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The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson

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Introduction:
Richard Lloyd Anderson, An Appreciation

Stephen D. Ricks

Richard Lloyd Anderson is a scholars' scholar. Among Latter-day Saints, he is dean and master of two separate fields of academic study: the New Testament and early LDS Church history. His passion for history has profoundly influenced his scholarly career; his passion for order and system has shaped his missionary work and directed him into studying law; and his love for Brigham Young University and loyalty to its mission and destiny have, in sometimes unusual ways, guided his academic path.

On both sides of his family, Richard is descended of hardy pioneer stock. His paternal grandfather, Ernest Anderson, who was born in Sweden and immigrated to Utah as a young man, owned and cultivated apple orchards and irrigated crops, setting an example of the value of honest labor. From his parents, Lloyd and Agnes Ricks Anderson, Richard learned the prime importance of integrity. His father was an advertising manager at several daily newspapers, and his mother was a grade-school teacher who played the violin and piano. Her intensive reading to him was the foundation of a lifetime of intellectual and aesthetic interests. An enthusiasm for discovery and joy in the hunt infected Richard early in life. The northeast foothills and city dump were above his home in the avenues of Salt Lake City, where he was born in 1926. Remarkably, his mother indulged his passion for roaming and sometimes searching at the dump, which netted tires and similar objects, although it also netted him a sturdy needle in his knee that required a physician's skills to remove.

Richard also had a zeal for studying history, which he was able to feed through extensive reading on the subject while a student. His high school career was punctuated by two moves. He began high school in Provo just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. He later studied at Pocatello (Idaho) High School and Ogden (Utah) High School, where he graduated in 1944. In the last two schools he was able to study Latin from exceptionally gifted instructors.

As was the case in the later years of the war, graduation from high school was followed by military service. Because an overbite and gum occlusion disqualified him from being a pilot, he was trained in and served as an aviation radioman in the navy. Even while in the military, Richard was able to continue to study church literature, reading the Bible in its entirety and taking courses in the New Testament from BYU by correspondence. Once, when Richard was in the hospital being treated for pneumonia and believing that he had the right to convalesce—though under the supervision of a zealous nurse who wanted him to roll bandages—he was still able to borrow afternoons for reading in a large shower room while the nurse unsuccessfully searched for him.

During military service, Richard made a hobby of talking to returned missionaries and asking them what methods of teaching investigators were successful, even going with local missionaries to visit their contacts. After an honorable discharge from the military, he was immediately called to serve in the Northwestern States Mission and given latitude to develop a logical system of teaching the gospel. Because it was successful, President Joel Richards, brother of Elder LeGrand Richards, asked him to write out "A Plan for Effective Missionary Work." It led to a remarkable increase in the number of converts in the Northwestern States Mission and found wide acceptance elsewhere. About 1950 Richard and others who developed missionary teaching plans were interviewed by Gordon B. Hinckley, who was then a general authority assistant in charge of publicity and mission literature. Those interviews resulted in the basic missionary discussions that are still in use.

Following his release as a missionary, Richard began his university studies in earnest, starting in the spring of 1949 at Weber College, in Ogden, Utah, where he lived. With a scholarship in debate and a promise of tutorials in Greek from his high school teacher, Richard planned to continue there that fall. But he was asked to come to BYU by Sidney B. Sperry and Hugh W. Nibley, who wrote to him that debate went out "with the coonskin coat and the bulldog." Richard has remained associated with BYU ever since, studying Greek and Early Christian History under Nibley (who took Richard and his classmates through Hefele's *Konzilgeschichte [Conciliar History]* in a single term), and Latin under the tutelage of J. Reuben Clark III and M. Carl Gibson.

In 1951 Richard took his bride of three months, the former Carma de Jong of Provo, with him to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to study law at Harvard. Study of the law helped to sharpen his organized and logical mind and to hone his ability to think sequentially, but his love for history remained unabated. In the tedious final year of study at Harvard Law School (a joke current among those studying the law is that they "scare you to death" the first year, they "work you to death" the second year, and they "bore you to death" the third and final year of law school), Richard was permitted to study Greek history at Harvard and had already been accepted into their program in ancient history had not financial necessity and a sudden invitation from William E. Berrett to teach church education classes in Cedar City intervened. The one-year interlude in southern Utah helped Richard gain a greater appreciation of Mormon pioneer history and also allowed Carma, a watercolorist, to study under an outstanding artist there.

In 1955 Richard was back again at BYU teaching religion full time, at the same time working on his degree in Greek. He completed this in two years, writing his thesis on "*Euangelion*—A Study in New Testament Context: The New Testament Definition of the Gospel." He left BYU in 1957 for Berkeley to study ancient history as a Danforth and Wilson Fellow. His dissertation, "The Rise and Fall of Middle-Class Loyalty to the Roman Empire: A Social Study of Velleius Paterculus and Ammianus Marcellinus"—a gem of systematic thought, reasoned argumentation, and lucid and logical expression—has unfortunately never been published. During the final year of his doctoral program at UC Berkeley (1960—61), Richard taught as lecturer in classical rhetoric and was invited and encouraged to join the faculty, with promises of tenure in only a few short years, but he declined, sensing that his destiny was at BYU.

In the 1960s Richard taught Religious Education courses at BYU, including New Testament Greek and graduate courses in New Testament and early Christian history, together with handling sections of Roman and Greek history and world civilization for the Department of History. After graduate work in religion at the university was dismantled, he concentrated on teaching undergraduate New Testament courses and in later years began a class on the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, which is the only class he offered in early LDS Church history, despite his well-deserved reputation as a master in that field.

Richard has written widely; his five books—*Joseph Smith's New England Heritage* (1971), *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (1981), *Understanding Paul* (1983), *Guide to the Life of Christ* (1999), and *Guide to Acts and the Apostle's Letters* (1999)—retain their value, and more than 125 articles authored by him have appeared in scholarly journals and LDS publications. He has also garnered many academic honors: he received a "Best Historical Article Award" from the Mormon History Association in 1969, was named LDS Commissioner's Research Fellow from 1974 to 1975 and Honors Professor of the Year in 1978, and received the Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Award for Scholarship and Citizenship in 1988. In addition, the "Richard L. Anderson Research Award" was established by Religious Education at BYU in 1998.

Still, his greatest pleasure derives from seeing his students develop their talents, from being a parent to his four children and eight grandchildren, from a close spiritual and intellectual partnership with his wife—who holds a doctorate in Historic Costume and consults in nineteenth-century Mormon costume, and from serving as an active and devoted Latter-day Saint. We dedicate this volume to Richard Lloyd Anderson for his careful, methodical, painstaking scholarship and for his contributions to the BYU community as teacher and scholar. Finally—and most important—we dedicate this volume to him for his example as witness of the restoration and for his devotion to his family and the kingdom of God.

We would like to thank the many people who have so ably assisted us in preparing this volume. Shirley S. Ricks managed the entire editing process from beginning to end. Jessica Taylor contributed her typesetting and editing skills to the completion of the volume. Alison V. P. Coutts shared her multitude of organizational and editorial talents in bringing this project to fruition. Reed D. Andrew, Daniel L. Belnap, Marc-Charles Ingerson, Rebecca M. Flinders, and Robyn Patterson spent many hours checking sources. Josi J. Brewer, Rebecca S. Call, Wendy H. Christian, Whitney Fox, Melissa E. Garcia, Paula W. Hicken, and K. Laura Sommer proofread the text. Stephanie Christensen helped with indexing the volume.

—Stephen D. Ricks

Marriage and Treaty in the Book of Mormon: The Case of the Abducted Lamanite Daughters

S. Kent Brown

Marriage seemingly receives little attention in the Book of Mormon. The earliest notice, that of the marriage of the sons of Lehi and Sariah to the daughters of Ishmael, rates no more than a single verse (see 1 Nephi 16:7). In the following generation, the prophet Jacob condemns certain men in his society for seeking to introduce the practice of plural marriage (see Jacob 2:22—35), a practice that seems not to have continued.[1] The regent Lamanite king, Lamoni, in a much later scene, proposes to marry his daughter to Ammon, a Nephite prince, a proposal that Ammon respectfully declines (see Alma 17:22—25). In a celebrated case, the traitorous Nephite Amalickiah deceitfully "obtain[s] the kingdom" of the Lamanites and takes the queen "unto him to wife" (Alma 47:35).[2] Oddly, perhaps, the most interesting, complex, and complete account of marriage in the Book of Mormon is that of the fugitive priests of King Noah to Lamanite "daughters" whom they abducted (see Mosiah 20:3—5), rupturing a treaty in the process.

These priests of Noah, part of a Nephite colony in the midst of Lamanites, had abandoned their homes and families in an effort to avoid death at the hands of an invading Lamanite army (see Mosiah 19:9—23). Two years later (see Mosiah 19:29), the priests crept back to the outskirts of their former colony and, presumably in order to stay alive, "carried off [fellow colonists'] grain and many of their precious things," coming "by night," which made their thievery potentially a capital crime (Mosiah 21:21).[3] It was while they were in the neighboring wilderness that they stumbled upon "a place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves" (Mosiah 20:1). After discovering "the daughters of the Lamanites, they laid and watched them; And when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness" (Mosiah 20:4—5).

The sudden disappearance of the young women led to an immediate rupture in the treaty—a suzerain-vassal relationship between Lamanite overlords and the subject Nephite colony, then under the leadership of Limhi—a rupture that brought military reprisal against the Nephites (see Mosiah 20:6—11).[4] The Lamanite king and his people suspected that the Nephites were responsible for the wrong.[5] When both parties grasped that it was the renegade priests who had kidnapped these young women (see Mosiah 20:17—19, 23—24), they set out to discover the whereabouts of the priests and their captives in order to punish the priests, without success.[6] When a disoriented Lamanite army accidentally located them many months later, the priests craftily escaped punishment by obliging their "wives" to intercede on their behalf, thereafter easing themselves into Lamanite society, even taking positions of responsibility (see Mosiah 23:30—24:1, 4).[7]

A number of legal and social issues stem from the narrative. The most important is the fact that, at the end of this series of events, the women are called "wives" and the priests "husbands" (Mosiah 23:33—34). The terms are most significant, for they establish the legal framework for the outcome of the story. Perhaps just as important is the observation that the editor of the account, Mormon, has accepted the terminology of his source. Plainly, by so doing he demonstrates that in his culture—although he lived much later—the women were thought of as legally married. One of the complicating issues that does not arise in the narrative has to do with the legal status of the priests' previous wives whom they had abandoned, although clear evidence exists for laws dealing with children in such a circumstance.[8]

The terminology not only interprets the outcome of the situation but also invites us to enter the world of the Old Testament where laws deal rather extensively with marriage, including that of a master to a captive woman. As we shall soon see, a number of elements in the account can be understood best in light of either the Mosaic code or Old Testament events that established legal norms.[9]

In the situation at hand, the text stands with verbs that point to the captive status of the Lamanite women: the priests "took them and carried them" away (Mosiah 20:5; cf. Mosiah 20:15, 23).[10] But the captivity was illegal, for those who subsequently accused the priests said that they had "stolen" the young women—a term with severe legal implications (Mosiah 20:18; 21:20—21).[11]

Two issues come immediately to the fore: (1) making the daughters captives—an illegal act in both Lamanite and Nephite societies, as the responses illustrate (see Mosiah 20:6, 16)—and (2) on a social level, the consequent depriving of each woman of a marriage performed with the "consent" of her parents, particularly of her father —"there is a complete break with her family."[12]

In this latter instance, such marriages were allowed between Israelite males and foreign women whose city, lying at a distance "very far off," had been sacked by an Israelite army (Deuteronomy 20:15; see Deuteronomy 20:10—15). But, of course, the Lamanite daughters were not foreigners in the sense that they were non-Israelites—hence, the enormity of the priests' actions: abducting the young women, forcibly separating them from their families while intending to take them as wives, forcing their will on Israelite women, and carrying out marriages that were inappropriate under the Mosaic code because they did not result from war. But in the end, astonishingly, the marriages were honored, at least by Lamanite society.

The decree of death to the priests, issued by both the Lamanite king and the Nephite ruler Limhi (see Mosiah 20:7, 16), strongly suggests that some of the young women were already betrothed to be married—and therefore were considered to be under a marriage obligation—and that their kidnappers were thought of as rapists. In such a situation, the men would be sentenced to die.[13] In contrast, in the case of an unmarried virgin, biblical law holds that the rapist must pay a fine, marry the woman, and never divorce her (see Deuteronomy 22:28—29). Hence, had none of the young women been engaged—that is, if none were under a marriage contract—the severity of the reprisal sought by the Lamanite king might be thought of as excessive,[14] unless one could demonstrate that he acted solely on emotion and not according to law.[15]

Another possible legal component is at play here, that of "humiliating" a woman.[16] In the Bible, this issue is closely associated with that of a woman forced to marry without the consent of her father. The meaning of the humiliation remains an open question. Daube believes that the matter is identical to taking a woman "without the correct formalities" and arises when a woman is treated as if she comes from a class that does not deserve a wedding with all the trimmings, so to speak.[17] But the humiliation may rather have to do with treating a woman as a harlot, as was done when Shechem forced Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah. It was this defiling of Dinah that led to the murderous response of her two brothers against Shechem and his fellow townsmen (see Genesis 34).[18] According to this view, even though the Lamanite women were later reckoned as wives of the renegade priests, the route to their marriages was through defiled beds, thus humbling the women.[19] In fact, it is the story of Dinah that provides some of the most striking parallels with the experience of the Lamanite daughters, except that Dinah did not marry the man who "took her, and lay with her, and defiled her" (Genesis 34:2).[20]

The broken treaty, at least as it was perceived by the Lamanite king, next draws our attention, not only because much space is granted to it—underscoring its value to both sides, including mention of the treaty ceremony itself[21]—but also because its apparent rupture lay at the heart of the king's decision to send his armies "to destroy the people of Limhi" (Mosiah 20:7). It also is important to the story to note that "even the king himself went before his people" into battle (Mosiah 20:7). Quite obviously the king felt that he had invested a good deal of effort in bringing the treaty about[22] and, as a result, was hurt and angered that the agreement had apparently been broken by Limhi—his negotiating partner—and the Nephite colonists.[23]

The making of the treaty is to be understood as a very serious and sacred matter.[24] On the human side, it was the basis for an era of peace, even though the peace chiefly benefited the Lamanites (see Mosiah 19:25—27, 29).[25] According to Old Testament law, the breaking of an agreement between two parties led to whatever consequences were spelled out in the "curses" of the oaths—the classic example being the one between the Israelites, who were about to possess the promised land, and the Lord.[26] As is plain from his response, the Lamanite king's promise that "his people should not slay" the people of Limhi (Mosiah 19:25) was reversed as one of the penalties for breaking the treaty.

In the end, the king's decision "to destroy" the Nephite colony must have rested on a combination of considerations, one of which was his feelings of anger. In general, when a treaty has evidently been broken, the question is, "How flagrant must a violation be before the sovereign could legitimately muster his military forces and attack the recalcitrant vassal?"[27] The Lamanite king must have seen a series of misdeeds in the abduction of the young women. First, an act of stealing was a clear breach of law; the people were not in a state of war or national tension. Second, any marriages that might result would consequently be illegal or, at the very least, extremely odious. Third, the kidnapping was evidence, as he perceived the matter, of broken solemn pledges made only two years earlier.[28] It would appear that he had no choice except to bring down the weight of the Lamanite army on the Nephite colonists.

Now we come to a key question. Why were these marriages between the priests and the abducted women recognized? Clearly the priests broke the law and thus distanced themselves from custom as understood in both the Nephite and Lamanite societies. Yet in the end the marriages not only were more or less legitimized according to the terminology in a Nephite record—*wives* and *husbands*—but were also allowed to stand in Lamanite society, where the couples came to live and raise families.

The answer has to be that an array of factors brought about a favorable resolution of the issue for the priests. First, on the legal side, we have already seen that under Mosaic law a man can marry a captive woman if certain procedures are followed, particularly because the marriage takes place without the consent of her father and without the normal wedding celebrations (see Deuteronomy 21:10—14). The law stipulates that the woman must be a prize of war and a citizen of a city "very far off" (see Deuteronomy 20:15), but for the renegade priests, such stipulations—even if honored in the larger society[29]—would have made little difference. Moreover, it was evidently possible in Book of Mormon society, as in societies in the ancient Near East,[30] to make a woman a wife by intercourse—an action particularly repugnant to the woman's family. Hence, the priests may have been partially, if weakly, justified—in their own eyes, at least—in holding onto the Lamanite daughters as wives.

One cannot prove directly that the particular stipulations of the Deuteronomic code, noted above, were known and observed among Book of Mormon peoples. But the account does exhibit clues of a serious legal difficulty in

resolving the status of the marriages, clues that invite one to examine the only legal texts that were available to Book of Mormon societies early on.[31]

The second set of circumstances has to do with what happened when the wandering Lamanite army came upon the new settlement founded by the priests and their wives. Essentially the priests made a deal. We note before anything else that typical soldiers in antiquity would not be literate and therefore acquainted with legal niceties.[32] But the army that discovered the settlement was well aware that these priests—known kidnappers—were deserving of death.[33] As a result, the priests did everything to escape being killed. The leader of the group, a man named Amulon,[34] adopted a two-pronged approach. First, he himself "did plead with the Lamanites" that they not destroy the members of the settlement. Then "he also sent forth their wives, who were the daughters of the Lamanites, to plead with their brethren, that they should not destroy their husbands" (Mosiah 23:33). His own efforts seem to have failed. But the efforts of the women paid off: "And the Lamanites had compassion on Amulon and his brethren, and did not destroy them, because of their wives" (Mosiah 23:34).[35] Simply stated, Amulon's tactic to throw himself and his fellow priests on the mercy of the Lamanite army worked because it spared their lives. But there is more. To all appearances, the wives were willing to intercede for their husbands. There was no visibly abusive compulsion on the part of the former priests, forcing the women to come forward and beg on their behalf in a demeaning way, an action that would surely have given the Lamanite soldiers an excuse to execute the husbands.

However, negotiations also meant that the priests evidently were required to abandon their new settlement, to return to the homeland of the Lamanites, and to "join the Lamanites," although the text does not specify what this latter means (Mosiah 23:35).[36] The results for the priests were that they would keep both their lives and their wives—a decision not subsequently overturned by the Lamanite king because, afterward, he appointed Amulon to serve as a regent king over the colony of Alma, "his people" (Mosiah 23:39).

Epilogue: The Fate of the Children of the Priests

In a sad aftermath, we learn of the terrible fate of the former priests and their sons.[37] A generation after the priests were allowed to keep their wives, and following a series of remarkable successes by Nephite missionaries preaching among the Lamanites, which led to a split in the society along religious lines, a Lamanite army—chiefly out of frustration—attacked the Nephite frontier city Ammonihah and destroyed all life in it (see Alma 16:1—3).[38] Of events that followed, we possess two accounts. One is that of the Nephite army which tracked the Lamanite force "into the wilderness" because this latter group had taken captives from neighboring settlements whom the Nephites sought to rescue. Rescue them they did. The commanding general consulted with Alma, the prophet in the church, who gave inspired instructions as to where the Nephite army could intercept the Lamanites with their captives, which they did without loss of life to any of the prisoners. The first account ends with the notation that the former prisoners "were brought by their brethren to possess their own lands" (Alma 16:4—8).

It is the second account that fills in the picture about the fate of the priests and their sons who, as it happened, were part of the invading Lamanite army that destroyed the city of Ammonihah. This record originated with the sons of King Mosiah, whose success as missionaries had raised anger and fear in certain Lamanite circles, an anger that spilled over into a civil conflict between nonbelievers and newly won believers in the message of Mosiah's sons. Because believers, who were called the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi (see Alma 23:17), refused to take up arms in self-defense and because their attackers became frustrated and angry with themselves for slaughtering fellow citizens who were believers, the nonbelievers "swore vengeance upon the Nephites" and subsequently attacked

the city of Ammonihah. It was this force that the Nephite army intercepted, freeing the prisoners. But there was more. When the Nephite force ambushed the Lamanite army, it both killed "almost all the seed of Amulon and his brethren, who were the priests of Noah," and drove the remainder deeper into the wilderness where a rift occurred among the Lamanite soldiers. Some had begun to doubt the worthwhile prospects of making war, having seen the pacifistic stance of their fellow countrymen, the Anti-Nephi-Lehis. At this point, the remaining priests and "the children of Amulon" executed those who had begun "to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord" (Alma 25:6). After an ensuing mutiny, termed a "contention in the wilderness," "the Lamanites" began "to hunt" and kill "the seed of Amulon and his brethren" (Alma 25:8).[39] In a mournful ending to this episode, the record sadly observes that "they are hunted at this day by the Lamanites" (Alma 25:9).

In a postscript, other "descendants of the priests of Noah" (Alma 43:13)—presumably not only children of the priests who were too young to participate in the attack on Ammonihah but also grandchildren of the former priests[40]—participated in the protracted wars between the Lamanites and Nephites (see Alma 43—44 and 49—62). From this point on, we lose sight of them in the record. But we last view them as they rejoin those whose hatred for the Nephites was almost insatiable and dealt in death.

Notes

1. Legalized polygamy is not commented on again, with one possible exception. It concerns Amulek who, in referring to blessings received during the extended visit of Alma to his home, said, "he hath blessed me, and my women" (Alma 10:11). However, the reference may be to his wife and his mother, not to two or more wives. Even though Amulek mentions "my father and my kinsfolk," the nature of the text does not allow a decisive judgment.

2. The legal and social dimensions of this case are intriguing, but go beyond the scope of the present study.

3. The unnecessary notation of the night as the time of crime demonstrates Nephite knowledge of this stipulation of the Mosaic code. On theft "by night" (Mosiah 21:21) as a capital crime, see J. Coert Rylaarsdam, *The Book of Exodus* (New York: Abingdon, 1952), 1002—3; and Samuel Greengus, "Law," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:249 (hereafter *ABD*). According to Exodus 22:2, a thief who comes by night can be killed without "blood-guilt" penalty to the executioner, but only if caught at night.

4. For a discussion of this treaty and its connections to the Bible and the ancient Near East, see Mark Davis and Brent Israelsen, "International Relations and Treaties in the Book of Mormon" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988), 14—16.

5. The Lamanites were aware that the crime was kidnapping, and possibly worse, for the king told Limhi that "thy people did carry away the daughters of my people" (Mosiah 20:15). Hence, as I understand this passage, either there were witnesses, or one or more of the young women successfully escaped the priests.

6. At first the kidnappers' identity remained unknown (see Mosiah 20:1); according to Mosiah 21:21, the punishment was to be for other crimes, such as theft of grain. For the crime of kidnapping, the punishment was to be death; compare Mosiah 20:7 wherein the Lamanite king seeks to "destroy" Limhi's people for the kidnapping and Mosiah 21:23 wherein Limhi, thinking "Ammon and his brethren" to be "priests of Noah," would have "put [them] to death."

7. For one approach to the theft of the Lamanite daughters, see Alan Goff, "The Stealing of the Daughters of the Lamanites," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 67—74. Goff draws attention to connections between this story and accounts in the book of Judges about the people of the tribe of Benjamin. John W. Welch, in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 139—41, suggests that the dancing formed an annual event. Not incidentally, the narrative in Mosiah 20—23 gives the impression of a significant passage of time.

8. There must have been laws that governed the standing of a wife who found herself in such straits, possibly allowing her to divorce the man who had abandoned her and their children and not to be responsible for his debts (cf. the Code of Hammurabi, nos. 135—36). Concerning the status of abandoned children, in the case at hand we read that the children adopted a patronymic that would not identify them with their biological fathers: "the children of Amulon and his brethren, who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi" (Mosiah 25:12). It is not clear how this sort of action might affect, for instance, the legal claim of the children to property of their fathers. In later Jewish law these kinds of issues were dealt with, for instance, in the Mishnah, *Yebamoth* 10:1—5; 15:1—16:7; *Shebuoth* 7:7, etc.

9. We know that Nephites appealed to biblical events for legal and social precedents. See Jacob's spirited condemnation of those who appealed to "things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son" (Jacob 2:23—24).

10. Understanding the verb *to take* as meaning "to take under one's control" (as Hebrew *låqa*) or "to take away by theft" (as Hebrew *gånav*); and *to carry* as connoting "to carry away that which does not belong to one" or, in a broadly legal sense, "to deprive." The Hebrew verb *låqa*, of course, also appears with the meaning "to take [a wife]" (e.g., Genesis 4:19; 6:2; cf. 1 Nephi 7:1; 16:7). See David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 73.

11. According to Mosaic law, kidnapping an Israelite was to be punished by death (see Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). See Muhammad A. Dandamayev, "Slavery: Old Testament," in *ABD*, 6:63.

12. Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 65; see also Phyllis A. Bird, "Women: Old Testament," in *ABD*, 6:956. The account presumes something like the law found in Deuteronomy 21:10—14. Compare also Exodus 22:17 and Numbers 30:16.

13. For biblical law, see Deuteronomy 22:23—27: "In the case of the betrothed . . . woman, the penalty is death for the rapist and the woman goes free if one can presume that she struggled and was coerced." Greengus, "Law," 4:247.

14. The "excessive" character of the reprisal must have to do with the fact that two peoples were living side by side under a treaty and the fact that kidnapping was involved. If events had taken place entirely within either the Lamanite society or the Nephite colony, and if all the young women were not betrothed, a more measured response would be expected. But when a treaty is involved, the king of the wronged party would see himself pursuing the interests of his people and their god by gathering an army and pursuing the breaker of the treaty (according to Deuteronomy 28:20—22, even the Lord punishes "with the sword" of another; cf. Jeremiah 1:13—16). See Michael L. Barré, "Treaties in the Ancient Near East," in *ABD*, 6:655.

15. Speaking of the Lamanites in general, the text does say that "they were angry with the people of Limhi" (Mosiah 20:6). Further, the Lamanite king admits that "in my anger I did cause my people to come up to war" (Mosiah 20:15). But there is nothing to suggest that the warlike response did not conform to established custom or law. See Barré, "Treaties," 6:655, who maintains that "In suzerain-vassal treaties, this [effort to punish] often took the form of a punitive campaign by the suzerain against the transgressor."

16. See, for example, Deuteronomy 21:14 and 22:24, 29.

17. See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 65—66.

18. Compare also Lamentations 5:11.

19. One must keep in mind that, according to some, in the ancient world women and children were often treated as a man's possessions, though not strictly as property (cf. Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21); see Bird, "Women," in *ABD*, 6:956.

20. For example, Dinah was initially spotted by Shechem in the company of other women (see Genesis 34:1); he in effect abducted her ("he took her," Genesis 34:2); his act was judged to be a wrong that needed a strong response, a wrong that had "humbled"—e.g., Deuteronomy 22:29—Dinah ("which thing ought not to be done," Genesis 34:7; "Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?" Genesis 34:31); in this light, the brothers of Dinah sought death for Shechem and those who harbored him (see Genesis 34:25—26); a deal was struck—deceitfully, in this case (see Genesis 34:13)—that would allow Shechem to retain Dinah as wife (note the proposed fine in Genesis 34:11—12, and the required circumcision in Genesis 34:14—17; in the present case, the priests of Noah were required to abandon their new settlement [see Mosiah 23:31] and to "join the Lamanites" [Mosiah 23:35]). For further information on the legal situation of Dinah, see James R. Baker, *Women's Rights in Old Testament Times* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 171—73.

21. Indicated by the term *granted* (see Mosiah 19:15, 22; cf. Genesis 9:12; 17:2 [Hebrew *nåtan*, "give" or "grant"; KJV renders "make"]; on words used to describe ceremonies, see Barré, "Treaties," 6:654); also present are the terms of the treaty, confirmed by oaths of ratification on both sides (see Mosiah 19:15, 25—26); the elevation of Limhi—"having the kingdom conferred upon him"—who then represented the Nephite colonists in making the agreement (see Mosiah 19:26); the Lamanite effort to assure compliance—the stationing of guards (see Mosiah 19:28); the benefits of the agreement—peace for two years (see Mosiah 19:29); the complaint of breaking the treaty (see Mosiah 20:14—15); the Lamanite response to the apparent breaking of the treaty—sending an invasion force "to destroy" the colonists (Mosiah 20:7); and the Nephite military response (see Mosiah 20:8—11). Nothing is known of the place where the treaty was concluded—possibly the temple—or whether a written copy was made.

22. The tribute of "one half of all" was to be paid "unto him" personally (Mosiah 19:26). Clearly the king was a major figure in the negotiations, providing more than merely the expected oath (see Mosiah 19:25).

23. The colonists would eventually break the treaty by flight and—in an echo of the Israelite exodus—by taking their "flocks" and "herds," in addition to "all their gold, and silver, and their precious things, which they could carry" (Mosiah 22:11—12), half of which belonged to the Lamanites under the agreement. But the Nephites had law on their side: they had been vassals for a number of years. Hence, their Lamanite-Israelite masters owed them freedom and gifts (see Deuteronomy 15:12—15); compare also Jacob and Laban (see Genesis 29—31). See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 47—61.

24. God becomes involved in the language of oaths sworn in making treaties. Regularly in treaties of the ancient Near East, "The deities before whom the oath was taken were thought to act as guarantors of the treaty." Barré, "Treaties," 6:654.

25. According to Mosiah 19:15, the agreement held that the lives of the colonists would be spared and they would be allowed to "possess the land" again. In Mosiah 19:25—26, the Lamanite king pledged "that his people should not slay" the Nephites, but Limhi promised that "his people should pay tribute . . . [of] one half of all they possessed." This level of payment had been established in an earlier accord (see Mosiah 7:22 and 19:15, 22).

26. Deuteronomy 28:1—13 enumerates the "blessings" of the covenant from the Lord, and Deuteronomy 27:15—26 and 28:15—68 list the "curses." One of the consequences of Israelite disobedience to the covenant is "thou [shalt] serve thine enemies . . . until [they] have destroyed thee" (Deuteronomy 28:48). Please note the additional phrase, "which the Lord shall send against thee," clear proof that the Lord is the guarantor of the agreement.

27. George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in *ABD*, 1:1182.

28. In a moving scene, after he had learned that the guilt rested on the renegade priests, the Lamanite king restores the oath that he thought had been broken and then "did bow himself down" before his army, pleading that they "not slay [the Nephite] people" (Mosiah 20:24—26).

29. Lamanites do not seem to have married their female prisoners of war. For example, in the exchange of letters between Moroni and Ammoron about swapping prisoners of war, Moroni seems to expect that he can get all the women back (see Alma 54).

30. In both biblical and Near Eastern law a dichotomy apparently existed between the divine imperative that an adulterer be punished by death and the right of pardon that could be exercised by the injured husband or, one infers, the injured fiancé. (Joseph acts thus for Mary; see Matthew 1:18—19). See Elaine A. Goodfriend, "Adultery," in *ABD*, 1:82—83. In the present case of the abducted daughters who were betrothed, such a dichotomy in Lamanite law would have allowed their former fiancés to forgive them, thus freeing them from penalty. One must remember, of course, that at least three years had passed before the women, now "wives," were discovered by the Lamanite army (see Mosiah 23:30—31); some of the former fiancés must have married other women in the meantime.

31. The later legal reforms of King Mosiah do not come into play here (so Alma 1:1, 14). The Nephite system then current is described as "the law which has been given to us by our fathers" (Mosiah 29:15, 25); in addition, "the law [of Moses] was engraven upon the plates of brass" (1 Nephi 4:16), which the Nephites possessed.

32. An entire complex of issues has to do with literacy in the wider Nephite and Lamanite societies. To make reasonable judgments about Lamanite levels of education is especially difficult because of the nature of the sources. The Lamanites' regular acceptance of Nephite dissenters and the elevation of them to high places in Lamanite society, particularly in the military, may well stem from the higher levels of education that Nephites seem to have enjoyed.

33. The verb *to destroy*, meaning "to kill," appears twice in Mosiah 23:33—34.

34. In an obvious coloration from the exodus story, Amulon is usually mentioned in the phrase "Amulon and his brethren" (Mosiah 23:34—35; 24:1; 25:12; Alma 25:4, 8; cf. Mosiah 24:4—5), who stand as substitutes for

"Pharaoh and his people" whom God punishes, even their children eventually being slain (see Exodus 12:29—30; Alma 25:4, 8). On the opposite side stands "Alma and his brethren" (Mosiah 23:35—37; 24:8, 15), or "Alma and his people" (Mosiah 24:12, 17—18, 20, 23), who recall "Moses and his people" whom the Lord delivers from bondage by leading them "into the wilderness," onto God's path, all preparations having been made the previous night (Exodus 12:1—13, 21—23; and Mosiah 24:18—20). See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 75—77. In this vein, in a source with a decided Lamanite connection, Amulon and his followers are routinely called "Amulonites" (Alma 21:3—4; 23:14; and 24:1, 28—29). In one passage, one finds the phrase "the people of Amulon" (Alma 21:2), which seems to designate this group before it became well established. Goff, "Stealing," 71—73, misses this set of nuances in discussing the people of Amulon.

35. The successful pleading of the women continues a pattern found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 7:19 and Mosiah 19:13—15) that finds echoes in the exodus story (see Exodus 3:21—22 and 11:2—3). See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 55—61.

36. It is very likely that the men, who were Nephites, were obliged to swear an oath of allegiance to the Lamanite nation. For they were to go with the army to the "land of Nephi," the Lamanite homeland, when they were diverted by the discovery of the people of Alma (see Mosiah 23:35—38). Moreover, they raised their children within the Lamanite society—establishing a colony in cooperation with Lamanites and other dissident Nephites, as later notices indicate (see Alma 21:2—3 and 25:4). On an oath of allegiance administered by Nephites, see Terrence L. Szink, "An Oath of Allegiance in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 35—45.

37. Abinadi, the first Nephite martyr who was convicted unjustly of crime by King Noah and these same priests (see Mosiah 17:6, 12), had prophesied that both the priests and their "seed" (Mosiah 17:15) would "be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro. . . . And in that day ye shall be hunted, . . . and then ye shall suffer . . . the pains of death by fire" (Mosiah 17:17—18).

38. The "utter destruction" of the city had been prophesied by Alma the Younger, former chief judge of the country (see Alma 9:12, 18, 24; cf. Alma 10:18, 22). The complete ruin was so devastating that the date is repeated twice in introducing the account (see Alma 16:1). Evidently, it was a date remembered for decades afterward.

39. The distinction between "the Lamanites" and "the seed of Amulon and his brethren" (Alma 25:8) must reflect accurately the Lamanite point of view in this matter (see especially Alma 24:29; also the pointed phrase "his people," meaning Nephites, in Mosiah 23:39). As one might infer, the children of the priests must have looked different from other Lamanites because they came from a Nephite father and a Lamanite mother. One can surmise that, unhappily, these children had also suffered certain kinds of discrimination as they grew up. Of course, the whole issue of social discrimination has yet to be explored.

40. Over time, people settled a "land of Amulon" (Alma 24:1) in Lamanite territory, a place-name that must go back to the leader of the defrocked priests. One can reasonably assume that it was descendants and family members of these former officials who were among the prominent colonists who came to live in this area.

An Inscribed Chinese Gold Plate in Its Context: Glimpses of the Sacred Center

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Richard L. Anderson's meticulous and wide-ranging scholarship cautions us against being content with simple cataloging. His example in examining the cultural context of New Testament studies prompts us to look more closely at the origins and ritual significance of an unusual Chinese artifact.

Introduction

The foundation of the Chinese documentary tradition, predating even bamboo tablets and scrolls of silk, is a huge corpus of inscriptions on bronze vessels, largely dating from the Zhou period (1044—256 B.C.). A modern index to this corpus includes 7,312 separate inscriptions that had been discovered up to the year 1980.[1] While a few extant inscriptions are preserved on gold, silver, copper, iron, and pewter, mainly in the form of seals[2] and knife-shaped coins or metal plates used as money,[3] the vast majority of inscribed metal objects are bronze ritual vessels.[4] These have been prized over the centuries by Chinese connoisseurs, who before the modern era seldom recorded the circumstances of their discovery nor their exact location in the tombs. These notes will examine a rarity in the Chinese tradition, a surviving inscribed plate of gold, excavated *in situ*.

Inscribed Decorative Gold Objects in China

As mentioned, inscriptions first appeared on gold in the form of seals, commencing with the Zhou dynasty. In this case the material confirms the royal status of these seals, some of which were given by the king to vassal princes as a symbol of their investiture. Later, toward the end of the Zhou, an era known artistically as the *Huai* style period in bronze work, gold sheets were sometimes attached to bronze plaques and inscribed with various decorations. Many examples are found in the Carl Kempe Collection in Stockholm. For example, a pair of circular gold plaques on bronze, measuring 67 mm in diameter, weighing 147 g, was used to ornament a painted band close to the ceiling of a tomb.[5] Another circular plaque in a gold sheet (62 mm, 12.5 g) is decorated with six interlaced dragons, each forming a figure eight. Similar gold plaques are found in collections in the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm; the Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and the C. T. Loo Collection, New York.[6]

During the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220), gold sheets on bronze plaques continued to be manufactured. One striking variation is a gold plaque with granulated work, fixed to a gilt lacquer sheet by tabs turned over the edges. It is 33 mm long and weighs 2 g.[7] An analogous gold plaque is in the C. T. Loo Collection. Eight other gold plaques from the end of the Han through the Six Dynasties (220—589) are featured in the Carl Kempe Collection (plates 18—20, 22—24, 33, and 37; pp. 78—81, 89, and 93) and bring the practice of decorative gold plates up to the Tang dynasty.

During the Tang dynasty (618—906), inscribed silver plates, platters, planchettes, and plaques seemed to completely replace the use of decorative gold plaques and sheets. Representative silver planchettes and plaques, inscribed with either patents of authority or quotas of taxes, are displayed in various museums in Shaanxi Province and elsewhere.[8] The most arresting example of Tang inscribed silver is a set of silver drinking counters or tallies. Fifty counters, each 20.1 mm long and 1.4 mm wide, are inscribed with a passage from the Confucian classic *Lunyu*,

or the Analects, on the obverse, with the reverse containing the prescribed number of cups that must be drunk as punishment in a drinking game.[9]

These examples of the decorative use of gold and silver for ornamental purposes might obscure the significance of the ritual use of inscribed gold plates, for it is with the introduction of Buddhism into China beginning in the first century A.D. that gold as a writing material takes on new significance.

The Famensi Pagoda

In 1978, an earthquake in Songpan County, Shaanxi Province, caused cracks to appear in the Ming dynasty brick pagoda of the Famen Monastery in nearby Fufeng County.[10] Restoration was proposed but nothing happened until, on 24 August 1981, the damage caused the 350-year-old pagoda to split and partially collapse, leaving only half of it standing. Even this surviving part had to be dismantled in the course of renovation work. This tragedy proved unexpectedly beneficial, as a hidden crypt was revealed below the foundation of the pagoda (fig. 1). The excavators recognized this as the "Underground Palace" of Buddhist literature. This stone-lined crypt was built along the north-south axis[11] and consisted of a series of chambers, ending with the *sanctum sanctorum* directly under the vertical axis of the pagoda. The center of the roof of this chamber was decorated with a 26-petaled silver lotus, confirming the central importance of this chamber.[12] It was filled with many precious objects of gold, silver, porcelain, and other materials—a discovery ranked with the terra cotta warriors in Xi'an and the Neolithic village of Banpo as one of the three most important archaeological finds in Shaanxi Province. The most sacred objects were four sets of reliquaries, each containing a finger bone believed to have belonged to the Buddha, and which survived his cremation in Kusinårå, India, in 483 B.C.[13] The most elaborate consisted of a plain wooden outer casket that revealed six miniature coffins of gold and silver, one inside the other. Nestled securely in the innermost coffin was a tiny pagoda of pure gold, crowned with a pearl and containing the finger bone glued to a silver pillar for display purposes. The relic was marked on the inside cavity with the design of the Big Dipper constellation, a symbol of the still center of the turning heavens.[14] Another finger bone was housed in a gilded silver coffin. A third bone was found in an exquisitely carved white marble reliquary. The fourth and final bone was contained inside a jade coffin decorated with two sapphires placed within several precious containers and hidden in the *mikan* under the marble floor of the innermost chamber.[15] This unexpectedly large collection of finger bone reliquaries is thought to have resulted from the dissolution of the monasteries during periods of violent anti-Buddhist persecutions. The reliquaries had been brought together in the Famen Monastery crypt to preserve them.

Located 120 kilometers west of Xi'an, Famen Monastery was first constructed shortly before A.D. 499, although it was not given that name until later. Local lore claimed that originally it had been founded by the great Indian monarch King Ashoka (ca. 274—236 B.C.) as one of the 84,000 stupas he erected to house relics of the Buddha as part of his national sponsorship of the new religion and extensive missionary effort. This legend may have arisen from the name of the monastery's pagoda—Pagoda of King Ayu in Chinese or Ashoka in Sanskrit. Nineteen Buddhist reliquary pagodas have been built in China over time to house different kinds of relics.[16] The pagoda at Famen Monastery was rebuilt after damages sustained during a period of persecution, 574—78. In 618 the monastery was officially named Famensi, and fifteen years later the Pagoda of King Ayu was renovated. Sometime during the seventh century the pagoda was renamed the *Zhenshenta*, "Pagoda of the True Body," or *Sharira* in Sanskrit.[17] During the Ming dynasty (1368—1644), the most recent installation of the Reliquary Pagoda was completed on its original Tang foundation (fig. 2). Under construction from 1579 to 1609, this edifice lasted until

its collapse in 1981.[18] It was rebuilt and rededicated on 9 November 1988 in lavish ceremonies, one of which consisted of representative priests from all over the Buddhist world entering the pagoda, worshiping while circumambulating the central pillar that stands above the reliquary chamber. Following the course of the sun and revolving stars by moving clockwise around a sacred center is called *rao xing* in China and *pradakshina* in India and is one of the most venerable acts of worship throughout Asia.

The Bodhisattva's Perpetual Offering

Among the many treasures found in the underground crypt was the parcel-gilt silver figure of a man, 21 cm tall, supporting a tray and half kneeling on a double lotus pedestal (fig. 3).[19] The piece may be examined in detail as the craftsman designed it, ascending in an increasing order of importance, from the outer periphery of the base, up through the silver kneeling figure, to the golden tray and the relic it supported.

The base consists of three elements: (1) an inverted lotus, (2) a spherical middle section forming a narrow waist, and (3) another lotus opening upward (fig. 4). The overall silhouette represents the hourglass-shaped world mountain emerging from the waters of chaos—the lower lotus—and opening with the upper lotus at the creation of the universe.[20] The lotus flower was observed to grow up from the dark and muddy waters to bloom on the surface with startling purity; its miraculous beauty was seen as a type of creation itself. This ancient Hindu symbol of the divine center of the cosmos—the *padmasana*, or lotus throne—was used in Indian art and literature for the deity who sat at the still center of the universe, whoever he or she was believed to be. Not surprisingly, the symbol was adopted by Indian Buddhists to emphasize the Buddha's central importance.

On each of the eight small lotus petals is an engraved image of a golden *vajra* deity. These three-headed, multi-armed *ashura*, or guardian figures, bear weapons and are surrounded by flaming halos, or *mandorla*.[21] Some *ashura* are seated on a lotus, while others recline on a rocky outcropping. According to the *Rig Veda*, in order to create the universe, the *ashura*, similar to the Greek Titans, joined the *deva*, or gods, in a divine tug-of-war, pulling on opposite sides of the endless serpent *Ananta*, who was wrapped around the narrow waist of the hourglass-shaped world mountain. In so doing, they churned the Milky Way and brought forth all of creation. This cosmogonic myth of the *Amritamanthana*, the Churning of the Milky Ocean to create Ambrosia, was based on observation of the everyday mystery of churning liquid milk into a buttery solid.[22] Thus the eight *ashura* of the base not only protect the eight directions, but also recall the miracle of creation to the viewer's mind. On each petal above them is shown a Sanskrit letter or *bija*, "seed syllable," inscribed in a circle, which represents a particular manifestation of the Buddha, perhaps correlating with the *ashura* below.[23] When these images are flattened and drawn in relation to each other, the eight petals remind us that we are dealing with a *mandala*, or cosmic diagram, showing the relationship of the various powers to each other and to the sacred center (fig. 5).[24]

The mandala tradition may have begun with the *stupa*, a reliquary mound of piled-up earth with a square drawn around it, representing the world mountain and the four-cornered world surrounding it. It evolved into magnificent and complex geometric patterns that formed the ground plan of temples, both Hindu and Buddhist. Frequently a miniature mandala in gold or stone was placed as the foundation deposit at the center of the temple. When translated into two-dimensional art, these mandala paintings became objects of meditation, the most famous examples known in the West being the *Thang-ka* paintings of Tibet.

The spherical middle section has four seated deities crowned and dressed in armor, facing out to the four cardinal directions (see fig. 4.2). They are *Lokapala* or *Tianwang*, Heavenly Kings and Lords of the Four Regions. The

damaged inner rim of the base prevents us from seeing how these four deities may have related to the eight *ashura* below.

The upper lotus with its sixteen petals has a seated Bodhisattva, or heavenly musician, surrounded by delicate honeysuckle tendrils within a double *prabhu-mandala* halo engraved on each of its petals (see fig. 4.3). This was a tedious process but justified in that it reminds the viewer that each petal represents an entire universe, with its own Buddha, ours being just one among the many created by divine power.[25]

The silver kneeling figure is bare chested and wears a long skirt (see fig. 4.4), based on the Indian *dhoti*. He wears jeweled armbands, and several strings of real seed pearls are draped around his neck. This jewelry distinguishes him as a Bodhisattva since representations of Buddha usually have no ornaments. This reflects the story of the historic Buddha's spiritual development in which the man Gautama was born as an Indian prince and wore such signs of royal power, only to renounce them as he started his final steps toward complete enlightenment when he was no longer a Bodhisattva, "One whose essence is Enlightenment," but became the Buddha, "One who is fully Enlightened." Gautama was not the only Bodhisattva, just as he is not the only Buddha. In the *Mahayana* form of Buddhism prevalent in China, Bodhisattva also refers to a class of divine beings who have postponed their entrance into Nirvana in order to stay behind and help those less advanced to achieve this desired state.

The face has high-arching eyebrows painted in blue and green over languid, half-opened eyes. The usual long earlobes of Hindu royalty, distended by the weight of heavy golden spools, in this instance have small gold and pearl earrings. His long, piled-up hair was painted dark blue, a convention for black in Indian art. His face conveys the calm, quiet elegance of the Buddhist images of the previous Sui dynasty (589—618), showing the typical conservative and opulent nature of religious art commissioned for state occasions.

The Bodhisattva's openwork crown consists of small filigree whorls, surrounding a small seated Buddha who can be identified as Amitabha, the Buddha of "Boundless Light." This Buddha governs the western quadrant of the Buddhist paradise where believers can hear the Law taught in its purity and thus be able to enter Nirvana in their next rebirth. The significance of this particular Buddha in the crown is that it identifies the figure below as the most beloved of all Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara, "the Lord who looks down [with compassion]."[26] Among his many epithets is Padmapani, "Bearer of the Lotus." In the case of our statue, the relic on its gold tray is supported by a lotus leaf (see fig. 4.5), which suggests that the white finger bone may be seen as the white lotus flower, one of the earliest aniconic symbols of the Buddha himself. The Bodhisattva reverently holds the tray level with his face.[27] He lifts the tray and turns his face slightly to his left, where one would expect to see the Buddha when he is depicted between the usual two attendant Bodhisattvas in sculpture and painting. Thus the finger bone represents, *pars pro toto*, the entire body of the Buddha. The mission of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva on the left side, is to protect this world in the interval between the departure of the historic Buddha, Shakyamuni, and the arrival of Maitreya, the Buddha yet to come. Later Chinese emperors increasingly identified themselves with this Bodhisattva under his Chinese name, Guanyin.[28]

The figure holds in his hands a silver tray-shaped lotus leaf (see fig. 4.5), upon which rests an inscribed gold plate with a raised rim (see fig. 4.6). The plate is 11.2 cm long and 8.4 cm wide. The gold openwork plaque attached to the plate's four corners by silver chains (see fig. 4.7) was used to lift it, probably to avoid touching its contents.[29] Two of the chains have pins, allowing removal from one long side so the handle would not touch the relic but would hang down at the side, allowing a clear view of the tray and its contents. We can now appreciate that the purpose of this elegant statue and its elaborate base was to display appropriately the finger bone relic for worship, much as

the Catholic monstrance is used to display the consecrated Host for adoration by the faithful. This usage is confirmed by the entry inscribed on the list of contents found at the entrance: "Bodhisattva offering the true body [of the Buddha]."[30]

An examination of the photographs seems to indicate that the inscription was chased into the gold with a cold chisel and not cast into its surface when it was originally made, as was the case with the ornamental flowers. The inscribing was done at a later date, perhaps in commemoration of a particular service performed in behalf of the emperor and at his command. The ceremony would have involved placing the relic on the gold plate and using the smaller plaque (see fig. 4.7) as the handle. The presence in the design of the handle of a three-pronged *vajra*—the diamond thunderbolt—provides further evidence to support this theory. This ancient symbol of irresistible power that shatters ignorance and penetrates to the center of all opposites is often shown in the hands of Hindu and Buddhist gods and their guardians.[31] Thus, by holding this *vajra* handle, the emperor, or a priest acting as his proxy, would "wield the *vajra*" in behalf of the Buddha.[32] And when the ceremony was over, the statue of the Bodhisattva would act as the emperor's proxy in making an eternal offering to the Buddha in the darkness of the crypt.

The inscription has 65 characters in 11 lines and is executed in a delicate hand. Literally translated, it reads:

> Presented on behalf of the Expansively Filial Greatly Sainted Emperor, the Utmost in Humanity, of Luminous Virtue, Brilliantly Martial and Sagaciously Cultivated: this Sharira Bodhisattva is respectfully manufactured for a perpetual offering. We ask in all humility that His Holy Life will be forever young, that the Holy Branches will have ten thousand leaves, and that the Eight Quadrants will come in submission, and that the Four Seas will have no waves [of turmoil]. Recorded on the Day of Extended Felicitation of His August Emperor, the Fourteenth Day of the Eleventh Month, Year *Xinmou*, Twelfth Year of "Total Harmony" *Xiantong* (January 27, 872).[33]

The listing of virtuous titles of the emperor is the standard introduction of such commemorative inscriptions. This particular inscribed plate is the only known example of the Tang dynasty in which the emperor's full titulary is recorded.[34] The terms reflect the Buddhist and Confucian concerns with the proper regard for the emperor's ancestors and compassion for the people under his care, as well as protection from their enemies. The statue is described as a Bodhisattva, *Pusa*, connected with the "True Body" or Sharira reliquary.[35] The "perpetual offering" mentioned reminds us that these objects were made to be used only a few times and then deposited in the treasure vaults, never to be seen again. The branches may refer to the *Fusang*, or tree of life, while ten thousand is a conventional number meaning all creation. The eight quadrants evoke the eight *ashura* on the base, and the four seas represent the entire world with China as the Middle Country, protected by the four guardians on the spherical middle section or narrow waist.

The Tang emperor, Li Cui—posthumous title Yizong (833—74)—assumed the throne in 860. His interest in Buddhism is hardly mentioned in the official documents devoted to his reign, let alone any record of this episode, either in *Jiu Tangshu* (Old History of the Tang), chapter 19a, or *Xin Tangshu* (New History of the Tang), chapter 9. Yet certain hints contained in the most detailed account provide a possible motivation. Yizong's reign was rather stable, except for troublesome rebels in the southern reaches of the empire, in what is present-day Guangdong Province and northern Vietnam. Rebellions are recorded for the years 864—65, 869, and 870. The one Buddhist incident preserved in the *Jiu Tangshu* is linked up, through sympathetic magic, with the events in the south: in the fifth month of the year 871, "His Highness favored the 'Monastery for Pacifying the Kingdom' [with his presence]

and bequeathed a lofty throne of *gharu* wood to the monk who expounds the sutras."[36] *Gharu* wood, a product of the *mixiang* tree (*Aquilaria agallocha Roxb.*), is produced only in these tropical regions so troubled by discord and rebellion.[37] It seems that His Highness desired to ritually quell this region by symbolically subjecting it, according to principles of sympathetic magic, to the pacifying influences of Buddhism as represented by the throne carved of *gharu* wood. This throne was located in the locus of national Buddhist power, the "Monastery for Pacifying the Kingdom."[38]

An edict preserved in the *Quan Tangwen* "Complete Prose of the Tang" verifies this motivation:

> Edict Welcoming the Bones of the Buddha
>
> This Royal Person, because of My paucity of virtue upon succeeding to the great enterprise for lo these fourteen years, has continuously encountered the crazed depravity of the Southern Barbarians, and the royal forces have been unable to rest. On the throne this Royal Person has been preoccupied with loving and nurturing all sentient beings and spirits. Consequently, I therefore have decided to venerate and worship the Buddhist teachings. I have determined to welcome the Sharira at the Gate of Doubled Mysteries so that the myriads of the populace may pray [to it] for blessings.[39]

Apparently the presentation of the apotropaic wooden throne to the monastery in 871 was ineffectual. Consequently, in the following year the Bodhisattva was cast by imperial commission. It is within this political context that the lines "that the Eight Quadrants will come in submission, and that the Four Seas will have no waves" had particular and contemporary significance. Perhaps this explains why all of the guardians depicted on the base brandish weapons in their multiple arms.

We find a secular response to an earlier instance of dabbling with the same Buddhist relic, beneath the royal dignity from a Confucian point of view, in the biography of the great statesman Han Yu (768—824). The procession of the finger bone of the Buddha from its home in Famen Monastery to the capital of Chang'an had become a popular event, attracting huge crowds of oglers and supplicants, for it had been known to heal onlookers in the past.[40] According to secular sources, such processions had occurred in years 660, 790, 819, and 873;[41] Buddhist sources reveal a total of seven such processions.[42] According to Han Yu's biography,

> The Gateway to the Dharma Monastery in Fengxiang possessed a Sharira Pagoda for Protecting the State; within the pagoda was one finger bone of Sakyamuni, the mortal Buddha. According to common custom, it [the pagoda] was opened once every thirty years. Whenever it was opened, the harvest was plentiful and the people tranquil. In the first month of the fourteenth year (*Yuanhe* reign period, 819), His Highness (Xianzong, r. 806—20) ordered the Imperial Commissioner Du Yingqi to escort thirty members of the palace, all holding fragrant flowers, to the Lin'gao Station to welcome the bone of the Buddha. It entered the palace from the Gate for According with the Light, and remained within the forbidden precincts for three days; thereupon it was escorted to the various monasteries [in Chang'an]. The princes, princesses, aristocrats, and gentry all rushed about making offerings, only fearing to be left behind. Among the commoners some abandoned their work, impoverished themselves, set their heads ablaze, or seared their arms in the effort to make offerings.[43] [Han] Yu never did like Buddhism, so he presented the following remonstrance.[44]

Then follows the text of his famous essay on the bone of the Buddha, including these particularly biting lines:

> Although your servant is utterly ignorant, I certainly realize that His Highness is not deluded by Buddhism, but is doing this act of veneration in order to seek for blessings and good fortune. Now that the harvest is plentiful and the people happy . . . setting up such a spectacle is merely for the sake of amusement. How can anyone as saintly and brilliant as You be willing to believe in such a thing?[45]

This essay by a famous literatus, at the height of his bureaucratic career, caused a sensation.[46] For his earnest but ill-advised words, Han Yu barely escaped summary execution, suffering instead a fate only slightly more tolerable: he was banished immediately to Guangdong, where he had been exiled once before for unvarnished remarks addressed to the throne.

It should be recalled that four finger bones of the Buddha were recovered from the ruined base of the pagoda in 1981; at some point in time Famensi came to be the repository of these other relics. We do have documentary evidence that finger bones were housed in monasteries around the capital and its environs, including temples on Mt. Wutai and the Zhongshan mountain range, and in Sizhou until at least 844. At that time, one year before the great proscription against Buddhism sponsored by the royal house at the instigation of Daoist advisors to the throne, it was forbidden to make offerings to these relics upon pain of public caning. Perhaps at this time the relics were moved to Famen Monastery for safekeeping, for smaller monasteries were closed and their images and scriptures transferred to larger ones during this same year.[47] A catalogue of stone rubbings from the Song period first published in 1119—25 by Zhao Mingcheng (1081—1129) preserves the titles of five stelae erected at Tang period monasteries that housed relics.[48] Presumably, then, at least five physical relics of the Buddha, beyond the many substitution relics made of gold, silver, pearls, and other materials, were preserved in China at the time.

The recent Imperial Tombs of China exhibit at Brigham Young University included one of these substitution relics from the Great Cloud Monastery located in Gansu Province. Housed in triple coffins of gilt bronze, silver, and gold, the reliquary bottle contained fourteen grains of pearl-like kernels in the shape of rice. The exhibition catalogue explains the background to these substitution relics:

> These relics are believed to be the ashes of the Sakyamuni Buddha (ca. 565—486 B.C.). According to Buddhist tradition, after the Buddha died and was cremated, his body was transformed into relics the size of rice kernels which could not be pulverized or scorched and sometimes produced brilliant light and divine effects. . . . A Buddhist sutra states, 'If there is no genuine relic, then a relic can still be created out of gold, silver, glazed tile, crystal, jasper, glass, and other valuable materials,' so that even sand, herbs, or pieces of bamboo or wood can serve as relics. The relic in this exhibition seems to have been made from pearl or something similar.[49]

In 1985 excavation work at the Qingshansi or Monastery for Celebrating the Mountains near the tomb of the First Emperor of Qin uncovered another hidden crypt dating from the Tang dynasty. It yielded yet another set of silver and gold coffins; in an interesting parallel to the Famensi Sharira Bodhisattva, these coffins were carried by a Bodhisattva resting on a lotus throne. Inside the gold coffin was a glass bottle containing substitution relics of an undetermined substance.[50] Another example recently excavated was the gilded bronze miniature pagoda placed under the foundation of the Ming dynasty Great Awakening Monastery in Nanjing, included in the Imperial Tombs exhibit (fig. 6).[51] This was found in a specially shaped brick-lined pit with a circular opening at the top, representing the roundness of the heavens, and a square bottom, representing the four-cornered earth. The four blue-and-white vases contained sweet-smelling herbs collected from distant regions and brought together in the vases to honor the sacred center. The Tibetan style stupa contains a seated female figure, Ushnisha Vijaya, protected by

four guardian kings, who stand in front of four stupa-shaped doorways. This particular deity was an emanation of the Buddha's crowning knot of hair and was invoked to pray for the extended life of the emperor. Understandably, the only solid-gold object in this intricate, three-dimensional mandala was the most important and was placed on a ledge at the front: the figure of the reclining Buddha as he passed into Nirvana.[52]

Significance of the Gold Plate

Gold played an important symbolic and liturgical role in the Buddhist religion. This is easily seen by reference to any good Buddhist dictionary—Chinese or Indian—in which the following terms are in common use: "golden land," a Buddhist monastery; "golden words," the words of the Buddha; "golden treasury," the Buddha nature in all the living; "golden mouth," mouth of the Buddha; "golden body" or "golden mountain," the body of the Buddha; "golden person," the Buddha or his image; and most significantly, "golden bones" or relics of the Buddha.[53] In the *Divyavadana*, King Bimbisara, on the advice of the Buddha, sent a neighboring king a painting of his teacher and the essence of the new Buddhist doctrine inscribed on a gold plate.[54]

In Sri Lanka, the first of the large stupas, the Ruwanveli, or "Gold dust," Dagoba became known simply as the *Mahathupa*, or "Great Stupa" (fig. 7). When the 254-foot-diameter dome was finished, it was covered with white plaster and ornamented with painted and gilded details.[55] The *Mahavamsa* describes the treasures of the central relic chamber of the Great Stupa as including a 27-foot-high silver Bo tree in the center. The Bo tree is revered because it sheltered the Buddha when he attained enlightenment and may be compared to the tree of life in western tradition. Four golden Buddhas were placed facing out to the four quarters of the earth, thus forming a great three-dimensional mandala.[56]

The stupa tradition was not unique to the Buddhists in India, as it was based on the ancient Hindu custom of burial tumuli. This widespread custom must also be looked at in conjunction with the *agnicayana*, or Vedic rite of constructing the fire altar, the Hindu model of the universe (fig. 8), thus combining time and space as well as the rituals of royal power. In a surprising parallel to our Chinese Bodhisattva bearing a lotus leaf, according to the *Satapatha-Brahmana* the object forming the second layer of the foundation deposit is also a lotus leaf, which bears a golden disk, representing the sun, with twenty-one knobs on its circumference, representing the twelve months of the year, the five seasons, three worlds, and the sacrificer himself.[57]

Several biographies of noted monks of the Six Dynasties and Tang periods illustrate various aspects of the ritual importance of gold. Once eleven taels of gold were presented as an offering to an image of the Buddha.[58] The biography of the Tang cleric Sengyuan records that in constructing a pagoda, a gold plate or platter, *jinpan*, is necessary.[59] This is the recognizable tradition of the foundation deposit, found in many cultures throughout the world. Presumably such a plate functioned as the foundation plate found at the base of many excavated temples in India. An example is the Gupta period Shivite temple in Gokul, in which a square gold plate with a crudely incised figure of Nandi, the animal steed of Shiva, was placed in the center of a square stone in the foundation deposit (fig. 9). Such a plate stabilized the ritual center of the microcosmic building and the macrocosm it paralleled.[60]

One biography associates gold very closely with relics of the Buddha. While preaching the Buddhist gospel, Sengshi witnessed two pieces of the bones of the Buddha that had been stored in a stone box transform suddenly into yellow gold.[61] We have previously seen that gold was one substance that could substitute for a genuine corporal relic. One entry even records the use of gold plates to transcribe sacred sutras: Shanwuwei "again

smelted gold like palm leaves[62] and copied the *Mahaprajnaparamita-Sutra* (The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra)."[63] This sutra was the fundamental philosophical work of the Mahayana school. Written in some 6,400,000 Chinese characters, it occupies three full Western-style volumes in its modern critical edition;[64] copying it on gold plates must have necessitated an extraordinary amount of gold as well as a huge investment in human and monetary resources.

Complete sets of such gold plates are apparently no longer extant in China. But a famous example of the Jingangjing—a Chinese translation of the *Vajracchedika-prajnaparamita*, or Diamond-Cutter Sutra, dating to the eighth century (fig. 10)—was inscribed on nineteen gold plates measuring 14.8 x 13.7 cm found in a bronze box within a stone box buried under a five-storied pagoda in Iksan, Korea.[65] The text opens with a group of monks who circumambulate the living Buddha three times and then sit down to listen to his teachings. He makes a series of apparently contradictory sayings similar to the later Zen *koan*. He warns of a future period called the "Latter Days of the Law" when the oral transmission will have decayed. He prophesies that there will be at least some enlightened beings who will understand and teach his true doctrine. He then promises that the country that preserves and teaches this sutra will have to be honored and worshiped by the worlds of gods, men, and evil spirits. It will become like a *chaitya*, or temple.[66] It is apparent that this promise was the motivation for Korean Buddhists to inscribe the sutra on gold plates and preserve it under a pagoda.

Another set of multilingual gold plates, inscribed in Tibetan, Chinese, Manchurian, and Mongolian, was presented to the eleventh Dalai Lama by Emperor Daoguang (r. 1821—51) of the Qing dynasty and is on display at the Potala Palace.[67] An extraordinary find from Asia was a set of twenty gold leaves inscribed in Pali.[68] It was the "Golden Torah" of Pali Buddhism, similar to the palm-leaf manuscript commonly found in India and Burma, a form imitated by the plates cast and inscribed by the monk Shanwuwei mentioned above and distantly echoed by the leaf-shaped tray that holds the gold plate of the Sharira. Other sets of inscribed gold plates from Asia include a plate in Japanese, sheets from Thailand, plates from India, and gold tablets from Iran.[69]

Daoists also used gold plates in their scriptural tradition of this Chinese indigenous religion. The furnace god, Zaojun (Tsao ChÅ¸n), was "an alchemist in charge of the furnaces used to fashion plates of gold that confer immortality on the users."[70] An early Daoist anthology yields many relevant citations of interest. Called the *Yunji qiqian*, or "Seven Slips from the Cloudy Satchel," this eleventh-century anthology is a resumé of the entire Daoist patrology, *Daozang*.[71] One set of scriptures from the Daoist Heavens was called "The Golden Book and the Prohibitions and Monographs of the Transcendents" (*Jinshu xianzhijie*).[72] "Golden books and secret writing" was another pairing,[73] as was "golden books and jade tablets" or "golden books with secret exegesis in jade."[74] This association between metal and mineral is still reflected in the practice of writing prayers to the spirit of the mountain in gold ink on jade tablets placed in an elaborate stone box on the summit of Mt. Tai.[75] In the preface to the imperially compiled biographies of Daoist immortals, His Highness recorded that their words and deeds were "worthy of inscribing on plates of gold and being secreted within the Orchid Terrace," the celestial counterpart of an earthly institutional library.[76] An ancient practice of transcribing prayers on planchettes of silver and other metals, or jade plates with writing in gold, and then casting them into mountain grottos and streams, is an early Daoist manifestation of communicating with the gods through metallic inscriptions.[77]

Gold played a similar role in the West. The most famous example of the ritual use of gold in traditional Jewish culture, of course, is the Tabernacle of Moses, in which, through a series of areas of increasingly restricted access,

the ark of the covenant at the center reminded Israel of its past as well as present connection with heaven. A true reliquary, it preserved the original stone tablets of the Law given to Moses and other testimonies of God's miraculous dealings with his people. The box itself was of acacia wood overlaid with gold plate, while the mercy seat was of solid gold, an indication of its supreme holiness as the throne of God. One possible reconstruction of the sacred geometry of the layout of the Tabernacle puts the holy of holies in the center of the second square (fig. 11), suggestive of the familiar mandala pattern of Buddhism.

In western Christianity, "the shrine containing a grave or, more frequently, a fragmentary relic, was very often simply, 'the place': *loca sanctorum*, s topoÄ±."[78] The Shinto temples of Japan often enshrine a tangible object, such as a bronze mirror, called the *shintai*, or "body of the god." The possession of a relic ensured the *praesentia* or physical presence of the holy, and its procession into the capital, whether fourth-century Constantinople or ninth-century Chang'an, confirmed that the community deserved the *praesentia*.[79]

In the restored gospel, the presence of the holy is nowhere more evident than in the building of temples. For example, great attention has been given to the proper order of the placing of temple cornerstones (D&C 94:6), from those at Far West, to a recent placing of the Mount Timpanogos Temple's cornerstone in a ceremony that combined elements of previous cornerstone, record stone, and capstone-laying activities. The archetype is the Salt Lake Temple, where the symbolism seems to have been most carefully worked out. This temple was seen in vision by Brigham Young, who struck his cane forcefully into the ground and proclaimed, "Here we shall build a temple to our God."[80] The spot, now presumed to be the center of the temple, was marked by Wilford Woodruff with a stake, within the ten-acre square known as Temple Block. The southeast corner of the square was used as the baseline and meridian of the city. This meant that every location would be measured from the temple and described in an efficient coordinate system.[81] In contrast to the Far West experience, where large uncut stones were manhandled into place on ground level, the Salt Lake Temple foundation was excavated at great effort and cost to a depth of "about sixteen feet below the surface of the eastern bank."[82] The four large cornerstones, presumably squared according to Wilford Woodruff's sketch, were placed in time to be dedicated on Wednesday, 6 April 1853, during general conference (fig. 12). Just twelve years earlier to the day, Joseph Smith had laid the cornerstones of the Nauvoo Temple in accordance with "the strict order of the Priesthood."[83] The speeches and prayers on the latter occasion were given by various priesthood quorums standing on their respective stones. Starting with the southeast, or chief, cornerstone, Brigham Young and the First Presidency commenced the ceremony, then the Brethren circumambulated clockwise and the Presiding Bishopric dedicated the southwest cornerstone, and so on.[84]

This sunwise, or clockwise, movement was restated years later in Orson Pratt's 1878 plan of the cycle of moonstones to be carved and placed on the exterior of the Salt Lake Temple (fig. 13).[85] As a sign of the importance of his astronomical investigations, he was given space in the southeast corner of Temple Block for a small wooden observatory with wooden shutters on the roof (fig. 14, lower right).[86] He also designed the Big Dipper arrangement on the center west tower and rotated it so the two "pointer stars" actually point to the real North Pole (fig. 14, upper left). The temple architect, Truman Angell, interpreted this symbolic constellation with the explanation that "the lost may find themselves by the Priesthood."[87] Ancient cultures such as the Chinese have used this same constellation to find the same still center of the circling heavens (see page 23 above). Brother Angell placed the Salt Lake Temple firmly in the ancient tradition by explaining, "The whole structure is designed to symbolize some of the great architectural work above."[88]

In 1893 Brigham Young's son and Church architect, Joseph Don Carlos Young, drew up a plan for the ordinance rooms that moved in an ascending, clockwise spiral ending in the southeast corner with three rooms: on the east, the sealing room for the living; in the center, the holy of holies; and on the west, the sealing room for the dead.[89] It is safe to assume that Brigham Young was responsible for the major design elements. He knew his Bible better than most and was familiar with the description of the holy of holies in the Tabernacle of Moses and in the Temple of Solomon, where that room is clearly described as a cube (see Exodus 26:15—25 and 1 Kings 6:20). Yet he chose to make this most holy of rooms circular and surmounted by an eighteen-foot dome, with all the architectural complications this created.[90] We are left to wonder if he did this because he understood that the square with its cube and the circle with its sphere both point to the same divine center.[91]

On 13 August 1857 President Young joined with other church leaders at a ceremony in which a foundation deposit, a metal box containing records of the church in a hollowed-out quartzite stone, now known as the "record stone" (fig. 14), was placed in the southeast corner, above the cornerstone but below the first course of granite blocks.[92] A complete set of Deseret gold coins was included, an interesting parallel to the gold coins found in Buddhist foundation deposits that help in dating the structure.

In this complex of symbols and rites, the most surprising parallel to the Chinese tablet is the inscribed copper plate (fig. 15)[93] placed in the capstone of the Salt Lake Temple. After invoking a continuity with the ancient Tabernacle of Moses and the high priest's gold plate inscribed with the phrase "Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36), the copper plate records, "The corner stones were laid April 6th 1853 commencing at the South East Corner," listing the General Authorities at that time, followed by the General Authorities thirty-nine years later, when the capstone was laid at noon as the sun reached its highest point. The presence of these two memorial deposits in the Salt Lake Temple is paralleled in numerous Asian stupas and pagodas, in which a foundation deposit is present at ground level and another reliquary at the top under the spire (cf. fig. 7).[94]

Conclusion

In the context of traditional Buddhism and compared with Daoism and other general Asian religious practices, the significance of the Chinese gold plate lies on several levels. Textually, as a document, it recorded a prayer for the long life and health of the emperor and invoked a blessing upon his realm. It further announced the presentation of this Sharira Bodhisattva as a perpetual offering to the holy relic. Symbolically, gold was the most auspicious and appropriate gift to the Buddha, which partook of the Buddha nature while functioning as a literal relic. Gold was believed to spiritually charge or sanctify a place—thus its presence in these numerous rituals. Perhaps its presentation served in this case to reinvigorate the sanctity, and, by extension, the prophylactic power against evil of a holy site charged with protecting the realm. For sites that housed relics, whether temple, shrine, or grave, were, according to Peter Brown, "loci where Heaven and Earth met."[95]

More prosaically, the presentation of the Sharira Bodhisattva and its inscribed gold plate verified the most mundane motivation for housing relics: to attract endowments and patronage.[96] This plate, then, represented much more than its simple message, since its message did no more than confirm the symbolism and religious function of the plate and the Sharira and direct the power of such symbolism outward to the person of the emperor and his realm. These are noble purposes, to be sure, but serve a different function than gold plates that contained sacred scripture—whether the Diamond-Cutter Sutra, the biographies of Immortals, or the Book of Mormon—where the ritual medium was subordinate to the religious message.

Since our interest was prompted by the Nephite golden plates, an intriguing question to consider here is the intent with which Moroni constructed his four-sided box of stones laid "in some kind of cement" (JS—H 1:52).[97] Did he choose that shape because it was the most practical design for storing the Nephite record and regalia, or did he orient the four sides to the four quarters of the world, a phrase mentioned six times in the text itself?[98] If the latter is true, he was doing more than just storing religious records inscribed on gold plates: he was constructing sacred space, a temple in miniature, to house the tangible links with his sacred past and continuing a tradition that stretched across thousands of years and throughout most of Asia.

Notes

Research for this paper, including internal travel within China to visit Xi'an and a trip to the University of California at Berkeley, was generously supported by FARMS. We wish to thank Noel Reynolds for setting us on the trail of Chinese gold plates.

1. See Sun Zhichu, ed., *Jinwen zhulu jianmu* [Concise Index of Published Bronze Inscriptions] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981). See the comprehensive survey of the historical discoveries of bronze inscribed vessels in China in Edward Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chap. 1.

2. See Thomas F. Carter and L. Carrington Goodrich, *The Invention of Printing and Its Spread Westward* (New York: Ronald, 1955), 12. Two gold seals, one from the Han and one from the Ming dynasties, are analyzed and illustrated in *Nanjing bowuyuan cangbaolu* [Catalogue of Treasures Stored in the Nanjing Museum] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe and Joint Publishing, 1992), 81, 272—75. For Chinese seals in general, see Tsuen-Hsuin Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 54—58, and Tsuen-Hsuin Tsien, *Chemistry and Chemical Technology: Paper and Printing*, Science and Civilisation in China, vol. 5, part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5—7.

