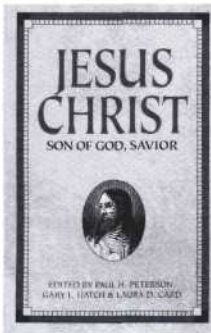




RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER
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Newsletter

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Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior

Edited by Paul H. Peterson,
Gary L Hatch, and Laura D. Card

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior explained how important it is that we learn of Him and His eternal mission: "I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness" (D&C 93:19).

This collection of papers presented at a Brigham Young University symposium on the Savior

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Up the Mississippi: The Voyage to Nauvoo

By Fred E. Woods
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*Come ye Saints of ev'ry nation,
Flee to Zion's safe abode;
Hail with joy the great salvation,
Offer'd you by Christ the Lord.¹*

Such words of inspiration were often sung by Latter-day Saints on the long voyage from England to Nauvoo. The *Millennial Star* records that Saints on the 1843 voyage of the *Metoka* "gave expression to their feelings in various hymns, which they sang as the vessel was towed into the [Mersey] river." "Though some attention has been paid to the Saints' ocean voyage, we must also not forget the final important leg of their journey, passage up the Mississippi to Nauvoo.

The Sandbar

As the seagoing Saints concluded the Atlantic leg of their voyage and entered the Gulf Coast region, they faced the obstacle of crossing the sandbar at the mouth of Old Man River. This was the point at which the mighty Mississippi emptied into the vast ocean. Considerable effort was required to pull the sailing vessels over this stretch of sandbar to the deeper, free-flowing waters of the river. Patience was required for this venture; for example, the 1842 LDS voyages of the *Sidney* and the *Medford* were each stuck on the bar at the mouth of the Mississippi for nearly a day and a half.⁵ Much to the delight of the Saints on board the *Sidney*, Alexander Wright made the best of the situation by catching enough catfish for all who desired them.⁴

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Map of Latter-day Saint Maritime Migration Routes to Nauvoo by Paul Jager, © Lee Groberg

The Balize

The challenge of crossing the sandbar in this region was remedied by steam-powered tugboats, which pulled the sea vessels across the bar and towed them about one hundred miles into the port of New Orleans. The tugboats were manned by pilots who resided at what was called the Balize. A. A. Conway describes this uninviting habitation:

The Balize, as it was known, where the pilot stations were established was little more than a mud bank situated a short distance above the North East Pass. One such station contained sixteen or eighteen houses built upon piles in the midst of the morass. The houses were connected one with the other by raised walks or bridges, laid on the mud, constructed of timber, logs and wrecks of vessels. The pilots at each station were mostly ex-merchantmen, chiefly English with some Americans, French and Spaniards. The monotonous existence at these stations resulted in the deterioration of the conduct of their inhabitants and they became notorious for the frequent occurrences of riots and brawls.⁵

Once a sufficient number of ships had gathered at the mouth of the river, a towboat would pull six ships at a time upstream. The standard procedure was to join one ship on either side of the towboat and pull four behind. This allowed easy communication from one ship to another.⁶ James Palmer, who voyaged on the ship *Hanover* in 1842, describes this process:

The first mate was on the look out for land and soon discovered from the main gallant topsail, that we are sailing

directly towards the mouth of the Mississippi river shortly we saw a vessel approaching from our left, that came from Germany and a steam tug came booming over the bar to meet us they threw their large cables and made fast to our ship and soon we were anchored safely in the mouth of that king of all rivers, and soon our German friends were made fast along side and we were booming up towards New Orleans.⁷

The River Trip

Eager to position their feet on solid ground after more than two months on board, the immigrants were no doubt jubilant about the hundred-mile river trip from the mouth of the Mississippi to New Orleans. Each nautical mile north took them further away from the distastefulness of the Balize and closer to the metropolis of New Orleans, where they could at last disembark from their sailing vessels and board a steamboat for St. Louis.

Mormon immigrants were delighted with the favorable change in scenery along the river banks. George Whitaker, who voyaged on the *Palmyra* in 1845, noted the panoramic views along the lush banks of this stretch of the river leading to New Orleans. He wrote: "I thought I never saw anything so beautiful as the sights going up the river. This was in the beginning of March. Everything looked fresh and green—the oranges were hanging on trees. I thought I would very much like to live there."⁸

Docking at New Orleans

Arriving at any North American port was a shared relief to all seagoing Saints after the long voyage. After more than two months with a company of Saints aboard the *Swanton* (1843), Charles Smith remembered docking at New Orleans: "I seemed quite rejoicing to think that we were once more on land."⁹ New Orleans was established as the principal port of arrival during the Nauvoo period and remained so until the spring of 1855.¹⁰ All but nine voyages during this fifteen-year period arrived at New Orleans, which accounted for about eighteen thousand Saints.

During the sailing era of the 1840s, the voyages from Liverpool to New York averaged about five weeks. Sailing to the port of New Orleans took an average of nineteen days longer." Why would anyone choose New Orleans over New York or a closer port? One reason was that traveling through New Orleans was less expensive, and another reason was that New Orleans provided convenient access to the Mississippi River, which supplied a direct route to Nauvoo.¹²

Financing Travel

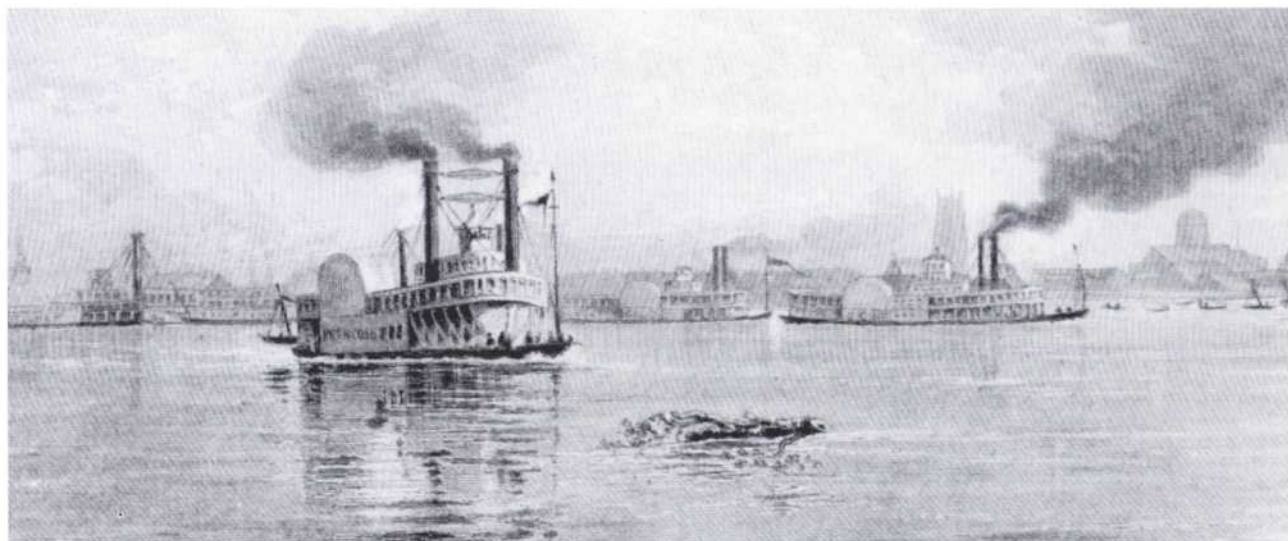
Throughout the Nauvoo era, some immigrant Saints who had arrived in New Orleans were delayed in their travels due to economic challenges, staying there to earn passage upstream. Others were detoured

because of the negative reports from disgruntled Nauvoo Saints. Arriving at New Orleans, George Whitaker noted:

This was the first time I had set my foot on land for about seven or eight weeks. We stayed there one day. I sold some of my shawls and got a good price for them. We met some of our brethren from Nauvoo, who had come to work there through the winter. They did not give a very pleasing account of things at Nauvoo, which discouraged some few of the Saints, and they remained there."

The *Millennial Star* informed the seagoing Saints that it was better to reach the American shores (Zion), than to stay in Europe (Babylon) and that they should be content "to make their way by degrees."¹⁴ One British convert was not content to remain temporarily at New Orleans. Arriving penniless with his family in spring 1843, Alma Spilsbury described his determined efforts to find immediate resources to bring his stranded family up the Mississippi to Nauvoo:

We were in a strange land and in a hot place with no money to buy our provisions nor to pay our fare on the steamboat. My wife wept like a child at our humiliating circumstances. Nevertheless I did not feel discouraged. Another ship load of Saints arrived on the morrow after us, and I went on board and found a man going to Nauvoo. I borrowed the money from him to pay our fare by giving him my clothes for security. Thomas Bullock loaned us money to bring our provisions to Nauvoo. So by hard struggling and the blessing of the Lord I accomplished the desire of my heart in getting to Nauvoo and seeing the Prophet of the Lord and shaking hands with the man who had seen God face to face.¹⁵



New Orleans by Frederick Piercy, as seen in his *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855)

Land Sharks

The Saints faced a continual threat of land sharks (river thieves) who waited to rob gullible immigrants as they passed into the Crescent City, which was, at this time, the fourth largest city in America.

Security generally did not pose a problem when Latter-day Saint emigrants departed from Liverpool due to the careful protection and direction of Church agents. However, Church agents were not assigned to New Orleans during the Nauvoo period. Lucius Scovil, the first LDS agent assigned to New Orleans, provides a colorful account of the river thieves' tactics:

Yesterday, I fell in with one of those sharks, his name is Cook, and the head of one of a company of ten in number, who are engaged in taking out permits and re-shipping passengers. They speak five or six languages and are determined to monopolize the business. . . . They would send some person . . . on board to make confusion . . . bringing bills from some boat and saying that they were captain or clerk of said boat, and would carry them for one dollar to St. Louis. . . . On this account, the last company had to stay here six days, just because they were bamboozled by these runners. I consider that there is but one way to do business for the best good of the Saints, and that it is for one person to do all of the business, and the rest remember the Mormon Creed. Those sharpers are threatening me all the time, but I do not fear them. I am satisfied that the church has not known the extent of their speculations from them, and yet were soaping them all the while.¹⁶

River Towns

On 1 April 1842, Alexander Neibaur described the Saints boarding the steamboat *Moravian* for Quincy, Illinois, providing scenes of life in the river towns. Neibaur described Natchez as "a neat town" where they stopped to take wood for fuel. Vicksburg he portrayed as "an imposing town built upon rising ground; courthouse built upon a hill. Numerous turtles on shore." Memphis, he wrote, was "a neat little place on a hill."¹⁷

As the Mormon immigrants steamed up the river, they sometimes had to reckon with a thunderous hatred directed against them. William Adams describes the vivid experience he had March of 1844 on the Church-owned steamboat *Maid of Iowa*:

We were very much annoyed, also persecuted in towns along the River. News went ahead that a Boat filled with Mormons were on their way to Nauvoo necessity caused the Boat to land to get supplies. Men would rush on to the Boat calling us foul names. "Joes Rats" was a common salutation we received. Natches, a town on the east side of the River set the Boat on fire. It was not discovered to [till] we had left the place over half an hour and the side of the Boat was a blaze also several Beds and bedding. The fire was extinguished in a short time with the loss of several feather Beds and bedding it was a narrow escape for the screw [crew] and passengers also the Boat.¹⁸

Peterson *continued from page 1*

invites us to learn more about the Being we worship, answering questions such as these:

How can the account of the visit of the resurrected Lord to the people of the Americas inspire us to come unto Christ?

What do the four Gospels teach us about Jehovah?

What can we learn by studying Isaiah's messianic prophecies?

Do we as Latter-day Saints really worship a "different Jesus"?

What are our views on grace?

General Authorities and religious educators provide thoughtful answers to these intriguing questions as they share their testimonies of the Redeemer. For example, W. Jeffrey Marsh, associate professor of ancient scripture at BYU, offers these encouraging words: "While the Savior may not always remove the trials from our lives, His grace can bear us up against

all the pressures surrounding us, regardless of the kinds of bondage we may find ourselves in. He knows how to help us, how to free us, and how to lead and protect us, if we will but exercise faith in Him."

Fundamental doctrines discussed in this volume include the following:

- Jesus' masterful teaching ability and awareness of individuals
- The Savior's premortal foreordination
- Jesus' role as Jehovah in Old Testament times
- Our Creator's humility to be born as the Babe of Bethlehem
- The role of grace and mercy in our redemption
- The reassuring reality of the Atonement and Resurrection

This volume sounds a clarion call of testimony—offered with clarity, vigor, and gratitude—in witness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus of Nazareth. B

Priscilla Staines explained that the fire was started by "some villain [who] placed a half consumed cigar under a straw mattress."¹⁹ She also recalled an incident that soon followed:

At another landing a mob collected and began throwing stones through the cabin windows, smashing the glass and sash, and jeopardizing the lives of the passengers. This was a little too much for human forbearance. The boat was in command of the famous Mormon Captain Dan Jones; his Welsh blood was now thoroughly warm; he knew what mobs meant. Mustering the brethren, with determined wrath he ordered them to parade with their loaded muskets in the side of the boat assailed. Then he informed the mob that if they did not instantly desist, he would shoot them down like so many dogs; and like so many dogs they slunk away.²⁰

Perils of River Travel

In addition to these challenges, the Saints encountered obstacles of river travel, including sandbars, snags, currents, and ice. These hazards were faced on the Mississippi voyage to St. Louis, which usually took ten to twelve days, and the final leg of the journey, which took several more days. Mormon immigrants from the 1842 voyages of the *Medford* and the *Sidney* took the steamboat *Alex Scott* upriver and ran aground and were therefore stuck for three weeks, ninety miles below St. Louis, because the water was so low. By the time they got to St. Louis, the river had frozen over, and here they had to spend the winter of 1843.²¹

Another Latter-day Saint company crossed the Atlantic a month later on the *Emerald* and was detained in the river cities of Alton, Chester, and St. Louis for three cold winter months due to the ice on the Mississippi." Parley P. Pratt, the company leader of the *Emerald*, decided against St. Louis, stating: "I landed with my family in Chester, Illinois—eighty miles below St. Louis. The company continued on to St. Louis. My reason for landing here was, that I would not venture into Missouri after the abuses I had experienced there in former times."²¹ Who would blame Pratt for such a decision, inasmuch as he had spent over eight miserable months locked up in Missouri jails!²⁴

St. Louis Delays

Money was a main factor for the delay of migrant Saints in St. Louis. For example, Latter-day Saint con-

verts aboard the 1844 voyage of the *Norfolk* did not have sufficient funds to continue their journey to Nauvoo.²⁵ At this time, St. Louis was a place that most Nauvoo-bound immigrating Saints wanted to pass through in a hurry. Cholera, or yellow fever, was an ever-present threat, and the hardness in the hearts of the St. Louis apostates seemed to be as cold as the winter ice on the Mississippi. Such hardness sometimes influenced the Mormon immigrants on their way to Nauvoo. Hiram Clark, who came to Zion with a group of 181 Saints in 1841, noted that about 30 of his group had been "disaffected through false reports" and therefore chose to tarry at St. Louis.²⁶

Joseph Fielding, company leader for more than two hundred Saints on the 1841 *Tyrian* voyage, summarized in a letter his view on the apostate spirit in St. Louis:

At St. Louis we found a number of Saints, at least who have a name among the Saints, some of these prove a trial to those who call there. They tell you many evil tales; I wish they would stop all who are like themselves. The faithful need not be troubled by them; let them talk and have all they can get, they seem afraid to suffer affliction with the People of God, and so go to Missouri, where there are none, thinking also to get a little more money.²⁷

In his journal, Fielding added: "Here we saw some poor, faithless Saints something like spiders webs set to catch flies they came to us with fair Words as our best Friends, but their counsel was that of Enemies, but did not prevail to stay any of our Company except two."²⁸

The Nauvoo Reception

It was the stalwart Saints who were able to withstand the numerous bombardments of deceptions and discouragement encountered at St. Louis. Their determined spirit urged them on to their desired haven in Nauvoo. One can hardly imagine the inexpressible relief and joy which greeted the weary travelers as they at last set foot in their much-anticipated Zion. After crossing the Atlantic on the *Metoka* in 1843 and finally reaching Nauvoo that fall, William Rowley wrote:

You may suppose we were most pleasingly surprised, after having had our ears continually assailed with the doleful accounts of "the wretchedness of the place," its "log and mud" built "cabins," its "knee deep" muddy streets, the "poverty and starvation" that awaited us, the "villainy and roguery" of its inhabitants, the "awful delusion of Mormonism," "beware of old Joe Smith," and a



Landing near Nauvoo House, courtesy of Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

thousand other such like salutations; you may judge then, how much we were gratified at beholding the striking contrast, while gazing with rapturous delight, first upon the "Temple," which already assumes a lofty bearing from the commanding eminence on which it is being erected; then the "Nauvoo House;" the "Mansion House," (the residence of him of whom the world is not worthy); the Masonic, Music, and Public halls; some completed, and others are being so, besides numerous well-built and substantial brick stores, and private dwellings. The whole site and aspect of the city, presenting a most cheering picture of the enterprise and industry of its inhabitants, exhibiting a remarkable difference to many of the western towns which we passed in coming up the Mississippi, of far longer standing and origin.²⁹

After being torn from kindred and homeland, having sailed thousands of watery miles, and in some cases experiencing the death of a family member, British Saints were often greeted at the landing by the Prophet Joseph Smith. There he stood before their faces, the noble embodiment of their faith. The Spirit bore witness to his holy calling as God's prophet and seer to all the world.

Robert Crookston expressed his joy at being welcomed by the Prophet: "As we approached the landing place to our great joy we saw the Prophet Joseph Smith there to welcome his people who had come so far. We were all so glad to see him and set our feet upon the promised land so to speak. It was the most thrilling experience of my life for I know that he was a Prophet of the Lord."³⁰

Christopher Layton, a passenger on the *Fanny* in 1844, remembered his arrival in Nauvoo as a day of re-

joicing: "There stood our Prophet on the banks of the river to welcome us! As he heartily grasped our hands, the fervently spoken words 'God bless you' sank deep into our hearts, giving us a feeling of peace such as we had never known before."³¹

Joseph Smith succored these weary Saints and greeted them with the warmest affections. Having their faith strengthened and the desire of their hearts realized, they were now ready to meet the challenges and trials which would confront them during the Nauvoo era.

This article was condensed by Devan Jensen from "Up the Mississippi," chapter 4 of the author's book Gathering to Nauvoo (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002).

Notes

1. J. Riley, "Poetry, on Emigration," *Millennial Star* 2, no. 10 (February 1842): 160.
2. "The Metoka," *Millennial Star* 4, no. 5 (September 1843): 80.
3. Andrew Jenson, *Contributor* 12, no. 12 (October 1891): 445.
4. Alexander Wright, *Journal of Alexander Wright: March 1839-January 1843, 398-99*, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as Church Archives.
5. A. A. Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820-1860" (master's thesis, University of London, 1949), 79.
6. Conway, "New Orleans," 79-80.
7. James Palmer, *Reminiscences of James Palmer*, 66, Church Archives. See also Richard Rushton, *Journal of Richard Rushton*, 10-11, Church Archives, who relates how in this same year, another group of immigrating Saints aboard the ship *Hope* were towed with another vessel up the Mississippi.
8. George Whitaker, *Autobiography of George Whitaker*, 7, Church Archives.
9. Charles Smith, *Reminiscences and Diary of Charles Smith*, 11, Church Archives.
10. For an excellent article on the Mormon episode in New Orleans during this era, see David Buice, "When the Saints Came Marching In: The Mormon Experience in Antebellum New Orleans, 1840—1855," *Louisiana History* 23, no. 3 (summer 1982): 221-37.

11. Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration, 1830-1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 69.
12. Church leaders issued an epistle to the British Saints on 15 November 1841, directing them when immigrating to the United States to use the port of New Orleans, rather than Montreal, New York, or Philadelphia, because it was the least expensive and also afforded convenience for water travel to Nauvoo (Journal History, 15 November 1841, 3). Several years later, LDS Liverpool emigration agent Reuben Hedlock again reminded the Saints that fares to the east coast ports were higher than fares to New Orleans (see "Conferences," *Millennial Star* 5 [March 1845J: 155).
13. Whitaker, *Autobiography*, 7.
14. *Millennial Star* 5 (August 1844): 46.
15. Viva Skousen Brown, *The Life and Posterity of Alma Platte Spilsbury*, ed. and comp. George Spilsbury (privately printed, 1983), 40.
16. Letter of Lucius N. Scovil to Parley P. Pratt dated December 15, 1848, *Millennial Star* 11 (1 March 1849): 72.
17. Journal of Alexander Neibaur, typescript, 8–9, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
18. *Autobiography of William Adams*, typescript, 4, Church Archives.
19. Reminiscences of Priscilla Staines, in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: n.p., 1877), 289. Staines thought the town was Memphis instead of Natchez, yet according to Samuel Cummings' early river guide, *Western Pilot* (Cincinnati: N & G Guilford & Co., 1834), 108, Natchez seems more likely to be the place of this foul event.
20. Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 290-91.
21. Jenson, *Contributor* 12, no. 12 (October 1891): 445-46.
22. Jenson, *Contributor* 12, no. 12 (1891): 446.
23. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 285.
24. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 189, notes that Elder Pratt was first arrested on 31 October 1838. Having spent months in the Richmond jail, he spent additional time incarcerated in Columbia and was not released until 4 July 1839 (246).
25. Jenson, *Contributor* 12, no. 12 (1891): 450.
26. Hiram Clark, "Extract from Elder Hiram Clark's Journal," *Millennial Star* 4 (February 1844): 147.
27. Parley P. Pratt, "Joseph Fielding's Letter," *Millennial Star* 3 (August 1842): 77.

28. Joseph Fielding, *Journals of Joseph Fielding*, 5:2-3, Church Archives.
29. W. Rowley, "Letter from W. Rowley," *Millennial Star* 4 (25 January 1844): 193-94.
30. Robert Crookston, *Autobiography of Robert Crookston*, typescript, 6, Church Archives.
31. Christopher Layton, *Autobiography of Christopher Layton*, ed. John Q. Cannon (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1911), 11. •

Spotlights



ALAN K. PARRISH, associate professor of ancient scripture, has written a landmark biography of Elder John A. Widtsoe to appear January 2003. Seeing the need to make the western deserts blossom as the rose, Elder Widtsoe studied chemistry at Harvard and Goettingen and applied it to the study of soils and nutrition. He became the world authority on irrigation and the "father of dry farming." After founding the Department of Agriculture at BYU, he became president of Utah State University for nine years and president of the University of Utah for five years. At the age of forty-nine he left his university assignment to fill a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in March 1921. Elder Widtsoe was one of our most prolific writers on Church history and doctrine.



THOMAS A. WAYMENT, assistant professor of ancient scripture, has coedited a book with Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, associate professor of Church history and doctrine. From *the Last Supper through the Resurrection: Jesus' Last Hours* details events of the final twenty-four hours of the Savior's life, with special emphasis on the issues surrounding the Jewish trial and the Roman trial. The authors begin with the Last Supper, comparing the chronology in the synoptic Gospels with John's account and concluding with a discussion of the Resurrection accounts in all four Gospels. The book is expected to appear in March 2003.

Dr. Wayment has an article accepted for the *Religious Educator* on the origins of the names of the Savior's parables. He is currently researching Book of Mormon quotations from the brass plates that were written by prophets other than Isaiah.