

Resonating through the veil: a Harmonic Response to the Naturalistic Explanation of the Book of Mormon

I say unto you:
If ye speak against it, it matters not,
For the word of God must be fulfilled.
— Alma 5:58

The Naturalistic Explanation of the Book of Mormon as articulated in both scholarly critiques and recently popularized discussions found online offers a compelling human-centered narrative:

Joseph Smith, a 19th-century American storyteller steeped in folk magic, revivalist fervor, and mound-builder myths, recited a planned and memorized—or if not recited and planned, he improvised—a 500-page epic stemming from the cultural detritus of his Palmyra youth. Drawing from various sources ranging from:

- The tales of Captain Kidd
- Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*
- Gilbert Hunt's *The Late War*
- Masonic Panic of the culture
- 1769 King James Version of the Bible
- Family history of visionary events and folklore
- And more

—Joseph's text emerges as a synthetic fraud, not the product of a divine translation.

This view of the gentiles classifies the golden plates as props, and the dictation process as a toss up between mad genius or trance-like channeling, feasible in roughly 65 working days while staring at a rock in a dark hat—and they're not wrong, but they're not right. To reduce the Book of Mormon to mere 19th-century collage risks flattening a multidimensional ledger into a two-dimensional postcard. It is to make the same misstep made by Jordan Peterson when he stated that he would not read it because he would not be able to give it adequate attention, thus creating a paradox that diminishes its potential for providing any insight.¹

¹ See p.4

The Book of Mormon is the quintessential auto-stereogram of theological texts. This is to say, those who desire to ask of God, believing that they will receive—those who hath an ear to hear and a stereoscopic eye to see—will have revealed, (layer upon layer, perception upon perception), a true witness of its fractal historicity. Critics who cannot comprehend the nature of this thing cannot continue demanding 3D proofs for 4D phenomena when they cannot extract the 3D proofs from the already provided 2D evidence. I mean they can, and we all know they'll let us know they're free to do so while simultaneously being determined to do so as well, but, it matters not.

Yes, the naturalistic lens to this historical work illuminates the human residue present on divine transmission, but that cannot eclipse the spiritual substrate. True Revelation is not some sterile download from AWS US-EAST-1, it is a resonant interface where the translator's context—familial dreams, cultural susurrations, personal pains—acts as the prism refracting the revealed eternal etchings. In other words, this is to reframe the naturalistic critiques not as evidence of merely and purely human action, but as diagnostic echoes of a living document, and thus a living story. The human residue that critics spotlight are not corruptions in the revelatory signal of the translation processes, they help diagnose how the text was calibrated for Joseph's time and place—which time and place is still our time and place; this, the last dispensation of the fullness of times.



Latter-day Saint thought is deeply topological. It is said,

There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes.

—which, coincidentally, is one phrase among many that is a 3D & 4D proof from and for the 2D evidence, but I digress. To have the ability or capacity to *discern* is to be able to perceive or recognize, much like Huizi², the differences or negotiable distinction among things. If spirit is a more fine or pure matter requiring a more fine and pure eye to perceive it, and we have many claims of that very perception occurring, then it stands to reason that there may be many testable ways to purify the eye unto the perception of the golden light of the celestial mind, and the discerning of the ephemeral material and topology of spirit.

For instance, every sense is the specialization of the sense of touch. When we see, our eyes touch light; when we hear, our ears touch sound; when we smell and taste, our nose and tongue touch molecules. Irrespective of this, no matter what sense is being utilized it is our brains touching the world and then interpreting the accompanying electrochemical signals in order to represent that world. Interestingly,

² Zhuangzi. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. Introduction, p.xxv. Translated by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1968.

Oliver Cowdery reportedly described his understanding as having been touched—as if it is a sense like the rest with external stimuli awaiting cranial interaction. Cowdery captured this multi-sensory revelation in words that blur the lines between the corporeal and the conceptual,

My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my under-standing was touched, and I know that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind, it was real.

Rather than a passive sense like vision and hearing, understanding is a dynamic and active sense. Understanding is actively both vision and touch—you must *see* the structure of things, but you must also *grasp* them to make them real—and they must hold weight; having a firm foundation. You can't truly grasp what you haven't seen, and you can't truly see what you haven't grasped. It's like a child truly learning to see—first, color and light and shape appear, then meaning arranges as they reach out and test what they perceive. Understanding is the sense by which the brain touches meaning itself. This would suggest that there is a material field, or substrate knowledge-base with which ones brain could interact in order to interpret and render electrochemical signals into a tapestry of meaning—an accessible net of Pure Intelligence

All spirit is matter, all spirit has structure—or texture—so all spirit may be contextualized in order to touch your understanding. That which is seen with the spiritual mind will have varying degrees of structure and texture about it, even tangibility, or pressure sense; there are numerous ways in which what is seen or heard can be felt.

In Latter-day Saint thought the Holy Ghost is often described as a burning in the bosom. You feel it at the center of your chest, to your hearts core, where emotions feel heaviest. This is because your heart's electromagnetic field extends beyond your body and interacts with environmental fields—it acts as the brain's transducer, *touching understanding* through resonant electromagnetism. The magnetic stories of the Holy Spirit resonate through each chamber of that hollow conductor. This is why profound truths often feel felt, not just thought.

Additionally, Oliver Cowdery stated that it was “*no vain imagination of the mind,*” which is a direct reference to the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12.18, which reads,

And the large and spacious building which thy father saw is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men...

To be vain is to be without value, to be worthless, void, empty, idle, fruitless; conceited and foolish. The Book of Mormon warned that those who conduct their life in this way,

...dwindled in unbelief, they became a dark and loathsome and a filthy people, full of idleness (vain imaginations) and all manner of abomi-nations.

The great and spacious building is foundationless, it carries no weight. This means that, while vain in appearance of material things, it completely lacks material structure at every layer. This is why a popular incantation for those on the road to Perdition is, “*Nothing matters.*” This is to be completely devoid of spirit, to be completely withdrawn from matter so as to not even be fine or pure at base layer—it is to not be; to simply not matter. Poof.

However, when we turn the light around and discern the spirit with purer eyes, our soul touches the golden flower of truth, and our understanding of the nature and character of God is touched by the fires of pure intelligence. To receive the light and enter the fires is to consume the golden pill; it is touch the heart and feel the love of God. You can’t truly grasp what you haven’t seen, and you can’t truly see what you haven’t grasped. It can’t be that nothing matters, because everything is matter.

Folk Magic: Threads of the Unseen

It is undeniable that the Smith family was deeply involved in various forms of folk magic and esoterica. Family artifacts whisper of this entanglement: Hyrum's Mars Knife, etched for invoking the red planet's martial fire; Joseph's Jupiter Talisman, a pocket-sized sigil promising wisdom and prosperity under the king of the gods; a modest cache of astrological broadsides charting celestial influences; seer stones polished for peering into veiled truths; and, in a poignant coda, the Saints carving canes from the coffins of Joseph and Hyrum, as if to carry their martyrs' woodgrain resonance into their daily stride.

In Joseph's formative years, this wasn't fringe eccentricity but the ambient pulse of a Second Great Awakening laced with millennial fervor. Religionists clamored for a lucid restoration of biblical miracles—visions, healings, tongues—yet the lines between orthodox piety and occult craft remained as porous as a sieve. Christianity and folk traditions shared the same soil: divining rods for water or revelation, charms against witches or woes, dreams as portals to divine or demonic dispatch, and so on. Amid this brew simmered a deeper unease, one that gnawed at the compass of many souls—how do we sift angels from demons, light from shadow, and truth from trickery? In a world of revivals and mound-builder legends, orientation wasn't abstract theology, it was a matter of survival; it was the tactile art of attuning to the unseen's texture before it could ensnare you.

Lucy Mack Smith, ever the family's unflinching chronicler, captures this balance with candor,

Let not my reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopped our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac drawing magic circles or soothsaying, to the neglect of all kinds of business; we never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remember the service of and welfare of our souls.

Here, magic isn't a siren to idolatry, it is a sidelong labor to comprehending the character of God. Joseph himself remarked and admitted to getting caught up in similar theological and metaphysical dalliances during his younger years when he said that he was,

...sometimes associated with jovial company, etc.,...³

—which is taken to mean: associated with ‘those under the influence of the planet Jupiter’—hence the talisman.

On such a note, critics can, at times, generalize certain folkloric syncs, saying that some of the events that transpire—such as the visitations of the Angel Moroni happening to occur every Fall Equinox—is either part of some occultist, magical astrological mapping, or some ruse by the boy Joe to plot his book structure over the course of the next several years, or that it was a visitation that never happened and was only a later addition to the history. What I find is first that, while events transpiring and lining up with equinoxes and solstices is undeniably part of occultist magical astrological mappings this does not preclude it from also being an aspect of Christian metaphysics or cosmology—better known as cosmism.⁴ Second, the years *are* bidding Joseph more time, not to plot his book, but to not be so levitous, and to release himself from association with jovial company. Third, the visitations didn't happen—as reported. Not precisely. Divine timing defies tidy human calendars. Take, for example, a brief window into my own experiences.

On September 23, 1996 I began having a series of three recurring dreams that I would have for the next twelve years before they would cease due to a sleep paralysis episode I had my first night in the Missionary Training Center, (September 25, 2008). Not only do these experiences seem to follow their own weird, individual patterns such as certain recurring dreams only being location based, or some of them being seasonal, but some of them can take up to ten years to lexically process in the experiencer. If a picture is worth a thousand words imagine the word count to a visionary visitation from angelic beings. Interestingly, the word count often remains at zero for some time before it expands exponentially.

Imagine not having any conceptual framework to describe what you have witnessed. Imagine not recognizing until the third dreamy visitation, that, “oh, hey, this same dream keeps happening, I should pay attention!” If you haven't had some type of divine encounter for yourself, take a moment to consider what it might even be like to experience an angelic visitation or otherwise inexplicable event, let alone what it must be like to attempt to describe the experience.

³ Joseph Smith History, 1.28

⁴ Leiland Tanner, *Eternal Perspectives*, https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_UhN6YcHQUhHxcZ2E6EH4-GtL4dhVdV4&si=tDuQwNiKs_PSTTI9

Much like describing anything from vast scenery to simple colors for someone who is congenitally blind this is not an impossible task, but literal replication is improbable. I can use all manner of description to convey to you the ontological nature of my angelic visitors: self-replicating fabergé eggs, intricately detailed nodules of light-plasma propelled by a harmonious group effort to guide me through an out-of-body message; beings that are both light orbs and, on occasion, small morphological humanoid creatures with exaggerated features. Nonetheless, they are intelligences of a manner that took decades to comprehend. Even still, unless you experience them for yourself you will be left blind to the literal replicative interpretation process, not knowing what the colors red and blue actually are, and only knowing them as representations of hot and cold, or high and low.

Trying to describe the divine is precisely why Islam doesn't want you to draw Allah, and why that which can be named is not the eternal dao; it cannot be done. No descriptions, only textures. Nothing to say, plenty to feel. Now apply this to the age of seven, or nine, or fourteen—ah, but does the age necessarily matter? This is a difficult task for anyone. Personally, this far into my life, I'd rather just settle for saying I saw my messengers every fall for so many years just to make the story easier than to try to actually map out and remember every single time I did have the dreams. That would actually be the task of insanity—mapping the unmappable, let alone trying to make sense of it with the limited and twisted linguistics of an unlearned youth. This is not to say I didn't have the dream on September 23, 1996, I did, but I know I had more than three recurring visitations isolated to occurring in late September because they occurred several times a year over the course of more than a decade and one of them was strictly set to one location. Moreover, it would be another fifteen years before I would be able to even begin to slightly comprehend the nature of the visitations themselves, let alone the meaning of their content; some of which I am still unravelling three years beyond that.

Visionary experiences are not tidy. They are both seasonal and spontaneous, and they are lexical marathons.

But pause here in the half-light of hindsight. Is it mere coincidence that these thinnings in the veil often cluster at the fulcrum when day and night hang in resonant equipoise? Do Joseph's Fall visitations smack of occult contrivance or of a storyteller's solstice-synchronized scaffolding for his saga to be? Perhaps worse yet, it is either a later construction pieced together from the mosaic of memory's data blocks, or it's just another lie jammed together to fit the loom of faith. (A contradictory approach).

Not to mention, Joseph's own 1838 historical account pins his first visitation from Moroni on the eve of the equinox, not the equinox itself; why then not the exact date? My childhood recurring dreams started one night after the equinox, and my sleep paralysis episode in the MTC three days after the equinox. Why not just claim the exact date of the equinox? Because they happened when they happened, and not when they didn't.

The stars aren't silent props in a human hoax, they are sussurants in the divine play transferring truths too vast for one tradition's tent. Consider Joseph's own riposte to the revivalist racket—

Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes. They all have a little truth mixed with error. We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true ‘Mormons.’⁵

In the hush of late 1832 and early 1833, Joseph absorbed a revelation that baptized the firmament itself. The 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants—a luminous ledger on light's anatomy—reads,

6 He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

7 Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

8 As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;

9 As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made;

10 And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.

11 And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

12 Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space

—
13 The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.⁶

Witness the topology unfold. There is light—intelligence, or truth—in all celestial objects, not as distant decor but as dynamic fields influencing our earthly orbits as surely as heart's electromagnetism tugs the bosom's burn. Just as our lights entwine here below, so too do those grand orbs press upon us from afar, refracting eternal etchings through the prism of our pains and pursuits. Do the astrologers, then, clutch only chaff? No—they too have a little truth mixed with error. One learns this, after all, through associating with jovial company for a time—this the first fumbling touch of instantiating a purer eye. But when the fumble is recovered and one moves on, that time of association becomes more or less a lesson checked off the celestial syllabus of eternal progression.

Skullduggery and the Path to Prophethood

⁵ George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others*

⁶ D&C 88.6–13

On the matter of treasure digging and the use of seer stones I think it is reasonable to accept that such history is true, even up to the matters involving complaints and the law, and even those reports that involve Joseph expressing remorse regarding his seer stone and treasure digging follies to Issac Hale. Any and all of it only lends more credence to the story. To say that because Joseph Smith was involved in this skullduggery it precludes him from being a trustworthy prophet, seer and revelator is to not only pedestalize him nigh unto the demanding of behavioral perfection, but also to deny the power of the atonement, and to distrust your own belief in the ability of people to learn, grow, and change—even yourself. And so with this acceptance I will directly address five common questions or issues raised by critics.

1. Why Was the Urim and Thummim Provided With the Gold Plates if Joseph Was Primarily Going To Use his Own Seer Stone?

For complex matters of time and the divine attributes of God which I have addressed at length elsewhere⁷ it is reasonable to assume that God the Father did not know who the Prophet was going to be. I could argue that it could have been anyone, but for sake of space and time I'll just forgo the probable fluff. Arguing that God the Father did not know who it was going to be, (accepting some arguments for the limitations to Gods knowledge), but then claiming it could have been any religious individual with the same curiosities during the same time and place as Joseph Smith, would find trouble when encountering 2 Nephi 3:15 where Lehi tells his son Joseph, recalling the words of Joseph of Egypt, that the Lord would raise up a choice seer whose name shall be after the name of Joseph, and also after the name of his own father. Is this Joseph Smith inserting himself into the text, or evidence of the slim probability for changes in these circumstances? Were I to say that it could have been anyone, but God couldn't have known it would be Joseph, would be to say that actually either God did know and I'm being dishonest, or Joseph son of Jacob who was carried into Egypt circa 1876 BC was not given the proper name in the Bible, and that even by circa 421 AD as Moroni was burying the plates I guess God still didn't know either, even though Joseph of Egypt was long past. It had apparently not only been written upon the plates already, but was made certain to be contained in the abridged version. Not to mention all that time the people of the book wasted ensuring the interpreters stayed with the record if Joseph wasn't going to use them.

Content dictates form. The Urim and Thummim and other divining stones are referenced throughout the Bible. Joseph Smith admitted to being involved with treasure digging and seer stones, and even expressed remorse, but he did in fact attempt to utilize such instruments. Like learning how to play any other instrument there are going to be wrong notes played along the way, but that does not mean that one cannot learn, improve, and perfect that craft. And on the path through that same celestial syllabus, another Joseph charts a parallel course.

⁷ Shenefelt, Harmonic Theism: Creatio ex Concordia and the Divine Arrangement of Worlds

In 1792 in New Bedford Massachusetts a later seventh-day adventist convert known as the “apostle of the Sabbath” was born. His name was Joseph Bates. Joseph Bates didn’t dabble in folk magic, soothsaying, or other jovial behavior—other than sailing—which sailing set him off course as a prisoner of the War of 1812. He was released in 1815 but continued his sailing career before settling back in Massachusetts around 1828. His father was also named Joseph.

It stands to reason that if there were two spiritually inclined men named Joseph during this time period, but only one of them was interested in the likes of the methods of translation and other related techniques and topics, and God wanted the record of these people to finally come forth, that he would then know to utilize the Joseph who was already familiar with such a realm, and not the one lost at sea who had yet to show as intense a fervor and need to comprehend the character of God as the other. God could have utilized Bates, had other circumstances of both Smith and Bates’ lives played out differently, perhaps had Bates returned home after his release as a prisoner of war in lieu of continuing to sail. It wouldn’t have mattered then that he had not dabbled in the same esoterica and peep stone tomfoolery as Smith, for the Urim and Thummim had been provided for just such a scenario. Additionally, it remains likely that had it been Joseph Bates, he too may have reached the point of not utilizing the Urim and Thummim in the translation process anymore either.

In the timeless childhood classic Harry Potter, there once hung in the balance the calling and election of The Boy Who Lived. A prophecy was made that stated that the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord would be born as the seventh month dies, as well as some other provided indicators. It is later revealed, however, that the prophecy could have applied to two children born that same day who shared the other indicators of the prophecy. In the end, the one considered to have the potential to be more powerful was chosen, and the saga unfolded, the last dispensation opened, and fate rolled on from there.⁸

In the end, the plates were not buried for a Bates adrift in New Bedford’s millennial mists, they were etched for the one whose hands already bore the calluses of peep stones and the ache of unburied longings, the seer whose follies forged the firmest grasp on the unseen. Like Harry’s scar choosing its bearer amid prophecy’s shadow, so too was the choice seer arranged not from celestial indifference but from the resonance of a God who comprehends all lights—errors included—to quicken one understanding above the rest. And in that quickening, the veil hums not with what might have been, but with what was fulfilled.

2. Why Did the Church Obscure the Use of the Seer Stone for 180 Years?

Whether you believe it was deliberate deception to make the story of the translation process more palatable, and to disassociate from folk practices and similar antics, or that it was a natural historical recovery of the initial mechanics and methods used, neither really speak to the heart of the issue.

⁸ Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Scholastic, 2003, ch. 37, pp. 841–42.

Honestly, I believe that the methodology, the mechanics, and the gift were mostly lost with Joseph. He was the one with the ability to translate, and the ability to ask of God, reportedly seeing anything he would ask of the Father,

Philo Dibble described Joseph Smith's power to see whatever he asked of God: "This is the description as given by Joseph the Seer and he could see whatever he asked the Father in the name of Jesus to see. I heard him say that he could see what he would ask of the Father in the name of Jesus and it would be granted, and I have no more doubt of it than I have that the mob killed him."⁹

In John Heinemann's, *A Mormon Scientist's Cosmology*, he writes of LDS teachings and architecture through a cosmological lens. He remarks on the vision of the Sunstone of the Nauvoo Temple, putting on display how the visionary qualia and visual content of Joseph Smith's life influenced and inspired early Mormon thought and aesthetics,

"Historical evidence from both Mormon and non-Mormon sources suggest that the figures depicted on the Nauvoo Temple sunstones were those of some personage who resides inside the Sun! The Mormon leader saw this unidentified man in one of several visions that he had pertaining to the style of the Nauvoo Temple. Smith was an extremely visionary man being greatly endowed with the ability to see things in the universe that no one else in his day could. Just who the man on the sunstone might've been was never made known by Joseph Smith, but he did see him in vision as being one of those who reside in the Sun!"¹⁰

Joseph Smith was like the brother of Jared to the rest of the early Saints, not that they weren't mighty members, prophets, and apostles themselves, it was just that, as the situation was described in the Book of Ether,

And thou hast made us that we could write but little because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty; even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.¹¹

⁹ Oliver B. Huntington, *Journal of Oliver B. Huntington*, vol. 3 (typescript, Utah State Historical Society, 1881), 166.

¹⁰ John Heinerman, Ph.D., *A Mormon Scientist's Cosmology* (San Rafael, CA: Cassandra Press, 1982), ch. 3 ("The Sun and Its Strange Inhabitants").

¹¹ BOM, Ether 12.24

Joseph had an intimate relationship with visionary experience, revelation, and the language of God. Not at first, as we've already covered, but line upon line, precept upon precept, he grew in the wisdom of the ways of the Lord. And, this is not to discredit them, but perhaps the same may be said of some of our Latter-day leadership as it was prophets past in comparison to the brother of Jared; they may still be growing in the wisdom of the ways of Joseph, perhaps leading and preparing the awkwardness of their hands for the next time the Urim and Thummim may be called upon for use. As the current prophet, Dallin H. Oaks has been known to say,

“The Lord will proceed in His own time, and in His own way.”¹²

A Sea of Glass Like Unto Crystal

3. If the Gold Plates Were Essential to the Translation, Why Were They Covered Up or Absent During Most of the Dictation Process?
4. If the Urim and Thummim Were Essential to the Translation, Why Were They Not Used?

We can deduce an answer to the first by utilizing the second as the fulcrum, and by later weaving in alleged issues such as Joseph Smith Sr's–Lehi's Dream. If we accept the Urim and Thummim as essential to some revelatory processes, (as evidenced in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price), we can accept that the positioning, location, and even visibility of the plates needn't matter. It is not as if the stones are ever reportedly held over the ancient record like a magnifying glass. After all, Abraham used them to see the great stars and receive cosmological revelations, as well as to hear the voice of God,¹³ and other biblical prophets used the interpreters and the breastplate as an otherwise oracular device. So it would seem that the interpreters are capable of revealing the entire universe and are not dependent on anything other than God and the wielder, let alone a stack of metal.

Moreover, though tradition holds strong in the use of the interpreters and the breastplate, and their preservation across thousands of years is emphasized, we have already touched on how they are, in the end, expendable, sorry to say. Their capability depends on the user, and some users need not use them at all, and not just the Urim and Thummim, but any seer stone, as it is reported that, in the end, Joseph didn't need to use the stone in order to translate. He had gained the capacity to translate at will. To borrow an example from the world of Harry Potter once more, it is to cast a spell without needing to speak the incantation, you simply think or feel it and it happens at will. This follows for why interpreters

¹² Oaks, Dallin H. “Timing.” *BYU Speeches*, Brigham Young University, 29 Jan. 2002, speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks/timing/.

¹³ Pearl of Great Price, Abraham, 3.1–4

or other stones were not used for the translation of the Book of Abraham. A seer learns that the translation is actually never appearing on the surface of a stone or the interpreters, for every thing is interpreted by the brain; meaning the words of the translation always appear on the surface of the mind, and never anywhere else. You are Space for the world, which world appears and springs from the headless void at the center of your experience, which void contains the entire universe—your own personal Urim and Thummim. Thus, plates veiled and Urim sidelined affirm the seer's ascent. Tools yield to the templed-self, where revelation resides not in props but in the wielder's purified prism—their permanently indestructible golden pill. As muddy waters still to crystal clarity, so does the cerebrospinal sea, awash in timeless glory, become our innate throne of God. This is undeniably the case. Orson Pratt would have believed as much, but this is looking too far ahead.

Heaven's Ledger

Before attempting to explain the experience and process of a revelator from metaphysically, physiologically, and theologically intertwined perspectives, it would be better if we take a glimpse behind the curtain to see just from where revelation arrives. Where does such information presented through an interpreter reside? How is a translation accessed, seen, and interpreted if not etched onto the stone or seen oozing out of its pours in some supernatural process?

Before Joseph Smith extracted the plates from both the physical mound of Cumorah and the spiritual mound of his mind they existed as a sealed record, sealed from any and all access across generations—the entire work itself a sealed portion of heavens vast ledger. Picture Moroni, the last Nephite prophet, standing atop the Hill Cumorah around 421 AD. In the physical realm, he buries the golden plates—engraved with the abridged history of his people—in a stone box. This act is concrete; he hides them in the earth, a literal deposit in order to preserve the record from the Lamanites' final onslaught. The plates, holding the remembrance of the Nephite saga, from Lehi's exodus to Moroni's farewell, were planted as a spiritual seed. This act crowns a collective endeavor spanning centuries: prophets like Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Mormon, and others labored to write, abridge, and safeguard these records. Their efforts to downsample vast histories into a unified, distilled essence—a relay of over 1,000 years—embeds the knowledge in the ether. The plates in Cumorah's stone box are the husk, woven by the Nephites' sustained devotion. It's not just Moroni's burial of the plates, but the centuries of intent that transmute the record into a universal mirage—a shimmering reflection of all that is known by those who compiled the knowledge, and all those who will come to drink of the same wise waters.

The plates are not a static object, they are a living interface. The physical plates in Cumorah's soil are mirrored in spiritual imprint; beyond the mirage of the material world they spring forth in the Spirit World as an accessible active archive—where the plates' wisdom resides as a living vibration. Physically, Moroni entrusted the plates to the ground; spiritually, he ignited their integration, locking them into the grand Book of Remembrance, a shared space where God's nervous system hums with eternal truths.

Spirit resides as torsions in spacetime, and their location is dependent upon their individual degree of material influence. In the third section of the Doctrine and Covenants we learn that,

God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore, his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

God, having no beginning nor end, has the capacity to be inside and outside of time and space. God is of a non-orientable eternity; being everywhere always. What is one linear eternal round from our dimensional vantage point is one non-orientable moment for God. The eternal round with which God is and walks is a hyperdimensional Möbius strip, particularly resonating in the higher dimensions which escape our grasp. The topology of Gods place in and out of time and space treats chronology and orientation as nth dimensional origami, and while we cannot truly depict these objects, we can do our best to represent them. An object such as this representative 4th dimensional Möbius strip helps to elucidate D&C 88.41 a bit more, as it reads,

He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even
God, forever and ever.

Spirit is matter existing as objective torsions in transvisible dimensions of the Möbius strip of spacetime, and in some dimensions this matter has reached such universal attunement so as to be tangible. This is why there is a warning in the form of D&C 129; in order to detect if a messenger and their message is from a higher, Godly-inhabited dimension vs a lower, deceitful dimension, one only has to ask to shake hands with the messenger. Both the potential state of motion and tangibility of the messenger are enough to detect their intent and status.

The Hill Cumorah held both the seed of the physical archive of the Nephites', as well as the roots supporting the spiritual fruit which grew out of Moroni's deposit. The plates' burial, (like our burial upon death), locked them in the earth, yet their essence ascended, growing as a tree of wisdom rooted as distinct pages in the Spirit World—on the ledgers of heavens Book of Remembrance—preserved by the Nephites' non-orientable, unified intent. Joseph, unearthing the archive, resurrected the plates, and like the body of Christ, they had reached a topological unity of perception, symmetry, and substance, ascending into a higher plane of existence.

The sealed portion of heavens ledger exists where chronology dissolves into topology—a ledger not of ink and ore, but of intention and torsion. To call it “sealed” is both paradox and invitation. The records are eternally accessible, yet perpetually unfolding, their contents are not encrypted by divine decree but by the limitations of our perceptual geometry. The golden plates Joseph unearthed were but a

singular projection of their hyperdimensional archive—a 3D shadow cast by a manifold vibrating across God’s eternal rounds. The autostereogram of the Spirit World.

This is an implicit argument for mormon process panpsychism, which states that Consciousness arises from eternal Intelligence—Light, cleaving to various elements to form spirit, infusing all matter with relational awareness in a panpsychist process of harmonic resonance, not reduction. Meaning even the material that makes up the plates, even the memories of bodies long since buried, they all have suborders and organizations of intelligence, light, and spirit which carry-on beyond the visible spectrum; and one may interface with them.

The Golden Heart of the Eternal God

Now that we know somewhat more concerning the residence of spirit, and the unnecessary visibility of, and/or access to the plates, we may return to the matter of the Urim and Thummim. Orson Pratt taught,

The Urim and Thummim is a stone, or other substance sanctified and illuminated by the Spirit of the living God, and presented to those who are blessed with the gift of seeing.¹⁴

The interpreters are a stone, or *other substance*. An other substance is like an other testament: the same testimony, another perspective. An other substance is an other understanding—another understanding sanctified and illuminated by the Spirit of the living God.

Reports differ, but somewhere around 1829–1830 Joseph Smith stopped using a seer stone to translate and receive revelation because he had become more readily in tune with the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Some try to play this off as if he was beginning to distance himself from folk practices and clean up his image as he built up a new church, and that it was just another sign that the stone was never needed to begin with, it was all part of the ruse and he was tired of using his old tricks—the stone was weighing him down and it was time to move on. Well, the stone was weighing him down in all the ways one can imagine, not only secular and social, but spiritual, and it just may be the case that the Urim and Thummim, the device which allows a worthy wielder to hear the voice of God and see his roaring creations, is any substance sanctified and illuminated by the Spirit of the living God.

What substance is more sanctified and illuminated by the Spirit of the living God than your very being, your very body—your temple? For all intents and purposes, your body is the current grounds illuminated for understanding via the Spirit of Truth.

Some would offer up the pineal gland as the inner replacement—a small, local pebble for receiving revelation in lieu of a handy, tangible seer stone found in a well. This, a notion that leaves

¹⁴ *Masterful Discourses of Orson Pratt*, 552

revelatory processes stuck drifting and mingling with Cartesian philosophies. I offer up your own neural net awash in the roaring winds of cerebrospinal fluid. Your own brain is the ultimate crystal ball, on your shoulders, always—so clear you never see it; so clear that some see through that glass darkly—others, as an iridule of divine radiance.¹⁵

Muddy water, when stilled, slowly becomes clear;
Something settled, when agitated, slowly comes to life.¹⁶

It would make sense that the seat of your very experience is a Urim and Thummim, for a sea of glass and fire—the electrical storm of a brain awash in cerebrospinal fluid—is near the throne of God, operating as the ultimate divine-light refracting device—that elusive third eye. This is true, for it says in D&C 130.5–6,

“...angels do not reside on a planet like this earth...they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, *where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.*”

That sounds like swimming in timeless glory with unspeakable comprehension—and it is. Ye are gods and children of the most High, and your body, which is made of the material elements of the most High, is the nearest to that throne of God you can get while being topologically restricted to this dimensional layer of reality.

This scripture, coupled with this explanation, also holds the key to a heretofore unmentioned doctrine that is never formally discussed in Latter-day Saint thought, but is a topic that has many members, and former members alike, secretly knocking at the back door of wonder, too afraid to discuss it in the open. This is, still, for another time.

But now that we know somewhat more concerning the process of using the urim and thummim, we can adjust our stereoscopic vision a bit in order to see layers upon layers of embedded information in the text.

If there are two things that are certain it is that Joseph Smith inherited the visionary topography of his family line, and that the Book of Mormon is a theological autostereogram. This is evidenced by, and easily discussed through utilizing the story of Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision as found in 1 Nephi 8 and 11. We will just skip over the comparison of Joseph Smith Sr’s version of the dream and accept it as evidence of real experiences. Not only this, Lucy Mack Smith and her sister Lovisa were also notably

¹⁵ THB, 1 Corinthians 13.12

¹⁶ DDJ, ch.15

visionary, and the topology of their reports are found mirrored in Joseph’s ever-expanding theology—as they should be; as is the case with the aforementioned cultural markings. Moreover, it would be remiss to simply accept Joseph Smith Sr’s dream as evidence of real experiences but then not investigate them any further. In my experience, this is something of a shared vision accessible across the human landscape, and the Book of Mormon itself alludes to that possibility, as Lehi first has the vision, and then Nephi asks for, and receives the same vision—with some personal variations of the overall experience. I have witnessed a vision of the tree of life on three prominent occasions, and have since discovered that there is remarkable overlap in the contents of the visual landscape there, and since distinctions among things are dependent on particular perspectives and the limits of an individual’s language, the descriptive lines drawn there are inherently negotiable.

There is an ancient Chinese book of life known as *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, wherein there is relayed the methods and procedures to attaining ultimate clarity of body and mind, and turning ones light around to be experienced for the radiant principle that it is. When one achieves this state then one may in turn see the Golden Flower. In Carl Jung’s commentary of Richard Wilhelm’s translation of this text he says,

The Golden Flower is a mandala symbol which I have often met with in the material brought to me by my patients. It is drawn either seen from above as a regular geometric ornament, or as a blossom growing from a plant. The plant is frequently a structure in brilliant fiery colors growing out of a bed of darkness, and carrying a blossom of light at the top, a symbol similar to that of a Christmas tree. A drawing of this kind also expresses the origin of the Golden Flower, for according to the *Hui Ming Ching* the ‘germinal vesicle’ is nothing other than the ‘yellow castle’, the ‘heavenly-heart’, the ‘terrace of life’, the ‘square inch field of the square foot house’, the ‘purple hall of the city of jade’, the ‘dark pass’, the ‘space of former heaven’, the ‘dragon castle at the bottom of the sea.’ It is also called the ‘border region of the snow mountains’, the ‘primal pass,’ the ‘realm of the greatest joy’, the ‘land without boundaries’, and the ‘altar upon which consciousness and life are made’. ‘If a dying man does not know this germinal vesicle,’ says the *Hui Ming Ching*, ‘he will not find the unity of consciousness and life in a thousand births, nor in ten thousand aeons.’¹⁷

For those who are already aware, and as we shall otherwise see as we investigate here, it is rather intriguing that this experience of the “Golden Flower” is at times described as “the heavenly heart” and “the space of former heaven” and “the realm of greatest joy”. This is indeed a profound vision to be

¹⁷ Jung, C. G., and Richard Wilhelm. *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*. p.101. Translated by Cary F. Baynes, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.

witnessed and shared by many. For, as it is also said in the text: “Once you know [this], you can seek experiential proofs.”¹⁸

As has been established here, the ultimate Urim and Thummim is your very head, or as Douglas Harding would say, your very No-Head. That space atop your shoulders you can’t actually see for yourself is the light of the world erupting out of you, as if appearing on the surface of the most resplendent crystal ball. As Harding described the situation,

From this white Light the gorgeous kaleidoscope of the universe [*that Golden Flower*] endlessly radiates, out of this infra-microscopic Top-hat are drawn all the props and all the actors that come and go on the world’s stage. How beautiful that this marvelous Cornucopia should be alive to itself, and how right that its own Self-awareness in me should never pall! For deserved interest, for genuine worthwhileness, what in the world can compare with Where it all comes from?¹⁹

For various reasons I don’t need to digress about here, I believe that in many instances of altered states—whether endogenously or exogenously induced—the experiencer is shown either representations of, or actual scoped in views of their own anatomy, neurochemistry, biology, etc. I call this a psychoscopic experience. I believe that the dream in question here is an archetypal representation of the neurology and cardiology involved in the experience. However, more specifically in this case, it may just be that it is not so much a personal view of their own individual internal mechanisms, nor a mere archetypal representation, but Joseph Smith Sr’s Vision, Lehi’s Dream, Nephi’s Encounter, and others experiences of the various Golden Flower descriptions—they are out-of-body experiences where the dreamer or meditator is sent to the very heart of the universe, which is the heart of the Eternal God of all gods.

First, let’s consider the initial descriptions of Lehi’s experience, as it differs from Nephi’s. Lehi reports,

“I have dreamed a dream, or in other words, I have seen a vision.”

This is a description of an asleep out-of-body experience. When I would have my recurring dreams, one of which became my future reality—another which I realize as I type this may soon be a marker for another turning point to come—I would wake up, but I would see myself laying there in bed sleeping before I would head out of the room and off on my journey. In other words, I dreamed a dream—indeed they were visions. In verse 7 Lehi confirms this, as it is common for an out-of-body experience to

¹⁸ Cleary, Thomas, translator. *The Secret of the Golden Flower: The Classic Chinese Book of Life*. p.32. HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

¹⁹ Harding, SFP, ch.19 p.45, bracket emphasis added

contain within itself an out-of-body experience of the initial out-of-body instance; he says, “I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste” — perhaps a “dark pass” or a “land without boundaries”.

Notice this is not in the sense that he had “found” himself to be somewhere, or that he saw a representation of himself out in the visionary landscape, rather that he arrived in a dark and dreary waste, seeing himself there—no doubt still feeling as if he could look back where he was asleep, dwelling in his tent, knowing it’s *him* he’s seeing, and not a mere representational image, nor hallucination. I have experienced this on many occasions. Over time especially you tend to know when you are actually seeing yourself vs when you are dreaming yourself.

Additionally, I find that due to Lehi’s descriptions of a “dark and dreary wilderness” and a “dark and dreary waste,” having travelled through for “the space of many hours,” that this is not simply an out-of-body experience but is also likely a sleep paralysis episode. A common feature among certain altered states, including sleep paralysis episodes, is experiencing long spaces of darkness, as well as the experience of exotic states of time: loops, which occurs between verses 4 and 7, and moments of eternity, which occurs in verse 8.

Comparatively, this mirrors Nephi’s report in chapter 11. As he sat pondering in his heart he was “caught away” in the Spirit of the Lord, he was taken, captured—sleep paralysis. This is in contrast to the description of the virgin Mary who in verse 19 is described to have been “carried away” in the spirit; she was taken along, transported—she *bore* the Spirit of the Lord.

Before synthesizing the neurological and cardiological underpinnings I find it important to mention how the encounter with the messenger guide of Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s encounter is consistent with D&C 129. In 129.4–7 it states,

When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand and request him to shake hands with you...If he be the Spirit of a just man made perfect he will come in his glory; for that is the only way he can appear—ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive; but he will deliver his message.

The truth is, a handshake is a great, very specific mode of the test, and is something to which I can testify as true. However, I can further testify that it is only one specific description of the process entailed. First, it doesn’t matter who initiates the handshake, it can be you or the other individual. Second, the handshake doesn’t necessarily have to be a handshake. What is intended is that there be a transaction that occurs, some sort of request or offering that allows you to detect and feel the intent of the messenger. Remember, all spirit is matter, and you can feel the spirit through the softness of the heart muscle—Nephi sat pondering *in his heart* after all—and so therefore your entire tabernacle is able to feel, detect, and know the topological state of the messenger by being in their presence.

We don't get as much detail as Nephi's encounter, but we can infer through Nephi's retelling that there must have been a similar starting to the conversation before anything visionary began with Lehi. The messenger appeared to Lehi and stood before him, in other words, he did not move. After he had arrived in his glory and stood before him this messenger offered a transaction, bidding Lehi to follow him. Lehi for one reason or another accepted the transaction, and off he went with the messenger. Remember, both the potential state of motion and tangibility of the messenger are enough to detect their intent.

Before Nephi really sets off on his vision he also exemplifies the transactional nature of these encounters and how they are utilized to ensure and assure both parties that the other is well-intended. The Spirit required to know the desire of Nephi's heart, and Nephi willingly exchanged and expressed the information. The Spirit accepted his "handshake"—which is just a protocol utilized for security purposes before initializing visionary communication—and off Nephi went through his visionary lesson.

Next, Lehi says that he beheld a tree whose fruit was desirable to make one happy—elsewhere possibly described as 'a structure carrying a blossom of light in the realm of greatest joy'. For, recall now when I stated that the dreamer here is sent to the very heart of the universe, which is the heart of the Eternal God of all gods. Lehi beheld the golden heart of God. Lehi was beholding the dendritic system of the Eternal God's heart, whose synapses where alight with a white fruit that was desirable to make one happy—a cardiovascular hormone. When Lehi partook of the fruit his soul was filled with such exceeding great joy that he became desirous for his family to partake of it as well.

Here, revisiting the wording in Alma 5.34 can help this understanding. It states that the Lord God hath spoken,

Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life.

1. To partake is to share
2. A fruit is any vegetable that is useful to humans and animals—a harvest, an enjoyment, a delight;
3. The tree of life, as answered in 1 Nephi 11.22, is the love of God.

Therefore, the experience of the tree of life—the heavenly heart—the Golden Flower, is to come unto him and partake of the fruit, to be desirous that your loved ones should also, and to share in the harvest of the love of God; to share in the delight of the love of God; to share thoroughly the light of the love of God—which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men.²⁰

Which means that the vision itself is a map leading to the heart and love of God, even his very interstellar, intrinsic cardiac nervous system. This tree, and its fruit that is most joyful and desirous, are Gods oxytocin-drenched dendrite bloom, shedding itself abroad as the most desirable thing to be found in the hearts of the children of men in the realm of greatest joy.

²⁰ BOM 1 Nephi 11.22

Oxytocin is a neuropeptide that functions as both a hormone and a neurotransmitter. It is synthesized and secreted in the heart, and plays key roles in cardiovascular regulation. Concentrations of oxytocin rival that of concentrations found in the brain, and it is otherwise known as the “love molecule” due to its essential role in social and pair bonding, and even interspecies relationships such as with your pets. Both physiologically and symbolically, oxytocin works to soften the cardiac core for empathy and divine receptivity. Higher oxytocin levels, whether from brain synthesis or the heart's own reservoirs, promote emotional openness, trust, and compassion, literally and metaphorically countering the "hardening" effects of stress or pride. The heart produces oxytocin locally in cardiomyocytes, where it works to reduce stiffness in heart tissue. Chronic stress hardens the heart through a cortisol-induced fibrosis, but oxytocin counters this, and even indirectly helps to mitigate inflammation and fibrosis in pericardial conditions like constrictive pericarditis. Foundationless in its fragility, the pericardial sac looms high in the mediastinal air above the heart. Multitudes of coronary plaque build-up enter its halls. Finely dressed in a mesothelial sheen it scoffs at the heart with its inflammatory ire, prone to effusion, tamponade, and constriction. Yet the pericardial pride of the world crumbles in crisis, and the fall thereof is exceeding great.

The strait and narrow path which comes alongside the iron rod is the pericardiectomy for the soul, and the fruit of the tree—the pure love of God—is healing, and spiritual recovery found on the terrace of life.

These are the main components of the vision, but it stands to reason that the rest of it may be mapped out. So, in order of appearance, here is the map of Lehi's Dream, which is a map of the heart of God—which heart is your heart, the heavenly heart:

1. 8.4–8: The Dark and Dreary Waste, (dark pass), is the venous periphery, large veins that drain the body's wilderness of deoxygenated blood back to the right atrium. It carries waste like ions and carbon dioxide which creates a low-oxygen environment and a fatigued state—it feels long and dark due to the lack of oxygen.
2. 8.10–12, 24, 30; 11.8–9, 21–25: The Tree of Life represents the dendritic system in the heart's intrinsic cardiac nervous system. This is a network of neurons mostly in the atria and around the base of the heart. These neurons have tree-like branches, dendrites which receive and process signals for rhythm and emotion. The white fruit symbolizes oxytocin, produced and released by heart cells, creating joy and harmony. The tree's branches spread signals for calm and connection, with the fruit inundating the soul. It stands central, and is desirable for its role in regulating love and stress relief.
3. 8.13, 26: The River of Water is the bloodstream, which tries to find the best path forward through the heart and off to the lungs for oxygen. Getting lost in the mists of its flows leads to issues like poor recirculation and clots. It runs parallel to the heart's fibrous skeleton
4. 8.14, 17: The Head of the River would be the sinoatrial node, a small group of cells which starts each heartbeat. As the family has gathered here in the vision it symbolizes the rhythm that propels them

forward. The dragon castle at the bottom of the sea—where a dragon guards the pearl of enlightenment.

5. 8.19–20, 24, 30; 11.25: The Iron Rod is the heart's fibrous skeleton. It is a rigid framework that separates the atria from the ventricles, anchors the valves, and insulates electrical signals.
6. 8.19, 26: The Bank of the River is the muscular ridges of the inner walls of the ventricles. Running alongside the iron rod of the fibrous skeleton they guide blood flow and manage pressure.
7. 8.20–22: The Strait and Narrow Path, (the primal pass), is the valves which connect atria to ventricles; narrow openings for blood passage, supported by the fibrous skeleton of the iron rod.
8. 8.20–21: The Large and Spacious Field (the land without boundaries, and the border region of the snow mountains), marks the end of the path at the base of the ventricles, where the chambers of the heart lead to the arteries, and expands into the aortic arch and ascending aorta. This is the heart's "world" portal, where oxygenated blood surges forth in a vast, pressurized expulsion. In the dream, the field is "as if it had been a world," teeming with "numberless concourses of people... pressing forward..."
9. 8. 23–24: Exceeding Great Mists of Darkness, (the dark pass), are any irregular blood swirls which block normal signaling in the atria. Clots and hazy blood particles block the view of the path and cause one to lose their grip on the rod.
10. 8.26–28, 31: The Great and Spacious Building is the pericardial sac as described previously. The purple hall of the city of jaded individuals.

And thus we have charted the inspired waters of Lehi's Dream, knowing that to partake of the fruit of the tree of life is to share in the flowering love of God, and to open and soften your heart through expressions of love and gratitude—and expressions of oxytocin.

Yet the image is not yet complete, as this began with the notion that the ultimate urim and thummim is that of your own head, and that the throne of god is nearest that cerebral fire encased in a spinal fluid that is a sea of glass like unto crystal. This is a fractal of creation, as the tree of life can also be found mirrored as the brain, with the spinal cord as the iron rod—and so forth. However, this would more explicitly be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, guarded by a cherubim with a flaming sword that turns every which way—in other words, glial cells watching synapses for chemical balance, surrounded by the electrical fires of neurology and knowledge at play. This tree's fruit? Likely norepinephrine. Deeply connected to the heart, it is essential for fight-or-flight awareness, and the moral tension of good-and-evil discernment.

In the brain, bathed in cerebrospinal fluid, lies the true Urim and Thummim—not an ancient artifact from the earth, but a natural part of our own self. Lehi's dream maps the golden heart's inner workings as a path to God's presence: the river as blood flow, the iron rod as the heart's supportive framework, the tree as the source of joy and bonding through oxytocin—the love of God, and so on. In

this view, the golden plates can stay covered, and the interpreters set aside; the seer no longer needs them because the ability to receive revelation has become internal. The process evolves from relying on outside tools to trusting the inner self as the real temple—the yellow castle. The sea of glass, described in scripture as a place of divine vision, is right here within us, showing past, present, and future. The translation of sacred texts, then, lives on not as fixed words on metal, but as ongoing flows of light and understanding in the heart, knowledge in the brain, and wisdom through the lungs of the Tree of Whispers.

Spiritual Eyes

There is much debate regarding whether or not the three or eight witnesses to the golden plates actually saw them physically, or only saw them in vision. Martin Harris reportedly hefted the plates several times while they were covered and in a box, but never saw them with his natural eyes—though the veracity of this report hangs in the balance.

Regarding whether or not there were actual plates, I find three paths forward for those tossing and turning about it:

1. There were real, ancient plates.
2. Joseph fashioned a set of plates and “made it up.”
3. Joseph fashioned a set of plates so that those who could not access the spiritual record would have tangible evidence.

I could argue all of them, but since this is primarily a response to the naturalistic comeuppance of the Book of Mormon we will be toying with the mindset of option three. This option not only allows grace for human residue to find presence in the story, it helps to elucidate many of the oddities surrounding the nature of the plates, and does so without discrediting or discounting their actual existence. In addition to this, it will likely speak to a very certain audience, and while true-blue Mormons/Latter-day Saints would likely view this as ilk not worthy of a proper testimony of the powers of God, it will no doubt become a fortitude of faith and reinvigorator of testimony for those who may have gotten lost and confused in the halls of the philosophies of men and in the faculties of Abrac along their journey, or for those who may have swallowed certain pills that can't be un-swallowed; sort of like refining your golden pill and receiving your white stone(s)—you can't revoke nor undermine the interpretations of some of your experiences, for they are real, and they are from God—for truth is everywhere, and we gather it up and bring it back to our home of Mormonism to our fellow Latter-day Saints unabashedly, and we cherish them up, and we share in our joy and rejoice with all those who will hear and feel in the love of God through the power of our Words.

Now, in addition to the recurring dreams, I have on many occasions: awoken to the sounds of heavenly choruses singing along with the sounds of harps, violins, and light-glockenspiel's—(glockenspiel's

specifically imitating the chiming and twinkling of the stars spread across the cosmos); I have had dreams where the content is strictly in writing—golden words etched across the blackness of the dreamscape, fading quickly before writing something anew in a language I don't yet understand; and since about age seven I have likely had a moderate case of Visual Snow Syndrome, meaning I will see any variety of visual perceptible shifts in the environment typical of psychedelic and altered states. This includes walls and floors breathing; patterns in carpets, upholstery, or clothing having their own variety of movement or static; blue-dot effect; seeing geometrical patterns in the air or on walls; and more. This is to say that I am familiar, (endogenously and exogenously), with seeing, hearing, feeling—coming into contact with—a landscape of spiritual spectrality that is always all around and within us, and is likely very similar to things Joseph and others in his family experienced, though clearly Joseph to a notably higher degree than those around him.

Last year while scrolling online I came across the story of a gentleman named Tom Matte. Matte was reporting the ability to passively observe and actively modify a continuous stream of vivid, three-dimensional holographic images that overlay his normal visual field. He claimed that these images appear as if projected on an internal screen, functioning independently of his immediate sensory environment or conscious recall. This intrigued me due to some of my own experiences with visual perception anomalies—the gold writing, as well as other objects seen in my dreams or in meditations. I messaged Tom and we ended up meeting over Zoom for a chat to discuss the similarities and differences and how we came about to have our visual perceptions. Tom's is much more acute or keen than my own. There is a difference between what is experienced in Visual Snow Syndrome and this ability he has which he calls "Upsight," but I have indeed experienced things as he describes and claims.

During the conversation we did discuss Joseph Smith. He said that he was very intrigued by Joseph but wasn't yet as familiar with the history as he would like to be. I briefed him on many of the relevant occurrences, including the Golden Plates and the witnesses. Tom said he doesn't think he personally has any "special" ability, and that Upsight is something others can experience and tap into, and said that from what he knew already and from our conversation he wouldn't doubt that Joseph Smith could visualize such things as the heart of God or the plates, or be able to access and know the content they hold within themselves.

For those interested in looking into this further, Tom has been working with a team of doctors to gather verifiable data of his experience as something real and not hallucinatory. I have cited here a preprint of their work so far, which portrays Tom as possessing a verifiable perceptual ability that challenges conventional models of cognition. It begins to frame Upsight as a replicable phenomenon warranting further exploration across various fields of study.²¹

What I am proposing here is that, (as alluded to previously when I compared the depositing of the plates into the ground as the planting of the spiritual seed of its content set to grow and bloom into

²¹ Cannard, C., et al. A Case Study of Differences in Brain Electrical Activity Between Recall-based Mental Imagery and a Subjective Phenomenon of "upsight". PsyArXiv, 19 Dec. 2023, doi:10.31234/osf.io/e6q7x.

accessible spiritual knowledge), is that Joseph was able to see, hear, feel, and know—through mechanisms truly only known and understood by the Almighty One providing them—the lands and experiences of a people crying out from the dust for their stories, passions, and eternal promises and warnings to be heard. He was visited by an angelic being, a messenger who helped him to comprehend these things—I know I have been.

The plates are real. They were made by those peoples, and they were preserved with the Urim and Thummim, but they are sacred objects, they are not for us to hold up in a Museum, they are rooted into the earthy tabernacle of the Eternal God for time.

Like dropping a feather in a treasure digging pit, Joseph knew the presence of an actual object was enough to ignite the passions of the soul unto the further pursuit of the truths and treasures of God. Not only that but the presence of objects in the here-and-now does help the seer hone his ability, hence the use of a seer stone at first, but then not later on. As many know, set and setting matter when it comes to attuning to the divine.

I do not find it absurd, unordinary, nor out of the question to consider that Joseph may have spent time creating his own set of plates to have on hand for any number of reasons while also claiming the ability to see and handle the real plates themselves, the writing thereon, and the interpretation thereof.

You can interface with the plates. They can be shown to others. This is attested to and found in the various first and second hand witness account statements, and even allows for the clarification of some of the descriptions used—which set of eyes beheld which set of plates, and so forth.

But of course all of this comes into question when considering the Urim and Thummim. There are many accounts of individuals, Oliver Cowdery, Emma Smith, Martin Harris, Lucy Mack Smith, handling the interpreters and breastplate. This then becomes a matter of figuring out the likelihood that someone could come across two transparent stones in the areas in which the Smiths lived or travelled through. My initial research appears to make the likelihood of coming across such stones relatively easy, bordering on trivial. Attaching them to silver bowed frames would then be the real challenge.

Again, the naturalistic lens to this historical work illuminates the human residue present on divine transmission, but that cannot eclipse the spiritual substrate. Revelation is not some sterile download from AWS US-EAST-1, it is a resonant interface where the translator's context—familial dreams, cultural susurrations, personal pains—acts as the prism refracting the revealed eternal etchings. In other words, this is to reframe the naturalistic critiques not as evidence of merely and purely human action, but as diagnostic echoes of a living document, and thus a living story. The human residue that critics spotlight are not corruptions in the revelatory signal of the translation processes, they help diagnose how the text was calibrated for Joseph's time and place—which time and place is still our time and place; this, the last dispensation of the fullness of times. So, whether miracle of real plates and interpreters unearthed, or whether fashioned by Joseph so as to propel the works of God forward anyhow, (or both!), the information held within the plates was still accessed, and was translated through spiritual modalities.

Post Script

To the orthodox, the true-blue, true-believing, steadfast, stalwart, Peter priesthood, or whatever monicker of this variety may be used to describe someone who strictly abides by all aspects and truth claims of the history and miracles as reported and presented by the church, to accept such a theory as this addendum would appear to be one that limits the powers and potentials of Gods miracles and God himself; like saying and accepting that Noah's flood was local, and not global, or multi-planetary, and so on. However, God works in mysterious ways more than miraculous ways; for mystery is often miracle.