3. See Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, 50—53.

4. See ibid., 309.

5. See Bo Gyllensvard, *Chinese Gold and Silver in the Carl Kempe Collection: A Catalogue* (Stockholm: Nordisk Rotogravyr, 1953), 66, pl. 6.

6. See ibid., 65, pl. 5. Other Huai style gold plaques are represented by plates 7 and 8a (pp. 66, 69).

7. See ibid., 77; pl. 17a.

8. Eight inscribed planchettes are illustrated and described in *Tangdai jinyinqi* [Gold and Silver Objects from the Tang dynasty], ed. Zhenjiang bowuguan (Beijing: Wenwu, 1985), appendix, plates 5—13.

9. See *Tangdai jinyinqi*, pl. 240. The set is described and its use in Tang period drinking games analyzed by Donald Harper, "The *Analects* Jade Candle: A Classic of T'ang Drinking Custom," *T'ang Studies* 4 (1986): 69—91; see also "Gilded Silver Drinking Tally Receptacle on a Turtle," in *Treasures: 300 Best Excavated Antiques from China*, ed. China Cultural Relics Promotion Center (Beijing: New World, 1992), 314.

10. Pagoda or Dagoba is the Portuguese pronunciation of the Pâli *Dhâtu-gabäha*, Sanskrit Dhâtugarbha, "womb world," one of the names for the Buddhist stupa in India, which the Chinese translated as *ta*; see Henry Yule and A.

C. Burnell, *A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* (London: Murray, 1903), 652—57. *Famen* means "Gateway to the *Dharma*," or Buddhist law.

11. The Tang crypt is oriented 9 degrees west of true north, a significant discrepancy probably resulting from the use of a magnetic device rather than astronomical observation. In 1580, the earliest date of reliable readings, magnetic north was 10 degrees west of true north from this site. The modern Chinese diviner's board, *shih*, has a compass placed in the center to help the geomancer align himself with the hidden currents of *qi*. It is still used to orient buildings and especially temples and tombs. If the orientation of Famensi was magnetic, it would be an early example of this tradition. Joseph Needham, with Wang Ling and Kenneth G. Robinson, *Physics and Physical Technology: Physics*, Science and Civilisation in China, vol. 4, part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955 —), 301—13.

12. See Roderick Whitfield, "Esoteric Buddhist Elements in the Famensi Reliquary Deposit," *Asiastische Studien* 44 (1990): 252.

13. See Famensi Bowuguan yanjiushi, ed., *Famensi wenji* [Anthology of Famen Monastery, hereafter abbreviated as *Wenji*]. *Famen lishi wenhua yanjiu congshu* (Shaanxi, Famens: bowuguan yanjiushi, 1990), 1:147.

14. See Zhu Qixin, "Buddhist Treasures from Famensi," *Orientations* 21 (May 1990): 79.

15. *Mikan*, meaning "secret niche," corresponding to the Gárbhagriha, "womb chamber," of Hindu temples where the "seed" is planted that gives life to the structure. Stella Dramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 1:27. Some scholars believe this fourth relic is the only "true" bone based on its hidden location. The other three were "shadow bones" intended to protect the genuine one. Zhu Qixin, "Buddhist Treasures," 80.

16. See Wenji, 155.

17. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Dictionary, English and Sanskrit* (London: Allen, 1851), 1057, gives a definition of *sárira* as as "the body, bodily frame, solid parts of the body . . . originally that which is easily destroyed or dissolved." In true Buddhist enjoyment of contrasting opposites, we have the paradox of the gilded Sharira container that does not rust and the corruptible ashes and bones within, the *zhen shen*, or "true body."

18. A more detailed historical epitome is presented by Chen Jingfu, "Guanyu Famensi lishi de jige wenti [Several Problems in the History of Famen Monastery]," in *Wenji*, 123—36.

19. Parcel-gilding is a sophisticated technique whereby a gold-and-mercury amalgam is deposited on the silver surface and the mercury is driven off by application of controlled heat. P. A. Lins and W. A. Oddy, "The Origins of Mercury Gilding," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 2 (1975): 365—73, demonstrate the origin of the process in the third century B.C. in Chou dynasty China, from which it spread to the west by the first century A.D.

20. *Sumeru*, *Meru*, and *Mandara* are just a few of its many names; see Adrian Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stupa* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Studies on Southeast Asia, 1985), 226—28, and the discussion in Georgio di Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time* (Boston: Gambit, 1969), 382—83.

21. *Mandorla* is Italian for "almond," from the Latin *amygdala*. Scholars have yet to explain the curious coincidence of the similarity of this Christian term for the almond-shaped glory that surrounds Christ to the Sanskrit *mandala*,

which, *inter alia*, also means "halo"; see also note 24 below.

22. Ambrosia, the food of the gods, is cognate with our word *immortal*, the Greek version of the Sanskrit Amrita; A. M. Fowler, "A Note on a±mbrotoß," *Classical Philology* 37 (January 1942): 77.

23. No correlation has been found with the diagrams available to us for comparison, though the Guanyin and Amitofu *bija* syllables would seem to be appropriate.

24. Monier-Williams, *Dictionary*, 775; màṇḍala "circular, round . . . a disk (esp. of sun or moon); . . . also 'the charmed circle of a conjuror,' globe, orb, ring, circumference, ball, wheel . . . the path or orbit of a heavenly body, a halo round the sun or moon, . . . a circular array of troops . . . district, . . . province, country . . . a multitude, group, band . . . a division or book of the Rig-veda, . . . a particular oblation or sacrifice."

25. This representational tradition reached its climax in the creation in bronze of the 53-feet high Great Buddha at Nara, Japan, in 749. On each of the many petals, a large complex diagram of a Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas and numberless concourses of angels was engraved. See Snodgrass, *Symbolism of the Stupa*, 208 fig. 133.

26. Surprisingly, the Chinese name of this Bodhisattva, *Guanyin*, is not contained in the inscription. As artists tried to depict his all-encompassing compassion more clearly, he was shown with increasingly feminine traits, eventually becoming the more familiar image of the latter form of *Guanyin*, the so-called Goddess of Mercy.

27. This custom of elevating an honored object above the eyes or head with both hands is still observed in many cultures throughout Asia.

28. For example, the infamous empress, Tz'u-his, insisted that she be called the *Lao Fo*, or Old Buddha. See David M. Farquhar, "Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38 (1978): 5—34.

29. The four chains remind one of the four *wei* cords that hold up the cosmic umbrella in one of the early Chinese models of the universe; for a discussion of *wei* cords, see Derk Bodde, "Myths of Ancient China," in *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. Samuel N. Kramer (New York: Anchor, 1989), 387. In Japan, the rare form of the *Tahø tø*, Treasure Pagoda, has four symbolic chains connecting the *stupika* finial to the square roof that protects the circular stupa below; see Pierre Rambach, *The Secret Message of Tantric Buddhism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 39, 58—59.

30. Whitfield, "Esoteric Buddhism," 255.

31. The three-pronged thunderbolt wielded by Zeus, the trident by Poseidon, and the triple thunderbolt on Roman shields are all manifestations of this motif in the West.

32. *Vajrapani*, "Wielder of the *Vajra*," is the name of another popular Bodhisattva.

33. The inscription is shown on fig. 4.6 and transcribed in Zhang Tinghao, ed., *Famensi* (Hong Kong: China Shaanxi Tourist Publishing House, 1990), 99.

34. See *Treasures: 300 Best Excavated Antiques from China*, 312.

35. Not “Buddha” as translated in *Treasures*.

36. *Jiu Tangshu* (Peking punctuated ed.), 19a.678.

37. See Li Hui-Lin, *Nan-fang ts’ao-mu chuang: A Fourth-Century Flora of Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1979), 87—90, for this tree and its aromatic products.

38. A parallel of nearly a thousand years earlier is found in the *Mahavamsa*, the national epic of Sri Lanka, in which a king made a lavish donation to the monastery building he had just completed. The donation consisted of an ivory throne embellished with a golden sun, a silver moon, pearl stars, a white umbrella, and ritual implements for use by the chief priest of the *Tirunansis*, who would thus be sitting in the center of the universe as he expounded the Buddhist doctrine. This appears to be a common royal prerogative; Wilhelm Geiger, trans., *The Mahavamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* (London: Luzac, 1964), 184.

39. *Quan Tangwen* (1818; reprint, Taipei: Wenyou shudian, 1972), 85.29.

40. See Kenneth Ch’en, *Buddhism in China: An Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 225. For the healing of a blind man during a procession in 631, see *Famensi wenji*, 152. The modern procession of the Buddha’s tooth in Kandi, Sri Lanka, remains one of the largest celebrations of its kind in the Buddhist world.

41. See Ch’en, *Buddhism in China*, 280. A restored Tang period mural depicting the procession of the relics is reproduced in part in *Famensi*, 93—94.

42. See *Wenji*, 153.

43. These excesses were not rhetorical exaggeration. According to an eyewitness, a fervent young monk adorned his head with artemisia and set it afire. He was held upright by the crowd, writhing in agony, until he passed out. The same eyewitness records that a soldier cut off his left arm in front of the relic as it passed by; holding his severed arm in his right hand, he swished blood from it on the relic with every pace he took; see Ch’en, *Buddhism in China*, 281. The custom continues in Korea and Japan as zealous nationalists cut off their little fingers during mass rallies to demonstrate their commitment to the cause.

44. *Jiu Tangshu*, 160.4198.

45. *Jiu Tangshu*, 160.4199. The entire text of this essay has been translated by J. K. Ridout in *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, ed. Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 2:250—53. For this episode in the life of *Han Yu*, *see Charles Hartman*, *Han Yu and the T’ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 84—87; and Homer H. Dubs, “Han Yü and the Buddha’s Relic: An Episode in Medieval Chinese Religion,” *Review of Religion* 11 (November 1946): 5—17.

46. As stressed by H. A. Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1923), 200.

47. See Ch’en, *Buddhism in China*, 230. For a contemporary account of these relics and their official disfavor, see Edwin O. Reischauer, trans., *Ennin’s Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York: Ronald, 1955), 340. The righteous Nephites at the end of their history felt the same need to gather their sacred relics together in a safe place, an underground chamber in the hill Cumorah.

48. See *Jinshilu* [Register of Metal and Stone (Inscriptions)] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1985), 63, 66, 68—69.

49. *Imperial Tombs of China* (Memphis: Lithograph Publishing, 1995), 120—21.

50. See *Wenji*, 162—63.

51. See *Imperial Tombs of China*, 134.

52. Compare Geiger, *Mahavamsa*, 217, in which the king prays that the relics will take on the form of the Buddha as he "lay upon his deathbed," which they do in a miraculous manner.

53. William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (1937; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), 280—84.

54. See Pranavitana, "Roruka: Was It Mohenjo-daro?" in *Studies in Asian History*, ed. Kishori S. Lal (London: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1969), 111.

55. This tradition continues in Southeast Asia, where the domes are covered in many layers of gold leaf, causing them to shine in the sunlight like a mountain of light, a frequent description. A Thai aphorism proclaims: "When the temples gleam, Buddha smiles on the land," a self-fulfilling prophecy since the gold is applied as an act of devotion. When the economy allows more people to afford this gift, the temples indeed gleam, proving the blessings of prosperity.

56. One thinks of Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham, the hypocephalus motif in which the central seated figure frequently has four rams' heads facing out to the four quarters, thus making this Egyptian cosmic diagram part of the same tradition as the mandala. An indication of their symbolic and real connection with inscribed gold plates is the fact that two examples are actually made of gold leaf, and several are painted in yellow on black to represent gold.

57. See Julius Eggeling, trans., *Satapatha-Brahmana*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 41 (London: 1882—1900), 364—68.

58. See *Tang gaosengzhuan* [Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Tang], in *Taishø shinsh¥ daizøkyø*, ed. Takakusu Junjirø and Watanabe Kaigyoku, 55 vols. (Tokyo: Taishø shinsh¥ daizøkyø, kankøkai, 1924—29); (the printing of this series of the Buddhist canon is hereafter abbreviated as *T.*), *T.* 2060, 19.586b.

59. See *Tang gaosengzhuan*, 18.574b.

60. See N. G. Majumdar, "Excavations at Gokul," in *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1935—36*, ed. I. F. Blakiston (Delhi: Manager of Public Affairs, 1938), 67—69. The tradition continues. On Sunday, 10 November 1996, the Hare Krishna group in Spanish Fork, Utah, broke ground for their new temple by excavating a large square pit, oriented to the four directions. After milk offerings were poured in, a silver image of Ananta Sesha was placed in the center as a foundation deposit. It represents the "unending" cosmic serpent who holds the planets in their orbit and will thus support the temple. *Daily Universe*, Monday, 11 November 1996, 7.

61. See *Tang gaosengzhuan*, 26.671a.

62. *Beiye*, an ellipsis for *beiduoye*, was a leaf from the *Borassus flabelliformus*, the palmyra or fan-palm, whose leaves were used for writing, called *Pattra* in Sanskrit.

63. *Song gaosengzhuan* [Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Song], *T*. 2061, 2:714c.

64. According to Kogen Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development, Transmission* (Tokyo: Kosei, 1982), 91.

65. A photograph of this set of plates, National Treasure No. 123, is contained in *Kum sok gong ye* [Gold and Other Metallurgical Products], *Hankuk ui Mi* [The Beauty of Korea], vol. 23 (Seoul: Chungang Ilbosa, 1985), plates 119—20; description on p. 220, and *The March of Islam* (Alexandria, Va.: Time-Life Books, 1988), 122—23.

66. See Max Müller, trans., *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 49 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 111—44.

67. See *Potala Palace* (Beijing: Cultural Relics, 1990), 136, for color plate. Reference and color xerox copy provided courtesy of William Hamblin.

68. See H. Curtis Wright, "Metal Documents in Stone Boxes," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:279—80.

69. See the convenient compilation of Franklin S. Harris Jr., "Old World Writing on Metal Plates," *Millennial Star* 96 (25 January 1934): 57—59.

70. Helmut Wilhelm, "Chinese Mythology," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1981), 4:413—14.

71. See the prefatory material included in K. M. Schipper, *Projet Tao-Tsang: Index du Yunji qiqian* (Paris: Ecole-française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981).

72. *Yunji qiqian*, in Daozang [Daoist Patrology] (Shanghai: Hanfenlou, 1926), 40.11b.

73. *Yunji qiqian*, 9.2a.

74. *Yunji qiqian*, 11.2b, below, and 6.20b.

75. See Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai chan: Essai de Monographie d'un culte chinois. Appendice: Le dieu du sol dans la Chine antique* (Paris: Leroux, 1910), 55; Dwight Baker, *T'ai Shan: An Account of the Sacred Eastern Peak of China* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925), 143. The BYU exhibit also featured a set of bilingual jade plates from 1662 in Chinese and Manchu, recording the biography of Emperor Shunzhi. The inscriptions on some of the plates had gold ink rubbed into the incised letters; see *Imperial Tombs of China*, 150.

76. *Yunji qiqian*, 103.2a.

77. See the exhaustive study by Edouard Chavannes, "Le jet des dragons," Mémoires conçernant l'asie orientale 3 (1919): 9—220.

78. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 10—11. For the Chinese-Buddhist belief in the sacred center and the role of temples and shrines as microcosms, see Rolf Stein, *The World in Miniature*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

79. On this point, see Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 92—93.

80. Journal History of the Church, 28 July 1847, Archives Division, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (*hereinafter* LDS Church Archives).

81. The peripatetic Richard Burton described the cornerstone ceremony and noted that the Great Salt Lake City itself was divided into some twenty wards numbered from the southeast corner. Thus the city was a conscious extension of the sacred order of the temple. Richard R. Burton, *The City of the Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 240.

82. *Deseret News*, 13 April 1853.

83. *History of the Church*, 4:331.

84. A practical explanation of the preeminence of the southeast may lie in Brigham Young's comment when he chose to make the southeast corner attic room his office in the Nauvoo Temple: "There is the most light." It contained an altar and was also used as a sealing room. Stanley Kimball, "The Nauvoo Temple," *Improvement Era* (November 1963): 978.

85. Brother Pratt actually needed fifty-two spaces for his plan to be acurate, but only fifty were available. This shows the inherent flexibility of design in these matters.

86. The original heavy red sandstone base used under his telescope has been replaced by a modern copy on the original site and rests unnoticed among the flowers.

87. Truman Angell, "The Temple," *Deseret News*, 17 August 1854, p. 2.

88. Ibid.

89. See James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 191—93.

90. The dome projects up into the next floor of administrative offices and gives its name to the Dome Room. Coincidently, it looks very much like a stupa with eight circular windows.

91. This change from square to circle may have been influenced by Brigham Young's experience of seeing the great dome of St. Paul's in London on his mission as well as discussions with Truman Angell, who had also visited St. Paul's.

92. See Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, 148. It was opened 136 years later, and the paper contents had decayed from moisture seeping in. *Church News*, 21 August 1993, 7.

93. A transcription of the plate can be found in Dean R. Zimmerman, "The Salt Lake Temple," *New Era* (June 1978): 36. Brigham Young placed a silver plate with a similar inscription in a box within the wall at the top of the St.

George Temple (see Janice F. DeMille, *The St. George Temple: The First 100 Years* [Hurricane, Utah: Homestead Publishers, 1977], 30—31).

94. See Snodgrass, *Stupa*, 266.

95. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 10.

96. "A monastery or nunnery which possessed relics could hope to attract endowments both from local people and pilgrims from further afield." Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000—1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12. On relics in general, see Friederich Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); Marie-Madeleine, *Highways of the Faith: Relics and Reliquaries from Jerusalem to Compostela* (Secaucus: Wellfleet, 1986); and G. J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Mutual Relationship* (Leiden: Brill, 1995). For studies of individual relics, see as a mere sampling William C. Prime, *Holy Cross: A History of Invention, Preservation, and Disappearance of the Wood Known as the True Cross* (New York: Randolph, 1877); John R. Butler, *The Quest for Becket's Bones: The Mystery of the Relics of St. Thomas of Becket of Canterbury* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), and H. E. Gove, *Relic Icon, or Hoax?: Carbon Dating the Turin Shroud* (Philadelphia: Institute of Physics, 1996).

97. David Whitmer, in an 1875 interview, called it a "casket" and said it was eventually washed down to the foot of the Hill Cumorah. Lyndon Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 7.

98. See 1 Nephi 19:16; 22:25; 3 Nephi 5:24, 26; 16:5; Ether 13:11.

Covenant Teachings of the Book of Mormon

Victor L. Ludlow

When questioned, few Latter-day Saints can identify the first stated purpose of the Book of Mormon as printed on its title page. They usually answer something about "the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ," forgetting that this phrase is prefaced with the words "And also . . ." However, two lines earlier, we read: "Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and *that they may know the covenants of the Lord*." Thus the first stated purpose of the Book of Mormon is to teach the house of Israel about covenants, and building on that foundation, the second major purpose is to testify about Jesus Christ. This article will highlight the covenant teachings of the Book of Mormon, especially those given by Christ himself.

Covenant teachings are an essential element of the Book of Mormon. The word covenant and its variants[1] appear 159 times in the modern editions of the Book of Mormon, an average of one reference every third page. The first reference occurs on the title page, five others appear in various chapter headings, and the remaining 153 are in the scripture text, including the penultimate verse of Moroni. From beginning to end, covenant concepts permeate the Book of Mormon.

The scope of this article will not permit a full discussion of all these covenant references, but the essential covenantal teachings will be identified and briefly explained. First, it is necessary to define a covenant. Many dictionaries define a covenant as a "solemn agreement between two or more parties." In the scriptures, God or his agent (usually an angel or prophet) is often represented as one of the parties. The Bible Dictionary in the LDS edition of the King James Bible describes a covenant as "an agreement between persons or nations; more often between God and man" (p. 651).

The holy scriptures serve as the repository for God's covenant teachings. Not only is this true for the Book of Mormon, whose purpose is to help Israel "know the covenants of the Lord," but also for the Bible and other scriptures. For example, in some early English translations of the Bible, its two major divisions were called "Old Covenant" and "New Covenant" instead of "Old Testament" and "New Testament" as we know them today. In addition, the Hebrew word usually translated as "testimony" in the Bible is "almost certainly an alternate designation for . . . covenant." Indeed, the term *testament*, or *testimony*, as recorded in Exodus 31:18 could just as easily be translated as "covenant" since the cognate Akkadian and Aramaic words were commonly used as terms for "covenant."[2]

Two major types of covenant relationships are found in the scriptures: vertical covenants made between God and man, and horizontal covenants, or solemn commitments between human beings. Most often in the Book of Mormon, the covenants refer to a sacred relationship between God and mortals in the "vertical" dimension, either collectively (such as with the house of Israel or the posterity of Lehi) or individually (through special covenant ordinances such as baptism or in private vows and promises). A majority (118 of 154) of the covenant references in the Book of Mormon amplify various sacred compacts between God and people as initiated from on high, often with an angel or prophet as God's spokesperson. Less often, solemn agreements or covenants, also called oaths,[3] are made between individuals or groups of people in the "horizontal" dimension, either in a positive context (to establish a "covenant of peace," for example) or for negative purposes (such as secret, murderous covenants). In the Book of Mormon, one finds 36 examples of covenant commitments between people in a horizontal or person-to-person connection.

As could be expected, the covenant references in the Book of Mormon are neither evenly nor randomly distributed throughout the text. Instead, they tend to be clustered in key areas. When the Book of Mormon is divided into nine historical sections, the covenant references in a given section range from two to twenty-seven. Even more revealing is the fact that the covenant references per page range from .02 (one reference every 45—50 pages) to .59 (one reference every 2 pages) in the various sections. Excluding the five covenant references found in the chapter headings, which were written for the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, the types of vertical and horizontal covenants and the location of the 154 references in the original scriptural text are shown in table 1:

Table 1. References to the Word *Covenant* in the Book of Mormon

	Vertical Covenants (God-with-People)			*Horizontal Covenants (Person-to-Person)*				
Book of Mormon Selections	Individuals	Groups	Subtotal	Positive	Negative	Subtotal	Total	CRPΔ
Title page—1 Nephi (54 pp.)	2	—17	19	0	0	0	19	.35
2 Nephi* (64 pp.)	4	19	23	0	0	0	23	.36
Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni (26 pp.)	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	.08
Words of Mormon—Mosiah* (64 pp.)	14	0	14	1	0	1	15	.23
Alma 1—35 (90 pp.)	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	.02
Alma 36—63* (71 pp.)	5	6	11	15	2	17	28	.39
Helaman—3 Nephi 7 (54 pp.)	0	5	5	3	15	18	23	.43
3 Nephi 8—4 Nephi* (46 pp.)	—1	—26	27	0	0	0	27	.59
Mormon, Ether, Moroni (63 pp.)	2	13	15	0	0	0	15	.24
Totals	31	87	118	19	17	36	154	.29

Δ Covenant-References-Per-Page average in this column. For example: .59 means a covenant reference would be found on slightly over one-half of the pages, .35 means a covenant reference on about one-third of the pages, and .02 means a covenant reference only once every 50 pages.
— The covenant references in these three groups appear in Old Testament passages being quoted in the Book of Mormon (Isaiah 49:8 in 1 Nephi 21:8; Isaiah 54:10 in 3 Nephi 22:10; and Malachi 3:1 in 3 Nephi 24:1).
* These sections contain the five modern chapter headings where the word covenant appears: 2 Nephi 30, Mosiah 18, Alma 37 and 44, and 3 Nephi 29.

Just as covenant teachings are clustered in certain sections of the Book of Mormon, the multiple spokesmen, prophets, and writers of the Book of Mormon placed varying emphasis on covenant teachings. Table 2 identifies the various Book of Mormon sections in which these different authors presented their covenant teachings.

Table 2. Covenant Spokesmen in the Book of Mormon by Section of the Book of Mormon (See Table 1

Spokesman	1 Nephi	2 Nephi	Jacob	Mosiah	$Alma_1$	$Alma_2$	Helaman	*Section* 3 Nephi
Angel	7							
Nephi	9	3						
Zenos	1							
Lehi		5						
Jacob		5						
Enos			2					
People				1				
Benjamin				4				
Zeniff				(1)*				
$Alma_1$				2				
$Alma_2$					1	(2)*		
Soldier						(1)		
$Moroni_1$						2		
Nephites						1		
$Helaman_2$						3		
Isaiah								1
Heavenly Father								1
Lord	1	10		3				21
Mormon				4	1	5/(14)*	5/(18)*	4
$Moroni_2$	1							

Subtotals	19	23	2	15	2	28	23	27

* The numbers in parentheses indicate the 36 horizontal (person-to-person) covenant references in the text, found in Mormon's editorial comments.

To summarize tables 1 and 2, we find that two-thirds of the *vertical* covenant references in the Book of Mormon are located in just three books (1, 2, and 3 Nephi), and all but one of the *horizontal* covenant references are in the section from Alma 36 to 3 Nephi 7. In addition, two-thirds of all the covenant references in the text are cited by only three individuals (Nephi, the Lord, and Mormon).

Having identified the major clusters and spokesmen for the covenant references in the Book of Mormon, I will briefly review the major covenant examples in each of the nine historical sections (as identified in table 1) to help us appreciate what the Book of Mormon teaches us about covenants.

Title Page—1 Nephi

We have already discussed the importance of the singular covenant reference on the Book of Mormon title page. The word covenant also occurs 18 times in 1 Nephi. These references are concentrated in the latter half of the book, in chapters 13 through 22. Some passages describe the Lord's biblical covenants (see 1 Nephi 13:23—26) and a promise to Lehi about a land of inheritance for his descendants (see 1 Nephi 13:30). Most references refer to covenants with the house of Israel, particularly as a part of the Abrahamic covenant (see 1 Nephi 14:5—17; 15:14—18; 17:40; 19:15; 22:6— 11). Some of the references in 1 Nephi deal with the past establishment of covenant relationships, but the majority (about two-thirds) talk about the future fulfillment of special covenants in the latter days. In short, the primary covenant teachings of 1 Nephi emphasize how the Lord's covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled in the last days.

One powerful example illustrates Nephi's teachings about covenants. In 1 Nephi 22, Nephi is teaching his older brothers after having just quoted Isaiah (chapters 48 and 49).[4] The brothers of Nephi then pose some hard questions, asking essentially, "What is the meaning of these Isaiah scriptures you have just read to us?" Answering, Nephi describes how these passages contain promises for their descendants. Starting in 1 Nephi 22:7, he tells them "that after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will raise up . . . Gentiles . . . upon the face of this land," who would scatter their seed. Then the Lord would proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, yea, which would be of great worth unto them and all the house of Israel, *"unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven* unto Abraham" (1 Nephi 22:9).

Nephi tries to help his brothers appreciate that the future work of the gentiles would bless not only their own descendants in America, but also the whole house of Israel, through whom all the peoples of the earth could be blessed. Continuing in 1 Nephi 22:10—11, he says:

> I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth cannot be blessed, unless he [the Lord] shall make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations. Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel.

This promise echoes a reference in Isaiah 52:10 (the single most quoted verse from Isaiah in the Book of Mormon), prophesying that the Lord will make bare his arm and that all the nations of the earth will see it.

Nephi teaches that the Lord will show forth his power by bringing about his covenants and his gospel in the last days. In this chapter, Nephi promises that the gentiles will assist his seed in bringing forth covenants unto the

house of Israel, and then from them to all the families of the earth. Indeed, the way will be prepared for righteousness to prevail and wickedness to be destroyed as the promises of Abraham's covenant will be fulfilled when the Lord reveals his power and glory in the last days.

2 Nephi

Most of the 23 covenant references in 2 Nephi occur in the first 11 chapters, with another cluster in chapters 29 and 30 at the end of the book. As in 1 Nephi, the passages deal primarily with the Lord's covenants with the house of Israel, but these teachings then go beyond Israel and deal with latter-day promises for other nations, the gentiles. In other words, the covenant promises as given to Abraham will be taken beyond the house of Israel into other parts of the world. The variety of covenant themes found in 2 Nephi include the covenant promise to Lehi of a land of inheritance (see 2 Nephi 1:5) and some divine covenants with Joseph (see 2 Nephi 3:4—12, 21—23) and the "children of men," including the gentiles (see 2 Nephi 9:53; 10:15; 29:1; and 30:2). There is a continued emphasis on promises made with the Lord's covenant people (see 2 Nephi 6:12—17; 29:4—5) and Abraham and the house of Israel (see 2 Nephi 9:1; 10:7; 11:5; and 29:14).

One interesting feature of the covenant references in 2 Nephi is that almost one-half of them are attributed directly to the Lord. That is, the writer introduces a covenant passage with "thus saith the Lord unto me" (2 Nephi 3:7; compare 2 Nephi 6:17; 10:7; and 29:4), completes the passage with "saith the Lord" (2 Nephi 3:12), or quotes the passage in the first-person singular with God as the speaker (see 2 Nephi 3:21; 10:15; and 29:1, 5, 14). In these passages, the Lord, as a premortal spirit being, reveals important covenant teachings to various ancient prophets as recorded in the Book of Mormon. Thus an important feature in 2 Nephi is the recognition of how the premortal Lord amplifies important covenant teachings. Most of these pronouncements of the Savior are found in chapters 3, 10, and 29 as Joseph of Egypt, Jacob (Lehi's son), and Nephi receive divine instruction.

Second Nephi 3 contains six covenant references as Lehi blesses his son Joseph and cites some prophecies of ancient Joseph, who was sold into Egypt. These prophecies contain the Lord's words as given to Joseph of Egypt, highlighting a seer and prophet of the last days, namely Joseph Smith, who would bring forth scriptures from the seed of Joseph. These scriptures, along with the Bible, would teach and comfort the descendants of Joseph, Lehi's seed, "bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, *and also to the knowledge of my covenants*, saith the Lord" (2 Nephi 3:12). The Lord continues in 2 Nephi 3:13 with further instruction about this prophet and a restoration, saying, "And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord." Thus the Lord's personal covenants with Joseph of old, especially about the latter-day Joseph, will be fulfilled as the Lord's covenants with the fathers are restored.

In 2 Nephi 10, Jacob, Nephi's younger brother, also quotes some unique, divine covenant pronouncements. After explaining what happened to the Jews following the crucifixion of Christ, Jacob proclaims in verse 7, "But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When the day cometh that they [the Jews] shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the lands of their inheritance" (2 Nephi 10:7). The Lord then quotes segments from Isaiah 49, which highlight how the gentiles will assist the Jews in the latter days. He then foretells that America would be a land of inheritance for Jacob's descendants and also a land of liberty for the gentiles. The Lord continues, "Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, . . . I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations" (2 Nephi 10:15); he would fulfill his promises to the righteous, which would include having the gentiles both afflict and bless Jacob's seed. Thus the coming of the gentiles to

America is an important precondition for the fulfilling of God's covenants to the house of Israel, especially Lehi's seed.

The Lord repeats and elaborates upon this promise to the house of Israel and Lehi's seed in a revelation to Nephi, as recorded in 2 Nephi 29. After highlighting the roles of the different scriptures that will come forth from the scattered remnants of Israel in the last days, the Lord concludes in verse 14,

> And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever. (2 Nephi 29:14)

These covenant passages in 2 Nephi illustrate that the coming of the gentiles to America and the coming forth of a prophet and new scriptures are key elements in God's covenant promises to Israel. Christ himself would continue these teachings almost five centuries later when he appeared to the Nephites as a resurrected being. But the foundation has been laid in 1 and 2 Nephi for important roles that the gentiles and latter-day prophets and scriptures will play. Their coming forth will bring forth covenant and gospel messages not only to the house of Israel, but from them to all the nations of the earth, as promised to Abraham centuries ago.

Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni

No covenant references are found in the books of Jacob, Jarom, or Omni. The two citations in Enos refer to personal promises made by God to Enos concerning divine preservation of the Nephite records (see Enos 1:16—17).

Words of Mormon—Mosiah

In Mosiah, seven covenant references highlight the covenant commitment the people of King Benjamin made after his powerful sermon from the tower (see Mosiah 5:5—6:2). Two later similar covenant passages refer to the baptismal covenant made by the followers of Alma at the waters of Mormon (see Mosiah 18:10—13; 24:13) and a comparable covenant with God made by the people of King Limhi in the land of Nephi (see Mosiah 21:31—32). Two unique passages highlight horizontal and vertical personal covenant promises. First, in Mosiah 9:6 the Lamanite king promises Zeniff that he could possess the land of Lehi-Nephi. This is the first horizontal covenant reference in the Book of Mormon. Second, the Lord promises Alma the gift of eternal life. This passage contains a promise that each covenant member of God's family should receive: "Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life; and thou shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and shalt gather together my sheep" (Mosiah 26:20).

Alma 1—35

The chapters in these 90 pages of Alma contain only two covenant passages. This section of the Book of Mormon has the least number of covenant references per page. In Alma 7:15, Alma the Younger invites the people at Gideon to enter a covenant with God as witnessed by their baptismal ordinance. In Alma 24:18, the converted Lamanite "people of Ammon" covenant with God that they will never again use weapons for the shedding of human blood. These passages demonstrate that both peaceful and warlike people can humble themselves and enter into covenants with God.

Alma 36—63

This 90-page section contains the first major block of horizontal covenant passages. We also find the first references to the negative person-to-person secret oaths and covenants that the wicked of old developed (see Alma 37:27— 29). These negative human covenants are balanced with a number of references to the most common type of a positive person-to-person covenant in the Book of Mormon— the "covenant of peace." A covenant of peace was usually made as defeated enemies delivered up their weapons and promised to go to war no more (see Alma 44:14—20; 50:36; and 62:16—17). Parallel passages also refer to Nephite preparations for war in a covenant of liberty (see Alma 46:20—22), a covenant of freedom (see Alma 46:35), and a covenant of the freemen with each other (see Alma 51:6). As the Nephites were under severe conditions of a two-front war with the Lamanites, six covenant references are cited concerning the older generation of the people of Ammon and their promise to God to refrain from battle (see Alma 43:11; 53:15—16; and 56:6—8; compare Alma 24:18). As a contrast, in two other covenant passages, two thousand men of the younger generation make their own covenant to fight for the Nephites (see Alma 53:17—18). One final unique covenant passage in the book of Alma describes Captain Moroni and his personal covenant to keep God's commandments; he admonishes others to adhere likewise to God's word and to give aid for their countrymen (see Alma 60:34). Thus we see in these Alma passages the significance of keeping covenants, even in periods of extreme distress. Even bitter enemies develop mutual respect and trust toward each other in keeping their covenants, promises, and oaths. In this section it is often difficult to distinguish the vertical and horizontal covenant dimensions from each other because many vows seem to be made both to God and fellow mortals. In any case, the solemn promises are faithfully maintained as the people honor the covenants and oaths they made.

Helaman—3 Nephi 7

This 54-page block of chapters covers the period of time leading up to Christ's crucifixion and his ministry among the Nephite-Lamanite people after his resurrection; a great variety of covenant teachings appear in this section. As noted earlier, over two-thirds of the 154 covenant references in the Book of Mormon explain promises made between God and his children on earth. Most of the remaining references describe honorable promises made between leaders and individuals, but a third and smaller selection of seventeen passages refers to evil, secret covenants made between men and the devil.[5] The last of the horizontal covenant references and almost all the secret covenant references are found in this section of Helaman and 3 Nephi 1—7 (see Alma 37:27 and 29 for the only other secret covenant references). Table 3 shows all the covenant references in this part of the Book of Mormon.

Table 3. Covenant References in Helaman and 3-Nephi 1—7

*	Helaman	1:11	covenant to protect Kishkumen, the murderer
*		1:12	Kishkumen and his secret band
*		2:3	Kishkumen's band seeks Helaman's death
*		6:21	a growing covenant band of robbers
**		6:22	signs and words of the secret band of robbers
*		6:25	Alma's warning not to reveal secret covenants
*		6:26	satanic origin of the "new" secret covenants
*		6:30	the works and secret covenants of the devil
â—Š	3 Nephi	5:4	robbers who covenant to cease killing are set free
â—Š		5:5	robbers who do not covenant to cease killing are punished
ØØØØØ		5:25	Lord's covenants with the house of Jacob
â—Š		6:3	covenant by reformed robbers to keep peace in the land
***		6:28	evil men covenant with Satan against the righteous
*		6:29	covenant against the Lord's people and the laws of the land
*		6:30	covenant to destroy the legal government
*		7:11	opposition to those of the secret covenant band

* References to negative, "secret" covenants
n References to positive, horizontal covenants

Ø References to righteous, vertical covenants

Only one verse in this section of the Book of Mormon refers to vertical covenants with God. In 3 Nephi 5:25, Abraham's posterity is promised a full knowledge of God's covenants with the house of Jacob. In fact, the root covenant appears five times in this verse, more than in any other single verse of scripture. In it, Mormon repeats the important promise that the house of Jacob will eventually come to a full knowledge of its covenant relationship.

The three horizontal covenant references in this section highlight promises made with robbers if they would cease their murderous acts (see 3 Nephi 5:4—5 and 6:3). Although few specific details are recorded about these horizontal covenants—such as if they were made in the name of God, what witnesses were required, or possible penalties if they were broken—it is assumed that these promises were honored.

The Secret Covenants of Men and the Devil

As shown earlier, 15 of the 23 covenant references in Helaman and 3 Nephi 1—7 relate to satanic vows made between men. These references are found in one dozen verses. Analyzing these twelve verses tells us much about secret, evil vows. By evaluating the key secret covenant elements in these passages, one soon recognizes similar elements in contemporary society.

Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, presents a pattern of covenant making that continued into later dispensations and was distorted by some people during this Book of Mormon period. This model can be divided into five steps, exemplifying the covenant process between the Sovereign of this earth and his children, particularly as demonstrated through baptism and temple ordinances:

1. Historical background = Recounting past events, relationships, and promises (see Deuteronomy 1—4)

2. Stipulations = Listing the general and specific expectations of either party (see Deuteronomy 5:26)

3. Blessings and Curses = Announcing the possible consequences (rewards and punishments) (see Deuteronomy 27—33)

4. Witnesses = Verifying the contract through earthly and heavenly observers (see Deuteronomy 27:1—8; 31:19, 26; and 32)

5. Remembrance = Recording a review, revision, and renewal process (see Deuteronomy 27:2—8; 31:9—13, 24—27)

All five steps[6] are found among the secret covenants of wicked men as recorded in Helaman and 3 Nephi. Thus this is an appropriate place to discuss the Book of Mormon teachings and examples of evil or secret covenants.

Historical Background. As Mormon presents information about evil covenants in the Book of Mormon, he provides details about the historical setting of these covenants. Starting some 50 years before Christ, the first of three secret, murdering bands organized to make covenants to protect their members, who had murdered the chief judge Pahoran and attempted to murder the prophet Helaman (see Helaman 1:11; 2:3). This band of Kishkumen later fled into the wilderness, where it seems to have died out (see Helaman 2:11). About 25 years later, a new band of robbers with secret, satanically inspired covenants was established (see Helaman 6:18, 21—30). They gained great control over much of society in spite of prophetic warnings, famines, wars, and the miraculous signs

of the Savior's birth. Finally, after fifty years of wickedness, the Nephites repented and destroyed this secret combination (see 3 Nephi 5:6). Unfortunately, within a decade a new band of murderers and robbers organized, following the satanic pattern of earlier secret combinations (see 3 Nephi 6:28—30). With the dissolution of a strong central government, partially resulting from this band's attempt to destroy the government, it came the largest social group or "tribe," though it was mutually opposed by the other tribes and groups (see 3 Nephi 7:11). Ultimately, this evil group was destroyed, together with all the wicked people in the great destructions preceding the Lord's ministry after his resurrection.

Stipulations. In reading the covenant passages in this section of the Book of Mormon, a variety of stipulations can be identified in these negative, vertical covenants. For example, the oaths are sworn in secret, ironically often in God's name to give them some sense of legitimacy and power. The purpose of the covenants is often to overthrow anyone in authority and to rob and murder for gain. The leaders also allow easy acceptance into their bands and develop counterfeit sets of tokens and signs to more easily distinguish their members (see Helaman 1:11; 2:3; 6:21—22; and 3 Nephi 6:28; 7:11).

Blessings and Curses. The secret bands seek to escape punishment for their immoral and illegal acts, but they also threaten and murder any who betray their own negative oaths. Often disguised as regular, even exemplary, members of society, they appear harmless, even virtuous. They seek to reward their members with positions of wealth and power. Rather than focusing on the long-term, spiritual consequences of their actions, they promise temporal rewards and riches. Their incentive is the antithesis of "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Instead they promise: "Take what you can now, through whatever wicked means, and establish your kingdom here" (see, for example, Helaman 6:21—22; and 3 Nephi 6:28; 7:11).

Witnesses. The secret bands seek strength in numbers and make their vows with each other in God's name and before each other, using their own heads or lives as a final witness. However, they do not want their membership and participation to be witnessed or known publicly (see Helaman 1:12; 2:3; 6:21—22; and 3 Nephi 6:28).

Remembrance. Tragically, although the secret bands and the records of their evil oaths and doings are sometimes destroyed, they are often revived as Satan inspires a new generation of wicked leaders (see Helaman 6:21—22; and 3 Nephi 6:28; 7:11). The prophets have some records of their doings, but they do not make them public (see Alma 37:27— 29). Their names identified as symbols of wickedness, Kishkumen and Gadianton are notorious for their founding of these secret bands.[7]

In this section of varied and concentrated covenant passages, we see that covenants range from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell. Leaving aside the destructive, negative covenants of the secret bands, we can now better appreciate the sublime covenant teachings of the resurrected Savior and the establishment of a Zion covenant community as recorded in the next section of the remaining 3 Nephi chapters and 4 Nephi.

3 Nephi 8—4 Nephi

The great majority of the Savior's covenant teachings of the Book of Mormon are found in 3 Nephi, starting with chapter 10, in which Israel is warned to repent or their lands would be "desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant" in the latter days (3 Nephi 10:7). As Jesus appears to the Lamanites and Nephites, he teaches three major sermons or discourses. The first is the Nephite version of the Sermon of the Mount, recorded in chapters 12 through 14 of 3 Nephi. One important addition to this 3 Nephi account places it in a covenant context, which is not

clearly expressed in Matthew. In the Book of Mormon, the Sermon at the Temple in Bountiful is directed to those who have entered into a covenant relationship through baptism (see 3 Nephi 12:1—2). Thus the expectations taught in the sermon would be directed to baptized members of the church. This sermon is indeed the Christian Constitution for all those who take upon themselves the name of Christ through the covenant ordinance of baptism.

The second discourse in 3 Nephi 15 and 16 contains teachings to Israel on the Mosaic law and the Abrahamic covenant. This Law and Covenant Discourse includes material found in the Old and New Testaments but gives greater detail and explanation. After clarifying some Nephite misunderstandings concerning the Mosaic law, Jesus says to the multitude at Bountiful, "Behold, I am he that gave the law, . . . therefore the law in me is fulfilled." He then adds, "And I am he who covenanted with my people Israel" (3 Nephi 15:5). Note that he emphasizes two different ideas in this verse, namely *law* and *covenant*. First, he is both the lawgiver and the fulfiller of the law. Second, certain covenants concerning him and the children of Abraham have been made but are not yet all fulfilled. He continues, "For as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled" (3 Nephi 15:6). His coming, atonement, and resurrection had fulfilled the law; however, certain covenant promises had not yet been fulfilled, although they would be. In 3 Nephi 15:7—8 he continues, "And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me." Although the law was fulfilled, the covenant was not yet all fulfilled.

The covenant was given first to Abraham around 1900 B.C., and the law was delivered later to Moses about 1300 B.C. Three major promises were given to Abraham: (1) he would have numberless posterity, (2) a land would be given to him and his posterity, and (3) his lineage would be a blessing to all nations and families of the earth (see Genesis 12:2—3; 15:5; and 17:2—8). These promises were partially fulfilled in earlier times and partially at the coming of Christ. Yet still others would be fulfilled at the close of this dispensation of the fulness of times and as the millennial era is ushered in.

The law (or Torah) given to Moses refers particularly to the elaborate set of preparatory legislation, statutes, and sacrifices that distinguish the Mosaic dispensation. The expectations laid out by the Mosaic law were fulfilled in Christ's great sacrifice at Gethsemane and Golgotha and as he was resurrected from the garden tomb.

So the law, which was given later, was fulfilled first, but the covenant, which was given earlier, will be fulfilled last. This is just another classic example of a pattern we find throughout the scriptures that the "first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30; see D&C 29:30). Although the law was satisfied about two thousand years ago, we still await the completion of the threefold covenant originally promised to Abraham.

Jesus continues his law and covenant teachings in 3 Nephi 15 by admonishing his listeners to keep his commandments and by discussing some of these remaining covenant promises, particularly those which the house of Israel should fulfill. He mentions that all the sheep of his Israelite fold would need to hear his voice so they could come into his flock. As scattered Israel would hear his voice and become his covenant followers, they could return to their lands of inheritance, where they could be a blessing to other nations of the earth. As Jesus emphasizes in 3 Nephi 16, in order for the covenant to be fulfilled, Israel must reassemble under his leadership in their lands of inheritance and live as a Zion people. Before Zion can be established among Israel, however, the people must gather. And before they can gather, he tells them, gospel truths will need to be presented to them. These truths will come through the gentiles, who would then be numbered among his people. Then the gathering and the covenant promises of Isaiah would be fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 16:17—20). This Law and Covenant Discourse serves

as a vital bridge between the simple, broad expectations of the Sermon on the Mount and the profound specific requirements of the third sermon, the Covenant People Discourse, as Christ begins teaching on the following day.

The Covenant People Discourse begins in 3 Nephi 20:10 and continues through 3 Nephi 23:5. In 3 Nephi 20, the Savior teaches his listeners that when the "words of Isaiah" are fulfilled, then the covenant promises with the house of Israel will be fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 20:10—12). As Isaiah's prophecies are fulfilled, then the gathering of Israel will take place and Israel will be given power over unrepentant gentiles as the Lord establishes his chosen people (see 3 Nephi 20:13—20). The Savior then reviews the messianic prophecies given to Moses and the covenant promises given to Abraham, which had been taught by the prophets down through the ages (see 3 Nephi 20:21—31). Then without identifying the source, Jesus begins quoting from Isaiah 52. He summarizes in 3 Nephi 20:46 by promising that when these things foretold by Isaiah come to pass, "Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled."[8]

Starting in the first verse of chapter 21, Christ then gives a unique sign so that his listeners (and later readers) would know when these promises of Isaiah and the gathering would begin to take place. In one very long, complicated sentence that begins in verse 1 and continues through verse 7, the Savior foretells that when the teachings of the Book of Mormon would come from some gentiles unto a remnant of their Nephite-Lamanite seed and their descendants would begin to know these things, then they would know "that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 21:7). Indeed, a great and marvelous work would come forth among them, which would show the Father's power among his covenant people (see 3 Nephi 21:8—11). Using the words of Micah, the Savior describes the power that covenant Israel will have among the gentiles as the wicked are punished and all are invited to become part of his church and covenant people (see 3 Nephi 21:12—22; Micah 5:8—14). Indeed, covenant Israelites will help his scattered people build the New Jerusalem as the powers of heaven and he himself would come down among them to complete the gathering of Israel (see 3 Nephi 21:23—29).

Israel's redemption and the fruits of the gentiles are foretold in Isaiah 54, which is then quoted in its entirety by the Savior (see 3 Nephi 22). Together, the children of the desolate (the covenant gentiles) and the children of the married wife (the Israelites) will bring forth stakes of Zion in the last days. The Lord's mercy will be shown through the maintenance of his covenant of peace (see 3 Nephi 22:10), and righteousness will reign. The Savior concludes his profound Covenant People Discourse in 3 Nephi 23 by admonishing his followers to search the words of Isaiah, who foretold these marvelous things.[9]

At the end of 3 Nephi, Mormon highlights the covenant teachings of the Savior and repeats the sign that when the Book of Mormon comes forth from the gentiles, then the covenant promises are beginning to be fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 29:1). Indeed, the Lord's covenant with Israel will be remembered and fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 29:3—9).

This Book of Mormon section of less than fifty pages contains more covenant references per page than any other section (see table 1). Particularly profound and insightful are the many covenant teachings of the resurrected Savior. He pledges that all the covenant promises of the Father with Abraham and the house of Israel (especially as recorded by Isaiah) will be fulfilled. One key sign of the beginning of their fulfillment will be when the Book of Mormon comes from the gentiles to the Lamanite remnants and they begin to know its teachings. This sign has been given, especially during and since the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball, inasmuch as missionary success, the establishment of many stakes, and the building of many temples are taking place in Central and South America. Thus the covenant fulfillment is underway.

Mormon, Ether, Moroni

This last section of the Book of Mormon contains fewer than half the covenant references per page found in the previous section. Most of them are in the form of editorial comments by Mormon and Moroni. Most of Mormon's covenant comments refer to the Lord's covenant people (see Mormon 3:21) and the covenants of the Father with Abraham, the house of Israel, and the children of men (see Mormon 5:20; Moroni 7:31—32). Two interesting passages anticipate the testifying and covenant purposes of the Book of Mormon as presented on its title page (see Mormon 5:14; 7:10). The key passage in Mormon 5:12—14 foretells the coming forth of Mormon's writings, which should go to the Jews "that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ" so that "the Jews, or all the house of Israel" can be gathered by the Father to the land of their inheritance "unto the fulfilling of his covenant."

Moroni also refers to the Lord's covenant people (see Mormon 8:15, 21) and his covenant promises with them (see Mormon 8:21, 23; and 9:37). He even addresses Israel concerning her covenants as he writes his abridgment of the Jaredite history (see Ether 4:15; 13:11). He also reminds his readers that the Father's covenants are an essential element in the gospel principles of faith and repentance (see Moroni 7:31—32). In his last testimony near the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni admonishes the house of Israel to awake, to put on her garments, and to strengthen her stakes "that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled" (Moroni 10:31). In conclusion, Moroni then invites the reader to receive the grace of God through Christ's sanctification, "which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot" (Moroni 10:33).

Conclusion

Literally from the title page to the very last page, the Book of Mormon contains numerous and varied covenant teachings. The primary emphasis is on the covenant promises made to Abraham and the house of Israel. In these covenant teachings, readers are not only taught and reminded of these ancient covenants and the signs and events of their latter-day fulfillment, but they are also invited to receive and honor their own covenant commitments, especially as symbolized in the baptismal ordinance. The secondary emphasis is on the covenants made between people, usually of a positive nature, which bring peace and stability to society. The third and last area of emphasis in the Book of Mormon is on those secret covenants and oaths that wicked people make with each other and Satan as he attempts to further his evil designs upon the children of men.

By carefully studying the 154 covenant references in the Book of Mormon, the reader gains important insights into the nature, purpose, and blessings of covenants. He or she also learns the importance of honoring one's personal covenant commitments, even in times of peril and persecution. And most important, the reader recognizes that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ make and unconditionally honor all their covenant promises, in order to bless the righteous and reward the obedient who have kept their covenants. These covenant relationships and blessings will continue into the eternities. The Book of Mormon reader needs to better understand and appreciate the special, sacred covenant relationship that he or she should maintain with Heavenly Father so that his full, marvelous blessings can be enjoyed.

Notes

1. The word *covenant* appears 100 times in the original Book of Mormon text, while *covenants* appears 31 times, *covenanted* 20 times, *covenanting* 2 times, and *covenanteth* 1 time.

2. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingon, 1962), 1:716.

3. A number of references to personal, military, and secret oaths are found in the Book of Mormon. Of the 41 references to *oath* or *oaths*, the great majority are of the horizontal or person-to-person type, almost equally divided between positive and negative examples. They are found mostly in the books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, and Ether.

4. 1 Nephi 20 (Isaiah 48) reviews the elements of a covenant made earlier, and 1 Nephi 21 (Isaiah 49) describes the blessings of a covenant yet to be fulfilled.

5. In a similar pattern, of the 41 *oath* references in the Book of Mormon, 20 of them are positive promises openly made between individuals and leaders while 9 of them are righteous, vertical oaths made with God or his servants, and 12 of them are negative vows entered into with secret combinations.

6. See Stephen D. Ricks, "The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin's Address (Mosiah 1—6)," *BYU Studies* 24/2 (1984): 151—62, and Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978).

7. For further details about these secret bands, see Victor L. Ludlow, "Secret Covenant Teachings of Men and the Devil in Helaman through 3 Nephi 8," in *Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992), 265—82.

8. The word *covenant* appears ten times in this single chapter, third in frequency only to Doctrine and Covenants 132 (16 times) and Genesis 17 (13 times).

9. The whole Covenant People Discourse is organized into a major chiastic pattern of poetic parallelisms. See Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 432—46.

To Remember and Keep:
On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book

Louis Midgley

> How much history do we require? What kind of history? What should we remember, what can we afford to forget, what must we forget?
>
> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi[1]
>
> The Book of Mormon must be read as an ancient, not as a modern book. Its mission, as described by the book itself, depends in great measure for its efficacy on its genuine antiquity.
>
> Hugh W. Nibley[2]

I am fond of the idea that communities "are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory,' one that does not forget its past."[3] Hence, according to Robert Bellah, a genuine "community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative, and in so doing, it offers examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community."[4] Bellah also holds that "the communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope."[5]

On this issue one would do well to consider Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's passionate and troubling book, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory.*[6] The subtitle of this book points to Yerushalmi's remarkable illustrations of the power of biblical narratives to constitute Jewish identity and community. Yerushalmi also tells a cautionary tale for those interested in the preservation and prospering of communities of faith and memory, since he sketches the impact on Jewish identity of the emergence of a sophisticated, secularized Jewish historiography whose content and assumptions expand the scope of Jewish history, question the veracity of biblical history, and thereby challenge the foundations of Jewish faith. Of all the modern forms of learning, the least consistent with Jewish faith are those on which modern historiography have been made to rest.[7]

History, Memory, and Faith

Yerushalmi argues that the Jews were the first to assign a "decisive significance" to history.[8] In so doing they forged a "new world-view whose essential premises were eventually appropriated by Christianity and Islam as well."[9] The Hebrew Bible contains a divine injunction for the faithful to remember the past. Yerushalmi has to account for the fact that with the closing of the Jewish canon of scripture, interest in writing history soon languished and disappeared. Here was a people whose existence and identity depended upon history, but who were essentially uninterested in history outside of their sacred texts.

Instead, according to Yerushalmi, biblical Israel was absorbed with God's mighty actions in history and hence looked to memory of a slice of the past as "crucial to its faith and, ultimately, to its very existence."[10] So the authors of the biblical texts were anxious to render faithfully the reality of what had taken place. Yerushalmi points out that

> Not only is Israel under no obligation whatever to remember the entire past, but its principle of selection is unique unto itself. It is above all God's acts of intervention in history, and man's responses to them, be they positive or negative, that must be recalled. Nor is the invocation of memory actuated by the normal and praiseworthy desire to preserve heroic national deeds from oblivion. Ironically, many of the biblical narratives seem almost calculated to deflate national pride.[11]

Thus God, and not Israel, is made the hero of biblical stories intended to show the terrible consequences of forgetting the terms of the covenant that bound a people to God, as well as the blessings that flowed from obedience to the covenant.

Even though the rabbis ceased to write history after the close of the biblical canon, their attention remained focused on the understanding of a meaningful history in which God blesses the obedient and curses the disobedient. Yerushalmi puts it this way:

> For the rabbis the Bible was not only a repository of past history, but a revealed pattern of the whole of history, and they had learned their scriptures well. They knew that history has a purpose, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and that the Jewish people has a central role to play in the process. They were convinced that the covenant between God and Israel was eternal, though the Jews had often rebelled and suffered the consequences. Above all, they had learned from the Bible that the true pulse of history often beats beneath its manifest surfaces, an invisible history that was more real than what the world, deceived by the more strident outward rhythms of power, could recognize.[12]

The Rise of a Secularized History and Its Impact on Jewish Faith

But with the emergence of a modern historiography grounded in secular assumptions, often radically challenging the assumptions that stand behind the account of the past found in the Bible, we see, according to Yerushalmi, "a decisive break with the past." What takes its place is an amorphous and shifting set of secular premises that form the basis for the modern historical outlook and sooner or later set the Jew working on the Jewish past in conflict with what had been taken for granted in all previous conceptions thereof.

Yerushalmi argues that the "belief that divine providence is not only an ultimate but an active causal factor in Jewish history, and the related belief in the uniqueness of Jewish history itself," soon disappeared among those writing the new Jewish history:[13] hence what Harold Bloom calls "a troubling and possibly irreconcilable split between Jewish memory and Jewish historiography."[14] Yerushalmi is not convinced that the new Jewish history, based as it is on the secular assumptions of modern historiography, can do much to preserve and even less to restore the integrity of either Jewish memory or faith. From his perspective, in the quest for a "usable past," it is unwise to rely on a highly secularized professional historiography for the needed light. This explains the melancholy, bittersweet tone of his book, since he is a gifted professional historian.

According to Harold Bloom, modern secular "historiography, of all the modern disciplines practiced by Jewish scholars, is necessarily the most Gentile."[15] The ultimate consequence is that "scripture has been replaced by history as the validating arbiter of Jewish ideologies, and the replacement, [Yerushalmi] believes, has yielded chaos."[16]

The Analogy with Revisionist Readings of the Book of Mormon

I first remember encountering the language of remembrance, and the suggestive reflections on the place of memory in forming and grounding Jewish identity, when in 1983 I noticed a review of Yerushalmi's book in *Commentary*.[17] My initial interest in Yerushalmi's book was in the light it could throw on the role of the Bible in grounding Jewish history and Jewish memory. But I also saw a possible analogy between his reflections on the secularization of Jewish history and the subsequent decline of Jewish faith and what seemed to me to be taking shape among a few cultural Mormons.

As is rather well-known, some cultural Mormons have brushed aside the Book of Mormon. In one bizarre instance a prominent savant boasted of "not having read the entire Book of Mormon."[18] He flatly rejected the Book of Mormon because, among other reasons, an angel was involved in its recovery.[19] But in 1980, when I started a careful examination of a few Mormon historians and their secular assumptions, I found those with revisionist proclivities generally not quite this blatant—rather more shy and retiring than bold and adventuresome. In the early eighties I discovered only a few cultural Mormons who were cautiously advancing naturalistic explanations of the Book of Mormon and the story of its recovery.[20] However, since the mid-eighties it has become fashionable to advance revisionist readings of the Book of Mormon. Elsewhere I have identified a number of former Latter-day Saints, RLDS "liberals," and various cultural Mormons who seem anxious to turn the Book of Mormon into nineteenth-century frontier fiction, inspired or otherwise, and Joseph Smith into a bizarre impostor, an imaginative religious "genius," or a combination of the two.[21]

Put bluntly, when I discovered Yerushalmi's book in 1983, what he described as having taken place since the early 1800s among assimilated, cultural Jews was suggestive of problems I then suspected would become fashionable, full-scale efforts to advance naturalistic accounts of the Book of Mormon and of the Mormon past generally. Why would we not expect the more corrosive ideologies flowing from Enlightenment rationalism—of modernity—eventually to have an impact on at least those on the fringes of the Mormon intellectual community? Since I first became interested in what was taking place among a few so-called Mormon intellectuals, many have sought to alter radically the way the Saints understand their founding stories and especially how they ought to read the Book of Mormon.

The Faith and Memory of Latter-day Saints

And so we must ask whether it is only Jewish faith that depends on the memory of a past that includes the mighty acts of God and the halting responses of his people. We do not have to look far for an answer. Martin Marty, the distinguished Lutheran church historian, argues that both individuals and communities base their identity on stories.[22] He argues that religious communities with roots in the Bible are more or less sustained by sharing a common story with a recognizable plot. We should be able to assess the vitality of religious communities by determining how closely they remain tied to their founding stories. Why? He insists that

> Life is not only lived one-on-one, or by one's self: we are social beings, born in and destined for some sort of social, communal, and corporate existence. And here story, and history, come in in even more suggestive ways. We have no access to a past beyond our own memory unless someone has taken pains to tell or write stories about it, to make it thus accessible.[23]

Without texts we have no past other than our own or shared communal memories. But Marty also argues that communities are not grounded in what we find in modern, secular historiography. Why? Because we do not really live by what is produced by either antiquarians or professional historians, for "religious communities are not made

up of antique-collectors. For instance, the Christian church is not a memorial society," because "the church is not a 'keeper of the city of the dead.' While tradition keeps it healthy, when it loves tradition it is not a community of traditionalists." Instead, "it lives by stories. These can engender doctrines."[24] Religious communities are thus grounded on a network of stories which constitutes the link with the past that forms their identity.[25]

But the stories that ground both individuals and communities, according to Marty, are not what is often meant by "history" in secular, academic circles. Communities of faith and memory do not depend on historiography as currently understood in the academic world. In addition, the fashions and fads of professional historiography often compete with the understandings of the past on which communities of faith depend.

According to Marty, excluding those who have reduced the content of faith to some currently fashionable moral sentiments or to mere advice about how to live, communities of believing Jews, Muslims, and Christians—including especially Latter-day Saints—in one way or another are constituted by a rich network of stories. In the case of Christians, accounts of the past allow the believer to "see God's activity in the events, words, works, circumstances, and effects of Jesus Christ and tell the story of his death and resurrection as constitutive of the faith that forms their community."[26] Some "extend the sense of story through the ages," while others may repudiate intervening Christian history and strive to live off their own understanding of the original story.[27]

Marty notes that Latter-day Saints have little interest in what is known in Christian and Jewish circles as "theology."[28] Thus the Latter-day Saints, according to Marty, "especially live as chosen and covenanted people in part of a developing history," and therefore "much is at stake when the story is threatened, as it potentially could have been when forged documents concerning Mormon origins agitated the community and led to tragedy a few years ago."[29] He has in mind Mark Hofmann's bizarre forgeries of what initially appeared to be texts that challenged the traditional account of the restoration. Marty claims that the faith and hence identity of Latter-day Saints is in important ways even more history-grounded than for Christians generally.

Why do attacks by cultural Mormons and others on the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon and the story of its recovery generate concern among the Saints? Put another way: why is it crucial for the Saints to give close attention to the Book of Mormon, as well as defend it from its critics? The answer is that for the Saints to begin to see the Book of Mormon as frontier fiction, as the product of a trance by a magic or occult-saturated, dissociative (manic-depressive) "genius," or whatever the latest fashionable naturalistic explanation might be, fundamentally transforms the crucial founding story of the restored gospel. For this reason the Saints hold that the Book of Mormon must be read as an ancient rather than a modern book. And this is also why much is at stake when these matters are debated.

Marty correctly senses that the faith of Latter-day Saints has always "been characterized by its thoroughly historical mode and mold." He sees the faith of the Saints as "historically classical" in its tradition.[30] "When Latter-day Saints argue," according to Marty, "they argue about morals based on history, or about historical events and their meaning—about how the contemporary community acquires its identity and its sense of 'what to do and how to do it' from the assessment of the character, quality, content, and impetus of that story."[31]

It is therefore crucial for the faith of the Saints that the story of the generative or founding events remains essentially in place in the hearts and minds of the Saints. This does not, of course, preclude but actually demands competent, better-documented, more accurate, finely nuanced, and richly detailed accounts of the restoration, as

well as continued thoughtful attention to the rich treasures found in the Book of Mormon when read as an authentic, ancient text.

The Saints thus have their own distinctive ties to the past. A story fills their memory and forms the identity that melds them into a community of faith and memory. That which disputes, dilutes, or transforms the distinctive Mormon past will also alter and erode the community that rests on those accounts. And that which refines, or tells more fully and accurately the story of the restoration, will preserve and build the kingdom. Hence the Book of Mormon and the related story of Joseph Smith's encounters with the divine must remain in place, or the faith of the Saints will languish or be radically transformed. Why? Those who either are or who become Saints do so because they find meaning in the Book of Mormon and the related account of its recovery. And their own story and the story of the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ are thus linked. This is why we can speak of a Latter-day Saint community of faith and memory. Those who cease being or who never become Latter-day Saints do so because the basic story no longer has power to regulate and give meaning to their lives or because it never came to define their identity.

Marty has described what he considers a crisis of faith taking place among Latter-day Saints; he sees this dilemma as somewhat analogous to similar crises experienced by other Christian communities when they were confronted with certain corrosive intellectual elements of modernity as manifest in a radical relativism about all truth claims, including statements about the past—especially those in which the divine is said to be encountered—as well as Enlightenment skepticism about the miraculous, attacks on natural theology, historical-critical studies of the Bible, and so forth.

To the degree that Marty is correct, he is able to identify a crisis within a dissident element on the fringes of the Mormon intellectual community, which he claims has undergone a crisis even "more profound than that which Roman Catholicism recognized around the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962—65)."[32] Although I believe that Marty has somewhat overestimated the extent of the crisis he describes, I am interested in what he believes is the source of the crisis.

Challenges to the Memory (and Faith) of the Saints

Marty refers to the "acids of modernity," which are the works of those he labels "God-killers,"[33] whose ideologies have corroded the faith of many Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The resulting crises of faith in each of these traditions have come in waves and degrees, and with different effects in each case. For the Saints, the crisis is not one that centers on abstruse philosophical issues or on questions of natural science, including scientific cosmology, or even on systematic or dogmatic theology, but essentially on historical issues—on how the Saints understand the past, and especially on how the Book of Mormon is read and the story of the restoration is to be told and understood. The primary source of this crisis is the emergence of a "historical consciousness" that creates problems for a faith grounded in historical events because history no longer seems to contain any certainties, or because it is assumed that history must be written in such a way that the divine is removed, except as a product of illusion or delusion.

Marty is clearly correct in his assessment of the crucial importance of history for Latter-day Saints, for it is in accounts of the past that we find access to the content of faith. The history that is crucial to the faith of the Saints includes—indeed is grounded on—the Book of Mormon and the story of its recovery, as well as the Bible. It is exactly at this point that Latter-day Saints are distinguished from all sectarian forms of Christian faith, including currently fashionable factions of Protestant evangelical religiosity. Latter-day Saints have their own version of the

Christian story. And it is this story of the Book of Mormon, its prophetic message, and the account of its recovery, rather than the murky details of sectarian dogmatic theology, that distinguishes Latter-day Saints from various brands of Christian faith. The history crucial to the faith of the Saints includes, among other things, the Book of Mormon and other ancient texts through which the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and much other additional information was restored after an apostasy from the faith of the original disciples. Hence the Saints reject both the ecumenical creeds and sectarian confessions. And even though some Protestants formally spurn creeds, they are still more or less beholden to their related theology, which the Saints reject as uninspired, corrupting speculation drawn from and dependent on a pagan philosophical culture.

But are the Saints really undergoing a "crisis of historiography" that threatens to challenge and transform their faith? One can, of course, find some support for this view, if one focuses on essays and books being promoted on the fringes of the Mormon intellectual community. But what is publicized in the popular press or promoted by a few dissidents is not the whole story, for the understanding of the generative events for the most part seems not to have been eroded or transformed, not even or especially among the most thoughtful and mature Mormon historians. Instead, attention to the Book of Mormon and the story of its coming forth has been deepened and refined among the Saints since World War II. And this has partly been the result of efforts of those refining the founding stories and looking more deeply into and defending the Book of Mormon, as well as of increased attention to such matters by the leaders of the church.[34]

Since the faith of Latter-day Saints has always been characterized by "its thoroughly historical mode and mold," the current crisis, to the degree that it is accurate to speak of such a thing, was unavoidable. Why? Because a new historical consciousness, according to Marty, has yielded "what some might regard as a dramatic and traumatic shift among Mormon intellectuals."[35] For most Saints, including most historians, no crisis has arisen, or they have passed through it with a more refined and even stronger faith. Or, for various reasons, they remain quite unconcerned by or oblivious to the quarrels of self-important pedants.

The primary challenge generated by the more corrosive elements of modernity to the faith of the Saints has not arisen from a skepticism concerning natural or systematic theology, since that sort of thing has played virtually no role in forming Mormon identity. Skepticism concerning miracles has only minimal impact on Latter-day Saints, since the miraculous has been understood by the Saints in ways that have diverted or blunted most of the traditional criticisms. Instead, from the beginning, the primary criticism of the restoration has been focused on the Book of Mormon and how it was brought forth. The crisis stems from attacks on the network of texts and stories that form the identity of the Saints. Hence, part of what seems necessary to maintain Latter-day Saint identity includes maintaining the viability of the network of stories that ground their faith, since challenges to these clearly threaten to weaken or destroy both individual and group identity and thereby undermine genuine trust in Jesus as the Christ.

Marty argues that the challenge to communities of faith by modernity (and he has in mind the fruit of Enlightenment rationalism and its aftermath), if not met in some effective way, tends to dilute, modify, or destroy faith. If religious communities, that is, in the larger sense Muslims, Jews, and Christians, each in their own way, depend for their identity on stories they more or less share within their own communities and that form both the content and grounding of their particular faith, the life and health of those communities depends at least to some extent on whether they manage to find ways of meeting challenges to their stories. Hence, we can speak of communities of faith and memory, and we can begin to sort out what generates, perpetuates, and threatens such communities.

Of course, what Marty labels the "acids of modernity"[36] (and I would also include some aberrations associated with various postmodernisms) may not threaten individual or group identity when believers exist in a condition of "primitive naiveté"—Marty borrows that label from Paul Ricoeur.[37] This label merely describes the understanding of the world held by those who have not confronted the possibility that the world can be understood differently by those outside a community of faith. When alternative explanations and competing stories or interpretations of the past are encountered, individuals must find some way to avoid the challenge, reach an accommodation with the competing view, or abandon their faith. In a general sense, the same is true of all communities who find their founding story challenged.

The Saints cannot avoid the impact of the cultures that surround them and hence have often found themselves confronted with sometimes attractive, competing, and contradictory understandings of reality. Many Saints at some point have experienced a crisis of faith, which they have had to resolve in some way. This is especially the case when they have experienced the allure of different, competing, and alien worlds made available through entertainment or advertising, or even through secular education. The Saints have managed such crises in a number of ways, with some ceasing to believe. When compared with other religious communities, however, the number of dissidents seems to me to be remarkably low. The current debate in the fringes of the Mormon intellectual community over the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon[38] is thus an indication that some Saints have adopted assumptions and fashioned explanations grounded in secular modernity.[39]

It should not, therefore, be surprising that revisionist accounts of the Book of Mormon and the related story told by Joseph Smith are clearly recognized as "naturalistic explanations of Joseph Smith's theophanies" rendered in entirely "secular" terms.[40] Even the most ardent apologist for what is vaguely labeled a "New Mormon History" grants that such naturalistic explanations end up denying "the possibility of genuine individual creativity or inspiration."[41] However, it is exactly this kind of revisionist history that some apologists for a secularized account of the Book of Mormon and the Mormon past defend by claiming that it approaches what they quaintly label "objectivity" precisely because they boast that they are not at all subservient to or genuinely involved in the faith of the Saints. And it is precisely those accounts, if they were to become popular, that would transform or destroy the Latter-day Saint community of faith and memory.

By drawing attention to these currently fashionable revisionist accounts of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's prophetic charisms,[42] which obviously interdict the story that forms the community of faith and memory, I do not in any way question the need for accurate, profound, and fruitful accounts of the Mormon past by Latter-day Saints (or sympathetic, better-informed accounts of others), nor do I deny that important advancements have taken place in writing about the Mormon past in the last thirty years. Furthermore, I deplore pictures of the Saints as faultless heroes. Attempts to conceal frailties or shortcomings among the Saints are simply silly. Recognizing that historical accounts—as well as understanding certain texts on which they rest and by which they are transmitted—have a crucial role in the perpetuation of communities of faith and memory, I am concerned with the way artifacts such as the Book of Mormon and the related prophetic truth claims of Joseph Smith are understood.

To this point at least, Marty's acids of modernity for the most part have not corroded the faith of the Saints as they have the faith of many others whose identity was once linked to biblical stories. But what must be a cautionary tale for Latter-day Saints is still to be found in Yerushalmi's examination of the links between Jewish faith and an understanding of God's mighty acts in the past, and then of the weakening of both under the impact of a highly secularized historiography. We may be witnessing some of the same corrosive effects on the memory and identity of the Saints in the recent highly publicized instances of dissidents openly challenging the Book of Mormon.

The "Ways of Remembrance" in the Scriptures

In addition to warning about the potential impact on Mormon history and memory from highly secularized accounts of the restoration, Yerushalmi's book also contains useful references to careful, detailed studies of the meaning and function of *zakher*—the Hebrew verb meaning "to remember"—in the Old Testament. Among the studies mentioned is an important work by Brevard Childs.[43] With this work in mind, it is possible to examine the frequent use of the language of remembrance in the Book of Mormon. Yerushalmi's book led me to the work of Childs and others and alerted me to the possibilities for understanding an important concept in the Book of Mormon. This eventually helped me formulate a brief exegesis of what I called "the ways of remembrance" in the Book of Mormon.[44]

I will attempt to demonstrate some remarkable parallels between deep structures in the teachings of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. It thus turns out that faith and memory are linked in even more profound ways than in the formation of identity. These links were clearly not known in 1830; they have only recently been discovered. Though I do not wish to stress this point, it seems that the presence in the Book of Mormon of deep structures of meaning unknown in 1830 may stand as a witness to Joseph Smith's remarkable prophetic powers. Be that as it may, I will focus on language found in both texts that articulates the ways of remembrance.

Understanding the Ways of Remembrance

Nephi concluded his account of Lehi's prophecies by saying, "Therefore, *remember*, O man, for all thy doing shall be brought into judgment" (1 Nephi 10:20, emphasis added here and in subsequent passages quoted from the scriptures). King Benjamin punctuated his covenantal speech with the plea, "O *remember*, *remember* that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it" (Mosiah 2:41). Jesus himself placed the Nephites in ancient Bountiful under covenant to "always *remember*" him and to keep the commandments that he, as their new lawgiver, had just given them (see 3 Nephi 18:7, 11; and Moroni 4—5, where we find preserved the memorial prayers for renewing the new covenant, which constitutes the people of God as the seed of Christ).

Several recent scholarly studies have analyzed the meanings of remembrance in the Bible, and some of this research can help us better understand and appreciate the important meanings of remembrance in the Book of Mormon. By placing emphasis on the concept of "remembering" and its correlate "keeping," the Book of Mormon significantly captures one of the most significant and distinctive aspects of Israelite mentality.

Brevard Childs demonstrates that more than two hundred instances of the various forms of the Hebrew verb *zakher* occur in the Old Testament.[45] He shows that what is understood in the Old Testament by memory and remembrance goes far beyond the mere mental recall of information. Of course, recalling information is part of the meaning of the Hebrew verb and its various other forms. *To remember* often means to be attentive, to consider, to keep divine commandment, or to act.[46] The word in Hebrew thus carries a wider range of meaning than is recognized in English. Indeed, *to remember* in Hebrew involves turning to God, repenting, acting in accordance with divine injunctions.

Not only man, but also God, "remembers." He remembers the covenants he has made with his prophets and his people: with Noah (see Genesis 9:15—16); Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Exodus 2:24; Leviticus 26:42); Moses (see Deuteronomy 31:16; Judges 2:1); all of Israel (see Ezekiel 16:60; Luke 1:72); and Lehi and his people (see Moroni 5:21; 8:21).

Conversely, the antonym of the verb *to remember* in Hebrew—*shachach*, to forget—does not merely describe the passing of a thought from the mind, but involves a failure to act or to do something, most often and significantly the covenant promise to keep the commandments of God. Hence, failing to remember God, his mighty acts, and his statutes and judgments is the equivalent of apostasy. For Israel to forget the covenant and therefore to fail to keep the commandments is to negate the blessings promised the obedient and to call down the cursings promised the disobedient. "Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety" (Leviticus 25:18—19).

The high density of words for memory and remembrance in the Book of Mormon remains unnoticed by casual readers. Though the range of uses of remembering in the Book of Mormon is perhaps not quite as extensive as that identifiable in the Old Testament, the idiom of remembrance in both books includes warnings, promises (especially those found in the blessings and cursings that accompany covenant making and renewals), threats, pleas, and complaints, and also the same deep connection between memory and action that is so prominent in the Old Testament. For example, to remember is to hearken (see, for example, Jacob 3:9—11), to awaken, to see, to hear, to believe, to trust.

One demonstrates remembrance through a faithful response to the terms of the covenant—in strict obedience to the statutes and ordinances, by keeping the commandments. But rebellious Israel has always been "quick to do iniquity, and slow to *remember* the Lord their God" (Mosiah 13:29).

Careful attention to the language found in the Book of Mormon—even or especially to one particular word like *remember*—may yield surprising dividends. For example, Lehi pled with his sons to remember his words: "My sons, I would that ye would *remember;* yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words" (2 Nephi 1:12). Such language may go virtually unnoticed, or it may seem to be merely a request to recall some teachings. The word *remember* seems rather inconsequential—plain and straightforward. But when examined more closely, the language about remembrance in the Book of Mormon turns out to be rich and complex and conveys important, subtle, and even hidden meanings.

Considerable stress is placed on the virtue of remembrance and the vice of forgetfulness in the Book of Mormon. The inherent meaning of this language is significant. By examining closely what the Book of Mormon says about "the ways of *remembrance*" (1 Nephi 2:24), we can better understand the book's overall message. In addition, we have available to us a rather good test of the advantages to be gained by reading the Book of Mormon as an ancient rather than a modern text.

Nephi was told by the Lord that the Lamanites "shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in *remembrance* of me; and inasmuch as they will not *remember* me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction" (2 Nephi 5:25). Since the Book of Mormon ends with the destruction of the Nephites, it seems that the choice between remembering and forgetting the terms of the covenant were crucial, even decisive, for the Lehite colony.

Later, King Benjamin "appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in *remembrance* of the oath which they had made" (Mosiah 6:3). This occurred after he had indicated that the original members of the Lehite colony had failed to prosper precisely because some of them had "incurred the displeasure of God upon them; and therefore they were smitten with famine and sore afflictions, to stir them up in *remembrance* of their duty" (Mosiah 1:17).

The first thing to note is that the "ways of *remembrance*" are not simply inner reflections, or merely an awareness of or curiosity about the past, or even detailed information to be recalled. Of course, in a number of instances the language of remembrance in the Book of Mormon seems to carry the meaning of recalling information about the past (see, for example, Ether 4:16 and Alma 33:3). More commonly, however, the language of remembrance identifies action that springs from an encounter with the meaning of past events. Thus, in the Book of Mormon, remembrance results in action.

The call to remember is often a passionate plea to recognize God's hand in delivering his people from bondage and captivity. The exodus theme works at two levels in the Book of Mormon: the covenant people, when penitent—when they approach the altar with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and when they remember and keep the commandments—are delivered by God, but so are individuals who turn to God for mercy. For example, Alma pled with one of his sons: "I would that ye should do as I have done, in *remembering* the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham" (Alma 36:2; compare Alma 36:29). But Alma also linked the two levels in recounting his own experience with the mercy of God, as in the following:

> And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I *remember* what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I *remember* his merciful arm which he extended towards me. Yea, and I also *remember* the captivity of my fathers; for I surely do know that the Lord did deliver them out of bondage. . . . Yea, I have always *remembered* the captivity of my fathers; and that same God who delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians did deliver them out of bondage. (Alma 29:10—12)

Because the Nephites are removed in time and space from past acts of deliverance and future redemptive events and because they have to rely on the words of prophets, the visions of seers, and what is recorded in the sacred texts, the ways of remembrance take on a crucial significance, in much the same way as they did for ancient Israel. The act of remembering makes it possible for the covenant people to participate in the crucial redemptive events of the past and also to look forward to vindication in the future. Remembering even helps them look forward to events that have not yet taken place. Through remembering the bondage and captivity and then the deliverance of their fathers, the Nephites view themselves as having access to those same gifts of deliverance and redemption—from Egypt and from wicked Jerusalem, as well as from the desert wilderness in the Old World, and from the terrors of their ocean voyage. These redemptive acts are all likened by the Nephite prophets to the ultimate redemption from death and sin made available through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The early Nephites thus had their hearts turned ahead to the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ or Messiah, which they saw as the central event in the divine plan of redemption from bondage to both sin and death.

From the perspective of the Nephites, remembrance included active participation in some form. For them it meant recalling not merely or simply with the mind but also with the heart (the heart being the seat of will, cognition, and memory for biblical peoples). For the Nephites, as for ancient Israel, to remember was to place the event upon the heart, or to turn the heart toward God—to repent or return to him and his ways as their righteous forefathers had done. As in the Hebrew Bible, remembering often carries the meaning of acting in obedience to God's commands. Remembering God and thereby prospering so as to be lifted up at the last day (as in 3 Nephi 15:1 and Alma 38:5) are contrasted with forgetting and perishing, or being cut off from God's presence (as in Alma 37:13 and 42:11). These contrasts remind us of Lehi's description of the grand opposition between obedience and eternal life, which includes the possibility of a liberation from sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and the ultimate bondage of the second death (see 2 Nephi 2).

Since remembering is not merely recalling something, but rather an action of the soul, what specific actions were the Nephites admonished by their prophets to take? The Book of Mormon tells us that they were to hearken (see, for example, Jacob 3:11), soften the heart, awaken, see, hear, believe, or trust, as the examples below demonstrate. Overall these actions involved turning to God. The covenant people showed their repentance by contrition, offering sacrifice, and especially by steadfastly keeping the commandments: "They did *remember* his words; and therefore they went forth, *keeping* [his] commandments" (Helaman 5:14).

On the other hand, when the covenant people forget, "they do harden their hearts, . . . and do trample under their feet the Holy One" (Helaman 12:2). Forgetfulness is also pictured as a dreadful sleep from which one needs to awaken (see 2 Nephi 1:12—13). The one who does not remember (and hence keep) is said to suffer from blindness and disbelief (see 3 Nephi 2:1—2) or from a hardness of heart (see 2 Nephi 1:16—17). To forget is also to fasten one's heart on or worship riches (see Helaman 13:22). It also means to engage in wickedness and to wax strong in iniquity (see Helaman 11:36). Being "cut off and destroyed forever" (2 Nephi 1:17) is the ultimate and dreadful fruit of forgetfulness.

The Book of Mormon links remembrance with covenants and their renewals. Remembering means to keep the terms of the covenant between God and his people; it is faithful response to God's commandments. At the same time, strictly keeping the commandments leads to remembering. Thus rebellious Israel, the prophet Abinadi tells us, was always "quick to do iniquity, and slow to *remember* the Lord their God; Therefore there was a law given them [by covenant at Sinai], yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to *keep* them in *remembrance* of God and their duty towards him" (Mosiah 13:29—30).

Like the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Mormon uses the expressions *keep* and *remember* interchangeably. For example, in Deuteronomy 5:12 the injunction is given to *"keep* the sabbath," while in Exodus 20:8 Israel is required to *"remember* the sabbath day, to *keep* it holy." This same connection is found in Jarom 1:5 and Mosiah 18:23, where the expression is to *"keep,"* and in Mosiah 13:16—19, where it is to *"remember."* Occasionally *"remember* to *keep"* combines both expressions. Thus Nephi pleads with his hearers to "give heed to the word of God and *remember* to *keep* his commandments always in all things" (1 Nephi 15:25). Again, remembering is an action, not merely recalling the past out of idle curiosity or for any other reason than to serve God.

In the Book of Mormon we see festivals and performances involving either an initial covenant making (see, for example, 3 Nephi 11—22, where Jesus of Nazareth himself—in his role as the Messiah or Christ—replaces for the Nephites the burnt offerings or holocaust of their original Mosaic covenant) or covenant renewals (see Mosiah 1:18— 6:3). These festivals and performances are said to have been observed in order to remember and hence *"keep* the commandments." (This expression occurs eighty-five times in the Book of Mormon, often in conjunction with remembrance, as in Alma 36:1, 30.) From the perspective of the Book of Mormon, one does not act only in order to remember. The two ideas are connected in both directions: a person remembers in the deepest sense only by acting in conformity with the will of God, and such deeds then stir remembrance of God's divine mercy to his people in times past and present, as Abinadi indicates.

Genuine memory or remembrance occurs in the faithful response to God's covenant with Israel to make them his people. Much like the teaching found in Deuteronomy 8:18—19, remembering God, keeping his commandments, and prospering are linked; then these notions are contrasted with forgetting him and perishing (see 2 Nephi 9:39; 10:22—23). Memory and covenants are thus consistently linked in the Book of Mormon. "*Rememberest* thou the covenants of the Father with the house of Israel?" (1 Nephi 14:8; compare, for example, 1 Nephi 17:40; 19:15; and 2 Nephi 3:5, 21; 29:1—2, 5, 14).

It is therefore not surprising to find in certain instances the concept of *remembrance* as part of the covenant blessing and cursing formula (see Alma 37:13; 36:1—2, 29—30; Mosiah 1:5—7; and 2:40—41). The Book of Mormon is not a secular but a covenant history, that is, one written from the perspective of the promised blessings for keeping the commandments and also the cursings that result from their neglect.

God's demands on Israel, as set forth both in the Bible and also in the Book of Mormon, cannot be fully or properly understood apart from the ways of remembrance. The mighty acts of God—including redemptive acts and the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt and, finally, the sacrifice of his Son—are the crucial events of the past. Without his dramatic acts on their behalf, they would have been nothing but another little, obscure Near Eastern tribe. The commandments he gave them recall and are based in his powerful actions on their behalf. Therefore the commandments are not just an expression of nice moral sentiments or even abstract law but are grounded in the key events in their history which form the substance of God's redemptive history.

According to the Book of Mormon, God is carrying out a plan[47] that includes the testing of his people—they are on probation.[48] A way has been provided for their redemption from darkness and sin (see 1 Nephi 10:18; 13:27; 2 Nephi 2:4; 9:10—11, 41; 28:10; and Alma 37:46), but they must trust God and repent; they must remember and keep the commandments. The importance of memory, in the Book of Mormon sense, is to keep before their eyes both the law and the lawgiver to bring about obedience and thus to allow them to claim the promised blessings and avoid the cursings that flow from disobedience.

As in the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Mormon language of remembrance provides a clear link between the commandments and covenant history. It is a special brand of historical memory that establishes the continuity of Israel as God's people. God's plan sets the stage for the history of Israel, a history dominated by the dialectic between obedience and rebellion, remembrance and forgetfulness, blessings and cursings, liberty and captivity, and eventually eternal life and death (see 2 Nephi 2:27). Remembrance thus makes Israel aware of her sins, God's mercy and love, and her own covenant pledge to keep the commandments.

In addition, the language of remembrance, as in the Hebrew Bible, includes warnings, promises, threats, pleas, complaints, and so forth. Often the language of the Book of Mormon takes the form of what appear to be stereotyped formulas. "O man, *remember*, and perish not" (Mosiah 4:30) is an example of one such formula that joins together memory and action. Furthermore, remembering the covenant is sometimes equivalent to possessing a land promised to the descendants of the one who first entered into the covenant with God, or to those who might be "grafted in" (see 1 Nephi 10:14; 15:16; Jacob 5; and Alma 16:17) or "numbered among" that seed (see 1 Nephi 14:2; 2 Nephi 10:18—19; Alma 5:57; 45:13; Helaman 15:13; 3 Nephi 2:14; 15:24; 16:3, 13; 21:6, 22; and 30:2). In that regard, Lehi's dealings with God are presented on the model provided by Abraham (see 1 Nephi 4:14—15; 17:40), and much attention is given in the Book of Mormon to the promise connected to the land.

To this point little has been said about God's remembering. God is portrayed as remembering, or forgetting, because of a covenant he once made with his people. By forgetting (or not remembering) the sins of his people, God grants a blessing or gives a gift in accordance with his covenant, which includes mercy or forgiveness (see Mosiah 26:22, 29—31). When God remembers, he does something, just as he expects his people to act when they remember him. He may punish, deliver, preserve, heal, sustain, warn, forgive, or otherwise intervene in human affairs by remembering or forgetting. For God to remember always involves or at least implies his working through real events, molding situations and circumstances to further his "eternal plan of deliverance" (2 Nephi 11:5) or

"plan of redemption" (Jacob 6:8; Alma 12; 17:16; 18:39; and 34:9, 16, 31). God's remembering is much more than a mere recall of something in his thoughts—it rather involves action, the giving of life or death.

The close links between thought and action can be seen in the way in which remembering in the Book of Mormon is linked to the heart of man (see, for example, Alma 1:24; 10:30; and 32:22). Such links are also demonstrated in the giving of names. To remember someone is to know or believe on his name. "And I would that ye should *remember* also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. I say unto you, I would that ye should *remember* to retain the name written always in your hearts" (Mosiah 5:11—12). To remember is to awaken, hearken, heed, pray, obey, know, and ponder.

The Book of Mormon emphasizes the need to have and keep sacred records (such as the plates of brass) and to preserve them. In this we may see the kind of connection found in the Hebrew (and in Arabic) language between the very meaning "to remember" and the word which means "record." A "book of *remembrance*" is mentioned in the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 24:16), as well as a "book of life" that records the names of the righteous (see Alma 5:58; compare 2 Nephi 29:11; 3 Nephi 27:26). To record is to make a memorial of deeds or sayings, to inscribe in a book (see Exodus 17:14).

In the Book of Mormon, remembering is clearly dependent on the possession of records (see 1 Nephi 4:14; and especially Mosiah 1:3—4). This connection is part of the obsession with records prevalent among the Nephite prophets. Throughout the Book of Mormon, the fate of the people of God depends on their memory of the past. The existence of historical records and careful attention to their contents and message are stressed throughout. Without such attention, the people would fail to fulfill their role in the plan of salvation.

King Benjamin taught his sons

> concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My Sons, I would that ye should *remember* that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have *remembered* all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates. . . . Were it not for these [records], which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites. (Mosiah 1:3—5)

King Benjamin, employing a common formula for the instruction of sons in the Book of Mormon, enjoins them:

> I would that ye should *remember* that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true. . . . Now, my sons, I would that ye should *remember* to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should *keep* the commandments of God, that ye may prosper in the land according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers. (Mosiah 1:6—7)

Clearly the remembering expected of the people of God in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon is not mere curiosity; neither is it a matter of simple recall. Rather, the key lies in righteous deeds.

The covenant God made with Lehi was renewed from time to time through rituals involving the entire community. Those rituals were a medium of instruction and constituted the "ways of *remembrance*," as they did with ancient Israel. Remembering the terms of the covenant made with God includes the constant stressing of the blessings and cursings that flow from keeping or breaking the commandments, from the broken-hearted and contrite offering of sacrifices as memorials (or fruits) of repentance.

The Historical Setting—Does the 1830 Audience Determine It?

One of the more ambitious efforts to read the Book of Mormon as a modern book is currently being made by Mark Thomas;[49] he focuses on what he assumes to be a simple idea borrowed by Joseph Smith from the immediate sectarian religious environment of nineteenth-century New England. What he does not notice is that the language of remembrance in the Book of Mormon reflects in detail a sensitivity on the part of its prophets that mirrors that of other Israelite prophets. In one of his recent essays, Thomas reports that some of those who read the Book of Mormon as a nineteenth-century composition—Joseph Smith's effort at frontier fiction—reach the conclusion that "the theology of the Book of Mormon as a whole can be characterized as a theology of mediation between opposing positions."[50] Thomas notes that some even feel "that its theological stance regarding human nature is a middling position between Calvinism and Arminianism, and its view of the godhead is a cross between belief in one and many gods."[51]

But Thomas does not entirely agree with the stance taken by other fashionable revisionists on these matters. For example, he reports that he has "argued elsewhere that the Book of Mormon advocates conservative Arminianism and defends a trinitarian position on the godhead."[52] But Thomas does not indicate what he means by "a trinitarian position." The word *trinity* means three and not one, as is so often assumed by those involved in polemics directed at the restored gospel. Except for the very early Sabellian or modalist heresy, which pictured the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as merely the way in which one deity appears to human beings, and the Unitarian movement started by William Ellery Channing, early Christians seem to have insisted on the existence of three separate and distinct entities in the Godhead. But, with the loss of prophetic guidance, the early church tried to figure out how three divine beings could also be one. Out of debates over this question, a variety of explanations were fashioned which employed categories borrowed from pagan Greek philosophy to try to explain how it is possible to have three separate beings and yet also only one God. The Book of Mormon obviously does not contain the kinds of language found in the creeds, which attempt to turn three separate and distinct beings into one God by "neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance," as it was expressed in the Athanasian Creed, borrowing categories from pagan philosophy.

Those who are anxious to read the Book of Mormon as a nineteenth-century composition struggle to find ways of linking its message and teachings to the controversies going on in the sectarian world. Ironically they end up quarreling with each other on exactly which strand of sectarian religious ideology they see in the Book of Mormon. And they also resort to rather clumsy proof texting to support their efforts to read strands of this and that sectarian ideology into the Book of Mormon.

Like a number of other cultural Mormons, Mark Thomas strives to read the Book of Mormon as a modern book. And yet some of his language is equivocal. For example, after arguing at length that the covenant renewal (or sacrament) prayers in the Book of Mormon (see Moroni 4—5) were drawn by Joseph Smith from contemporary quarrels over liturgical matters in his own immediate sectarian religious environment, Thomas surmises that "some readers may conclude that this points to a nineteenth-century historical setting for the writing of the Book

of Mormon. Others may conclude that rhetoric was such a central concern of the ancient authors and/or Joseph Smith that they shaped both form and content of the book to address nineteenth-century issues."[53] If these are the only alternatives, where does Thomas position himself? Put another way: what exactly is the assumption on which Thomas himself operates when he attempts to explicate the meaning of language in the Book of Mormon?

Thomas begins with the assumption that "the Book of Mormon utilizes nineteenth-century literary forms and theological categories."[54] This is obvious. Why? No one ever claimed that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon into Maori, Persian, or Russian. So it will necessarily contain nineteenth-century English. One must assume that Thomas has more than this in mind. And he clearly does, for he also insists, and perhaps correctly, that the Book of Mormon message "finds expression in an idiom that cannot be fully interpreted outside of history." He then suggests a link "between textual interpretation and historical setting."[55] And I agree. But what historical setting should be attributed to the Book of Mormon? Should it be read as a modern rather than an ancient book?

Thomas holds that "interpretative theory demands some historical setting."[56] Thomas has only two choices: either he can read the Book of Mormon as an ancient text, which he steadfastly refuses to do, or he can read it as set in Joseph Smith's immediate environment. For Thomas the Book of Mormon must be read as frontier fiction composed by Joseph Smith in an effort to present his version of the sectarian religious opinions floating around western New York. So Thomas wishes "to appeal to history as an interpretive aid. The historical setting to which I will appeal," he admits, "is the original 1830 audience."[57] Hence Thomas suggests that this audience somehow provides the proper historical setting for understanding the Book of Mormon. For Thomas, the Book of Mormon must be read as a nineteenth-century composition—not as an authentic ancient history. I disagree.

The way in which an audience can begin to grasp the meaning contained and sometimes hidden in a text is by reading it. And if it is an ancient text, obviously understanding something of the historical setting in which it was composed will materially assist in grasping that meaning. This is especially the case with texts translated from another language. Hence, if one has any reason to believe, as the Saints have always done, that Joseph Smith somehow "translated" through the gift and power of God an authentic ancient text into English, then its nineteenth-century audience does not somehow fix its meaning; its modern audience merely attempts to grasp its meaning as far as that is possible. And ancient texts, especially in translation, are often strange to a modern audience. The stance taken by Thomas is much like claiming that the twentieth-century audience for Thomas L. Pangle's translation of Plato's *Laws* or Allan Bloom's translation of Plato's *Republic* is somehow the historical setting in which those dialogues were composed.

What Thomas has to say about remembrance in the sacrament prayers (he identifies them as eucharistic prayers) found in Moroni 4—5 provides an opportunity to test the thesis that the proper avenue for interpreting the Book of Mormon is the assumption that Joseph Smith was its author and hence that he was merely borrowing ideas from his immediate sectarian environment. Thomas argues that nineteenth-century literary forms and theological categories are found in the sacrament prayers and are a key to understanding them. And he specifically identifies as one of these nineteenth-century notions the call for remembrance in the blessing to be offered on the bread and wine. He announces that "obedience is promised in taking the wine, and the bread signifies remembrance only."[58] What can be said with some certainty is that, if Thomas had looked into the question of how the language of remembrance is used in the Book of Mormon, he would have noticed that it follows rather closely its use in the Old Testament. He would have discovered a linguistic and hence conceptual link in the Book of Mormon (and the Old Testament) between remembering and keeping the commandments. And he could not have maintained his

notion that the sacrament prayers involve some effort to generate a subjective, emotional "religious experience," whatever that might be.

Misunderstanding the Ways of Remembrance—Seeing Emotion Rather Than Deeds as the Crux

The covenant people of God are constantly urged in the Book of Mormon to remember. It is not just in the blessing on the bread and wine found in Moroni 4—5 that remembrance is enjoined on the faithful. Thomas grants that "the importance of remembering comes up frequently in the Book of Mormon."[59] He then claims that "to 'remember' is to grasp the significance of one's position before God."[60] As I will demonstrate, this is at least intolerably vague. He opines that nothing resembling the Roman Catholic notion of a real presence of God exists in the communal partaking of the bread and wine set forth in the Book of Mormon. These are, he claims, "but a memorial to be taken 'in remembrance.'"[61] A memorial? This formulation seems tautological and hence empty. Thomas struggles to develop his explanation: he holds that "this experiential memorial is expressed in the theme of 'remembrance' in the Mormon prayers. Understanding the concept of remembrance helps clarify its use in the eucharistic prayers."[62] He is, of course, right in holding that getting clear on the ways of remembrance would assist in understanding those prayers.

But exactly how does Thomas understand what he calls "the concept of remembrance" in the Book of Mormon? He correctly notes that the sacrament or eucharistic prayer "exhorts remembrance of God's commandments or covenants."[63] Without following up this insight, Thomas also announces that "'remembrance' or memory implies a state of being, a religious experience which conduces to righteous behavior."[64] A "state of being"? An "experience" or "religious experience"? Such vague language only obscures the meaning contained in the text he attempts to interpret. He describes remembrance rather vaguely or wrongly as both "a religious and emotional experience."[65] These are categories foreign to the Book of Mormon. What exactly does Thomas have in mind when he uses such vague expressions? On the basis of what he has located in sectarian sources, he announces that one ought to acknowledge the fact that sacramental prayers involving "remembrance and covenant obedience were in frontier worship of western New York."[66] What he does not sense is that similar language does not demonstrate that the same meaning is present. Obviously various forms of the verb "to remember" would be found in sectarian liturgies in western New York at or near the time of Joseph Smith. But would that language be used as it is in the Book of Mormon (or in the Bible)? Thomas neglects to ask such questions and hence never gets beyond noting what are some trivial linguistic similarities.

It turns out that Thomas thinks that partaking of the bread and wine involves what he calls "a state of being," which seems to be merely a subjective emotion. He also describes the presence of the spirit as "a state of being."[67] Thomas seems to have found this kind of language in some of his sectarian sources in western New York. Hence he claims, and perhaps correctly, that somehow remembrance "as experiential memorial appealed to evangelicals in the early nineteenth century. These evangelicals believed in subjective religion. They described their religion as 'experiential religion.' What they meant by this was a religion the individual experienced."[68] And to experience religion meant to experience or manifest an emotion,[69] perhaps to bark or shout or fall in a camp meeting. Such revivals may be an example of what Thomas is getting at. All this may or may not be true. But it is certainly not helpful in understanding the ways of remembrance as actually found in the Book of Mormon. Instead of depicting remembrance as an emotional experience, the Book of Mormon clearly links remembering with doing something, specifically with keeping the commandments of God.

Conclusion

Though the entire range of uses of the language of remembrance in the Book of Mormon is not as extensive as that identifiable in the Old Testament, words for memory and remembrance occur in the Nephite record well over two hundred times. This high density is not noticed by casual readers, but it vividly reflects a sensitivity on the part of Book of Mormon prophets that is remarkably similar to that of other Israelite prophets.

The prophetic, redemptive history found in the Book of Mormon, which stresses God's continuous effort to save or deliver his covenant people, is given to enlarge their memory (see Alma 37:8). Many passages in the Book of Mormon manifest a passion for preserving the crucial story of God's dealings with his people and also stress their halting responses. The heart of that story is the conflict between obedience and rebellion, liberty and bondage, prosperity and suffering, having the influence of the spirit or being cut off from God's presence. Remembrance thus teaches and warns Israel, although it does not inflate reputations or generate pride. The people of God need to know how they came to be a covenant people; they also need to know how they have strayed, both as a people and as individuals, from the correct path or way, and how they might regain favor in God's sight by turning away from sin and returning to God. Here we find the deeper meaning of the covenant renewal that takes place in the sacrament.

We are enjoined to remember, as the Nephites of old remembered. We are to remember the curses brought on the Nephites, which they inflicted on themselves by forgetting the terms of the covenant. We must understand that to the extent that we fail to remember and keep our covenants with God we are or will be cut off from his presence. Without God's mercy we remain carnal, sensual, and devilish, chained in bondage and captivity.

The sacred records translated as the Book of Mormon provide us with prophetic direction and warning by preserving and enlarging our own memory of God's mighty deeds and of the terms of the covenant that make us the people of God. These records teach us that we must neither forget what God has done nor what we have covenanted to do. The result of such a forgetting is to turn onto an alien way or path into darkness and sin. Instead, the people of God must "always *remember* him, and *keep* his commandments," as they take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ (Moroni 4:3), for to forget the sacrifice offered by our Lord for our sins by not keeping the commandments is to offend God and fall from his grace.

Notes

1. Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory,* 2nd ed., with a new preface and postscript by the author and a foreword by Harold Bloom (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 107.

2. Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 3.

3. Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 153.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Among other things, Yerushalmi is the Salo Wittmayer Baron Professor of Jewish History, Culture, and Society at Columbia University.

7. Bloom makes this point forcefully in the first part of his foreword to the paperback edition, in Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, xix.

8. Ibid., 8.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 9.

11. Ibid., 11.

12. Ibid., 21.

13. Ibid., 89.

14. Ibid., xiv.

15. Ibid., xix.

16. Ibid.

17. See David Singer, "Testimony," *Commentary* 76/1 (July 1983): 72—75, reviewing the original 1982 hardback edition of Zakhor, first issued by the University of Washington Press.

18. L. Jackson Newell, ed., *Matters of Conscience: Conversations with Sterling M. McMurrin on Philosophy, Education, and Religion* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 114.

19. McMurrin has become famous for the secular dogmatism that "we don't get books from angels and translate them by miracles." Ibid., 368; and cf. 24, 108, 190, 194, 210—11.

20. Specifically Marvin S. Hill and Klaus J. Hansen. Subsequently I discovered that they had allies among the "liberal" RLDS faction currently in control of that movement.

21. I have provided a reasonably full description of and response to this literature in various essays. See, for example, my essay entitled "The Current Battle over the Book of Mormon: 'Is Modernity Itself Somehow Canonical?'" *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 200—254; or my essay entitled "Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Critics and Their Theories," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 101—39.

22. See Martin E. Marty, *We Might Know What to Do and How to Do It: On the Usefulness of the Religious Past* (Salt Lake City: Westminster College, 1989), 3—21.

23. Ibid., 8.

24. Ibid., 9—10.

25. See ibid.

26. Ibid., 11.

27. See ibid.

28. For an account of how and why Latter-day Saints have given little or no attention to what is traditionally known as "theology," but have grounded their faith in texts like the Book of Mormon, which they believe constitute an authentic his-tory, see Midgley, "Theology," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1475—76. The Saints have a particular antipathy toward the kind of theology that is made to rest on categories borrowed from pagan philosophical traditions. I have dealt with this issue in detail in an essay entitled, "Directions that Diverge: 'Jerusalem and Athens' Revisited," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/1 (1999): 27—87, esp. pp. 58—72.

29. Marty, *We Might Know What to Do*, 11—12.

30. Ibid.; see also Martin E. Marty, "Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," in *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 170, which was reprinted from the *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 3—19, and also from Marty's *Religion and Republic* (Boston: Beacon, 1987), 303—25.

31. Marty, We Might Know What to Do, 12; quoting his "Two Integrities," 170.

32. Marty, "Two Integrities," 169.

33. Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (New York: Meridian, 1959), 298—301. He has in mind the likes of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.

34. See Noel B. Reynolds's essay, "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century," *BYU Studies* 38/2 (1999): 6—47, which shows the increased and increasingly sophisticated attention given to the Book of Mormon since 1945.

35. Marty, "Two Integrities," 170.

36. Marty, *A Short History*, 296.

37. Marty, "Two Integrities," 171.

38. For an example of the recent attack on the Book of Mormon, see the ten essays included in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993). But compare these attacks on the Book of Mormon with the thirteen responses found in the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994). In subsequent numbers of this journal additional responses to Metcalfe have appeared.

39. See Louis Midgley, "The Acids of Modernity and the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," in *Faithful History*, 189—225.

40. Thomas G. Alexander, "Historiography and the New Mormon History: A Historian's Perspective," *Dialogue* 19/3 (1986): 30.

41. Ibid., 46.

42. See Midgley, "The Current Battle over the Book of Mormon," 200—225.

43. For this richly detailed study in English of memory in the Old Testament, see Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM, 1962). Yerushalmi also cites other studies in German. See his *Zakhor*, 119 n. 1.

44. See Louis Midgley, "The Ways of Remembrance," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights You May Have Missed Before*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 168—76.

45. Childs, *Memory and Tradition*, 9, lists the numbers for the various forms of the word.

46. See ibid., 9—10, 50—54.

47. See 2 Nephi 9:6, 13; Jacob 6:8; Jarom 1:2; Alma 12:25—26, 30, 32—33; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13; 24:14; 29:2; 34:9, 16; 39:18; 41:2; and 42:5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 31.

48. See 1 Nephi 10:21; 15:31—32; 2 Nephi 2:21, 30; 9:27; 33:9; Helaman 13:38; and Mormon 9:28.

49. See Mark Thomas, "Was Joseph Smith for Real? How He Lied, Perhaps Even to Himself," *Free Inquiry* 20/1 (1999): 37—39; "A Mosaic for a Religious Counterculture: The Bible in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue* 29/4 (1996): 47—68; "Moroni 8 as Rhetoric," *Sunstone* 4/1 (January—February 1979): 22—24; "Scholarship and the Future of the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 5/3 (May—June 1980): 24—29; "Lehi's Dream: An American Apocalypse," in *Proceedings of the Symposia of the Association for Mormon Letters: 1979—1982* (Salt Lake City: Association for Mormon Letters, 1983), 91—98; "The Meaning of Revival Language in the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 8/3 (May—June 1983): 19—25; "Scholarship and the Book of Mormon," in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 63—79, reprinted with editorial changes from "Scholarship and the Future of the Book of Mormon"; Mark D. Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000); and finally "A Rhetorical Approach to the Book of Mormon: Rediscovering Nephite Sacramental Language," in *New Approaches*, 53—80.

50. Thomas, "Rhetorical Approach," 57.

51. Ibid., 57—58. Thomas cites Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 21—22. Hill asserts that "theologically the Book of Mormon was a mediating text standing between orthodox Calvinists and emerging Arminians" (p. 21). Hill's illustrations seem puerile. For example, "the scripture was to provide a second witness to a disbelieving world" (p. 21). What this has to do with mediating between Calvinist and Arminian theology is anyone's guess. What Marvin Hill says is that for him the Book of Mormon appears to have an "ambivalent position on the trinity." Why? "It is true," Hill opines, "that some passages blur the distinctions between the Father and the Son" (p. 22). Hill apparently does not seem to realize that the word trinity means three. And the Book of Mormon clearly identifies Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What it does not do is picture their unity in terms of an Aristotelian category such as substance, which is what is commonly done in the formulations advanced by those drawing either knowingly or unknowingly on pagan philosophical

traditions in an effort to have the three separate and distinct beings, which are at the same time also one, in order to avoid charges of polytheism. Hill adds that "another category where the treatment seems mediatory is the scripture's view of man and mortality. At one point the text sounds Calvinistic." Why? Hill reasons that, "according to the Book of Mormon salvation comes only through grace" (p. 22). For Hill, this is Calvinism. But, then again, "men and women are capable of faith and repentance and have the will to believe" (p. 22), and this sounds Arminian to Hill. What he does not seem to recognize is that the position advanced in the Book of Mormon on these matters is substantially the same as that found in the New Testament and the early church fathers, though it is radically unlike that advanced later by Augustine and taken up much later by Calvin.

52. Thomas, "Rhetorical Approach," 58. He cites his remarks from the "Readers Forum," *Sunstone* 13/6 (December 1989): 4—5; and his "Scholarship and the Book of Mormon," in *The Word of God*, 63—79.

53. Thomas, "Rhetorical Approach," 77.

54. Ibid., 54.

55. Ibid., 53.

56. Ibid., 54.

57. Ibid., 53.

58. Ibid., 56.

59. Ibid., 69.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., 68.

62. Ibid., 69.

63. Ibid., 70.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., 73.

67. Ibid., 69.

68. Ibid., 70.

69. See ibid.

Inspired Melody and Chosen Word: The Wedding of Music and Scripture in Leroy Robertson's *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*

Marian Robertson-Wilson

The *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon* by Leroy Robertson is a dramatic presentation of certain events in the Book of Mormon which are portrayed by key personages and tied together by a compact narrative. As such, it resembles an unstaged opera. Robertson himself described it as "a fresh, new American approach to the greatest, age-old story ever told" and further stated that in this composition he hoped to

> crystallize the powerful events concerning the prediction, the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as contained in the Book of Mormon, at a high level of art which would give it [the story] a degree of permanence as a work.[1]

Brief History of Its Composition

The idea for an oratorio based on material from the Book of Mormon was first planted in Robertson's mind by Apostle Melvin J. Ballard circa 1919 when this high church dignitary chanced one day to sit by the young violin-toting musician during a ride to Salt Lake City on the old interurban train.[2] Although the concept never left him, Robertson was unable to begin serious and consistent work on the *Oratorio* until the 1940s. It was virtually completed in 1947 and premiered in 1953 by University of Utah choruses, the required soloists, and the Utah Symphony, all under the direction of Maurice Abravanel.[3] It was recorded by a local company at that time, and then again in 1961 by Abravanel and his loyal forces under the auspices of Vanguard Recording Society, Inc. This latter recording gave the *Oratorio* national and international exposure and elicited widespread and favorable reaction.[4]

After Robertson's death (1971), the *Oratorio* was performed for the first time by the Tabernacle Choir in 1978, again with the Utah Symphony, Abravanel conducting. It was also recorded once more, this time under the aegis of Columbia Records.[5]

From its inception, this work has met with unprecedented success. Beyond Utah it has been performed in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; Independence, Missouri; Rexburg, Idaho; and at the Old North Church in Boston, Massachusetts. It stands yet today as a landmark composition in the musical literature of both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and twentieth-century America.

Challenges of Composing This Oratorio

Once, when describing the composition of the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon,* Robertson remarked: "As soon as I could get a libretto that would work, the music was there. I didn't have to worry about the music at all."[6] With revealed scripture providing the basis for his text, one may naturally wonder what problems the composer could have faced in constructing his libretto.[7]

The fundamental challenge proved to be that of choosing material which would fit within the confines of a modern oratorio, i.e., Robertson needed a well-focused story of universal interest, clearly narrated, and expressed through powerful characters—all to be contained in a work of about an hour's duration. With the Book of Mormon story spanning about one thousand years (if we exclude the book of Ether), traversing the world from Jerusalem to America, and replete with innumerable events and impressive personages, the composer faced a text almost overwhelming in its scope. Only after many months, even years, of intensive daily study did Robertson decide which material would best suit his needs.[8] Ultimately he chose what constitutes for many the apex of the entire Book of Mormon: the birth and death of Christ, and his appearance on the American continent as described in Helaman and 3 Nephi.

Having selected which events to depict, Robertson then had to arrange them in a logical sequence. This he outlined as follows:

Part I: The prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephites concerning the birth and death of Christ.

Part II: The signs of the birth of Christ as witnessed by those on the American continent.

Part III: The signs of the death of Christ as witnessed by the Nephites, and Christ's ministry on the American continent.[9]

As the *Oratorio* unfolds, three characters emerge: Samuel the Lamanite; the Evangelist, who narrates some events and ties the story together; and Jesus Christ the Lord, who ministers to the Nephites and is worshiped in his glory. The Nephites are represented by the choruses.

Wedding the Words and Music

Robertson's ultimate and most detailed task—and one that likely came concurrently with making his outline—was to choose the pertinent passages from the Book of Mormon, put them in order, and then hone them line by line as he set them to the music that constantly came to his mind. He soon realized that he could not always follow the text exactly as written in the Book of Mormon, for whenever music enters the picture, both music and words must combine so as to enhance each other. Some astute and respectful adaptation of the scripture would be needed.

Therefore, two questions immediately arise: (1) What sort of adaptations did Robertson make? and (2) Did these adaptations in any way change the message of the Book of Mormon text?

A careful examination of Robertson's libretto reveals the following:

1. The composer abandoned all use of words in favor of the orchestra so as to express the mood of the event being depicted; or,

2. he followed the text exactly, making no changes whatsoever; or,

3. he repeated given words and phrases for emphasis; or,

4. he omitted a few words and phrases from the Book of Mormon text, usually to avoid repetition; or

5. he extracted salient phrases from many passages, which he then juxtaposed in order to condense and dramatize the events in question.

Throughout the score, Robertson conscientiously cited the exact scriptural reference for each line of his libretto, thereby leaving no doubt as to the original source (for this concordance, see the appendix, pp. 149—58).

Obviously, a word-by-word, line-by-line comparison of the entire libretto with the corresponding scriptural passages would far exceed the scope of this article.[10] However, a brief analysis of a few illustrative passages will be given herewith as an indication of Robertson's adaptation of the Book of Mormon text:

Abandoning words completely. A vivid example of using only the orchestra occurs at the very beginning of the *Oratorio*, where a brilliant introduction by full orchestra sets the stage for the work to follow.[11] In less than three minutes, Robertson evokes the turmoil, disobedience, pride, and anger then rampant among the Nephites—all described over many pages of Helaman. The listener awaits and is prepared for righteous Samuel's bold entrance, which holds everyone spellbound (see below).

Robertson, again using only the orchestra, sets a very different mood when the rejected Samuel departs from the Nephites. Immediately following the Evangelist's remorseful, "And he [Samuel] did go into his own country and was never heard of more among the Nephites," the short, eloquent "Epilogue" ending Part I bespeaks Samuel's sorrow for the Nephites' attitude and the tragedies surely to befall them.[12]

Another orchestra number worthy of mention—if for no other reason than that it has gone on to have a life of its own apart from the *Oratorio*—is the "Andante" (or "Pastorale") that concludes Part II.[13] With this tender piece, Robertson depicts the miracle of Christ's birth, which, in this setting, evokes the sweet calm and comfort of the Christ child's loving spirit. Robertson had felt and had never forgotten this calm while herding sheep as a lad for his father in the Western Desert of Utah. Referring to a whispering clarinet figure in the "Andante," he once remarked that it was like "a gentle wind blowing across the desert."[14]

Keeping the original text intact. From among many passages, one may cite two wherein Robertson used the words exactly as printed in the Book of Mormon. The first is his well-known and much beloved setting of the Lord's Prayer (see 3 Nephi 13:9—13; see also Matthew 6:9—13). Because both the text and music speak for themselves, any analysis or further discussion here would be superfluous.[15]

The other passage, however, deserves some comment because, for Robertson, it stood out as one of the most powerful utterances in the entire Book of Mormon. For this text, the composer provided only an accompaniment of organ chords. There is no tempo marking, hence the vocalist is free to express his own phrasing and feeling as full attention centers on the gravity of the words. Robertson marked this passage *serioso*. The source is 3 Nephi 26:3:

> He [Christ] did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that He should come in His glory —Yea, even all which should come upon the face of the earth, until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away.[16]

Repeating words and phrases. Robertson repeated phrases in his libretto either to build or diminish momentum. One example of building momentum and emotion can be found during Samuel's rebuke of the Nephites when he

predicts the destruction facing them unless they change their ways. At this point Robertson wrote a lament for the chorus—now representing the Nephites—in which the beginning phrase, "O that we had repented," is sung four times; then, a few bars later, the plaintive line, "O that we had remembered the Lord our God" (Helaman 13:36, 33), is also sung four times, this time in imitation. In fact, nearly every phrase in this passage is repeatedly tossed back and forth throughout the chorus, even to the final lines:

> O Lord, cans't Thou not take away Thine anger? O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, take away, away Thine anger, away. (Helaman 13:37)[17]

Another choral piece in which Robertson repeated phrases is found at the conclusion of Part I, Section 2, this time with a quiet, diminishing momentum. Samuel has just predicted the birth of Christ, which is to occur in five years, and concludes with these words of comfort: "And whosoever shall believe on the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life" (Helaman 14:8). The believers confirm their feelings as they sing a soft lyrical melody, whose initial motif itself repeats, then finally fades away:

> How beautiful upon the mountains, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings— How beautiful upon the mountain, How beautiful upon the mountain, the mountain, Are the feet of him, are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, good tidings. (see 3 Nephi 20:40 and Isaiah 52:7)[18]

Omitting words and phrases. A good example of Robertson's omitting words and phrases comes at the outset of the *Oratorio*, in Samuel's rebuke to the Nephites (the asterisks [*] show where a word or phrase of the Book of Mormon text has been omitted from the libretto):

> Behold, I, Samuel a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord,* And He hath put it into my heart to say* the sword of justice hangeth over this people. And four hundred years pass not away that the sword of justice falleth,* And heavy destruction awaiteth* and it surely cometh,* And nothing can save* but* repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, Who surely shall come into the world and be slain for His people. (see Helaman 13:5—6)[19]

At seven points in this passage, Robertson has omitted a word or phrase. At the first point, which comes immediately after Samuel's bold introduction of himself, Robertson omitted this phrase: "which he [the Lord] doth put into my heart." However, at this juncture, three brilliant bars in the orchestra are heard, which serve to punctuate Samuel's announcement (as does the omitted phrase). Thus, in a sense, the music not only complements, but also replaces the text.[20] At the next five points, words referring to "this people" have been omitted.[21] Sharp, very short chords in the orchestra punctuate each of these omissions. And with the strident and frightening orchestral flourish that follows the phrase, "the sword of justice hangeth over this people," the music gives the needed emphasis, leaving no doubt as to whom Samuel's message is directed.

In the last two lines of this passage, the tone of rebuke suddenly changes with Samuel singing a lyrical melody to a quiet string accompaniment, hinting at Christ's forgiveness and suffering. At the last point, Robertson shortened the Book of Mormon's "save it be" to "but." This in no way changes the meaning and better suits the musical context.

Extracting pertinent phrases from several passages. Robertson usually extracted such phrases from long descriptive passages and then juxtaposed them so that the music would heighten the drama of the events narrated in the Book of Mormon. As an example, one may cite the beginning of Part III, where Robertson has taken some salient phrases from 3 Nephi 8:5—24 and put them together so as to present in a few lines the destruction witnessed by the Nephites at Christ's death: the great storm and terrible tempest; the earth divided asunder; the people drowned, slain, and carried away in a whirlwind; the impenetrable mists of darkness; the Nephites crying: "O this day, this terrible day."[22] Needless to say, the music vividly depicts these events by creating the impressions of the storm, the whirlwind, the overpowering blackness. But one must hear these passages, for their effect cannot be adequately described.

For the "Finale" of the *Oratorio*, Robertson again employed this technique. From passages in 3 Nephi, Helaman, and Isaiah (as quoted in the Book of Mormon), he extracted four lines, as follows:

> The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. (3 Nephi 16:20; see also 3 Nephi 20:35 and Isaiah 52:10)
>
> All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (3 Nephi 20:35; see also Isaiah 52:10)
>
> Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion. (3 Nephi 20:36; see also Isaiah 52:1)
>
> Thy King cometh unto thee. (a paraphrase of Helaman 5:9)

To each of these lines the composer gave a distinctive melody, developing them one at a time, then putting them together, one after the other, to construct a great quadruple fugue.[23] The fact that these four short lines occupy twelve pages of the orchestra score bears witness to the extent and power of the music.[24]

An extended "Glory" immediately follows this piece, with the music for this single word growing until it covers ten pages of the orchestra score.[25]

The *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon* then concludes with a resounding chorale setting of the Doxology, wherein the audience is invited to sing as well:

Glory unto the Father and the Son, Glory unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, As it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever, Is now and shall be forever. Amen. Amen.[26]

Conclusion

Even as a youth, Leroy Robertson proved himself to be a master at setting words to music, and in the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*, he put those talents to a quintessential test. As the composer once stated, in fashioning this work, he indeed found "a beautiful wedding" of text and melody.[27] The foregoing analysis is but an attempt to show this linkage and may serve as a guideline to Robertson's thinking. But truly, one must hear the *Oratorio* in order to feel its full effect and comprehend its meaning. Then does one come to realize how, by means of his music, Leroy Robertson celebrated the greatness of the scripture upon which it is based.

Concordance of Scriptural References and the Text of the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*
Adapted by Leroy J. Robertson from Helaman and 3 Nephi
PART I

Samuel the Lamanite prophesies concerning the birth, death, and resurrection of the Christ. Samuel also rebukes the Nephites for their sins and prophesies their destruction.

Section 1

SAMUEL

Hel. 13:5 Behold, I, Samuel a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord.
And he hath put it into my heart to say that the sword of justice hangeth over this people,
And four hundred years pass not away that the sword of justice falleth,
6 And heavy destruction awaiteth and it surely cometh,
And nothing can save but repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ,
Who surely shall come into the world and shall suffer many things and be slain for His people.
7 For behold an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me,
And he did bring glad tidings to my soul.
And behold I was sent to declare it unto you that ye might also have glad tidings,
But ye would not receive me.
29 O ye wicked and ye perverse generation,
Ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people,
How long do ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you.
22 Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you,
But ye do always remember your riches,
Yea, your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord,
But they do swell with great pride unto boasting, envying, strife, malice, persecution and murder and all manner of iniquity.
23 For this hath the Lord caused that a curse should come upon the land and also upon your riches,
32 And in the day of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord, but in vain shall ye cry.
For your desolation is already come upon you and your destruction is made sure.
And then shall ye weep and howl in that day,
And then shall ye lament and say:

CHORUS

36 O that we had repented,
33 And not killed the prophets
And stoned them and cast them out.
O that we had remembered the Lord our God
In the day that He gave us our riches for our riches are gone.
36 O that we had repented.
37 Behold, we are surrounded by demons,
Encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls.
O Lord, can’st thou not take away Thine anger?
O Lord, take away Thine anger, away.

Section 2

SAMUEL

Hel. 14:2 Behold, I give unto you a sign;
For five years more then cometh the Son of God
To redeem all those who believe on His name
3 And at the time of His coming there shall be great lights in heaven
4 And the night shall not be darkened,
The night before He is born.
5 And behold, there shall a new star arise
6 And there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven.
7 And ye shall all be amazed and fall to the earth,
8 And whosoever shall believe on the Son of God
The same shall have everlasting life.

CHORUS

3 Ne. 20:40 How beautiful upon the mountain
(Isa. 52:7) Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.

Section 3

SAMUEL AND CHORUS

Hel. 14:14 Again, another sign I give unto you,
A sign of His death.
15 For He surely must die to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead
That thereby man may be brought into the presence of the Lord.
20 Behold in the day that He shall suffer death
The sun shall be darkened;
The moon and the stars shall refuse to give light unto you.
There shall be no light upon the face of the land
Even from the time that He shall suffer death unto the time that He shall rise again from the dead.
21—23 There shall be thunderings and lightnings,
The earth shall shake and tremble.
The rocks broken up and mountains laid low,
27 And darkness shall cover the earth.
25 The graves shall be opened and yield up their dead.

EVANGELIST

Hel. 16:1 And there were many who heard the words of Samuel
Which he spake upon the walls of the city.
And they who believed on His name went forth
To be baptized unto the Lord.
2 But those who believed not were angry
And cast stones and shot arrows at him
As he stood upon the wall;
But the spirit of the Lord was with him
And they could not hit him with their stones and their arrows.
6 And when they saw this they cried unto their captains saying:

CHORUS

6 Take this fellow and bind him
For behold he hath a devil
And because of that power
We cannot hit him with our stones and our arrows.
Therefore take him and bind him,
Away with him.

EVANGELIST

7 And as they went forth to lay their hands upon him,
He did cast himself down from the wall
And did go into his own country,
8 And was never heard of more among the Nephites.

PART II

The birth of the Christ

Section 1

SOPRANO (or TENOR)

Hel. 16:14 The angels did appear and declare glad tidings,
Glad tidings of great joy,
3 Ne. 1:4 And miracles were wrought among the believing.

Section 2

EVANGELIST

Hel. 16:15 But those who believed not hardened their hearts and came to depend on their own strength and wisdom.
23 For Satan did get hold upon them
3 Ne. 1:6 And they did rejoice over their brethren saying:

CHORUS

Your joy and your faith hath been vain.
The words of Samuel are not fulfilled.

Section 3

EVANGELIST

3 Ne. 1:9 Now there was a day set aside by the unbelievers that all those who believed should be put to death,
Except the sign should be given.
10 And now when Nephi saw this wickedness
His heart was exceedingly sorrowful,
11 And he went out and bowed himself upon the earth and cried to God.
12 Yea, he cried all the day.
And the voice of the Lord came unto him saying:

JESUS

13 Lift up your head and be of good cheer
For on this night shall the sign be given.

CHORUS

13 Lift up your head and be of good cheer,
For behold the time is at hand.
For on this night shall the sign be given.

EVANGELIST

15 And the words which came unto Nephi
Were fulfilled according as they had been spoken,
For at the going down of the sun
There was no darkness.

Andante for Orchestra

PART III

The death of the Christ
The ministry of the resurrected Christ upon the American continent
Prophecies from Isaiah as quoted in Book of Mormon
Gloria Patri
Amen

Section 1

RECAPITULATION SUNG BY SAMUEL

3 Ne. 2:1 Now the people began to forget
The wonders from heaven

2 Saying they were wrought by man
And the power of the devil.
3 Ne. 8:5 There arose a great storm
6 And a terrible tempest
And the whole earth did quake
As if to divide asunder.
9, 15 And many were drowned and slain
16 And carried away in the whirlwind.
21 There could be no light
22 For so great were the mists of darkness.
23 There was mourning, weeping, howling and groaning,
For destruction had come upon them
24 And they were heard to cry:

CHORUS

24 O this day, this terrible day.
3 Ne. 9:2 The devil laugheth and his angels rejoice.
(The chorus and orchestra develop this text into a tumultuous climax after which the voice of the resurrected Christ is heard.)

JESUS

15 Behold I am Jesus Christ the Son of God.
I created the heavens and the earth
And all that in them are.
21 I have come to bring redemption
To save the world from sin
22 And whoso cometh to me as a little child
The same will I receive
For of such is the Kingdom of God.

Section 2

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

3 Ne. 11:1 A multitude gathered about the temple,
Wondering and marveling
One with another,
8 And they cast their eyes up to heaven
And saw the Lord descending.

EVANGELIST

16 And they cried with one accord:

CHORUS

17 Hosannah! Hosannah!
Blessed be the name of the most high God!

EVANGELIST

9 He stretched forth his hand and spake unto them:

JESUS

3 Ne. 9:18 I am the light of the world,
The beginning and the end.
22 I have laid down my life
And taken it up again
Therefore repent and come unto me.

Section 3

CHORUS—SOPRANOS AND ALTOS

3 Ne. 12:47 Old things are done away
(3 Ne. 15:3) All have become new
46 Fulfilled in the coming of our Savior.
45 The Father maketh his sun to rise
And smileth down in favor.

CHILDREN'S SOPRANO CHOIR

3 Ne. 17:9 They brought forth their lame, their blind and all that were afflicted,
And He did heal them.
12 Then they set their little children
Upon the ground about Him
14—15 And the multitude did kneel
As Jesus prayed.

CHORUS (The Lord's Prayer)

3 Ne. 13:9—13 (Matt. 6:9—13) Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

	And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen.
3 Ne. 17:24	They saw the heavens open, Angels descending, encircling the children about, Encircling the children about.

Section 4

3 Ne. 26:3	He did expound all things even from the beginning Until the time that He should come in His glory. Yea, even all which should come upon the face of the earth, Until the elements should melt with fervent heat And the earth be wrapt together as a scroll And the heavens and the earth shall pass away.

Finale

	CHORUS
3 Ne. 16:20 (Isa. 52:10)	The Lord hath made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations. All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God!
3 Ne. 20:36 (Isa. 52:1)	Awake, awake, put on thy strength O Zion,
Hel. 5:9	Thy King cometh unto Thee! Glory!
Doxology:	Glory unto the Father, unto the Son and the Holy Ghost. Glory unto the Father and the Son, Glory unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, As it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever! **CHORUS** World without end. Amen.

Notes

1. Leroy Robertson, as quoted by L. Brent Goates, *Deseret News and Telegram*, 11 February 1953.

2. For details of this meeting, see Marian Robertson Wilson, *Leroy Robertson: Music Giant from the Rockies* (Salt Lake City: Blue Ribbon Publications, 1996), 38.

In addition to the published text herewith cited, there is a companion manuscript, which, while having the same narrative, contains much more complete documentation comprised of many pages of extensive endnotes and eleven appendices. Copies of this companion manuscript can be found in the Special Collections and Manuscripts of the Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library, the Manuscripts Division of Special Collections at the University of Utah Marriott Library, and in the Archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

3. To give a hint of the complexity and magnitude of a presentation of this *Oratorio*, here is a synopsis of Robertson's outline of the performers needed: The *Oratorio* is scored for a large mixed chorus, dividing into a double chorus and a children's chorus; soloists: bass baritone, baritone, tenor, and soprano; full orchestra as follows: three flutes (piccolo); two oboes (English horn); two clarinets in B-flat; two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns in F; three trumpets in B-flat; two trombones, bass trombone and tuba; timpani; percussion (three players); celesta, piano, harp, organ; and strings (i.e., a full complement of first and second violins, violas, 'celli, and basses). The entire work lasts a bit more than one hour. See Leroy Robertson, *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon*, photocopy of the holograph score (henceforth referred to as orchestra score), notes penciled inside front cover. The holograph score can be found in the Leroy Robertson Collection in the Manuscripts Division of Special Collections at the University of Utah Marriott Library. Photocopies of it can also be found in the Archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

4. For more details about the history of the *Oratorio* during Robertson's lifetime, see Robertson Wilson, *Leroy Robertson*, 123— 24, 141—42, 200—207, 215, 234, 248—52, 292, 298, and 309.

5. This performance and recording could only have occurred through the genial cooperation of Choir Director Jerold Ottley; the Choir management; the Utah Symphony management; the Choir-Symphony liaison, Herold Gregory; and Maurice Abravanel. The Tabernacle Choir-Utah Symphony recording was later released on cassettes. In 1996, the Vanguard recording was released on CD by Vanguard Classics. At present all recordings are sold out. For a discography, see Marian Robertson Wilson, "Leroy Robertson and the *Oratorio from the Book of Mormon:* Reminiscences of a Daughter," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/2 (1999): 13.

6. Leroy Robertson, "Creativity in Music . . . Other Thoughts on Creativity" (unpublished reprint of manuscript from the Institute for Behavioral Research in Creativity, n.d.), 83. This piece was later edited and published in *Expanding Awareness of Creative Potentials Worldwide*, ed. Calvin W. Taylor (Salt Lake City: Brain Talent-Powers Press, 1990), 124—29.

7. Robertson's libretto is sufficiently original that when it became necessary to apply for a copyright, the First Presidency granted Robertson permission to copyright both the words and music in his own name. See David O. McKay, Stephen L Richards, J. Reuben Clark Jr., The First Presidency, letter to Leroy Robertson, 28 February 1955. Robertson's libretto has since become a standard for gauging the originality of other musical compositions based on scripture. See James Cohn, on behalf of ASCAP, letters to the author, 18 May 1979, 11 June 1979, and 11 October 1979. All these letters are in the Addendum to the Leroy Robertson Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

8. These were the years when every night after supper, Robertson would take his well-worn copy of the Book of Mormon, go to his chair in the living room, and intently pore over the text, blocking out various passages for further consideration (author's memory). Robertson's copy of the Book of Mormon is now in the possession of his son, Jim (James Leroy).

9. Both Parts I and II are subdivided into three sections; Part III has four sections. See the entire text in the appendix.

10. Such an in-depth study would be of sufficient scope to merit a graduate thesis or postgraduate monograph.

11. For this attention-getting introduction, Robertson has all the strings play their notes *tremolo;* flutes have triplet figures; all the lower instruments, including organ, announce one of the main musical themes of the *Oratorio*, which is repeated and developed into a climax over twenty-two bars. See Robertson, orchestra score, 3—6.

12. Beginning softly with winds alone, then with strings, brass, and harp added, the musical theme heard at the *Oratorio*'s outset is developed into a *fortissimo* climax that quickly diminishes to *pianissimo.* The entire passage is marked *espressivo*, then *espressivo molto.* See Robertson, orchestra score, 51—54.

13. Under the name "Pastorale," this piece quickly became a favorite of Maurice Abravanel, who often performed it in his concerts either as a programmed number or as an encore. It is, in fact, the slow movement from an earlier Robertson work, his *Symphony No. 1 (Desert Symphony)*, which he incorporated virtually intact into the *Oratorio.*

14. Leroy Robertson, remark to the author, ca. 1953.

15. For details about the inspired composition of this setting of the Lord's Prayer, and its subsequent popularity, see Robertson Wilson, *Leroy Robertson*, 123—24, 236—37, and 298.

16. See Robertson, orchestra score, 135—36. Impressed by its depth, Robertson often recited this passage by heart to the author. It directly precedes and leads into the *Oratorio*'s "Finale," an extended, heartfelt, ever-growing "Glory."

17. For music relating to this scripture and that of the foregoing paragraph, see Robertson, orchestra score, 15—29.

18. See ibid., 32—34.

19. See ibid., 6—9.

20. The author well remembers hearing her father sing forth these words as he sat one day in his living-room chair. Even in that quiet home, and without audible orchestral accompaniment, it was a benumbing, awe-inspiring experience to sense the power at hand.

21. The omitted phrases are, respectively: "unto this people," "upon this people," "this people," "unto this people," and "this people."

22. See Robertson, orchestra score, 96—109. Interestingly enough, Robertson has Samuel sing these descriptive passages as a recapitulation of his prophecy. Musical reasons also prevailed, for the composer needed a voice of this range and power and did not wish to introduce yet another evangelist as narrator. The Nephites are represented by the choruses.

23. The fugue is a centuries-old and well-recognized form of musical composition in which imitation figures prominently. A given theme—known as the subject—is introduced according to more or less strict rules, then developed according to the skills and imagination of the composer. In a quadruple fugue, four subjects are employed. For standard, academic analyses of this venerable musical form, see Ebenezer Prout, *Fugal Analysis* (London: Augener, 1892). For a masterful discussion highly prized by Robertson, see Iwan Knorr, *Lehrbuch der Fugenkomposition* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911).

24. See Robertson, orchestra score, 136—47.

25. See ibid., 148—57.

26. See ibid., 160—70. For the final "Amen," Robertson wrote a very low pedal note on "C" for the organ. When the great pipe that produces this sound is played, one can feel the vibration more than hear the note. With a slight smile, Robertson used to explain how he purposely held that note in reserve until the very end of the *Oratorio* in order to create this thrilling effect.

27. Robertson, "Creativity," 125.

Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites, 200–1 B.C.

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The Nephite record refers many times to "religion" and "church" as it speaks about the peoples whose activities it chronicles. The purpose of this article is to examine the text of the Book of Mormon in order to distinguish the major organizational patterns that characterized the sacred aspect of life among those ancients. This article also tries to mirror the attention to detail in the study of sacred texts shown in research by my colleague and friend, Richard L. Anderson.

A great deal about "religion" among Book of Mormon peoples still remains to be discovered from the text by Latter-day Saint students. Our examination of the book to this point has been devoted almost exclusively to discovering instructive parallels to beliefs and practices familiar to us in the restored (Latter-day Saint) church. But it is inevitable that much in the Nephite point of view will prove quite different from our ideas and customs. Scholars have found many ways in which the historical documents show us that, for example, New Testament Christians differed from the Mormons of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Nephites would have been even more distinct. Because they were culturally based in ancient America, their ways of thinking, feeling, and speaking about divinity and worship are even more likely to differ from the Judeo-Christian tradition from which our ways have developed. Similarities will be found, to be sure, but differences must exist and deserve our careful attention lest we inaccurately relate the two systems.

In general the "religious" realm in the lives of ancient peoples cannot be equated with our current use of that term. Our civilization and language are so different from theirs that it is unthinkable that we could automatically translate concepts from their record to our minds without qualification.

One of the major differences between their conceptual world and ours has to do with the scope of "religion." A current definition is belief in or worship of a supernatural power accepted as the creator and governor of the universe. Ancient people generally accepted supernatural powers as so pervasive in their world that it did not occur to them to deny their strong relevance to their own life, sacred or mundane. Food-getting, fighting, sex, health, and symbolic expressions were all considered to be imbued with sacred dimensions impossible to separate from the rest of life. Of course there were some skeptics, but we are talking here about the general culture. Eminent Semiticist Dr. Cyrus H. Gordon makes a similar point when he observes: "The Hebrew language has no word for 'religion.' The true religion is designated as 'the fear of God (or Yahwe).'"[1] However, in seventeenth-century Europe a revolution of thought called the Enlightenment took place. As a result, rational thought, not sacred devotion, came to be held up by intellectuals in the European tradition as an ideal. So it has become common to treat "religion" as a distinct category of human experience, which can be held at arm's length and analyzed as much as, say, "economics." Today it is common for persons to say, "I am not religious," meaning that he or she does not choose to think in terms of any specified supernatural power nor to act consciously in the realm that modern culture terms "religion."

It is because this contrast is so great that I have, to this point (but, for simplicity, not hereafter), set off the term *religion* in quotation marks, lest we automatically suppose that the word means the same thing to us as it did to Alma or Mormon. Consequently we should be warned to look carefully at what the scriptural text's terminology actually means, as far as careful examination can reveal it.

This discussion will be far from a comprehensive treatment of the sacred elements in Nephite culture. That would require at least a book. We will survey the major groups and movements through which sacred activities were structured organizationally; this will provide an orientation for a future fuller analysis of the whole range of activities, such as roles, rites, and beliefs. Here our concern will be limited to such questions as: What was "the church"? What rival units ("cults"?) existed in the society? What about Lamanite and Jaredite societies—did they too have "churches" or "cults" that may have influenced Nephite patterns?

To some readers of scripture these questions may seem fruitless. To me they are not. From the text of the Book of Mormon, we ascertain that sacred features were central to Nephite culture. We cannot gain an adequate picture of how Nephite society and the modes of thinking of its participants operated without knowing all we can about their religion. Moreover, for me it is important to understand the full range of Nephite life as a context in which to shed light on the words of the Nephite prophets. We are obliged to learn as much as possible about the religious aspect of their life, if we are to understand the book fully.

The Social, Historical, and Linguistic Complexity of Nephite Society

Religious organization in any society mirrors in important ways the structure and logic of social life generally. It would be the same for the Nephites. First, it is necessary to picture the prime units and dimensions of their society,[2] and then we can project the organizational forms for sacred conduct on the background of the broader social structure.

Descent from different founding ancestors marked off four groups in early Nephite society. Nephites in the narrow sense ("the children of Nephi," Mosiah 25:2) held a preeminent position since rulership in the kingdom "had been conferred upon none but those who were descendants of Nephi" (Mosiah 25:13). Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites also had corporate status as tribes (see Jacob 1:13). The distinctions among the four descent groups continued throughout Book of Mormon history (see 3â€,Nephi 7:2—3; 4â€,Nephi 1:36—37; and Mormon 1:8), although the tribal distinctions were muted in the overall record by use of the umbrella political term *Nephites* to apply to all four groups.

In the course of centuries, those original tribes would not have continued functioning precisely as they had in the beginning. In the first place, some would have grown so large in numbers of descendants and so spread out geographically that they could not have operated in the old manner. The Nephite and Lamanite labels must have come to designate supertribes, each divided into lesser groups for certain purposes. Thus by A.D. times there would effectively have been more than the original seven groupings, counting subtribes. When 3â€,Nephi 7:2 reports that "they did separate one from another into tribes"; "they were enemies"; and they had "strict laws that one tribe should not trespass against another," the reference is to "tribes" within the broad Nephite category.

The people of Zarahemla were more numerous than the descendants of the four tribes who constituted the original broad Nephite faction referred to in Jacob 1:14 (see Mosiah 25:2). These "Mulekites" were also linguistically separate (see Omni 1:17—18). They constituted a population whose social distinctness and political power became so submerged under Nephite rulership that little is heard of them as a group throughout the Nephite record. It is obvious, however, that no majority population simply disappears from a social scene; what must have happened is that the people of Zarahemla, the majority, became socially and politically invisible to the eyes of the Nephite elite record keepers in the capital city. No doubt those "Mulekites" maintained cultural distinctness in their ethnic strongholds, like the Anglo-Saxons under Norman governance. It must also be kept in mind that the people of Zarahemla probably were not a homogeneous group. Given their history of internal

conflict (see Omni 1:17), in fact, it is quite certain that they would not have been unified. With a background in divisive wars, we may conjecture that they already constituted more than a single social and ethnic element under their own previous chiefs before $Mosiah_1$ took over the rule.

In addition to the differentiation based on ancestry, class differences provided another significant basis for diversity. One Nephite segment claimed "the blood of nobility" (Alma 51:21; actually there could have been two such claimant groups, those descended from chief Zarahemla and various descendants of Kings $Mosiah_1$, Benjamin, or $Mosiah_2$). In addition, powerful class distinctions based on wealth left major fissures in the structure of Nephite society, we are told (see Alma 32:2; 4 Nephi 1:26). These two factors—nobility and class distinction—were probably interdependent to some degree.

Social segmentation is a well-documented phenomenon in the Nephite record. The Amlicites were one large segment that broke away from the majority and tried to replace the legitimate Nephite rulers with their own man (see Alma 2). The king-men,[3] led by "those of high birth" (Alma 51:8), were perhaps ethnically related to the earlier Amlicites; they attempted the same type of power seizure (see Alma 51) and apparently dwelt in the same area (see Alma 51:17—20). Later on, the Amalickiahites followed the same political course. They wished their leader, Amalickiah, to be king over the Nephites; "The greater part of them [no doubt meaning the instigators of the movement]" were lower judges who "were seeking for greater power" (Alma 46:4; see 46:1—6).

Still another faction, the people of Zeniff, left the main Nephite body to reinherit part of the land of Nephi from which $Mosiah_1$ had fled (see Omni 1:27; Mosiah 7:9). From them, in turn, two other groups divided off—the Amulonites and the people of Alma.

Other social fragments included Morianton's people (see Alma 50:29), the group under would-be king Jacob (see 3 Nephi 7:9—12), and the Zoramites, who split off from the Nephite polity in the days of $Alma_2$ and who worshiped at the notorious Rameumptom. It is unclear whether they traced descent from the original Zoram, but the process of their fission is described in some detail; they progressed from initial geographical isolation, to unorthodoxy in ritual and beliefs, then to internal social turmoil, and finally to formal acceptance of Lamanite rulership (see Alma 30:59—35:11 and 43:4). Still other groups migrated to the land northward without maintaining much contact with their home society (see, for example, Alma 63:4—11).

Many other dissenters are mentioned incidentally. Some fled to dwell among the Lamanites (see, for example, Alma 63:14), but unquestionably other unhappy, separatist-minded elements, whose dissent did not quite reach the "boiling point," would have remained within Nephite society and simmered. They ranged from followers of Sherem in the second generation (see Jacob 7), through the people of Ammonihah (note their cheeky response to Alma in Alma 8:9—13, confirmed in verse 17), to those who fought in the final wars of the Nephites only to defect finally to the Lamanites (see Mormon 6:15).

Among the separatists were robber groups, who, by the end of Nephite history, were socially, politically, and territorially distinct from the Nephites and Lamanites per se (see Mormon 2:8, 27—28). In earlier days predecessors of these robber groups had maintained distinct traditions and social forms within the nominally Nephite society (see, for example, Helaman 6:18).

Other social enclaves who did not seek autonomy yet surely were culturally distinct existed under the umbrella of the Nephite polity. The people of $Alma_1$ who had migrated to the land of Zarahemla, the people of Limhi, and the

Anti-Nephi-Lehies were all refugee groups out of Lamanite lands who came to live in areas granted them within the land of Zarahemla. Each group apparently stayed socially distinct. Two of the "seven churches in the land of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 25:23) in the time of $Alma_1$ probably consisted of his own group from the land of Helam (see Mosiah 24:17—25) and the Zeniffites of Limhi (see Mosiah 25:15—18), both existing as separate residential enclaves.[4] Later, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, under the name of Ammonites, were first settled in the land of Jershon (see Alma 27:26) and then moved wholesale to the land of Melek for strategic reasons (see Alma 35:13).

All told, we detect substantial variation in the structure of the society termed "the people of Nephi" or "Nephites." The differences separating the social elements were based on ancestry, geography, culture, language, ethnicity, and class. A careful reading of the record as a description of society reveals a mosaic of groups rather than a socially unified nation. In fact, one of the most insistent lessons we gain from the record is the difficulty that the ruling class had—at least in the period covered by the books of Mosiah, Alma, and Helaman—trying to hold this coalition together within a single political structure.

Human experience worldwide teaches us that religion, however defined, is one of the most powerful adhesives that holds social groups together. It is obvious that the fragmentation of Nephite society would be reflected in—and in part stem from—different views about sacred matters and worship.

Beyond Nephite Society

In addition to the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic variety among the Nephites, neighboring groups must have exerted influence on them. Appreciation of the complexity of the religious aspect of Nephite life demands that we pay attention to those adjacent forces.

In a broad sense the Nephites' rivals were called Lamanites, but that master rubric obscured differences that seem to have made little difference to the Nephites. At a strategic level, if Nephites wore white hats, they considered that any sort of Lamanite wore a black one. Yet, given the striving, quarrelsome dimension exhibited by the Lamanites, it is unlikely that, out of sight of the Nephites, they were all that unified among themselves.[5]

The most prestigious descent group within that supertribe must have been the Lamanites in the narrow sense—direct descendants of the original Laman. Nothing indicates that his lineage claimed an exclusive right to rule, as Nephi's descendants did, although the sparseness of our information on them may obscure that point. (Two successive Lamanite kings bore the name—at least in the Nephite record—of *Laman*; that might have been a title, comparable to *Nephi* as a regal title among the Nephites, but we cannot know for sure; see Mosiah 7:21; 9:10—11, 13; 10:6, 18; and 24:3, 9.) The Lemuelites formed another descent group. We do not know whether they lived in a separate area and had a tribal sociopolitical structure of their own, but it is reasonable to believe that they did. It is clear from Alma 24:29 that descent from the two brothers continued to be traced separately. The presence of a "city of Lemuel" (Alma 23:12) further implies that the Lemuelites occupied a distinct settlement area, at least in part, as may "the city of Laman" for that tribe (3 Nephi 9:10). Lemuel himself was heavily dependent on his brother Laman (note 1 Nephi 3:28, "Lemuel . . . hearkened unto the words of Laman"), but that does not mean that his descent group totally gave up their independence to the senior lineage. The fact that they reconstituted themselves as a tribal unit in the third century A.D. (see 4â€‚Nephi 1:38) indicates that not only had individuals kept track of their descent but that the tribe had retained its corporate standing since the beginning, and that in turn implies continuous possession of ancestral lands in a given region.

The tribe of the Ishmaelites also appears to have maintained some autonomy, according to the account of Lamoni, who was king of the people occupying "the land of Ishmael." The fact that the land was "called after the sons of Ishmael" (Alma 17:19) suggests that Ishmaelite descendants predominantly occupied it or at least had originally done so. More explicitly, Lamoni is reported to have been "a descendant of Ishmael" (Alma 17:21). From the point of view taken in the Nephite account, Lamoni and his people were Lamanites, a term that the king himself may have used (see Alma 17:22, "among the Lamanites, or among his people"). Still we note that there was a rivalrous faction in Lamoni's land whose men did not hesitate to steal from the king's own flocks (see Alma 17:26—28; 18:7). Moreover, although their activities and identities were notorious, they remained at the court with impunity (see Alma 19:21—22); that can only mean that they had a significant power base apart from that of their Ishmaelite king. One is led to wonder whether differences in descent may have been behind this division of loyalties and behind the "contention" that "began to be exceeding sharp among" the people over how to interpret what was happening to Lamoni, their king (Alma 19:28).

Lamoni's father, who dwelt at the capital city Nephi, was "king over all the land" of the Lamanites (Alma 20:8). (Given the patrilineal emphasis evident in royal descent among the Lamanites, we may suppose that the great king, like his son Lamoni, was counted an Ishmaelite.) From that ancient center he ruled over a very extensive territory that extended coast to coast, "even to the sea, on the east and on the west" (Alma 22:27). His prime mechanism of rule consisted of appointing dependent kings over each local land, whose loyalty to him rested on his charisma and the making of sacred oaths (compare Mosiah 19:25—26 and 20:14—15). (Based on similar systems in other parts of the world, there would, of course, have been tribute payments formally and regularly sent by the subsidiary units to their overlord.) Some of the subkings were his sons (see Alma 20:9), although at least one, the king over the land of Middoni, was not (Alma 20:4 says he was only "a friend" to Lamoni, not a brother). Furthermore, the degree of autonomy the subordinate kings enjoyed could vary. Lamoni himself was not completely beholden to the great king; while he "feared to offend him" (Alma 20:11), he still defied his father's direct command (see Alma 20:14—16). Then, under the threat of Ammon's sword, the old king granted Lamoni total freedom to rule his own land (see Alma 20:22—26), an arrangement apparently not without precedent. The limitation on the father's actual power as king is further shown in Alma 20:27—28. According to this passage, he granted that Ammon's brethren be released from prison in Middoni, yet it was necessary for Lamoni to go there in person and find "favor in the eyes of the king of [that] land" in order to bring about their release. Note too that the old king had gone personally and without advance notification to visit Lamoni in order to find out what was happening in Ishmael. This makes it apparent that the nominally supreme king possessed no settled apparatus even of diplomatic representation within his scattered domain, let alone effective bureaucratic control over it. Given these evident limitations on royal power, we are not surprised in the aftermath of the old king's conversion to the Nephite faith that a majority of those who had been converted "would not that he should be their king," as Alma 24:2 indicates.

The title *king* may suggest to modern readers that the Lamanites' polity was a state—a form of government characterized by the use of relatively stable institutions of law and government (i.e., the legitimate use of force) for the maintenance of an established order of socioeconomic inequality. What we see in the historical sketches in the Nephite record is, instead, a system of "chiefdoms." Both the Nephite and Lamanite rulers would be labeled by modern social scientists as "chiefs." In a chiefdom, hereditary rank differences exist, but the position of the elite is only tentatively established, lacking a "formal, legal apparatus of forceful repression."[6] The political weakness of would-be "kings" and their vulnerability to challenges to their authority are evident in the Book of Mormon record. However, very little evidence from the text supports the idea of a legal framework that the whole of Lamanite society considered a valid charter for elite power and privileges.

From the glimpses the text affords us of conditions in the Lamanite realm, we can deduce that it was divided into a number of semiautonomous societies, regions, and factions, among which relationships were problematic and variable rather than monolithic and stable. Consequently, it is inevitable that the elements making up "the Lamanites" would have displayed a number of versions of religious behavior and belief. The characterization of religious matters among specific subgroups of the Lamanites confirms this state of affairs, as we shall see below.

We have already seen that fragmentation and regional differences were also characteristic of the Nephite polity. Thus multiple sociocultural arrangements prevailed within both the overarching categories, "Nephites" and "Lamanites." Culture would also have differed among those elements. That means that their religious institutions would be internally differentiated too.

Worship among the Nephites

At the time of Lehi's departure from the Jerusalem area, priests at the temple were carrying out designated sacrificial practices on behalf of the whole people (see, for example, Leviticus 16:15—16). For certain purposes, priests also made offerings on behalf of an individual person or family (see, for example, Leviticus 15:29—30 and 19:21—22). But, based on old traditions, individual male worshipers had the proper power to carry out many sacrifices (see, for example, Deuteronomy 16:2, 4—6, 14; 33:19; compare Deuteronomy 12:5—7, 26—27; and Leviticus 19:5).[7] Jewish religion at the time of Lehi still allowed certain ritual practices to be carried out legitimately by nonpriests.

We are not surprised, then, to read that Lehi built, in the wilderness, an altar of stones on which he sacrificed (see 1 Nephi 2:7 and 5:9). It is to be expected that sacrifice of this familial sort would survive among some of Lehi's descendants. The Nephites at the time of Benjamin's assembly sacrificed at the temple: "They also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses" (Mosiah 2:3). However, later we learn that Alma refers to the people in the land of Sidom "assembl[ing] themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar" (Alma 15:17), but no temple has been indicated. This suggests a more informal pattern for managing sacrifices and sounds like Lehi's practice. As late in Nephite history as the time of the coming of the resurrected Jesus, we find a clear implication that Mosaic rites were still being followed, some of which may have been individually performed (see 4 Nephi 1:12; note Alma 34:10—11).

Old Testament writers tell of many abominable or pagan, syncretistic practices in use at Jerusalem in Lehi's lifetime, both at the temple and in private quarters (see 2 Kings 23:4—16; 2 Chronicles 34:3—7; Jeremiah 19:13; 32:29; Ezekiel 8:9—16; and Hosea 4:13). We can expect that some of those heretical features were retained in the consciousness of personnel who arrived in either Lehi's or Mulek's party. Particularly in the case of Mulek's group, priests associated with the Judaic royal house (Mulek being a son of King Zedekiah) might well have accompanied the young prince on his journey, and those priests could have been prime channels for importing non-Yahwistic rites to Lehi's land of promise.[8]

A centralized set of rituals and connected beliefs (called by scholars a "cult" or "cultus," without any judgment intended regarding orthodoxy) was established by the Nephite founder and first ruler, $Nephi_1$ (see 2â€‚Nephi 6:2 and 25:2). This official Nephite body of practices centered on the temple built under $Nephi_1$'s direction and according to his design (see 2â€‚Nephi 5:16). The observances were carried out or superintended by designated priests and teachers (see 2â€‚Nephi 5:26; 6:2; Jacob 1:17—19; Enos 1:22—23; and Jarom 1:3—5, 10—11).[9] Nephi's actions followed a Near Eastern pattern spelled out in 1 Chronicles 22, where David started to build the

temple, although his son Solomon completed it (see 1 Chronicles 23—29). According to 2 Chronicles 31:2—3, Judah's King Hezekiah renewed the royal sponsorship—appointing new priests and supporting them with his own resources "for the burnt offerings"—and otherwise served as sponsor and guarantor of the temple cult at Jerusalem. This official national or tribal system of centralized rites of worship was considered by the people of the Near East to be a royal institution.[10] At the beginning of the Book of Mormon record, $Nephi_1$ reports that he appointed his brothers the first priests (see 2 Nephi 5:26). Nephi himself was the cultural channel through whom the ordinances and beliefs were transmitted from the Old World (see 2 Nephi 25:2). In his group, only he (and his brother Sam and Zoram) had seen the operation of the Jewish cult at Jerusalem. He was in the position of cultural gatekeeper; he could shape his own version of the Jerusalem cultus in the new land along lines that he defined as orthodox. Since the Nephite ruler appointed the priests (see Jacob 1:18), he would have been thought of as a priest himself, in a formal sense, and subsequent kings surely would fill the same ex officio priesthood role.

This sacred status for Nephite kings is spelled out by Ammon, speaking to King Limhi, who says that he knows of a man—the king in Zarahemla—who could translate "records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God" (Mosiah 8:13), by means of a device called interpreters. "And behold, the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man that is commanded to do these things, and who has this high gift from God" (Mosiah 8:14). The king ($Mosiah_2$), he continued, is a seer and a revelator and a prophet (see Mosiah 8:13—16). Later, in fact, $Mosiah_2$ did translate the Jaredite record (see Mosiah 28:11—13). A parallel evidence of the king's priestly status occurs when Benjamin addresses the people, announcing his son $Mosiah_2$'s accession to the throne; the event took place at the temple, where Benjamin personally led the people in making a new covenant with God (see Mosiah 1:18; compare the parallel for the people of Zeniff, in Mosiah 7:17—18 and 8:1—2). Clearly the king was central among the Nephite ritual personnel. Furthermore, he was the formal custodian of not only the interpreters, but also the other tribal and national sacred relics—the plates of brass, the Liahona, and the sword of Laban (see Mosiah 1:16). It is unlikely that they would have been kept in any location except the temple, under the practical custody of the senior priest.

The temple-based cult begun by $Nephi_1$ would have been part of the kingship complex transferred by $Mosiah_1$ to the city of Zarahemla when he discovered the people living there. King Benjamin's role as the sacred officiator reveals that, and it is confirmed by the cryptic reference at Mosiah 27:1 to King $Mosiah_2$'s consulting "his priests." They would have been the priests in charge of the (in effect, the king's) temple and who saw that its rituals were carried out on schedule. (The need for scheduling naturally would have placed responsibility for keeping up the calendar in priestly hands, as had been the case at Jerusalem; compare 3â€‚Nephi 8:1—2.) The refusal by Mosiah's priests to enter into the particular issue of moral and political behavior ("persecution") that $Alma_1$ had raised is consistent with the definition of their role as largely ceremonial, focused on what went on at the temple itself rather than dealing much with ethical issues among the public at large.

When the record says that the Nephites did "keep the law of Moses" (for example, Alma 25:15), that no doubt means that the official cult of sacrifices, offerings, and festivals was being visibly maintained at the temples and that the resources received as offerings were sufficient to enable the priests to carry out "the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses" (Alma 30:3), in a timely manner and on a respectable scale. The record keepers of the Nephites, all of whom lived at the Nephite capital (Zarahemla in this period), seem likely to have used the degree of public support for these rituals as their key data for interpreting the religious faithfulness of the populace. We are given no hint of a reporting structure through which other sorts of information on the spiritual condition of the people at large would have reached the high priest.

Understanding the heavily ritualistic nature of the official cult, which people could observe only at the city of Zarahemla (or at other major regional centers where there were temples), suggests that the rites may well have been of little importance to many Nephites as far as their personal lives were concerned. If so, we can also understand what Korihor complained about to the high priest and why his charges may have been popular within some circles in the society: "I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads" (Alma 30:23). Korihor's accusation may not have been accurate, but it is possible that people found the charge plausible, if they viewed the priests' activities as practically and morally meaningless official rituals that were financially burdensome on them. After all, Abinadi had laid much the same charge on the corrupt priests of Noah: "And they said: We teach the law of Moses. And again he said unto them: If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches?" (Mosiah 12:28—29). The same pattern is also manifest later among the Zoramites. The poor there felt "despised . . . because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have cast us out of our synagogues which we have labored abundantly to build with our own hands; and they have cast us out because of our exceeding poverty" (Alma 32:5). These and other statements in the record, which echo Jesus' accusations against the Jewish religious leaders (see, for example, Luke 20:46—47), confirm a tendency for priests and people in many periods of history to fail to appreciate the symbolic and moral potential of sacred rituals (compare "strayed from mine ordinances," D&C 1:15; see also Isaiah 24:5). Yet rites need not rob a formal ceremony of spiritual substance, as is illustrated by the powerful teachings of the first Nephite priest, Jacob, to the group of worshipers gathered at the temple in the city of Nephi, probably on a ceremonial day in the Jewish-derived calendar (see Jacob 2:2, 11). And King Benjamin's marvelous sermon was delivered on another highly ritualized occasion at the temple in Zarahemla (see Mosiah 1—6, especially 2:3).[11]

Considerable light is shed on the formal cult by what the Book of Mormon tells us, explicitly and implicitly, about the organization of religious life at the time when King Mosiah_2 gave up his throne. He had apparently been filling two roles: (1) that of highest judge in the polity and (2) ex officio chief priest (although formally designated subordinate priests carried out the routine sacrifices). The text gives us no explicit description of the transition to the new arrangement when judges replaced the monarch. Not long before this event Alma_1's people had come into the land of Zarahemla, as had Limhi and the remaining people of Zeniff (see Mosiah 24:25 and 22:13). Alma_1's church took on a semiofficial standing in the society by virtue of the kings' virtual sponsorship of Alma's religious role (see Mosiah 25:14—15) before the assembled people. Furthermore, the king "granted unto Alma that he might establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla; and gave him power to ordain priests and teachers over every church" (Mosiah 25:19). Limhi and his people came into the new church via baptism (see Mosiah 25:17), but apparently King Mosiah_2 did not do so at that time. Before long, at any rate, more than half the Nephites at Zarahemla belonged to "the people of God" (Mosiah 26:5), and a few decades later we are told that "the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites" (Alma 16:15).

If we look for a model to clarify what was going on, we might find it in the case of the early church of Christ led by Jesus' apostles as outlined in the book of Acts. The gospel as taught by Jesus was presented to the Jews as a reformed version of their belief system, a variant "way" (Acts 9:2; 22:4; and 24:14). Only when the leaders of the Jewish people rejected this interpretation of continuity was the movement viewed, by them, as a heretical "church" to be opposed and destroyed.

To the contrary, Mosiah$_2$, the Nephite king, early gave his stamp of approval to Alma$_1$'s presentation of his "church" as a reformed and invigorated version of established Nephite religious belief. Thus the church under Alma$_1$ was shaped as a mainstream form of Nephite religious life rather than as a revolutionary challenge to the established pattern. The king greeted Alma$_1$ as a religious cynosure, a phenomenal individual who could revivify the religious life of the Nephites through his dynamic new message and the flexible structure of local "churches" composed of baptized believers. He co-opted the new source of religious energy and morality by giving it his royal approval; he gave sanctity and authority to the new system in the eyes of his people by granting Alma$_1$ "power to ordain priests and teachers over every church" (Mosiah 25:19).

Did he simultaneously make Alma$_1$ chief priest over the temple rites? Nothing explicit is given to us on that point. When Alma$_1$ raised to the ruler a question about how to deal with those who refused to accept the church's standards (see Mosiah 26:1—5), the king at first said, in effect, "while I have power to judge those people, I choose not to but give you official power to deal with them" (based on Mosiah 26:12; see Mosiah 26:8). Soon after, however, the matter of nonbelievers persecuting church people arose. Now "Mosiah consulted with his priests" (Mosiah 27:1) about how to handle the problem. Since it was more of a political issue, he felt he could act and proclaimed that there must be no persecution.

Obviously Alma$_1$, "high priest" over the church (Mosiah 26:7), presided over a structure of priests and teachers within the structure of the church (see Mosiah 26:7) who were organizationally separate from the priests directly under the king. (Had the former priests simply been given new duties, there would have been no need to ordain new priests and teachers; see Mosiah 25:19—21.) Mosiah's priests could only have been those charged with carrying on the sacrificial duties prescribed under the Nephite version of the law of Moses, that is, the official temple cult.

A certain tension may be inferred between these two priesthood structures at the time of Mosiah 26. How, if at all, it was resolved, is not clear from the text, but some hints appear. One possibility is that Mosiah$_2$ was himself baptized, which would have given official validity to Alma$_1$'s church. The king would have become a kind of Nephite Constantine (the first Roman emperor who became a Christian). Mosiah$_2$'s baptism could have provided a basis for his putting the temple cult under the high priest of the church. Another possibility is that when Alma$_2$ succeeded his father as high priest over the church (see Mosiah 29:42 and heading to the book of Alma) and simultaneously became chief judge in the government, as successor to the king he would have brought together under his aegis both the temple cult and the church. After all, the chief judge retained attributes of kingly power and symbolism. Although the title *king* was now eliminated, the record still refers to "the reign" of Alma$_2$ as chief judge (Alma 1:2; compare 2:1). Nephite judges also sat on "thrones" as though they were kings (Alma 60:7, 21). In addition, Alma$_2$ functioned like a king in personally leading his people to battle (see Alma 2:16; compare Words of Mormon 1:13). It is logical that under him both the royal powers (including control of the temple cult) and the control of the church were combined.

Later, Alma$_2$ resigned his civil role as chief judge while he "retained the office of high priest unto himself" (Alma 4:18). Mention here of "the office of high priest" without limiting that position to the church may mean that there was now a single structure of religious organization and practice that was not thereafter separated as church distinguished from temple cult. This idea is supported by the fact that Alma$_2$ retained the sacred artifacts, previously a sign of kingship, along with his leadership over the church. These objects were the national treasures emblematic of legitimate rulership in the tradition of Lehi1 and Nephi$_1$, consisting of the brass plates, the plates of

Nephi, the Liahona, and the sword of Laban. $Alma_2$ passed them on to his son $Helaman_1$ (see Alma 37:2—47), and they continued down the generations of holy men among descendants of $Alma_1$, who were not chief judges (see 3 Nephi heading, and 3 Nephi 26:7, 11).

The idea that the temple cult had been amalgamated into the new church structure is supported by an incident reported in Alma 16. When the military leader Zoram sought the aid of an oracle about how to conduct war, he went to $Alma_2$, the "high priest over the church" (Alma 16:5). In the Israelite tradition that oracular function probably had belonged to the chief priest at the temple; looking to $Alma_2$ to provide it indicates that he was by now over the entire religious structure, not just heading the church as a separate entity.

Within $Alma_2$'s lifetime, expansion of the church had made it the dominant Nephite religious structure. $Alma_2$, Amulek, and their associates are said to have preached repentance and baptism, the key tenets of the church, "in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues" so widely and successfully that "the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites" (Alma 16:13, 15). With that turn of events, it is likely that performance of the old sacrificial rituals in the Mosaic tradition would have been subsumed under the priesthood of the church rather than continuing under now redundant temple priests. (We know that the rites were not abandoned because the Savior referred to their continuance a century later; see 3â€‚Nephi 9:19.)

$Alma_1$'s Church of Christ

The "church" founded by $Alma_1$ at the waters of Mormon was a different type of religious institution from the official, royal cult at the temple. First, it was based on individual learning and internalized acceptance of moral principles rather than on preexisting group membership. Alma "did teach them . . . repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord" (Mosiah 18:7). No hint is given in the text that he utilized any of the Mosaic rituals in the religious life of his group. (He himself had been a Zeniffite priest under King Noah and surely knew those rites. His rejection of that style of worship could well have resulted from his hearing the prophet Abinadi's message, which underlined for him the futility of reliance on Mosaic ceremonies as the key to salvation.) He referred to his associates as "the children of God" (Mosiah 18:22). Individual believers were required to "come into" the group by making a covenant wherein baptism in water was a witness or token of their personal mental and spiritual cleansing and willingness to adhere to the fold of believers (see Mosiah 18:8—9, 16—17). This covenant was made one person at a time (see Mosiah 18:12—17) in contrast with the covenant under Benjamin, which was accepted by the whole people simultaneously. The only ritual element mentioned for Alma's group, beyond the initial baptism, consisted of "assemb[ling] themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar, watching and praying continually, that they might be delivered from Satan, and from death, and from destruction" (Alma 15:17). In the church, the priests' sole function was "to teach them concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The people's duty consisted essentially of "repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people" (Mosiah 18:20), as well as giving one another strong social, emotional, and economic support. They assembled on "one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God" (Mosiah 18:25). The church's priests were not supported by offerings but had to labor like common folk for their own support (see Mosiah 18:24, 28; Alma 30:32—33).

The arrangement for worship instituted by $Alma_1$ was different in concept from that under the law of Moses, at least as Israelite practice in the Holy Land had evolved. The Mosaic order of things never escaped from an orientation to corporate, that is, tribal or national, responsibility for sin. In the older system generally, priests

approached the divine on behalf of the whole people. The individual's possible role in worship, though present in principle, was typically submerged in group conformity. For example, while King Benjamin taught principles of repentance and faith, as in Mosiah 4:4—10, the resulting covenant was framed as a group response: "they all cried with one voice" (Mosiah 5:2). As far as the text of the Book of Mormon indicates, $Alma_1$'s church was an innovation among the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 5:12).[12] He taught that individuals must work toward salvation through personal faith, repentance, and actions in voluntary fellowship in a group of like-minded individuals who constituted a church that had no basis in natural descent. Moreover, the key rituals in the new order had to do with furthering individual spiritual advancement, not with the state of the sociotribal group.

Alma 31:9—10 clearly distinguishes this church as a religious framework from the Mosaic temple cult. The Zoramites, we are told, "would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the law of Moses. *Neither* would they observe the performances of the church, to continue in prayer and supplication to God daily" (Alma 31:10). A close analysis of all relevant portions of the scriptural text would allow the construction of a fuller picture of the tenets, rules, and rites of both the church and the temple cult, but that cannot be done in the scope of this article.[13]

These characteristics of $Alma_1$'s congregation and movement suggest why the text uses the label *church* for his organization but not for the royal-sponsored cult based at the temple. In the multicultural, multiethnic society into which "the Nephites" were evolving at this period of time, the old tribal-based religious system was seriously hampered. Functional social support for those who believed in $Alma_1$'s teachings allowed people of different localities, ancestries, and tongues to associate and support one another, free from the bonds of tribal and local affiliation. For example, Helaman 11:21 notes that "both the Nephites and the Lamanites, did belong to the church." Adherence was not a matter of descent, ethnic background, or locality but of personal choice to believe and accept membership in the body of "Christians" (see Alma 46:13—15).

Note that geographic mobility, such as the movements into the land northward reported in Alma 63, would have hampered the connecting of believers if tribal or kinship ties had been the primary social adhesive. De-emphasis of the rituals centralized at a single temple had to take place if "the Nephites" were to maintain their status as a unified group. The new organizational pattern of separate congregations in different settlements provided a more adaptive social basis for religious life in the Nephites' rapidly evolving situation in the first century B.C. than did tribalism and the traditional royal cult.[14]

Still, while organizationally distinct from the official cult, the church and its members did not abandon the Mosaic tradition but found a way to allow the two patterns to function in parallel rather than in competition. The reconciliation followed in principle the pattern described by Jacob, the son of Lehi. He spoke of how the earliest Nephites conceived the Mosaic and Christ-centered patterns (see 2â€‚Nephi 25:24—27) as complementary. The relationship was phrased in the following manner concerning the people of Ammon a generation after $Alma_1$'s day:

> They did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe to keep his commandments and his statutes. Yea, *and* they did keep the law of Moses; for it was expedient that they should keep the law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. But notwithstanding the law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them. Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith

> in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 25:14—16)

The church founded by $Alma_1$ actually remained a quasi-tribal affair through the time when his people stayed in the land of Helam, since the entire residential group consisted of member participants. But on their transfer to the Zarahemla area (see Mosiah 25:19—24), their status as a distinct body took on new meaning, for at that point the choice to belong or not arose and the group became an enclave within the larger Nephite society at the capital where alternative systems of belief were encountered. Their voluntaristic standing at first resulted structurally in seven congregations at or near Zarahemla (see Alma 25:23). Before long, new adherents, both individuals (see Alma 4:4—5 and 6:2) and whole new congregations "in many parts of the land" (Alma 8:11) beyond the land of Zarahemla, came to comprise the church overall (see Alma 5:1). This followed the pattern reported for Gideon and Melek of "branch" congregations (see Alma 5:1—3). Personal backsliding also was now recognized as a possibility (see Mosiah 26:4, 36; Alma 4:8—11; 6:3; 45:22—24), and those individuals who became unfaithful were expelled from the organization.

The church of $Alma_1$ had minority status at first (e.g., Nehor apparently did not encounter church members frequently; see Alma 1:7), yet it quickly became socially influential, for $Alma_2$, the high priest over the church, was appointed the first chief judge to head the Nephite government (see Mosiah 29:42). Moreover, when he gave up that political role in order to go about reinvigorating the church, his replacement was "a wise man who was among the elders of the church" (Alma 4:16). (It seems likely that this relationship between church and power would become a source of irritation to those not of the church. At the same time, the linking of secular power with the church leadership must also have been an attraction that aided the evangelizing efforts of the two Almas.) In the course of time, "the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites" (Alma 16:15). Despite ups and downs in the faithfulness of members, the church's beliefs and its organizational strength remained highly influential even down to the beginning of our era (see, for example, Alma 45:22; 46:11—29; Helaman 3:24—26, 31; chap. 5).

The Order of Nehor

"In the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, . . . in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat," a man named Nehor was brought before the judge for "bearing down against the church" (Alma 1:1—3). His dissenting message gained adherents, and he "even began to establish a church" (Alma 1:6). When he was put to an "ignominious death" by ritual execution, it did not stop the flourishing of his movement (see Alma 1:15—16). A few years later his "church," left as his dark heritage and now termed "the order of Nehor," had spread as far distant as the city of Ammonihah (see Alma 14:18; 15:15; and 16:11), north- and westward from Zarahemla, and hundreds of miles to the south among the Amalekites and Amulonites in Lamanite territory (see Alma 21:4 and 24:28).

The interpenetration of religion, politics, and economy is seen in the development of this order. Founder Nehor had argued vehemently for what $Alma_2$ called "priestcraft"—payment for priestly services. He declared "that every priest and teacher ought . . . not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people" (Alma 1:3). The movement appealed to "many who loved the vain things of the world, . . . and this they did for the sake of riches and honor" (Alma 1:16, compare Alma 1:27, "wearing costly apparel"). But sheer power was involved as well as the riches that could come from power, for, in the first place, Nehor "endeavored to enforce [his belief system] by the sword" (Alma 1:12). Then after his demise his order showed its power-seeking face through Amlici, a new organizer of dissent against the norms of Nephite society. He was a follower of Nehor who is said to have been

cunning and "a wise man as to the wisdom of the world" (Alma 2:1). His intent was to "deprive [the people] of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God" (Alma 2:4). His mechanism was first to amass political support and then to convert that strength to armed force—a rebel army—in order to have himself declared king (see Alma 2:2, 10). To make this agenda palatable to the widest possible mass of supporters, he used Nehor's materialistic belief system as religious validation to color his political ambitions.

The same syndrome is visible earlier in the case of the Amulonites, the former priests of Noah among the people of Zeniff. Once incorporated into the general Lamanite polity, they got themselves appointed teachers over the Lamanites (see Mosiah 24:1, 4). Their teaching seems not to have been explicitly religious (see Mosiah 24:5), but they did promote literacy among the varied Lamanite groups, by means of which trade was fostered, whereupon they "began to increase in riches" (Mosiah 24:7). Whatever watered-down ideology these teachers first presented to the Lamanites was shortly replaced when they accepted and promoted the order of Nehor. We may suppose that Nehor had come up with a more sophisticated scheme of beliefs that the Amulonites and the Amalekites used to further their own exploitation of the people (see Alma 21:4—8). It is plausible, for example, that membership in the order of the Nehors served merchants by giving them access to Nehorite groups in distant communities. (The apostle Paul did much the same thing by using Jewish communities wherever he journeyed. Today, people still use special group bonds based on shared belief systems—ranging from Masons to Jews to Mormons—to facilitate becoming established in new locations.)

Secret Societies

The secret organizations mentioned at many points in the history of Book of Mormon peoples also included a religious aspect, that is, they functioned socially somewhat like a church. (The scriptural text is ambiguous about whether only one or multiple secret orders existed.) Anthropological data and logic tell us that any group in the ancient world could have flourished only if a significant sacred dimension was involved with which adherents could identify. Some form of religion probably was instrumental in the maintenance of the tight discipline that a secret operation required. Success would depend on the sanctions that their leaders could bring to bear on wavering members. The positive sanctions of gaining wealth and power by illicit, "cheap" means would initially attract and hold members together. On the negative side, the ultimate threat that would cause group members to maintain affiliation and conformity would be death by execution, but any organization reserves its ultimate sanctions, positive or negative, for rare, exemplary use. An intermediate range of sanctions would be needed to support group solidarity on an everyday basis, and threats and rewards based on religion would have been useful to keep members in line. Historical and social science studies of secret groups in many parts of the world confirm this picture.[15]

That the secret group of Gadianton had a religious dimension is confirmed in Helaman 6:21—31. Initially the text mentions the use of covenants and oaths, combined with attribution of a satanic hand behind the movement. Clarification comes from a statement about "trampl[ing] under their feet the commandments of God" (Helaman 6:31). Finally, all question about the group's reliance on specifically religious patterns is settled by the statement that the Gadiantons "did turn unto their own ways, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver" (Helaman 6:31). ("Ways" often signifies religious behavior in the Book of Mormon text; note Alma 10:18, where the Nehor believers at Ammonihah were "laying plans to pervert *the ways* of the righteous"; and compare, for example, Mosiah 11:1; 23:14; and Helaman 3:20.) Of course no system of "idols" and associated rituals and symbols is ever made up from whole new cloth but at least in part syncretizes preexisting forms and notions. In this case, the secret organization's "own ways" are specifically said by Giddianhi, one of its leaders, to be a revival of ancient beliefs and practices: "The works thereof I know to be good; and they are of ancient date and they have

been handed down unto us" (3â€‚Nephi 3:9). It is reasonable to suspect that this is a reference to the Jaredite secret groups.

"Mulekite" Cults[16]

The population referred to in the Nephite record as the people of Zarahemla could not help but have their own religious customs when $Mosiah_1$ first encountered them. The history of their chief, Zarahemla, was interpreted by $Mosiah_1$ as having a connection to Mulek, the son of Judah's King Zedekiah. But Zarahemla's faction was only one among others within his pre-Nephite tradition. Omni 1:17 informs us that they had previously had "many wars and serious contentions." With whom? Obviously with others from their immigrant cohort, or else with groups descended from Jaredite-period society. Perhaps one basis for such disputes and the fragmentation of the descendants of the original voyaging party was the composition of the group on the "Mulekite" ship(s). It is plausible that Mulek and his party of Jews arrived on a non-Israelite ship, so a crew of Phoenicians or Egyptians might have accompanied them and could have exercised disparate cultural (including religious) influence. The active presence of Egyptian names in Nephite society, such as Paanchi and Pahoran, seems to be evidence for Egyptian cultural influence, which seems more likely to have come via "Mulekites" than via the Nephites. $Mosiah_1$'s migration out of the land of Nephi would be likely to filter out unorthodox (by $Nephi_1$'s standard), overtly Egyptian elements from the Lehite source, but no such filter screened the tradition that came through the people of Zarahemla.[17] Moreover, if the Judaic prince Mulek was accompanied by people from the court of Zedekiah—a strong likelihood—their religious ideas and forms brought from quasi-pagan Jerusalem in the land of Israel could also have found cultural lodgment among the "Mulekites."[18]

Furthermore, persuasive evidence in the Nephite record indicates that the "exceedingly numerous" people of Zarahemla included descendants of groups from the Jaredite era.[19] Among the interesting links to the earlier people is that two founders of political/religious dissenting movements among the later Nephites had Jaredite names, Nehor and Gadianton. Kishkumen, another person with a Jaredite name, was also a key figure in the secret society movement (see Helaman 1:9—12). (Interestingly, "Nehor" may even reflect a *pre*-Jaredite cultural influence. It was the name of the first city mentioned in the book of Ether. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the demographic history of the Jaredite immigrant party can hardly account for any such city at the early time of its mention; hence the city and perhaps the name presumably originated due to a preexisting—"indigenous"?—group).[20]

The Jaredite tradition reported by Ether was itself culturally complex. Probably four or more strands of religious tradition existed among the people whose history is summarized in the book of Ether: (1) the prophetic belief system of which Ether approved (see, for example, Ether 7:25; 9:28; 12:3—4; and 13:3—13); (2) an idolatrous religion that was tied with the ruling establishment and that justified slaying the prophets (see, for example, Ether 7:23; 8:25; and 11:2—3; note especially 14:9—a king is murdered by "his high priest"); (3) the cult involved with the secret organizations (compare Ether 8:13—16), which were probably ancestral to the Gadiantons among the Nephites; and (4) a folk system of dealing with sacred matters, probably including witchcraft (see Ether 14:1—2; compare Helaman 13:17—24, 30—37, and Mormon 2:10). Whatever the details of the history of its transmission, the possibility exists that not only the cult associated with the Jaredite secret order, but also elements of these other Jaredite patterns of worship dealing with the supernatural, also filtered down through groups who survived past the destruction of Ether's lineage and were encountered by the Nephites among the people of Zarahemla.

Those people of Zarahemla obviously would have had at least one religious system operating in their culture at the time $Mosiah_1$ found them (no society exists without some system), and Jaredite elements seem likely to have been involved. In addition, certain beliefs, myths, and ritual elements from the eastern Mediterranean brought by Mulek's voyaging party could have been active in "Mulekite" belief and worship.

Another Nephite Cult

A possible religious influence from the "Mulekites" appears as a distinct organizational element in the mixture constituting Nephite religion. Shortly after the start of the reign of the judges, toward the end of the second century B.C., a group of young adults in the land of Zarahemla refused to "believe the tradition of their fathers. They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ" (Mosiah 26:1—2). They would not join the church recently introduced by $Alma_1$ but "were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after" (Mosiah 26:4). "A separate people as to their faith" clearly indicates the presence of a cult if not a church. The expression *ever after* may have been a comment from Mormon, more than four centuries later. Soon afterward, adherents to this cult became more numerous than their rivals in the church (see Mosiah 26:5). Among them were $Alma_2$ and several sons of King $Mosiah_2$. Of $Alma_2$ we are told that "he became a very wicked and an idolatrous man" (Mosiah 27:8). The source of this idolatrous cult is suggested by the fact that $Alma_2$ named two of his sons, who were born before his conversion (judging by their probable ages and the chronology of their father's career) with Jaredite names—Corianton and Shiblon. It is a reasonable presumption that those names for his sons were derived and conferred when $Alma_2$ maintained an avid connection with the idolatrous cult of his younger days.

That cultic way probably had enough social strength not to have disappeared even in the periods when $Alma_2$'s church publicly dominated Nephite life. It may have been pushed into lesser visibility at times, but very likely it continued among some sectors of the society. After all, as we see in the case of the Zoramites, knowledge by the elite of what was actually going on in the hinterland was far from clear. When Alma 1:32 speaks of "idolatry . . . babblings,â€,.â€,.â€,. wearing costly apparel; [and] being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes," this same cult may be meant. (More careful scrutiny of what $Alma_2$ preached *against* would probably allow reconstructing more of what the opposition cult was *for*.)

To an anthropologist it appears inevitable that an agricultural society like that of the Nephites, with a sociopolitical system verging between a chiefdom and a state, would involve a nature-based religious cult that included myths and rites connected to the agricultural calendar and astronomy. This system might well have incorporated parts of the royal sacrificial cultus at the temple (originally out of "the law of Moses") into an expanded religious scheme that included elements of interest to the "Mulekites," who were, after all, the majority of the population (see Mosiah 25:2). The idolatrous cult to which young Alma once belonged could have had such a function for many, especially "Mulekites," in Nephite society.

Other Religious Elements among the Nephites

Since the Zoramites were a branch of Nephite society, we could expect that the information we learn from $Alma_2$'s record about his preaching among them, intended to reclaim them to orthodoxy (see Alma 31), would tell us something about religious life among the Nephites generally. The Zoramites, like every other group, would have derived much of their pattern of worship by borrowing concepts and forms from traditions known to them. For example, the synagogue referred to as the site of their religious activity must be essentially similar to the

synagogues among the Nephites in general ("built after the manner of the Jews," Alma 16:13) as well as among the Amalekite and Amulonite factions in Lamanite territory (see Alma 21:4—5); the Lamanites themselves also had them (see Alma 26:29). Yet $Alma_2$ and his associates were amazed by the unique prayer used by the Zoramites worshiping at their Rameumptom (see Alma 31:12, 15—18). Robert F. Smith has observed that this prayer "is the virtual counterpart" to a certain Jewish prayer and that, moreover, the "holy stand" in name and form corresponds with "the type of pulpit/platform once found high in the center of Jewish synagogue and Temple."[21] To all appearances, then, Zoramite religious practice involved Jewish worship forms in use at the time of Lehi's departure, joined with "perverted" versions of "the performances of the [Nephite] church" or "ways of the Lord" (Alma 31:10—11). The amazement of $Alma_2$ and his companions at this ritual complex and at the details of the synagogue's arrangement indicates substantial differences from all that they were familiar with. The Zoramite prayer and structure would seem to have been passed down through a Jewish tradition not known at the Nephite capital. The concepts could have been stimulated locally by statements in the brass plates, or perhaps they were preserved at a local "Mulekite" shrine undetected by Nephite priestly eyes. However, the Zoramites "would not observe to keep . . . the law of Moses" as such (Alma 31:9). Instead they worshiped idols (see Alma 31:1; although so did many Jews at Jerusalem in Nephi's day). Thus Zoramite religion appears as a hodgepodge of practices whose sources we cannot hope to unravel now.

We should note too that the Zoramite rebellion in regard to their worship forms and beliefs was entwined with issues of political power and no doubt of economy (compare Alma 31:24, 28), for this whole incident resulted in the Zoramite leaders' anger at $Alma_2$ and the Nephites in general (see Alma 35:8—9, 13). It also turned into Zoramite realignment under Lamanite political sovereignty (see Alma 43:4) and finally into bitter war against the Nephites (see Alma 43:6—7; 48:5).

The Zeniffite cult also sheds light on Nephite practices. Their priests, of course, came originally from Zarahemla where they would have known the rites of the Nephite temple cult, which was based on the law of Moses. (The whole Zeniff expedition had some connection with the people of Zarahemla that is unclear but may have provided a strand of unorthodoxy of its own;[22] see Mosiah 7:3.) It is sufficient here to note that, as in the case of the Zoramites, the religious practices that developed in the city of Lehi-Nephi combined elements of Mosaic law and ritual with other ways. John W. Welch has pointed out that the trial of Abinadi by King Noah and his priests has strong connections to Jewish law and that they also followed the Israelite festival pattern.[23] At the same time, those priests led the people into idolatry (see Mosiah 11:6—7); where the idolatrous notions and iconography were derived from we cannot tell (perhaps from the Lamanites). Also, a very unusual ritual execution ceremony, the burning of condemned men, was manifested among them (see Mosiah 17:13—15; 19:20—21).

We must conclude that varied sources contributed to the syncretistic pattern of Zeniffite ritual and belief. This could well be a model for what happened not only among the Zoramites but also to the mainline cult at Zarahemla whenever the prophets lost control of it (for example, see Helaman 4:21—24).

In Israel and Judah in Old Testament times, a tradition existed of a corps of prophets acting unaffiliated with sacred sites or the priests. Sometimes prophets filled their role as lone individuals, and at other times they lived together in some obscure type of brotherhood (see, for example, 2â€‚Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; compare 1 Nephi 1:4). Lehi was a lone prophet in this tradition (see 1 Nephi 1:18—19). The pattern continued among Lehi's descendants; for instance, Enos reported that "there were exceedingly many prophets" among the early Nephites (Enos 1:22; see also Words of Mormon 1:16—18; Helaman 13:24—28; and 16:14). Samuel the Lamanite was a notable example of this type of religious figure. No light is shed by the Book of Mormon on any connection between these

isolated prophets and organized, priestly religious systems, whether cult or church. At the time of 3â€‚Nephi 6:20, 25, "men inspired from heaven and sent forth," who were "prophets of the Lord," are portrayed, like Abinadi and Samuel, as enemies of a corrupt political establishment.

Another type of religious activity is also barely detectable in the Book of Mormon text. Virtually all societies contain individual practitioners called shamans, medicine men, healers/curers, witch doctors, sorcerers, or magicians. Such practitioners often specialize: some diagnose illness, some find lost objects, some bewitch an enemy, and so on. While their role activities vary in detail, all share the characteristic that an individual with a special "spiritual" gift acts as intermediary between sacred powers and ungifted people. Quite often these agents manifest what psychologists today would call abnormal personality characteristics. Usually the people themselves claim to be not active seekers but only passive instruments through whom the dead or supernatural beings find voice. Most feel that they are "called" to their role, sometimes against their will. A "fee" or gift may be given to them as either a payment or an offering of gratitude by their clients.

At two places in the Book of Mormon, reference is made to such practices. In the early days of the reign of the judges, Alma records that "those who did not belong to their church did indulge themselves in sorceries, and . . . in babblings," among other disapproved activities (Alma 1:32). Later Mormon reported much the same: "There were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics" (Mormon 1:19). Given worldwide human experience in such matters, we are on safe ground in supposing that these phenomena were common throughout Nephite and Lamanite history. Most of this type of activity occurs at a folk level, where individuals faced with practical or emotional problems seek out those with these "gifts." The shamans/curers rarely become persons with community—let alone supracommunity—reputation or power. The likely reason they are not mentioned more frequently in the Book of Mormon is that they were so universal and localized as not to seem worthy of notice by the record keepers, who were from the elite level of society.

Religious Elements among the Lamanites

Throughout their history a high degree of mixing of populations took place between Nephite and Lamanite factions. "Dissensions" from the early Nephites in the land of Nephi were noted by Jarom as early as the fourth century B.C. (see Jarom 1:13). More "dissensions away unto the Lamanites" occurred during the reign of Benjamin in the second century B.C. (Words of Mormon 1:16; note an interesting individual case at Helaman 5:35—36). The pattern of Nephite influence penetrating Lamanite ranks continued all the way to the end of Nephite history (see Moroni 9:24, "many of our brethren have deserted over unto the Lamanites, and many more will also desert over unto them"). Yet a reverse flow of genes and culture also can be seen. For example, large numbers of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies settled amidst the Nephites (see Alma 27:26—27) and later were joined by thousands of others who dissented from Lamanite society (see, for example, Alma 47:29; 62:17). Lamanites occupied Nephite lands, and it is likely that not all returned to their own area when Nephite authority was reestablished (see Helaman 4:13—16; 5:19, 52). Captives taken by the Lamanites would have conveyed Nephite influences and brought counterpatterns with them when they returned (see, for example, Alma 58:30). Missionary activity went both directions (see Alma 17:8; Helaman 5:20, 49—51; and 6:4—5). Trade too would have carried ideas and practices back and forth between the two societies (see Helaman 6:6—10).

Because of these influences, no discussion of religion among the Nephites would be complete without also considering Lamanite religious organization and practices. But given the brevity of the record we have on the Lamanites, a more subtle analysis will be needed than can be carried out here; therefore, only limited suggestions about the Lamanite elements will be offered.

Nephi's record lacks detail, so we cannot know what peculiarities of ritual and belief Laman, Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael and their spouses might have brought with them. That there were some features that Nephi would not have approved of seems likely, inasmuch as Enos 1:20 already charges the Lamanites with being "full of idolatry." (An alternative view could see the idols as evidence of the mixing of descendants of Laman, Lemuel, and Ishmael with other populations whom they had meanwhile encountered.)[24] In any case we are not justified in supposing that the Lamanites had no religious system. No doubt what they followed involved elements of the Jerusalem cult with which Laman, Lemuel, and probably one or more of the sons of Ishmael had had experience as adults. Evidently a "Great Spirit" deity was integral to the later belief pattern (see Alma 18:2—28; 19:25, 27; 22:9—11), and some Mosaic ideas of sacrifice may also have been behind the late Lamanite practice of human sacrifice (see Mormon 4:14—15).

The presence of Amalekites and Amulonites and the order of Nehor in the midst of the Lamanites could not have been without influence on the tribal Lamanites themselves. Some Lamanites under influence of those two dissident groups employed "temples" and "sanctuaries" (Alma 23:2), and they built synagogues "after the order of the Nehors" (Alma 21:4) where the sons of Mosiah and their companions preached. In addition, the Anti-Nephi-Lehi converts to the Nephite church existed for years as a major component of society in the land of Nephi, and subsequently Nephite religion again had much influence on the same Lamanite area (see Helaman 5:50).

While it is not very clear what was believed and practiced in the Lamanite religious system(s), we can note that Nephite dissenters felt enough familiarity and perhaps sympathy with it that they constantly made their way into Lamanite territory. It could well be that what I have referred to above as "another Nephite cult" was similar enough to Lamanite practice to make the dissenters feel somewhat at home religiously in their land of exile. Both Nephite and Lamanite versions could have been syncretized with versions of worship systems in place in the land among maize cultivators before Nephites or Lamanites arrived.

In that regard consider particularly the fact that "corn"[25] was a major—in fact the preferred—grain crop among the Lamanites in the days of the Zeniffites (see Mosiah 7:22 and 9:14). As I have pointed out elsewhere, botanical facts about this native American crop force us to conclude that "Lehi's descendants could only be growing corn/maize because people already familiar with the complex of techniques for its successful cultivation had passed on the knowledge" to the newcomers.[26] But wherever maize was grown in the native societies of pre-Columbian America, it was deeply involved with sacred beliefs that controlled or colored planting, processing, and consuming this most important of all ancient American foodstuffs. The Lamanite preference for corn would also have involved their holding a pattern of beliefs, rites, calendrical interpretations, and myths involving that crop that would have been considered among them of great importance and high antiquity. In other words, Lamanite cultivators would quite surely have followed a cult that involved corn and sought to enhance its fertility through appeal to supernatural powers. A version of that cult was probably shared by many if not all Nephite/"Mulekite" cultivators.

Conclusion

The Book of Mormon reveals time and again that relations with the supernatural were central to Nephite life. Very probably the Lamanites, as with all other peoples at their level of civilization, were also heavily invested in religious concerns. If we are to grasp what motivated people and shaped sacred discourse among the Book of Mormon groups, we need to understand all we possibly can about their worship. Little real analysis has been done by the Latter-day Saints of this matter; nevertheless, it is important. More study should be devoted to it. It is not enough —indeed it is misleading—to suppose, as is often done now, that "understanding" religion in the Book of Mormon consists of taking doctrinal statements from the book and relating them to teachings of today's restored gospel.

Proper Book of Mormon scholarship must go beyond those mere comparisons to shed light on the thought world of the Nephites and Lamanites as such.

Notes

1. Cyrus H. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Testament Times* (Ventnor, N.J.: Ventnor, 1953), 55.

2. For general discussions of this topic, see my "Book of Mormon Peoples," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:191—95; a duplicated paper, "Social Structure and Cult among the Nephites" (presented to the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, Provo, Utah, 26 October 1974), 11, 14; and my article, "When Lehi's Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 19—24. See also Ross T. Christensen, "The Seven Lineages of Lehi," *New Era* (May 1975): 40—41; and John A. Tvedtnes, "Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 296—326.

3. Compare Tvedtnes, "Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation," 299.

4. See John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 190—91. Note the language of Alma 5:6 about "the captivity of your fathers," in relation to 5:5. This would have been addressed only to his associates. He would have used different language in addressing groups—church believers—with other backgrounds within the immediate land of Zarahemla.

5. Compare Tvedtnes, "Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation," 301—2.

6. Elman R. Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization: The Process of Cultural Evolution* (New York: Norton, 1975), 16. In general, see Timothy Earle, ed., *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

7. "Altars were extremely numerous and found in every corner of the land." While priests were the officiators at the temples, "every man of Israel was entitled to offer sacrifices on individual altars without the intermediation of authorized personnel." Menahem Haran, "Priests and Priesthood," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 13:1071—72. Compare Anson Rainey, "Sacrifice," in ibid., 14:605—6.

8. John L. Sorenson, "The 'Mulekites,'" *BYU Studies* 30/3 (1990): 11.

9. See an overview of Nephite priesthood patterns in Daniel C. Peterson, "Priesthood in Mosiah," in *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1991), 187—210.

10. "One of the major responsibilities of ANE [ancient Near East] kingship was the provision of a temple for the god of the state. This act of temple building provided the symbolic expression of the god as the guarantor of the state and the dynasty (2 Samuel 5:12)." Keith W. Whitelam, "King and Kingship," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:46—47. Naturally, the king's residence abutted on the temple precinct or was actually within it. Ibid. The roles played by David and Solomon in constructing the first Israelite temple and the latter's exercising priestly oversight therein are prime illustrations of this principle. On temples in general in the Book of Mormon, see John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful," in *Temples of*

the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 297—387.

11. See Stephen D. Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1—6," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 209—19; and Stephen D. Ricks, "Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1—6," in *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom,"* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 233—75.

12. This leaves the question of what Nephi means early on when he speaks of "the brethren of the church" in relation to Laban in old Jerusalem (1 Nephi 4:26). John A. Tvedtnes discussed the Hebrew words from which Joseph Smith's translation could have yielded the English expression *church* in his *The Church of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 18. Might "the church" in Jerusalem have had reference to a special brotherhood of orthodox Jews to which Laban belonged? For an overall discussion of the term *church* among the Nephites, see Rodney Turner, "The Three Nephite Churches of Christ," in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman et al. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 100—126.

13. This task was approached in John W. Welch, "Book of Mormon Religious Teachings and Practices," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:201—5.

14. See the lengthy discussion in chapter 5 of Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting*, 190—238; note particularly "The Expansion of Zarahemla," 190—93, and "Trends in Nephite Social Structure," 207—11.

15. See Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting*, 300—309.

16. Here I continue my practice of putting this term in quotation marks to emphasize that it does not occur in the scriptural text but is a modern label.

17. On Egyptian names, see Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 25—31; and Paul Y. Hoskisson, "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:130, 135 nn. 18—20; Hoskisson notes that Jaredite names begin to appear only at the time of the book of Alma.

18. See Sorenson, "The 'Mulekites,'" 6—19.

19. Ibid., 15; see also Sorenson, "When Lehi's Party Arrived," 19—24; see initially Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 242—46.

20. See Sorenson, "When Lehi's Party Arrived," 33; and Sorenson, "Viva Zapato! Hurray for the Shoe!" review of "Does the Shoe Fit? A Critique of the Limited Tehuantepec Geography," by Deanne G. Matheny, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 354—57.

21. *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 2:640—41 nn. 401, 403. Regarding synagogues, which many experts suppose only to postdate Lehi, see Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting*, 234—36.

22. Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived,” 10.

23. See “Abinadi and Pentecost,” and “Dancing Maidens and the Fifteenth of Av,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 135—38 and 139—41.

24. See Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived,” 26—29.

25. It has been suggested that the term *corn* in the Book of Mormon was used in the general English language sense of (any) grain. If we had only Mosiah 9:14, “the corn of their fields,” that might be possible, but Mosiah 9:9 would be rendered nonsensical by such a reading, for it lists “corn” as a specific crop in addition to and apart from “wheat” and “barley.”

26. Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived,” 5.

The Military Reforms of the Emperor Diocletian

John F. Hall

Throughout the course of the third century A.D., the Roman Empire was subjected to repeated attack, both by Germanic tribes and by the armies of a resurgent Persia under the militaristic Sassanid dynasty. Compounded by an ever-deteriorating internal state of affairs, the result of frequent civil conflict, Roman military efficiency declined so appreciably that the once impregnable fortified frontier, the *limites*, were frequently pierced, exposing the interior of the empire to attack and plunder. By the time of Diocletian's accession as emperor, four great problems had arisen in the military sphere: (1) deteriorating discipline within an army committed to self-aggrandizement, (2) deficient military capability of politically appointed commanders, (3) inadequate tactical mobility of army units, and (4) divestment of the *limites* to provide contingents for emergency field armies.

Diocletian undertook to resolve these problems by a bold reorganization of the military—the first significant revision of the army since the time of Augustus three centuries before and the greatest alteration of the theoretical basis of Roman military practice ever undertaken. The reforms were effective in curtailing both external aggression and internal disintegration. Moreover, the later military revisions of Constantine were not original but rather continued in logical fashion the reforms of Diocletian, laying the foundation of a military system and methodology that extended beyond the end of antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages.

The extensive military reforms and accompanying frontier reorganization accomplished by Diocletian originated from a desire to maintain a strong and internally secure empire through a defensive system that would be effective against external aggression. The basic principle of Roman military strategy since the time of Augustus, the defense of the frontiers, was retained. However, in order to administer the greatly increased number of troops, the organization of the structure was so transformed that it may be considered a new system.

The concept of frontier defense had for four hundred years been a basic and essential part of the Roman military system.[1] The purpose of Diocletian's frontier reform was twofold: first, to inspire enemies outside the empire with the fear of defeat;[2] second, "to create a more effective system of frontier defence by a more detailed distribution of the available garrison troops."[3] In an effort to satisfy these designs, basic reforms of fortification and troop placement were instituted, but additional reforms were necessary for the maintenance of those basic reforms.[4]

The fortifications along the *limites* required extensive reconstruction. In former times frontier fortifications were designed in concert with the principle of "the overwhelming striking-power of the Roman army, and fortifications had been confined to purely military structures such as forts and signal-towers (only a few towns were fortified), and these fortifications themselves were relatively slight—earthen ramparts, fronted with timber or later with stone."[5] Even so, the frontier of the Antonines and Severans had been pierced many times in the course of the third century by barbarian invaders. The *limites* had failed to serve their purpose. The frontier was to be reconstructed on a greater scale by Diocletian, even if the frontier would not constitute the cardinal principle of Diocletian's defensive strategy.

> There were far more fortifications—not only those occupied by the army (*praesidia*, *castra* or *castella* proper), but civil sites as well, and not merely along or close to the Rhine, but deep into the interior of Gaul. . . . These late fortifications differed materially from those of the earlier period. Earth ramparts must virtually have disappeared, their place being taken by massive stone walls, at least ten feet thick and of

> greater height than ever before; and the great thickness of their walls shows that signal-towers and blockhouses *(burgi)* too, along the Rhine and far into its hinterland, must have been loftier than in earlier times.[6]

The Rhine and Danubian fortifications, which had existed since the time of Hadrian, were not the only sections of *limites* to which Diocletian turned his attention, but the entire perimeter of the empire was refortified in various ways.[7] The empire was beset by enemies on all its frontiers. Those areas where no system of fortification existed required the immediate erection of defensive structures. Although the frontiers varied greatly in their terrain and particular needs, Diocletian utilized the same principle of defense for all.[8]

In brief, Diocletian's strategy was to maintain the *limites* through colonies of *limitanei* (troops manning frontier forts) charged with the first line of defense of the empire. This thin cordon of militia was supported by cavalry units stationed at key strategic points behind the front lines. The regulars, or *ripenses*, were organized in legionary concentrations at major centers, some distance behind the cavalry network, thereby constituting the major striking force of the system.[9] With minor modification, such an organization could be and was applied to areas devoid of natural boundaries such as the eastern frontier, or was used to strengthen the natural boundaries of the Sahara in Africa or the Rhine and Danube in Europe. The plan and the structures were the same.[10]

Diocletian took great personal interest in the development of the frontier fortifications. Lactantius characterizes him as possessed with a compulsion for constant construction: "to this there was added a certain limitless desire of building, and for supplying all the workers, craftsmen, carts, and whatever was necessary for constructing the works."[11]

William Seston cites Theodor Mommsen's observation that Diocletian personally supervised the reoccupation of several sections of the Danubian *limes* (frontier fortification) that had been lost to the barbarian tribes. He was present at the conquest of the Rhaetian *limes* in 288, at the reoccupation of the "*ripa samarticae* [north bank of the Danube occupied by Samartic barbarians]" on the far bank of the Danube in 294. In 289 and again in 300 he traveled to Antioch for the reconstruction of the Syrian *limes*.[12] Diocletian's involvement in this process was clearly more extensive than that of any of his predecessors.[13]

The empire featured five primary defensive areas: the African, Syrian, Danubian, Rhine, and the British *limes*. Diocletian began the reorganization of the Rhine *limes* immediately after his accession. Maximian was sent to Gaul to reestablish order and begin the reoccupation of this *limes*. He established a Frankish buffer state on the far bank of the Rhine and constructed a line of forts in advance of the Rhine from Mayence to the sources of the Danube.[14] In 294 Constantius extensively augmented the Rhine fortifications to provide increased security for Gaul so that he might undertake the invasion of Britain without fear of barbarian incursions. He constructed a second line of fortifications on the other bank of the Rhine, behind the first, so that a double line of fortification existed between Basel and Constance.[15]

Whereas the defense of the Rhine was essentially a process of refortification along a natural boundary, the fortification of the Syrian *limes* resulted in the original development of the threefold, in-depth defense system described above, which was later adapted to other frontiers. Because of the ever-present Persian menace, Diocletian instituted new eastern frontier defenses immediately after the beginning of his reign.[16] The greater part of the system was constructed in 287 and 293, adding to a small northern section erected in 297 after the

victory of Gallienus over the Persians.[17] In the eastern desert there was no natural boundary such as the Rhine or Danube that would encourage the construction of a continuous *vallum* (wood and earthen rampart), which could, if built, be easily pierced by the mobile Persian army. Relying on what natural fortifications existed on hills, plateaus, and other strategic points, Diocletian constructed a series of forts across the desert. Manned by *limitanei*, these constituted his first line of defense in the east. The towns behind the line were occupied by cavalry and legionaries who served as the second and third lines of defense, protecting strategic roads and areas.[18]

The African defense system, prior to the rule of Diocletian, had consisted of a series of *castella* (fortified guard posts), which served as desert watch stations, and of a structure called the *fossatum* (ditch and earthen ramparts). During the course of Diocletian's reign, this system was strengthened and modified in such a way that it came to resemble the Syrian *limes*. The *fossatum* became a continuous rampart employed as the boundary of the Roman frontier as well as a part of the defensive system. Denis Van Berchem describes the *fossatum* as four to ten meters high with an earthen rampart topped by a wooden wall.[19] It was not large enough to serve the same defensive purpose as the great walls of Europe and was far too extensive to be completely garrisoned. Indeed, because of the presence of fortification works and other structures in front of the *fossatum*, it must be concluded that in this system the rampart constituted not the first defensive position, but rather a last line of defense.[20]

Diocletian's treatment of the Danubian defenses was much like that of the Rhine *limes*. It was his policy to reoccupy and refortify the abandoned *limes* while strengthening the system with secondary defensive positions of cavalry and legions. Moreover, on the right bank of the Danube new *castella* were constructed in the same way that they had been placed in front of the African *fossatum*.[21] But what is most significant, all took the form characteristic of the Diocletianic defenses in other areas.[22]

The improved and expanded frontier defense system occasioned the introduction of other reforms. The greatly extended defenses needed to be properly garrisoned, thus necessitating a tremendous troop increase, which in turn was administratively effected through a complete provincial reform. It must, however, be remembered that even though these other reforms came as a result of the original reform, together they gradually and simultaneously developed and were dependent on each other.

H. M. D. Parker asserts that "on his accession [Diocletian] found some forty legions in existence and, although certainty is not attainable, it seems probable that he raised their total to about sixty."[23] Seston generally agrees that during the twenty-five years between 280 and 305 the number of legions throughout the empire rose from 39 to 59 or 60.[24] A. H. M. Jones adds a further corroboration of this remarkable troop increase: "The evidence suggests that the army was approximately doubled between the Severan period and the reign of Diocletian, and that the greater part of the increase was due to Diocletian himself."[25] The increase was gradually realized through the application of the provincial administrative reform:

> These new units were not raised simultaneously, but at intervals, to meet the requirements of the new provincial organization, which Diocletian gradually established throughout the Empire. As the smaller frontier provinces were created out of the old larger administrative units, each was given its own garrison troops. The principle of distribution was in accordance with the practice of the third century, namely, the assignment of a pair of legions to each province.[26]

This, of course, provided for the assignation of a greatly increased number of legions.

Little precise factual information is available regarding Diocletian's recruiting procedures to increase the number of troops. J. B. Bury concludes that the manpower was recruited from four sources: the sons of soldiers, serfs, barbarian settlers, and adventurers.[27] Seston believes that recruiting was accomplished through the application of a quota system to the regions of the empire in much the same way that taxes were collected.[28]

E. C. Nischer has proposed the theory that the legions raised by Diocletian were composed of a greatly reduced complement of only one thousand men. If this supposition is correct, the view expressed above that part of the motive behind provincial reform was to provide additional administrative supervision for an increased number of legions, two to a province, should be reexamined.[29] Nischer's opinion is opposed by that of several other historians.[30] Van Berchem regards this estimate of legion strength as merely a hypothesis. In a question where no clear and definite evidence is available, Jones offers a sound analysis that

> The legion of the principate numbered about 6,000, and there is good reason for believing that the new legions which Diocletian raised were of the same strength. They, like the old legions, later contributed detachments to the *comitatus*, and in those areas, the Danubian provinces and Egypt, where the frontier legions were later broken up into a number of detachments, the Diocletianic legions were divided in the same way as were the older legions.[31]

No primary evidence exists to illuminate the problem of legion strength in the Diocletianic era, either pro or con. However, without any reputable indication that the size of the legion was altered by Diocletian (whose increase of the size of the army is definitely asserted by Lactantius,[32] seeming at least to imply his interest in the maintenance of a large army, and thus explaining the increased number of legions of substantial troop strength), we must assume that the legion is composed of its customary contingent of six thousand soldiers. Accordingly, for the present, no argument can be offered against the interpretation of troop increase presented above.

The military detachments of the empire were of differing classification and role. Van Berchem explains the function of various kinds of troops employed in Diocletian's frontier system, with *limitanei* garrisoning the frontier and cavalry and infantry legions stationed behind the frontier at key strategic points, under the command of the military governor, or *dux*.[33]

The first line of defense was provided by the increasingly militialike *limitanei* who, according to the *Codex Iustinianus*, not only defended the forts and settlements of the frontier but also engaged in agricultural cultivation of land to encourage settlement of the frontier regions by civilians.[34] These were soldiers who functioned in a fashion similar to the ancient *auxilia* (auxiliary troops of non-Romans) with the dual responsibilities of defense and settlement; their military function is described by Van Berchem as ensuring Rome's access to the frontier through holding strategic routes and points.[35]

The *limitanei* were supported in their function by the *equites*. These cavalry units were organized in independent tactical units called *vexillationes*, each *vexillatio* most likely being composed of five hundred men.[36] It was their function to provide accessible routes of communication from their garrisons strategically positioned behind the frontier and to check any incursions from across the frontier. The primary fighting force of a province consisted of the two legions assigned to it. Their role was strictly one of support, except in times of conflict when it was their responsibility to engage and destroy the enemy. These first-class troops are sometimes designated by the term *ripenses*. By A.D. 325 the term was applied to the regulars stationed in the provinces as opposed to the

comitatenses or regulars serving with the *comitatus* or field army. The term *ripenses (riparienses)* derives from the Latin *ripa* and, as its name denotes, relates to the defense of a riverbank[37] and was used in reference to certain troops in the Danube area as early as the reign of Aurelian.[38] Indeed, it was in that area, the boundary of which is the Rhine and the Danube, that these troops were most commonly located.[39]

The command of the provincial garrisons had been exercised throughout the history of the empire by the provincial governor. It should, however, be remembered that from the time of the reign of Gallienus a tendency had existed toward the separation of military and civil powers and, moreover, that in those provinces still governed by a senatorial governor, a *praepositus*, rather than the governor or *praeses*, often exercised the command over troops. Under Diocletian, however, governors who were of equestrian rank still retained the function of command. Nevertheless, inscriptions dating from the early years of Diocletian's reign attest to the fact that military operations were still occasionally performed by the *praeses*.[40]

The separation of the military and civil powers was carried to its conclusion under Diocletian. J. G. C. Anderson informs us that

> In the later years of Diocletian's joint reign the principle of divided authority was applied almost universally. By A.D. 304—5 the separation of military and civil functions was normal: only in such provinces as Mauretania and Isauria, where conditions were disturbed, were the two functions still combined, and there the combination was permanent.[41]

The military command of the governors was superseded by the creation of a new officer—the *dux*. "The appointment of an equestrian military officer as general commander of the troops of a province or of more than one province, the *dux provinciae* or *dux limitis provinciae*," was "a natural sequel"[42] after the separation of military from civil powers. Jones asserts that "In the system of command Diocletian introduced one innovation, establishing in certain frontier areas zone commanders *(duces)* distinct from the provincial governors, who retained civil functions only. This change however was far from universal: in many areas the provincial governor continued to command the local forces as heretofore."[43]

The origin of the *dux* is rightly attributed to Diocletian. The initial existence of the office in the time of his reign is certain. The first literary mention of Diocletian's new military commanders occurs in the early part of his reign when the author of the second panegyric refers to those occupying the new office of *dux* as preserving the glory of Diocletian. Regarding this account, Norman H. Baynes explains that "there is no undoubted reference to the later provincial military commander—the *dux*—until the year 289."[44] The existence of the *dux* is further attested by several inscriptions dating to the period of the tetrarchy.[45]

Nevertheless, the question may be raised whether the *dux* originated before the time of Diocletian. *Duces* are mentioned in the passage from Aurelius Victor describing the accession of Diocletian.[46] It may, however, be argued that Aurelius Victor, writing in the late fourth century, applies the terminology of his day to a situation that had existed almost a century before. A further argument for the early origin of the *dux* cannot be so easily dismissed, however. An inscription found at Verona, dating to the year 265, records that a certain construction project was undertaken at the direction of one "Aur. Marcellino, v.p., duc. duc."[47] Mommsen expanded "duc. duc." into "duce ducenario."[48] If his interpretation is correct, the office of *dux* must have existed, at least in some form, before Diocletian. Baynes attempts to account for the use of the term *dux* by citing Homo's argument that Aurelius

Marcellinus was not a *dux* assigned to the command of the troops of a province, but simply a director of a particular project.[49] Clinton W. Keyes, on the other hand, disagrees with Mommsen's rendering of "duc. duc."; as he explains, "the stone-cutter may have repeated these letters by mistake [i.e., *duc. duc.*], and the man's title may have been simply *v. p. ducenarius*, a title which is found in another inscription of a little later date (*CIL*, III, 1805)."[50] Of course, there is no good reason to expect a *dux limitis* to have served at Verona. "It seems much more likely that Marcellinus was a financial officer."[51]

The command of the regular troops of the African provinces was not entrusted to a *dux* but to an equestrian officer with the title *praepositus/limitis*. It is possible that this officer had originally been placed in command of troops in the old province of Africa, a consular province and thus governed by a senator whose title was later retained by officers who exercised the same functions as the *dux* in other provinces. Seston attributes the widespread employment of the *praepositus* within the African provinces to a general reorganization of the area effected by Maximian at the conclusion of his African expedition and campaign of 198.[52]

It was the function of both the *dux* and the *praepositus* to command troops and maintain defensive structures.[53] However, regarding military command in the provinces, Jones explains that "in most of the provinces, which were ungarrisoned, the governor had civil functions only. In some [provinces] which had garrisons Diocletian separated the military command from the civil government, but this was by no means a universal rule."[54] Furthermore, as we are informed by Van Berchem, it was the provincial governor who exercised the command of the *limitanei* of the province, while the *dux* might command the legions and cavalry.[55]

The lack of uniformity in the system and the occasional overlapping and reduplication of the duties of various commanders, whether *duces*, *praepositi*, and *praeses*, may be accounted for by the fact that "the re-organisation of the frontier provinces was not carried out simultaneously,"[56] but that "the policy was applied at different times during the reign, as occasion dictated, as the circumstances of particular territories pressed themselves on the attention of the Emperors."[57] Consequently, the reform of frontier defense, the military, and the administrative system occurred both simultaneously within the individual provinces of the empire, and gradually from province to province. As Parker writes, "The division of the old provinces into smaller units, which further weakened the power of their governors, was carried out in gradual stages and the completed scheme is reproduced in the provincial list of Verona."[58]

Some may have held that the sole motive of the provincial reforms was to continue the reduction of the power of the governors and, by so doing, decrease the likelihood of civil strife. Although this was certainly an effect of the reform, the purpose for which it was undertaken was to provide effective leadership for the armies.[59] Jones supports the military interpretation, arguing that "some at any rate of the new *duces* commanded far larger concentrations of troops than any provincial governor had had at his disposal for generations."[60] Parker concurs with Seston's analysis of the motive, declaring that

> although the primary purpose of this new territorial delimitation was doubtless to facilitate the work of administration, it is worthy of note that in each case the re-organisation appears to have followed a period of extensive military operations. This suggests that at least a secondary motive for the change may have been the creation of a more effective system of frontier defence. For the subdivision of provinces situated

> in a danger zone would, if each province had its own garrison legions, provide a stronger and more intensive resistance to hostile attacks from beyond the frontier.[61]

The civil (and in a few cases military) administration of the province was accomplished by its governor. In the appointment of governors, Diocletian continued Gallienus's policy of assigning provinces to equestrian governors, to such an extent that under his rule senatorial governors were almost eliminated. Jones affirms that there "were still a few proconsuls and legates, . . . and only the two consular proconsulships of Asia and Africa, both greatly reduced in territory, still survived, and were still filled by senators."[62] However, these two governors "were responsible directly to the Emperor and not to the praetorian prefect."[63] Jones writes that "all the other provinces . . . were governed by equestrian *praesides*."[64] Although the empire was divided into four administrative sections under the tetrarchy, the continual division of provinces and the formation of new provinces undoubtedly represented a great strain on the administrative machinery of the imperial government. Parker suggests that "in order to facilitate the control of the provincial governors by the central bureaucracy, Diocletian introduced a new and more comprehensive scheme of internal organization. The Empire was divided into twelve dioceses."[65] Provinces were grouped together to form the various dioceses, "each of which was directed by a deputy of the praetorian prefects, *vices agens praefectorum praetorio*, or *vicarius* for short."[66] The establishment of the system of vicars weakened the praetorian prefects,

> whose representatives they were, and appeals from their decisions were heard not by the prefects, but by the Emperor himself. By this check upon the monopoly of power in the hands of his chief ministers, Diocletian sought to protect himself from a repetition of the military *pronunciamentos* [declaration of troops to elevate general to imperial rank], which in the past had so vitally sapped the strength of the Empire.[67]

The vicar not only served as a check on the prefects but also as a restraining force on provincial governors.[68]

The provincial and diocese divisions of the empire are given in the "Verona List." Jones's research and observations on the value of the list demonstrate its accuracy. Based on the known dates of creation for provinces appearing in the list, Jones dates the document several years after the abdication of Diocletian, writing, it "cannot be earlier than 312, the earliest possible date for the creation of Aegyptus Herculia, nor later than 320, the latest possible date for the amalgamation of Numidia Cirtensis and Militiana."[69]

The administrative organization of the regular troops, cavalry, and infantry, under the command of the *duces* corresponded in part to the new provincial organization. The empire was divided into military districts, each administered by a *dux*. Several provinces were grouped together to form a military district. The Eastern Prefecture was divided into six military districts that, with the inclusion of the Egyptian district, constituted the organization of the empire directly under Diocletian's supervision.[70] In Galerius's administrative portion of the empire, seven *duces* commanded troops along the Danubian *limes*.[71] The western half of the empire was placed under the military supervision of thirteen *duces*.[72] With the exception of the field armies maintained by the emperors near their persons, the entire military strength of the empire was stationed along the frontiers and commanded by *duces*, as they were placed in the military districts.

A different interpretation of the military administration of Diocletian has been proposed by Nischer. In addition to the frontier reorganization, he contends that the reforms "consisted in the institution of a number of independent

bodies of divisional and main reserves which were not tied to any particular point of the frontier, but which possessed a greater freedom of action and could even be employed at need in more distant provinces without any substantial weakening of the frontier-defence proper."[73]

Nischer seems to have conjured up twenty additional legions whose existence at the time of Diocletian is unverified. He assumes that all legions of Flavian Constantinian nomenclature were originated by Constantius rather than Constantine, and that a number of other obscure legions also functioned under Diocletian. These legions are deployed in the Nischer system to fill the posts of regional and main reserves. A "Rhine reserve" is supposed to have been organized, composed of the legions I Flavia Constantiniana, II Flavia Constantiniana; a "West Danube reserve" of the legions III Herculia and IV Iovia; an "East Danube reserve" of the I and II Flavia Gemina; a "Pontus reserve" of the I and II Armeniaca; an "Eastern reserve" of the V and VI Parthica; an "Egyptian reserve" of the I Maximiana, II Flavia Constantia, and III Diocletiana; an "African reserve" of the I Flavia Pacis, II Flavia Virtutis, and III Flavia Salutis; a "Julian Alps Main reserve" of the legions I, II, and III Iulia Alpima; and an "Isaurian Main reserve" of the legions I, II, and III Isauria.[74]

Nischer's theory is refuted by both Baynes and Parker. Baynes believes Nischer's system of divisional reserves to be "unsupported"[75] and Parker, after examining the origin and positioning of each legion mentioned by Nischer, concludes that his theory is "arbitrary and unsatisfactory."[76] He continues and summarizes his position in support of the Diocletianic provincial defense system as follows:

> Now since the time of Septimius Severus it had been the practice to assign not more than two legions to each frontier province, and, although in some provinces one legion was sometimes deemed sufficient, the upper limit was not exceeded. . . . This policy appears to have been continued during the third century A.D., and we find Aurelian raising the garrisons of Phoenice and Arabia to the normal strength of two legions apiece. It is surely then not improbable that Diocletian adhered to what had become a recognised principle. Certainty is unattainable; but, if we adopt the theory that Diocletian garrisoned his frontier-provinces on the basis of not more than two legions to a province with a preference for a system of pairs, then we can both account for the increase in the number of the legions and also discover the play of their distribution without having recourse to Nischer's theory of "Divisional and Main Reserves," for which not a shred of evidence exists.[77]

Thus, through programs of refortification, troop increase, reformation of the military command system, and provincial reorganization, Diocletian endeavored to provide the empire with secure boundaries.

The defense of the empire against its enemies could not be accomplished merely through the improved system of frontier fortification and administration that Diocletian had instituted. A further element of defense was required for Diocletian to realize his goal of a secure empire—an effective offensive striking force.

The central component of Diocletian's offensive strategy was a permanent field army. Through its creation he provided the foundation for the enlarged and expanded field army whose existence during the time of Constantine is revealed in the document *Notitia Dignitatum*. Mommsen calls this later force "the joint creation of Diocletian and Constantine."[78]

The contention that Diocletian was the architect of the field army and that Constantine was the builder who constructed the edifice on Diocletian's foundation is challenged on the basis of the familiar passage in which

Aurelius Victor describes the labor of Constantine as originating a new military order *(novando militiae ordine)*.[79] Those who oppose the theory of a Diocletianic field army hold that Diocletian was only the augmenter of the number of troops that were still administered and distributed solely in accordance with the concept of positioning them along the frontier. It is Constantine alone whom they consider worthy to be credited with the innovation of the field army.[80]

Nischer attempts to refute the existence of a Diocletianic field army through three arguments. He first contends that Constantine is surely the great reformer of the army and the originator of the field army in accordance with the statement of Aurelius Victor. This is essentially the line of reasoning expressed above. His second argument is that the troops that comprised the field army of Constantine are listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* under titles unknown to the pre-Constantinian army. Nischer finally argues that it seems illogical to believe that if Diocletian had been the founder of the field army, he would have begun his process of reform with a tremendous increase in troop strength and then have continued to form entirely new units out of units whose formation was barely complete. Furthermore, the execution of such measures would have required a longer period of time than the reign of Diocletian.[81]

Nischer's first argument must be called into question because the passage from Aurelius Victor is by no means clear in its meaning. Perhaps it may be concluded that some kind of a military reform was initiated by Constantine. However, the nature of that reform is not indicated by the historian. It may or may not have been associated with the field army. Seston goes so far as to question the reality of any sort of reform on the part of Constantine.[82]

Parker answers Nischer's second objection by presenting strong evidence that the legions of Constantine's field army were, in part, Diocletianic in origin.

> These statements, I take it [i.e., Nischer], mean that in the field-armies very few legions are found which are designated by a number only, or by another title in addition to the number, and the exceptions can be explained by holding that the legions so styled date back to frontier-legions of Diocletian. Now if we take the list of *legiones palatinae et comitatenses* in the *Notitia* we find in the eastern half of the Empire two Palatine legions *(Primani*, *Undecimani)* designated by a number, nine *legiones comitatenses (*V *Macedonica*, VII *Gemina*, X *Gemina*, I *Flavia Constantia*, II *Flavia Constantia Thebaeorum*, I *Maximiana Thebaeorum*, III *Diocletiana Thebaeorum*, I *Flavia Gemina*, II *Flavia Gemina)* by a number and name, and three *legiones comitatenses (Tertiodecimani*, *Quartodecimani*, *Secundani)* by a number; while in the western half of the Empire we meet with one Palatine legion designated by a number *(Octavani)* ten *legiones comitatenses (Secundani Italiciani*, III *Italica*, III *Herculia*, II *Britannica*, I *Flavia Pacis*, II *Flavia Virtutis*, III *Flavia Salutis*, II *Flavia Constantiniana*, *Tertio Augustani*, III *Julia Alpina)* by a number and name, and one *legio comitatensis (Undecimani)* by a number. If we subtract from this list the eight "Flavian" legions and III *Julia Alpina*, whose origin we have shown to be doubtful, that leaves us with no fewer than seventeen "easily explained exceptions."[83]

This information casts doubt on Nischer's reasoning. As Parker asserts, the existence in Constantine's field army of at least seventeen legions during the tetrarchy cannot be lightly dismissed as an "exception." Nischer's disregard of such weighty evidence calls his entire methodology into question.

Parker also responds to Nischer's third query regarding Diocletian's logic. Because small legionary *vexillationes* drawn from the frontier legions were used in the composition of the field army, Parker is able to explain that "the

increase in the number of frontier-legions . . . was not merely a defensive measure, it was also an attempt to provide for a mobile army raised on the principle enunciated by previous emperors, . . . each in all probability 1,000 strong, drawn from the larger frontier-legions, and these, whether they had received by then the title of 'comitatenses' or not, are the foundation of Constantine's field-army."[84] Nischer's error is that he supposes Diocletian's reforms were accomplished in accordance with an established plan. This is contrary to the indication that the reorganization of the frontier provinces was not carried out simultaneously, but as necessitated by particular military circumstances. Thus frontier legions were raised at varying times.[85] We may suppose that contingents were added to the field army on a similarly gradual basis. Diocletian did not raise a huge number of troops for service on the frontier and then transform them into a field army. Here Nischer is correct. Rather, a gradual process of formation occurred both in raising frontier legions and in organizing the field army. This was not an impossible feat, nor one that could not be completed in twenty years.

It seems that the concept of the mobile field army originated with the cavalry corps that Gallienus stationed at Milan to retaliate against enemy incursions. This aggregation of cavalry cannot be considered a true field army, but was certainly its forerunner. Seston expresses a similar view.[86]

The field army of Diocletian consisted of a nucleus of permanent troops, augmented in times of emergency by *vexillationes* from the provinces. At the center of this force were the emperor's most elite troops, organized in the *sacer comitatus* (sacred body of companions). The existence of this body is attested by both literary and epigraphic sources. A papyrus that treats the composition of the expeditionary force Diocletian led into Egypt to quell the rebellion of the rebel Achilleus in 297[87] mentions the *comitatus* in several places.[88] An inscription dated to the reign of Diocletian further attests the existence of the *comitatus* under the tetrarchy.[89]

Jones proposes that the "mobile forces under the immediate command of the emperor, which, since they accompanied him on his movements, were called the *comitatus*."[90] The *comitatus* was apparently composed of several different bodies of troops and *comites*, the companions, or court, of the emperor. A select military guard, the *lanciarii*, also held a place in the *comitatus*. Several inscriptions provide evidence of the existence of *lanciarii*.[91] Nischer refuses to consider the *lanciarii* as part of the *comitatus* but rather considers them to be "apparently a detachment of the praetorian guard."[92] On the other hand, Parker maintains that it is virtually impossible to consider these troops as part of the praetorians, since an inscription implies that the *lanciarii* were especially selected for this honor *(lectus in sacro comitatu lanciarius)*,[93] and suggests that the *lanciarii* were troops selected to serve as a bodyguard to the Augusti and Caesars on their campaigns. They may have begun to fill this role in place of the praetorian guard when that body was limited by Diocletian to garrison duty in Rome.[94]

The *protectores* comprised another of the units included within the *comitatus.* Jones explains their function as that of an imperial honor guard, which status "seems to have been invented by Gallienus, who bestowed it on high-ranking officers, prefects of legions and praetorian tribunes."[95] Jones further asserts that "by Diocletian's time there was certainly a corps of *protectores* which accompanied the emperor." It is very possible that these are the same troops that are less formally called *domestici* and who Diocletian himself commanded before his accession.[96] This detachment is mentioned in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus as being present with Diocletian on his Egyptian expedition.[97] An inscription from the tombstone of a quartermaster of this unit, dating to Diocletian's reign and found at his official residence at Nicomedia, shows that the *protectores* did not constitute an official unit; since they were stationed at the emperor's residence, they were likely members of the *comitatus*.[98]

The imperial bodyguard proper was called the *scholae*. The existence of this unit in the *comitatus* of Diocletian is clearly attested by certain literary sources. The *Acta Sergi et Bacchi* in the *Analecta Ballandiana* indicate that two senior members of the *Scholae Gentilium* were martyred during the persecution of Galerius.[99] Lactantius speaks of the rapidity with which Maximinus was promoted through the ranks to the office of Caesar, having once served as a *scutarius* or a member of the *Scholae Scutariorum*.[100] It may then be postulated that at least two units of *scholae*, the *Scholae Gentilium*, recruited from barbarians and the *Scholae Scutariorum*, were raised among the Romans.[101]

The inclusion of other privileged units among the crack troops of the *comitatus* is very possible. Two such elite corps are the Ioviani and the Herculiani. Literary sources reveal their frequent presence with the emperor, and they are listed in the position of highest honor among the *legiones comitatenses* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. They were probably attached to the *comitatus* as units originally drawn from the legions of the province of Scythia, the I Iovia and the II Herculia, to render temporary service that was, apparently, later made permanent.[102]

To be able to provide additional legions to augment the *comitatus* in times of danger and thus form an expanded field army, Diocletian increased the size of the Danubian troops. The increase in troop numbers along the Danube enabled Diocletian to draw from the frontier legions without jeopardizing the safety of any one section of the frontier by depleting legionary garrisons below a safe level. It is certain that Diocletian used this method of adding *vexillationes* from the frontier legions to organize the field army. This is illustrated in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* account of Diocletian's Egyptian expedition. In it, nine *praepositi* are said to be in command of the troops. Each commanded *vexillationes* from a pair of legions, probably sister legions assigned to the same province.[103] Thus the only real change in the policy of Constantine from that of Diocletian is "the *permanent* concentration by Constantine of those *vexillationes* in an army separate from the frontier-army and their subdivision into two sections which differed from each other only in rank and distinction."[104]

The infantry that formed the bulk of the expeditionary forces was raised in the method described above. Although the *vexillationes* were transferred from duty with their larger parent legions stationed on the frontiers, they did constitute what must be termed a field army. Like so many other innovations of Diocletian, the field army was probably formed in response to a particular military necessity occasioned by a particular problem situation. The Egyptian expedition of Diocletian is an example of such a situation.

Of the troops comprising the army that Diocletian led into Egypt, it appears that the detachments drawn from the two legions of a province acted in unison and were under the command of the same officer. At times units from sister provinces were organized in the same fashion. The *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* specifically mentions troops from Upper Moesia, consisting of units of the IV Flavia and the VII Claudia and a detachment of the legion XI Claudia, which was stationed in Lower Moesia, as commanded by the same officer, one Iulianus.[105] After the campaign was successfully concluded, several *vexillationes* remained in Egypt. They were detachments from legions originally stationed in the same province. The *Notitia Dignitatum* identifies the location of units from the legions V Macedonica and the XIII Gemina, originally assigned to Dacia, in northern Egypt.[106]

Just as Diocletian led his expedition to quell the rebellion in Egypt in 297, Maximian, in the same year, led a force of troops into Africa to end disturbances by desert tribes. Maximian's field army seems to have been formed in the same manner as that of Diocletian, with the greater part of the force consisting of troops drawn from frontier legions. A number of inscriptions provide us with this information. The epitaph of a praetorian guard evidences the presence of detachments of this unit with the *comitatus* of Maximian.[107]

The legion XI Claudia, as indicated by another inscription, was stationed at Aquilea, which may have represented a reserve base at which the *vexillationes* used in the field army could await the next campaign without rejoining their parent legion.[108] Because a number of the units of Diocletian's field army remained in Egypt rather than returning to their parent legion, and because the XI Claudia vexillatio likewise did not rejoin its legion, it may be questioned whether other units also remained detached from their parent legion and continued as permanent mobile independent units.[109]

Cavalry was an important and integral part of the field army. According to Parker, the creation of the mobile cavalry unit of the field army, detached from service to a particular legion, was not the accomplishment of Constantine.[110] As I have shown in a longer version of this paper, the formation of independent cavalry units must be attributed to Gallienus, and the separation of the legionary cavalry from their legions, with the reception of the new name *promoti*, to Aurelian. During the reign of Constantine, the *promoti* were designated by the unit title of *vexillatio*, which at this time began to refer only to units of cavalry and was no longer applied to infantry. However, it seems that perhaps even this new terminology originates with Diocletian instead of Constantine. Certain passages from the *Codex Iustinianus* indicate that such terminology was followed before 293.[111] Independent cavalry units, or *promoti*, were utilized in the armies of Diocletian. Some were certainly incorporated in the field army and others served in frontier areas. The evidence that cavalry was used in both the *comitatus* as well as on the frontier is strong. An inscription from Noricum mentions a cavalry unit that had been part of the *comitatus*, but on completion of its term of service had returned to its station on the frontier.[112]

On the basis, then, of numerous literary and epigraphical evidences, it must be concluded that the mobile field army was the creation of Diocletian, gradually formed to meet the military necessities of the empire. It consisted of several special units permanently assigned to duty in the *comitatus*, of both infantry and cavalry *vexillationes* assigned on either a temporary or permanent basis. The mobile field army was a vital and important component in Diocletian's comprehensive strategy for the defense of his empire.

The reforms of Diocletian proved successful in giving new life to an ailing empire. The organization of the tetrarchy, the refortification of the *limites*, the augmentation of the army's size, the reformation of the system of military command, the reorganization of the provinces, and the inauguration of a permanent mobile field army constituted a comprehensive program of reform advanced by Diocletian. These changes occurred in response to definite and specific threats to the security of the empire and were implemented gradually in response to individual situations and events. Their effectiveness, which developed as a result of their establishment, is perhaps best described by a historian of the world.

> Thanks to Diocletian's foresight all the frontiers of the Roman Empire had been fortified in the manner already described with towns and citadels and towers where the entire soldiery lived. Thus the barbarians could not effect passage anywhere as forces would encounter them and repel invasions.[113]

Notes

The preceding is a chapter from a senior honors thesis written in 1975. Richard Lloyd Anderson was a member of the committee that accepted the thesis for "university scholar" designation.

1. See William Seston, *Dioclétien et la Tétrarchie: Guerres et Réformes (284—300)* (Paris: De Boccard, 1946), 177; see also Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* (London: Black, 1969), 47,

88—90.

2. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 296.

3. H. M. D. Parker, *A History of the Roman World from A.D. 138 to 337*, 2nd ed., revised by B. H. Warmington with additional notes (London: Bradford and Dickens, 1958), 271.

4. This idea is supported by Seston, *Dioclétien*, 296:

> De l´ des décisions techniques qui eurent pour but de fortifier les frontières, d'accroître les effectifs ainsi que de régler le dispositif des troupes et leur ordre de bataille. En même temps, pour assurer avec régularité l'entrentien des armées qu'on maintenait sur le qui-vive mais, autant que possible, loin des combats, il devint nécessaire de créer des cadres administratifs qui fussent assez forts pour réunir les ressources indispensables et en contrôler l'emploi, sans qu'ils pussent devenir un danger pour l'autorite impériale. Toutes ces réformes sont liées entre elles et on ne doit les séparer qu'autant que la clarté de la description l'exige.
>
> . . . from that the technical decisions that have as a goal the fortification of the frontiers, in order to improve the effectiveness as well as regulate the disposition of the troops and their order of battle. At the same time, in order to assure with regularity the upkeep of the armies that are being kept in readiness, but, as far as possible, away from combat, it became necessary to create an administrational cadre which was strong enough to organize essential resources and control their use without becoming a danger to the imperial authority. All these reforms are interlinked and cannot be separated beyond the limitations of their job description.

5. Franz Oelmann, "The Rhine *limes* in Late Roman Times," in *Congress of Roman Frontier Studies 1949*, ed. Eric Birley (Durham, England: Durham University Press, 1952), 81.

6. Ibid.

7. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 296.

8. See ibid.

9. See ibid., 178.

10. See ibid., 297—98.

11. Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 7.8.

12. Seston, *Dioclétien*, 296—97.

13. See ibid., 298.

14. See ibid., 105. Mamertinus, *Panegyrici Latini* 7.1—7.

15. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 106. Mamertinus, *Panegyrici Latini* 2.6—7, 5.1—3. R. G. Collingwood, "Reviews and Notices of Recent Publications," *Journal of Roman Studies* 18 (1928): 241.

16. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 167.

17. See ibid., 163. Sextus Aurelius Victor, 39.33—37. Mamertinus, *Panegyrici Latini* 2.7.

18. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 178.

19. See Denis Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantinienne* (Paris: Geuthner, 1952), 43.

20. So also concludes Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 44. Van Bercham's view is well corroborated by a description of the *fossatum* cited by him from *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.15. Van Bercham, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 43 n. 2.

21. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 131.

22. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 98.

23. Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 271.

24. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 298.

25. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284—602* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 1:60.

26. Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 271.

27. See J. B. Bury, *The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 39—40.

28. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 302; cf. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:615; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 7.2—5.

29. See E. C. Nischer, "The Army Reforms of Diocletian and Constantine and Their Modifications up to the Time of the Notitia Dignitatum," *Journal of Roman Studies* 13 (1923): 8—11.

30. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 111.

31. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:56—57.

32. See Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 7.5.

33. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 22.

34. See *Codex Iustinianus*, 1.27.2, cited in Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 20.

35. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 21.

36. See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:56.

37. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 89.

38. See Flavius Vospicius Syracusius, *Divus Aurelianus* 38.4, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, 3.270; J. Frank Gillian, "The Dux Ripae at Dura," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 72 (1941): 157—75.

39. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 89.

40. See Hermann Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (hereafter *ILS*) (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), inscriptions 627—28.

41. J. G. C. Anderson, "The Genesis of Diocletian's Provincial Reorganization," *Journal of Roman Studies* 22 (1932): 30.

42. Ibid.

43. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:608.

44. Norman H. Baynes, "Three Notes on the Reforms of Diocletian and Constantine," *Journal of Roman Studies* 15 (1925): 200.

45. See Dessau, *ILS*, 664, 4103.

46. See Sextus Aurelius Victor, 39.1.

47. *Corpus Inscriptionem Latinarum* (hereafter *CIL*), V, 3329.

48. Cited in Baynes, "Three Notes," 200.

49. See Homo, as cited in Baynes, "Three Notes," 200.

50. Clinton W. Keyes, *The Rise of the Equites* (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1915), 51 n. 2, cited in Baynes, "Three Notes," 200.

51. Ibid.

52. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 120; cf. Eutropius, *Breviariaum ab urbe condita* 9.23; Sextus Aurelius Victor 39.22; *CIL*, VI, 1130.

53. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 308; also see Mamertinus, *Panegyrici Latini* 2.3—4.

54. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:43.

55. See Van Berchem, *L'Armée de Dioclétien*, 23.

56. H. M. D. Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," *Journal of Roman Studies* 23 (1933): 184.

57. J. B. Bury, "The Provincial List of Verona," *Journal of Roman Studies* 13 (1923): 128.

58. Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 263.

59. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 243.

60. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:45.

61. Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 177.

62. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:45.

63. Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 264; compare Dessau, *ILS*, 1213, 1217, 1220, 1227.

64. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:45.

65. Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 264; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 7.

66. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:47.

67. Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 265.

68. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 340.

69. A. H. M. Jones, "The Date and Value of the Verona List," *Journal of Roman Studies* 44 (1954): 22.

70. See ibid., 23—24; *Notitia Dignitatum* (Register of Dignataries), in *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History* 6/4 (n.d.): 17.

71. See *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or. 39—43).

72. See *Notitia Dignitatum* (Occ. 1).

73. Nischer, "Army Reforms," 6.

74. See ibid., 8.

75. Baynes, "Three Notes," 203.

76. Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 175.

77. Ibid., 177—78.

78. Cited in Baynes, "Three Notes," 204.

79. See Sextus Aurelius Victor, 41.12.

80. See Nischer, "Army Reforms," 4.

81. See ibid., 4, 12—13; Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 182.

82. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 304.

83. Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 182—83. Cf. *Notitia Dignitatum*, 17.

84. Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 184.

85. See ibid.; Baynes, "Three Notes," 203.

86. See Seston, *Dioclétien*, 305; Sextus Aurelius Victor, 39.22.

87. See Eutropius, *Breviariaum ab urbe condita* 9.23; Sextus Aurelius Victor, 39.23.

88. See *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, part 1, ed. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt (Boston: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1898), 90 (col. II, line 17).

89. See Dessau, *ILS*, 2781.

90. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:52.

91. See Dessau, *ILS*, 2045, 2782.

92. Nischer, "Army Reforms," 55; see Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 185; Josephus, *Bellum Iudiacum* 3.6.2.

93. See Dessau, *ILS*, 2781.

94. See Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 185.

95. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:53; Sextus Aurelius Victor, 39.1.

96. See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:53.

97. See *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 90 (col. II, line 7).

98. See Dessau, *ILS*, 2779.

99. See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1:54.

100. See Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 19.6.

101. See *Codex Theodosianus*, 17.9.389, in Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 2:1076 n. 33.

102. See Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 2.42, 3.30; *Notitia Dignitatum*, 9.

103. See Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 271—72.

104. Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 183.

105. See *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 93—94 (col. V).

106. See *Notitia Dignitatum*, 17.

107. See Dessau, *ILS*, 2038.

108. See Dessau, *ILS*, 2332.

109. See Parker "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 186; *CIL*, V, 895.

110. See Parker, "The Legions of Diocletian and Constantine," 187—89; Dessau, *ILS*, 569.

111. See *Codex Iustinianus*, 10.55.3; 6.64.9, in Parker, *History of the Roman World*, 272.

112. See *CIL*, III, 5565.

113. Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 2.34, in *Historia Nova: The Decline of Rome*, trans. James J. Buchanan and Harold T. Davis (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1967), 76.

The Social Context of First-Century Roman Christianity

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

Whoever coined the phrase "Rome was not built in a day" established a permanent reminder that the Eternal City had a long history.[1] That history already extended back over eight hundred years when the disciples of Jesus brought their message to Rome.

Modern readers of the book of Romans, addressed to the Saints in Rome, sometimes have difficulty understanding the rich content and diverse issues found in one of the most influential books in the New Testament. In writing this book, Paul wrote to readers who probably understood the social reality of the many groups living in Rome at the time and who would have had no difficulty understanding his message and intent. However, most modern readers are not familiar with the social context and historical setting that help a reader to appreciate the nuances found in Paul's long epistle. That social context is the essence of this essay. Through its content, the reader will have a better understanding and appreciation of the Rome that Paul wrote about—in particular, issues dealing with ethnicity, gender, and class. The book of Romans will then, I hope, be appreciated in new ways as the reader gains appropriate understanding of Paul's world—the social context of first-century Roman Christianity.

The Roman Capital

Rome, capital of the Roman Empire from the reign of Augustus (27 B.C.—A.D. 14) until that of Diocletian (A.D. 284—305), was the largest and most splendid city in antiquity.[2] The effort the Romans put into beautifying part of the city while allowing the slums to expand reflects a part of the social condition at the time the first Christians began to worship in the imperial capital.

Earliest Rome was centered around the Esquiline and Quirinal hills. Under Rome's Etruscan kings, the Capitoline hill emerged as the very heart of the Roman establishment, with its magnificent temples; the nearby Palatine contained residences and eventually the palace of the emperors. Between them lay the area of the Velabrum, leading to the Tiber, which formed the western boundary. To the north was the Pincian hill, and south of it the hills and valleys led all the way to the Caelian hill, where the Castra Praetoria, Paul's prison, was situated.

According to the *Res Gestae of Augustus* (a document written in A.D. 14 and read in the Senate after his death the same year) the plebeian class at Rome in the time of Augustus numbered 320,000, not counting women and children.[3] When added to the senatorial and equestrian classes, the total free population would have been nearly 700,000. In addition, the slaves of the city probably equaled half that number, augmenting the tally to well over a million. Rome was also the destination of many foreign travelers. Some estimates have placed the combined population at more than one million in the first century.[4]

Little wonder that all carts and wheeled traffic were forbidden in the city during the day. The only exception was the *carpentum*, or small cart, used by the Vestal Virgins and the ladies of the court. Foot traffic crowded the streets, and Rome acquired a lasting reputation for dirtiness and squalor. Housing was of two kinds. The wealthy had large, private houses *(domus)*, sort of inner-city villas. Generally they were found in the more fashionable parts on the hills of Rome. In marked contrast were the *insulae*, cramped quarters in tall apartment buildings that housed the middle and lower classes, who were packed into dirty little rooms as unsanitary as they were susceptible to fire.

Besides population, another major factor in the crowding was the incessant series of mammoth building programs. Rome, under Augustus and his successors, was subjected to constant renovation and rebuilding. From the Capitoline to the Aventine hills to the Campus Martius and beyond, all the way to the Vatican hill, emperors erected arches, columns, baths, circuses, palaces, temples, theaters, basilicas, and forums. Monuments were everywhere—so many in fact that free spaces were wholly consumed. And yet these architectural feats made Rome the envy of the world.

Augustus set the tone. He declared that he found Rome a city of bricks and left it a metropolis of marble. With the help of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, the boast was made true. The grandeur of Rome was celebrated while the broad policies of Julius Caesar (49—44 B.C.) were completed. With the Temple of Castor and Pollux and the Temple of Mars finished, the famed Forum Romanum was altered significantly. Further, the Campus Martius to the north was developed as a viable part of the city, largely by Marcus Agrippa. There citizens could find theaters, the Pantheon, the Baths of Agrippa, and the Temple of Neptune. A partial list of Augustus's other marvels in stone include the Forum Augustum, the Curia Julia, the Basilica Julia, the Temple of Divus Julius, and the Theater of Marchellus.

Tiberius (A.D. 14—37) initiated little construction, in keeping with his own austere nature. He did finish the Augustan projects and ordered the creation of the Temple of Divus Augustus. Of note was the Domus Tiberiana, the splendid great imperial place on the Palatine, which, however, was considered inadequate by Gaius Caligula (A.D. 37—41).

Caligula not only upgraded the Domus but had the curious habit of raising temples to himself. He also allowed Isis followers to have a place of worship on the Campus Martius and then desecrated the Temple of Divus Augustus by placing a bridge over it to connect his palace on the Palatine with the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol. His successor, Claudius (A.D. 41—54), focused on those imperial efforts that would most benefit the city. He improved the harbor at Ostia to ensure grain supplies and rebuilt the water system. The aqueducts at Rome had always been extensive, providing fresh water from the early days of the Republic. Their care had been entrusted to the censor and the aediles; Claudius created the office of *curator aquarum,* head of the water board.

Aside from the Golden House and the reconstruction of Rome, both springing from the fire of 64, Nero (A.D. 54—68) spent much time and money on other buildings of suitably grand scope, such as the Circus Gai et Neronis and the Neronian Baths. Nero's original Domus Transitoria, linking the Palatine and the Esquiline hills, was a disappointment, for it could not encompass his vision of a proper home. The fire made the replacement, the Domus Aurea, possible.

With the death of Burrus in 62 and the retirement of Seneca, a reign of terror descended upon the city. Support for the emperor dwindled by 65, when elements of the Senate and the depleted nobility joined forces in the Pisonian conspiracy. Although crushed, the plot signaled the eventual downfall of Nero, who was ousted in 68; a bloody civil war followed in 69, which ended with the conquest of the city by legions supporting Vespasian. During these struggles, the authorities chose to make Christians the scapegoats, and the early church was cruelly persecuted.

Roman Religion

Roman religion focused on the public or state priesthood, personal expression, and household and family observance. The pantheon of Roman gods was composed of a diversity of gods associated with different aspects of Roman life. Unlike the Greeks, the Romans had no mythology—no genealogies of the gods, and gods with no

offspring. Like the Greeks, Romans believed only a temple or at least a sacred image of the deity ensured the presence of a god in the city. As in other ancient religions, sacrifice was the main element of worship. Rome established an openness toward new deities as long as the Roman gods remained supreme.[5]

Social Status

Roman society had a clearly defined class structure.[6] At the pinnacle of the social pyramid were the senatorials, comprised of some nine hundred senators and their families.[7] Their grand villas dominated the central sections of Rome, and their clienteles constituted an important group. Their wealth far surpassed that of individuals in other classes with only a few exceptions. Membership in the senatorial class had been limited to those with both wealth and a long pedigree of honored ancestors, but from the beginning of the Principate, some wealthy men with lower-class ancestors as recently as two generations back were able to enter the Senate. One of the requirements for membership in the Senate was a class rating of one million sesterces, 250,000 times a laborer's daily wage. Most senatorial wealth was invested in property such as homes in the city, country villas, and farms.[8] Most of the highest governmental offices in Rome were held by this class.

Next in rank was the equestrian class, the *ordo equester.* Individuals were eligible for enrollment if they could claim two generations of free birth and if they possessed about one-half a senator's wealth.[9] *Equites* (knights), unlike members of the senatorial class, were allowed unlimited participation in commerce, trading, and governmental contracts. But they tended to emulate their social betters, and even those who engaged in business generally invested their capital in land. Although most were wealthy men whose ancestors were free Romans or provincials, the descendants of freed slaves were also able to enter this class from the time of Augustus, who started this practice.

Just below the senatorial and equestrian classes in legal status was the freeborn Roman citizenry, the plebs. This group included all Romans from those just below equestrian status to the poor who were dependent on the daily dole.[10] Tacitus made a sharp distinction, however, between Romans who supported themselves adequately and the destitute. Thus only the former will be included in this category. Tacitus calls them the *populus integer*, the "respectable populace."[11] He may have in mind a passage in Livy in which the *populus integer* is contrasted with the poor.[12] Although of lower legal status than freeborn Romans, some freed slaves who had gained citizenship, particularly those of the imperial household, earned considerable wealth and gained a status virtually equal to respectable Romans. However, it is misleading to lump these two groups into an economic middle class. They did not have a unified class consciousness and only generally fulfilled some of the functions of the modern middle class. Also in this category were freeborn Greeks, perhaps with Roman citizenship, who had voluntarily migrated to the capital and taken up business there. These people shared a common desire to rise in wealth and status.

Unlike the aristocracy, the *populus integer* generally did not avoid manual labor, at least not until they became wealthy enough to do so. This group also included rich and experienced freedmen who invested in risky shipping enterprises or who operated a number of businesses. It included Roman citizens who owned their own shops or craft businesses and who worked alongside their one slave or free laborer. They put a high value on honesty in business dealings and preferred a person's promise to collateral.[13] In imitation of the aristocracy, they feasted as lavishly as they could afford. The less wealthy among them joined street or craft associations in which they could find comradeship and share the cost of great banquets and funerals. In this group and among the *equites* were

found people who had some degree of upward social mobility. Though not all were upwardly mobile, a far greater percentage from these groups saw an increase in wealth and status over their lifetime than from any other group.

In first-century Italy, somewhere between 25 and 40 percent of the population were slaves.[14] A large percentage of the rest probably were freedmen *(liberti)* or were descended from freedmen. Slaves belonging to the households of the wealthy or moderately wealthy had, in some ways, a better life than the free poor of the city. Unlike the free poor, such a slave was assured three meals a day, lodging, clothing, and health care. Urban slaves who were being prepared for posts in the government bureaucracy received a superior education. Many other slaves in the cities were better educated than the freeborn poor. Such slaves could look forward to freedom between the ages of thirty and forty. While working for their master, they were allowed to earn and save money with which they hoped eventually to purchase their freedom. The freed slaves would, after the Roman custom, have become *liberti* and have assumed the *nomen gentile* of their former master, retaining their original name as a cognomen.

The most fortunate slaves were those belonging to the emperor. Some imperial slaves, even before manumission, had their own slaves, and when acting on behalf of the emperor, they had authority over freeborn Romans. It was not unknown for an imperial freedman to rise to wealthy prominence and join the *populus urbanus*.[15]

At the bottom of the social pyramid were the free poor.[16] Tacitus calls those who frequented the circus and theaters the "shabby people" *(plebs sordida)*.[17] He seems to place alongside them the slaves who were not dependents of the "great houses" (mentioned earlier in the passage) and "spendthrifts and bankrupts." Together, they were part of a class in habitual need who spent most of their day working to meet immediate necessities—if they could find work. Many had been yeoman farmers or were descendants of yeoman farmers who had lost their property through indebtedness. A few were able to rise out of poverty, but others who had incurred overwhelming debt were joining its ranks. Ramsay MacMullen thinks this group probably constituted a third of the population of Rome.[18] The arenas of Rome attracted destitute Roman citizens who, during fifty-seven days of public games each year, could forget their poverty.

In the first and second centuries A.D., every Roman citizen over the age of eleven (the minimum age may have been fourteen) was entitled to the dole, a grain allotment estimated at two-fifths of the minimum needed by any given individual.[19] So they had to supplement their income in some fashion. The state did not adequately provide for the needs of the aged, widows, orphans, disabled, or the sick. As a result, once such people used up their paltry savings, they joined the destitute rabble of the city who caused Cicero and Tacitus so much consternation. The slave whose master had inadequate resources found it more difficult to earn his freedom. And once his freedom was earned, he might find himself competing unsuccessfully with cheap slave labor without the economic support of his former master. The poor descendants of freedmen were beneath Tacitus's notice but comprised a sizable portion of Rome's population. They attempted to support themselves with the simple trades and skills they possessed, often working at jobs that poor citizens considered too menial.

Foreign Groups

Rome, as the capital of the empire, attracted large foreign colonies from the provinces of the Mediterranean area.[20] The columbaria (vaults with niches for urns containing ashes of the dead) of the imperial period of Rome reveal that many persons with foreign names, both slaves and freed, had lived and were buried there. Foreign cults

too were brought there: that of Mithras (as early as the reign of Tiberius), of Isis and Osiris, of Dea Syria (whom Nero himself revered), and of Judaism.[21]

Among the non-Roman population were those who came by choice; however, most came to Rome involuntarily as slaves and prisoners of war. As the empire grew, thousands of war captives from Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Greece, Africa, Spain, and elsewhere came to the capital. Evidently, most of these slaves were Greeks and Orientals. Because these slaves were often able to gain their freedom, freedmen and their descendants made up a considerable portion of the free population by the first century B.C. Some scholars assert that by then, freedmen and their descendants made up the largest part of the plebs, the free poor.[22]

The decreasing birth rates among native Romans, the establishment of foreign colonies, and military recruitment added to the declining numbers of native Romans. By the first century A.D., foreigners and their descendants may have made up the majority of the *plebs urbana*, along with a large population of free resident aliens *(peregrini)* and the entire slave class.[23] Of course, slaves of foreign origin were forced to reside with their masters and undoubtedly worked in close proximity to slaves of various nationalities. Freedmen and free immigrants, however, sought to live with others of their own nationality during the early stages of their socialization into the new culture. Additionally, they replaced those who left the ethnic groups to join the larger society. These foreigners and new immigrants crowded into the Roman tenement houses *(insulae)* and usually tended to congregate in individual *insulae* with others of the same nationality. This process allowed such groups to maintain their languages and cultures and thus live as partially autonomous units within Rome. Likewise, these groups often worked together. George La Piana says that certain trades and crafts in Rome were practiced mainly by skilled foreigners from cities or provinces known to specialize in that profession.[24] These skills existed in Rome in profusion only because of the influx of foreign workers.

Seemingly, before assimilating into the larger society, foreigners congregated in certain parts of the city as well as in individual *insulae*. Foreigners chose to reside at the Aventine during imperial times because of its proximity to the harbor on the Tiber. Other archaeological finds prove that the Aventine and its surrounding area were always hospitable to the Oriental cults, which took their place beside the old and venerable deities of Roman religions.

Another feature of society in Rome at this period was the presence of private associations *(collegia)*, which could be organized for almost any purpose and were to enjoy a long history in Rome. However, from the end of the Republic to the third century A.D., they were regulated by strict laws. Political associations, on the other hand, were forbidden, and other types of associations had to be individually approved by the Senate or emperor. Associations were attractive to those in the lower classes and to foreigners, for they provided a sense of belonging and honor lacking in the larger Roman society. A member of a *collegium* was equal to every other member, at least in theory. Meetings were usually held in a shrine of the patron deity. Poor men could pool their meager resources and put on great banquets. An obvious major concern of all associations among the poor was proper burial arrangements for deceased members. The less wealthy, as well as freedmen or slaves without well-to-do patrons or owners, were concerned to avoid the fate of those who could not afford a proper funeral: burial in a mass grave.

Associations allowed these groups to practice their unique religious customs, to follow a life adapted to their social conditions, and to react against the social exclusion practiced by the larger society. Some associations were composed of men occupying the same profession. Of the several hundred professional associations in Rome, a number were probably composed entirely of foreigners.[25] This is not surprising, especially considering their role in commerce. For example, most merchants in Rome during the imperial period were from the eastern provinces.

Religious associations were another important type of *collegia*. Even slaves were often allowed to join the associations of their fellow foreigners. Following their ancestral religious practices and providing for burial according to their own traditions helped maintain their cultural identity. The gathering of Jews would have been viewed in much the same context and come under the same rules as the funeral associations. Thus their banquets and celebrations would have fit well in a Roman social context—the same would have been true of the Christians.

Arising in the first century A.D., burial associations also attracted foreigners. At first, apparently, they were not *collegia* but cooperative societies that bought cemetery ground at common expense. As such, they did not need official governmental approval. Under the Flavians, these cooperatives were gradually replaced by associations organized by and for poor residents of Rome *(collegia tenuiorum)*. Dominated by foreigners, these associations did not need official recognition by the Senate or emperor. However, they were required to submit a list of members to obtain a permit from the city prefect.[26]

Slaves and freedmen of the same household sometimes formed *collegia domestica*. These associations often differed from other *collegia* because their membership included individuals with different ethnic backgrounds, having nothing in common except residence in the same household. Furthermore, these associations were officially located in the master's *domus*. It is uncertain whether they needed official recognition.[27] Finally, some unauthorized associations were allowed to remain undisturbed provided they were not involved in public disorder.[28]

Rome was generally tolerant of the various religious practices brought to the city by an increasing number of foreigners. As long as these religious groups recognized the sovereignty of Rome, they were accorded quiet toleration and legal protection—and sometimes even the favor of the state. However, if they became too public, putting themselves on an equal footing with the gods of the state, they risked violent repression. By the time of Claudius's reign, the state realized that the Eastern religions were too widespread and powerful to be ignored; among them were the Jews of the Diaspora, apparently a group well-known to the public.

Cult of Isis

Among the many Oriental cults arriving in the capital city, the Cult of Isis was clearly one of the most popular. Isis, sister and consort of Osiris, was regarded as "protector of women and marriage; goddess of maternity and the new-born; guarantor of the fertility of fields and abundance of harvests."[29] Sailors and traders carried her cultic influences to Rome. While there was popular resistance to foreign cults, Isis became very successful—Gaius Caligula built a large temple to her in the Campus Martius.

Jews

In terms of the long history of the Diaspora, the Jewish community in Rome is comparatively young. The first mention of its existence occurs in 139 B.C.,[30] but within a century, the Roman population had a significant Jewish representation. The numbers increased when Jews came to Rome under Pompey and Vespasian as slaves, so that as many as fifty thousand Jews lived in Rome by the end of the first century A.D. Apparently, they were among the largest of the foreign groups in the city; because Judaism required them to live apart from gentiles and to follow a strict dietary regime, they often lived in specific neighborhoods in Rome.

The oldest and largest settlement of Jews was in Transtiberinum (modern Trastevere); seven synagogues existed in this area alone. Archaeological studies during the early part of this century have clarified the extent to which Jews built synagogues in Rome during this period. Many synagogues had sprung up in Rome by A.D. 49. The relaxation of regulations governing *collegia* by Roman government officials contributed to this increase. The government sanctioned them as official religious associations, but Jewish *collegia* differed considerably from other religious associations because their members met for common meals and collected funds for support of their poor and for the temple in Jerusalem. They were exempt from military service and had their own court system.[31]

Archaeological evidence further suggests that each synagogue had its own name, such as the synagogue of Agrippa—friend of Herod and general of Augustus—or one named for Volumnius, the procurator of the Syrian province at the time of Herod the Great. Herodians and Austesians were names of two other synagogues.

Harry J. Leon suggests that although each Jewish synagogue tended to be homogeneous in character, Roman Jewry was heterogeneous. He bases this proposition on the study of three Jewish catacombs. The Appia catacomb featured a larger percent of Latin inscriptions (36%) than either Monteverde (20%) or Nomentana (6%). The Nomentana catacomb shows a preponderance of Greek inscriptions (93%), and Monteverde (78%) and Appia (64%) have less. Unlike the Greek inscriptions, all the Latin inscriptions at Nomentana are on marble, possibly demonstrating a higher social class.[32]

It is apparent that a connection between immigration and organization of the synagogues existed in Rome. Inscriptions are usually in Greek and seldom, except in later times, in Latin. Only a few Hebrew inscriptions appear, and these are all religious quotations.[33] A large percentage of first-century Roman Jews continued to speak Greek in Rome, and it was in this language that Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans. The conclusion drawn from these inscriptions is that the Jews in Rome were a diverse and fragmented group with autonomous congregations and leaders.

Surprising, though, is the lack of a single, controlling, citywide organizational structure of Roman Jewry. La Piana argues: "The actual character of the Jewish community would have made impossible the concentration of power in one hand. As has been stated above, the Roman Jewry was by no means a homogeneous body."[34] This loose structure provided an essential prerequisite for the early penetration of Christianity in Rome and accounts for its rapid advance in the imperial capital. The multitude of congregations and the absence of a central Jewish governing body made it easy for the Christian missionaries to preach in the synagogues of Rome. Only central authority could have revoked permission for Jewish-Christian missionaries to remain in the independent congregations. Because Roman synagogues had no such authority, Christian missionary activity was possible with little effective hindrance.

Even though Judaism lacked respect from most of the Roman elite,[35] a number of non-Jews apparently found the teachings and practices of Judaism attractive. Of the several hundred inscriptions, only four or five refer to proselytes. Eight more refer to "God-fearers," persons who had not fully converted to Judaism.[36] They were attracted to the moral teachings of Judaism and kept the Jewish Sabbath but were deterred from full conversion by Judaism's complicated ritual prescriptions, dietary laws, social limitations, and—above all—the requirement that men be circumcised. This suggests that "God-fearers" found Christianity attractive, for it offered the advantages of Judaism without some of the burdens.

Christians

Now that the social context of Rome at the time of the introduction of Christianity to the imperial capital has been outlined, readers can turn their attention to the specific issue of the introduction of Christianity among the Jews of the Diaspora living in Rome at that time.

According to Luke, Christian missionary activity typically started in Jewish synagogues. Acts 13:5 is typical of the evangelical procedure: "And when they were at Sala mis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews." One can assume that the same procedure began the process in Rome. The existence of organized Jewish synagogues there offered a necessary precondition for the establishment of Christian congregations.

When and by whom Christianity came to Rome remains unknown. In Acts 2:10, Luke lists among the "Jews and proselytes" gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost "Roman sojourners." *Epidemountes* does not mean "residents" of Jerusalem; they were rather pilgrim "sojourners." Acts 6:9 also speaks of a "synagogue of the freedmen" *(libertinon)*—that is, of *libertini*, Jewish slaves who had managed to gain their freedom in the Roman world. These freedmen could actually have come from anywhere in the Roman Empire, but many of them might well have been descendants of Jerusalem Jews taken to Rome by Pompey as prisoners of war in 63 B.C.

If some of the Roman sojourners in Jerusalem were among the three thousand Jews converted to Christianity according to the Lucan account (see Acts 2:10—11, 41), they may have formed the nucleus of the Christian community in Rome on their return there. Thus the Roman Christian community would have had its origins in the Jewish community. Additionally, the community undoubtedly also grew by the gradual emigration of Christians from the provinces, traveling to the capital during the forties via the Jewish Diaspora. These first converts probably pursued their new religious understanding within the Jewish synagogue context and did not assert a separate Christian identity.

A fourth-century Christian writer notes:

> It is evident then that there were Jews living in Rome . . . in the time of the apostles. Some of these Jews, who had come to believe (in Christ), passed on to the Romans (the tradition) that they should acknowledge Christ and keep the law. . . . One ought not to be angry with the Romans, but praise their faith, because without seeing any signs of miracles and without any of the apostles they came to embrace faith in Christ, though according to a Jewish rite.[37]

Ambrosiaster's suggestion that the first Christians in Rome followed the "Jewish rite" may indicate an originally Jewish-Christian community in Rome. By the time Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, a primarily gentile-Christian community existed in Rome.

The shift in the character and organizational structure of the Christian community from essentially a Jewish-Christian group located in the Jewish synagogues to a dominant gentile-Christian group located in separate and distinct house-church congregations may be understood in the context of an important historical incident in Rome. Writing about A.D. 120, the Roman historian Suetonius, who had been the private secretary of the emperor Hadrian and who wrote *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, reports that the emperor Claudius "expelled from Rome Jews who were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus."[38] This sounds as though one Chrestus was a rabble-rouser or extremist who incited the Jews of Rome to riot.

Chrēsto, meaning "useful, good, valuable," was a common Greek name of slaves and freedmen in the Roman world at the time.[39] The name Chrestus was also used by Romans, both slaves and free—for instance, P. Aelius Chrestus.

Many scholars argue that Suetonius did not understand the name Christos (by iotacism, the tendency in the Greek language to pronounce various vowels and diphthongs as *ī*).[40]

Assuming this reconstruction, Suetonius would have been referring to a conflict between Jews and Jewish-Christians of Rome in the late forties. The constant disturbances would, it has been supposed, have been caused by Jews who opposed those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah or Lord and who consequently differed in their interpretation of the law, thereby threatening religious unity and identity in the Jewish congregations in Rome. These disturbances were happening so frequently that they became the reason for the imperial banishment of Jews and Jewish-Christians from Rome. Though a most severe blow to Roman Jewry, the expulsion of the Jews from Rome also meant the end of the presence of the first Jewish-Christians there.

Paul

By the time Paul's epistle arrived in Rome, the gentile congregations had spread widely throughout the empire and now offered their own set of problems for the apostles—especially Paul. The situation in Rome afforded opportunities to address the problems arising in a world where gentiles were increasingly turning to the Christian faith, for Paul writes to congregations whose significant gentile component was being affected by the return of the Jews to Rome after their expulsion under Claudius had been rescinded.

The situation in Rome concerned Paul and apparently put the gospel at risk, thus warranting the lengthy arguments in Romans 1—11 to correct the problem that had arisen. Many scholars over the last few decades have attempted to show the relationship of the argument section (Romans 1—11) to the exhortation section (Romans 12—16). J. G. D. Dunn writes that Romans 14:1—15:13 "most likely . . . evidences Paul's knowledge of circumstances in Rome itself, at least in broad terms."[41] And Günther Bornkamm points out that the book of Romans clearly expresses the "world-wide program of the Pauline mission" like no other New Testament epistle and that the question of "the strong and weak in Romans 14—15 is placed into the main context of this world mission."[42]

Francis Watson presupposes not one congregation in which the Jewish and gentile members "disagree about the law" but two separate congregations—a Jewish-Christian congregation and a gentile-Christian congregation—which Paul "wishes to bring together into one congregation."[43] That Paul does not address the "church in Rome," as was his custom (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1), suggests such a setting (Romans 1:7). Watson, like E. P. Sanders, concludes that "what Paul finds wrong in Judaism [is simply that] it is not Christianity."[44] Watson's claim that Paul is trying to get the Jewish-Christians to abandon the synagogue entirely may go too far, but he does offer a cogent argument regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of Romans.

Watson pieces together the social reality that lies behind Acts 18:2 and Romans 14:1—15:13. The antecedent history that anticipated the occasion referred to in this section probably involved some kind of dispute over the preaching of Jesus the Messiah in the Jewish quarter in Rome. When Claudius expelled all Jews (including Jewish-Christians), the gentile-Christians began to have their own identity apart from the synagogue and to develop their own expression of Christianity—i.e., gentile-Christianity.

After the Jews were allowed to return to Rome, the Jewish-Christians found two significant changes: first, the rise of a gentile expression of Christianity that was meeting apart from the synagogue in house-churches; and second, the returning Jewish-Christians were not welcomed back into the Jewish quarter. Watson suggests that non-

Christian Jews blamed the Christians for the expulsion, thus creating a hostile relationship between themselves and the Jewish-Christian population. This in turn created another dilemma—which Watson suggests explains Paul's use of the terms *weak* and *strong* in Romans 14—15.

When the Jewish-Christians were able to live in the Jewish quarter, they, along with their "kinsmen according to the flesh," were able to find kosher meat and wine. Once the Jewish-Christians were resettled in a gentile environment, cut off from their community in which such clean meat and wine could be obtained, the observant Jewish-Christians would only eat vegetables.[45]

Wolfgang Wiefel, who had earlier posited a similar scenario to Watson's, suggests that Paul is writing "to assist the Gentile Christian majority, who are the primary addressees of the letter, to live together with the Jewish-Christians in one congregation, thereby putting an end to their quarrels about status."[46]

Whatever other conflicts arose because of the situation in Rome, Paul speaks to an "acceptance" of the "weak" and the "strong" within the context of worship (Romans 15:7—12). For whatever reason, the "strong" were not accepting the Jewish-Christian believers within the worshiping Christian community. In Rome, it seems clear, two separate expressions of Christianity existed. This is the situation to which the apostle to the gentiles applies his lengthy, theological argument in Romans 1—11. It seems reasonable, then, to agree with Watson's two-congregation scenario. The content of the argument sections (Romans 1—11) is anticipated in Paul's introduction, Romans 1:1—5, in which he declares that he had been called and set apart to proclaim the gospel of God. This gospel has as its focus Jesus, God's Messiah-King-Son, whose coming has inaugurated the time when God's eschatological and messianic promises are fulfilled. And this, in turn, results in the nations coming to faithful obedience to Jesus.

The introduction to Paul's argument is his theological comment on the two-congregation problem in Rome. Indeed, it is correct to underscore the social dimension reflected in the epistle. The two quarreling groups are called to unity because it is the time for all nations to praise and glorify God. This seems to be Paul's point in quoting Old Testament texts about gentiles being included in the eschatological worship of God (see Romans 15:9—12).

Conclusion

In Rome, immigrants tended to form communities with shared native tongues, customs, and gods. They also organized associations as groups, such as the poorer Romans who lacked connections with the great houses. In these associations they held great banquets in imitation of the upper classes. The Jews maintained a uniquely visible identity in the early empire period. The special privileges extended to them by the state allowed them to maintain the cultural legacy they inherited from Jerusalem. The fact that the synagogues were organizationally autonomous from one another probably helped preserve their differing customs and ways of adapting to Roman society. It was in this social milieu that Christianity in Rome began.

The first Christians in Rome were apparently Jewish. By the time Paul wrote his epistle to the Roman congregations, however, the situation had changed—gentiles appear to have predominated, while the Jewish presence was reduced to that of a significant minority. Thus at least two distinct social groups were present: Jewish converts to Christianity (and perhaps a few gentile proselytes to Judaism who in turn converted to Christianity) and a larger group of gentile-Christians. As the church in Rome remained Greek-speaking virtually

throughout the second century, this latter group probably was composed predominantly of free Greek-speaking foreigners at Rome and Greek-speaking slaves and freedmen.

Paul seems to address several distinct congregations (house-churches) in Romans 16, also known as the greetings chapter, as follows: (1) "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus. . . . Likewise greet the church that is in their house" (Romans 16:3, 5); (2) "Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household" (Romans 16:10); (3) "Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord" (Romans 16:11); (4) "Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them" (Romans 16:14); and (5) "Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them" (Romans 16:15).

The development of the house-church ensured the continued division between the individual Christian congregations as homogenous groups gathered in small circles of associates. Like Roman Jewry at the time, Christianity apparently had not developed a citywide organization. This was the audience to which Paul wrote from Corinth in the winter of A.D. 57—58. The congregations behind Romans 16 were diverse in ethnic origin, social status, and gender. Eventually, this diversity contributed to the divisions manifested at the end of the first century and beginning of the second century in Roman Christianity.[47]

Notes

1. The phrase was allegedly coined by the sixteenth-century English dramatist John Heywood; see Antony Kamm, *The Romans* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

2. See William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); the following summary is based on Lawrence Richardson Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

3. In several modern editions and commentaries; see, for example, E. G. Hardy, ed, *The Monumentum Ancyranum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923).

4. See Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 314.

5. Burkhard Gladigow, "Roman Religion," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:809—15.

6. The word used for class by most Latin authors is *ordo*. "Class" seems a more useful translation than "order."

7. See Géza Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, trans. David Braund and Frank Pollock, 3rd ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 115; see also Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 93—94.

8. For example, Pliny the Younger's 20 million sesterces "lay almost exclusively in land." See ibid., 116.

9. See ibid., 123.

10. See Herbert Hill, *The Roman Middle Class in the Republican Period* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952).

11. Tacitus, *Histories* 1.4.

12. Livy 9.46.11, 13, 14.

13. See MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 65.

14. See ibid., 92, for the lower figure. For the higher, see Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 1:9.

15. See Paul R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 224—30, 267—94.

16. See MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 92—93.

17. Tacitus, *Histories* 1.4.

18. See MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 93.

19. See Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 38—39. See also Geoffrey Rickman, *The Corn Supply of Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 187—95.

20. See George La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire," *Harvard Theological Review* 20/4 (1927): 183—403.

21. See Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960).

22. See, for example, Tenney Frank, *An Economic History of Rome*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Cooper Square, 1962), 213—14.

23. See La Piana, "Foreign Groups," 197.

24. See ibid., 213.

25. See ibid., 265.

26. See ibid., 234, 274.

27. See ibid., 275.

28. See ibid., 245.

29. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Isis."

30. See Leon, *Jews of Ancient Rome*, 4.

31. See Jean-Baptiste Frey, ed., *Corpus of Jewish Inscriptions* (1936; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1975), 1:65—87, for inscriptions describing the daily life and activities of Jews in Rome.

32. See Leon, *Jews of Ancient Rome*, 77.

33. See Harry J. Leon, "The Language of the Greek Inscriptions from the Jewish Catacombs of Rome," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 58 (1927): 210—33.

34. La Piana, "Foreign Groups," 362—63.

35. Cicero called Judaism a "barbaric superstition" and its followers a "mob"; Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 67 and 69; Juvenal depicts Jews as beggars and fortune tellers. He asserts that the Sabbath rest demonstrates their laziness; see Juvenal, *Satires* 3.14, 6.542—48, 14.105—6. But for positive views, see Peter Schaefer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 192—95 (attraction and repulsion).

36. La Piana, "Foreign Groups," 390—91.

37. As cited in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Anchor Bible Doubleday, 1993), 30.

38. Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Claudii Vita* 25.4; see Stephen Benko, "The Edict of Claudius of A.D. 49 and the Instigator Chrestus," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 25/6 (1969): 407.

39. See Daniele Foraboschi, *Onomasticum alterum papyrologicum* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1971), 342.

40. See W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966), 41; see also Leslie W. Barnard, "The Early Roman Church, Judaism, and Jewish-Christianity," *Anglican Theological Review* 49/4 (1967): 371—84; Jules L. Moreau, "Rome and the New Testament—Another Look," *Biblical Research* 10 (1965): 34—43; Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 100—101.

41. James G. D. Dunn, *Romans 9—16* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 795, 800.

42. Günther Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 25.

43. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 97.

44. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 552.

45. Watson, *Paul*, 94—95, identifies the "weak" as Jewish Christians who were applying old Jewish customs for Jews who were living in gentile surroundings and could not find "clean" food (see Daniel 1:8—16; Judges 12:1; and Esther 14:17 LXX). Thus Romans 14:2 might very well be speaking of the Jewish-Christians who had been expelled from the synagogue. The issue is not just kosher law, but incorrectly slaughtered meat, offered to idols in the gentile sector; this explains "eateth herbs [vegetables]" (Romans 14:2); see also Charles K. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," in *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982) 42; Dunn, *Romans 9—16*, 799—801.

46. Wolfgang Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in *Romans Debate*, 113.

47. See George La Piana, “The Roman Church at the End of the Second Century,” *Harvard Theological Review* 18 (1925): 201—77.

The Last Days, Then and Now

Hugh Nibley

Dear Brother Anderson, This is going to be discourse without footnotes. I have always had a suppressed desire to risk such an indiscretion, and people have asked why I cannot write anything without timidly quoting chapter and verse from some German professor. This time, ignoring the public and the pedants, I pass the piece to a magnanimous and sensible critic, awaiting his weary sighs or indulgent silence with equanimity. Where we quote it will be from memory, wens and all, speaking with conviction but with no authority whatever.

What Is an Achsenzeit?

It is about "axial" times and dispensations. They are those moments when civilization turns on its axis to face a totally new direction, sometimes referred to as a quantum leap; only at the same time that the old order collapses like a big bubble in a mud geyser, the old order is immediately followed by a new bubble just like it. Thus instead of displaying an ever-onward evolution, the course of history is punctuated at intervals by sudden reversions to square one after the breakdown of the old order had promised a bright new day. The axial extravaganza is thus "the best of times and the worst of times." Any idealistic little Zions are soon removed from the scene, and the world is back on its old track. The seeds of the great revolution now become the seeds of the next revolution.

It is remarkable that the phenomenon remained unremarked for so long. Your bemused informant noticed it in writing the 1957 Melchizedek Priesthood manual. It seemed that Joseph Smith had chosen the perfect moment for Lehi's crossing of the seas and founding of a new civilization. That is just the sort of thing that was happening everywhere about the year 600 B.C. It was a great age of discovery, exploration, and colonization—Hanno sailed around Africa in 600 B.C., and Olbia and Massilia at opposite ends of the Mediterranean world were founded by Greeks who themselves had to make room for swarming hordes pushing in from Asia, an event celebrated by the great lyric poets. Above all came the great intellectual revolution: Thales, the founder of modern physics; Pythagoras, his rival in the West; and Heraclitus, who put it all together, were all contemporaries of Lehi, as were the founders of the great world religions—Buddha, Confucius, Mahavira, and Zarathustra. I like to think that Lehi, an eminent merchant, had dealings with Solon, wisest of the Greeks and founder of Athenian democracy, who, when his family fortunes were ruined by the disastrous honesty and generosity of his father, had to cover his losses by business trips to Sidon.

Today there is a great and sudden revival of axial studies, and all scholars are agreed that the immense significance of 600 B.C. is the switch of Western thought from the "magic-mythic" thinking of the ancients to the rational and scientific mind of today. The Egyptologist Jan Assmann has written that the man of 600 B.C. "is the man we live with today."

After writing the manual, I remembered that H. G. Wells had taken note of the phenomenon in his *Outline of History*, which I had read on my mission in 1928 (on a Saturday, of course; reading was not considered a vice in those days). Shortly after came the belated discovery that the German philosopher Karl Jaspers had described the great event and given it the name of the *Achsenzeit*, the Axial Period, as early as 1948. The recent revival of interest, one suspects, may be prompted by the disturbing possibility of another such event in the alarmingly near future. It has sent the experts searching widely and delving deeply for all sorts of axial periods—600 B.C. was not the only axial period. For example, Professor Assmann insists that the First Dynasty of Egypt was the Big One, being as far back as human memory goes and so was the beginning of everything.

The list of candidates for axial honors is an impressive one. The fall of the great world capitals—Troy, Babylon, Nineveh, Rome, Constantinople, etc.—each represents a turning point in world history. The civilizations of China and India are also carefully noted but though their technical and intellectual advances were significant, we are told (still barring footnotes) that they never rid themselves sufficiently of the magic-mythic-mystic elements. World migrations, ending the Roman Empire and creating the nations and languages of Europe, now recall other and earlier "dark centuries," convincingly coordinated with the Big (1200—800 B.C.) and Little (A.D. 1440—1750) Ice Ages. Long before that, the sophisticated animal art of the caves of the Ariâ‰¤ge and vicinity between 30,000 and 20,000 B.C. is the great "Quantum Leap" that marks the emergence of true human beings. After the rise and collapse of Egyptian and Mesopotamian splendor came the all-too-brief Periclean and Augustan Ages, the Gothic glory and the Italian Renaissance, the great seventeenth century followed by the self-important Age of Reason and Oswald Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West)*.

The Axial Steady State

Why was the axial event overlooked for so long? Answer: among the courses I took in high school was the "Progress of Civilization"; later I took one at UCLA called the "Idea of Progress." The bursting meliorism of twentieth-century evolutionism, with Chicago taking the lead, swept all before it. Natural selection guaranteed inevitable progress from the single cell to the godlike scientist. At the same time at Los Angeles High, we read Omar Khayyám and recited his frank and realistic appraisal of the situation: "One moment in annihilation's waste, one moment of the wine of life to taste—the stars are setting and the caravan starts for the dawn of nothing. O, make haste!" It was the existential agony of Kierkegaard, which was to become the fare of the next generation. The mindless, random, mechanical, and infallible operations of natural selection guaranteed that things could only go on getting better and better, but also that we were going nowhere.

Heraclitus, the favorite philosopher of many brooders, divided his mental problems into the realms of the cosmos, the king or government, and religion, all subject to axial changes. Many recent studies of the oldest creation myths show that the creation story always seems to follow upon the destruction of something greater and more wonderful. The new worlds are made of the ruins of the old. The progression in Hesiod and Daniel is from a Golden Age, now long gone, through those of silver, copper, iron, and now clay.

The axial occurrences seem actually to reverse the course of evolution; in the end things never seem to progress, and "there is nothing new under the sun." Since "man's great disobedience and the fall," the race appears to be in a perpetual free fall. As Gibbon puts it, the Roman Empire was born decadent. The most significant difference between this philosophy of Heraclitus, "the wet blanket" *(skoteinos)*, and that of what Albright called the "Chicago School" is that the Greek conclusion rests on solid evidence, the other on pure, American twentieth-century boomerism.

The actual story of the race is divided into separate, distinct, and discrete episodes. It cannot be viewed or digested in any other way. It is not progressive—and that is the most shocking thing about it. Take Lehi's story. It begins in the supremely optimistic year of 600 B.C., which presently explodes in the fall of Jerusalem and the Captivity. But along with the bright promise that introduces Nephite civilization goes the plotting of Laman and Lemuel, already setting Lehi's children on the road to Cumorah. Next, the glory of Zarahemla and its apocalyptic obliteration were followed at once by the nearest thing to a Zion civilization; but then the old appeal of money, power, and pride building up to a perpetual crime wave necessitated defensive tribal organizations, which ended with the last tribal coalitions, at Cumorah, and henceforward a permanent, shifting, savage warfare.

As that same force of gravity which brings the stars into existence also brings about their violent demise, even so, the natural man is programmed to bring about the corruption and fall of civilization by his constant and unvarying self-centeredness. According to Solon and Heraclitus it must be so if "the natural man is an enemy to God . . . carnal, sensual, [and] devilish" (Mosiah 3:19; 16:3), a flawed product of evolution, as Arthur Koestler wrote just before his suicide, programmed to self-destruct. It is only since the sixties that "Neocatastrophism" pointed to at least five major extermination periods on earth, when almost all existing species (sometimes 90 percent or more) were wiped out and abruptly displaced by a whole new menagerie of dominant types. The face of the earth itself, like that of all the other bodies in the solar system, has been violently altered from time to time. The comfortable and assured triumphant evolution, science now tells us, must make way for axial reverses and the "Violent Universe."

All in the Family

Two of Lehi's contemporaries, who worked with his friend Jeremiah, have left us most penetrating studies of the axial periods. Writing from Babylon about thirty years after the fall of Jerusalem, Ezra the Scribe recalls other great overthrows when the elements and the enemy combined against humanity. After the fall of Adam he names calamities of the generations of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Like the great Greeks, Ezra can find no good reason for these strange and unwelcome reverses. Though a teacher in Israel, he is unable to give a clear answer to the question of the Holocaust: "Why does God allow the chosen people to be afflicted by people who are even worse than they?" The admonition of the Lord to Nephi, that a brutal enemy would be on hand as "a scourge to thy seed to stir them up to remembrance of me" (2 Nephi 5:25), does not seem to occur to Ezra or his friend Baruch even though both insist that the Jews are suffering because they have utterly failed to keep the law of Moses, and that the earth will suffer as long as the inhabitants continue to fail the test of righteousness. Granted that, however, the sufferings of Israel still seem to be out of proportion to Ezra, and the best answer he can give is from the catalog of stock clerical answers: (1) the ways of God are inscrutable; (2) some things are unavoidable; (3) God still loves his chosen people after all; (4) the misery must go on until a certain preordained number of people have suffered, and (surprisingly) a set time has passed; and (5) it was all foreseen in the council in heaven at the creation, if that is any comfort.

God also tells Ezra that his son the Messiah will appear, to reign on earth for four hundred years. Ezra ends with a report on the ten tribes who, he is able to declare, have recently added another leg to their migration into an even more distant place than their first concealment.

Finally, he asks how long the gap or waiting period is to be between the gloomy end of one dispensation and the happy beginning of the next and is told that there is no gap! As the infant Jacob's hand grasped the heel of Esau, so that the one followed the other in birth without a break, so there is no interval between axial periods. Ezra is finally instructed to appoint a conventicle of five scribes and with them take forty days to write down everything; twenty-four of their books are to be taught to the people and seventy of them to be reserved in secret by the Quorum of the Wise Ones. Note how carefully the record of the great succession of dispensations has been cultivated.

The book of *2 Baruch* is considered the last truly inspired writing of Judaism, immediately followed by what R. H. Charles calls "an evil and a barren era." Baruch takes Jeremiah and a company of the righteous to fast and weep with him in the valley of Cedron. His tendency is to blame Adam for everything, though he cites almost verbatim God's words to Enoch about giving man knowledge, commandments, and agency, all of which he has despised. Even the happy Messianic times on earth, he says, are only temporary as men's virtues and energies seem now entirely used up. Israel suffers because Israel sins, abusing the elements of earth—the destruction of the

environment unfailingly signals axial disaster ahead. He cites Ezra's principle that the Lord has taken away Zion to leave the earth clear (as in the days of Noah) for a clean sweep of destruction. Sadly, the axial disasters of one time perfectly match those of another occurring centuries later. The number of those born, Baruch assures us, is fixed and a place is prepared for each, and the resurrection is postponed until a set number of souls has been completed. He lists twelve ages of the earth, calling them alternative times of "the black waters" and "the white waters," which correspond to the early Christian teaching of "the summertime of the just" and "the wintertime of the just." The black element dominates here, and each period involves the whole earth. The length of the various ages, like the number of spirits, was determined at the council of heaven before the creation. Our comfort is that God is aware of it all, so why complain? He lists the dispensations of Adam, the Watchers, Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah, and another yet to come, that will be the darkest of all and cover the whole earth. He gives us that fools' progress, the unfolding thought pattern to which our great sixth-century thinkers trace the doom of nations. It runs from mental laziness through a stupor of thought to feelings of insecurity, panic, and paranoia, and finally to hysterical accusations and insane hatred; then it is time for the earthquakes, fires, and famines to ring down the curtain. Yet the Saints shall be spared in a holy land. Baruch concludes with the lament: Zion has been taken from us and all that remains to us is the law of God.

Axial Times or Dispensations?

What is the difference between an axial period and a dispensation? They describe much the same phenomena but each in its own special light. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that a dispensation is something bestowed from the permanent stock or storehouse, e.g., heaven, the content of which can include spiritual enlightenment as well as substantial blessings. A dispensation is monitored and directed from above, while the normal course of axial history is mindless, mechanical, random, and inevitable, like evolution. That is why world literature is so bleak and hopeless, centered as it is on the futility of the human condition that is brought out unsparingly in the times of great social upheavals and forced migrations.

Dispensations, on the other hand, have a meaning and a purpose. What is the purpose of it all? "We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do the things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:24—25). The earth then, is a proving ground, a testing place. And for what are we being tested? Again the answer is clear: "I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, I gave unto man his agency; And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given *commandment*, that they should *love one another*, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . . and in my hot displeasure will I send the floods upon them" (Moses 7:32—34). The test leading to axial disaster is simply our capacity to love. And what is the purpose of determining that? That "they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and forever" (Abraham 3:26). All are being tested for permanent or at least very long-range assignments in the real world to come. We are here only long enough for testing—this is made glaringly apparent in the wails of protest by Kierkegaard and his existential companions against the injustice of curtailing human life before it even gets interesting. The terribly poignant tragedy which they loudly deplore is that while we come to earth endowed with enormous potential, eagerly excited to develop our manifold powers to the fullest, we are only given a few minutes and then snatched away and dumped in a hole in the ground. It is the cruelest of cruel jokes.

More Intimations of Immortality

But isn't the coincidence of those two realities of high-powered brains going almost completely to waste in the world, which matches the evolutionary absurdity of brains far more splendidly equipped than mere survival requires (thus confronting Darwin with what he called "an abominable mystery"); does that not give the broadest possible hint that our phenomenal power of thought was developed elsewhere in a time and place where it was needed, and that it is meant to be put into full operation in another environment hereafter? One might say our real existence brackets fifteen minutes of testing. Heraclitus saw the point ("we are in a drunken stupor") and so did Plato in his doctrine of anamnesis.

The Lord showed Enoch that one "time of wickedness and vengeance" is just like the others though centuries apart and that of all worlds this is the very wickedest. So we have the honor of facing the hardest of tests in the worst of worlds for the greatest of prizes! Professor Erik Hornung, the dean of contemporary Egyptologists, names the great and terrible questions that arise in every axial crisis, namely, "Why is this happening to us? Where is God when we need him? Why is our lifetime so cruelly curtailed?" The first question was a favorite of the indignant Robert Ingersoll, who bitterly chided God for not existing. As a missionary in Germany in the 1920s, I heard the ceaseless refrain, "Es gibt keinen Gott!" Would he have allowed the war and all this? It did little good to remind them of their own folly. That led to the second question, the problem of God's silence; the Greeks had a word for it —*aporia*, meaning failure to get through, interpreted as implying that God is either uninterested, unwilling, or, even worse, unable to help us. Again, the dispensations give us a sound explanation exonerating God of cruelty or weakness.

The Joseph Smith book of Enoch, a theodicy, lays it all out, justifying the loudly condemned and misunderstood cruelty of the flood. God actually joins Enoch in weeping for the destruction of mankind (see Moses 7:28—29). This astounding event is also recorded in the writings of the rabbis; in their version, when Enoch asks God why he weeps, he is told to mind his own business. Only the Joseph Smith account has a real answer. The whole heavens weep and all his creations weep at the destruction of a world to which all have contributed and in which all share the same law of love that binds God's children and here binds the worlds together. The wicked will be imprisoned, having disqualified themselves for advancement, pending their repentance and deliverance at a later time. For the Savior's work and love are as vast and all embracing as the most distant reaches of existence.

As to the explanation of the Gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 18, Joseph Smith—Matthew in the Pearl of Great Price), they entertain conjecture of a time when the master of the house takes a far journey, leaving his servants in charge. As soon as he departs the more highly placed servants begin to overwork, underpay, and beat the underlings. Now the master of the house has deliberately delayed his coming *(aporia)*, and, when he does come, it is "like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), catching everybody completely off guard, doing their normal thing—a highly reliable test and measure of their merits. The purpose of the test, we are told, was to assign rewards and punishments, each one being sent to the place he deserved; and what they were being tested for was simply their humanity, or, as the scriptures call it, charity.

As an invaluable and neglected handbook of dispensations, the Pearl of Great Price lays out for us the course of seven major dispensations, placing them against a much vaster background of worlds without number. It shows how each dispensation is a restoration, a real breakthrough from above, and then how each is subjected from the beginning to that pressure or test that eventually reaches the breaking point, scattering its people as wanderers over the whole earth. (1) Adam received everything at the outset, but Cain teamed up with Satan and the family "loved Satan more than God" (Moses 5:18), leaving their parents to "[mourn] before the Lord" (Moses 5:27), while the Cainites, prevailing over the Sethians, took the hordes down into the plains to live in the land of Nod, a perpetual wandering. (2) A crash program sent the Watchers onto the scene as missionaries of reform. But even

they, "the sons of God," were enticed by the "daughters of men" (Moses 8:21), fell, and perverted and corrupted everything. Enoch, who preached to the cattlemen on the mountains, led his righteous Zion away to another planet entirely, while "the residue of the people" are removed from the scene in the great purging of the flood. What two solutions could be more totally "axial"? (3) By all accounts (and there are many), Noah's flood was the greatest axial event of them all, calling for a complete transfusion of blood into the earth through the family of one man. God warned Noah not to expect too much of the New Age or the corrective action of the flood, since "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). Things are not going to improve in the long run. Noah's sons migrated in various directions, and their offspring were soon proving that dismal proposition to the hilt as the earth became blighted by the terrible winds which dried up large areas of the land, overthrew the tower, and drove the Jaredites and many other tribes on their long, sorrowful treks. (4) Such was the world of Abraham, ever wandering in the deserts as "the famine waxed sore in the land," planting trees and digging wells for others to enjoy as the greatest benefactor of the human race. He excelled all others in the three departments that Heraclitus lists as man's greatest achievements: His searching of the cosmos, his right to kingship and priesthood, and his knowledge of the true religion. Though the mightiest of intellects, Abraham realized (again with Heraclitus) that the true work of man is not *theoria*, contemplation, as the Miletian philosophers, Aristotle, and the rest of the Schoolmen taught, but *euarestesis*, i.e., being of the greatest possible service to one's fellowman, that all the nations of the earth might call him blessed. (5) A special book of Moses puts us in the eternities amidst "millions of worlds like this." And was there ever an axial spectacular of afflictions and miracles to match the plagues of Egypt, the wild behavior of the sea, or the sight of Moses standing on the fiery mountain? Most of all, an entire nation wandering forty years in the deserts—how could there be a more complete break with the rest of world civilization, which had already collapsed in its main stronghold, Egypt? Moses broke off his stay with the people; he simply left them, promising in his farewell address that they would go from bad to worse. And so to the trials and scandals and excesses of David, Solomon, and the rest. Some Jewish writers have considered the emergence of Samuel and the priesthood to be the most important axial point in history. The prophets vainly tried to improve things until (6) the time of Christ. The Lord was "despised and rejected . . . ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). The destruction of Jerusalem, following his departure, was but "the beginning of sorrows" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:19), which would last for almost two thousand years until the Lord told (7) Joseph Smith, "Behold the world lieth in sin," and there is "none that doeth good no not one, . . . mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them acording [*sic*] to this ungodliness" (see 1831—32 account of Joseph Smith's first vision as recorded by Frederick G. Williams). Yet presently the Saints were joyfully singing, "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee" —again the best of times and the worst of times.

To recapitulate, through the long, sad history things have been kept at virtually the same level, to provide a fair and equal test for each generation in its turn in this our "time of probation." For the Pearl of Great Price, our "handbook," gives us the plan and rationale of the whole thing which is completely missing from the conventional axial system with its relentless procession of "dark centuries" and brief recoveries.

Line by Line

But the main question still remains—why is the whole story broken up into so many distinct and discrete sections and compartments? Moses was given the answer when he was sharply rebuked by the Lord for wanting to see the whole picture. It is true that the object of all science and art is to see the wholeness of things, but it is also true that that can only be done when we know what the things are we are dealing with. Moses was shown "every particle" of the earth which was to be the scene of his mission (I take this to mean all the different types of particles that make up its composition; the scriptures require us to look into no smaller particulates than "the sands of the seashore"). The whole program of our earth life is conveniently divided into neat packages for easier handling or grasping.

Every seventh day we are supposed to drop everything and allow the complete and total gap of rest to segment our activities. That is no small matter; no delinquency of Israel could surpass the awful offense and dire retribution of failing to observe the Sabbath. "In it thou shalt not do *any* work" (Exodus 20:10, emphasis added). For at the end of their work of creation the Godhead announced, "We shall rest for a season." Sir John Eccles, the great authority on the brain, assures us that awakening from sleep in the morning is as great a miracle as resurrection itself, the break between one episode of existence and the other is absolute. The Egyptians constantly punctuated their activities with festivals of total release from daily care. These recurred with the cycles of sun, moon, and stars—every day, week, month, year, dynasty, aeon, etc., the human race is to take a break. The question of "continuity and discontinuity" is foremost today among students of the axial period. One happy aspect of this refreshing discipline is our opportunity to experience delights which "age cannot wither nor custom stale." Take the case of Adam, which should reconcile us to the single brief and frustrating span of this earthly episode.

Eternal Lives

Adam's life is a succession of complete and widely differing careers: (1) It begins with a premortal existence in a world we know not of, first as coplanner and designer of this mortal world; (2) then to building inspector, bearing progress reports to his fellow executives; (3) then as a primitive man living on intimate terms with the animals for an indefinitely prolonged period, since "time was not yet measured unto man." Apparently it was an uninhibited existence since his next step was (4) marriage under the covenant in a totally new environment, an earthly paradise with unlimited delights for the senses and the palate, all provided "spontaneously," and all this along with ready access to heavenly visitation. (5) Then comes an awful axial shift, a dreadful wrenching into a lone and dreary world and a harsh environment requiring him to dress in skins (probably including furs) and work his head off, hacking at the stubborn soil to make a living, allergic to the new plant life, deserted by his own children to "mourn before the Lord." It looks like a dead end, but then Adam is placed here expressly in an environment that will give Satan every opportunity to "try him and to tempt him," to see whether he will be true and faithful in all things and qualify for advancement hereafter; (6) so what comes next is elevation of his hard earthly life to a new and happier level, as an angel comes and explains the gospel of salvation to Adam and his delighted wife. (7) This effects a return to former glory when his earthly days are ended. (8) And so on to "eternal lives," a convincing promise completely beyond our reckoning: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Fundamental to the gospel is the bringing together of "all things in one" (D&C 84:100). Of the twelve apostles and the rest of us the Lord said "if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one, an endless mystery to the theologians. Zion is "of one heart and one mind" (Moses 7:18). The Lord summed up the Ten Commandments in one great commandment, the second being like unto it (cf. Matthew 37:40). We have today the Grand Unified Theory (GUT), one theory to explain absolutely everything. But to get it we must know the parts; this oneness must be comprehended "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little" (2 Nephi 28:30). And while the cosmos is one, and "all things are created and made to bear record of me" (Moses 6:63), yet God marks the fall of a tiny but individual sparrow. If that is not so we are all left out, for what do we count against infinity? The Lord blesses the children of the Nephites "one by one" (3 Nephi 17:21), rather than as a pontiff from the balcony. "A man's way is One," say the Arabs. Yet the Seven Ages of Man make him, in the course of his lifetime, seven distinct personae, as Solon and Shakespeare both tell us, in mind, manner, appearance, voice, and mood.

Waiting Their Turn

And so it goes. After recent discoveries that show us the galaxies, the stars, the planets, the face of the earth, the living species on it, all passing from one tentative state of existence to another, we realize that if we are here only for a one-night engagement it can only mean that there is more to come. With all the hustle and bustle and Malthusian overcrowding of the earth, we overlook the manifest truth that the planet was meant for multiple use. To take fullest advantage of its limited space and resources, discrete periods of *time* have been set apart for the accommodation of different species. Thus one now celebrated population used the planet for millions of years without in any way interfering or competing with us. Then they were abruptly moved out, possibly by the brusque and uncompromising impact of a meteor—the K/T scenario—to make room for a new menagerie of creatures. It should therefore be obvious that provision has been made for every form of life, from the most primitive to the most advanced, to fill "the measure of its creation" (D&C 88:19)—no matter how different from ours—and have joy therein. And they are free to do it without our knowledge or permission; their assigned time on earth is their own. Must I deny their existence simply because I was not told about them? This raises a serious question.

An LDS Dilemma

Every individual has his own private *imago mundi*, the way he envisages how things were way back then or at any time in the past. It is doubtful whether most people are greatly concerned with the scientific accuracy of the pictures they formed in Sunday school of the Garden of Eden, Noah's ark, and the creation. But those images had the sanction of everlasting truth when they were taught to the seven-year-old; they were from the Bible. His fundamentalist background leaves no room for things totally alien to the Genesis story. Now every convert to the church brings with him his own *imago mundi*, which in fact can only be his own and never identical with another's. What does he do with it when he joins the church? How does he adapt to the new doctrines he has accepted? He may make adjustments and allowances, but old impressions last.

New knowledge added to our old knowledge is in fact a sort of intrusion, even a gentle rebuke, to our present complacency. It renders former convictions outdated, replacing teachings we have become attached to, not by refuting them, but simply by adding to them. But that offends us. The celebrated Adolf Erman reports that when he made a find that could be a valuable contribution to a subject that his colleague, the equally celebrated Eduard Meyer, was working on, the latter, instead of being grateful and delighted, was definitely miffed—must he revamp his already finished conclusions? One of the greatest burdens for the Prophet Joseph was the steady resistance he met when he tried to expand the knowledge of the Saints beyond their fundamentalist stereotypes.

One Act Only?

The most fundamental issue causing this distressing tension was the world of difference between the doctrine of discrete dispensations or axial periods and the mandatory scenario of the one-act play. It is true that they all make one single drama, but it can be expanded infinitely in either direction, past or future, like the mystic pentagram. Ancient nations saw their theogony and past history as a single glorious epic. It furnished the subject of mighty bardic recitations, or great dramatic trilogies, dividing the epic into three basic plays. Each play in turn was divided into acts—we still favor three today—and separate scenes, each emerging when a new character enters onto the stage. The characters' separate speeches in turn were often famous, standing alone as material for study in the schools or recitations by prize students, or for little Philo to be shown off to company. This is the same principle that divides and subdivides the universe and everything in it: We can view the whole epic history best by seeing it as one scene, one act, or one play at a time, with the whole argument in the background; just as the eye focuses on only one object at a time, while subliminally taking in its essential peripheral ambiance.

But such is not the position of either the most rigid fundamentalists or the doctrinaire evolutionists who are in perfect agreement on one thing; they both accept without question the standard definition of *creation* as laid down by the Schoolmen long ago and expressed by Thomas Aquinas as the emergence of (1) absolutely everything out of (2) absolutely nothing in (3) absolutely no time—an immeasurably brief instant. Recently the popes have favored the Big Bang theory, overlooking the disastrous effect of that supremely axial event in introducing not only one possible world but millions.

The standard definition of creation required the one-act version, since there was no act before it because there was nothing there, and no more acts after it because it has already accounted for everything that ever is or was. This limits our timing to six thousand years; that is all we are allowed. This became the burning issue which divided the two schools. To meet the test of faith, followers of the Bible must renounce any other timescale. The axial experience and the idea of dispensations, on the other hand, not only allow infinite stretches of time in either direction but divide up the whole into smaller epochs, ages, and lifetimes. This is not only necessary for handling but observes the basic rule of science and of art that the whole cannot exist without its parts while each part is a whole in itself, containing countless more parts of the same nature.

This is the idea of dispensations, each containing a complete revelation of the same gospel plan, whatever their number. The favorite argument of the ministers against the assertion that the Prophet Joseph was "blessed to bring in the Last Dispensation" was the third verse of Jude: "the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints." They conveniently rendered it "once and for all"—there could be no more delivery or dispensation of the gospel. They would usually add Revelation 22:18: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Though we are explicitly told that the forbidden additions are those of *men*, leaving the way open to God to do as he pleases, the reverend gentlemen had to fall back on these two shaky arguments—once and for all and no more!—to prove that the last revelation had been given for all time.

The Jews used the same one-act-only argument to reject Jesus as the Messiah, insisting that he could come once only in the clouds of glory to settle all things forever, while Christ breaks that one-act rule by appearing in glory at least at the transfiguration and the ascension, with promise of yet another such appearance. Our handbook of dispensations, on the other hand, has the Lord appearing gloriously in person to all the founders of the seven dispensations described.

Enter Science Fiction

The one-act, single-creation theory strictly forbids the discovery of *other worlds*, there being no mention of such in Genesis, while the first creation includes everything that ever was or could be created. This is the only inhabited world, said Aristotle, and man is the only animal endowed with a spirit and rational speech. It has always been maintained by fundamentalists and scientists alike that the discovery of life on other worlds would destroy man's unique position in the universe, deny this world's claim to be the center of the cosmos, and minimize the Creator's singular achievement, making a mockery of the Genesis story. There is nothing to substantiate such a claim in the scriptures, but the one-act theory required it. It may be hard for the present generation to realize that teachers of science (such as my own) were until recently just as fanatically opposed to life on other worlds as were teachers of the Bible classes; for they recognized that for the unimaginably remote possibility of the purely random creation of life ever to have happened more than once was out of the question. So they too joined the one-world congregation.

This tedious controversy that binds the book of Genesis in Spanish boots should mean little to Mormons, released from any obligation to take sides, thanks to their legacy of sweeping and stunning revelations, such pronouncements as "millions of earths like this, . . . [which] would not be a beginning to the number of [God's] creations" (Moses 7:30), "worlds without end" (D&C 76:112), "I could not see the end thereof" (Abraham 3:12). "There are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man" (Moses 1:35), and "there is no end to my works, neither to my words" (Moses 1:30). This world is actually made after the pattern of "other worlds which we have heretofore created," all of the same substance and following the same rules of physics. Equally liberating is the position of man in the picture, man who "was [also] in the beginning with God" (D&C 93:29), but always himself, since "Intelligence . . . was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29). Then why is one "more intelligent than another" (Abraham 3:18)? Everyone can answer that for himself, since no one so far has used or unfolded more than a fraction of his intelligence. To get us out of that situation is God's main interest, since "The glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36) and his "work and [his] glory" are one and the same—to bring men up to his own level: "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). This he does by teaching us: His words are inseparably joined in the revelations with his works, always mentioned together, "and there is no end to my works, neither to my words" (Moses 1:30). The words give purpose and meaning to the works.

To the idea of pleniarism, the doctrine that you cannot have too much of a good thing, we add the principle of multiple use, allowing for untold populations of creatures of the universe such beings as we dream not of, flourishing communities of anaerobic organisms living at tremendous temperatures and pressures in the unexplored depths of the sea. Thus countless species have enjoyed life, as unaware of our existence as we have been of theirs.

Why have the Mormons hesitated to take advantage of their great legacy of wisdom? Is it a lingering sense of loyalty to our sectarian past? Or is it not rather because we share a common resentment of the swaggering and condescending science majors and professors alike? The old Sunday school teachers, to save face, stood by their guns and dug in their heels, and so the tug-of-war continued between the two royal armies, both lacking ammunition for a decisive victory.

Write Your Own

Mormonism has always welcomed new knowledge from any source. Thus we are invited to be attentive and alert in the temple, with brain and intellect revved up for high performance; everyone is invited and required to form his own *imago mundi* by being shown various astronomical spectacles, followed by a dramatic presentation when we are confronted on different days by different casts moving in widely varying stage settings, in different costumes, people of different complexions and mannerisms, speaking with different voices and inflections and even different languages. And from all that, each individual must compose his own visions of Genesis. Stephen Hawking assures us that there is just as much imagination in the scientific picture of the world as there is in the religious. We are not only allowed but forced to use our talents and our faith to put ourselves into the picture.

A Parable

When I first came to Utah, the missionaries were showing a Book of Mormon film depicting the journey of Lehi's family in the wilderness. There were men, women, and small children dressed in the lavish drapes of Hollywood *orientalisme*, all carrying jars, boxes, and bundles in their arms and on their heads and shoulders as they painfully clambered over rocks and gullies. Eight years of that in the wilderness? Half a day of it would have finished Davy

Crockett. When the film was shown in Beirut, the local Saints, who knew all about Arabs, laughed with uncontrollable irreverence. So one day I dropped into Brother Joseph Fielding Smith's hospitable office, his door always wide open there at the top of the stairs, and pointed out to him that a rich merchant, accustomed to traveling in the desert, would have thought of getting some help in moving his family, at least in carrying those huge black goat's hair tents under which he was to hold his frequent family councils—all the more so, because everybody else at that time was using donkeys and camels to negotiate the vastness of Arabia Deserta. Brother Smith instantly saw the point and agreed that Lehi's people must have had beasts of burden, even though they were not specifically mentioned by Nephi. Is there any reason then, short of a special revelation through the highest channels (though such is available to all of us individually), why the details of life in ancient worlds, having no doctrinal significance for us, should not be left open to private fancy, individual research, and even-tempered discussion? There is even a place for the gorgeous, but strictly noncanonical fantasies of an Arnold Friberg.

Axial and Apocalyptic

Scholars have never hesitated to acknowledge close resemblance between axial crises and the awesome promises of apocalyptic literature. Klaus Koch has shown that apocalyptic has always been out of favor with the Christian clergy. The English title of his book, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, implies as much, while the original title, *Ratlos* (helpless) *vor der Apocalyptik*, indicates their hopeless inability to cope with it. It makes no sense to them because of their one-act fixation. Apocalyptic literature is rich with multiple crises—past, present, and future; the sounding of successive trumpets; the coming and going of hosts; the climactic progression of plagues. The forty-day episodes call for repeated visits of the Lord; in chapters 14—17 of his Gospel, John speaks of the Lord's much coming and going, leaving and returning, taking others with him, acting as a guide and showing the way. He is one with the apostles who are thereby one with each other and with all who accept their teachings and in turn, with all who accept *theirs*, etc. The times and places are of great importance; what does "a time, and times, and half a time" (Revelation 12:14) mean? For the simplistic Christian, it all sounds much too complicated; where is the appealing simplicity of the rustic Jesus in our wall pictures? Apocalyptic is deemed by the ministry most fit for the "lunatic fringe."

With the Jews, all but one coming of the Messiah is unacceptable. Jesus, with at least three appearances in glory—at the transfiguration, at the ascension, and at his promised return in like manner—simply does not qualify.

The Christians find other contradictions. His promise, "Behold I come quickly!" (D&C 35:27), was naturally seen by the Schoolmen as arousing the "Great Expectation"—to the early Christians Jesus was to come at any moment. But he did not come quickly! Hence an established teaching of twentieth-century Christian church history is what the scholars call the "Great Disappointment." It took a generation, they tell us, for the Saints to give up their overwrought, wishfully inventive thinking and come around to a more rational, down-to-earth, light-of-day acceptance of the real world of sensible people.

But now comes the rub: as Pascal and Kierkegaard both saw, and the Neo-Freudians now confess, that safe light-of-common-day position is really a desperate denial of reality by frightened modern society "tranquilizing themselves with the trivial."

Fear and Trembling

The inhabitants of the earth are invited to "fear and tremble" in the introductory statement of the Doctrine and Covenants (1:7). "The hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken away from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion" (D&C 1:35). It is not a pleasant thing to contemplate, and it all

seems rather brutal. The favorite argument of atheists and the disaffected throughout history is the old complaint of *aporia*—would a kind God permit such things to happen?

First of all, before we seek an explanation, we might as well acknowledge that such intensely unwelcome things have happened and will happen again. I can still hear my grandmother singing a favorite hymn: "When the earth begins to tremble, Bid our fearful thoughts be still; When thy judgments spread destruction, Keep us safe on Zion's hill, Singing praises, Singing praises, Songs of glory unto thee . . ." (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 83). The Hopis say the human race survived the three great axial destructions of the past by taking their stand on a holy mountain and joining in hymns of praise until the strenuous transition passed. And we are told that the Jaredites survived the mountain waves that poured over them, crouched in their small submersible vessels, as they sang hymns together all the way across the ocean (see Ether 6:7—9).

Whether the tremendous trials of the dark times occur or not is no longer a question. As a child, growing up in full view of the great Cascade Peaks, I was beset by apocalyptic imaginings of fiery eruptions. Of course older and wiser people assured us children that any spectacular displays from those old and exhausted heaps of slag would have to wait at least ten thousand years; those things take time. We have not had to wait that long.

On a mission in poor and hungry Germany, less than a decade after World War I, the constant refrain heard from door to door was "Es gibt keinen Gott!"—There is no God! Could a kind God have allowed such suffering? Equally frequent was "Nie wieder Krieg!"—No more war! And before I got out of school they were cheering themselves hoarse for Hitler, and in due time I found myself very much in the front line of another world war. Moral: Impending axial surprises are a distinct possibility.

To This Favor You Must Come

Even the most frightful natural upheavals can be endured, and the lone survivor is a stock figure in literature, as the "remnant" is in the scriptures. What they tell us is best summed up in the two oldest exemplars of axial literature. The first is called the *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, which Alan Gardiner, who edited the text, declared to be beyond question an authentic eyewitness report of what was happening at the collapse of the Old Kingdom more than forty-four centuries ago, when Egypt took a sudden plunge into 350 years of darkness. The uncanny resemblance to everything in our own time is both an adequate confirmation and commentary. We shall follow Gardiner's example in selecting, paraphrasing, and comparing the text. The other is the so-called *Writing-Board* from the British Museum, an even older document reporting the same events.

The opening lines of the *Admonitions* are only half preserved but give a clear picture of petty crime and public indifference: In the first line a doorkeeper is proposing to his friends, "Let's go down and knock over *(haq.n)* the candy store *(bnr.y.t)*." Next line: "They refuse to pick up the laundry anymore. . . . They are systematically poaching the birds. . . . These things have been prophesied since the (prehistoric) time of Horus. . . . There are gangs *(shemyyw)* everywhere, a man has to have his shield when he goes out to plow . . . have your bow ready—there are criminals afoot everywhere, not a trustworthy man around . . . a man considers his own son an enemy . . . even if the Nile rises as usual nobody is plowing, because nobody knows what is going on . . . women are not having children—it is not the fashion *(skhrw-ta)*."

There are many bitter jokes about the wild redistribution of wealth: "The poor man who couldn't afford a pair of shoes is now a big property owner . . . laborers are discouraged. . . . Violence is increasing; epidemics are spreading, bloodshed is common, corpses lie in the open. . . . The river has become the new mortuary; the current provides processions for the dead . . . in every town the word is 'Let's beat up (or get rid of, *dr.n*) the bigshots *(qnw)*.' . . . Men

are like *gem*-birds (pecking around for bits of food), and everybody goes around in filthy clothes . . . the rich man is being robbed by the help [but how did he get his money in the first place?]. People are nauseated by drinking Nile water with blood in it . . . everywhere buildings are burned to the ground, though so far the palace has managed to escape; ships from the South are stranded; the towns are in ruins down there, the whole country is drying up. Crocodiles are fattened by suicides . . . the population is decimated; everywhere you will find somebody who has buried a brother. . . . The desert is advancing over the land, whole provinces (nomes) are laid waste . . . undesirable aliens are pouring in across the borders . . . there are no natives left . . . servant girls are seen wearing somebody's splendid jewelry. . . . There is no more foreign commerce, for the gold is all used up . . . the crafts are deserted. . . . Laughter has died, nobody laughs anymore . . . people of every class say they wish they were dead . . . the children suffer most . . . the trees are being cut down illegally . . . everybody calls for honesty while practising dishonesty . . . the animals feel it especially, their cries are pitiful to hear . . . what is to be done when a man strikes his brother, a son of his own mother? . . . People have taken to highway robbery, hiding in the bushes at night and murdering their victims . . . what was there yesterday is missing today [cf. Helaman 13:34]. . . . If only the noise and uproar would stop! . . . I wish the whole human race would just disappear . . . they are eating weeds and drinking ditch water. Even birds can't find fruit or vegetables . . . food is even stolen from the pigs. . . . the law courts are looted by mobs . . . the secret rites and ordinances openly divulged . . . the lawbooks are trampled underfoot and kicked to pieces in the alleys . . . the recorders of the graineries have their records snatched, and everybody takes what he wants (6:8—9). The street people make their own legal councils, and the Sacred Council of the Thirty is deposed, their secrets disclosed. . . . There are fires throughout the land lighting the sky by night. The King is deprived of his authority by secret combinations of a few men. . . . The royal residence is overthrown in an hour. . . . A brave man alone hasn't a chance against the cowardly gangs."

There is another long, grimly humorous list of how the poor have become rich and vice versa, e.g., "the man who could not afford a wooden coffin now owns a tomb, while the one who built it is buried by exposure in the uplands. . . . who slept on the street now lies abed . . . who scavenged in the dump for cloth now wears fine linen . . . who had no loaf now has a barn (though it belongs to somebody else) . . . and why not? if you can get it you deserve it . . . the butchers cheat the gods by supplying geese instead of oxen for sacrifice, and they eat the meat they have been paid to prepare for others . . . cattle are running wild everywhere with no one to round them up . . . there are no concerned overseers in business or government. . . . those in power are never told the real condition of the people, so everything goes to ruin. . . . fields are reaped, but it is not reported . . . for housing, Egyptians are now making their own tents like the hill people . . . there is no income for the palace; the guard of the warehouse is knocked out, but the thieves find the bins empty in the king's storehouse . . . all this because of machinations of the secret enemy."

Gardiner, on the other hand, sees a passionate complaint against God's *aporia:* "Why has not Re created all men good alike? If he had done so, the present evils would never have arisen." Yet he describes the righteous ruler as the "Good Shepherd (Herdsman) of Mankind." It is because God "failed in the beginning that the human race is hopelessly flawed . . . this goes for the King too: 'Is he sleeping? His power is not to be seen.'" Many believe this was the ninety-six-year-old Pepi II. "Though the King has all the official requirements, yet noise, confusion, and general violence prevail throughout the kingdom." Then a direct charge against the king: "You have deceived us!" (13:19). Next a description of a kingdom that could be—a Zion. Here the good and bad societies are contrasted as in the Shield of Achilles, a scene of pious festivity and contentment. Next he chides the Egyptians for not standing up to the Asiatic invaders and again accuses the aged and incompetent king.

We noted in the priesthood manual that the axial switch of 600 B.C. saw the end of the old sacral kingship everywhere. And here we find the same thing happening twelve hundred years before!

Déjà Vu

The author of the Egyptian *Writing-Board* bitterly complains that the axial horrors of the time present nothing new to write about: "I have said that which I have seen, and from the first generation down to the present time they are all the same. I wish I had something new to explain my present anguish. If there is change, it is always for the worse, increasing confusion and waste (entropy). Everyone suffers, everything is going downhill, but everybody puts up with it . . . people get up every morning and go through the usual routine; no one has the wisdom or concern to speak up—nobody cares that much. I don't see any way out. . . . The stronger will always prey on the weaker . . . speaking out just makes trouble. You can't get anywhere with stupid people; everybody listens only to himself."

The Merciful Plan

Especially effective among the complaints brought before and against God (the rabbinical *Vorwurf an Gott*) has been the charge of the killing of innocent animals and children in the flood. When Adam complained about it in heaven, God told him he could not even begin to imagine the extent of God's own love for all his creatures. And to Ezra, championing the animals, he explains that animals have no conception of death, the terror of which lies all in the anticipation. They don't know about it until it strikes them and it is over. There is the classic example of the calmly feeding mastodons, frozen hard with their flesh still edible and their mouths full of fresh buttercups.

The same mercy is shown to humans. All the recurrent "times of wickedness and vengeance" follow the same pattern. We have noted from the first how the axial change is always very swift and sudden. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man and also in our own "days of wickedness and vengeance" (Moses 7:60). It has happened before, and each time with business as usual: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26—27). If it must come, it is made quick and painless. Likewise, in the great axial age of Abraham, "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the *same day* that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:28—29). Whether by a tsunami or a firestorm, or by both as in the Book of Mormon, death is almost instantaneous by suffocation. It could not be more merciful. We are told of occasions when the angels protested God's delay in smiting a sinful community, but he put them off, as he did the apostles at Capernaum, saying that some might yet repent, and all must have the full benefit of the doubt.

The Extended Hand of Mercy

The accusing question arises—what comes after all that destruction? What is gained by it? You will find the complaints in all the literature—Egyptian, Greek, Latin, Babylonian, Hebrew, Eddic, Bardic, Romantic, modern—all of it is the product of a series of axial disasters, teaching us that man is bound to find himself in hopeless situations no matter when or where he lives. Then again it all goes back to the Chadwicks' "Epic Milieu" when natural forces, especially the weather, pushed men over the brink and sent whole nations, notably grass-dependent nomads of the "Heartland" of Central Asia into migration toward rich and settled civilizations around the coastal periphery and so threw the world into turmoil.

Koestler's flawed evolution puts one in mind of a machine that is missing a vital part. Nothing can be done until the part is supplied. Who will deliver it—and us? Theologians today are fond of the word *breakthrough*—such must be the very nature of religion; they have at last recognized that we cannot make it all up ourselves, that college courses cannot cut it. It must be brought from above. The universal note of despair that runs through all of the world's literature proclaims our helplessness. Even the promise of the nineteenth-century superman and

twentieth-century science has yet to make us safer and wiser. By precept and example the Prophet Joseph alone shows us the astonishing reality of our situation: We were *meant* to be tried beyond our strength; the test was intentionally made too hard for us!

The late Karl Popper explained that to test a piece of machinery or material you must do your best to break it, putting it under merciless pressure until you have passed the breaking point; otherwise the test is incomplete—an easy test is no test. So "in this world ye shall have tribulation (*thlipsis*, lit. "keeping the pressure on"); but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Was the crucifixion to be called off, then? No, neither was the tribulation of the disciples. Yet the word is, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). This is how it must be, and everything is made clear.

Merciful toward afflicted mankind on earth—even the guilty ones of "the times of wickedness and vengeance"—the Lord also brings them the greatest of gifts in the next world. Though, admittedly, Grace does not ask anything in return, still, to be forgiven outright, without even an opportunity to repent, is to be treated like a feebleminded child who, whatever he does, knows no better. The Lord, on the other hand, gives all of them the opportunity to prove themselves independent and responsible spirits, able to earn forgiveness and to return to the great plan of salvation by seconding the work of the Savior with all their own might, mind, and strength, not because he needs our help, but that he graciously permits it.

So he goes down to those disobedient spirits in prison, victims of sundry axial punishments, teaches them the words of life, laying out the whole plan for them. Putting them all on their good behavior, he arranges for their baptisms and endowments and so gives all a chance to work out their own salvation. In the end, the weeping Enoch saw "all things, even unto the end of the world . . . and received a fulness of joy" (Moses 7:67).

Messiah Becomes the New King: Notes on Isaiah 9: 3–7

Donald W. Parry

The millennial reign of Jesus the Messiah is the primary focus of Isaiah 9:3—7.[1] The prophetic setting and context of these verses point to the time of Christ's reign on the earth.[2] I make this statement knowing that these verses are also appropriately applied in other settings to describe different aspects of the Messiah and his mission. For example, the phrase "for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6) has traditionally and appropriately been applied to the birth of Jesus into mortality.[3] Notwithstanding such interpretations of these verses, I wish to show that this section comprises a messianic prophecy that is directly connected to the enthronement[4] and rule of King Messiah (Jesus Christ), when all the kingdoms of the earth will be destroyed and Jesus Christ will be the sole ruler forevermore.

I will first present a new translation of Isaiah 9:3—7 (which will include variant readings from the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation), followed by a point-by-point commentary, and will conclude with several observations about the setting of the prophecy.

Translation

You have increased the rejoicing, You have[5] magnified the joy; and[6] they rejoice before you as one rejoices at harvest time, and as one rejoices when dividing the booty; (9:3) because you have shattered the yoke of their burden, and the staff of their shoulder, and the rod of their oppressor;[7] (9:4) because every soldier's boot that tramps with a quake, and every garment[8] rolled in blood; Will be for burning, fuel for the fire; (9:5) because to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the dominion will be on his shoulders; and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (9:6) There is[9] no end to the increase of his dominion and peace, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom ordering it, and establishing it with justice and with righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this. (9:7)

Commentary

9:3 *You have increased the rejoicing/magnified the joy*[10]—How has rejoicing been increased and joy been magnified? The answer is found in the threefold use of "because" in verses 4, 5, and 6. Joy has increased *because* the Messiah has broken the oppressive yoke and rod of the oppressor (see Isaiah 9:4); *because* the boots, garments, and other war items of the soldiers will be burned with fire (see Isaiah 9:5); and *because* a son is born who will establish his righteous government and set up peace among the nations.

harvest/dividing the booty—God's victory over Israel's enemies will bring joy to Israel, similar to the joy received by the farmer at the time of harvest, or similar to the delight that victors of war feel when they receive spoils and booty.

9:4 *yoke/staff/rod*—In biblical times the *staff* and *rod* were instruments used by evil taskmasters when smiting their slaves or servants. The *yoke* was a wooden frame designed to harness together beasts of burden for the

purpose of pulling a plow, wagon, or other instruments. The three items—the yoke, staff, and rod—are metaphors signifying forms of oppression, or the manner in which Israel had been burdened by the surrounding nations (see Isaiah 10:5, 24—27). The language of the verse, for instance, recalls the manner that Egypt oppressed Israel before Moses led them out of Egypt. Leviticus 26:13 speaks expressly about the *yoke;* Exodus 1:11; 2:11; 5:4—5; and 6:6—7 specify the term *burden;* and Exodus 3:7; and 5:6, 10—14 refer to the *oppressor* (note that the King James Version reads "taskmaster" in these verses).

Although the wording of the verse recalls historical circumstances, the messianic reference is straightforward; the Messiah will remove the oppressor's yoke and the taskmaster's staff; he will free his covenant people from worldly oppression when he conquers the nations and rules with justice and righteousness (see Isaiah 9:7). When the Messiah shatters the yoke, staff, and rod, the taskmaster will be replaced by a new Master, who is Jesus Christ, and the taskmaster's rod will be replaced by the Messiah's rod, or scepter.

9:5 *boot of a soldier/garments*—According to the law of Moses, boots, garments, weaponry, chariotry, and other items used during war were not to become part of the booty or spoil of the victors. Such property was under a ban and had to be burned with fire (compare Joshua 7:23—26; 11:6, 9; Ezekiel 39:9—10; Psalm 46:9). When the Messiah comes to the earth with great glory, he will char all corruptible things, including and perhaps especially items of war.

rolled in blood—Or stained in blood.

burning/fire—Symbolically and prophetically, the boot and garments identified in Isaiah 9:5 have reference to all unclean and corruptible things that will be burned with fire at the second coming of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 25:1; D&C 64:23—24). Specifically, the weaponry and chariotry of the armies ("boot of the soldier") of the nations will burn when the Messiah comes to rule and places the government upon his shoulder. Compare Isaiah 2:4 where weaponry is made into agricultural instruments for the benefit of mankind.

9:6 *to us*—To Isaiah and all those who are redeemed through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

child/son—Jesus Christ is the *child* and *son.* In one sense, the term *child* has reference to Jesus' childhood in Nazareth (see Matthew 2:23). The context of this section, however, suggests that *child* also has theological connotations and refers to Jesus' divine parentage and ancestry. On this, one should compare Moroni's reference to Jesus as the "Holy Child" (Moroni 8:3). For members of the church, *child* is theologically connected to one's becoming a spiritual child of Jesus Christ, both in the setting of one's baptism as well as in the Lord's temples.

The term *son* has reference to Jesus' divine sonship—"I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7; see Psalm 89:27—28; 2 Samuel 7:11—16).[11] *Son*, in Isaiah 9:6, may be an abbreviated form of "Son of God" (2 Nephi 25:19), "Son of Man of Holiness," "Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32), "Son of the living God" (D&C 14:9), "Son of David" (Matthew 1:1), or "Son of the most high God" (1 Nephi 11:6). Righteous individuals may also become sons and daughters of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 6:17—18; Mosiah 5:7; 27:25; Ether 3:14; and D&C 11:30; 25:1), speaking in the spiritual sense.

dominion . . . on his shoulders—The phrase points to the vesting rite of a king who, as part of a coronation and enthronement ceremony, places upon or has placed upon his shoulder the robe of regal authority.[12] The robe, not mentioned explicitly here, represents both kingly and priestly power (compare Revelation 1:13, where the sacred vestments belong to both the king and the high priest). The term *government* (as translated in the King James

Version), derived from the same Hebrew root as "prince" (see immediately below, "Prince of Peace"), may be read as *dominion* or *rule*.[13] The phrase *upon his shoulder* anticipates a saying found in Isaiah 22:22, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." It is due to the fact that Jesus Christ will bear the rule on his shoulders that the yoke and the staff will not be upon the shoulders of the faithful (see Isaiah 9:4).

Wonderful Counselor—Most translators translate *Wonderful* as an adjective that describes *Counselor*, and not as two separate nouns as they are presented in the King James Version (compare 2 Nephi 19:6). The Messiah will be an adviser (Counselor), or perhaps one who argues cases in court. "The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people" (Isaiah 3:13); also, "For behold, ye yourselves know that [the Lord] counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works" (Jacob 4:10).

Mighty God—The title is used again in Isaiah 10:21. The word *mighty* (Hebrew, *gibbor*) has reference to a warrior, hence the phrase may read *Warrior God*, recalling Isaiah 9:3—5, where Jehovah overcomes the nations and all forms of oppression.

Everlasting Father—Jesus Christ is an eternal being who is the father in a number of senses, as explained in "The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve," dated 30 June 1916.[14]

Prince of Peace—Christ is part of the royal family of God, a Prince who shares the throne with the Father (see Revelation 3:21) and who is the "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16) over a kingdom of kings and priests, or righteous saints. He is the Prince of Peace, who at his second coming will destroy all war and contention and will reign over a peaceful kingdom (compare Isaiah 2:2—4; 9:4—5). He is the "founder of peace" (Mosiah 15:18), the "author of . . . peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33), the "God of love and peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11) and the "Lord of peace" (2 Thessalonians 3:16). At his birth into the telestial world at the meridian of time an angelic host proclaimed: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Jesus himself taught, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27), and to the unruly elements, the troubled waters, Jesus commanded: "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39).

Depending upon the scriptural context, the Hebrew root word that underlies the English term *peace* signifies "good health," "harmony," "make intact" or "complete," "recompense unto," and "pay vow,"[15] all of which are connected in one way or another to the divine mission of Jesus.

9:7 *There is no end to the increase of his dominion*—Christ's kingdom will increase throughout the eternities. The angel Gabriel echoed some of Isaiah's words concerning the throne of David, Jesus' reign as king, and Jesus' possession of an everlasting kingdom when he (Gabriel) spoke to Mary: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the *throne* of his father David: *And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever;* and of *his kingdom there shall be no end"* (Luke 1:30—33, emphasis added).

throne of David—The throne is a metaphor for kingship, dominion, and sovereignty (see Genesis 41:40; 2 Samuel 7:16; and 1 Kings 1:47). Jehovah is crowned and enthroned upon the throne of David and rules with great glory and justice for eternity.

The throne of David is identified here because "the events of David's life constituted a remarkable type of the Messiah. . . . David, having established for Israel the day of her greatness and glory, is a natural type for Christ

during the millennial reign."[16] Jeremiah prophesied that "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:3—6; see Ezekiel 37:24—25).

his kingdom—This has reference to the Messiah's "kingdom of heaven" (D&C 65:6), where the Lord will rule from David's throne and where there will be "no end" to the increase of his dominion and peace (Isaiah 9:7). The "kingdom of God which is set up on the earth" has been established to prepare humankind for the second coming of Jesus Christ. In October 1831 the Lord revealed that "the keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth. . . . Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come" (D&C 65:2—6).

ordering it/establishing it—The Messiah will establish his kingdom with exact "justice" and "righteousness."

zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this—An expression also found in 2 Kings 19:31 and Isaiah 37:32. The expression "is an assurance that the promise will in fact be fulfilled because Yahweh will support it with his 'zeal' . . . with all his strength."[17]

Notes and Observations

The various expressions of Isaiah's messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:3—7 pertain to Jesus the Messiah who conquers, vanquishes, subdues, and rules as the victorious king. Distinctive kingship themes are expressed in Isaiah's prophecy, including the victory of the new king over oppressive kingdoms (see Isaiah 9:4—5); the divine sonship of the new king (see Isaiah 9:6; see also 2 Samuel 7:11—16, "I will be his father and he shall be my son"; Psalm 2); the reception of the government by the new king (see Isaiah 9:6); the naming ceremony, wherein the king receives names that are fitting for his kingship (see Isaiah 9:6); the king becomes Father, God, and a member of the royal family ("Prince of Peace," Isaiah 9:6); the king is given the throne and the kingdom (see Isaiah 9:7); and the king rules with justice, peace, and righteousness forever (see Isaiah 9:7).

Other themes presented in this section (called "Davidic king motifs") recall King David and his golden reign over Israel. In this prophecy they speak of Jesus Christ, who is the last but greatest king from the Davidic dynasty. The Davidic king motifs include the dawn of great light (see Isaiah 9:1—2; compare 2 Samuel 23:4; and Psalm 110:3; 118:24, 27), rejoicing (see Isaiah 9:3; compare Psalm 118:15, 24; 132:9, 16), the overthrow of foes (see Isaiah 9:4; compare Psalm 2:2, 8—9; 72:4, 14; 89:23; 110:1, 5—6; and 132:18), burning with fire (see Isaiah 9:5; compare 2 Samuel 23:7; and Psalm 21:9; 118:12), and royal continuance forever (see Isaiah 9:7; compare Psalm 2:8—9; 21:4; 61:6—7; 89:3—4, 28—29, 36—37; and 132:11—12).[18]

Note that the nation's joy has increased (see Isaiah 9:3), the people's yoke and burdens have been lifted, their oppressors removed (see Isaiah 9:4), and soldiers and items connected with war are unnecessary (see Isaiah 9:5) because Jesus Christ has become king and reigns as the Prince of Peace (see Isaiah 9:6) with justice and righteousness (see Isaiah 9:7). Note also the four royal titles given to Christ presented at the time of his investiture of authority and kingship[19]—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (see Isaiah 9:6).[20] The titles are connected to the reception of sacred names in the setting of an enthronement

ceremony. The names emphasize his ability to judge in righteousness, his fatherhood, his godhood, and his royalty; they prophesy of the ultimate victory of the house of Israel because the Messiah has become King and God.

Certainly the divine role of the mortal Jesus of Nazareth was not the warrior Messiah, as depicted in this section of Isaiah, but instead was the Suffering Servant who condescended below all things and suffered all things (see Isaiah 53).[21] Only a single phrase in the entire section seems to pertain to Jesus' mortal birth—"to us a child is born, to us a son is given." Scholars generally agree that the phrase deals, in its greatest and last application, to the enthronement of King Messiah. I have attempted to demonstrate this concept in my comments above. One Isaiah scholar and commentator, Otto Kaiser, has summarized:

> [The scholar] Alt thought that he could find the key to the understanding of [this phrase in Isaiah 9:6a] in Psalms 2:7b, where mention of the birth of the king refers to the adoption or, as we should more accurately put it . . . , the legitimation of the king as the son of Yahweh on the day of his accession. There the king himself refers to the authority to rule given to him by Yahweh in the so-called royal protocol: "Yahweh said to me: 'You are my son. Today I have begotten you.'" The fact that the present passage says that a child is given to us and a son is born to us could accordingly be regarded as the consequence of adapting the element taken from the enthronement hymn, and therefore the enthronement ritual, to the thanksgiving, and we might follow Alt in referring the statement, even in its present form, and within the context demarcated for comment, to the accession of the king rather than to his birth. This interpretation has already attracted scholars because it makes it possible to maintain the temporal unity of vv. 6f . . . so that here the whole passage would be related to the enthronement of the new king.[22]

The denomination of the king as *child* and *son* has reference, then, to the individual who becomes the princely son of the Great King, who is God the Father of all. The child/son has been found worthy to sit upon the throne with the Great King, receive the vestments of kingly and priestly rule, and accept the crown of righteousness. Truly, as the Psalmist proclaimed in his enthronement psalm:

> I have consecrated my king upon my holy mountain of Zion. Let me proclaim the law of Jehovah, He has said unto me, "You are my Son; Today I have begotten you.[23] Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and for your possession the uttermost parts of the earth. You will break them with an iron scepter, You will shatter them like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:6—9)[24]

In conclusion I will set forth the framework of Isaiah 9:3—7 in its greater context. Isaiah 7:1 through 12:6 appears to be a distinct literary unit,[25] a single revelation given to Isaiah. The prophecy is comprised of several subsections, shown as follows, but not listed in chronological order:

> Ephraim and Syria War against Judah (7:1—9) The Sign to Ahaz—The Immanuel Prophecy (7:10—16) Assyria's Invasion of Judah (7:17—25) The Immanuel Prophecy—First Fulfillment (8:1—4) Rejecting Jehovah, the Waters of Shiloah (8:5—10) Messianic Prophecies of Christ (8:11—15) Sealing the Testimony and the Law (8:16—9:2) The Messiah—The Son Becomes the New King (9:3—7) Judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel (9:8—10:4) Assyria: Instrument in God's Hand (10:5—11) God Destroys Assyria: A Type of the Destruction at the Second Coming (10:12—19) Remnant of Israel Shall Return (10:20—27) Assyria Marches to Jerusalem Causing Terror (10:28—34) The Stem of Jesse (Jesus Christ) Prophecy (11:1—5) Glorious Conditions of the Millennium (11:6—10) An Ensign Shall Gather Israel (11:11—16) Israel's Song of Salvation (12:1—6)

The literary unit deals chiefly with the following three themes—the nation of Assyria, the house of Israel, and Israel's Messiah, who is Jesus Christ. Isaiah's prophecies regarding Assyria, their wars against Israel, and their final destruction at the hands of the Lord are recorded in Isaiah 7:1—9, 17—25; and 10:5—11, 12—19, 28—34. Although Jehovah chastens members of the house of Israel for their wickedness (see Isaiah 9:8—10:4), he provides hope for them by promising that a remnant of Israel will remember the covenant and return to their lands of promise to build Zion in the latter days (see Isaiah 10:20—27). Israel will gather around the gospel ensign (see Isaiah 11:11—16) when they see it lifted on a high mountain. Further, Israel is comforted when it learns concerning the glorious conditions of the millennium that await the faithful (see Isaiah 11:6—10). During that blessed period, Israel will join together in a chorus singing a song of salvation unto their God and Savior (see Isaiah 12:1—6).

Isaiah's messianic prophecies presented in this literary unit (see Isaiah 7:10—16; 8:1—4, 5—10, 11—15; 9:3—7; and 11:1—5) are interrelated in a most inspired fashion. By way of an example, the principal themes of the Immanuel prophecy (see Isaiah 8:1—4) are the identification of a mother who will play a prominent role in the prophecy, the birth of a son, the naming of that son, oppression by worldly nations, oppressive kings of the world, the destruction of the land and cities by the oppressive kings and their armies, God's control of the events of the world despite the temporary power of the worldly kings, and the ultimate promise of hope that "God is with us" (Hebrew = *Immanuel*), both during mortality as well as during the millennium. The first and localized fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in Isaiah 8:3—7; the greater fulfillment is shown in Matthew 1:21—23.

The eschatological correspondence of the Immanuel prophecy is documented in Isaiah 9:3—7. This section of Isaiah's great prophecy also deals with the birth of a son, the naming of the child, God's control of history, and the fact that "God is with us." However, in this same section, the events have changed and a reversal of roles has occurred. The characterization of the mother has been replaced by the role of the father, the oppression of Assyria and the kingdoms of the world have been removed because the new King has been installed upon the throne of his Father, and peace has replaced destruction and war, again because the Prince of Peace now rules with justice and righteousness.

In short, the Messiah, after his divine investiture and enthronement upon the throne of David, will wear the royal robes of his Father and reign as the new King forever and ever. His Saints will call him *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,* and *Prince of Peace*. Surely, the "zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this."

Notes

I write this contribution with great appreciation for Richard Lloyd Anderson, for his gospel scholarship, and for his unwavering dedication to the restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

1. I have opted to discuss Isaiah 9:3—7 because it comprises a literary unit; the preceding literary unit is composed of Isaiah 8:16—9:2 and the following unit takes in Isaiah 9:8—10:4. For a discussion on and commentary of sections before and after Isaiah 9:3—7, see Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 85—90, 97—102.

2. Elder Bruce R. McConkie places Isaiah 9:7 in the context of the millennium with these words: "And so shall it be commencing in the millennial day when 'the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Rev. 11:15)," *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973): 1:631 = *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979—81), 3:420 n. 3; see also *The Millennial Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 597; 654—55.

3. Further, George Frideric Handel's inspired musical rendition entitled *The Messiah*, specifically the chorus called "For unto Us a Child Is Born," has inspired the Christian community concerning Jesus' birth since its composition in 1741. On Handel's *Messiah*, see Watkins Shaw, *The Story of Handel's Messiah* (London: Novello, 1963). I note here that the libretto or lyrics of "For unto us a child is born" were written by Charles Jennens.

4. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1—12, A Commentary*, translated by Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 398, writes that Isaiah 9:6 "seems to have in mind the act of enthronement for a new ruler: The names which are given to the child are just like the 'great names' which were given to the Pharaoh in Egypt when he was enthroned. . . . In the same light, the phrase 'the sovereign authority came upon his shoulder' [= KJV, 'and the government shall be upon his shoulder'] . . . seems to be out of place in the context of a ceremony celebrating a birth."

5. Isaiah 9:3 JST and 2 Nephi 19:3 delete the term *not* in this phrase.

6. Isaiah 9:3 JST adds the conjunction *and* at the beginning of this phrase.

7. 2 Nephi 19:4 deletes the phrase *as in the day of Midian*.

8. The critical apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. Hans P. Ruger, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1984), 688, suggests the phrase *kol simlah* should be read as "every garment."

9. Isaiah 9:7 JST and 2 Nephi 19:7 replace KJV's "shall be" with "is."

10. In this prophecy Isaiah uses the Hebrew perfect verbal form throughout (translated as the English simple past or present perfect tense), although he does speak concerning the future. Concerning this common practice of Isaiah as well as other Old Testament prophets, Stephen D. Ricks has written: "Some Old Testament prophets make . . . use of the past tense for future events. Biblical scholars E. Kautsch and A. E. Cowley note . . . that the past form—referred to as the 'perfect' in biblical Hebrew—is sometimes used 'to express facts which are undoubtedly imminent, and therefore, in the imagination of the speaker, already accomplished. . . . [In] this use of the perfect . . . the prophet so transports himself in imagination into the future that he describes the future event as if it had been already seen or heard by him' (*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford: Clarendon, reprint, 1970), 312—13." Ricks also notes that Book of Mormon prophets use similar approaches in their prophecies (see Mosiah 16:6). See Stephen D. Ricks, "Many times in prophecy, the present and past tenses are used, even though the prophecy refers to a future event. Can you explain the use of verb tenses in prophecy?" I Have a Question, *Ensign* (August 1988): 27—28.

11. Many scholars have grasped, in part, the significance of Psalm 2:7, including Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 80, who wrote: "The special relationship of father-son between god and king is to be found again and again within the north-west Semitic area too, the king being directly called the son of the god, and the god, father of the king. . . . The best proofs of the king as son of the god are given in the O[ld] T[estament], the most important of them being, of course, Psalm 2.7. However, not only is the king *son* of the god, he is actually *identical* with the god." Similarly, Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1—12: A Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 212, sees a direct connection between "son" in Psalm 2:7 and "world rule"; and Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 28, believes that the "Messiah will ultimately be, not merely the Servant, but the 'Son' of . . . deity, and that he shall thus have supremacy over all earthly kings."

12. See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1—12*, 400.

13. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), s.v. "misra."

14. "The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition" may be found in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 117—29.

15. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), s.v. "slm."

16. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 121.

17. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1—12*, 215.

18. Adapted from J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 99—100.

19. Egyptian kings were also given royal names at their coronation, see Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 71—73; and Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 46—47.

20. The KJV manifests five throne names for the Messiah—*Wonderful*, *Counselor*, the *Mighty God*, the *Everlasting Father*, the *Prince of Peace*. The Vulgate presents six names: *Admirabilis*, *Consiliarius*, *Deus*, *Fortis*, *Pater futuri saeculi*, *Princeps pacis*. The Septuagint provides one name only: *The Messenger of great counsel*.

21. I make this statement knowing full well that many of the messianic prophecies pertain to both the mortal and the millennial Jesus. For instance, it is true that the mortal Jesus was the warrior Messiah in that he defeated (through the atonement) the monster of sin and death. In my view, however, the prophets are usually quite clear in their depiction of the mortal Messiah as contrasted with their depiction of the millennial Messiah. In Isaiah 53, Isaiah describes Jesus as one who is "tender," "despised," "rejected," "a man of sorrows," "acquainted with grief," "stricken," "smitten," "afflicted," "wounded," "bruised," "oppressed," "afflicted," "cut off out of the land of the living," "bruise[d]," and "put . . . to grief" (Isaiah 53:3—10). This description of the mortal Jesus is much different than other prophecies that depict the Messiah at his second coming when he will be "glorious in his apparel" and "traveling in the greatness of his strength," when he will tread the wicked in his "anger," "trample them in [his] fury," "make them drunk in [his] fury," and "bring down their strength to the earth." This will be the Lord's "day of vengeance" (Isaiah 63:1—6).

22. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1—12*, 211.

23. The New International Version and Jerusalem Bible both read, "Today I have become your Father."

24. The translation of these verses is mine.

25. The literary unit is framed with the superscription in Isaiah 7:1 ("And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah . . .") and the millennial hymn in Isaiah 12. A new literary unit begins with Isaiah 13:1, introduced with the formula "The burden of Babylon."

The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muḥammad

Daniel C. Peterson,
Stephen D. Ricks

Walther Zimmerli, in his magisterial commentary on the book of Ezekiel, distinguishes between two kinds of prophetic call in the Hebrew Bible—the narrative type of call that is characterized by a dialogue with Yahweh and the divine call and commission preceded by a "throne vision,"[1] "the apocalyptic vision of God (in human form) seated on his throne preceding the call of the prophet."[2]

Details of the traditions providing the background to Qurʾān 74:1—7, among Muḥammad's first revelations—or, according to some Muslim and Western commentators, his *first* canonical revelation[3]—contain elements that are strikingly similar to features of the "throne-theophany" type of prophetic call outlined by Zimmerli and described in greater detail by John J. Collins and others.[4] In this paper, we consider these verses, as well as other passages from the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* or traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad—with accompanying discussions and explanations by the commentators, medieval and modern—that illuminate our understanding of their meaning. In particular, we pay attention to the context and use of the word *throne*, which is crucial to a proper understanding of the background of these verses.

On the authority of Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh,[5] the following background to Qurʾān (hereafter Q) 74:1—7 is given in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārḥ. Preceding the receipt of Q 74:1—7, Muḥammad is said to have completed his period of meditation in Mount Ḥiraʾ and to be descending from the mountain when he heard a voice. He looked around but saw no one. He then looked above his head, "and there He was, sitting upon the throne." After this, being "burdened [i.e., troubled] thereby," Muḥammad went home to his wife Khadīja and begged her to cover him up, which she did.[6] Thereupon he received the message contained in Q 74:1—7: "O thou wrapped up in thy raiment! Keep vigil the night long, save a little—A half thereof, or abate a little thereof, Or add (a little) thereto—and chant the Qurʾān in measure. For We shall charge thee with a word of right. Lo! the vigil of the night is (a time) when impression is more keen and speech more certain. Lo! thou hast by day a chain of business."[7]

Who is the "He" in the statement of Bukhārī: "and there He was sitting upon the throne"? There seems to be a reticence on the part of certain Muslim Qurʾānic commentators to answer this question. According to al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad at this juncture saw "something" *(shayʾ)*.[8] Others, such as Muslim and Ibn Kathīr, assert that it was the angel Gabriel.[9] However, an analysis of the Qurʾān's use of the term *throne* (Arabic *kursī*/*ʿarsh*) serves to strengthen the assumption that it is none other than God himself who is referred to here, a possibility allowed by some Muslim commentators and one that many Western scholars hold to.[10]

A survey of Qurʾānic data supports the association of the throne exclusively with God. Throughout the Qurʾān, God is described as "the lord of the throne." He is *rabb al-ʿarsh* ("lord of the throne") at Q 9:129, 23:86, and 43:82; at Q 27:26 he is uniquely so. In Q 40:15, 81:20, and 85:15, he is *dhū al-ʿarsh* ("possessor of the throne"). While nondivine thrones are mentioned Qurʾānically in both the story of Joseph and his parents (Q 12:100) and the Queen of Sheba (Q 27:23, 38, 41, 42), neither Gabriel nor any other angel is ever associated with a throne. Indeed, at Q 17:42 (cf. Q 21:22), God is asserted to be uniquely *dhū al-ʿarsh* in distinction even to hypothetical other gods. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Gabriel, a mere angel and thus a creature, would possess a throne.

W. Montgomery Watt and others further argue that Gabriel was only identified as the vehicle of revelation quite late, and that, at the first, it was God himself who was viewed as the agent of inspiration. "This indicates a growing and changing understanding of spiritual things in the minds of Muḥammad and the Muslims," Watt writes, contending that the earlier view gave way to a theological principle that God could not be seen.[11]

In his eleventh-century compilation *al-Mufradāt*, al-Raghīb remarks somewhat irritably that the *ʿarsh* of God "is one of the things which mankind know not in reality, but only by name; and it is not as the imaginations of the vulgar hold it to be [namely, the throne of God]."[12] Edward Lane offers yet other definitions of a spiritualized character, giving us such renderings as "the highest sphere" (i.e., highest of the celestial spheres) and "the empyrean."[13] Yet the phrasing of al-Raghīb's exclamation clearly implies that there were those who took the *ʿarsh* literally, and, indeed, Lane's "spiritual" definitions are not logically inconsistent with some formulations of a more literal understanding of the term: "God is on his throne," reports Abū Dāʾūd, "and his throne is above the heavens."[14] Such Qurʾānic passages as 67:16—17 seem to imply that God is located in the sky, and the omnipresence of such verbs as *anzala/yunzilu/inzāl* ("to send down" = "to reveal") certainly seems to reflect such a concept. Al-Ṭabarī relates a tradition that expressly describes the Qurʾān as a *tanzīl* ("a sending down" = "a revelation") from a God who has *istawā* ("mounted up"; see discussion below).[15]

Equally straightforward are some of the descriptions of the "Throne Verse" in Q 2:255, which declares that *wasiʿa kursīyuhu al-samawāt waʾl-arḍ* ("his *kursī* extends over the heavens and the earth")—*kursī* usually having the meaning, much like *ʿarsh*, of "elevated chair"—and which is thought by many Muslims to be "the best verse in the Book of God."[16] This is one place where the modern commentator A. Yusuf Ali's urge to allegory may have some foundation, for surely no literal throne could be so large as to cover heavens and earth. Thus, when Ali says that *kursī* is metaphorical, connoting "majesty," we are inclined to agree with him,[17] as well as when he describes the throne as "seat, power, knowledge, symbol of authority."[18]

But such an explanation opens up a new way of understanding the verse, which indicates that literalism is not yet out of the running. There were—and are—real, tangible thrones. Symbolism generally *follows* literal reality. When, for example, one says of a king in English that his scepter extended over all the known world, one does not mean to deny that he had a real metal scepter. It is surely this kind of thought that lies behind Heinrich Speyer's summary of the Qurʾānic data as, "Der göttliche Thron . . . erstreckt sich (in seiner Wirksamkeit) über Himmel und Erde" ("The divine throne . . . extends [in its efficacy] over heaven and earth").[19]

Some traditionists make a distinction between *kursī* and *ʿarsh*. For example, while the *kursī* is vast, the *ʿarsh* is immeasurably greater.[20] Some traditions, in fact, emphasize that the *kursī* dwarfs the seven heavens, in turn being dwarfed by the *ʿarsh*,[21] which reminds us of the huge dimensions used to emphasize God's greatness in rabbinic and mystical Judaism.[22] (It should be noted in this context that, where any distinction is made between *kursī* and *ʿarsh*, the former is always subordinated to the latter, never the opposite.)

Other traditionists take an approach that A. Y. Ali would find congenial: The *kursī* is God's *knowledge*. Thus, say the commentators generally known as the Jalalayn, the import of Q 2:255 is that God's knowledge encompasses heaven and earth. But also, "the throne itself contains them *(mushtamil ʿalayhima)* because of its greatness (*li-ʿazamatihi)*." They then transmit a *ḥadīth* according to which "the seven heavens are no more than seven dirhams [= medieval coins] thrown into a shield *(turs)* as compared with the throne."[23]

Al-Ṭabarī relates two traditions to this effect, namely that the *kursī* is *ʿilm Allāh* ("God's knowledge"), and declares this to be his own opinion.[24] Still, in al-Ṭabarī's own commentary,[25] such traditions are greatly outnumbered by those who hold the *kursī* to be God's footstool *(mawdiʿ qadamayhi)*. Accordingly, and by analogy to earthly footstools, it is below the *ʿarsh*. In fact, says one, heaven and earth are within *(fi jawf)* the *kursī*, and the *kursī* is before *(bayna yaday)* the *ʿarsh*. Similar opinions are passed on by Ibn Kathīr.[26]

Ibn Kathīr also knows of traditions that identify the *kursī* as the eighth celestial sphere, the *falak al-thawābit* or "sphere of the fixed stars." Above it is the ninth, the *falak al-athīr* or "sphere of the *athīr*" (cf. Gk. "ether"), which is also known as the *falak al-ʿarsh* ("sphere of the throne"), a designation that fits our data perfectly. It is said to be so called "because it affects the others" *(yuʾaththiru fi ghayrihi)*—which is obviously a folk etymology to make sense of the foreign *athīr*. Lane reports that *kursī* can signify "the sphere of the stars."[27] In this context, we note that the constellation of Cassiopeia is known as *dhāt al-kursī* ("possessor of the *kursī*").

But, again, some commentators take this idea of the *kursī* as footstool in a very literal fashion. In al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, for instance, the *kursī* as footstool makes the sound of a creaking camel saddle.[28] This compares closely with the view in the ancient Near East and the Old Testament, where the "footstool was an indispensable part of the throne."[29] In the Bible, the *earth* is said to be God's footstool (see, e.g., Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:35).[30]

Further, Ibn Kathīr reminds us of the necessity of taking Q 2:255 as it stands, although he cautions us to do it *min ghayr takyīf wa la tashbīh* ("with no question as to how, but also without anthropomorphizing").[31] If we are to do so, we must note that the other occurrence of *kursī* in the Qurʾān involves a very real throne belonging to Solomon (Q 38:34), a fact that will have some bearing on our exegesis. This may be why such early Muslims as Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and Hishām al-Jawāliqī took the throne verse as literally true.[32]

Numerous other Muslim traditions describe Muḥammad's theophanic experiences. In some versions, he saw the deity as luminosity *(nūrānī)* or light *(nūr)*.[33] In a tradition preserved by Muslim, it is stated that "God's veil is light."[34] This is reminiscent of the language of many religions, in which theophany is described as an experience of light. Other traditions are less reticent. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, for instance, preserves at least two traditions that state quite matter-of-factly that Muḥammad saw God.[35] On the other hand, some traditions are equally forceful in their denial of such theophanies. According to traditions related on the authority of Muḥammad's young wife ʿĀʾisha and preserved in the writings of Muslim, Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad ibn anbal, anyone claiming that Muḥammad saw God is a liar.[36] The very fact that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal preserves such contradictory traditions is an indication that the question of literal theophanies became a source of conflict in later Muslim history.

If our understanding of the foregoing traditions is correct, several features in the call of Muḥammad (based, in this case, primarily on the tradition given by Bukhārī as background to Q 74:1—7 cited above) correspond to accounts of throne theophanies preceding prophetic commissions found in Jewish canonical and extracanonical literature, among which the following may be cited:[37]

- *A theophany, where the appearance of God on his throne (in the case of certain apocalypses, a chariot) is described.* In Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel saw a manlike God seated on a throne of sapphire or lapis lazuli "on a vault glittering like a sheet of ice—a hemisphere of transparent crystal." This language is reminiscent of the vision described in Revelation 4, especially 4:6, where John sees the throne of God and "in front of it stretched what seemed a sea of glass, like a sheet of ice." We may further compare Exodus 24:10, where

God stands on a clear-blue sapphire. In Isaiah's call to prophethood in Isaiah 6:1 it is recorded: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple." The account of Lehi's throne theophany records that Lehi "was carried away in a vision, even that he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God" (1 Nephi 1:8). The Ethiopic *Enoch,* a composite work originally dating to the second century B.C., features a vision of an anthropomorphic God who is seated on a crystalline throne.[38]

In these theophanies, in the "historical prologue," which provides the background for the theophany and surrounding events, place and time play a significant role. In the case of Muḥammad, the vision occurred at the bottom of the wadi at the foot of Ḥira' following his sojourn there. Isaiah, we have noted, prefaced his call with: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw . . . the Lord [in the temple]" (Isaiah 6:1). Ezekiel's vision is prefaced by the historical note: "Now it came to pass, in the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of King Jehoachin's captivity, the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel, the priest, in the land of the Chaldaeans by the Chebar River" (Ezekiel 1:1). In the *Ascension of Isaiah*, probably influenced by Isaiah 6, we read: "In the twentieth year of the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, . . . Isaiah . . . was seeing a vision."[39] Enoch's ascension, recorded in the Slavonic Enoch, occurred at the New Year: "On the first day of the first month . . . there appeared two men to me."[40] Further, Ezra prefaced his theodicy with, "In the thirtieth year after the downfall of the city, I . . . began to address the Most High . . . and . . . thereupon the angel answered me who had been sent to me."[41] Nephi sets the scene of religious turmoil in Jerusalem as background to Lehi's throne theophany: "For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, . . . and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed" (1 Nephi 1:4).

What Norman Habel notes concerning the theophany and prophetic commission of Isaiah's call is equally true of the others: "Despite the overwhelming glory of the sacred locale (the temple for Isaiah), the historical moment is just as important to the prophet's proclamation. The year was a year of transition, crisis and import; it was the year of the king's death."[42] Further, the historical information "underscores the significance of the historical orientation of the experience."[43]

- *An auditory revelation that clarifies the epiphany or theophany*. John J. Collins summarizes his data on Judeo-Christian throne theophanies by noting that the initial "epiphanies are always followed by auditory revelation"; and we cannot fail to remember that this is emphatically the case with Muḥammad. In this instance the auditory revelation is Q 74:1—7, whose function intersects with a further element of the genre, the concluding words of the vision, here implying the *prophetic call and commission,* where the recipient of the revelation is called to represent deity. Similarly, in the "throne theophany" in Isaiah 6, the divine commission, "Go and say to this people, hear . . . ," represents the initial auditory revelation following his vision. Nephi's account of Lehi's vision obscures his father Lehi's formal call to prophesy, but Nephi implies that Lehi accepted the call as prophet and that he began to preach to the people: "After the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard . . . and also the things which he read in the book" (1 Nephi 1:18—19).
- *Reaction of the recipient, where the overpowering awe and/or perplexity of the recipient confronted with the revelation are described.* Following the theophany, Muḥammad reports that "I was burdened thereby, and went to Khadīja, saying: 'Cover me with a *dathar* (cloak), which they did.'" Similarly, Isaiah was

overcome by the glory of his heavenly vision, exclaiming: "Woe is me! For I am undone" (Isaiah 6:5). As a result of his encounter with the fiery throne chariot, Ezekiel fell upon his face (see Ezekiel 1:28). Lehi, because of his vision of God's glory and of the imminent judgment on Jerusalem, "did quake and tremble exceedingly. . . . [A]nd he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the spirit and the things which he had seen" (1 Nephi 1:6—7). In the Ethiopic *Enoch,* Enoch, who saw lightning and fiery cherubim who spoke with fiery tongues, reported, "I quaked and trembled, I fell upon my face."[44] So also in the *Apocalypse of Abraham,* following Abraham's encounter with the glorious angel Jaoel, Abraham said, "There was no breath of man, and my spirit was affrighted, and my soul fled me, and I became like a stone, and I fell upon the earth, for I had no more strength to stand."[45]

We have restricted ourselves herein to a discussion of events surrounding the receipt of Q 74:1—7 and have noted their similarity to Jewish and Christian "throne theophanies." But the many-faceted accounts of heavenly visions in the Jewish and Christian pseudepigrapha are far richer than the few features discussed above. Strikingly, other elements of these accounts find resonances in Muslim traditions—Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, biography—concerning Muḥammad. The pattern that emerges in this literature "is that of a righteous individual who, concerned for the wickedness of his people, prays and weeps on their behalf until physically overcome by the spirit of revelation" and is thereupon "carried away in a vision."[46] There, he sees a vision of the throne chariot, or of "God on his throne attended by the heavenly council."[47] He may be given a tour of the world and heavens, and also "receives a heavenly book which explains the secrets of the universe and the impending disaster of his people. The vision is completed with a call or commission extended from the heavenly council to warn his people about their inevitable destruction; however, he is also forewarned that his people will reject him."[48] It is not difficult to apply this to Muḥammad's practice of *taḥannuth* (an obscure term that may refer to meditation) in Ã®iraʾ before the revelation, to the story of the *miʿrāj*—Muḥammad's ascent to heaven[49]—to the giving of the Qurʾān, with its contents of apocalyptic warning, and even to Waraqa b. Nawfal's prediction of the rocky reception to be given to the new prophet.

What role might the throne-theophany vision, an important component in the account of the prophetic commission of earlier Abrahamic prophets, including the great writing prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, have played in Mu-ḥam-mad's call as a prophet? Representing as it does a very typical Near Eastern literary genre designed to affirm publicly the authority of the prophet, it seems worth investigating whether it originally performed the same function in Muslim belief and may have been an essential part of Muḥammad's credentials as a prophet in the ancient Abrahamic tradition.[50]

Notes

1. Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1—24*, trans. Roland E. Clements (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 100.

2. Matthew Black, "The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the Son of Man," in *Jews, Greeks, and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 57, cited in Blake T. Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," *BYU Studies* 26/4 (1986): 69.

3. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-Rusul wa-ʾl-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), 2:303—4, explicitly denies the primacy of Qurʾān 96:1—5; cf. Richard Bell,

"Mohammed's Call," *The Moslem World* 24/1 (1934): 16—18.

4. The elements of this type of pattern are found in the paradigm of the genre *apocalypse* developed by John J. Collins in "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1—20. On page 9 Collins defines *apocalypse* as "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world." While not all prophetic call narratives display the characteristics of apocalypses (e.g., the solely auditory prophetic calls do not), both canonical and extracanonical visual prophetic call narratives do display the characteristics of the apocalyptic genre.

5. It must be acknowledged that Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh is described by Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 17, as "not a very reliable" transmitter of prophetic tradition. Bukhārī's inclusion of him, however, in the most prestigious and authoritative *ḥadīth* collection suggests that early Muslims viewed him otherwise.

6. Khadīja was Muḥammad's first and, while she lived, only wife.

7. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo: Ma ābiʿ al-Shaʿb, 1958). This and other citations from the Qurʾān are from the version of Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: Mentor Books, n.d.).

8. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 2:304.

9. Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo, a.h. 1384), 1:98—99; Abū Fidā Ismāʿīl ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm* (Aleppo: Maktabat al-Irshād, 1980), 1:387.

10. See W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 19; Bell, "Mohammed's Call," 17—19; Rudi Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1957), 44—45.

11. Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 19; cf. 23; cf. also W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 15; Frants Buhl, *Das Leben Muhammeds*, trans. Hans H. Schaeder (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1955), 136; Aloys Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1861), 297 and 297 n. 3.

12. Edward W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980), 5:2000.

13. Ibid.

14. Abū Dāʾūd, *Sunan* (Cairo: Mu afā al-Bābī al-Ã®alabī, 1952), 2:534.

15. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954), 16:138.

16. So Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 1:304—6.

17. A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: American Trust Publishers, 1977), 355 n. 1032.

18. Ibid., 103 n. 298. According to L. E. Toombs, "Throne," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:637, "By metonymy 'throne' represents royalty in all its aspects."

19. Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961), 2.

20. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 1:309—10; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad M. Shakir and Aḥmad M. Shakir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), 5:399.

21. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 1:309—10.

22. Of the rich literature that deals with this topic, the following may be cited: Arthur Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God: II. Essays in Anthropomorphism* (New York: Ktav, 1937), 51; Ira Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism: Studies in the History of Midrash* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982); David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988); Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965).

23. Jalalayn, *Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 56; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 1:309—10.

24. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 5:397—98, 401—3.

25. Ibid., 398—99.

26. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 1:309.

27. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 7:2605—6.

28. See Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 5:398, 400; cf. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:66.

29. Toombs, "Throne," 637.

30. Cf. G. Henton Davies's interesting article on "Footstool" in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Buttrick, 2:309.

31. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 1:310.

32. See Henri Laoust, *Les schismes dans l'Islam* (Paris: Payot, 1977), 408—9; cf. Wilfred Madelung, "The Shiite and Kharijite Contribution to Pre-Ashʿarite Kalam," in *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 122; contrast Rudolf Strothmann, "Tashbīh," in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 584—85.

33. See Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī li-ʾl-Ṭabaʿah, 1969), 5:170—71, 175.

34. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:111.

35. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 1:285, 290.

36. See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:109—11; Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 6:49; Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī bi-Sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* (Medina: Al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1964), 8:441— 43.

37. See Collins, "Introduction," 1—20.

38. *1 Enoch* 14:15—18.

39. *Ascension of Isaiah* 6:1, 12.

40. *2 Enoch* 1:2, 4.

41. *4 Ezra* 3:1—3; 4:1.

42. Norman Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narrative," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): 310.

43. Ostler, "Throne-Theophany," 74.

44. *1 Enoch* 14:14. Compare Collins, "Introduction," 6; Ostler, "Throne-Theophany," 76—77.

45. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:2.

46. Ostler, "Throne-Theophany," 67.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Geo Widengren has devoted two fascinating monographs to the ancient Near Eastern background of the *mi ʿrāj* of Muḥammad in *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift* 1950:3; and *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and His Ascension*, *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift* 1955:1.

50. Widengren, in *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 215, makes a similar point concerning ancient Near Eastern ascension texts and accounts of Muḥammad's *mi ʿrāj*: "The ascent to heaven is, in a way, necessary for the Apostle. Without it he would never be given his commission as Apostle, nor his command of the heavenly revelation which he has to impart to humanity"; cf. Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammad im Leben und Glauben seiner Gemeinde* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1918), 10—13.

Josephus's Portrayal of Jeremiah: A Portrait and a Self-Portrait

David Rolph Seely,
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Authors of history leave indelible footprints in their works. Many clues can be found in any historical work of how a historian's individual worldview shades and colors his or her narrative. Some ancient historians include an account of their own life in their work, selecting and shaping the evidence they choose to present in a carefully contrived self-portrait. A sensitive reader can discover many clues about the author through a careful reading of his work. One of the most fascinating ancient writers is the Jewish historian Josephus, whose works have preserved a wealth of information both about the biblical world that preceded him and his own life and times.

Josephus wrote four works that have survived: *Antiquities*, which is a retelling of biblical history from Adam and Eve to the time of the Jewish war against Rome; *Jewish War*, an account of the disastrous Jewish revolt against Rome that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; *Life*, an autobiography; and a short tractate called *Against Apion*, which is a defense of Judaism in light of false propaganda being spread by a certain Apion.

At the beginning of his *Antiquities*, Josephus explains that his narrative will be a complete retelling of the scriptural record:

> The precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth, each in its place, as my narrative proceeds, that being the procedure that I have promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything. (*Antiquities* 1.17) [1]

And later in his discussion of Daniel, Josephus writes:

> But let no one reproach me for recording in my work each of these events as I have found them in the ancient books, for at the very beginning of my History I safeguarded myself against those who might find something wanting in my narrative or find fault with it, and said that I was only translating the books of the Hebrews into the Greek tongue, promising to report their contents without adding anything of my own to the narrative or omitting anything therefrom. (*Antiquities* 10.218)

In both passages Josephus claims that his narrative neither adds to nor omits from the Hebrew scriptures. But a reader of Josephus's *Antiquities* will find everything but a methodical paraphrase of the Old Testament. Some divergence might be expected since Josephus's biblical text, or texts, are not necessarily those of the Masoretic tradition. But Josephus's work appears rather to be a carefully contrived narrative that diverges widely from biblical traditions—contrary to his claim—through both addition and omission.

A comparison of Josephus's paraphrase of scriptural history in *Antiquities* with the Bible and an examination of his self-portrayal in his other works shows that in many cases a pattern appears in his additions and omissions. Josephus compares himself with biblical characters. Scholars have noted several biographical details of Josephus's life that appear in *Jewish War* and *Life* that have dramatic parallels with the accounts of some of the characters in his narratives, such as Joseph of Egypt, Saul, Daniel, Esther, and Mordecai.[2] The specific nature of these parallels suggests that they influenced Josephus's understanding and depiction of history in his writings, both in the way he

portrays himself, as well as in the way he depicts the persons in his narrative. By shaping his account of biblical characters as well as his own self-portrayal, he highlights and emphasizes many parallels.

Most of the parallels between Josephus and biblical personalities are grounded in historical happenstance. For example, as Joseph (Josephus's namesake in the Bible) made the most of his captivity in Egypt, and likewise Daniel in Babylon and Persia, so Josephus himself managed to survive and flourish in Rome. Furthermore, Joseph, Daniel, and Josephus all saw and interpreted dreams. Saul, like Josephus, was a general. Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and Mordecai share common ground with Josephus as "valued advisers to the head of the host country."[3] Other similarities are created from the speeches Josephus records both of biblical personages as well as his own. Likewise, Josephus seems to create occasional parallels by including details (not found in the biblical text) about the lives of biblical characters that match aspects of his own life as he records it.

Here we attempt to examine systematically Josephus's depiction of Jeremiah in light of his comparison of himself with Old Testament prophets. An examination of the parallels reveals the richness of Josephus's narrative, both in terms of his paraphrase of the Old Testament found in *Antiquities* as well as in his depiction of himself and his times. In addition, we gain insight into Josephus's narrative art and his method of recounting the history of his people. And finally, by the way Josephus portrays himself we can better discern how Josephus understood himself and his times and how he wished his audience to understand his role in the history of Israel. In short, we can see how Josephus writes himself into the history of Israel.

Josephus particularly identified with those in the prophetic tradition who had the power to predict the future—most notably Joseph, Jeremiah, and Daniel. Josephus himself claimed to have the gift of interpreting dreams and thus of foreseeing the future. He saw himself in the prophetic tradition as one chosen by God to use his gifts in the service of his fellow Jews. He records his "prophetic call" when he was hiding in a cave, after the fall of Jotapata, awaiting the Romans. At that time suddenly there came back into his mind those nightly dreams in which God foretold the impending fate of the Jews and the destinies of the Roman sovereigns. He was an interpreter of dreams and skilled in divining the meaning of ambiguous utterances of God;

> a priest himself and of priestly descent, he was not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books. At that hour he was inspired to read their meaning, and, recalling the dreadful images of his recent dreams, he offers up a silent prayer to God.
>
> Since it pleases thee, who didst create the Jewish nation, to break thy work, since fortune [*Tyche*] has wholly passed to the Romans, and since thou hast made choice of my spirit to announce the things that are to come, I willingly surrender to the Romans and consent to live; but I take thee to witness that I go, not as a traitor, but as thy minister [*diakonos*]. (*Jewish War* 3.351—54)

Josephus's gift to predict the future saved his life. He told Vespasian that one day he (Vespasian) would be emperor (see *Jewish War* 3.400—402); with the fulfillment of that prophecy, Josephus acquired the patronage of the Flavians, whose support made his entire literary career possible.

Josephus and Jeremiah

Because of his gift Josephus shows great interest in other prominent prophets in Israel, especially those who interpret dreams like himself, and this identification presumably influenced his extensive portrayal of the careers and prophecies of Joseph and Daniel in *Antiquities*. However, the only prophet he explicitly compares himself to is

Jeremiah—a prophet who lived in a similar historical period, in whose time Jerusalem was captured and the temple was destroyed. Furthermore, Jeremiah's message to his countrymen was the same as that of Josephus—surrender or be destroyed. In his address to the zealots in the besieged city of Jerusalem, Josephus says:

> Thus, when the king of Babylon besieged this city, our king Zedekiah having, contrary to the prophetic warnings of Jeremiah, given him battle, was himself taken prisoner and saw the town and the temple leveled to the ground. Yet, how much more moderate was that monarch than your leaders, and his subjects than you! For, though Jeremiah loudly proclaimed that they were hateful to God for their transgressions against Him, and would be taken captive unless they surrendered the city, neither the king nor the people put him to death. But you—to pass over those scenes within, for it would be beyond me adequately to portray your enormities—you, I say, assail with abuse and missiles me who exhort you to save yourselves, exasperated at being reminded of your sins and intolerant of any mention of those crimes which you actually perpetrate every day. (*Jewish War* 5.391—93)

This comparison is central to a discussion and understanding of Josephus's portrayal of Jeremiah in *Antiquities* and his depiction of himself. Many of the parallels have been variously noted by different scholars.[4] Here we will attempt a comprehensive summary of these parallels with further refinement and several additions.

We will organize and present the parallels between Jeremiah and Josephus in three categories: first, those that can be attributed to historical happenstance; second, examples of similar theological understandings; and third, a group of parallels, which David Daube calls "retrofigurements," that have been created by Josephus's inserting or "retrojecting" nonbiblical material into his account of Jeremiah.

Historical Happenstance

In this category we find parallels between Jeremiah and Josephus that emerge in the writings of Josephus both by what he chooses to add and to emphasize and what he chooses to omit in his narrative of the story of Jeremiah and in his portrayal of himself.

- *Both were from priestly families and claimed prophetic gifts.* Jeremiah was named a prophet and a priest (see Jeremiah 1:1, 5; *Antiquities* 10.80) and was called to deliver the word of the Lord to his people. Josephus reserves the use of the word *prophētēs* for the canonical prophets; nevertheless, he does consider himself a successor to the prophets and calls himself a "minister" (*diakonos, Jewish War* 3.354).[5] He claims the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus as his ancestor who, he says, possessed the "gift of prophecy" (*Jewish War* 1.68). Josephus also was from a priestly family (see *Life* 1.1). Thus he valued the connection between priests and prophets.[6]
- *Both had missions to the world beyond the Jews.* Jeremiah was called to be a prophet to the nations (see Jeremiah 1:5, 10). Josephus perceives himself as writing to both the Jews and the Greeks (see *Jewish War* 1.3). Josephus never emphasizes this point for Jeremiah but does in behalf of himself (see *Antiquities* 1.5).
- *Both had the gift of prophecy.* Jeremiah had the gift of foretelling the future (see Jeremiah 1:12; *Antiquities* 10.79), as did Josephus (see *Jewish War* 3.351—54). Jeremiah predicted the ascendancy of Babylon and the consequent capture of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the exile of Judah. Josephus likewise foretold the ascendancy of Rome and the ensuing destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the people. Interestingly enough, Josephus attributes his ability to foretell the future to his capacity to receive and interpret divine dreams. Jeremiah, in chapters 23, 27, and 29, presents several

polemics against those who receive “false” dreams—which chapters Josephus conveniently avoids. Likewise, Jeremiah predicts the restoration and resurgence of Israel (see Jeremiah 30—33), as does Josephus in his cautious paraphrase of Daniel’s vision of the stone that will come forth (see Daniel 2:34—45).

- *Both suffered physical abuse and were threatened with death.* Jeremiah suffered physical abuse because of his message and was threatened with execution (see Jeremiah 26:8—24; 36:19—26; 37:13—21; 38:4—13; and *Antiquities* 10.88— 95, 114—23). Likewise, Josephus was physically abused and threatened for his message (see *Jewish War* 3.355—61, 383— 86; 5:391—94).
- *Both advised their countrymen to surrender to the enemy.* Jeremiah prophesied that the only hope to save Jerusalem was to surrender to the Babylonians (see Jeremiah 38; *Antiq uities* 10.117, 125—26). Josephus delivered the same message to his countrymen—to surrender to Rome or be destroyed (see *Jewish War* 5.415—19).
- *Both were opposed by false prophets who assured the people that the Lord would deliver them and the city would be preserved.* Jeremiah was opposed by those who assured the people that an alliance with Egypt would defeat Babylon, those in exile would return shortly, and the city would be preserved (see Jeremiah 27—28; *Antiquities* 10.104, 111—12). Josephus records that a series of false prophets promised that God would intervene and deliver them from the Romans (see *Jewish War* 6.285).
- *Both were accused of treason and had to justify their actions.* Jeremiah was considered a traitor for his exhortation to surrender and for the effect this had on a people under siege (see Jeremiah 36:9—31; 37:11—15; 38:1—6; *Antiquities* 10.114—15, 119). Unlike Jeremiah, Josephus actually defected to the enemy. He justifies himself by saying that he went not as a deserter but as a minister to his people (see *Jewish War* 3.130, 136—37, 354). Both were considered traitors by their countrymen for their stance and had to justify themselves.
- *After the destruction both had a friendly relationship with the victors as a reward for their stance.* Jeremiah received a food allowance and a gift (see Jeremiah 40:5; *Antiquities* 10.157). Josephus received the freedom of some of his countrymen, a gift of sacred books, as well as land and a stipend (see *Life* 418—23). One important difference is that Jeremiah chose to stay with his people rather than to go with the victor; Josephus went to Rome under the patronage of the Flavian household.
- *After the destruction both continued to advise the surviving remnant of their people.* Jeremiah remained in the land, where as prophet he continued to advise a group of people. After the death of Gedaliah, he went with the people to Egypt (see Jeremiah 42—44). In addition he wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon (see Jeremiah 29). Josephus wrote his first account of the war to his fellow Jews in Mesopotamia (see *Jewish War* 1.3, 6), and his later writings were intended to explain and defend Jews and Judaism both to Jews and to gentiles.

Possible Theological Parallels

Some of the most intriguing parallels between Jeremiah and Josephus are of a theological nature; their speeches contained similar teachings. In most of these parallels it is clear that Josephus is patterning himself after the model of Jeremiah.

- *Both interpreted the imminent destruction of Jerusalem as a result of the judgment of God because of the wickedness of the people.* Jeremiah, in his temple sermon, enumerates the sins of the people for which judgment is imminent: not executing justice; oppressing the alien, widow, and orphan; shedding innocent blood; stealing; murder; adultery; swearing falsely; and idolatry (see Jeremiah 7:5—10). In his speech Josephus lists thefts, treacheries, adulteries, rapine, and murder (see *Jewish War* 5.402). Shaye

J. D. Cohen notes further parallels with Jeremiah's list in *Jewish War:* Jews have acted unjustly (see *Jewish War* 4.334—44), oppressed the downtrodden (see *Jewish War* 4.557), killed innocent people in the temple (see *Jewish War* 4.312—44; 5.15—20), stolen (see *Jewish War* 4.312—44; 5.1—20), committed adultery and other sexual crimes (see *Jewish War* 4.558—63), sworn falsely (see *Jewish War* 4.213—14), and polluted the temple (see *Jewish War* 5.401—2).[7]

We should note the significant omission in Josephus's writings of any reference to idolatry; this contrasts sharply with Jeremiah's emphasis on the idolatry of Israel (see, for example, Jeremiah 2—3; 7:29—8:3; 25:1—7; 44:15—28). In retelling the story of Moses and Israel at Sinai, Josephus leaves out any reference to the incident of the golden calf. The quiet omission of instances of idolatry throughout *Antiquities* is typical of Josephus's account, presumably because such a reference might have been offensive to his Roman patronage and readership.

- *Both mention previous destructions of the temple.* In Jeremiah's temple sermon in Jeremiah 7 and 26, he addresses a people who believe the temple will ultimately be preserved and thus save them. Jeremiah uses the example of the previous destruction of the shrine at Shiloh as a warning that the Lord will not preserve a wicked people just because his house is in their midst (see Jeremiah 7:12—15; 26:4—6). In his speech to the zealots, Josephus adopts the same strategy as he recounts the times the people have been preserved and the times they have not. The destruction wrought by the Babylonians serves as his prime example that the Lord would not protect the Jews. Josephus in his speech harks back to the past: "The Babylonians whom I mentioned marched against it [Jerusalem] and captured and burnt both the city and the sanctuary, although the Jews of that day were guilty, I imagine, of no such rank impiety as yours."
- *Both taught that the reason Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed was that God fought on the side of the enemy.* Jeremiah records the words of the Lord: "I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they shall die of a great pestilence" (Jeremiah 21:5—6; see Lamentations 2:1—7). Josephus also comprehends that one's faith in the God of Israel depends on understanding why he allowed his city, his house, and his people to be destroyed and scattered; otherwise, one might deduce that the Babylonians and their gods were stronger than Judah and her God. Note Josephus's account of Nebuchadnezzar, the conqueror of Jerusalem:

> Nebuchadnezzar began to denounce him [Zedekiah] as an impious wretch and a violator of treaties who had forgotten the words which he had spoken earlier when he had promised to keep the country safely for him. He also reproached him for his ingratitude in having first received the kingdom from him—for Nebuchadnezzar had taken it away from Jehoiachin, to whom it belonged, and given it to him—and then used his power against the one who had bestowed it on him. "But," he said, "great is God who in His abhorrence of your conduct has made you fall into our hands." (*Antiquities* 10.138—39)

Josephus applies this theme emphasized in Jeremiah to his own day. In his speech to the zealots, he proclaims, "My belief, therefore, is that the Deity has fled from the holy places and taken His stand on the side of those with whom you are now at war" (*Jewish War* 5.412). Furthermore, Josephus records that Titus, on his initial survey of the fallen Jerusalem, exclaims: "God indeed has been with us in the war. God it was who brought down the Jews from these strongholds; for what power have human hands or engines against these towers?" (*Jewish War* 6.411—13).

- *Both understand the will of God is manifested throughout history in the order of kingdoms.* This concept goes beyond the event of the destruction of Jerusalem. Both Jeremiah and Josephus understand that the will of God is manifested throughout history in the order of kingdoms. Jeremiah understands Babylon to

be a servant of God in the course of history (see Jeremiah 27:1—15; 43:10); eventually the time will come for Babylon to be punished and replaced by the next kingdom—the Persians (see Jeremiah 50—51). Josephus declares that in his time "fortune [*Tyche*] has wholly passed to the Romans" (*Jewish War* 3.354). Josephus also includes several prophecies of Daniel in *Antiquities,* which also promote this idea. Jeremiah insists that one must hearken to the word of the Lord. In some instances Judah should not make alliances with foreign powers, and in other situations—namely the time of Jeremiah—the will of the Lord was for Judah to surrender to Babylon. In a similar vein the role of prophecy for Josephus is to identify the divinely ordained kingdom of the present, and the role of the individual is to conform himself to that kingdom.[8]

- *Both believed in an ultimate resurgence of the nation after a period of subservience.* Jeremiah's writings include a whole series of prophecies about the return from exile and the "building and planting" of the people (Jeremiah 30—32). He prophesies that the exile would last seventy years (see Jeremiah 25; *Antiquities* 10.110). Josephus gives hints in his speech that if the people repent they can reestablish a relationship with the Lord; he also implies a future resurgence of the Jews (see *Jewish War* 5.377—419). He reminded the Jews that God had always eventually avenged them: "When did God who created, fail to avenge, the Jews, if they were wronged" (*Jewish War* 5.377). Unlike Jeremiah, who prophesied a return in seventy years, Josephus gives no explicit timetable for the restoration of the Jews. The Bar Kokhba revolt occurred in A.D. 132—35—sixty-five years after the captivity in A.D. 70, and one of the Bar Kokhba coins features a depiction of the temple. It is possible that the anticipation of a return in seventy years played a part in the timing of this revolt.

One of the most astonishing passages is found in Josephus's paraphrase of Daniel. When Josephus reports on the prophecy of the resurgence of the kingdom of God as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would destroy the giant and fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:34— 45), he says:

> And Daniel also revealed to the king the meaning of the stone, but I have not thought it proper to relate this, since I am expected to write of what is past and done and not of what is to be; if, however, there is anyone who has so keen a desire for exact information that he will not stop short of inquiring more closely but wishes to learn about the hidden things to come, let him take the trouble to read the Book of Daniel, which he will find among the sacred writings. (*Antiquities* 10.210)

Regarding this passage, Daube points out that

> it is remarkable how much of a viewpoint utterly irreconcilable with the Roman he [Josephus] managed to bring before his public. Take his belief that, in the end, it is the Jews who will triumph; actually, that moment will arrive as soon as they whole-heartedly submit to God. To be sure, he puts it reticently, even obliquely, but no one who paid heed could miss it.[9]

- *Both emphasize the foolishness of trusting in the arm of flesh.* Jeremiah says, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm. . . . Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jeremiah 17:5—7). And Josephus writes, "Thus invariably have arms been refused to our nation, and warfare has been the sure signal for defeat. For it is, I suppose, the duty of the occupants of holy ground to leave everything to the arbitrament of God and to scorn the aid of human hands" (*Jewish War* 5.399—400).

Possible "Retrofigurements"

Several of the parallels between the lives of Jeremiah and Josephus are based on details—having no basis in extant scripture or tradition—that Josephus interjects into his narrative about Jeremiah. It is possible that such details about Jeremiah were available to Josephus in other textual traditions that have not survived. It is also possible that these details were deliberately introduced by Josephus. Daube calls these possible "retrofigurements" or "retrojections" of things that Josephus had experienced back to the time of Jeremiah.[10]

- *Josephus portrays Jeremiah exhorting Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonians, just as in the Bible, in order to save his life and the city (see Jeremiah 38:17—23), but adds the nonbiblical detail to save the temple as well (see* Antiquities *10.126, 128).*[11] This matches Josephus's speech to the zealots in which he emphasizes the destruction of the city and the temple at the time of Zedekiah and encourages the inhabitants to surrender and save the temple (see *Jewish War* 5.362, 391, 406, 411).

Josephus introduces an interesting twist here. In Jeremiah's temple sermon he warns the people that the temple will not save them. In Josephus's version, both in his account of Jeremiah, as well as in his own case, the warning is that the people must surrender in order to save the temple—a twist that reflects Josephus's perspective.

- *Josephus includes the nonbiblical detail at the time the Babylonians granted Jeremiah his freedom (see Jeremiah 40:1) that Jeremiah requested of Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian general, the release of his scribe Baruch (see* Antiquities *10.156, 58).*[12] This parallels Josephus's record that after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, he made a petition to Titus, the Roman general, for the release of his brother and friends and acquaintances (see *Life* 418—20).[13] Daube calls this a possible "retrojection" and yet the release of Baruch may be suggested by the biblical text in which the Lord, through Jeremiah, promised Baruch his "life as a prize of war" (Jeremiah 45:1—5), as he did for Ebed-melech (see Jeremiah 39:17—18).
- *Josephus records that Jeremiah "left behind writings concerning the recent capture of [Jerusalem], as well as the capture of Babylon" (*Antiquities *10.79).* Thus Josephus presents himself, like Jeremiah, as leaving behind for his people an account of both destructions—the Babylonian and the Roman. Clearly many of Jeremiah's prophecies refer to Babylon's capture of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 7, 26, 34, 36—38, etc.); the prophecies of the fall of Babylon can be found in the Oracles against Foreign Nations (see Jeremiah 50—51). Scholars have debated to which writings of Jeremiah Josephus is referring that relate to the destruction by the Romans. Some have supposed that this passage is a later interpolation. Marcus concludes that Josephus considers the book of Lamentations to be both a lament over the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem as well as a prophecy describing the future destruction by the Romans—a connection that may be suggested by the Jewish tradition that both destructions occurred on the same date—the ninth of Ab.[14]

There may be a better solution. Jeremiah 16:16—18 figuratively speaks of two deportations, one led by fishermen and one by hunters. William Holladay, in his recent commentary on Jeremiah, notes that scholars have variously understood these to be two deportations in 598 and 587 B.C., but Jerome, in his *Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah*,[15] records that the Jews of his day understood the fishermen to be the Babylonians and the hunters to be the Romans.[16] Perhaps Josephus's comment is based on this passage, which could lend itself to such an interpretation.[17]

Summary and Conclusions

Numerous, obvious parallels between the prophet Jeremiah and the historian Josephus are brought clearly into focus by Josephus's shaping of his biblical paraphrase and by his self-portrayal. Many of these parallels are obviously grounded in historical happenstance since the two men lived in similar situations; some are reflected in the theological understanding and teachings of the two men; and several of them might be best explained as "retrofigurements" in which Josephus has created a parallel by inserting back into his paraphrase of the life of Jeremiah a detail that happened to him personally.

Clearly one of the principles that guided Josephus in his retelling of the biblical story in *Antiquities* was a shaping of biblical characters to better explain to the world who he himself was; his own self-portrayal at times dramatically matches that of biblical characters. While implicitly creating these comparisons with many other biblical figures (Joseph, Saul, Daniel), Josephus only explicitly compares himself with the prophet Jeremiah. While it is possible that a familiarity with this biblical figure influenced the way Josephus lived his life and conducted himself, it is certain that the account of Jeremiah in the Bible has a great impact on how Josephus introduces himself in his narrative through various techniques: (1) explicit comparison, (2) presenting details that highlight commonalties and ignore obvious differences, such as not mentioning the several passages in Jeremiah critical of those who interpret dreams and Jeremiah's frequent condemnation of idolatry, (3) echoing Jeremiah's rhetoric and theology in the accounts of his own speeches, and (4) enhancing the biblical character with nonbiblical details that further highlight the comparison (Daube's "retrofigurement").

Josephus's identification with Jeremiah and other biblical figures gives his history a sense of self-righteousness. In his own narrative Josephus becomes one of the few individuals, like Jeremiah of old, who had the gift of discernment of the future and the task to teach the will of God to his people. Perhaps he used the life of Jeremiah as a model for his own life; perhaps he created some of the parallels through his literary craft. Josephus portrays himself as a messenger from God who takes his place in the biblical tradition of prophets. While Josephus emphasizes the similarities between himself and the prophet Jeremiah, the differences are crucial. Josephus claims that he had the good sense to follow the "will of God" by treacherously betraying his comrades in the siege of Jotapata and surrendering to the Romans. For this he was rewarded with wealth, opportunity, a wife and family, and a long life—which he used to defend the heritage of his people to the world. In all of this Josephus often suggests his own favored status with God.

Jeremiah too survived the destruction, but he stayed with his people. His forty-year ministry was full of suffering, the laments of which survive in his book and foreshadow the suffering servant who was to come. In the end Jeremiah was forced into exile to Egypt by his own people, without a wife or a family, where he died in silence. Jeremiah's book stands as a witness to his people of his divine calling and of the call to repentance that was rejected and contains an extraordinary record of his prophetic look into the future: of the coming of the Messiah, the restoration of the gospel, and the gathering of Israel. As one who knew the voice of the Lord, Jeremiah had no need to boast of his exalted status with the Lord. We can only imagine how Jeremiah would have portrayed Josephus if he had seen the future life of his countryman.

Notes

We salute Professor Richard Lloyd Anderson for his many years of excellence in teaching and scholarship and thank him for the warm relationship we have enjoyed with him.

1. All translations of Josephus are from the edition of Henry St. J. Thackeray, Ralph Marcus, Allen Wikgren, and Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus*, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926—1963).

2. See Christopher T. Begg, "The 'Classical Prophets' in Josephus' *Antiquities*," *Louvain Studies* 13 (1988): 341—57; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25/2 (1974): 239—62; Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius," *History and Theory* 21/3 (1982): 366—81; David Daube, "Typology in Josephus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 31/1 (1980): 18—36; Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Saul," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 53 (1982): 45—99; and Louis H. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 41/2 (1990): 386—422.

3. Daube, "Typology," 33.

4. In particular see Daube, "Typology," and Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius."

5. Josephus, not usually known for precision in his use of terminology, makes a very dramatic distinction in using the word *prophētēs*, reserving it for the canonical prophets. Josephus considers the reign of Artaxerxes as the end of the "succession of the prophets" (*Against Apion* 1.41). This concept matches the rabbinic tradition of the book of Esther as the last book written with prophetic authority. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy," 400—407, notes the emphasis on "succession" of the prophets, and while a distinction between biblical prophecy and the "prophecy" of others exists, clearly later figures, including Josephus, who are successors to the prophetic tradition in speaking for God, interpret the past and foresee the future.

6. See Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy and Priesthood"; Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy."

7. Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius," 371.

8. Ibid., 371—74, contains a more complete discussion of this phenomenon in Jeremiah and Josephus.

9. Daube, "Typology," 34—35. Josephus's prophecy of the resurgence of Israel is to be found encoded in the prophecies of Daniel where Josephus evades an interpretation of the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" because it was believed to be a prophecy of the eventual overthrow of Rome (see *Antiquities* 10:210).

10. Daube, "Typology," 26, 32.

11. This discrepancy has been noted by Marcus, *Josephus*, 6:228; also Daube, "Typology," 26. Jeremiah prophesies the destruction of the temple in several passages (chapters 7, 26), but the mention of the temple in this particular speech is best interpreted as a deliberate retrojection by Josephus.

12. Marcus, *Josephus*, 6:247 note e; Daube, "Typology," 27.

13. See Daube, "Typology," 27.

14. See the note by Marcus, *Josephus*, 6:200—201 note c. Marcus says, "Josephus naturally thought of the book of Lamentations (which, like his contemporaries, he regarded as Jeremiah's work) as a prophecy of the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans as well as of that by the Babylonians." Marcus never explains his rationale here. Perhaps he has in mind the similarities of detail found in Lamentations about the Babylonian siege and Josephus's description of the Roman siege, capture, and burning of the city, or the details of the famine in Lamentations 4:4—5, 9—10, resulting in mothers eating their children as described by Josephus in A.D. 70 (*Jewish War* 6.201—19). Perhaps he is thinking about the Jewish tradition that both temples were destroyed on the ninth of Ab.

15. See Jerome, *Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah* 16:16—18, in *(S) Hieronymi Presbyteri in Hieremiam Prophetam Libri Sex*, ed. Siegfried Reiter (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1969), 158—59.

16. See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 478—79.

17. Similar interpretations have been made of the biblical passage in Deuteronomy 28:47—57, which refers to siege, capture, and cannibalism. Some interpreters have seen Rome in the image of the nation "as swift as the eagle flieth"—the eagle being a prominent symbol in the Roman standards.

Savior, Satan, and Serpent: The Duality of a Symbol in the Scriptures

Andrew C. Skinner

Scholars tell us that it is "abundantly clear from a wide range of evidence" that the image of the snake or serpent in the ancient world was a dual symbol representing deity, creativity, and healing on the one hand, but evil, harm, and destruction on the other.[1] In fact, this polarity is not only found in *archaic* cultures but remains with us today. The symbol of the healing serpent is still preserved on the physician's caduceus (the emblem of a noble profession), while a person of disreputable actions—especially treachery—is sometimes referred to as "a snake."

A careful reading of Israel's sacred writings reveals that the same duality regarding serpent symbolism that existed among the various peoples of the ancient Near East was also an integral part of the religious landscape of Jehovah's covenant people. Furthermore, from the scriptures we can even identify and attach proper name-titles to the two specific beings who are represented by the dual image of the serpent: Christ and Satan. I propose that the ancient serpent myths of the Fertile Crescent and Mediterranean-based cultures are echoes of original divine truth—namely, that from the beginning of time the true Messiah was intended to be legitimately represented by the image of the serpent, but the symbol was usurped and perverted by the quintessential false messiah, Satan. This essay will survey the nonbiblical Mediterranean and Mesopotamian cultural evidence of serpent symbolism, review the scriptural usage of serpent symbolism (showing how it referred to both the Savior and Satan), and suggest something about the origin of this dual symbol.

Nonbiblical Evidence

The use of the serpent as a dual, polar symbol emerged in the cradle of civilization during the earliest periods of history. Serpent symbolism among the ancient Egyptians demonstrates the most glaring contrasts between worship on the one hand and abhorrence on the other.

In Egypt the snake was a chthonic animal (a creature representing any one of a number of gods of the earth and underworld) and the embodiment of life-giving powers.[2] One of the forms of the god Atum, believed to be a primeval creator deity, was the snake or serpent. In a fascinating dialogue with Osiris, the Egyptian god of the netherworld and of final judgment,[3] Atum predicts the destruction of the world he created and his own reversion back to the form of a serpent or snake.[4] As Henri Frankfort says, "the primeval snake . . . survives when everything else is destroyed at the end of time."[5] Thus the serpent was strongly and continually associated with creation *and* eternal existence in the ancient Egyptian ethos. The Egyptians symbolized life itself by the image of the rearing serpent, and a serpent biting its tail was a common Egyptian emblem for "eternity." One of the names for the primeval serpent was the "invisible One" because it came into existence before the sun.[6]

Another primeval deity mentioned in the Pyramid Texts is Amun, one of whose two primary manifestations or representations was that of the snake named Kematef (meaning, "he who has completed his time").[7] After the Eleventh Dynasty (the Egyptian Middle Kingdom), Amun appeared as the god of the capital of Thebes and eventually merged with the sun god to become known as Amun-Re, the supreme state god in the New Kingdom (c. 1550—1090 B.C.). Since the constancy of the sun in the Egyptian sky and the concept of life (even eternity) were inextricably linked, the association between renewal or rebirth and the image of the serpent was also natural and

powerful. At Karnak it was believed that Amun-Re and his divine consort, the goddess Mut, gave birth to a son named Khonsu. Mut is also symbolized as a snake and is called "Mut the resplendent serpent."[8] Thus the divine triad or family, the preeminent unit of social organization among the gods and humans according to the Egyptian worldview, was linked to the image of the serpent.

The close ties between birth, the social organization and goodness of the gods, rebirth, and the image of the serpent infused Egypt during all her early historical periods down to the end of the New Kingdom. When corn was harvested and grapes pressed into wine, an offering was made to the harvest goddess, Thermuthis, who was depicted as either a snake or a woman with a serpent's head.[9] Geb, the god of the earth and "the father of the gods," is referred to as "the father of snakes," which emerge from the earth. Geb's most famous son is Osiris who, in addition to being the god of the netherworld and judgment, is also the god of resurrection.[10] Given their obsession with the quest for eternal life, it is significant that the snake "became a symbol of survival after death" (even resurrection) among the ancient Egyptians.[11] In the Egyptian Book of the Dead (sometimes referred to by its more precise title, The Book of Going Forth by Day), chapter 87, we are told that transformation into a serpent upon death gives new life to the deceased person.[12]

Veneration of serpents or snakes in predynastic Egypt and during the Old Kingdom coalesced around the most important serpent goddess of Lower Egypt, Wadjet or Buto. *Wadjet* (meaning "green one") was the general Egyptian term for cobra, and in that form she became the symbol of royalty and unification. In fact, the cobra, or uraeus, became a generic Egyptian ideograph for the concept of *immortal*. Thus the pharaoh was described as "the living years of the uraeus."[13] She was attached to the royal crown as protectress of the king or pharaoh, and in the end became the "eye of Re." As the "green one," the serpent Wadjet embodied the forces of growth and health. (Significantly, green was the color that symbolized resurrection in ancient Egypt.) According to one Pyramid Text, the all-important papyrus plant was supposed to have emerged from the goddess Wadjet. Eventually, she was assimilated with the goddess Isis.[14]

In opposition to all that was good in ancient Egypt, the most preeminent of all the demons, evil gods, or evil powers was Apophis, who was represented by a snake. Apophis was "the serpent of darkness," the supreme opponent of the great sun god Re.[15] The Egyptian Book of the Dead fairly crawls with other serpent demons as well, sometimes winged, or rearing up, occasionally even standing on legs and spitting fire. And yet, the serpent demons are not more powerful or overpowering than those serpent deities in charge of the forces of good. For example, counterbalancing Apophis is the snake Mehen ("the coiled one"), who was the *helpful* attendant of the sun god Re. Mehen assisted Re on his journey through the realm of night so he would reemerge unharmed morning after morning, day by day.[16] Thus the plans of a supreme spiritual adversary, represented by a serpent, were foiled by the powers of good, also represented by a serpent.

The negative aspects of serpent symbolism would have been particularly keen in the minds of Egyptian royalty as they thought about the afterlife. In fact, the dangers that had to be overcome *after* death during one's journey through the netherworld in order to gain eternal life were so great that discussion of these matters occupies a significant place in the funerary papyri of ancient Egypt. Even certain Pyramid Texts manifest this preoccupation, one of which indicates that the dead king (pharaoh) gains eternity by winning the "snake game."[17] Though little else is known about this element of the salvific process in ancient Egypt, one wonders if this contest was not symbolic of having to pass some kind of postmortal test or final judgment where the deceased would be required to demonstrate his knowledge of special information gained through his mortal experiences. Perhaps. However,

we can assert that, given such overwhelming evidence from texts and inscriptions, the serpent stood both for supreme goodness as well as ultimate evil among the ancient Egyptians, and that serpent imagery was incontrovertibly associated with the afterlife, resurrection, and eternity.

Ancient Mesopotamian culture (indigenous to the area approximately encompassing modern Iraq) displays a dualism associated with serpent symbolism similar to that found in Egypt. The Sumerian god of spring vegetation, Tammuz, was linked to the image of the snake. Both he and his mother bore the title "mother-great-serpent of Heaven," that is, the serpent deity who emanated from the heaven god Anu.[18] The snake was also the sacred symbol of the god Ningizzida, who was called in Sumerian mythology "the companion of Tammuz."[19] He was the guardian at the door of heaven who had the power to bestow fertility, "who protected the living by his magic spells, and could ward off death and heal disease for the benefit of those who worshiped him devoutly."[20] The image of Ningizzida as a horned serpent on the seals of scrolls from ancient Mesopotamia seems to have been a sign of his divine power.[21] According to an omen text of the Babylonians, if a child was born with a head like a serpent, it was a mystery sent by Ningizzida.[22]

As with the god Ningizzida, the Mesopotamian corn goddess, Nidaba, was shown in representations with serpents springing from her shoulders.[23] In the Sumerian and Babylonian worldviews the serpent was symbolic of the regenerative and healing properties of certain elements and produce of the earth. Therefore, the Sumerians and Babylonians transformed these aspects of nature into special serpent deities as did other Semitic and Mediterranean cultures.[24]

The image of the serpent deity in ancient Mesopotamia spanned time periods as well as cultures. The greatest sovereign the Sumerians ever had, King Gudea of the city-state Lagash, placed a representation of a serpent deity at the entrance of one of his temples around 2050 B.C. Fourteen hundred years later, King Nebuchadnezzar II, ruler of the Neo-Babylonian empire (605—562 B.C.), dedicated the monumental Ishtar Gate of Babylon to the god Marduk with the following inscription:

> (Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, son of) Nabopolassar (King of Babylon am I). The gate of Nana (Ishtar . . . I built) with (blue) enamelled bricks . . . for Marduk my lord. Lusty bulls of bronze and mighty figures of serpents I placed at their thresholds, . . . Marduk, exalted lord . . . eternal life . . . give as a gift.[25]

Regarding the joining of the bull and serpent images, Karen Joines has shown that it also was found throughout the ancient Near East. She has written:

> The cultic association of the bull with the serpent emphasizes the fertility aspect of the serpent. . . . the serpent-bull symbolism is widespread. Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Assyria have influenced the Canaanites at this point, and Palestine again becomes part of the larger Near East in its cultic symbolism.[26]

Not all Mesopotamian serpent images represented something beneficent. The oldest mythologies of ancient Mesopotamia have a familiar ring to them because they often parallel episodes found in the Old Testament and because their themes reflect the primeval struggle between two opposing powers. The story of the fall of man and the first family's expulsion from the garden (Genesis 3) have details and undertones presented in the Sumerian tale of Enki and Ninhursag, the Adapa story, and the Gilgamesh Epic.

In the Gilgamesh Epic, Utnapishtim and his wife, who have become like the gods, present some hope by which Gilgamesh may also obtain everlasting life. Beyond the Waters of Death exists a magic, life-giving plant that renews a person's youth. Gilgamesh gathers it, but an evil snake snatches this plant away, ending the hero's hope of eternal life. That the snake benefits from possession of the plant and lives on is evidenced by the fact that it sloughs off its old skin and enjoys a rejuvenation. Gilgamesh sits down and weeps over his own loss and the fact that he has played into the hands of the malevolent serpent.[27]

Thus the serpent in this epic fills a similar role as the serpent in Genesis, preventing the renewal of life by controlling or manipulating certain special flora to its advantage. Later Persian tradition also tells of a special plant that bestowed immortality. But Ahriman, the evil adversary of the one true "Wise Lord" (Ahura Mazda) created a serpent to destroy the miracle-working plant.[28]

The most troublesome of all the serpents in Mesopotamian mythology are described in the Babylonian creation epic (the *Enuma Elish*)—those primeval "monster serpents" that constitute the forces of chaos in the primeval world of the gods. Described as "sharp toothed, with fang unsparing," possessing bodies filled "with poison for blood," they gather in council, preparing to wage a war in heaven against the great gods.[29] The forces of chaos are headed by none other than Tiamat, who is herself a female serpent (frequently referred to as a dragon). Ultimately, chaos is subdued as Tiamat is killed by Marduk, the champion deity, and her body is cast out of the presence of the gods, half to form the earth's seas, and the other half to form the sky.

Mesopotamian epic texts are an impressive witness to the prominent role played by serpent adversaries in the belief systems of the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Old Babylonian cultures. Those evil serpents act out their parts in the councils of their fellow gods and seek to frustrate the designs other deities have for the human race. The parallels between this story and the actual war in heaven are striking.

To the west of Mesopotamia, on the Mediterranean coastal plain of northern Syria-Palestine, an important Phoenician deity named Eshmun of Sidon was worshiped. Like the Greek deity Asclepius, Eshmun was the god of medicine whose symbol was a serpent. And, again like the Greek Asclepius, Eshmun of Sidon apparently oversaw the growth and use of medicinal herbs, the cure of poisons, and also potent charms. It seems only natural that both Eshmun and Asclepius be represented as serpents since they knew about the antidotes for poisons and medicinal herbs that come from the ground. In Phoenician inscriptions, Eshmun is called *Adonai*, "My Lord," parallel to the use of the Hebrew *Adonai* in referring to Jehovah.

The influence of Eshmun seems to have been felt over a long period of time and a wide geographical region. Scholars believe that coins from the Roman period depicting the figure of a youthful god standing between two serpents reflect the cult of the god Eshmun, "the Healer." Though Asclepius is also represented as a serpent in Greek portrayals, an actual Sidonian coin shows Eshmun leaning on a staff with a serpent entwined about it.[30] Sidonian depictions of Eshmun also parallel ancient Syrian representations of their god of healing, Shadrapa, whose image is that of the serpent. If not Eshmun, the Roman coins certainly depict Asclepius.

The Greek name of the god of medicine, Asclepius, was taken over by the Romans as Aesculapius, and the staff of Aesculapius with snakes wound around it is still the famous symbol, or caduceus, of the medical profession. It is interesting to note that authorities believe that the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans worshiped the god of medicine in the form of a serpent for at least two reasons. First, the snake was "the connecting link between the world of the quick and the dead," between the living and the dead (as seen in other cultures such as Egypt); the serpent could give life or take it, let another creature live or cause it to die by invoking, as it were, a kind of "instant

judgment" in deciding to strike or not.[31] This seems true of both venomous and nonvenomous snakes such as constrictors. Second, the snake was the perfect model of regeneration and immortality since it sheds its skin every season.[32]

The precursor of serpent veneration in classical Greece is to be found among the ancient Minoans on the island of Crete. Between 2000 and 1450 B.C. the Minoans promoted an advanced maritime culture that dominated the islands of the Aegean Sea, the mainland of Greece, and the coastal regions of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The most important Minoan deity was the Mother Earth Goddess of the city-state Knossos, or Cnossus, the capital of Cretan civilization. She is similar to fertility goddesses worshiped elsewhere in ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures. On Crete she was usually depicted in small statue form as a woman holding a snake in each hand, with a bird perched on top of her head. As in other places and other cultures, the sloughing of the snake's skin probably represented the concept of renewal to the Minoans on Crete.

The dominance of the Mother Goddess is believed to have signaled the preeminent status of women in Cretan religion, indicating that they may have served as priestesses or held other important positions. However, no temples, large cult centers, or even large cult statues have been found on Minoan Crete. The serpent deity was worshiped in sacred groves, in caves, and at shrines set up in individual homes.[33]

In the religious thought of the later classical Greeks (who were undoubtedly influenced by their Minoan predecessors), the serpent image sometimes appeared in tandem with the image of a bird (just as it did on Crete *and* in the art and literature of Mesopotamia).[34] The Agathos Daimon was often depicted as a winged serpent and regarded as a good spirit.[35] Seemingly, this linkage of serpents and birds cuts across a broad spectrum of cultures. Cultic or ritual vessels unearthed from Early Iron Age Canaan bear decorations with the serpent-dove motif.[36] Even the most famous example of the winged serpent motif outside of (but related to) the Near East, namely, the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl ("feathered serpent"), is impressive because that god was revered as the founder of priestly *wisdom* (almost as if the Aztecs were somehow familiar with Jesus' statement to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," Matthew 10:16). Quetzalcoatl's high priests even bore the title "Prince of Serpents."[37]

Serpent veneration is attested in virtually every region of the Mediterranean basin, but nowhere more explicitly than in the Holy Land. Jars and vessels decorated with snakes give evidence of the existence of serpent cults in early Canaan. A two-handled cylindrical receptacle, dating to the time of Ramses III (1198—1166 B.C.), was uncovered at Beth-shan, a major city lying between the Jezreel and Jordan valleys. According to experts, this cultic object, which was decorated with serpents coiled around the sides from bottom to top, with doves perched on the handles, may have been used in sacred rites associated with agriculture.[38] In fact, more objects displaying serpent imagery have been found among the strata of Beth-shan than at any other site in the Holy Land. Many if not most of these objects date to the Iron Age I period.[39] A large storage jar decorated with a snake in relief has been found at Tel Dan, one of the two national sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Dating from about the tenth century B.C., it was uncovered near the "high place" and probably used as some kind of cultic receptacle.[40]

According to Philip J. King, the snake goddess was worshiped during the Early Iron Age (1225—960 B.C.) at such sites as Gezer, Beth-shan, Beth-shemesh, Shechem, and Hazor. The serpent-dove motif found at Beth-shan, dating from the twelfth century B.C., seems to have been commonly associated with Ashtoreth, the female consort of the Canaanite deity El. The serpent or snake was also associated with Anat, the goddess of war venerated at Ugarit, one of the capital cities of the Canaanites and the repository of tablets containing the myths of that people.

At what was once the largest city in the Holy Land during Canaanite times, Hazor,[41] Yigael Yadin found evidence of serpent worship. In the apparent storeroom of a potter's workshop, his team uncovered several complete vessels, including chalices, bowls, lamps, and juglets. But the greatest prize was what Yadin called a "cultic standard." The standard was essentially a bronze plaque with a prong for fastening it to a standard or pole. On the face of the plaque was the anthropomorphic image of the snake goddess holding a snake in each hand. Just above the goddess was a representation of her emblem, a crescent and a snake, which also appeared on the lower portion of the plaque. Yadin speculates that the cultic standard must have belonged "to the treasures of the sanctuary, and was used probably in the cultic procession, in which the priests carried the standards of various gods."[42]

Though examples could be multiplied, suffice it to say that enough evidence exists to show clearly that veneration of serpents in one form or another was found throughout the ancient Mediterranean region, especially among Israel's closest neighbors. The familiar mythology of the ancient Near East manifests the primeval struggle between the powers of good and evil, both of which are often represented by snakes. As a bringer of salvation and giver of everlasting life the snake became a divine reptile. As the conveyor of death the snake became the incarnation of evil spirits. Against the backdrop of this duality we turn now to sacred scripture, where we find critical information to help us more fully understand and appreciate the numerous echoes and parallels in cognate literature.

Serpent Imagery in the Scriptures

The serpent first appears in the scriptures in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:1). In the Hebrew language the creature is called a *naḥash*, a viper, from which derives the noun for copper or brass (*neḥosheth*), also used as an adjective denoting the "brass" serpent that Moses erected on a pole in the wilderness for the protection and healing of the Israelites (see Numbers 21:4—9).

On the one hand, the *naḥash* in Genesis is clearly symbolic of evil, even the evil *one* (Satan), precisely because the serpent was in league with the devil, promoting the cause of the adversary and acting as his agent to bring about the fall (see Moses 4:5—31). On the other hand, when used by Moses under God's inspiration, the image of the *naḥash* or, more precisely, the *naḥash neḥosheth* (brass serpent), became the agent of life and salvation for God's covenant people.

Numbers 21 is particularly intriguing because it demonstrates serpent symbolism in Israelite culture in a striking fashion:

> And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Numbers 21:5—9)

The agent of both harm *and* healing, death and life, is, in this instance, the serpent. The people sin, and fiery serpents bite them. Moses constructs a brass image of the harmful creatures, and the people are spared. But it is really Jehovah who is the cause working behind the image, the actual instigator of both death and life. The Israelites may already have been familiar with images of fiery serpents from their exposure to Egyptian mythology while sojourning in Egypt. But the serpent symbol is now seen in its true light—a valid and important representation of God's ultimate power over life and death. God is the reality behind the symbol.

In the early part of the story of Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh, king of Egypt, Jehovah showed Moses in a dramatic way that he was the real God represented by the image of the serpent or snake, an image that Pharaoh himself wore on the front of his official headdress as a symbol of his own deity and sovereignty. (It will be remembered that every pharaoh was regarded as a living god on earth by his subjects.) When Moses threw down his staff, as commanded, it became a serpent. God told the Lawgiver that just such a demonstration should be conducted in front of Pharaoh and his court so that all would know that Jehovah was the true God who had commissioned his representative, Moses, to stand before the false gods of the Egyptian people, whose pantheon included Pharaoh himself (see Exodus 4:1—5, 8).

When Moses and Aaron went before the pharaoh they did exactly as the Lord had commanded. Their staff became a snake, which in the Hebrew text is denoted by two different terms, one of which is the very same word used earlier in Genesis to describe Eve's tempter, *naḥash* (see Exodus 7:9, 10, 15). Either through sleight of hand, or by demonic power, Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the action and turn their staffs into serpents as well. In what might be viewed as a quintessential showdown between God and the devil, the serpent of Jehovah swallowed up the serpents of Pharaoh as the God of Israel demonstrated his omnipotent supremacy (see Exodus 7:10—13). This scene dramatically illustrates the duality of serpent imagery in the scriptures.

That the image of the serpent continued to exist as a powerful symbol of God long after the Mosaic era ended seems apparent from 2 Kings 18:4:

> He [King Hezekiah] removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

Equally apparent from this verse, however, is the idea that the serpent at some point ceased to be for the Israelites a pure symbol of the one true God who should be worshiped (as Moses intended) and became instead an idol, the object of worship, instead of a reminder of the reality behind the symbol (Jehovah). We are told that Hezekiah, one of the few righteous kings of Judah, removed the high places and idols of the people and broke into pieces the brass serpent. Just when idolatrous significance was attached to the brass serpent is not known, but perhaps it occurred during the reign of Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz (see 2 Kings 16).

Many centuries later in Jewish history, the association between deity and the image of the serpent was given its fullest expression by none other than Jesus himself. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14—15). Thus, according to Jesus, the serpent was intended to be the supernal symbol of himself and his atonement.

The righteous peoples of the Book of Mormon understood the symbol of the serpent in exactly the same way, even from the earliest periods of their history. In the sixth century B.C. Nephi spoke plainly of this symbolism:

> And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err. And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto the serpent which he did raise up before them, and also gave him power that he should smite the rock and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved. (2 Nephi 25:20)

Later on, another prophet named Nephi (son of Helaman) also made reference to the image of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness by Moses and its clearly intended association with the Son of God, the Messiah, the giver of eternal life. In fact, it seems fair to say that Nephi, son of Helaman, saw even more clearly than Nephi, son of Lehi, the messianic implications and significance of the brazen serpent symbol.

> But, behold, ye not only deny my words, but ye also deny all the words which have been spoken by our fathers, and also the words which were spoken by this man, Moses, who had such great power given unto him, yea the words which he hath spoken concerning the coming of the Messiah. Yea, did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal. (Helaman 8:13—15)

Such evidence causes one to wonder how widely known and diffused the serpent symbol became. If the Israelites themselves promulgated some kind of an association between serpent imagery and salvific power, down to the time of Hezekiah, and the Nephites also possessed a knowledge of such an association (especially in its true and correct interpretation), might not the pagan neighbors of Israel also have had a knowledge, albeit in corrupt form, of serpent-savior symbolism? And, in fact, might not the serpent plaque found at Hazor by Professor Yadin, interpreted by him and others as being created expressly for use on a raised pole or standard, represent a diffusion of such serpent-savior symbolism?

Like the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon demonstrates the dual nature of serpent symbolism. Just as God was represented by the image of the serpent to Lehi's descendants, so too was Satan identified with the image of the serpent, as can be seen in passages referring to the fall of Adam and Eve (see 2 Nephi 2:18; Mosiah 16:3). There he is called the "old serpent," the one who "did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall" (Mosiah 16:3).

Reminiscent of these Book of Mormon passages is the language of John's Apocalypse, which refers to Satan as "the serpent," "that old serpent," and "the great dragon" (Revelation 12:9, 14, 15; 20:2). According to John the Revelator, the serpent fought a war in heaven (see Revelation 12:7), was cast out with a third part of heaven (see Revelation 12:4), and attempted to destroy a woman who had brought forth a son. But he did not prevail. Selected verses of Revelation 12, arranged in a slightly different order than the King James Version, illustrate our point and tell the story well:

> 7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
>
> 9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

> 4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
>
> 5. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
>
> 13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.
>
> 6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God . . .
>
> 17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We interpret these verses to mean that Satan was not only cast out of heaven to tempt and deceive humankind on the earth, but also to become the prime mover behind apostasy, forcing "the woman" into the wilderness for a time. The woman appears to be the true church or kingdom of God on earth. The man child, who rules "all nations with a rod of iron," is Christ, while the wilderness refuge of the woman (the church) is the great period of apostasy. However, the serpent does not succeed in destroying the church, but, as John foresaw, the church comes out of the wilderness or is restored to the earth in later times (see Revelation 14:6—7).

Ultimately, says John, the "old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Revelation 20:2), will be bound for a thousand years, loosed a little season to wreak havoc among the Saints, but finally cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (see Revelation 20:3, 7—10). All this is done by the power of the righteous one (Jesus Christ), who is also symbolized by the serpent image in another of John's own writings (see John 3:14—15).

Can there be any doubt that John the Apostle was fully aware of the duality of serpent symbolism? In fact, when one considers all of Jesus' words as reported in the four Gospels, it is clear that Jesus himself understood perfectly the duality of the serpent symbol, as did others in New Testament times. Not only did Jesus speak of himself as the fulfillment of Moses' brazen serpent typology, but he also spoke of Satan as a serpent—which was a significant image in intertestamental times. One scholar has written:

> When Jesus tells his disciples that they have been given authority to "tread upon serpents [*ophis*] and scorpions" and that "the spirits are subject" to them (Luke 10:19—20), he may have alluded to Ps 91:13 ("You will tread upon lion and the adder, young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot"). Psalm 91 has nothing to do with Satan; but Jesus' words do (cf. Luke 10:17—18). Would a reference to treading upon serpents have been understood in first-century Palestine as a reference to Satan and demons? Very much so. Consider this eschatological hope expressed in one of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs:* "And Beliar [i.e., Satan] shall be bound by him [i.e., an agent of salvation on whom the Spirit of God shall rest; Isa 11:2]. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits" (*T. Levi* 18:12; cf. *T. Sim.* 6:6; *T. Zeb.* 9:8). Since Satan is represented as a serpent *(ophis)* in Gen 3:1—15 and the righteous will trample serpents under foot, it is not too difficult to see how the language of Psalm 91 could be adopted and applied to Satan and evil spirits as we find it in Luke 10 and the *Testament of Levi* 18. The targumic tradition also links serpents and scorpions with Satan and evil spirits (and Gen 3:15, which speaks of the woman's seed crushing the serpent's head, is understood in a messianic sense in the targums).[43]

We may even add at this point that the woman's seed would be able to crush the evil serpent's head by the power given to them from the true serpent, the Messiah!

Meanings and Messages across Cultures

The scriptures give to us the true and complete perspective on serpent dualism. Clearly, Satan is well represented as a serpent. But, so is the Savior. Coming together in the person of Jesus Christ are all the positive powers and attributes of all the ancient Near Eastern deities ever associated with the image of the serpent. A review of the evidence reasonably leads to the conclusion that the intensely positive serpent symbols and images from ancient non-Israelite, non-Christian cultures of the Fertile Crescent and Mediterranean basin represent echoes of divine truth corrupted early on. That is to say, the foreknown and long-awaited Messiah of the world, the great Jehovah of the Old Testament and primordial creator of the heavens and the earth, was originally and legitimately represented by the image or symbol of the serpent—before the ancient and renowned civilizations of the Fertile Crescent and Mediterranean region developed. But the real intent of that symbol became corrupted and was applied to other important deities of various pantheons as the serpent symbol was handed down from culture to culture.

Like the Egyptian Atum, Christ is the primeval creator deity (see Moses 1:32—33). Reminiscent of Amun, the supreme god of Egypt in the New Kingdom, Christ literally delivers renewal and rebirth (see Romans 6:3—9; Mosiah 3:19; 5:7; Alma 5:14; D&C 5:16; and Moses 6:59—60). The goodness and bounties of life are not given to us by Thermuthis, the Egyptian goddess of harvest, but rather by Christ (see D&C 59:16—20). And resurrection as well as eternal life are not bestowed by Osiris but result from the atoning death of Jesus (see Romans 6: 3—9; 1 Corinthians 15:21— 22). Just as royalty and unity were symbolized by the serpent Wadjet or Buto of Egypt, royalty is truly to be ascribed to Christ the King, and unity is found in him (see D&C 38:27). Though in ancient Mesopotamia Ningizzida was regarded as the guardian at the door of heaven, scripture teaches that Jesus is the true gatekeeper who employs no servant or substitute there.

> O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name. (2 Nephi 9:41)

Furthermore, the serpents Eshmun of Sidon, Asclepius of Greece, and Aesculapius of Rome are all "the Healers," in imitation of the real healer, Jesus (see Alma 7:11—12).

But what of the origins of the serpent image as a symbol for Christ? And if the serpent was originally a legitimate emblem of the coming Messiah, how and why did Lucifer come to usurp the serpent symbol? In a roundabout way, the Prophet Joseph Smith may have provided a clue regarding the origins of serpent imagery as a symbol for Christ and why Satan appropriated it for his own. When speaking of the dove as an identifying symbol of the Holy Ghost, Joseph Smith said, "The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove."[44]

The implication of this statement is that other signs, symbols, and tokens were also instituted in premortality to represent deity, but the one that Satan absolutely could not imitate was the dove. However, as the preeminent counterfeiter and deceiver, Satan could and *does* usurp these other signs and symbols properly reserved for God

in order to try to legitimize his false identity as a god. This is why Satan chose to use the sign of the serpent as the best means of deceiving Eve as well as her posterity from that moment on.

The scriptures help us to see that Satan imitates and perverts every divine truth, every godly concept, principle, or practice, every good and positive symbol, image, sign, and token to deceive and manipulate the souls of men. This even includes appearing as an angel of light (see Alma 30:53; D&C 128:20). By usurping and manipulating the symbol of the serpent, he tried to validate his false identity and his lies, insisting that following his ways would elevate our first parents to the status of the very God represented by the true image of the serpent (see Moses 4:10—11). Satan came to Eve clothed, as it were, in the garb of the Messiah, using the signs, symbols, and even the language of the Messiah, promising things that only the Messiah could rightfully promise. "(And [Satan] spake by the mouth of the serpent.) . . . And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not surely die; . . . ye shall be as gods" (Moses 4:7, 10—11). In reality only one who worked out an infinite atonement could legitimately make these kinds of statements. Perhaps that is why Satan is justly called a liar from the beginning (see Moses 4:4; D&C 93:25).

It seems quite plausible that like the sign of the dove, the sign of the serpent was instituted in premortality as a symbol of deity, particularly of Jehovah (see Exodus 4:1—5; 7:10—13; and Numbers 21:5—9), and later on as a symbol of Jehovah-come-to-earth, or in other words Jesus Christ (see John 3:14—15), the true God of life and salvation. It also seems plausible that both the signs of the dove and the serpent (as specific symbols of the true and living Lord) were made known to God's children in mortality sometime in the distant past. It is interesting to note that at that archaeological site in the Holy Land where most of the cultic objects bearing serpent imagery have been found (Beth-shan), the serpents are usually displayed in association with doves. In addition to the smaller religious objects that display the serpent-dove motif, each of the two Iron Age I temples at Beth-shan display the serpent-dove decoration. A fragment of the relief from the southern temple depicts deities standing and holding doves, while serpents wind upward with their heads almost touching the feet of the deities. In the northern temple, doves sit near the feet of deities as serpents glide toward the doves.[45]

Over time the symbolic importance of the dove seems to have been lost altogether, while the symbol of the serpent was usurped by Satan, and then, over time, its true meaning became corrupted and diffused through many cultures over the ages. However, enough faint glimpses and echoes of its original and intended association with Christ exist to enable us to make significant connections to the truth as we engage in cross-cultural and historical studies.

Notes

1. W. S. McCullough, "Serpent," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 4:290. See also the succeeding article in the same volume: L. Hicks, "Serpent, Bronze," 291.

2. See Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 108.

3. See Sabatino Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962), 125—27.

4. See Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 145—46.

5. Ibid., 378 n. 12.

6. Karen R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament: A Linguistic, Archaeological, and Literary Study* (Haddonfield, N.J.: Haddonfield House, 1974), 19.

7. Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, 26, 108.

8. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 180.

9. See Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, 108.

10. Moscati, *Face of the Ancient Orient*, 125—26; and Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, 93.

11. Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, 108.

12. See Manfred Lurker, "Snakes," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 13:373.

13. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism*, 19.

14. See Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, 127.

15. Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 18, 132.

16. See Lurker, *God's and Symbols*, 108.

17. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 119.

18. Stephen H. Langdon, *The Mythology of All Races*, ed. John A. MacCulloch (New York: Cooper Square, 1964), 5:78.

19. Ibid., 77.

20. E. Douglas Van Buren, "The God Ningizzida," *Iraq* 1/1 (April 1934): 89.

21. See Lurker, "Snakes," 371.

22. See Langdon, *Mythology of All Races*, 5:78.

23. See ibid.

24. See ibid.

25. Quoted in Joines, *Serpent Symbolism*, 68.

26. Ibid.

27. See John Gardner and John Maier, *Gilgamesh* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 240—52, tablet XI (lines 193—289).

28. See Lurker, "Snakes," 372.

29. Thorkild Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 175.

30. See Langdon, *Mythology of All Races*, 5:74—77.

31. Kelly Petropoulou, *Ancient Corinth*, *Nauplion*, *Tiryn*, *Mycenae*, *Epidaurus* (Athens: Olympic Color, n.d.), s.v. "Epidaurus."

32. See Lurker, "Snakes," 373.

33. See Robert T. and Helen Howe, *The Ancient World* (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, l988), 95—96.

34. See John M. Lundquist, "Babylon in European Thought," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Scribner, 1995), 1:74.

35. See Lurker, "Snakes," 373.

36. See Philip J. King, *Amos*, *Hosea*, *Micah—An Archaeological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 134.

37. Lurker, "Snakes," 371.

38. See King, *Amos*, *Hosea*, *Micah*, 133—34.

39. See Joines, *Serpent Symbolism*, 71.

40. King, *Amos*, *Hosea*, *Micah*, 134.

41. See Joshua 11:11, which calls Hazor "the head of all those kingdoms," that is, the capital of northern Canaan. It was about two hundred acres of built-up area.

42. Yigael Yadin, "Further Light on Biblical Hazor—Results of the Second Season, l956," *Biblical Archaeologist* 20/2 (May 1957): 44.

43. Craig Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), 4.

44. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 276.

45. See Joines, *Serpent Symbolism*, 72.

Scribes, Pharisees, Hypocrites: A Study in *Hypókrisis*

Richard D. Draper

"One day as he [Jesus] was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there" (Luke 5:17 NIV).[1] Luke sets his observation very early in the Lord's ministry, when the Savior had "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). His power was manifest as he cast out devils, healed the sick, and cleansed lepers. As a result, "there went out a fame of him through all the region around about" (Luke 4:14), reaching as far south as Judea.

Luke connects Jesus' healing power to the presence of a large gathering of Pharisees and teachers of the law intent on watching and hearing the Lord. Why does he link the two? It does show that the Lord's healings had attracted the attention of a specific group of Jews and gathered them from a significant geographical area,[2] but was there more? The story he tells next is, indeed, one of healing, but the subject is a paralyzed man. It did not involve the Pharisees and teachers of the law, or did it? Luke's context suggests it did, for he points to this moment as the beginning of the antagonism that developed between the Lord and the Pharisees. That antagonism would eventually grow until, in response, certain among the Pharisees would plot to kill the Lord.

A point needs to be made. Not all the Pharisees or even most became antagonistic toward the Lord. Some invited him to dine with them, and others listened to his teachings.[3] His gospel seems to have captured the hearts of many who became his disciples, like Nicodemus and those who made up a large number of the members of the early church (see John 3:1—2 and Acts 15:5). Most seem to have either tolerated or ignored him. Mark suggests that the Savior's antagonists came mostly from Jerusalem (see Mark 7:1), and Luke adds that his enemies were those who suffered from covetousness (see Luke 16:14).

There is no doubt from Luke's account that Jesus set himself on a healing ministry. Luke's statement that one of the Lord's objectives was to heal the doctors of the law and certain of the Pharisees is quite arresting.[4] It makes one wonder about the nature of their sickness, how Jesus intended to heal them, and what the result of his attempt would be. This paper explores these questions.

Historical Background

What we know of the background of the scribes and many of the Pharisees provides a number of clues to the nature of their illness. Though there is much we will never know because of the paucity of sources, we can piece together their motives and their basic objectives. Looking at these provides an understanding of their disease and how it came to be.

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian who wrote in the late first century A.D., preserved important information concerning Jewish religious groups in general and Pharisees in particular. His writings reveal that the Pharisees were a reformist movement attempting to arrogate to themselves and their disciples a holiness belonging to the priesthood and trying to influence, at times even force, society to accept their particular interpretation of the scriptures.[5]

The Pharisees had established themselves as an important part of the Jewish population some time before the early second century B.C.[6] They courted the masses with such success that, "when they speak against the king or high priest, they immediately gain credence."[7] It would seem that almost from the onset they were not opposed to saying things against their leaders or attempting to influence public opinion. Their popularity gained them membership at times in the highest circles of priesthood and government.[8] These people, from the inception of the party, seem to have banded together for the specific purpose of influencing Jewish society as a whole.[9] The early members were political activists and had a specific agenda that they promoted.[10] They were able to convince many, even among the highest in society, that righteousness and conduct pleasing to God could come only as the people practiced the precepts of biblical law according to the Pharisaic interpretation.[11] They had been more or less successful in pushing their agenda, based on the tradition of the Oral Law (their means of interpreting the scripture), well over a hundred years before Christ.

Josephus also provides a small but clear window into the social agenda of these early Pharisees. They had to have political influence in order to mandate their views over their rivals, especially the Sadducees, but also the Essenes. The latter particularly reviled them, calling them "seekers after smooth things" *(dôr ḥălāqôṯ dôršê ḥălāqôt)* because they would not give up city life (they seem to have been an urban movement) and live the far more demanding rule of the Essene community.[12]

In their attempt to mold society according to their rules, the Pharisees seem to have run most directly headlong into the theologically conservative Sadducees, who rejected many of their views. Both factions were maneuvering within the Jewish polity to have their interpretation of the scriptures translated into the everyday life of the people. But the Pharisees, more often than not, held sway with the general populace. At times, before the coming of the Romans, Josephus tells us, this party "had so much influence with their fellow-Jews that they could injure those whom they hated and help those to whom they were friendly."[13] For the period between 76 and 69 B.C., they practically ran the government, the Jewish ruler commanding the people "to obey them."[14] Josephus states that, during this brief period, "the enjoyments of royal authority were theirs."[15] They were able to induce many of those in a mostly unresisting populace to follow their interpretation of the law of Moses.

However, they overstepped the bounds of propriety in some instances, even moving to execute some of their opponents. Because of this they soon lost favor with the state, though not with the people. Though many aristocrats left their cause, they seem to have been able to court many of the common people through a show of care and sympathy. The vicious streak in their nature only seems to have come out against those whom they saw as a threat, and then only when they held sufficient power or influence to strike without fear of reprisal or of losing favor with the people.

The Nature of Pharisaism

Taking all that we can learn from Josephus and other sources, we can say with some confidence that the Pharisees, though rooted in a religious tradition, were also a sociopolitical organization that grew in number to about six thousand men at the time of Herod the Great. They had a social agenda based on their hermeneutics, which they sought to incorporate into the very fabric of Jewish society.

They were sensitive to the upheavals Jewish society had gone through because of Greco-Roman pressures. They were able to build upon a deep yearning for stability. The challenge and success of the Pharisees came in

interpreting biblical pronouncements in such a way that they met current needs.

The center of their reforming movement, the top item on their social agenda, was to retrieve Israel from Hellenistic influences to a rigorous observance of the law—but it was an observance of the law according to their interpretation. They resisted all other interpretations, insisting that such were detrimental to Torah and holiness. Only their way would bring salvation. The ground of their rationalization rested on their belief that they, and they alone, had found the way of correctly interpreting the written biblical text. In other words, they had discovered the correct principles of hermeneutics by which the law could be translated into the daily life of the Jew.

Note, however, that they did not emphasize changing the individual. Though that might have been the goal, they aimed at reforming the community as a whole. They would easily relate to the idea that "it takes a village" and so seek to change the individual by changing society.

However, their view of the ideal community did not go unopposed. As noted, other groups, especially the Sadducees, could not agree with them in some issues fundamental and crucial to the continuance of Judaism.[16] Each of these—Sadducees, Essenes, Pharisees, and even Zealots—was engaged in biblical hermeneutics. They showed their distinct individuality not only through their conclusions but also by their methodology and basis of authority, and they competed ferociously at times for political and social influence.[17]

Tithes and offerings, Sabbath observance, ritual purity, and eating restrictions made up the heart of the Pharisees' social agenda. Much of their understanding of how these should be done came from the Oral Law and the traditions of the elders. They made these elements not only their specialty, but also their articles of faith. They do not seem to have been interested in the larger arena of civil law per se, nor in issues involving temple administration and worship.[18]

That is not to say that competition between priest and Pharisee did not exist. As noted above, the Pharisees sought to bring the purity and holiness of the temple and its priesthood to the layman. It took a rather radical interpretation of the scriptures, on their part, in order to do this. The Pentateuchal law applied generally to the priesthood; thus the majority of its provisions did not apply to the average person—or even to the priests themselves except when they engaged in temple service. There, the priest had to avoid all defilement in order for his acts to be valid.[19] Some time in the second or third centuries B.C., a group of laymen sought to transfer the ceremonial cleanliness and holiness of the active priest to themselves and from themselves to people in general. The Pharisees seem to have been the later manifestation of this group.[20] They came close to advocating a "priesthood of all believers." Though the Pharisees never seem to have actually articulated this idea, they nonetheless gained authority by arrogating to themselves the priestly functions of guarding or interpreting the law and showing others the way to holiness.[21]

The Source of Pharisaic Influence

In brief, the Pharisees were primarily well-educated laymen who sought for religious authority among the people by competing with, if not mimicking, the priesthood. The opinion of the populace was all important, so the Pharisees continually tried to impress one another and the people at large. In this way, and perhaps unwittingly, they began and promulgated the practice of priestcraft. Understanding this goes a long way in identifying the disease of which the Savior hoped to cure them, for here we have come to its breeding ground.

However, before exploring this idea, a note needs to be made. The Pharisees do not seem to have been alone in pushing priestcraft. We see in some of the recorded acts of the Sadducees some aspects of this practice. Further, it would be unfair to infer that all Pharisees practiced priestcraft or that they all came under the condemnation of the Lord. Many of the early members of the church were converted from Pharisaism, Paul being an excellent example. These became the backbone of the church in Judea and throughout all the world during the first century. Even so, the New Testament record does suggest that some of the Pharisees imbibed a poison that killed their spiritual receptiveness to the Lord and his message.

According to the Book of Mormon, priestcraft was rampant among the Jews and contributed greatly to their refusal to accept the Lord: "For should the mighty miracles be wrought among other nations they would repent, and know that he be their God. But because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified" (2 Nephi 10:4—5). Priestcraft occurs when "men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion" (2 Nephi 26:29). Many Pharisees labored for money and honors of men (see 2 Nephi 26:31).

They could preach for worldly gain and feel justified before God because of their specific (if twisted) way of understanding what Judaism was and how to live it. Their interpretation entailed profound judgments concerning the meaning, shape, and practice of the biblical community and its place in the larger world.[22] Josephus clearly shows that being able to convince others of the soundness of their position was the source of their power. He states that they had "the reputation of excelling the rest of their nation in the observances of religion, and as exact exponents of their laws."[23] The Pharisees promoted that dual reputation, and especially that of understanding, or interpreting, the law with the greatest accuracy. Indeed, Josephus reports that they were "considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and [as a consequence] hold the position of the leading sect."[24] The force of the Greek phrase Josephus uses suggests that they prided themselves on exactness (*ĕ*xakrib*ă*z*ō*) of interpretation of the law and of the traditions of the fathers.[25]

Paul reinforces the idea. He says that he was tutored by "Gamaliel [the Pharisee], and taught according to the perfect manner [*ă*krĭbeian] of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God" (Acts 22:3). The word used by Josephus and Paul, *ă*krĭbeia, means accuracy, precision, and strictness, but also carries the connotation of "painful exactness." However, the word does not suggest moral exactness; when applied to people, it carries the idea of being stingy, parsimonious, and covetous. This last term (phil*ă*rgyroi) Luke applied directly to the Pharisees (see Luke 16:14).

Defining the word through context (it is used seven times in Acts)[26] suggests that the Pharisees were not the most rigorous of the sects (the Essenes probably best qualified for that) but, rather, were the most precise in their interpretation of the law and the traditions of the elders.

The reputation they cultivated as true interpreters of God's word gives us a glimpse as to why others gave them the name of Pharisee.[27] The term Pharisee is generally believed to come from the Hebrew prš, meaning "to separate."[28] But separate from what? We have already seen that they did not separate from Jewish society and, as a consequence, brought on themselves the epithet "seekers of smooth things" from the Essenes. They did attempt to separate themselves from Hellenistic gentiles. But there was more. It is clear that their separation dealt less with outer and more with inner matters. This required a unique understanding of God and his law unknown in Persian or early Hellenistic Judaism.

Indeed, their position required a rather drastic interpretation of the law—and it was hermeneutics at which the Pharisees excelled. In this regard, it is of note that the root *PRŠ, in addition to denoting separation, also means "to declare distinctly," "explain," and "to translate."[29] The name Pharisee seems to fit these scholars because, through their unique interpretation and application of the scriptures, they sought an inner separation of the Jewish people from the unholiness of the world around them. In reality, however, many of them made their proselytes even more unclean by appealing to the carnal mind, assuring the people of holiness where there was none.

Thus we see that by Jesus' time, they needed to be healed. As will be shown below, the disease was a direct result of their interpretation of the scriptures and the practice of priestcraft which grew out of it.

The Disease of the Pharisees

Of what did the Lord need to heal many of them? In a word: hypocrisy. However, we must be careful to give the full breadth of meaning associated with the biblical use of the term. Otherwise we may miss why the Savior desired to heal the scribes and Pharisees and of what.

Hypocrisy, as the term is used today, means the deliberate affectation of more virtue than one actually has. A synonym is sanctimony, the outward show of holiness or devoutness. In our minds the word hypocrisy suggests the outward display of piety, goodness, or sincerity when one is, in reality, irreligious, corrupt, and insincere. Therefore, it connotes more than pretense or affectation, but the assumption of goodness and piety when one is neither good nor pious and does not want to be.[30] Thus hypocrisy, in the modern sense, should be understood as a kind of purposeful, self-serving, and deceitful play acting. This fits the ancient definition, but another aspect must be included or else we will misunderstand the full depth of Jesus' animus against Pharisaic hypocrisy.

The word hypocrisy has Greek roots. It is derived from the Greek noun hypókrisis, which is itself derived from the verb hypokrínomai. Many dictionaries trace the word to the Greek stage, and, in that setting, define it as acting out a part.[31] But to impose this definition exclusively on biblical usage, especially the New Testament, misses additional important nuances.

In the classical world, hypokrínomai and related words were more closely associated with the dispensing of information than of acting. The word group had the sense of explaining, expounding, or interpreting. It described both declamation and dialogue.[32] The related word hypokrisía stressed the idea of oral as opposed to written expression and hypokrínô meant "to separate" and "interrogate" (the relationship of ideas being the separation of truth from error via questioning).[33]

The word's association with the stage was a later development, but, given its ancient context, it is not hard to see how that happened. It was the actor's job to interpret the script of the playwright or poet, thus giving force or meaning to the written expression. The actor's job was to make the written word come alive, as it were, through his interpretive presentation of the myth or story of which the chorus sang.[34]

Examples of the use of the word in ancient Greece underscore the point that hypókrisis, in its original setting, was the provenance of the interpreter and expounder more than that of the actor. The Pythian priestess at Delphi acted as Apollo's hypocritês because she made the god's will known to his devotees.[35] Aristotle used the word to denote the art of linguistic expression as opposed to the material power of persuasion. It was through gaining the

craft of hypókrisis (oral expression) that one could put forth ideas with power.[36] Hypocrisy, then, was the art not of selling an idea (that belonged to the rhetor) but of articulating it in a forceful, clear, and comprehensible way.

However, due to its association with the stage, the word *hypókrisis* did take on a metaphorical connotation. Some Greek thinkers began to apply the term to any kind of play acting whether in the theater or not. A few saw life as a stage on which all were actors playing their part. Hellenized moralists and teachers used the term to emphasize the task of the mortal: He must play a part well—internalize it and make it his own.[37] In this sense, hypókrisis meant to practice an art, skill, or virtue.

Other philosophers used the term to express a related but different idea. For them, the hypokrités was the skilled master who, like the actor, was able to project whatever emotion the moment demanded while remaining inwardly unaffected. The orator-philosopher, for example, might be required to play the role of an angry person, which he must do perfectly, but his goal was to remain calm within and ever in control.[38] The true philosopher was to inculcate this virtue, for it allowed him to respond to the vicissitudes of life while still being shielded from its harmful effects.[39] In so doing, he remained his own man, ever in control of himself and the situation.[40]

Note that the philosophical view presented hypókrisis as a virtue. It was a necessary tool in the arsenal of the philosopher that allowed him to respond to the need of the moment while still remaining in control of himself. The negative aspects of the word did not come to dominate the Greek definition until long after the time of the Lord. In all classical usage, the term, by itself, never took on a negative moral tone. First and foremost it described oral expression and interpretation.[41] When applied to acting off the stage, it most often carried the idea of practice. Therefore, the word hypocrisy by itself did not convey the idea of dissembling. Speakers and writers always supplied additional words to show whether the term was to be understood in a positive, negative, or neutral sense.[42] It was only under the Byzantine emperors, and with direct Christian influence, that the word took on an independent and permanently negative meaning.[43]

In doing this, the Christians were actually following a path already set out, not by the Greeks, but by the Jews. The use of hypókrisis among them at the time of the Savior shows it had already acquired quite a negative cast that included more than dissembling. To appreciate its full meaning, we must understand that, although the word hypocrite is found in both the Old and New Testaments, there is actually no Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent. Some translators of Hebrew in the second and first centuries B.C. did indeed use it in an attempt to communicate Hebrew ideas to Greek-speaking Jews. However, a careful study of its use reveals that the translators used hypókrisis to convey the idea of moral sin—more specifically, as we shall see below, godlessness.

In the Old Testament, we find the adjective or noun form of the word hypocrite used fourteen times.[44] In each case it translates the Hebrew ***ḥānēf***. But the meaning of ***ḥānēf*** is far removed from the idea of play acting in either a positive (practice) or negative (dissembling) sense. It carries the idea of profaning or polluting, of being irreligious and even ruthless. The verb form of ***ḥānēf*** connotes most often the idea of polluting or corrupting, and the King James translators often interpreted it with that sense (e.g., see Numbers 35:33; Psalm 106:38; Isaiah 24:5; and Jeremiah 3:1).[45] That they did this suggests they understood the word quite broadly. However, unless we understand with the same breadth, we are in a position of misunderstanding its meaning in the scriptures.[46] A good example can be found in Job 15:34 where the KJV reads, "the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate." The word translated "hypocrites" is the plural form of **ḥ**ânêf, and the passage should read, "the congregation of the godless shall be desolate." Verse 4 gives the context, saying, the wicked man "castest off fear [of the Lord] and

restrainest prayer before God" (Job 15:4). Thus, the whole is a clear warning not only against dissembling but also against apostasy.[47]

The King James scholars followed a long tradition in translating ***ḥānēf*** with the word *hypocrisy*. First and second century A.D. translations of the Hebrew text into Greek had translated some occurrences of ***ḥānēf*** with the Greek hypokrités. For example, twice in Theodotion's translation of Job (34:30; 36:13), later incorporated into the LXX, ***ḥānēf*** is translated that way.[48] Similar occurrences in the translations by Aquila and Symmachus[49] suggest that Greek-speaking Jews understood hypókrisis in terms considerably stronger than the Greek metaphorical sense of "pretending" or "acting." It shows us that some Jews and Jewish Christians tied hypókrisis closely to the idea of pollution and profanation and took it in the direction of standing opposed to God, that is, of being apostate. The hypokrités was an ungodly man and hypókrisis identified apostasy as the reason.

In short, the term hypókrisis emphasized a stance opposite God. The word's emphasis on apostasy adds a dimension not usually associated with hypocrisy. However, there is a close connection between dissembling and godlessness. Deceit and lying are part of the bag of tools the recreant soul uses as he tries to thwart God and deceive his people. So hypókrisis includes the idea of a deception or duplicity but reveals an actual apostasy from God.

That this definition dominated during the time of the Savior can be seen in the writings of his near contemporaries. Josephus uses it to describe the deceitful role played by those who feign friendship that they might better betray the unwary and lead them away from God's will.[50] Philo views the hypocrite as one willing to do anything necessary to acquire possessions of another, even using a malevolent kind of flattery. But, Philo insists, the hypocrite must be seen for what he is, an enemy full of falsehood and deceit who destroys all that is good.[51] For him hypocrisy stands contrary to truth and righteousness and is a greater evil than death itself.[52]

The main emphasis of the term among the Jews was not only the putting on of a righteous appearance to cover an evil intent, but also of apostasy against God, of opposition to his will or intent. Ironically, the hypocrite was not really acting, but rather showing his true self through his duplicities. Apostasy reveals itself, among other ways, in lying through the art of deceit, but the bad man is a bad man.[53] Therefore, dissembling was but one facet of the terrible sin of hypocrisy.

The Use of *Hypókrisis* in the New Testament

The use of hypókrisis by the New Testament writers rests squarely on the Jewish understanding of the term. Applying that definition gives us proper insight into the Lord's biting epithet, "scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites." No text survives (if there ever was one) which gives us the actual word Jesus used. But whatever the Lord called the scribes and Pharisees, it is unlikely that he used the Greek hypokritês.[54] This word was, however, chosen by the evangelists to express Jesus' thoughts. And whatever word he used, it carried, in addition to the idea of dissembling, that of opposition against God.

Jesus did not attack certain Pharisees for merely simulating goodness. This is very apparent in those places where we have parallel accounts. For example, when certain of the Pharisees and Herodians tried to catch the Lord in one of their traps, comparable passages read: "But he, knowing their hypocrisy *[hypókrisin]*, said unto them, Why tempt ye me?" (Mark 12:15); "But Jesus perceived their wickedness [their malice, ponêrian], and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" (Matthew 22:18); and "But he perceived their craftiness *[panourgían]*, and said unto them, Why

tempt ye me?" (Luke 20:23). We find another good example in Matthew 24:51; there Jesus warns that if a servant, because of the delay of his lord, shall smite his fellows and behave himself unseemly, then the lord "shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites," while Luke 12:46 says his portion shall be with the "unbelievers" (faithless, apístôn).

The point is that when the Savior called the scribes and certain of the Pharisees hypocrites, he put a different emphasis on the word than we usually do. Their sin was not primarily dissembling, of feigning piety and righteousness, though that certainly revealed a deeper illness. Rather, he was chiding them for an obstinate self-righteous conviction of their own goodness. To emphasize, Jesus did not castigate the scribes and Pharisees for feigned righteousness. He attacked them because of their insistence that their standard of righteousness was correct when, in reality, it was nothing short of apostasy. Their perversion destroyed the very works of God and actually led people into unrighteousness.[55]

This same idea holds true of Paul's use of the word. When he castigates Peter and Barnabas in Galatians 2:13— 14, for acting *tēi hypokrísei*, he was not denouncing them for insincerity or dissembling, but because their action was an irresponsible breach of good faith that resulted in a renunciation of the agreement made at the Jerusalem conference (see Acts 15:1—35). Such hypocrisy, Paul feared, would give the Judaizers ammunition for their cause and raise great havoc with the church. It was not sanctimony that riled Paul, but actions that would give energy to apostasy.

Speaking of the apostasy, Paul laments that many would "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1—2). These verses show that he was not afraid that some would dissemble, but that, being seduced, certain apostates would seduce others in turn. Like the Jews before them, they would insist that their interpretation of the tenets of the kingdom was true, while in reality, they, even knowing better, propagated "doctrines of devils" and drove the apostasy forward.

The problem that led both Jew and Christian astray was a willingness to use, as a basis for interpretation and application of the scriptures, something other than God and his Spirit. In the case of some of the Jewish groups, this resulted in a self-inflicted spiritual myopia which set them against the Lord and created their apostate condition. When they recruited others to their view, the converts also became apostate. Therefore, the Lord could say, "ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13). And further, the leaders were guilty of compassing "sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

In this way certain of the Pharisees blindsided their disciples who either could not or did not want to detect their false doctrine. These leaders were like unmarked graves, which defiled those who innocently passed over them (see Luke 11:44). When the Sadducees and Pharisees come to John for baptism, he called them a generation of vipers which sit by the way, poisoning the unsuspecting with their pollution (see Matthew 3:7—8). He commanded them to repent. Only then would he baptize them. That repentance consists of abandoning their apostasy and returning to God. This idea is clearly borne out in the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) where John asks them,

> Why is it that ye receive not the preaching of him whom God hath sent? If ye receive not this in your hearts, ye receive not me; and if ye receive not me, ye receive not him of whom I am sent to bear record; and for your sins ye have no cloak. Repent, therefore, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance; And think not to say within yourselves, We are the children of Abraham, and we only have power to bring seed

> unto our father Abraham; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children into Abraham. (Matthew 3:34—36)

John shows us that the reason the Sadducees and certain of the Pharisees would not receive the teaching of "him whom God hath sent" was their interpretation of the scriptures. They were sure that their doctrine, their understanding, their observance of the law, alone had the power to save. Only they could raise up children to Abraham's salvation. Such arrogance on the part of this branch of the Pharisees was the foundation of their spiritual myopia and its accompanying apostasy.

In chapter 12 of his work, Luke uses hypokritês to identify such acute spiritual nearsightedness. He tells of the Lord castigating the people because "when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54— 58). The Pharisees and others are hypocrites because they can accurately interpret the weather but cannot see the signs of the times. Judgment day is coming, and they cannot perceive it. It is their apostasy that causes their spiritual myopia.

Apostasy allowed myopia in other ways. They would unfetter a cow and lead it to water on the Sabbath, but on the same day, they would not unleash a human from disability (see Luke 13:15—16). In the parable of the mote and the beam (see Matthew 7:3—5), the hypókrisis reveals itself in the blindness of one to his own faults, but not to those of his neighbor.

In Mark 7:5—9, the Lord defines hypókrisis and makes his point using Isaiah 29:13: "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men."[56] The Pharisees' problem, revealed in dissembling and other ways, was one of distance. That distance was disclosed by the practice of claiming to declare God's word but, in reality, replacing it by the traditions of men. The Lord points this out:

> Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.
>
> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (Matthew 23:16—24)

Here the Lord insists that they not only deceive others, but they also deceive themselves. Their position on oaths shows the extent of their blindness. They insisted that the specific is binding while the general is not: gold replaces the whole temple; sacrifice, the whole altar; the throne of God, heaven. Jesus shows that the general includes the specific and to swear by any binds one as though he swore by all.

The problem was one of moral responsibility. The scribes were showing the people a way to ignore their oaths, thus contributing to insincerity and dishonesty. The Lord pushes his point by using the example of their attitude toward tithing in which they count out mint, dill, and aromatic seeds (cumin), but think nothing of taking profit at the expense of the widow or orphan. Jesus condemns them for showing such zeal in small things while neglecting the greater commandments and more difficult portions of the law. Using hyperbole, he emphasizes their problem. They strain a Mosaically unclean gnat from their water, but swallow, as it were, the Mosaically unclean camel. The contrast is both amusing and telling.[57]

By this means, the Lord shines a brilliant light on the difference between their outward proclamation and inward commitment to God. There is no question that they dissemble,[58] but the true hypókrisis that allows it is sin: failure to do God's will. They mask their apostasy behind the pious appearance of outward conduct. Here we come close to our modern definition that emphasizes willful pretense. However, it would appear that some of the Jewish leaders, because of their myopia, were in no way pretending righteousness either consciously or unconsciously. They most sincerely believed that they were righteous when in reality they were not. They truly believed that their externalism could save them, that appearance counted for more than intent. They derived all this from their hermeneutics.

The Lord insists that apostasy expresses itself depending on whom the hypokrit***ē***s is trying to impress. In the case of the Pharisees, it was men they were trying to impress rather than God. Because of this, they were led not to righteousness but to priestcraft. They sought to please the carnal mind. This is full-blown apostasy, for they had broken the first commandment, replacing worship of God with that of man. Furthermore, they also broke the second, for they bowed down, as it were, before the precepts of men, revering tradition before God.

Luke reveals their *hybris*. This group of Pharisees set themselves up in place of God as their own standard. "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men" (Luke 16:15), Jesus stated, because they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Luke 18:9). They lit their way with lamps fueled with self-conceit and judged others by this standard. And by that self-made standard, this group actually came off very well. They were not play acting. The whole point of Luke is that they were completely true to their own standards. Because of their self-perceived rightness (in contrast to righteousness), they could not repent. Because they could not repent, they could not receive the Spirit and follow the Lord.

The Lord's Attempt to Heal the Scribes and Pharisees

The opposite of hypocrisy, according to the Lord, is the simple, unassuming practice of doing God's will. Jesus intended, as we have seen, to heal the scribes and Pharisees. His method was to bring them from spiritual darkness and self-inflicted apostasy, based on incorrect interpretation of the law, into the light. His task was to teach them the correct interpretation of the law that they might practice righteousness. The third Gospel reveals how he sought to do this.

Luke as the physician concentrates on Jesus as a healer. But the emphasis of his study is not on the physical effects, but rather the spiritual. In some instances, he simply announces that Jesus healed. At other times, he goes into detail. Each incident he expands upon touches some aspect of the law and its application. In them we see how the Lord meant for the law to be understood. And Luke shows a progression: healings that bring fame, healings that bring criticism, and finally, healings that bring deadly opposition.

The first detailed healing concerns a leper. The Mosaic law branded all lepers as unclean, and therefore unfit to reside in the camps and cities of Israel (see Leviticus 13— 14). Therefore, the leper's lot was especially hard. He not only had to suffer the ravages of the disease, but he could not get comfort from those in society. Further, some attributed sin as the cause of the disease and refused any dealings with those afflicted.[59] But the Lord did not shy away from the request of one victim. Without hesitation, the Lord healed him and then instructed him to "Go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Luke 5:14). The Lord reinforced the Mosaic prescriptions—the former leper was to follow the law precisely as it had been laid down (see Leviticus 14:1—32).

The reason Jesus told him to do so is arresting: It was to be "a testimony unto them." To whom was the leper's healing to be a testimony?—seemingly those at Jerusalem, for that is where the ceremony of cleansing would have to be carried out. Of what did it testify?—surely not just that the leper was fully healed and could, therefore, once more enjoy communion within society. It may be that his healing testified to the Lord's authenticity. He was not performing tricks on a gullible public. However, it seems more likely that it proved the Lord did not stand opposed to the law of Moses. Neither he nor those whom he healed were free from the demands of the law; there was no competition between Jesus and Moses.

But there is another dimension of this healing that should be mentioned in light of Luke's next healing story. Many felt, as mentioned above, that leprosy was a divine curse for sin. If the disease were healed, the leper must have found forgiveness. If Jesus healed the leper, then Jesus was the means of that forgiveness.

In whatever manner the healing served as some kind of witness to those at Jerusalem, it and the report of many similar incidents generated curiosity on the part of the Pharisaic element within Judaism. Many came even from Judea and Jerusalem to Galilee to see and hear this new healing rabbi.

The healing he did in the presence of these men would prove pivotal to his ministry. In fact, it would put him on the short road to his death. So important is the incident that all three synoptic writers include it (see Matthew 9:1—8; Mark 2:1—12; and Luke 5:17—26). We will draw insights from all three accounts.

Pharisees gathered around the Lord to learn more about him. He, however, already knew about them, and Luke informs us that "the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick" (Luke 5:17 NIV). This statement sets the stage on which Luke allows us to see, as it were, the Lord's agenda. The Lord structured events in an attempt to heal the Pharisees and doctors of the law if they were willing. So Luke tells the story:

> And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day. (Luke 5:18—26)

It is interesting that in attempting to heal the Pharisees, the Lord did not first heal the paralyzed man. Instead, he forgave his sins. His action caused the anticipated stir. Some of those present were sure he had blasphemed, that is, relegated to himself the prerogatives of Deity. One can appreciate the position of the Pharisees. Who can forgive sins but God alone? What they could not see was that divinity stood before them. What this Son of God had to do was heal their myopia that they might "know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins." As proof, he turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Arise," and the man was instantly healed.

How did the Savior's act prove to the Pharisees that he held the power of God and could forgive sins? How does healing relate to proof that sin was forgiven? The bridge is made via the traditions of the Oral Law. According to these, sin prevents miracles.[60] Divine wonders can only be performed by a justified person.[61] A person who is just cannot be guilty of blasphemy. According to the rationale of the Pharisees, since Jesus healed the man, the Lord had to be just, and, therefore, Jesus could not be guilty of blasphemy. Since God alone can forgive sin, and the miracle proved the paralyzed man's sins were forgiven, then Jesus had to be divine.

Two additional points underscore the idea that this was the message Jesus wanted to give. First, the Lord's observers had accused him of blasphemy. Taking that term in its New Testament context, it is directly associated with those times when Jesus is accused of making himself equal with Jehovah (see Matthew 26:63—65; Mark 14:61—65; and John 10:32—36). Though the charge is not leveled here, it cannot be far behind.

Second, it is at this juncture that Luke first records the Lord's application of the title Son of man to himself (see Luke 5:24). The term was current in the Jewish culture of the first century A.D., and though scholars are still unsure as to the full meaning of this title,[62] the term designated a supernatural figure who was to act as the vice-regent of God at the close of the age.[63] The context in which Luke places it on the Lord's lips is revealing. It is not just at the moment when he has demonstrated his dual power to heal physical and spiritual illness, but when his divinity has been proved.[64] The then-current definition of supernatural being and God's vice-regent seems to fit much of the profile of the Savior. The title's implications should not have been wasted on his hearers.

The result of the healing, and perhaps of the disclosure, was astonishment. Indeed, to translate Luke 5:26 literally, "bewilderment [ékstasis] took all, and they praised God and were filled with fear saying we have seen unexpected things [parádoxa] today."[65] Unexpected indeed. They had come to observe the new rabbi and found instead the Son of God. They praised God for the wonder of it all, but did they get the message? The healing event suggests that they did not. But first, two observations:

First, the miracle underscored the vast difference between the new rabbi's interpretation of the law and that of the old Pharisees. Their doctrine let them quite contentedly leave the sinner shackled to his sin and, thus, the paralytic to his bed. Christ's doctrine did not. His action freed the believer from both constraints.[66]

Second, it is of note that in his attempt to heal the Pharisees by opening their eyes and revealing who he was, and thus leading them from apostasy, Christ came onto their turf and used their traditions. He proved he was at least Jehovah's vice-regent through the mechanism of their unique tradition, the Oral Law. This placed them in the position of having to accept him on the basis of their law, or reject him and, with the same stroke, their beloved law as well.

Ironically, having used one of their traditions to establish his identity and authority, his task was now to pull the Pharisees away from them. Only then could he break the stranglehold of apostasy. To do so, he had to teach them

the correct interpretation of the scriptures. In this way they would understand the old testament or covenant and be ready to accept the new.

Therefore, he seems to have deliberately chosen those areas which the Pharisees had placed under their own provenance as the point of attack. He challenged them concerning ceremonial cleanliness, Sabbath observance, and eating restrictions. He ate with publicans and known sinners, neither he nor his disciples performed public fasts or made long prayers, and he was not particular about ceremonial washings before meals. When the Pharisees objected to this blatant mistreatment of what they held sacred, he told them a parable.

> No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. (Matthew 9:16—17)

His point is that the old fabric of their law with its off-base hermeneutics could not hold his powerful new doctrine. Their theological wine bottles could not withstand the pressure of his new teachings. In this way he emphasized that his was not simply a new adaptation or modification of the law as was theirs. His was a radical and, he insisted, true interpretation. They must be willing to give up the old for the new.

His interpretation left temple holiness to the priests and the temple. His people were to be free. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," he admonished, "for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29— 30). His doctrine was sweet old wine and, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:39). Indeed, his task was to bring them back to a correct understanding of the old law, that they might, in its sweetness, find him as its creator and follow him into the new law.

There was stony resistance, however. On a certain Sabbath, the Savior and some of his disciples walked by a ripened grain field. Some took occasion to pluck wheat, winnow it, and eat it. Some of the ubiquitous Pharisees saw this and objected. The act of winnowing, they insisted, was a direct violation of the law (see Luke 6:1—2). The Lord, in order to correct their misapplied prohibitions, sarcastically chided them saying, "Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; How he went into the house of God and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?" (Luke 6:3—4; see 1 Samuel 21:1—6). The inference is that they should know, if they properly interpreted this story, that genuine physical need, in this case hunger, even if it is not en extremus, supersedes a general rule.

Luke's next recorded healing is most revealing. The author once again highlights a moment when the Lord stepped on Pharisaic proscriptions of Sabbath observance. In a synagogue the Savior saw a man with a withered hand. The "Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him" (Luke 6:7), and Luke notes that the Lord "knew their thoughts" (Luke 6:8). To counter their machinations, the Savior appealed to their reputation as interpreters of the law: "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" (Luke 6:9). They knew the correct answer but refused to respond. Mark says that the Lord "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5). That hardness would not let them yield to the spirit of the law. The Savior's question bathed this fact with clear light. He forced them to see that their traditions contradicted God's intended purpose of the Sabbath.

The Results of the Lord's Attempt to Heal the Pharisees

Their stony hearts were the target of his next act, one designed either to break them into contrition or to compact them into impenetrable hardness; he healed the man. Their reaction seems instantaneous: "And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6:11), meaning "how they might destroy him" (Mark 3:6). Luke's use of the word "madness" is most telling. The Lord's actions drove these people into a mindless rage.[67] In doing so, it further intensified their self-imposed myopia into blindness.

John understood this. He tells the story of a man born blind whom the Lord healed on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees were incensed by what they considered yet another breach in the etiquette of the Sabbath. In response the Savior said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:39—41). Their sin was that they did indeed see, but refused to believe their own eyes. Thus, each one was willfully blind, truly a hypokritês.

Two items suggest that the Pharisees understood the Lord's teachings and knew who he was. John testified that "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). Indeed, the light "was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:10—11). The irony, John points out, is that the world did not even recognize its very creator when he came, but it was the world that did not recognize him, not the Jews. They knew him, but did not receive him.

Second, the Savior's most telling parables were directed at these self-made enemies, not to mask his point, but to put it forth with such clarity they could not misinterpret. And again the Gospel writers show that it worked. For example, one day at the temple Jesus told his audience the parable of the wicked husbandman who slew the master's servants and killed his son. Matthew records, "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them" (Matthew 21:45). It made them angry, "But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet" (Matthew 21:46). Even in their anger, they refused to upset their power base.

The contention continued to grow with the Pharisees continually using their interpretation of the law in an attempt to discredit the Savior. In turn, he used his skill as interpreter not only to ward off their blows but to clearly teach his truths. They put him to the test with such issues as taxation (see Matthew 22:15—22), divorce (see Matthew 19:3—9), and the greatest commandment (see Mark 12:28— 34). Even the Sadducees got into the act asking a question dealing with resurrection (see Mark 12:18—27). In each instance he bested them at their game by playing it better than they did. He continually proved his hermeneutics were consistent with the whole of the scriptures and with the intent of God. They could neither best nor discount him.

At times he turned the tables by pushing them in the game of interpretation to their discredit. Two examples will illustrate the point. The first comes from Mark 7:5—16. On this occasion certain of the Pharisees asked, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." This group based their interpretation of cleanliness on the tradition of men, not on the Spirit of God; therefore, it took them far afield. Indeed, they had laid "aside the commandment of God, . . . [and held] the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." Theirs was not a simple matter of misinterpretion or misunderstanding. They perfectly understood the meaning of the scriptures but

supplanted it with the philosophies of men that appealed to the carnal mind. The Lord then pointed out exactly how they did this:

> For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:10—13)

Here we see priestcraft at its best. The carnal mind seeks to get around the requirements of God while remaining guiltless. This branch of the Pharisees provided the way through their hermeneutics. Clearly they were guilty of breaking the law and teaching others to do the same, but their consciences had been seared with the hot iron of priestcraft, and they felt resentment toward the Lord, not remorse.

The Savior was not afraid to discredit them in front of the very people who were their political support. To these he said, "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 7:14—16). His attack destroyed one of the pillars of Pharisaism in which they felt expert: interpretation of the law, ceremonial cleanliness, and Sabbath observance. At the same time he left the others undermined and about to fall. He was bringing the Oral Law down.

The second example comes out of Matthew 22:41—45. Here the Lord actually turned the tables. He was the one who posed the question "while the Pharisees were gathered together." He inquired, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"

The text suggests the Savior did not intend to force some recognition between himself and the Son of David or to puzzle or silence his enemies. It was meant to force them to revise the Messianic preconceptions which lay at the foundation of their refusal to accept him.[68] Those whom he addressed were well aware of the Messiah oracle (see Psalm 110). From this the Pharisees taught of a future ruled by a Davidic king and presided over by themselves.

Their interpretation, however, caused them to emphasize the wrong aspect of their king's rule. The Savior forced them to reexamine their conclusions. He hinted that they had placed too much importance on the Messiah's sonship. Yes, the Messiah was the Son of David, but he was not merely the Son of David. In essence the Lord was asking them to rethink their conclusions in light of the whole of scripture. The Pharisees had begun at the wrong end. They had emphasized the material and political; the result was secularity. The Savior forced them to start at the correct end. They were to consider the Messiah's Lordship. Starting there, they would see that the spiritual aspect eclipsed the paternal. Christ was the Lord of David in spiritual matters, where it really mattered, and they should focus on his divine, not his secular, rule.[69]

They resisted his push for a readjustment in their thinking. The result was that "no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matthew 22:46). He proved himself truly the best at the game they had made their own, but his skill did not bring respect or acceptance. Instead, it acted as a bellows that fanned their madness into a white-hot fury.

Even as they raged, however, he made sure that they understood that killing him would not, as they so fondly hoped, end the battle.

> Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matthew 23:34—39)

In the past, God sent prophets and messengers whom Israel killed; by doing so she brought upon herself God's wrath and destruction. Now, the Savior warned, she was about to do the same thing again. This time, the consequences would take away her nation and temple, neither to return until the last days.

In his final confrontation with this very bitter and hardened group of Pharisees, the Lord revealed the depth of their apostasy and its consequences. It had resulted in a spiritual blindness so profound they could not see hell gaping open wide her jaws to receive them, nor even the closer destruction of their nation and temple. But what they should have seen, and did, was the truth revealed by their Messiah. Sadly, in seeing and not responding, in loving the praise of men more than the honor of God, they became fully blind, refusing to let the Savior heal them of their affliction. That blindness would only be lifted by the blaze of glory associated with the second coming. Then they will see again through the healing tears of sorrow and repentance (see D&C 45:51—53).

Summary

Some of the Pharisees suffered from a very deadly form of spiritual cancer: hypókrisis. The word, as used by the New Testament writers, denoted more than dissembling. For them, it pointed to pollution, profanation, and godlessness. The term placed stress on the idea of standing apart from Jehovah and his purposes. Therefore, hypókrisis described apostasy. The hypókrisis of the Lord's adversaries consisted in the jarring contradiction between God's intent and their practice.

His attempt to heal them bought an immediate reaction: madness. The Savior did not back off. Instead, he heightened the push. The Lord showed them who he was in ways that they could not misunderstand except through self-inflicted blindness. They knew that "this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him" (John 11:47—48). As a result they would lose both their nation and position. So they plotted to kill him.

Their blindness came neither by ignorance nor innocence. It was most deliberate. When they chose darkness rather then light, Jesus became a sorrowful but very active partner. He provided an instrument to fully blind them: searing light. He understood full well the irony of their move and voiced the prophetic lament: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35). Only when hypocrisy is gone will they see. And when they see, they will see God.

Notes

1. The KJV reads differently than the NIV, stating, "and the power of the Lord was present to heal them." The different readings result from a discrepancy in the Greek manuscripts. The majority read, "and the power of the Lord was there to heal them" (*autous*), but some read, "and the power of the Lord was there for him [*autón*] to heal." A few read, "and the power of the Lord was there to heal all" (*pantas*). The Greek is ambiguous, but the best reading seems to be, "and the power of the Lord was with him [Jesus] to heal," giving the sense that "the power of the Lord (God) was present to the effect or intent that He (Jesus) should heal." W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 1:496.

Throughout this paper, unless noted otherwise, Greek definitions come from Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and ed. William F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); and Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968). The style of the Greek transliterations is taken from Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975).

2. Both Luke and Mark place this event fairly early in the Lord's ministry, though Mark suggests it took place after the call of the Twelve.

3. Simon the Pharisee invited the Savior to his home, and all indications suggest that, at least initially, it was in good faith (see Luke 7:36—50), and the Lord even dined with a chief of the Pharisees (see Luke 14:1). It was a group of Pharisees that warned him that Herod was out to kill him (see Luke 13:31).

4. Luke uses the word *nomodidáskalos* (translated in Luke 5:17 KJV as "doctors of the law") to describe those who had joined the Pharisees to observe the Savior. The Greek literally means "teachers of the law." Luke uses the term again in Acts 5:34, and Paul uses it in 1 Timothy 1:7. Just how the *nomodidáskalos* differed from the *grammateus* (scribes) is not known; however, it may be that the scribes' primary job was that of secretary or clerk, while that of the doctors was teaching.

5. See Ellis Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 216—22.

6. For theories on their background see ibid., 25—28; Leo Baeck, *The Pharisees and Other Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), 5—12; Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 1:73—81; Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 2—23.

7. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.5.288.

8. Josephus reports that Hyrcanus, the high priest, was, for a time, a member of that group. Ibid., 13.5.289.

9. See Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 22—23.

10. For a good discussion of the whole movement see Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 36—58.

11. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.5.289, where John Hyrcanus I, the high priest (134—104 B.C.), declares that their interpretation of the law showed one the true path of righteousness.

12. The evidence, though circumstantial, that the "seekers after smooth things" (spoken of in 4QpNah 3—4.1.2, 7; 2.2, 4; 3.3, 6—7) were the Pharisees seems reasonable. See Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed.

(London: Pelican Books, 1987), 31—32; Anthony J. Saldarini, "Pharisees," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:301.

13. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.15.401—2.

14. Ibid., 13.16.408.

15. Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.5.111. Here Josephus is quoting King Alexander Jannaeus, who, on his deathbed, advises his wife to make peace with the Pharisees.

16. See Saldarini, "Pharisees," 290.

17. See Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2nd ed. (Middlesex, England: Penquin Books, 1975), 35.

18. See Saldarini, "Pharisees," 290. It is true that the later rabbis attempted to preserve what they could of temple ritual and regulation in the Mishnah, but that was not the focus of the Pharisees at the time of Herod.

19. According to *Yoma* 1.1, the high priest had to separate himself from his family for seven days before the Day of Atonement and stay in the hall of the presidents of the Sanhedrin. This isolation served as his sanctification and gave him the necessary holiness.

20. See H. F. Weiss, "Pharisaios," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 9:13.

21. Malachi was very explicit in saying that the priest should guard sacred knowledge, and the people should seek the word of God from him because "he is the messenger of the Lord" (Malachi 2:7).

22. See Saldarini, "Pharisees," 301—2.

23. Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.5.110.

24. Ibid., 2.8.162.

25. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.2.41.

26. See Acts 18:25 (akribôs); 22:3 (akrībeian); 26:5 (akribéstatēn); and 18:26; 23:15, 20; 24:22 (akribésteron).

27. The name seems to have been initially applied by their detractors. The Pharisees preferred being called ḥāverîm, "companions." Some scholars argue that the Hebrew perûshîm does not come from the root for "separate" but from "Persian." Though the case is not as strong as that denoting separation, it cannot be disproved. If the term is associated with Persia, then the nickname would designate those who were willing to introduce foreign (specifically Iranian) doctrines into Judaism. On this see Matthew Black, "Pharisees," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:776.

28. All Hebrew translations, unless noted otherwise, come from Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), s.v. "prš."

29. Ibid.

30. See *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms*, 1985 ed., s.v. "hypocrisy."

31. For example see *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1973 ed., s.v. "hypocrisy," which ties the word directly to acting on the stage.

32. See, e.g., Homer, *Odyssey* 19.535, 555; Aristophanes, *Vespae* 53; Herodotus, *Histories* 1.91.6; Plutarch, *Caesar* 43.4. For a discussion, see Ulrich Wilckens, "hypokrínomai," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 8:559—61.

33. Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "hypokrĭnô."

34. See Wilckens, "hypokrínomai," 560.

35. See, e.g., Pindar, *Fragmenta* 235, where he speaks of the delphênos hypokrísis. For the word's association with the oracle, see Herodotus, *Histories* 1.49, 90, and for the priestess acting as interpreter, see Herodotus, *Histories* 6.21—22; 7.140—42.

36. See Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 3.4.

37. See Wilckens, "hypokrínomai," 560.

38. See e.g., Cicero, Tusculanae Desputationes 4.25.55, and Stobaeus, Ecloge 1.550.15—17.

39. See Wilckens, "hypokrínomai," 562.

40. In this regard see Cicero, *de Officiis* 1.28.97, and *Tusculanae Desputationes* 4.25.55.

41. See Wilckens, "hypokrínomai," 559.

42. See ibid., 563.

43. See ibid., 565—66.

44. The KJV uses the words *hypocrisy*, *hypocrite*, or *hypocritical* in Job 8:13; 13:16; 15:34; 17:8; 20:5; 27:8; 34:30; 36:13; Psalm 35:16; Proverbs 11:9; Isaiah 9:17; 10:6; 32:6; and 33:14.

45. See F. W. Young, "hypocrisy, hypocrite," in *Interpreter's Dictionary*, 668—69.

46. The Old Testament committee that translated the King James Version had little overlap with its counterpart working on the New Testament. Some feel that this means the opinion of the Old Testament committee would not necessarily reflect that of the New. Even so, the fact that the Old Testament committee chose hypocrisy to translate ***ḥānēf*** suggests that the English word did have a connotation at the time which was broader than that today.

47. Now ***ḥānēf*** can include the idea of dealing falsely with another and also flattery, but even that idea adds a dimension not usually associated with our understanding of hypocrisy. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) stays

true to the Hebrew text by dropping the word *hypocrite* altogether in Job 15:34 and translating the Hebrew with the more accurate "godless." Just why the King James translators used *hypókrisis* to translate ***ḥā****n****ē****f* we do not know, but they did not get it from the Septuagint (LXX), the Old Testament anciently translated into Greek. There ***ḥā****n****ē****f* is translated by various Greek words meaning "godless," "lawless," "treacherous," and "worthless," but never as *hypókrisis*. Job 8:13; 15:34; 27:8; Proverbs 11:9; and Isaiah 33:14 translate ***ḥā****n****ē****f* with *asebês* (ungodly); Job 17:8 and 20:5 uses *paránomos* (lawless); Isaiah 9:17 and 10:6 uses *anómôs* (lawless); Job 13:16 uses *dolós* (fraud or deceit); and Isaiah 32:6 uses *mátaios* (worthless or foolish). Of interest is that in Job 20:5 *asebês* is translated as "wickedness" and *paránomos* as "hypocrite." We do find the word *hypókrisis* as a translation of ***ḥā****n****ē****f* in Job 34:30 and 36:13. But the text was corrupted early, and Origen used Theodotion's translation to fill the hole so we cannot be sure what the Hebrew was. Also the LXX of Psalm 35:16 (34:16 there) uses no word that can be translated "hypocrites." For a more complete discussion, see Young, "Hypocrisy," 668—69.

48. Theodotion lived in the second century A.D. Little is known of his life, but he was either an Ebionite Christian or a Jewish proselyte. He translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. His version has so much in common with the LXX that Origen used it to fill in the many gaps he found there. He also placed it in the Hexapla. For more information see, Frank L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), s.v., "Theodotion."

49. Aquila was a native of Sinope in Pontus and active between A.D. 117 to 138. Converted to Christianity until a fallout over his love for astrology, he became a Jewish proselyte and studied under rabbis who taught him his exegetical methodology. He translated the Old Testament into Greek to replace the LXX, which the Christians had adopted. His version was extremely literal even to the point of obscuring the sense at times. Still his fidelity to the Hebrew has been vouchsafed by early Christian scholars. Symmachus lived in the late second century. Little is known about his life, but he seems to have been either an Ebionite Christian or a Jewish proselyte. He made a translation of the Old Testament into Greek that was placed in Origen's *Hexapla*. His desire was to create a highly readable text rather than stay with verbal accuracy, so his work is highly interpretive. See Cross and Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v., "Aquila," and "Symmachus."

50. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.16.318, 1.24.471, and 1.26.516.

51. See Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues* 48.

52. See Philo, *On Joseph* 68.

53. See Wilckens, "hypokrínomai," 566.

54. Some caution must be used here since the Savior grew up in a bilingual if not trilingual milieu. Many Greek loan words show up in the Talmud and, even though this work is late, it evidences that a number of Greek words were becoming common among the Aramaic-speaking Jews. However, even if the Savior did use the Greek word, the context shows the epithet did not convey the more positive meaning it yet carried among the Greeks, but was used with a much harsher intent.

55. See Young, "Hypocrisy," 668—69.

56. The verse quoted by Luke is that of the LXX, but the reading is close enough to the Hebrew not to change the meaning.

57. See Alexander B. Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels: The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (n.d.; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 1:282.

58. Luke 20:20 actually uses *hypókrisis* in the sense of play acting. According to that Gospel, the chief priests "sent forth spies, which should feign themselves *(hypokrinoménous heautoús)* just men, that they might take hold of his words." Note how Luke follows the more classical use of *hypókrisis* by letting his reader know that the pretense had evil intent. These Jews really were dissembling, but the pretending *(hypokrinoménous)* was that they were righteous when they were not. Given Luke's Greek background, it is not at all surprising he would use the term in the classical way.

59. The basis for the tie between sin and illness grew out of Exodus 20:5. The Qumran community really pushed the idea; see 1QapGen 20:16—29. However, mitigating this was the book of Job as a whole, Jeremiah 31:29—30, and Ezekiel 18:1—4. Even so, the belief still held, especially for certain sins. For a discussion, see Harvie Branscomb, "Son Thy Sins Are Forgiven," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53/1 (1934): 53—60; Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 3, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 91.

60. The idea that sin precluded the miraculous can be seen in Mishnah *Aboth* 5.8 and Berakhot 4, 20a; compare 3 Nephi 8:1.

61. See 1Q20 20:16—29, but for the idea that a man acting in the name of God could forgive sin, see 4Q242 1—3:4.

62. See James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Christianity and Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); for the concept of Messianism in earliest Judaism, see 79—115; on the term *Son of Man*, see 130—44.

63. For discussion, see Morna D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), 81—93.

64. Luke spoke previously of the Lord's power (*dynamis*) to heal. Here Luke focuses on his authority (exoúsia) to do so.

65. Luke's use of *parádoxos* is arresting. The word can be translated by "wonderful," "strange," "remarkable," but it should never lose the sense of that which is contrary to opinion or that which is unexpected. The English word *paradoxical* gets at the sense, a seemingly inconsistent or absurd statement that may be true.

66. See John Nolland, *Luke 1—9:20*, Word Bible Commentary, vol. 35a (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 236.

67. The word *ánoia* suggests stupidity, folly, and even insanity. See Behm, "ánoia," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:962.

68. See Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 1:277.

69. See ibid., 277—78.

Terrena atque Caelestia:
A Prolegomenon to a Study of the Fourth Gospel

C. Wilfred Griggs

Richard Lloyd Anderson has had a significant and long-lasting impact on me. He has been my teacher in both undergraduate and graduate classes, a valued colleague for more than a quarter of a century, and a dear friend during all that time. The quality of his scholarship is demonstrated through an unusual tenacity in finding and evaluating original sources relating to historical issues. The breadth of his interests is a challenge to all students to expand their horizons of knowledge in different disciplines, at the same time probing for a deeper understanding within specific areas of special interest and training. The example of his commitment to Jesus Christ in his words and actions reminds all friends and colleagues that faith and scholarship are not incompatible traits in an individual. Richard Anderson has presented a model of achieving excellence in both areas during his long and illustrious career at Brigham Young University.

I am offering this brief survey of ancient views on John's Gospel to this volume of essays honoring Richard Anderson, both as a modest tribute to a revered teacher and friend and as an introduction to my forthcoming commentary on the Fourth Gospel.

A number of years ago I began to write notes and observations on the text of the Gospel of John, planning to produce a commentary on that work. Even earlier, I had written (assisted by Randall Stewart, then a graduate student) an introductory New Testament Greek grammar that focused on John.[1] In the course of writing extensive notes on the Fourth Gospel, I discovered a meaning of the text that I had not found in other modern studies of John. Because of John's immense popularity from post-apostolic Christian history onward, I decided to write, as an introduction to my own commentary, a brief survey of how different ancient Christian authors viewed John's Gospel. I was partly motivated by a curiosity about the approaches of ancient and modern authors to this Gospel and about how ancient views compared with my own. It was somewhat surprising (if occasionally pleasantly so) to notice that my own observations, although not necessarily in agreement, were often closer to ancient views than to more recent theories of composition and meaning in the text. Why that is so is not yet entirely apparent to me, though it may become clearer in years to come.

Although this is not the place to present a comprehensive history of the influence of the Gospel of John in Christian history, I wish to make the reader aware that this biblical book enjoyed an early and widespread popularity among many Christians, both those later labeled heretical and those considered orthodox. It is of course well-known that the earliest existing fragment of a New Testament writing is a small piece of papyrus containing portions of John on both the *recto* (front) and the *verso* (back) sides. Comparing the letters on the fragment with those on other papyri from around the beginning of the second century—some having dates on them corresponding to A.D. 94 and 127—led C. H. Roberts to conclude that this text of John was written either at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second.[2] Jack Finegan more recently claimed that this fragment, known now as *Papyrus Rylands Greek* 457, was written no later than A.D. 125 and "is evidence that that Gospel was circulating in Egypt already at this date."[3] Despite some attacks on the writings of John in the late second century,[4] the textual evidence for the Gospel suggests that continued popularity at that time is considered at least as good, if not better, for John as for the Synoptics.[5]

Evidence for the existence of the Gospel of John no later than the beginning of the second century is found in the *Egerton Papyrus* 1, "discovered" in 1934, and published by H. Idris Bell and T. C. Skeat in 1935 (compared with the time gap between discovery and publication of other famous religious texts, Bell and Skeat may have established a record for promptness in publishing a text). Identified by content simply as "Fragments of an Unknown Gospel," the manuscript is dated no later than the first half of the second century,[6] and the connection between this text and John is described as "obvious and palpable."[7] Whether this connection (particularly in passages that have great affinity with verses in John 3:2; 5:39; 7:30, 44; 8:59; 9:29; and 10:25, 39) occurs because of borrowing from the Fourth Gospel or because material was taken from another earlier account cannot be determined. What can be affirmed is that the material in question was certainly known and in circulation among Christians in Egypt by the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. The entirety of the *Egerton Papyrus* is given below (Bell's translation) so the reader can see the similarities:

> (I)? And Jesus said] unto the lawyers,[? Punish] every wrongdoer and transg[r]essor, and not me; . . . (2) And turning to the rulers of the people he spake this saying, Search the scriptures, in which ye think that ye have life; these are they which bear witness of me. (3) Think not that I came to accuse you to my Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. (4) And when they said, We know well that God spake unto Moses, but as for thee, we know not whence thou art, Jesus answered and said unto them, Now is your unbelief accused. . . . . (5)? they gave counsel to] the multitude to [?carry the] stones together and stone him. (6) And the rulers sought to lay their hands on him that they might take him and [?hand him over] to the multitude; and they could not take him, because the hour of his betrayal was not yet come. (7) But he himself, even the Lord, going out through the midst of them, departed from them. (8) And behold, there cometh unto him a leper and saith, Master Jesus, journeying with lepers and eating with them in the inn I myself also became a leper. If therefore thou wilt, I am made clean. (9) The Lord then said unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him. (10) [And the Lord said unto him], Go [and shew thyself] unto the [priests . . . . . (II) coming unto him began to tempt him with a question, saying, Master Jesus, we know that thou art come from God, for the things which thou doest testify above all the prophets. (12) Tell us, therefore: Is it lawful [?to render] unto kings that which pertaineth unto their rule? [Shall we render unto them], or not? (13) But Jesus, knowing their thought, being moved with indignation, said unto them, Why call ye me with your mouth Master, when ye hear not what I say? (14) Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, [teaching as their doctrines the] precepts [of men]. . . . . (15) shut up . . . in . . . place . . . its weight unweighted? (16) And when they were perplexed at his strange question, Jesus, as he walked, stood still on the edge of the river Jordan, and stretching forth his right hand he . . . and sprinkled it upon the . . . (17) And then . . . water that had been sprinkled . . . before them and sent forth fruit.[8]

It is certainly clear that there is no wholesale borrowing from John (or the Synoptic Gospels, for that matter), because similar ideas and events are recast into a quite coherent narrative, with no abrupt changes or sharp literary seams. Bell does not claim a solution for determining how the similarities with John came to exist in this format, but he suggests that both John and the *Egerton Papyrus* likely derive from a common source in the first century.[9] The *Egerton Papyrus* text is cited here to demonstrate the early popularity enjoyed by material that is found in the Gospel of John (even if recast in a different setting and format in *Eg. Pap.* 1).

Who specifically used John in the early post-apostolic church, and in what way this Gospel was first understood, are questions not easily answered from existing evidence. Rudolf Schnackenburg clarifies the problem as plainly as

anyone:

> When one attempts to trace the influence of the Gospel of John in the life and history of the Church, one is hindered by the lack of monographs which might cast light on particular points . . . but here [in the second century] in particular these initial stages are full of obscurities. Was it mainly adopted by Gnostics to start with and made to serve their opinions, or was it quickly acknowledged by the whole Church? . . . One thing is certain, that Irenaeus saw the value of the fourth Gospel in the struggle against Gnosticism and that it is due to him above all that John was launched on its triumphal march in the Church.[10]

Whether the Gnostics were the first to accept and comment on John, the first unquestioned quotations from and commentaries on this book come from so-called Gnostics and Gnostic sources. A brief and necessarily incomplete survey of the influence of John in both Gnostic and ecclesiastical Christianity will provide a suitable background for a later discussion in this study of secular matters and especially spiritual matters in the Fourth Gospel.

In 1895 Carl Schmidt discovered fifteen pages of a previously unknown work, an *Epistula Apostolorum* (*Epistle of the Apostles*). An entire copy of the work in Ethiopic was published in 1913, and a composite publication of the Coptic and Ethiopic versions was published by Schmidt in 1919.[11] Hugo Duensing claims that the *Epistle of the Apostles* "is a remarkable document from the time of the battle between Christianity and Gnosticism," and although the document is in opposition to Gnosticism, Duensing argues that some doctrines in the work arise "not from the soil of ordinary Christianity but from Gnosticism, which caused the writing to be dropped in a later period."[12] The *Epistle* is part of a large corpus of materials known as the forty-day literature[13] and combines a considerable amount of eschatology with ritual preparation for a future resurrection and a postmortal heavenly ascent (see esp. *Epistle of the Apostles* 12—13, 15, 19—21, 26—29, and 34—39). In a review of Jesus' ministry, the text quotes John, demonstrating that whoever composed the *Epistle* considered the Gospel to be authoritative in an apocalyp-tic and ritual setting. Selected passages will be given to show how John was used in the *Epistle of the Apostles* (the Duensing-Taylor translation is cited):

> We believe that the word, which became flesh through the holy virgin Mary, was conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit, and was born not by the lust of the flesh but by the will of God. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 3; cf. John 1:13)

> Then there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. And he was invited with his mother and his brothers. And he made water into wine. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 5; cf. John 2:1—11)

> Then when we had no bread except five loaves and two fish, he commanded the people to lie down, and their number amounted to 5000 besides women and children, whom we served with pieces of bread; and they were filled, and there was some left over, and we carried away twelve baskets full of pieces. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 5; cf. Matthew 14:17—21; Mark 6:38—44; Luke 9:10—17; and John 6:9—13)

> But when they had approached the tomb they looked inside and did not find his body. And as they were mourning and weeping, the Lord appeared to them and said to them, For whom are you weeping? Now do not weep; I am he whom you seek. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 9—10; cf. John 20:11—15)

> That you may know that it is I, put your finger, Peter, in the nailprints of my hands; and you, Thomas, put your finger in the spear-wounds of my side. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 11; cf. John 20:20, 27)

> And he said to us, "I am wholly in the Father and the Father in me." (*Epistle of the Apostles* 17; cf. John 10:38; 14:10—20; and 17:21—23)
>
> But look, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 18; cf. John 13:34)
>
> Truly I say to you, you and all who believe and also they who yet will believe in him who sent me I will cause to rise up into heaven, to the place which the Father has prepared for the elect and most elect, the Father who will give the rest that he has promised, and eternal life. (*Epistle of the Apostles* 28; cf. John 10:28; 17:2)

From these few examples it is obvious that the *Epistle of the Apostles* assumes acceptance of John within the Christian community to which it is addressed. Because of the strong emphasis on the physical resurrection of Jesus, the writing cannot be viewed as originating from a Docetic author; however, the presence of apocalypticism and the ability to escape from darkness into light through the knowledge and power obtained by means of the revelation of Christ (see *Epistle of the Apostles* 20, 30, passim) are sufficient for Duensing to say that it arose from the soil of Gnosticism. For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that by early in the second century, the Gospel of John (among other Old and New Testament writings, to be sure) was being used in writings that claim to provide the reader with the knowledge and power to obtain eternal life.

In addition to the textual evidence, which suggests the early and ongoing popularity of John's Gospel in Egypt, a number of Egyptian Christians from the second and third centuries quote or comment on that Gospel in their writings. The earliest known of these, Basilides of Alexandria (fl. c. A.D. 130), is known only through his critics, the heresiologists, whose motives to ridicule and discredit their subjects render their own works questionable. Basilides and others who are condemned by such churchmen as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius are called Gnostics, a term of disapproval rather than of definition. Despite volumes written in recent years on that subject, Gnosticism is not easily defined, and there was no unified or identifiable sect constituting the so-called Gnostic church or movement. Worse yet, even those labeled as Gnostics by their opponents usually disavowed such labels, making identification still more elusive and uncertain. A well-known example of this problem comes from Tertullian, a late second-century heresiologist, who declares, "We are quite aware why we call them Valentinians, although they affect to disavow their name."[14] Since this is not the place to attempt a solution to the problem of who in Egypt was a Gnostic and who was not, let it suffice to note that many authors who considered themselves Christians (whether they were or were not called Gnostics by others) quoted or commented on John in support of their beliefs and practices.

According to Photius, Hippolytus, a student and successor of Irenaeus, gives a summary of Basilides' doctrines and avows that when the Alexandrian commented on Genesis 1:3, "Let there be light," he quoted John 1:9: "He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."[15] Basilides also quoted John 2:4, "Mine hour is not yet come," when affirming that everything has its own particular time to happen.[16] No current evidence suggests in a detailed way how Basilides used the Fourth Gospel or in what way he understood the text.

The first commentary on John that survives even in part is written by another so-called Gnostic of the late second century, Heracleon, a student of the famous Egyptian Gnostic, Valentinus. Most of the existing quotations from Heracleon's commentary are found in Origen's commentary on John, continuing an Egyptian Christian tradition of displaying a strong interest in the Fourth Gospel.[17] The most prominent Italian disciple of Valentinus, Ptolemy,[18] was contemporary with Heracleon, and he also wrote a commentary on the introduction to John.[19] Concerning

the commentaries of Ptolemy and Heracleon, Elaine Pagels has suggested that both wrote with a specific type of audience in mind, including or excluding explanations to suit that audience.[20] In the case of Ptolemy, Pagels believes that he included Gnostic interpretations for his audience of initiates, while Heracleon omitted explicit references to his esoteric theology from his commentary because he intended it to be read by noninitiates.[21] Even so, Pagels contends that Heracleon presupposes an esoteric "mythopoetic theology" in his commentary, inferring that these authors understood an exoteric (public) level of Christianity and an esoteric (reserved for initiates) level of the faith. The "mythopoetic theology" in this context refers to four things: variations of some so-called Gnostic accounts of a precosmic council, a rebellion by one or more spirit powers in that setting, the creation of the physical cosmos and the subsequent descent of the Savior into the fallen creation, and, finally, the mysteries of redemption based on revealed knowledge *(gnosis)* passed on to initiates in the faith.

Further evidence for these two levels of exposition of Christian doctrine in early Egyptian Christianity is found in the letter of Clement of Alexandria to Theodore, published by Morton Smith in 1973.[22] In that fragmentary account, Clement claims that Mark, while in Rome with Peter, wrote "an account of the Lord's doings, not, however, declaring all of them, nor yet hinting at the secret ones, but selecting what he thought most useful for increasing the faith of those who were being instructed."[23] Later, when Mark went to Alexandria after Peter's death, "he composed a more spiritual Gospel for the use of those who were being perfected."[24] Even in his "secret Gospel," Mark was apparently careful to write in such a way that only those who were initiates in the mysteries would understand his message:

> Nevertheless, he did not divulge the things not to be uttered, nor did he write down the hierophantic teaching of the Lord, but to the stories already written he added yet others and, moreover, brought in certain sayings of which he knew the interpretation would, as a mystagogue, lead the hearers into the innermost sanctuary of that truth hidden by seven veils.[25]

Clement assures Theodore that not only is the sacred and secret message of the esoteric gospel kept from the uninitiated by the style of the writing, but the Gospel itself was kept under guard to keep it from falling into the hands of unworthy or unscrupulous people:

> Thus, in sum, he prepared matters, neither grudgingly nor incautiously, in my opinion, and, dying, he left his composition to the church in Alexandria, where it even yet is most carefully guarded, being read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries.[26]

Despite the precautions taken by the Alexandrian Church for the security of the sacred text, some apostate Carpocratians had obtained a copy of "Secret Mark" and were causing a stir with their misinformed and distorted version of its contents.

The two-level interpretation of Christianity (exoteric and esoteric) is not limited to Gnostics, according to Pagels. She specifies two Alexandrian Christians, Clement and Origen, "who *also* apprehend the 'scriptures' as 'religious literature' and seek to expound its 'hidden' symbolic meaning."[27] Whereas the Gnostics are said to be guilty of denying the literal reality of Jesus' flesh or the events of his incarnation, these "ecclesiastical Christians" are writing within the common and accepted beliefs of Christianity.[28] Both Alexandrian writers accept the reality of the scriptural accounts but believe that deeper theological and symbolic insights may also be found in them.[29] One of the problems in comparing the approach of Gnostic writers with that of the so-called "ecclesiastical" writers, of

course, is that the Gnostic commentaries are only available through the polemical writings of their religious enemies and critics.

Beyond observing the two levels of Christian doctrine in early Egyptian Christianity, this is not the place to analyze Heracleon's methods in interpreting John's Gospel. Pagels's study is recommended for readers who wish to pursue that subject. Here it is enough to note that Heracleon perceives different levels of understanding the Gospel, each available to readers according to their own spiritual nature.[30] Such levels of apprehending the meaning of John are not to be confused with the later distinctions of orthodoxy and heresy, for, as Walter Bauer has shown, those are concepts which had not become well-defined in the second-century church.[31] Heracleon seeks rather "to define the inner and true interpretation of the faith over against 'the many,' whose beliefs and practices, he claims, are not only limited . . . but also misleading and erroneous."[32]

Claiming to have a deeper understanding of scriptures than is generally known or acknowledged by others may lead to countercharges by one's enemies of arrogance and alleged superiority. Indeed, the Valentinians in Egypt were denounced by ancient writers as determinists for claiming that they alone would be saved while the bulk of mankind would be damned.[33] Modern commentators have also interpreted Valentinian theology as predestinarian, excluding from salvation those who by nature are not entitled to receive the greater knowledge.[34] Pagels argues that the charge of determinism is oversimplified, suggesting "that Heracleon is setting forth a theory of the dynamic transformation of human insight."[35] Thus those whose spiritual nature allows them to receive heavenly knowledge and insight can enjoy new levels of understanding the scriptures. This capacity is not found in all people, however, and Pagels asserts that Valentinians had only a limited concept of free will. She concurs with Gilles Quispel in claiming that the spirit of understanding came as a gift of grace, rather than simply as an expression of a person's natural endowment.[36] Although everybody can apprehend the Gospel of John in a meaningful way, only those who have been enlightened by the spirit of grace can comprehend the symbolism found in the Gospel.[37] The Valentinians do not deny the historical reality of events in John—they simply consider those events to be unimportant when compared to the spiritual meaning they convey.[38]

Although the first known commentaries on John were written by those later called Gnostics, the Fourth Gospel was not ignored or abandoned by Christians who were in the mainstream of the emerging orthodox tradition. Just after the middle of the second century, "Tatian in Rome, the pupil of Justin Martyr, had already used the framework of the Fourth Gospel and thus John's chronology, in opposition to that of the Synoptics, as the basis of his Diatessaron."[39] A generation earlier, in the first half of the second century, documentary evidence suggests that Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, both knew John.[40] The latter was even ordained a bishop by John, according to Tertullian.[41] No record survives to show whether or how Papias made use of the Gospel of John, but his list of Jesus' disciples, recorded by Eusebius,[42] is sufficiently like those found in John 1:35—51 and 21:2 to argue that he used John, rather than the Synoptics, in some instances.[43] Only a few passages in Polycarp's extant *Epistle to the Philippians* show a clear relationship to John's writings, the most famous being, "For everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an antichrist."[44] Any similarities with the Gospel are not precise and are not easily shown to be using that source.

A Christian convert of the middle of the second century, Justin, who was also the teacher of Tatian mentioned above, wrote two apologies and a *Dialogue with Trypho* (a Jew). While this apologist mentions John specifically as the author of the book of Revelation ("A certain man among us, whose name is John, one of the apostles of Christ,

prophesied in a revelation which was made to him"),[45] he does not name John as the author of the Gospel. Nevertheless, "Justin's doctrinal system is dependent as a whole upon the Fourth Gospel, and especially on the Prologue."[46] An example of Justin's dependence on John can be seen in *Apology* 61:4—5:

> For Christ has also said: If you are not born again you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. But it is obvious to everybody that those who have been born cannot enter the womb of their mother. (cf. John 3:3—5)

The Reverend Dr. John Pryor has recently summarized the evidence relating to Justin's knowledge and citation of the Fourth Gospel, including the famous passage quoted above. Even though his assessment is generally negative concerning Justin's awareness or opinion of the Gospel of John, he still concludes, "Justin does appear to be familiar with a document which we know as John's Gospel."[47] He makes the suggestion that Justin's reticence to use that Gospel may be caused in part to "the high standing of the Fourth Gospel in heretical circles."[48] Not all commentators agree with Pryor's negative assessment of Justin's use of John, for some see many allusions to John in Justin's work. In any case, the Gospel of John was widely known among the early church fathers.

It was natural, and perhaps expected, that the popularity of the Fourth Gospel would engender some negative reactions. In an effort to distance themselves from those they deemed heretical, some ecclesiastical leaders would reject whatever the so-called apostates were promoting. In the latter half of the second century, a man named Montanus, in company with two female associates, Prisca and Maximilla, appeared in Phrygia, and the three "claimed to be prophets inspired by the Paraclete."[49] Announcing that the second coming of Christ was imminent and would occur in that region,[50] the Montanists placed great emphasis on the Revelation of John, and "The Gospel also suffered from their misguided appeal to the Johannine doctrine of the Spirit."[51] Opponents of Montanism not only rejected the heretical movement, but, according to Irenaeus, "set aside at once both the Gospel [of John] and the prophetic Spirit."[52] Hippolytus of Rome wrote that an educated Christian in Rome named Gaius refuted the Montanists and their doctrines in part by rejecting the Gospel and Revelation of John, claiming that the former was written by Cerinthus.[53]

Epiphanius writes in his work against heretics of a group of Christians whom he calls "Alogoi" because they did not accept the Logos which had been preached by John.[54] Little can be affirmed regarding their beliefs, but the Alogoi rejected John's authorship of the Gospel and the Revelation, ascribing both to Cerinthus (similar to Gaius, mentioned above, who attributed the Gospel to Cerinthus). Schnackenburg, following August Bludau, maintains that "they themselves had not come to this view out of hostility to Montanism, but by internal criticism of John, based on its contrast to the synoptic presentation."[55] The Alogoi were not considered heretical in other respects, however, as Epiphanius concedes: "For they seem to believe the same things we believe."[56]

Such opposition to the Gospel of John, whether based on a study of its contents or because of its acceptance by one's enemies, demonstrates the pervasive influence of that Gospel in the second-century church. Even those who opposed this book do not appear to have been motivated by a dislike of the Fourth Gospel. In their own attempts to establish an orthodox Christian doctrine, these fathers instead undertook to discredit those who were using John to support doctrines increasingly considered heretical within the nascent patristic orthodoxy. The main question for most Christians in the first two centuries focused not on the authenticity or the importance of the Fourth Gospel, but rather on its meaning. Even those who were called heretics and apostates considered

themselves Christians, and they believed that the Gospel of John contained keys to understanding doctrines relating to the salvation of mankind.

By the end of the second century, the popularity of the Gospel of John was no longer in doubt, even though not everyone agreed on its purpose and meaning. It will come as no surprise to the student of Christian history that one writer of the third century, Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185—254), towers above all others in defining Christian theology, especially in commentaries on scriptural writings. Origen tried, as part of his work, to provide the definitive interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Born in Alexandria in A.D. 185 to parents who either were already Christians or became so soon afterward,[57] Origen received both a classical and biblical education.[58] One indication of his prodigious intellectual capabilities was his appointment to take charge of the Christian Catechetical School at Alexandria at the age of seventeen.[59] Another indication of Origen's genius and industry was the vast output of his writings. Jerome recorded that Origen wrote approximately two thousand volumes,[60] while Epiphanius claimed Origen had authored some six thousand works.[61] Most of his works have not survived, however, primarily because of later controversies surrounding his interpretations of Christian doctrines. One of these doctrines, to give an example, had to do with the eternality of the human soul. Jerome later condemned Origen for teaching that the soul had a premortal existence and existed as an angel in heaven.[62]

Among the many treatises authored by Origen were his *Commentaries on Holy Scripture*, begun in Alexandria and continued in Caesarea after his move there in A.D. 233. His sponsor in that great undertaking was a wealthy patron named Ambrose, who provided Origen with every requirement and convenience for producing his manuscripts:

> And also from that time Origen began to write his Commentaries on the Divine Scriptures, at the urgent request of Ambrose, who not only gave verbal encouragements and appeals, but also provided ungrudgingly an abundance of every needful thing. While he dictated, there were more than seven shorthand-writers, who relieved each other at appointed times, and there were at least as many copyists, as well as girls trained in penmanship. For all of them Ambrose provided generously everything they needed.[63]

One is not surprised that, with such uncommon intellectual capability and under such propitious conditions, Origen produced so much in his lifetime.

As noted above, Origen began to write a commentary on the Gospel of John, a massive undertaking that occupied perhaps fifteen years of his life.[64] He began his work on John while living in Alexandria, but had only completed five books of the commentary by the time he moved to Caesarea.[65] Origen's method of analysis included an exhaustive examination of the meanings of words and a comparison of words and concepts in John with the same words and concepts found elsewhere in the scriptures. Employing his method in critical detail resulted in the first book of his commentary analyzing the meanings and significance of only two words from John 1:1: *beginning* and *word*. Origen had given a detailed study of only the first eighteen verses of chapter one of John in his first five books of the commentary. He had reached John 13:33 by the end of his thirty-second book, which is the last presently in existence, but he told his patron, Ambrose, in the preface to that book "he expected he could not complete the commentary and would have to resume his study of John's Gospel in paradise."[66] Allan Menzies thought there once may have been thirty-nine books in the commentary,[67] but Eusebius remarks that only twenty-two books had survived to his own time.[68] Of this majestic enterprise, which Crouzel believes "may be

considered Origen's Masterpiece,"[69] only somewhat more than eight books are extant: 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 20, 28, 32, and some of 19. Origen often refers to the earlier commentary written by Heracleon, frequently disagreeing with him.

Origen's methodology in scriptural interpretation is often described as allegorical, but one should be aware that the learned Alexandrian is not throwing out literal or historical tradition by introducing the symbolic or spiritual interpretations. Although emphasis on the historical level of understanding scripture varies from work to work, Origen's general practice is to explain the passage literally before moving on to the symbolic or spiritual level of interpretation. Achieving a higher level of understanding is not, for Origen, the same as entering the realm of rhetoric and literary eloquence. For such ornaments the Alexandrian theologian has little use, arguing that the scriptures were written in a common and rather plain style so that they might not be deemed as persuasive according to the wisdom of the world. Rather, the success of scripture in producing conviction comes not through rhetorical polish, but through the demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God.[70] Similarly, Origen argues that scriptures are not understood through the methods of linguistics or literary analysis[71] but by means of the same spirit by which they were given:

> And if we arrive at the Gospels, the accurate understanding of these also, inasmuch as it is an understanding of the mind of Christ, requires the grace that was given to him who said, "But we have the mind of Christ, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, the things which also we speak, not in words taught through the wisdom of man, but in words taught through the Spirit."[72]

It is with the Spirit that one can give a spiritual (as distinct from a strictly symbolic or allegorical) interpretation of the scriptures. Origen declares that a spiritual interpretation demonstrates the heavenly message of which earthly events and records are types and shadows.[73] In such language and thought, Origen is of course echoing Paul, who earlier wrote the same sentiments to both the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 10:11) and the Hebrews (Hebrews 8:5). Far from relegating the scriptures to allegorical or symbolic interpretation, as some have argued, Origen maintains that

> there are many more (scriptural) passages which are true with respect to their historical meaning than those which are interwoven with purely spiritual significance.[74]

Still, he argues, even those passages which are historically accurate have a spiritual meaning, and the student of scripture should strive to grasp the full meaning.[75] Such subjects as the nature of God and his Son, the origin of evil, the fall of man, and the atonement are concealed in "accounts containing a narrative which bears an explanation of the sensible universe, the creation of man and of the succession of the first men until they became numerous."[76] Through such accounts, "certain mysteries (things not to be uttered publicly) are made clear to those who are able to examine carefully these writings."[77]

Within the context of Origen's method of scriptural exegesis, one would expect the spiritual message of John to overshadow the historical events. Origen's feeling for the importance of the Fourth Gospel is revealed clearly at the beginning of his commentary:

> Therefore one should venture to say that the first-fruits of all the scriptures are the Gospels, and the first-fruits of the Gospels is the Gospel according to John.[78]

According to Origen, John "teaches a shadow of the mysteries of Christ,"[79] both through "the mysteries which are brought forward by his words and the matters of which his deeds were the clues."[80] This claim does not permit one to retreat into intellectual Christianity alone, for Origen acknowledges that one must be a Christian in physical, as well as spiritual, matters.[81]

In conformity with the manner of interpreting scripture given above, Origen reveals as his purpose the pursuit of a spiritual understanding of the Gospel, for, he says, from the events in the scriptures anyone can be persuaded of truth at the factual (historical) level.[82] He wishes to understand spiritually, however, and prays:

> And now let us ask God to assist us through Christ by the Holy Spirit for an explanation of the secret meaning (connected with the mysteries) which has been treasured up in these words.[83]

Even if one disagrees with Origen's spiritual understanding and interpretation of John, his sincerity and enthusiasm for his effort—or his self-assurance, for that matter—are not in doubt. It was clear to Origen that not all followed his reasoning or agreed with his conclusions, but for them he expresses disdain:

> I am often led to marvel at the things which are said concerning Christ by some who profess to believe in Him. . . . I am amazed at the stupidity (I am speaking quite plainly) of many of them, but that is what it is.[84]

For one who is willing to pursue the spiritual understanding of the Gospel, he will "put on" Christ and carry in his own body the dying Lord Jesus, and his life as well.[85] There are those, however, who "will take offense at what we have said, (we who are) representing the Father as the One True God, but admitting that besides the True God others have become Gods by having a share of God."[86] Those who refuse to truly participate in divine matters (the spiritual mysteries of the gospel) must remain in ignorance:

> And perhaps it is so that those who share in the Word (or who are in the mystery) know the things which do not come to those who do not share in the Word.[87]

Participating in the Word means, according to Origen, to follow Christ and imitate him in all things. To those who understand this, the mysteries are opened and revealed in clarity.[88]

There were then, as now, competing doctrines and philosophies of Christianity, and Origen somewhat apologetically explains why he feels compelled to give his own viewpoints at such great length:

> And now with the pretense of higher knowledge the heterodox (apostates) are rising up against the holy church of God, and they are bringing forth compositions in many volumes which pronounce an interpretation of the evangelical and apostolic writings. If I should remain silent and not set before the church members the saving and true doctrines, these teachers will overpower inquisitive souls which, with a lack of saving nourishment, will hasten toward things which are forbidden, food that truly is both impure and abominable.[89]

Origen is not just showing off his considerable erudition; he perceives his task to be nothing less than the saving of souls through the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, and the Gospel of John provides a great key to gaining entry to that knowledge. In point of fact, Origen says, "We knock so that by the keys of knowledge the hidden matters of

the scripture may be opened to us."[90] Origen then compares his knocking at the door to Jesus' going up to the temple and there driving out the moneychangers. Origen notes that in the church, as in the temple in Jerusalem, there are always those who make merchandise of the Word of God. They will be separated out, however, and only by obtaining knowledge and through the mysteries will church members become part of the heavenly building.[91] For Origen then, the Gospel of John provides the key to understanding the truths of the eternal gospel and becoming part of the heavenly temple.

Not only does the Gospel of John have the earliest and perhaps best attestation of the New Testament writings, but it is also arguably the most popular writing in the early church. Opinions differed on specific interpretations of the Fourth Gospel, but there was general agreement that its message held the keys to spiritual knowledge and insights that would assist a Christian to progress both in mortality and beyond the grave. Because Christian concerns have not changed in the modern era, it will be advantageous to consider the Gospel of John in light of the restored gospel. This introductory essay reveals the direction the examination will follow.

Notes

1. See C. Wilfred Griggs and Randall Stewart, *Learn Greek through the New Testament* (Provo, Utah: Interlinguistica Series in Foreign Languages, 1981).

2. See C. H. Roberts, ed., *An Unpublished Fragment of the Fourth Gospel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), 13—16.

3. Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 86.

4. See, for example, Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.11.9, and Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.

5. See Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 1:173.

6. See H. Idris Bell and T. C. Skeat, eds., *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 1—2.

7. Ibid., 31.

8. Ibid., 28.

9. See ibid., 35—39.

10. Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:192.

11. See Carl Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche, 1919).

12. Hugo Duensing, "Epistula Apostolorum," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 1:190.

13. On which, see Hugh W. Nibley, "Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-day Mission of Christ—the Forgotten Heritage," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 10—44.

14. Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 4.

15. Hippolytus, *Adversus Haereses* 7.10.

16. See ibid., 7.15.

17. For the published fragments of Heracleon, see Werner Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1:162—83.

18. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1961), 1:261.

19. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.8.5; see Latin ending: *Et Ptolemaeus quidem ita.*

20. See Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 18—19.

21. See ibid.

22. See Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

23. Folio 1, recto, lines 15—18, Smith's translation.

24. Folio 1, recto, lines 21—22, Smith's translation.

25. Folio 1, recto, lines 22—26, Smith's translation.

26. Folio 1, recto, lines 26—28; verso, lines 1—2, Smith's translation.

27. Pagels, *Johannine Gospel*, 16.

28. Ibid.

29. See ibid.

30. See ibid., 55.

31. See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), xxii.

32. Pagels, *Johannine Gospel*, 58.

33. See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.89; Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Scriptis Theodoti* 56.3; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.6.1—2; Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis* 20.20; Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 5.9.22.

34. See John E. L. Oulton and Henry Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 2:31—32; Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 9—12.

35. Pagels, *Johannine Gospel*, 57.

36. See ibid., 100.

37. See ibid., 119—22.

38. See ibid., 118.

39. Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1989), 4.

40. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5.33.4; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.39; 5.24.16.

41. See Tertullian, *De Praescriptionibus* 32; cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.3.4: "Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the church in Smyrna."

42. See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.39.3—4.

43. See Hengel, *Johannine Question*, 16—23.

44. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians* 1.1; cf. 1 John 4:2—3.

45. Justin, *Dialogue* 81.

46. John H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1928), 1:lxxv.

47. John W. Pryor, "Justin Martyr and the Fourth Gospel," *Second Century* 9/3 (1992): 169.

48. Ibid.

49. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 253.

50. See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.16.

51. