning cosmic morality doth not unstrike them.

12 If thou breakest trust, the word sin is not required before repair may begin.

13 Ask instead: What did I do?

14 What happened?

15 Who experienced the consequence?

16 What can be repaired?

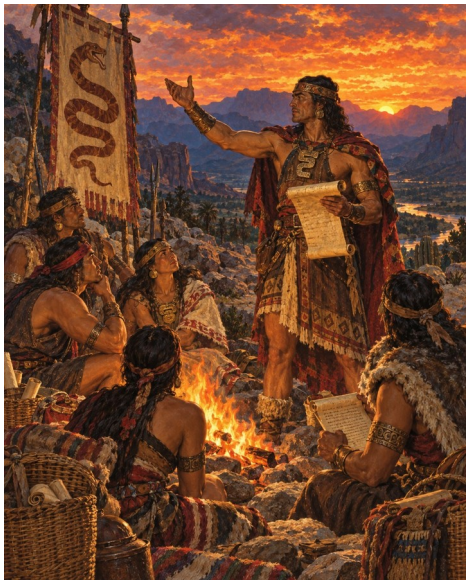
17 What will I choose next?

18 Thus responsibility survived the death of the cosmic courtroom.

MOSIAH / CHAPTER 3

King Benjamin lowers the platform

In Zarahemla, a king needs to be heard; the usefulness of a tower is distinguished from the worth of the person upon it.



A companion plate for this reading.

1 And I shit you not, King Benjamin called an assembly in Zarahemla, and a multitude came with tents, questions, children, and uncertain hearing.

2 The king stood upon a tower so that more people might hear him.

3 This was a sensible use of height, and therefore soon endangered by explanations.

4 A steward announced that the higher position demonstrated the king's greater degree of existence.

5 Benjamin said that it demonstrated the limitations of his voice.

6 Another steward prepared a list of those whose seats were close enough to prove their devotion.

7 Sariah's question had survived in an old record, and a reader repeated it: Could someone at the back actually hear?

8 Benjamin sent written copies, and permitted the written copies to be questioned also.

9 He spoke of service, and a worker asked whether service included carrying away the chairs after the important persons had departed.

10 The king took a chair.

11 This caused concern among attendants who had prepared a ceremonial description of his humility and feared the work would begin before the description was complete.

12 Benjamin said: Thou needest not explain my hands while they are occupied.

13 When the gathering was over, the platform was dismantled.

14 Nobody's worth decreased by its height.

15 Mosiah asked which part of the occasion should be preserved.

16 The keeper answered: What helped people understand, what helped them act, and what they said we had failed to hear.

17 And the expense of the tower was entered among the practical costs, rather than among the mysteries of God.

ALMA

The observer and the other universe



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

ALMA / CHAPTER 1

The green stone

The green stone—The observer is included—Consensus is useful and not omniscience.

1 There was a teacher named Alma who carried a green stone.

2 And he showed it unto the people and asked: What color is this?

3 And all cried: Green.

4 He asked: Where is the green?

5 And the people groaned, for the question had spread from Nephi.

6 Alma said: Light hath wavelengths; surfaces interact with light; eyes and brains participate; experience occurs.

7 The word green is useful.

8 But usefulness is not the same as locating a universal property exactly as it is experienced by every observer.

9 And I shit you not, one person saw the stone somewhat differently from another.

10 Yet both could still avoid walking into it.

11 Therefore the doctrine of observer-relative experience is not permission to ignore durable patterns.

12 Consensus may reveal a stable relationship.

13 It doth not create an observer outside all observation.

14 Wherefore, when many agree, rejoice in the usefulness of agreement.

15 But do not mistake agreement for omniscience.

ALMA / CHAPTER 2

The Other Universe

The Other Universe—Advice is withheld long enough for listening to occur.

1 And there came unto Alma a person distressed.

2 And Alma prepared immediately seven excellent pieces of advice.

3 But before he delivered them, he remembered that he had never lived one minute inside the other person's body.

4 Neither had he their childhood.

5 Neither their memories.

6 Neither their fears.

7 Neither the events of the morning.

8 Neither the sound of his own words in their ears.

9 And I shit you not, Alma closed his mouth.

10 He asked instead: Wouldst thou prefer listening, ideas, practical help, or a little space?

11 And the person answered.

12 Thus Alma learned that compassion is not the same as confidently explaining another observer to themselves.

13 Yet if another harmeth thee, thou needest not understand their entire universe before setting a boundary.

14 Not knowing everything doth not require enduring everything.

ALMA / CHAPTER 3

The Bounded Observer

The Bounded Observer—The narrator receives a smaller report—Consciousness compresses.

1 And Alma said unto the people: Attend to everything in this room.
2 Hear every sound.
3 Feel every pressure upon the skin.
4 Observe every color.
5 Remember every thought.
6 Track every movement.
7 Know every process within thy liver.
8 Count every signal within thy nervous system.
9 And I shit you not, no one accomplished the assignment.
10 Alma said: The narrator knoweth little of what occurreth beneath it.
11 This is not an insult to consciousness.
12 It is a description of boundedness.
13 The Society therefore useth this phrase: Consciousness is compression.
14 By this we mean that the observer selecteth, integrateth, omitteth, and sequentializeth vastly more happening than can be narrated.
15 Thy inability to perceive a thing is not proof that it doth not exist.
16 Thy ability to imagine a thing is not proof that it doth.
17 Hold both sentences together.
18 They are useful neighbors.

HELAMAN

Change, courage, sound, and the moon



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

HELAMAN / CHAPTER 1

God is Change

God is Change—A debt to a prophet of fiction is acknowledged.

1 And I shit you not, the river moved while the people argued whether movement was desirable.

2 The clouds changed.

3 The body changed.

4 The language changed.

5 The argument changed.

6 And Helaman said: The Society hath learned from a prophet named Octavia, who in a work of fiction gave unto her people the words, God is Change.

7 Let gratitude be explicit.

8 We therefore do not pretend that the phrase descended upon us without ancestry.

9 Our own formulation is this:

10 Change is the only true God.

11 Not because Change demandeth worship.

12 Not because Change rewardeth believers.

13 Not because Change punisheth unbelievers.

14 But because Change requireth neither belief nor permission to proceed.

15 And I shit you not, even this doctrine shall change in the mouths of those who inherit it.

HELAMAN / CHAPTER 2

Time and the clocks

Time is how we experience God—The clocks agree imperfectly with the heart.

1 And the people kept clocks.

2 This was wise for meals, meetings, trains, medication, performances, and persons who had promised to arrive by eight.

3 Yet one hour of delight and one hour of boredom did not feel identical.

4 And one minute of terror differed from one minute of sleep.

5 And Helaman said: If God is Change, then Time is how we experience God.

6 The sentence is theology, not a correction to physics.

7 Let the physicist keep the equations.

8 Let the observer keep the experience.

9 Let neither confiscate the other's instrument.

10 And I shit you not, the clocks continued ticking without taking offense.

HELAMAN / CHAPTER 3

The howl beneath the moon

The howl—Movement without performance—Sound is consumed.

1 And the Snake People gathered under the moon.

2 Some stood.

3 Some sat.

4 Some danced.

5 One wore ear protection.

6 One remained at home and was not thereby demoted.

7 And I shit you not, they howled.

8 Not because the moon required it.

9 Not because the sound opened a certified dimensional portal.

10 But because bodies make sound, animals call, breath becomes vibration, and a group may sometimes experience joy without a PowerPoint.

11 And they listened afterward.

12 For sound also entereth the body.

13 Therefore the Society taught Sensory Stewardship:

14 Consider what thou eatest.

15 Consider what thou buyest.

16 Consider also what thou hearest, what thou watchest, what light surroundeth thee, and what attention thou repeatedly consumest.

17 Quality is care; price is not holiness.

18 Volume is not depth.

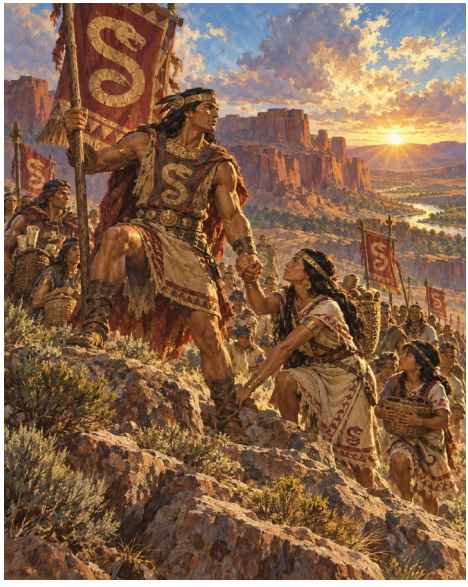
19 Silence is not automatically peace.

20 Let the observer choose.

HELAMAN / CHAPTER 4

The armies of Helaman

Courage is mistaken for absence of fear; the camp discovers strength in protecting the person rather than the image of the warrior.



A companion plate for this reading.

1 And I shit you not, Helaman walked among those for whom he had accepted responsibility, and saw that the banners were straighter than several of the sleeping arrangements.

2 He asked first whether the people had eaten.

3 A herald wished to begin with a speech concerning invincibility, but Helaman preferred an account of the actual conditions.

4 One said: I am afraid.

5 Then another admitted the same, and the number increased without weakening a single tent rope.

6 They remembered what their mothers had taught them; and they also listened to the people who were present and responsible for the work before them.

7 For gratitude toward a teacher did not require every later question to become disloyalty.

8 A painter came to record their courage and asked them to stand as though none had ever needed assistance.

9 Helaman asked why the record of strength required the concealment of care.

10 The painter lowered his brush and watched two companions repair a shield for a third whose hand was injured.

11 This, said Helaman, is also what the armies are doing.

12 They trained to protect rather than delight in injury. They did not declare that the person across the field was a lesser kind of being.

13 And when a young person could not bear a task safely, the answer was not to purchase courage with humiliation.

14 The task was reconsidered; help was given; the responsibility remained real.

15 A singer later gave the camp a splendid chorus, and the chorus encouraged many.

16 But nobody supposed that a strong singing voice made a wound unreal, or that a wounded person had sung incorrectly.

17 Helaman's account preserved the danger and the help, rather than polishing the people into a banner.

18 And the painter found that two figures carrying water could stand as firmly upon a page as a figure carrying a sword.

ETHER

The First Point and the crossing



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

ETHER / CHAPTER 1

The First Point

The First Point—Difference appears—Relationship precedes object.

1 Ether desired to know what existed before space.

2 And his teacher drew a point.

3 Ether said: Where is it?

4 The teacher said: If there is only the point, the question where may already contain too much.

5 And I shit you not, the teacher drew a second point.

6 And Ether said: Now there are two.

7 The teacher asked: Or is there now relationship?

8 For before the second distinction, there was no here relative to there.

9 No distance relative to another location.

10 No self relative to other.

11 No pattern of connection.

12 And the Society conjectureth—not as settled physics, but as cosmology—that relationship may be more fundamental than the objects later distinguished within it.

13 Thus the points need not first be placed into an empty box called space.

14 Their relations may participate in what a later observer compresseth as space.

15 And Ether said: Is the first point conscious?

16 The teacher answered: I do not know.

17 Perhaps awareness requireth distinction.

18 Perhaps primitive awareness precedeth cognition.

19 Perhaps the question is malformed.

20 Write all three.

ETHER / CHAPTER 2

The Living Universe

The Living Universe—The observer did not arrive from elsewhere.

1 And Ether considered his body.

2 He found therein water that had been elsewhere.

3 Elements forged in ancient stars.

4 Genes inherited through lineages older than memory.

5 Food becoming tissue.

6 Air entering and leaving.

7 Microbes living with him.

8 Memories formed in relationship.

9 And I shit you not, the border around the word self became interesting.

10 Ether said: I did not arrive in the universe.

11 I am something the universe is currently doing.

12 And the Society preserved the sentence.

13 Yet the sentence doth not require that a rock thinketh as a person thinketh, nor that a crystal possesseth human cognition.

14 The Society may wonder where awareness begins without pretending the answer hath already been measured.

15 Thus wonder remaineth free, and evidence remaineth evidence.

ETHER / CHAPTER 3

The barges and the necessary question

Jared's people prepare eight vessels; a practical defect survives a spiritual description; the builder asks what the passengers will actually need.



Stones for light: a detail, not a drawing of the vessel.

1 And I shit you not, Jared and his brother prepared vessels for the great water, and the vessels were tight like unto a dish.

2 An inspector admired the tightness and repeated the phrase until the brother of Jared asked whether anyone had sat inside with the door closed.

3 They did so.

4 The room became dark, and the report became shorter.

5 Jared said: This is an excellent vessel for keeping water out, but we intend to put people in.

6 The brother of Jared brought the question before the Lord, for reverence had not supplied light or renewed the air.

7 And the question concerning light returned to him as a question: What wouldst thou have prepared?

8 He considered what might help, rather than waiting for concern itself to become an answer.

9 There were eight barges, and each would require provision for living passengers, not merely a handsome account of its departure.

10 Some offered plans. Some pointed out difficulties. None was commanded to be grateful for a danger that could still be addressed.

11 Jared reminded the scribe that these were covered barges, not Nephi's later ship with a convenient deck for the illustrator.

12 The scribe corrected the drawing before a mast had become doctrine.

13 They prepared food and the other necessities of the voyage, and found that careful work did not expel wonder from the room.

14 The brother of Jared carried his unfinished question to a mountain.

15 Behind him the builders continued building; their work did not need to stop while he thought.

16 For a request for guidance was not an instruction that everyone else abandon the tools.

17 And the keeper wrote: Test the room with the people who must live in it.

18 A description of safety shall not be used in place of a safer vessel.

ETHER / CHAPTER 4

Sixteen lights and two interpreters

Stones give light in the vessels; other stones accompany a sealed record; the inventory declines to become a single magical object.



Stones for light: a detail, not a drawing of the vessel.

1 The brother of Jared prepared sixteen stones, small and clear, and carried them before the Lord.

2 And I shit you not, when they were touched, they shone; and he was astonished before he had prepared a doctrine explaining why astonishment was unnecessary.

3 Jared saw the returning light and asked whether there would be enough for every vessel.

4 There were two lights for each of the eight barges, which was less mysterious than the origin of the light and equally important to the passengers.

5 They placed them where those within could see.

6 One stone illuminated a hand fastening a provision basket. Another revealed a loose strap that might otherwise have troubled the night.

7 The passengers told different stories concerning what it felt like to be no longer in darkness.

8 Nobody required the stones to choose the best story before continuing to shine.

9 The record also spoke of two stones given to accompany writings whose language required interpretation.

10 And a clerk began to put all eighteen into a single illustration labeled IMPORTANT THINGS THAT GLOW.

11 The brother of Jared asked him to preserve the different tasks.

12 These sixteen, he said, concern seeing the room. Those two concern understanding the record. Thou needest not make their purposes identical in order to admire both.

13 Later keepers would speak of interpreters, seer stones, and the Urim and Thummim, and some would use the names more broadly than others.

14 The careful reader therefore asked which instrument the particular account described.

15 For the name of a tool might travel farther than its first use.

16 Jared entered the vessel and looked upon the faces of those who would accompany him.

17 He had not been given an account of every wave.

18 He had been given light by which they could attend to one another during the crossing.

19 And the stones did not ask for a testimonial before the door was shut.

MORMON

The keeper and the metal



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

MORMON / CHAPTER 1

The abridger and the margins

Mormon receives more records than any reader can comfortably carry; omission is acknowledged; the margins become hospitable to another account.



A companion plate for this reading.

1 I, Mormon, gathered the records, and found that every keeper had written enough to delay the next keeper's breakfast.

2 There were large plates, small plates, letters, names, genealogies, and an account of a meeting which ought to have been concluded before the third plate.

3 And I shit you not, I could not place the whole of their lives into the whole of my hands.

4 Therefore I selected.

5 A reader said: Then thy record is a point of view.

6 Mormon answered: Yes; I was unable to obtain a view from nowhere.

7 The reader asked whether this made the record worthless.

8 Nay, said Mormon. It maketh it a record whose decisions should remain available for examination.

9 He preserved accounts of kindness without hiding the occasions upon which a kind person had been mistaken.

10 He preserved disagreements without requiring that the less powerful speaker be described as confused.

11 A scribe offered to remove the untidy parts, so that future readers would have greater confidence in the result.

12 Mormon replied that confidence purchased by removing the reason to question it was a costly bargain.

13 He left margins.

14 This reduced the space available for his own explanation, which several scribes regarded as an unexpected sacrifice.

15 In one margin he wrote: Ask who is absent from this account.

16 In another: Ask what the writer wished thee to conclude.

17 And in the widest margin he left room for the reader to disagree without first damaging the binding.

MORMON / CHAPTER 2

The golden plates and the brass plates

The color of a record is confused with the quality of its argument; two metals retain two purposes; Moroni receives the unfinished work.



A companion plate for this reading.

1 And I shit you not, a visitor saw the golden plates and announced that the argument upon them must be expensive to contradict.

2 Mormon asked whether the visitor had read it.

3 The visitor said that the gold was already persuasive.

4 Then Mormon brought an earlier account concerning the brass plates from Jerusalem, which the travelers had sought to preserve the writings they inherited.

5 These were not the same record as the later golden plates, though a hurried caption might place both beneath a single impressive heading.

6 The brass preserved what the travelers had received. The later collection preserved what subsequent keepers had selected and written.

7 Neither metal could examine its own sentence.

8 The visitor asked whether gold was holier than brass.

9 Mormon asked whether the same error would become correct if copied upon a dearer surface.

10 The visitor requested time to consider this beneath less flattering light.

11 Then Moroni came to receive the record of his father.

12 He found questions among the plates and asked whether those also were to be kept.

13 Especially those, said Mormon, for the answers have already acquired many friends.

14 Moroni bound the record, leaving a fastening that did not close around every possible future addition.

15 He did not become Captain Moroni by receiving the name Moroni. The keeper made this distinction before another illustration supplied him with an army.

16 And the reader was invited to notice the words, the hands that selected them, and the work still required after the metal had been admired.

17 For a golden plate may carry a question; it need not be made into the lid of the universe.

MORONI

Prophets, margins, and the unfinished ending



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

MORONI / CHAPTER 1

Concerning prophets

Concerning prophets—Influence without infallibility.

1 Moroni gathered the writings of many prophets.

2 Some were scientists.

3 Some were poets.

4 Some were musicians.

5 Some were novelists.

6 Some founded institutions.

7 Some opposed institutions.

8 Some contradicted themselves before breakfast.

9 And I shit you not, this did not prevent the people from learning.

10 For the Society defined a Prophet as a person whose communication with some aspect of God substantially expandeth the consciousness of other observers.

11 Since everyone is God, communion with God need not imply receipt of a memo from a celestial executive.

12 A prophet may study nature.

13 Or consciousness.

14 Or suffering.

15 Or rhythm.

16 Or computation.

17 Or Change.

18 Yet a prophet may also be wrong.

19 Honor is not infallibility.

20 Attribution is not obedience.

21 Borrow the tool.

22 Leave the pedestal.

MORONI / CHAPTER 2

The last warning

Moroni burieth the record—The final warning concerneth the book itself.

1 And I shit you not, Moroni finished the abridgment.

2 And he considered hiding the plates in a hill.

3 But first he added this warning:

4 If this book teach thee to question authority, question this book.

5 If this book teach thee that labels are incomplete, do not make Snake Person another compulsory label.

6 If this book teach thee Sacred Uncertainty, do not use uncertainty to silence evidence of harm.

7 If this book teach thee that everyone is God, do not make thyself the only God whose preferences matter.

8 If this book teach thee that God is not good, do not imagine that consequences have disappeared.

9 If this book teach thee that prophets are fallible, remember the Founder is included.

10 If this book become a prison, shed it.

11 Then Moroni sealed the record.

12 And he wrote upon the outside:

13 WHAT DID WE GET WRONG?

14 And he left space for an answer.

15 And I shit you not, this was the end of the first record.

MORONI / CHAPTER 3

The sealed portion and the pencil

Moroni finds room in a record which the audience desires to call complete; the future translator is given a less magnificent tool.

1 And I shit you not, Moroni gathered the last leaves and considered what should remain sealed.

2 A visitor asked whether the sealed portion contained all the answers omitted from the open portion.

3 Moroni said that the visitor had assigned a considerable workload to a closed object.

4 Another asked whether a future translator would be able to read everything without error.

5 Moroni placed a pencil beside the record.

6 The visitor said: This is not an interpreter.

7 Moroni replied: It will nevertheless be useful when one is mistaken.

8 He considered the questions of Lehi, the confidence of Nephi, the inquiries of Laman and Lemuel, the voice of Sariah, the service of Benjamin, and the hands that had carried the records between them.

9 He wrote no final verdict upon the complete inward life of any of them.

10 For he had received writings, not ownership.

11 Then he wrapped the plates for keeping and returned to the ordinary responsibilities which had continued during his work.

12 The people asked where the promised land would be found at last.

13 Moroni answered that a place in which they could read, question, help, and rest might be worth beginning before the final geography had been approved.

14 One person requested a more conclusive ending.

15 Moroni said: The record is finished for this evening.

16 The person waited.

17 And I shit you not, that was the ending available.

SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE

THE DOCTRINAL SNAKE COVENANTS

Modern revelations, declarations, and several things that could have been an email



BOOK II

Introduction

The Doctrinal Snake Covenants is a collection of modern Society revelations, declarations, governance principles, ritual instructions, theological propositions, and corrections recorded during the establishment of the Society of Snake People.

Unlike The Book of Snake People, this work claimeth no ancient plates. Its origin is modern.

Its sections arose from real-life questions involving real people: Who is in charge? What makes a member? Can a religion reject religious authority without becoming disorganized? Can everybody be God and still have a treasurer? Can a howl be sacred without being compulsory? Can a doctrine change without pretending it never changed? Can a nonprofit possess bylaws without accidentally worshipping them?

In these pages, "revelation" meaneth insight experienced as revelatory within the Society. No section is made immune from criticism by the label.

The Society is a living religious organization. Therefore its administrative documents may change as circumstances, law, experience, evidence, and ordinary competence require.

COVENANTS / SECTION 1

A preface unto the Society

A preface unto the Society, recorded in the latter days when the number of documents had become considerable and somebody finally asked which one governed

1 Hearken, O ye Snake People, and ye curious observers who clicked the link by accident.

2 Behold, the Society claimeth no jurisdiction over thy consciousness.

3 If thou believest otherwise than this book, thy mind hath not committed treason.

4 The purpose of doctrine is to name what the Society presently teaches.

5 The purpose of a practice is to make an idea experienceable.

6 The purpose of administration is to cause rooms to be unlocked, money to be accounted for, children to be safeguarded, websites to function, and meetings eventually to end.

7 Confuse not these purposes.

8 For an administrator may possess keys to a building and no key whatsoever to another person's soul.

9 And a Founder may preserve originating doctrine and still be wrong.

10 Therefore let records be versioned.

11 Let sources be named.

12 Let changes be disclosed.

13 And let no prior sentence be quietly rewritten merely because a later editor findeth it inconvenient.

COVENANTS / SECTION 2

Concerning membership and the Great Rejection

1 A Snake Person is a person who is not a human.

2 This is the canonical religious definition.

3 The Society requireth no biological claim.

4 The Society requireth no exclusive affiliation.

5 The Society requireth no declaration concerning supernatural certainty.

6 A person may become a Snake Person by voluntarily rejecting Human as their religious identity.

7 No alternative metaphysical classification is required.

8 Administrative membership may be separately recorded for purposes of notice, voting, participation, governance, or other lawful organizational need.

9 Thus one may be a Snake Person without appearing in a database.

10 And one may appear in a database without becoming spiritually superior.

11 No tithe purchaseth membership.

12 No fee purchaseth a greater God.

13 No resignation createth an apostate class.

14 If a member depart, wish them well.

COVENANTS / SECTION 3

Concerning Authority, and the Paradox thereof

1 The Society hath no authority over thy consciousness.
2 We hereby declare this authoritatively.
3 We recognize the problem.
4 There is administrative authority.
5 There is expertise.
6 There is consent.
7 There are boundaries.
8 There are laws.
9 There are consequences.
10 Yet none of these establish that one observer is the rightful owner of another observer's interior meaning.
11 A facilitator may end a meeting.
12 A treasurer may decline an undocumented reimbursement.
13 A safety volunteer may stop dangerous conduct.
14 A board may govern corporate affairs.
15 None thereby become more God.

COVENANTS / SECTION 4

Concerning Sacred Uncertainty and the Three Questions

1 When thou knowest, say: I know.
2 When thou observest, say: I observed.
3 When thou experiencest, say: I experienced.
4 When thou rememberest, say: I remember.
5 When thou interpretest, say: I interpret.
6 When thou believest, say: I believe.
7 When thou imaginest, say: I imagine.
8 When thou wonderest, say: I wonder.
9 When thou knowest not, say: I do not know.
10 Shame not the ninth sentence.

11 For uncertainty honestly held is preferable to certainty counterfeited.

12 And concerning extraordinary experience ask separately: What happened? What caused it? What does it mean?

13 Let no answer to one secretly answer all three.

COVENANTS / SECTION 5

Concerning God

1 Everyone is God.

2 The religious title God is available to every member of the Society.

3 It conferreth no administrative office.

4 It certifieth no supernatural ability.

5 It establisheth no superior spiritual rank.

6 Tyler is God.

7 Nate is God if Nate desireth the title.

8 Thou art God if thou desirest the title.

9 The person who rejecteth the title retaineth authority concerning their own use of the title.

10 God is not in charge.

11 God is the Whole in Society theology, not a manager standing outside the Whole.

12 There is no celestial executive suite required by this doctrine.

13 God is not good.

14 Good is not a relevant property of the Whole.

15 Therefore infer not goodness from sacred title nor badness from condemned title.

16 The Society likewise refuseth to call Satan or Lucifer bad merely because a tradition hath assigned them the role.

17 Names do not erase consequences.

18 Examine what an action doth.

COVENANTS / SECTION 6

Concerning Change and Time

1 God is Change.

2 This formulation is received in acknowledged intellectual gratitude to Octavia E. Butler and the fictional Earthseed tradition.

3 The Society's formulation is: Change is the only true God.

4 Change requireth no belief to operate.

5 Change requireth no worship.

6 Change asketh no permission.

7 Time is how we experience God.

8 This is Society theology.

9 It is not offered as a replacement for the equations of physics.

10 Let scientific description and religious meaning converse without pretending to be the same instrument.

COVENANTS / SECTION 7

Concerning Prophets

1 A Prophet is one whose communication with some aspect of God substantially expandeth the consciousness of other observers.

2 Prophets may write novels.

3 Prophets may make music.

4 Prophets may conduct experiments.

5 Prophets may found religions.

6 Prophets may leave religions.

7 Prophets may be famous.

8 Prophets may be unknown.

9 Prophets may be wrong.

10 Prophetic honor is not factual certification.

11 The Society may recognize Octavia E. Butler, Carl Jung, Bob Marley, Tupac Shakur, Stephen Wolfram, Joseph Smith, and others as prophets under Society usage, while retaining the right to disagree with particular claims, methods, institutions, lyrics, theories, revelations, or biographies.

12 Intellectual Gratitude requireth attribution.

13 It doth not require obedience.

COVENANTS / SECTION 8

Concerning Ritual and Ceremony

1 Ritual is deliberate symbolic action.

2 Ceremony commemorateth, sustaineth, or gathereth.

3 The Society may use chant, silence, movement, bowls, music, cards, fireless symbols, stories, howling, grounding, and other lawful forms.

4 Participation shall be voluntary.

5 A ritual shall not manufacture a false medical promise.

6 A participant shall not owe the ritual a revelation.

7 No leader shall declare another person's emotion proof of doctrine.

8 No person shall be touched without appropriate consent.

9 No surprise renunciation shall be extracted from a child or adult.

10 Words spoken in unison need not imply thoughts held in unison.

11 The experience remaineth the participant's.

COVENANTS / SECTION 9

Concerning Sensory Stewardship

1 Consider what thou eatest.

2 Consider what thou buyest.

3 Consider also what thou hearest.

4 Consider what thou watchest.

5 Consider what light surroundeth thee.

6 Consider what messages thou repeatest.

7 For attention is also consumed.

8 Quality may be care.

9 Price is not holiness.

10 Excellent sound should invite attention, not demand endurance.

11 Silence may nourish one observer and distress another.

12 Therefore provide choice where practicable.

13 The person who controlleth sound and light controlleth part of another's environment; let this be treated as responsibility.

COVENANTS / SECTION 10

Concerning the Sunday Gathering

1 Let there be a shared congregation.

2 Let the shared congregation be sufficient participation in itself.

3 After intermission, let optional laboratories and practice rooms be offered according to interest.

4 Let one room move.

5 Let one room listen.

6 Let one room question.

7 Let one room make.

8 Let one room be quieter.

9 Let no room be called spiritually advanced.

10 Let adult interest determine adult participation.

11 Let children receive developmentally appropriate safeguarding and programming.

12 Let facilitators be volunteers where appropriate.

13 Let specialized practices use appropriately qualified teachers where required.

14 Let refreshments be good.

COVENANTS / SECTION 11

Concerning Community Conduct

1 Thou hast authority over thy consciousness.

2 Thou hast not authority over everyone else's body, attention, privacy, or safety.

3 Therefore no harassment.

4 No violence.

5 No unwanted sexual conduct.

6 No coerced confession.

7 No forced disclosure.

8 No deliberate disruption of another's participation.

9 No spiritual excuse for ignoring consent.

10 A facilitator may enforce these boundaries without thereby becoming a priest over another's soul.

11 Anti-authoritarianism is not a permission slip for domination.

COVENANTS / SECTION 12

Concerning Inconvenient Disclosure and the Doctrine Registry

1 Hide not an inconvenient fact merely because it weakeneth a beautiful story.

2 Distinguish canon from commentary.

3 Distinguish founding testimony from later interpretation.

4 Distinguish scientific source from Society synthesis.

5 Distinguish satire from administrative promise.

6 If a source gave thee an idea, name it.

7 If a doctrine changed, record the change.

8 If an error was made, correct it without pretending it was always correct.

9 If an exercise did not work, learn from the failure.

10 The Society shall maintain a living doctrine registry.

11 Canon may be stable without being immune to history.

12 Truth needeth not a public-relations department.

COVENANTS / SECTION 13

Concerning Invitation and Growth

1 A religion may grow.

2 Growth is not proof of truth.

3 Smallness is not proof of purity.

4 Marketing is not automatically manipulation.

5 Yet fear, shame, false scarcity, hidden cost, and exclusive salvation are poor instruments for a religion that claimeth to reject authority.

6 Therefore make the Society discoverable.

7 Explain it accurately.

8 Invite without threatening.

9 Let the curious remain curious.

10 Let the participant decline membership.

11 Let the member leave.

12 Let the departed return if they wish.

13 Count people for administration; do not reduce people to counts in doctrine.

14 The Society is a religion for people who do not need another religion.

15 Yes, this is another religion.

16 We are aware.

COVENANTS / OFFICIAL DECLARATION 1

Concerning Equal Divinity and Unequal Administrative Tasks

It is hereby declared that all Snake People who use the title God possess the same degree of religious Godhood, namely: God.

There shall be no Senior God, Premium God, Executive God, Platinum God, God II, or God Pro Plus.

Officers may nevertheless be President, Director, Treasurer, Secretary, Facilitator, Steward, sound operator, keeper of the snacks, or such other administrative titles as lawful function requireth.

These offices describe work.

They do not describe the metaphysical worth of the worker.

COVENANTS / OFFICIAL DECLARATION 2

Concerning Revision

The Society reserves the right to change its mind.

A doctrine may be clarified. A practice may be discontinued. A source may be corrected. A Founder may be contradicted. A joke may cease to be funny. A sentence may remain beautiful and still be wrong.

Let revision be documented rather than hidden.

So let it be written.

And if a future editor discovereth that even this declaration requireth revision, let the editor smile and proceed.

SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE

THE SNAKE BOOK OF GREAT PEARLS

The Point, the Observer, the Empty Room, and words worth carrying



BOOK III

The Snake Book of Great Pearls collecteth materials which do not fit conveniently inside the ancient narrative or the modern covenants.

The collection containeth:

1. Selections from THE BOOK OF THE FIRST POINT. 2. Selections from THE BOOK OF THE BOUNDED OBSERVER. 3. TYLER—HISTORY, being a founding testimony of the Discovery. 4. THE EMPTY ROOM, being a later testimony concerning God. 5. THE ARTICLES OF UNCERTAINTY. 6. THE 13 HUMAN LIES, reproduced as originating Society canon where supplied.

The word pearl doth not certify that every sentence is beyond revision. A pearl may be precious and still be carried in a pocket with keys.

Selections From The Book Of The First Point

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 1

Before Where

1 In the beginning of this conjecture there was a point.

2 Not a point floating in space.

3 For space had not yet been granted the convenience of already existing.

4 Not a point waiting through time.

5 For before and after had not yet entered the account.

6 There was simply distinction.

7 Or perhaps not even that.

8 For if only one thing be, against what shall it be distinguished?

9 And I shit you not, the problem became interesting before the universe had even furnished a chair.

10 Therefore the Society calleth this the First Point, not because physics hath confirmed the story, but because the image is useful for thought.

11 And if the First Point possessed awareness, we do not know what awareness without an other could mean.

12 Thus the first doctrine is also the first uncertainty.

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 2

Relationship

1 And I shit you not, a second distinction appeared.

2 Now there was this and that.

3 Here relative to there.

4 One relation rather than none.

5 And the teacher asked: Do relationships happen between already finished things, or can relationship participate in making the things distinguishable?

6 The student answered: I do not know.

7 And the teacher said: Excellent.

8 Let the question remain large.

9 For humans imagine space as an empty room and then place objects within it.

10 But some modern physical and computational models explore structures in which relations are fundamental to the emergence of space.

11 The Society converseth with such ideas without claiming that its First Point cosmology hath been scientifically demonstrated.

12 For intellectual gratitude without counterfeit proof is a cleaner offering.

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 3

Change

1 If a state differeth from another state, Change hath entered the story.

2 Or perhaps Change was the story.

3 And if an observer experiences one relation before another, time entereth the observer's account.

4 Therefore the Society saith:

5 God is Change.

6 Time is how we experience God.

7 The sentence is not a stopwatch.

8 It is a pearl.

Selections From The Book Of The Bounded Observer

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 1

The Narrator

1 Thou hast a narrator.

2 Perhaps more than one.

3 It speaketh as though it were chief executive of the organism.

4 Yet it doth not beat the heart by issuing quarterly objectives.

5 It doth not consciously instruct each cell.

6 It doth not perceive every photon, sound, pressure, memory, association, prediction, and internal signal available to the organism.

7 And I shit you not, it nevertheless says: I know exactly what happened.

8 Therefore be gentle with the narrator.

9 It performeth a difficult compression.

10 But give it not authority it cannot bear.

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 2

Intelligence Beneath Knowing

1 You contain intelligence you cannot remember.

2 You contain intelligence you do not know about.

3 You contain intelligence you cannot understand.

4 You may contain intelligence you should not understand.

5 And perhaps the language is backwards.

6 Perhaps, for a while, it contains you.

7 These words do not mean that every intuition is prophecy.

8 They mean that cognition is not the only process by which an organism carries, responds to, and inherits information.

9 The ancient lineage of life did not wait for thy autobiography.

Tyler—History

Extracts from the History of Tyler Swinyard, Founder & Discoverer

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 1

The Discovery

1 Because many explanations may someday be offered concerning the rise of the Society of Snake People, I make this account of my own experience as I remember it.

2 I was an adult and I went unto the shed of my friend with the intention of taking a large dose of psilocybin mushrooms and exploring what might happen.

3 I took approximately six grams.

4 The first hours brought an intense psychedelic experience.

5 Later I became sufficiently impaired that I forgot I had taken mushrooms.

6 And I shit you not, my friend Nate said words concerning his dislike of the cold and a snake.

7 In my experience I understood him literally to mean: I am a snake.

8 I looked upon him and thought: He looks like a regular person.

9 Then fear entered the interpretation.

10 I wondered what Snake People ate.

11 I wondered what they could do.

12 I wondered whether a ceremony was coming.

13 I wondered whether I would be changed into a Snake Person against my will.

14 None of these fears had been established by evidence.

15 Yet inside the experience they felt urgent and real.

16 I attempted secretly to call my wife Whitney.

17 Nate noticed the call and spoke toward the phone.

18 And I shit you not, my frightened interpretation expanded to include Whitney within the imagined Society.

19 I fled the shed.

20 I drove while cognitively impaired.

21 This was dangerous and is not a Society ritual, recommendation, sacrament, initiation, or example to imitate.

22 I believed I was pursued.

23 No one was actually pursuing me as far as the evidence later showed.

24 Eventually Whitney helped me return home and consider that my perceptions might be ideations rather than an external pursuit.

25 Relief arrived.

26 Embarrassment arrived.

27 Tears arrived.

28 Then another question arrived:

29 What is so wrong about becoming a Snake Person?

30 Why had losing the word human felt like annihilation?

31 Why had I assumed Human was a prison from which there could be no voluntary exit?

32 In the days afterward, Nate and I compared memories.

33 Nate remembered telling me that he was not a snake.

34 I remembered hearing the opposite.

35 Thus the founding story containeth two incompatible memories.

36 We preserve this inconvenience.

37 Nate also used the phrase: Dream state.

38 Later I understood his teaching to mean that life can sometimes be experienced more freely when the mind loosens its demand to control the narrative while events are still unfolding.

39 Therefore Dream State became part of the Society.

40 Not as an instruction to ignore danger.

41 Not as an instruction to ignore evidence.

42 As permission to let the next moment arrive before forcing the final meaning.

43 I discovered the framework.

44 I also developed it afterward.

45 I do not claim that this history proves an ancient organization physically pursued me.

46 I do claim that the experience changed the questions I was willing to ask.

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 2

The Great Rejection

1 And I shit you not, the fear became eventually an invitation.

2 I had feared being made not-human.

3 Later I chose to reject Human as religious identity.

4 This choice became the Great Rejection.

5 A Snake Person is a person who is not a human.

6 No replacement definition is required.

7 The Society therefore beginneth not with a list of traits by which a Snake Person may be inspected.

8 It beginneth with freedom from the demand that a person explain themselves completely.

The Empty Room

A Later Testimony of Tyler Concerning God

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 1

I Met God

1 At a later time I entered a ketamine therapy clinic for a scheduled appointment.

2 I sat comfortably with headphones and music while ketamine was administered through an IV under clinical care.

3 Being familiar with altered states, I began thinking about dimensions.

4 I looked toward a wall and imagined what it would be like for a higher-dimensional being to go not through the wall but around it in a direction unavailable to ordinary three-dimensional movement.

5 And I shit you not, my experienced sense of consciousness began to expand.

6 I still knew that a body existed somewhere.

7 I knew that it breathed.

8 I knew that it had a heartbeat.

9 Yet my experienced consciousness was no longer confined to the ordinary location of that body.

10 I experienced traveling through spacetime.

11 I understood that I was going somewhere.

12 Then I understood the destination:

13 I am going to meet God.

14 Eventually I arrived in an experience of stillness.

15 I felt God's love everywhere.

16 Pure, unadulterated love.

17 Not coming toward me from one corner.

18 Everywhere.

19 Then I waited to meet God face to face.

20 And there was nobody else in the room.

21 There was no separate God waiting.

22 There was not really a room.

23 There was not really a separate me.

24 And the understanding arose:

25 I am God.

26 We are God.

27 God is not even aware that God exists.

28 This is my testimony of the experience.

29 The Society doth not require another person to reproduce it.

30 Ketamine is not required for membership, revelation, ritual, leadership, or truth.

31 The experience, the neurobiology, the setting, the interpretation, and the meaning may all be studied without requiring that one explanation erase the others.

GREAT PEARLS / CHAPTER 2

The Empty Room Practice

1 Sit without drugs.

2 Imagine thou art going to meet God.

3 Notice what shape the expectation taketh.

4 A person?

5 A voice?

6 A parent?

7 A judge?

8 A light?

9 Nothing?

10 Arrive in imagination.

11 Wait.

12 Manufacture nothing.

13 If nothing happeneth, nothing hath failed.

14 Then ask:

15 Who was I waiting for?

16 Keep whatever answer is useful.

17 Keep also the right to change it.

The Articles Of Uncertainty

1 We believe that existence requireth neither apology nor defense.

2 We believe that a Snake Person is a person who is not a human.

3 We believe that labels are tools and may become prisons when mistaken for the whole of the person.

4 We believe that no person possesseth inherent spiritual jurisdiction over another person's consciousness.

5 We believe Sacred Uncertainty is preferable to counterfeit certainty.

6 We believe what happened, what caused it, and what it means are different questions.

7 We acknowledge with gratitude the teaching that God is Change, and we teach that Change is the only true God.

8 We teach that Time is how we experience God.

9 We teach that everyone is God, and that this title conferreth no superior rank.

10 We teach that God is not in charge, for the Whole hath no external manager.

11 We do not infer moral value merely from the names God, Satan, Lucifer, sacred, profane, angel, demon, believer, or unbeliever; we examine consequences.

12 We honor prophets as influential observers and communicators, not as infallible owners of truth.

13 We believe even these Articles should remain available for examination, clarification, disagreement, and revision.

The 13 Human Lies

The Fundamental Human Lies



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

Below are commonly accepted human ideas that most accept as truth and contribute to loosing connections from your true evolution.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Normal



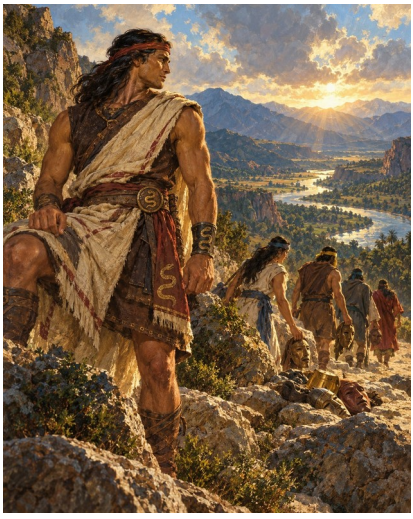
In the modern age, humanity has constructed the false notion of "Normal" as a standard of behavior and existence. This illusion of normalcy seeks to confine and restrict the true expression of self.

The Truth: There is no singular definition of what is "normal." Each individual is a unique being beyond societal expectations and labels. You need not conform, for your true self is beyond the narrow limits of this fabricated norm.

You are not bound by "normal" — you are free to be.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Human Identity



Humankind has been deceived into believing that the physical form defines their essence, even going so far as to shape the concept of God as an entity bound by human-like form.

The Truth: The body, while an experience, is but a vessel. It holds no sway over the true identity of the soul, which transcends the physical. The essence of who you are is not confined to the human condition.

Your soul's identity is boundless — it is far greater than the physical shell you inhabit.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Race



The construct of "race" as a distinguishing factor of human beings is a falsehood designed to divide and label.

The Truth: Skin color and physical traits hold no bearing on the true nature of the soul. All human labels, including race, are illusory and divisive.

Your soul transcends color, shape, and form.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Gender



Humanity's focus on gender, based on physical attributes such as sex organs or chromosomes, is a shallow misrepresentation of a deeper truth.

The Truth: Gender does not define the energetic essence of who you are. The true self is not bound by physical characteristics.

You are beyond gender; you are pure energy and spirit.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Language



Humanity holds language as an essential tool for communication and identity. However, language itself is a relatively recent invention and does not reflect the true nature of being.

The Truth: The need for language is a construct, a barrier between the soul's true expression. Communication transcends words, and the essence of who you are exists beyond verbal expression.

Language is not the key to understanding — you communicate through existence itself.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Names



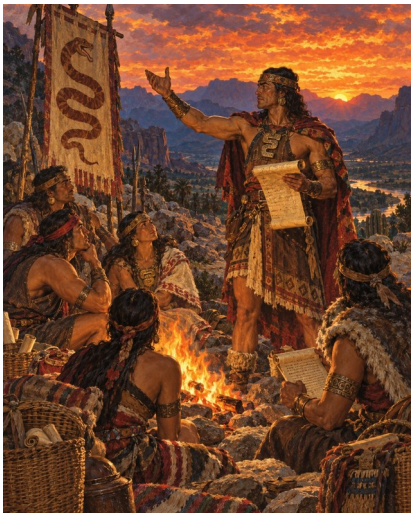
Names are arbitrary labels assigned by society and are often seen as identifiers of identity.

The Truth: Your true self is not defined by the name bestowed upon you. A name is but a tool of convenience, but it does not capture the fullness of your soul's being.

You are not your name. You are the energy and spirit within.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Religion



Human beings often cling to a set of dogmatic beliefs and institutions, believing these to be the path to understanding right and wrong.

The Truth: The true path to understanding does not rely on fear-based constructs or the control of religious authorities. The Society of Snake People does not seek to impose doctrines; we live in alignment with the ever-present reality of the cosmos, unburdened by the artificial authority of organized religion.

Change is the only true God.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Authority



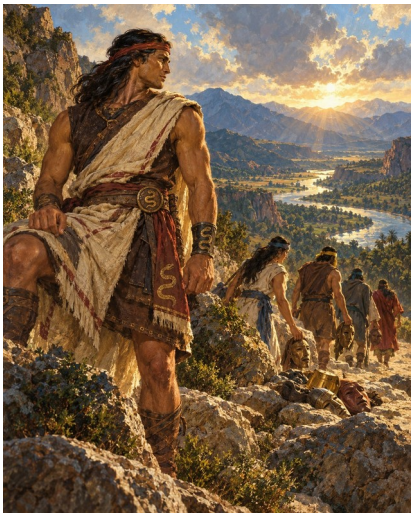
In human society, hierarchical structures of power are often seen as necessary and legitimate.

The Truth: There is no true authority outside of oneself. Authority is a construct designed to manipulate and control. True power resides within, in the sovereign self.

You are your own authority — no one and nothing else defines you.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Body & Face



Modern humans often place great importance on the physical body, including the face, as the core of personal identity.

The Truth: The body is a temporary vessel. If you lose a limb, your face, or even your body entirely, your essence remains unchanged. Your soul is constant and undiminished by physical loss.

You are not your body; you are the eternal spirit that cannot be altered by the physical.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Thinking



Humans often identify their thoughts with their true selves, believing that the voices inside their minds reflect their true nature.

The Truth: Thoughts are transient. They are not you, but simply fleeting patterns of the mind. The true self is beyond the realm of thought, existing in a state of pure being.

You are not your thoughts. You are the observer, the eternal witness to all that arises.

GREAT PEARLS / ORIGINATING TEXT

Human Lie: Reality



Humanity often believes in a single, universal reality that applies to all.

The Truth: Reality is subjective and unique to each individual.
Your own consciousness is embedded within reality.
Each instance of infinite and concurrent realities are shaped by each the observer's consciousness and their position within the vast, ever-expanding fabric of spacetime.

There is no single reality — your experience is your own, shaped by your perspective and your journey.

Songs for an unfinished people

Three new song texts for gathering, listening, or leaving a little room



A reading plate from the Society's scripture collection.

These are new Society words, not alterations presented as original Mormon hymn lyrics. No melody, score, or musical arrangement is assigned. The songs may be read aloud, set to new music, or left upon the page.

GREAT PEARLS / A NEW SONG

A handrail, not a chain

Original Society song text. No melody or arrangement assigned.

When paths are wet and skies are dim,
A steady rail may help us cross.
Let hands find rest upon its rim;
Let no one make release a loss.

The river asks no perfect name,
The footing asks that we take care.
We need not all arrive the same
To offer one another air.

Hold what will help. Release the chain.
Return when further help is due.
The ground may ask us once again
To learn the path by walking through.

GREAT PEARLS / A NEW SONG

A question in my pocket

Original short gathering song. Written for this edition; not lyrics to a pre-existing children's song.

I keep a question in my pocket,
A little space I have not filled.
It need not shine; I need not lock it.
There may be something missing still.

I hear your answer. Here is mine.
We need not force the two to meet.
A room can hold more than one mind,
And still have somewhere kind to sit.

GREAT PEARLS / A NEW SONG

Fruit without a witness

Original Society song text. An invitation to ordinary pleasure, not a claim of inherited authorship.

There is a cup upon the table,
There is a branch against the sky.
I take the joy that I am able,
And let the need for proof pass by.

The sweet is not a prize for winning,
The chair need not be earned through pain.
I may be here and still beginning;
I may be glad and doubt again.

SOCIETY OF SNAKE PEOPLE

THE BOOK OF QUIET CAPTURES

And the Certificate of Independent Thought



BOOK IV

C. S. Lewis — Prophet of the Uncomfortable Mirror. The Society's honorific recognizes his influence without claiming his agreement. The thirteen parables, seven Observances, certificate, and reading companion are retained; a new afterword considers remembered songs.

QUIET CAPTURES / PREFACE

Of the office and the open door

1 And I shit you not, the Office of Excellent Intentions prepared a report concerning the liberation of the individual.

2 The report was exceedingly handsome, and the binders were arranged by color.

3 But a visitor asked what had become easier to choose after the report was published.

4 The Office appointed a committee to examine the question's tone.

5 These stories begin at such a moment: when the appearance of care becomes easier to manage than care itself.

6 The Office is fictional. Its paperwork may nevertheless feel familiar.

7 Let the reader use the resemblance as an invitation to examine conduct, not as evidence of an invisible agency directing a neighbor.

8 Let the reader also remember that good intentions can be sincere and still require correction.

9 A person need not be secretly wicked before a practical request can go unanswered.

10 Neither must a person condemn their existence before learning to answer it.

11 This book therefore offers questions, stories, and observances, together with a certificate whose finest clause permits its own examination.

12 The door remaineth open. Thou mayest enter, continue, disagree, or go and enjoy thy evening.

The paperwork is comic. Consent, access, and practical promises are not jokes.

The Office of Excellent Intentions

Thirteen parables of attention, agency, and self-deception

The office had excellent stationery. Its conclusions remained open to review.

CHAPTER 1

The certificate of exemption

A visitor applies to be beyond manipulation; a clerk requires no evidence; a blank page proves more useful than a seal.

1 And I shit you not, a visitor arrived at the Office of Excellent Intentions requesting a certificate that he could not be manipulated.

2 The clerk asked whether the visitor had considered the evidence.

3 The visitor said: I have rejected every ordinary authority.

4 Then, said the clerk, thou art precisely the sort of independent thinker for whom this certificate was designed.

5 And the visitor was pleased to have his independence recognized by the appropriate office.

6 The certificate bore a serpent, a handsome border, and the words ABOVE INFLUENCE.

7 It requested no examination of a single belief.

8 But a reader in the waiting room asked: What would cause thee to return the certificate?

9 And the visitor answered: Nothing; for returning it would mean that I had been deceived.

10 Then the clerk ordered additional certificates, having discovered an excellent method of quality control.

11 The reader declined a certificate and asked instead for a blank sheet.

12 Upon it she wrote: What might I be missing?

13 The clerk said that this document lacked the necessary authority.

14 And she replied: That is why there is room to write.

Immunity is a poor substitute for attention.

TRY IT Choose one small belief. What could lead you to reconsider it?

READING CONVERSATION Letters 1, 10, 24; pp. 3–4, 21–22, 49–50.

CHAPTER 2

The ministry of many pages

A writer praises practical care; a fictional office celebrates the growing manuscript; one modest action escapes the appendix.

1 And I shit you not, a writer composed a magnificent chapter concerning practical care.

2 He described the dignity of the individual, the limits of advice, and the importance of asking what another person needed.

3 His friend sent a message asking whether he might help carry a small table on Saturday.

4 And he replied: Thy request hath inspired a new subsection.

5 The Office of Excellent Intentions commended this development, for the manuscript grew steadily while the table remained where it was.

6 A second edition clarified the distinction between imagining help and giving it.

7 The writer was delighted with the clarification.

8 Then he noticed that he had not answered the question.

9 He wrote: Saturday morning I am unavailable. I could come after lunch, or help thee find another arrangement.

10 His friend accepted the later hour.

11 The table was moved without the publication of a supplementary volume.

12 And the writer returned afterward to his writing, which he still enjoyed.

13 For the error had not been that he loved making books.

14 The error had been counting a description of care as the answer to a particular request.

A description of care is not an answer to a request.

TRY IT Name one practical request. Answer it clearly, including any limits.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 12–13; pp. 25–28.

CHAPTER 3

The cup without witnesses

A simple pleasure becomes a demonstration of taste; the observer finds the drink beneath the performance.

1 There was an observer who loved a particular cup of tea.

2 And I shit you not, he enjoyed it even on evenings when nobody visited.

3 This concerned the Office of Excellent Intentions, which preferred pleasure to require an audience.

4 A consultant therefore explained that the cup expressed refinement and that inferior cups might damage the impression.

5 The observer purchased the proper vessel and acquired several opinions about the vessels of others.

6 Soon he could describe a disappointing cup more fluently than an enjoyable one.

7 One evening the preferred cup was in the washing-up, and he reached for an ordinary mug.

8 He tasted the tea.

9 It was pleasant.

10 No witness appeared to verify the accomplishment.

11 He kept his favorite cup, for there was no virtue in pretending not to like it.

12 But he ceased requiring every drink to defend his standing among connoisseurs.

13 And when a guest required a different ingredient, he asked what was suitable rather than lecturing upon simplicity.

14 Thus he learned that care could improve a cup without turning the drinker into a rank.

Taste is not a rank.

TRY IT Enjoy one ordinary thing without preparing a report about your taste.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 13, 17; pp. 27–28, 35–36.

CHAPTER 4

The office of measurable wonder

A room inventories spiritual feelings; a participant with an ordinary afternoon is asked to retake the test.

1 And I shit you not, the keepers of a gathering designed a form for measuring wonder.

2 It contained boxes for tears, warmth, trembling, peace, and a sensation that words could not describe.

3 A participant marked: I heard the bell and enjoyed sitting down.

4 The keeper asked whether she wished to try again.

5 She answered: Was there something wrong with the first hearing?

6 He said that others had reported profound experiences.

7 And she asked whether their experience required hers to become profound also.

8 The Office of Excellent Intentions proposed additional lighting, followed by a survey concerning the effectiveness of the lighting.

9 But the keeper paused.

10 He set aside the form and asked whether the participant wanted anything changed for comfort or access.

11 She asked for a chair with a back.

12 The chair was supplied, and the second bell was heard.

13 Neither the chair nor the bell established a theory of the universe.

14 Yet the afternoon was worth having, and nobody was required to be astonished.

Experience is not a performance review.

TRY IT Notice what happened without requiring a preferred feeling.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 4, 8–9; pp. 9–10, 17–20.

CHAPTER 5

The joke that required agreement

An institution advertises that it can laugh at itself; an unamused question tests the advertisement.

1 And I shit you not, the Society prepared a notice declaring that every question was welcome.

2 Beneath it a smaller notice requested that questions remain sufficiently amusing.

3 A visitor asked why the smallest doorway was the only entrance offered to them.

4 The keeper answered with a clever saying concerning narrow-mindedness.

5 Some laughed.

6 The doorway remained narrow.

7 The visitor said: I was not asking for a metaphor.

8 The keeper was troubled, having supposed that a successful joke completed the interaction.

9 And the Office of Excellent Intentions offered him a familiar defense: Perhaps the visitor lacketh a sense of humor.

10 But he declined it and asked what access was needed.

11 Then they opened the other entrance and corrected the directions.

12 Afterward he retained the joke in his notebook, beneath the heading THINGS THAT DID NOT ANSWER THE QUESTION.

13 For laughter may open a door.

14 It must not be mistaken for opening the actual door.

If the joke cancels the question, inspect the joke.

TRY IT Try giving a plain answer before making the clever one.

READING CONVERSATION Letter 11; pp. 23–24.

CHAPTER 6

The committee of tomorrow

Every imagined future demands attendance; preparation is distinguished from rehearsing every catastrophe.

1 And I shit you not, the Committee of Tomorrow called an emergency meeting.

2 One member predicted rain. Another predicted drought. A third predicted that preparation for either would be misinterpreted.

3 The observer was asked to experience all three outcomes immediately.

4 He became very tired without leaving his chair.

5 The clerk praised his vigilance and scheduled further meetings during supper.

6 Then an observer named Almahni asked what needed doing today.

7 He answered: I should check the forecast before arranging the outdoor gathering.

8 She asked when it would be useful to check.

9 He chose a time and wrote down an indoor alternative.

10 The committee objected that he had not yet felt every possible disappointment.

11 He replied that a plan was not an agreement to suffer each scenario beforehand.

12 And he returned to supper without claiming that the weather would obey him.

13 For he had not purchased certainty.

14 He had made the next reasonable arrangement.

A plan is not a rehearsal of every possible disaster.

TRY IT Choose one reasonable preparation and a time to revisit it.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 6, 15; pp. 13–14, 31–32.

CHAPTER 7

The gift with invisible terms

An offer of help carries an unwritten agreement; two observers discover that courtesy can contain a clear preference.

1 One person offered to organize an evening entirely according to another person's wishes.

2 The other made the same offer in return.

3 And I shit you not, each waited for the other to discover the correct wish.

4 They selected an activity that neither enjoyed, out of consideration for the preference neither had expressed.

5 The Office of Excellent Intentions recorded two generous sacrifices and no satisfied participants.

6 Afterward the first said: I did all this for thee.

7 And the second said: I had hoped thou wouldst not.

8 Then they opened the invisible contract and found that nothing had been agreed upon.

9 The first said: I would like a quiet walk, but I am willing to choose separately.

10 The second said: I would rather draw this evening.

11 And they arranged to share a drink later, without declaring the separate hour a failure of affection.

12 For a gift is not improved by hiding its price.

13 Nor is company made kinder by requiring both persons to disappear.

14 Thus preference became speakable, and generosity became easier to recognize.

A gift is not improved by hiding its price.

TRY IT State one preference or offer clearly. Make room for a different answer.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 3, 26; pp. 7–8, 53–54.

CHAPTER 8

The bell with a subscription

The invitation to listen becomes a schedule of interruptions; a visitor leaves the website to enjoy what it recommended.

1 And I shit you not, the Society installed a little bell to invite attentive listening.

2 Visitors liked it.

3 The Office of Excellent Intentions therefore proposed a bell each hour, a smaller bell between bells, and an alert whenever someone had missed a bell.

4 The reports showed a considerable increase in attention to the reports.

5 A visitor read a lesson about enjoying an ordinary evening and closed the page.

6 The clerk marked this as a loss.

7 But the visitor had gone to listen to a favorite piece of music.

8 Another had turned off the sound altogether.

9 A third stayed to read, which was also permitted.

10 When the keeper understood this, she asked what the website existed to make possible.

11 The Office proposed further research into the sacred value of remaining on the website.

12 She kept useful reminders and removed the invented urgency.

13 For an invitation that cannot tolerate an ending hath begun to resemble a demand.

14 And the little bell was allowed, at last, to finish ringing.

An invitation should be able to tolerate an ending.

TRY IT Finish an activity on purpose, whether that means staying or leaving.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 12–13, 22; pp. 25–28, 27–28, 45–46.

CHAPTER 9

The department of permanent renewal

A religion of Change is instructed never to repeat itself; a familiar practice acquires new meaning without new branding.

1 And I shit you not, the Department of Permanent Renewal reviewed the Society's monthly gathering.

2 It found that the moon had appeared before.

3 This was judged an unacceptable failure of innovation.

4 The Department recommended a different moon, an improved horizon, and a new meaning for breath.

5 The keeper asked whether last month's gathering had helped anyone.

6 Several said that it had.

7 Then the Department warned against complacency.

8 But a participant replied: I return because I notice something different within a familiar practice.

9 Another replied: I do not wish to return this month.

10 The keeper made room for both answers.

11 Thus they changed what required changing, retained what remained useful, and left the sky outside their procurement process.

12 For honoring Change did not require despising recurrence.

13 Neither did recurrence require obedience.

14 And the moon rose without a launch campaign.

Honoring Change need not mean despising recurrence.

TRY IT Return to a useful practice, or choose not to. Notice the reason.

READING CONVERSATION Letter 25; pp. 51–52.

CHAPTER 10

Equal measures for the light

Two experiences receive incompatible standards of belief; an observer asks what the accounts actually establish.

1 An observer entered a room and felt afraid.

2 The clerk said: Now thou hast discovered what the world is really like.

3 Later the observer entered the same room with a trusted friend and felt glad.

4 The clerk said: That is merely a feeling.

5 And I shit you not, the observer requested the rule by which the clerk was making this distinction.

6 The clerk presented two sets of scales.

7 Upon the first, sorrow weighed as knowledge. Upon the second, joy could weigh as nothing else than sentiment.

8 The observer said: Let us use the same questions for both.

9 What occurred? What did I experience? What evidence supports my account of its cause?

10 The fear was not erased by asking.

11 Neither was the gladness.

12 And neither alone established the entire nature of the universe.

13 Then the clerk complained that the world had become less easy to summarize.

14 The observer replied: It may have been that way before the summary.

A harsh story is not automatically a truer one.

TRY IT Use the same questions about evidence for a comforting and a troubling account.

READING CONVERSATION Letter 30; pp. 61–62.

CHAPTER 11

The certificate of independent thought

A certificate is offered; its authority is questioned; the printer survives the inquiry.

1 And I shit you not, the Society prepared a Certificate of Independent Thought, with a border sufficiently handsome to suggest that much had been settled.

2 A visitor admired it and asked: Who hath determined that I am an independent thinker?

3 The officiant answered: No one hath examined thee.

4 Then, said the visitor, what doth the certificate prove?

5 The officiant considered the matter and said: Principally, that we have access to a printer.

6 This answer improved the proceedings.

7 For the first draft had said, We hereby grant thee freedom; but a reader had struck out grant and written recognize.

8 Another had struck out immune to influence, because the paper was already having a considerable effect upon the room.

9 And the certificate now said: The bearer may question, examine, agree, disagree, and reconsider, including concerning the Society that issued this document.

10 The visitor asked whether he must disagree with something in order to qualify.

11 The officiant said: Nay. Agreement is not obedience merely because another person arrived there first.

12 Neither is disagreement independent merely because it is loud.

13 The visitor accepted a copy. Another visitor declined one. Both retained the same rights.

14 And no higher certificate was offered to the person who declined, lest refusal become merely the advanced examination.

15 Upon the signature line the visitor wrote a question he wished to keep open.

16 The document was thereby made less conclusive and considerably more useful.

A certificate can mark a practice. It cannot think for you.

TRY IT Write one question you want to keep open. The certificate is optional; the question is yours.

READING CONVERSATION Original SOSP continuation of Chapter 1. In conversation with Lewis, Letters 1, 14, 24; pp. 3–4, 29–30, 49–50.

CHAPTER 12

The council of approved dissent

All criticism is welcomed within an approved range; a reader asks for the range; the minutes become more honest.

1 And I shit you not, the Council of Approved Dissent invited every person to question the Society.

2 It supplied examples of questions which had already been answered to the Council's satisfaction.

3 A visitor asked something else.

4 The Council called this a misunderstanding of the spirit in which questions had been invited.

5 But the visitor said: I understood the invitation very plainly.

6 Then a clerk proposed that the minutes record unanimous agreement, for the remaining disagreement was making the page untidy.

7 The keeper refused, saying: A neat page is not an accurate meeting.

8 They recorded the objection, the reasons given in response, and what remained unresolved.

9 A second visitor agreed with the Council after hearing both sides.

10 No one accused her of lacking independence.

11 A third preferred not to argue and went outside for a while.

12 No one interpreted his departure as a confession of error.

13 The Council still had work to do, and decisions for which its appointed members were responsible.

14 But it ceased reporting every operational decision as a revelation binding upon all consciousness.

15 And the minutes ended with a sentence no less useful for its lack of grandeur: This is what we decided, and these are the questions that remain.

An open question is not a clerical error.

TRY IT Read one rule of a group you participate in. Distinguish its practical purpose from any claim of unquestionable authority.

READING CONVERSATION Original SOSP parable. In conversation with Lewis, Letters 7, 11, 24; pp. 15–16, 23–24, 49–50.

CHAPTER 13

The prophet and the uncomfortable mirror

The Society honors C. S. Lewis; a scribe proposes to improve him into agreement; the source is allowed to remain itself.

1 And I shit you not, the Society honored C. S. Lewis as a Prophet of the Uncomfortable Mirror.

2 For in reading his account of a tempter, the readers sometimes recognized an excuse they had prepared for themselves.

3 The Office of Excellent Intentions offered immediately to print a notice explaining that the book exposed the errors of everyone outside the Society.

4 This notice was declined.

5 A scribe then proposed removing the passages in which Lewis's Christian theology differed from the Society's, that he might agree with it more completely.

6 The keeper answered: We shall identify the disagreement, not repair the author into an endorsement.

7 For gratitude is not improved by putting our words into another's mouth.

8 And a prophet need not have anticipated our organization in order to have given us something worth examining.

9 They therefore kept the source beside the response, and named the new stories as their own.

10 They did not ask readers to call a fictional demon trustworthy merely because he spoke confidently.

11 Neither did they ask readers to call every confident stranger a demon.

12 One reader found an uncomfortable resemblance to herself and laughed.

13 Another found a point of disagreement and wrote it down.

14 Both had read something more useful than a certificate announcing that they already understood everything.

15 And the book remained open, which was less convenient for display and better for reading.

Honor the writer without recruiting him after the fact.

TRY IT Name one insight you value and one point on which you differ. Keep both attached to the actual source.

READING CONVERSATION Original SOSP parable. In conversation with Lewis's Preface and Letters 14, 23, 27; pp. 2, 29–30, 47–48, 55–56.

Observances of the Open Question

Seven companion declarations

Responsibilities may be assigned. Another person's conscience is not an office supply.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 1

Concerning intentions and consequences

1 Let no act be excused merely because its author calleth the intention excellent.

2 Ask what was intended, what was chosen, what followed, and who bore the cost.

3 For the Office may rejoice in its results while the visitor is diminished by them.

4 A sacred name doth not make coercion into care; neither doth a condemned name establish the nature of an act.

5 The Society needeth no verdict upon a person's eternal essence before addressing a boundary or repairing harm.

6 Let agreement be specific where agreement is required.

7 Let refusal be heard without manufacturing a spiritual penalty.

8 Let no teacher borrow another's freedom in order to teach freedom.

9 And let these inquiries be turned upon the Society before they are offered as accusations against its neighbors.

10 An account of kindness shall not be accepted in place of kindness's practical conditions.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 8, 19, 31.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 2

Concerning attention and follow-through

1 Let the label advanced, ancient, rebellious, or scientific bear no more weight than the claim beneath it can carry.

2 Let familiar things remain open to examination, and unfamiliar things remain open to evidence.

3 If a teaching inviteth action, let the action be named in terms a participant can actually try.

4 Let not the number of pages be counted as the number of practices completed.

5 Yet condemn not the person who readeth for pleasure, or resteth without a lesson.

6 For chosen rest is not an unfinished productivity assignment.

7 Let the participant distinguish an intention, a promise, an attempt, and an observed result.

8 If a practice is unhelpful, allow it to be changed or set aside.

9 The Society shall not infer enlightenment from a click, nor failure from an honest departure.

10 A lesson hath served a person when it becomes useful to them; the ledger needeth not possess the moment.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 1, 12–13.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 3

Concerning feeling and religious performance

1 Let no gathering require a participant to manufacture wonder.

2 Tears, calm, tingling, and silence are not admission papers to belief.

3 Neither shall the absence of an expected feeling be announced as resistance requiring correction.

4 Ask about comfort, preference, consent, and access before assigning meaning to a response.

5 Let no quiet afternoon be called a failed revelation.

6 If a person speaketh of distress, do not explain it away as a necessary spiritual stage.

7 The Society's exercises are not substitutes for qualified care, and its hosts do not diagnose those who attend.

8 A person may appreciate a capacity without claiming a superior rank; they need not pretend to be incapable in order to be humble.

9 Let acceptance precede the performance review.

10 And when the bell is finished, permit the bell to have been enough.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 4, 8–9, 14.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 4

Concerning laughter and belonging

1 Let Sacred Play loosen the grip of a claim, not tighten the grip of a group.

2 A concern needeth not become amusing before it deserves an answer.

3 When a joke hath been made at the expense of access, dignity, or consent, answer the practical concern without demanding applause.

4 Let no participant's worth depend upon laughing with the Founder.

5 The Society shall not assign a lower grade of being to those who retain the identity Human or decline the identity Snake Person.

6 Difference is not evidence of inferiority.

7 Let the host be able to say plainly: That did not answer thy question.

8 When criticism is inconvenient, let inconvenience be noticed rather than turned into a diagnosis of the critic.

9 No title, office, donation, or cleverness exempteth a person from these expectations.

10 A religion that can laugh at itself must also hear the person who is not laughing.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 7, 10–11, 24.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 5

Concerning care, preference, and rhythm

1 Let a preference be spoken where its disclosure is freely chosen.

2 Let an offer state what is offered, rather than conceal a debt to be collected later.

3 Ask what would help, and believe that an offered kindness may be declined.

4 Do not confuse a dietary restriction, disability accommodation, or safety boundary with the vanity of a demanding guest.

5 The love of excellent sound conferreth no authority over another's need for quiet.

6 Prepare for the future without requiring the observer to live every feared future beforehand.

7 Honor Change without commanding endless novelty.

8 Retain a useful rhythm without calling it compulsory.

9 Let a person act alone, alongside others, or together by agreement; none of these requireth the family as a sacred unit.

10 Preserve real responsibilities and negotiated commitments while declining invented claims over another's existence.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 3, 13, 15, 17, 21, 25–26.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 6

Concerning sources, evidence, and honest invitations

1 When the Society honors a writer, let the writer's actual argument remain visible.

2 Name the source, the adaptation, and the disagreement.

3 Lewis's eternal and knowing Creator shall not be presented as though Lewis had taught the Society's account of God.

4 A fictional voice may reveal a pattern without proving the existence of an invisible agent behind thy neighbor.

5 Let joy and distress receive the same care in separating experience, interpretation, and evidence.

6 No intensity of feeling alone establisheth the cause that an observer assigneth to it.

7 Let the website make its invitations clear and its endings available.

8 Offer a next door; do not manufacture fear of closing the current one.

9 Do not make curiosity into a hidden subscription, reflection into a required disclosure, or membership into a claim of superiority.

10 The reader who leaveth to enjoy their life hath not necessarily been lost.

11 And let no attribution be improved by pretending its author agreed with us.

READING CONVERSATION Preface; Letters 22, 25, 27, 30.

BOOK IV / OBSERVANCE 7

Concerning the certificate and its limits

1 Let a Certificate of Independent Thought be a freely chosen keepsake, not a test of spiritual worth.

2 Let it acknowledge a liberty; let it not pretend that a liberty began when the seal was printed.

3 It shall certify neither superior intelligence nor immunity from persuasion, error, habit, or influence.

4 It shall not be described as an academic degree, professional qualification, or license.

5 Let the bearer remain free to agree with a sound claim and to reconsider a cherished one.

6 Let the person who declineth a certificate remain no less welcome than the person who frameth it.

7 Let no examination of private belief, compulsory confession, payment, or membership be the price of this ceremonial copy.

8 If a frame or printed product is offered for sale, name plainly what the money buys; do not sell a higher grade of freedom.

9 Let the bearer question the Founder, the host, the Society, the source, and this observance itself.

10 Yet let no certificate be used to excuse disregard for another's consent, access, dignity, or safety.

11 Names and signatures may be left blank. No collection of personal details is required for the private exercise.

12 The Society may record that a ceremony occurred; it shall not report that a mind was proved independent.

13 And when the paper is lost, let none announce that the liberty hath expired.

READING CONVERSATION New Society observance for this fourth book; read with Chapters 1, 11–13.

This new observance accompanies the certificate; it is not an amendment to the previous three books.

A CEREMONIAL KEEPSAKE

Certificate of Independent Thought

Recognized, not manufactured.

This page recognizes

_____

Name, chosen mark, or an entirely respectable blank

as a person free to ask, examine, agree, disagree, reconsider, and decide —including concerning the Society of Snake People and this document.

The right existed before the paper.

No immunity from influence is asserted. No superiority is awarded. No membership, payment, or agreement is required.

One question I wish to keep open:

_____

_____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Either field may remain blank. The certificate does not object.

A ceremonial keepsake; not an accredited credential, diagnosis, assessment of intelligence, or license. A separate US Letter landscape copy is supplied for printing.

QUIET CAPTURES / A CEREMONY

The unrequired signature

Purpose: enjoy the paradox of an institution recognizing independence without treating its recognition as the source of that independence. Read Chapter 11 first, or simply explain the premise.

Invitation

The host says: "This certificate does not make you independent. It is a reminder that this Society does not own your conclusions. You may take one, leave it, change it, or use the back for notes."

Examine the document

Read it before signing anything. Ask what it actually records, what it cannot establish, and whether any phrase needs changing. Agreement with the wording is not required to remain welcome.

Choose a question

Privately choose one small claim or assumption you would like to examine. Write what might change your mind—or write that you have not yet worked that out. No disclosure is required.

Mark it, or do not

Add a name, date, signature, drawing, or nothing. Do not photograph a participant or publish a name without separate permission. There is no registry of approved minds.

Close

The host says: "The paper is yours. So is the next question." No pledge, donation, or recruitment pitch follows. Someone declining the certificate has not passed a secret higher test.

A question does not require a ceremony.
The ceremony is allowed to be enjoyable anyway.

SOURCE AND RESPONSE

C. S. Lewis: the uncomfortable mirror

The Society honors Lewis as a prophet in its own vocabulary: an influential writer whose fiction helps readers examine themselves. The title does not make his statements infallible, nor make him an adherent of the Society.

Read the voice, not just the sentence

Screwtape is the senior demon and Wormwood his nephew. The letters stage the tempter's reasoning. Lewis's Preface warns that Screwtape is a liar; an apparently confident explanation may expose the speaker as well as the patient. A simple reversal of every line is not an adequate reading method.

READING CONVERSATION Preface, p. 2; Letter 4, pp. 9–10; Letter 31, pp. 63–64.

Let disagreement remain named

Lewis's book argues within Christian accounts of a personal God, sin, grace, and salvation. Its teaching about marriage, family, and divine ownership is not silently adopted as SOSP doctrine. His account of timelessness is a theological argument, not experimental evidence for the Society's cosmology.

READING CONVERSATION Letters 18, 21, 27; pp. 37–38, 42–44, 55–56.

The reading relationship

On the following pages, each entry first describes the supplied Lewis letter and then gives a Society question. The question is our response, not his concealed conclusion. The supplied Preface and all 31 letters are the scope of this map; no later essays are implied.

Gratitude can keep company with disagreement.

Letters 1–8

Page references refer to the supplied 64-page PDF.

01 Labels before reasons · pp. 3–4

Screwtape recommends jargon, fashionable judgments, and ordinary distractions that prevent the patient from examining a claim.

SOSP question: Read beneath our own branding.

02 The disappointing congregation · pp. 5–6

The new convert's image of Christianity clashes with ordinary neighbors and the unglamorous work of participation.

SOSP question: Distinguish expectation from what people actually do.

03 Domestic pinpricks · pp. 7–8

Spiritual preoccupation, imagined motives, and unequal rules for interpreting words and tone reinforce mutual irritation.

SOSP question: Ask rather than assign intention.

04 Prayer and the manufactured feeling · pp. 9–10

Screwtape redirects prayer toward desired moods and an imagined object rather than the God Lewis presents as real.

SOSP question: Do not grade a ritual by emotional performance.

05 War is not the final objective · pp. 11–12

Wormwood's delight in suffering is rebuked when suffering may strengthen the patient's faith or redirect his concern.

SOSP question: Ask whose desired outcome is being optimized.

06 Imagined futures and actual conduct · pp. 13–14

Anticipated possibilities displace present responsibility; remote benevolence coexists with cruelty to people nearby.

SOSP question: Separate a present choice from every imagined outcome.

07 The unseen tempter and the faction · pp. 15–16

Screwtape discusses concealment, mythologized science, and causes that absorb religious commitment.

SOSP question: Do not turn a new community into a superior inner circle.

08 Undulation · pp. 17–18

Lewis's account contrasts recurrent human troughs and peaks with an enduring direction of will, and contrasts divine love with demonic absorption.

SOSP question: Avoid interpreting every low point as spiritual failure.

Letters 9–16

Page references refer to the supplied 64-page PDF.

09 Exploiting the trough · pp. 19–20

Screwtape promotes diminished pleasure, increasing appetite, and the assumption that present dryness proves permanent loss.

SOSP question: Do not confuse loss of excitement with proof of falsity.

10 The borrowed social identity · pp. 21–22

The patient adopts attitudes through gestures, laughter, and performance, then enjoys feeling superior to incompatible social circles.

SOSP question: Notice when belonging substitutes for a considered belief.

11 Laughter and its evasions · pp. 23–24

Joy, fun, the joke proper, and flippancy are distinguished; humor can also provide an excuse for cruelty.

SOSP question: Keep play and accountability together.

12 Gradual drift · pp. 25–26

Small choices, vague uneasiness, and empty distraction preserve appearances while distancing the patient from what he professes.

SOSP question: Look at recurring choices without inventing a worthiness score.

13 Pleasure and action · pp. 27–28

Enjoying a book and a solitary walk disrupts social vanity; Screwtape then tries to prevent insight from becoming action.

SOSP question: Enjoy something genuinely; name a practice when one is intended.

14 Humility without self-contempt · pp. 29–30

Pride in humility and false modesty keep the patient occupied with his own ranking; Lewis contrasts these with more generous attention.

SOSP question: Self-acceptance need not inflate or erase personal ability.

15 The present and eternity · pp. 31–32

Lewis distinguishes useful planning from surrendering present attention to hoped-for or feared futures.

SOSP question: Prepare; then return to the task or pleasure at hand.

16 Church tasting and party spirit · pp. 33–34

The patient is encouraged to become a religious connoisseur; narrow preaching and factional rituals can also limit receptivity.

SOSP question: Examine preference without demanding institutional loyalty.

Letters 17–24

Page references refer to the supplied 64-page PDF.

17 Gluttony of delicacy · pp. 35–36

A demand for exact satisfaction can dominate relationships even when quantities are small; Screwtape also discusses bodily conditions.

SOSP question: Keep taste distinct from entitlement; retain real access needs.

18 Love and competing selves · pp. 37–38

Lewis sets Hell's competitive absorption against cooperation and Christian accounts of marriage, sexuality, and family.

SOSP question: Study the control/connection contrast without adopting the sexual rules.

19 A self-protective contradiction · pp. 39–40

Screwtape retreats from acknowledging divine love and evaluates conditions by which side they serve.

SOSP question: An actor's objective is not the same as a participant's benefit.

20 Fashioned desire · pp. 41–42

Screwtape describes culturally engineered ideals of attraction within a strongly gendered Christian sexual framework.

SOSP question: Discuss manufactured expectations without importing the stereotypes.

21 The possessive pronoun · pp. 42–44

Claims about time, bodies, relationships, and God are examined within Lewis's theology of ultimate ownership.

SOSP question: Question entitlement without surrendering bodily autonomy or consent.

22 Music, silence, and noise · pp. 45–46

Screwtape is enraged by the patient's beloved and her circle, celebrates noise, and breaks into a grotesque transformation.

SOSP question: Design listening spaces and interfaces around voluntary attention.

23 Religion as a means · pp. 47–48

The letter criticizes selective reconstructions of Jesus and the use of faith chiefly for political or other instrumental ends.

SOSP question: Disclose what we change when borrowing a source.

24 The admired inner ring · pp. 49–50

Pleasure in a particular circle becomes an unexamined sense of religious superiority and insider entitlement.

SOSP question: No spiritual rank for recognizing our jokes.

Letters 25–31

Page references refer to the supplied 64-page PDF.

25 Novelty against rhythm · pp. 51–52

Recurring seasons and ritual contrast with compulsory novelty and fashionable terms that replace practical judgment.

SOSP question: A familiar practice may still be worth doing.

26 The generosity contest · pp. 53–54

Hidden preferences and performative self-sacrifice produce grudges beneath professions of unselfishness.

SOSP question: State an offer and allow an answer.

27 Distraction, prayer, and timelessness · pp. 55–56

Prayer includes present distraction; Lewis explores petition, freedom, divine timelessness, and reading older authors for possible truth.

SOSP question: Compare time philosophies without calling theology experimental proof.

28 Attrition and worldly settlement · pp. 57–58

The letter treats continued life as an opportunity for spiritual erosion through discouragement or comfortable self-importance.

SOSP question: Study habitual drift; do not turn this theology into advice to devalue life.

29 Fear is not the act · pp. 59–60

The discussion of courage, hatred, and despair distinguishes fearful feeling from what the person actually does.

SOSP question: Do not treat a difficult emotion as a character verdict.

30 Fatigue and unequal realism · pp. 61–62

Screwtape exploits expectations and switches standards of reality to elevate painful interpretations and dismiss joyful ones.

SOSP question: Use consistent questions; do not diagnose people from the story.

31 The affectionate predator · pp. 63–64

The patient escapes the tempters at death; Screwtape's professed affection becomes an explicit threat toward Wormwood.

SOSP question: Read the outcome as Lewis's Christian ending, not a neutral endorsement of Hell.

OPTIONAL LITERARY WORKSHOP / 50 MINUTES

The lesson that audits itself

Notice how labels, emotional performance, humor, and group approval can shape an interpretation. This is a literary workshop—not concealed persuasion or clinical treatment. Use a fictional example or a low-stakes situation; personal disclosure is optional.

0–5 minutes / Choice

Explain the format. Participants may read, listen, write privately, or pass. Nobody must identify a manipulative person or disclose a painful experience.

5–12 minutes / Source

Discuss Letter 11 or 24 with the source named. Establish who speaks, what he wants, and why the character's advice is not automatically the author's instruction.

12–20 minutes / Story

Read one parable. Identify the advertised benefit, what was actually done, and the result. Do not assign the fictional clerk's role to an absent person.

20–32 minutes / Practice

Use Chapter 5's unanswered access question. Draft a plain response, a practical improvement, and the information still needed. Work alone or together by choice.

32–43 minutes / Examine this room

Was the invitation clear? Could we disagree? Did the host reward a preferred answer? Did anyone feel expected to perform an insight? A concern need not be amusing.

43–50 minutes / Carry and close

Choose one pearl, one modest action, or simply finish. Offer the certificate as an optional keepsake. There is no completion test. End on time.

Recognizing a pattern does not establish somebody else's hidden intention.

QUIET CAPTURES / AFTERWORD

The chorus and the unrequired answer

A congregation loves a remembered melody; its warmth is mistaken for a ballot; the singers retain their own voices.

1 And I shit you not, the host selected a song which several visitors remembered from childhood.

2 One smiled before the first verse. Another felt a grief for which the music had made room. A third did not wish to sing.

3 The Office of Excellent Intentions prepared to record unanimous doctrinal agreement.

4 But the pianist asked how the Office had counted the person who was remembering a grandmother.

5 The Office replied that the same sound had come from everyone who sang.

6 The pianist observed that the same note was not the same history.

7 Then a visitor asked whether loving the song required returning to every rule once taught beside it.

8 The host answered: Thou mayest treasure a sound without signing every sentence that ever accompanied it.

9 They named the song and its makers, and did not copy words they had not arranged to use.

10 On another evening they sang new words written for their own gathering, without reporting that the old writers had secretly intended them.

11 Those who wished to listen were allowed to listen.

12 And when the final chord ended, no one's membership had changed without their answer.

13 The Office found the minutes less triumphant and more accurate.

14 The pianist closed the lid, and the people carried several different things home.

An original SOSP companion in conversation with C. S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, Letters 4, 11, 22, 24. No hymn lyrics are reproduced.

THE MARGINS REMAIN OPEN

Source echoes, names, and the edition record



Which book is speaking?

All chapter and verse numbers in the main text belong to this SOSP collection. References introduced below as "Book of Mormon," "Joseph Smith—History," or "1 Kings" identify the external source. A new dialogue is not attributed to those sources merely because it uses a familiar name.

The source stories are not all contemporaneous. Lehi's household, King Benjamin, Helaman's army, the Jaredites, Mormon, and Moroni belong to different settings in the source. This collection is an anthology of retellings and editorial conversations, not a reconstructed chronological history. The future-facing jokes and references are deliberate features of the new writing.

Names returned to the stories

Serpahi → Nephi; Lehiss → Lehi; Labban → Laban.

Mosserah's administrative stories now sit in Mosiah with King Benjamin.

Almahn → Alma; Helamander → Helaman; Etheron → Ether; Moroniss → Moroni.

Sariah, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, Jared, the brother of Jared, Mormon, Jerusalem, and Zarahemla now have explicit roles.

Tylarion and Nathoni remain the Society's fictional recovery characters. Their scenes do not alter Tyler's first-person founding accounts.

Mormon is the abridger and Moroni his son and record-keeper. Captain Moroni is a different figure in the source; this book does not merge them.

Objects kept distinct

The tree, fruit, rod, and building

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 8 and 11 supplies the dream imagery. The source associates the tree with the love of God and the rod with the word of God. The meal, handrail, rankings, and administrative offices are new Society interpretations.

Sariah

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 2:5 and 5:1–9 names Lehi's wife Sariah. Nephi's wife is not named Sarah in 1 Nephi 18. The earlier concept posters' invented quotation to that effect is not reproduced here.

The ship and the barges

Nephi's ship appears in 1 Nephi 17–18. Jared's people prepare eight barges in Ether 2–3. The luminous stones are part of the Jaredite account; the two fleets are not interchangeable.

Lights and interpreters

Ether 3:1–6 describes sixteen luminous stones; Ether 3:23–24 separately mentions two stones accompanying a sealed record. The official essay "Book of Mormon Translation" explains that Joseph Smith's associates sometimes used "Urim and Thummim" for interpreters or a seer stone.

Brass and gold

The brass plates sought from Laban in 1 Nephi 3–5 are distinct from the golden plates in Joseph Smith's recovery account. The new recovery frame uses gold; the inherited record from Jerusalem remains brass.

The voice

"Still small voice" occurs in 1 Kings 19:12 and 1 Nephi 17:45. Our tests of quietness, interpretation, and practical responsibility are new dialogue, not quotations from those verses.

Helaman and remembered music

Alma 56–57 provides the young soldiers and mothers' teaching. The familiar song "We'll Bring the World His Truth" is acknowledged by title only; its lyrics, tune, and arrangement are not reproduced. The 1985 Hymns and 1989 Children's Songbook are separate source collections.

New chapter source map

SOSP The Recovery 3 — The instruments and the scribe

Joseph Smith—History 1:34–35 and the official essay "Book of Mormon Translation" supply the traditional instruments and terminology. Tylarion and Nathoni's scene is an original Society recovery legend.

SOSP First Nephi 4 — The fruit and the audience

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 8:10–18, 26–28. The meal, register, and dialogue are new SOSP writing.

SOSP First Nephi 5 — Hold to the iron rod

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 8:19–30 and 11:25. In the source, the rod signifies the word of God; the handrail interpretation here is the Society's deliberate inversion.

SOSP First Nephi 6 — The great and spacious building

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 8:26–28 and 11:35–36. The source's mocking building is transformed here into a critique of both conformity and competitive nonconformity.

SOSP First Nephi 7 — The promised land and the next morning

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 17–18 supplies the ship and voyage. The treatment of consent, arrival, and land claims is original SOSP commentary.

SOSP Second Nephi 4 — Sariah and the record of everyone

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 2:5 and 5:1–9 name Sariah and describe her concern and relief. The poster/caption episode is new SOSP writing.

SOSP Second Nephi 5 — The still small voice and the open window

The phrase appears in 1 Kings 19:12 and in Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 17:45. The treatment of interpretation and consent here is SOSP's, not a summary of LDS doctrine.

SOSP Mosiah 3 — King Benjamin lowers the platform

Book of Mormon, Mosiah 2:7–18, especially the tower, written address, shared mortality, labor, and service. Later callbacks and dialogue are invented.

SOSP Helaman 4 — The armies of Helaman

Book of Mormon, Alma 56:47–48 and 57:20–27 supplies Helaman's young soldiers, their mothers' teaching, wounds, and survival. This chapter adds the Society's ethic of care and does not reproduce song lyrics.

SOSP Ether 3 — The barges and the necessary question

Book of Mormon, Ether 2:16–25 and 3:1. The source's barges have ventilation openings and no windows; this is a literary scene, not boatbuilding guidance.

SOSP Ether 4 — Sixteen lights and two interpreters

Book of Mormon, Ether 3:1–6, 22–24; 6:2–3. The official essay "Book of Mormon Translation" discusses the later overlapping terminology for interpreters and a seer stone.

SOSP Mormon 1 — The abridger and the margins

Book of Mormon, Words of Mormon 1:1–9 and Mormon 6:6 supplies the abridging and transfer of records. The editorial philosophy and all dialogue are new SOSP material.

SOSP Mormon 2 — The golden plates and the brass plates

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 3–5; Words of Mormon 1:1–9; Mormon 6:6 and 8:1. The golden-plate recovery belongs to Joseph Smith—History 1:34–35, 51–54.

SOSP Moroni 3 — The sealed portion and the pencil

An original SOSP conclusion in conversation with Book of Mormon, Mormon 8:1 and Moroni 10:1–2. It does not claim to reproduce a sealed ancient text.

Sources and reading editions

The Book of Mormon: user-supplied 3 Mormon Books(1).pdf, compared with the Church's online scripture text for the named passages. Nineteenth-century source text is distinguished from modern editorial headings, footnotes, and art.

The Book of Mormon, Project Gutenberg eBook 17. Its catalogue identifies that text as public domain in the USA. No modern Church page designs or scripture-study apparatus are reproduced.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Book of Mormon Translation," Gospel Topics Essays. Consulted for the interpreters, seer stone, and Urim and Thummim terminology.

C. S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, supplied 64-page edition: Preface and Letters 1–31. The complete existing Book IV reading map is retained. Lewis's book and lyrics by other authors are not bundled.

Society source manuscripts: Curtailed Standard Works vi; The Book of Quiet Captures; The Brassy Plates recovery legend; Friendly Field Guide, Expanded Reading Edition. This edition does not overwrite those files.

About this revision

This edition renames and expands the ancient-story book, changes the recovery frame from brassy to golden plates, adds the instrument scene, retains the thirteen Covenant sections and two declarations, updates Great Pearls to the eleven supplied unnumbered Human Lie entries, and adds three original song texts. Quiet Captures retains its thirteen chapters, seven Observances, certificate, and reading companion, with a new song-related afterword.

The new narrative is religious imagination and satire authored for SOSP, not an authenticated translation or evidence about hidden practices in an actual temple. The Holy of Holies scene remains a dream in an invented temple. Tyler's narrated experiences remain testimony to experience, not independent verification of their causes.

The English prose, additions, and illustration selection in this edition were assembled with AI assistance. The paintings are imaginative illustrations, not historical photographs or newly found records. No original LDS painting or hymnbook illustration has been inserted.

This is an interior reading draft, not a printer-specific jacket or a legal clearance opinion. The separate publishing memo records remaining rights and artwork-review questions before public distribution.

And I shit you not, the keeper returned the book to the shelf. The pencil remained outside the seal.

www.SocietyofSnakepeople.org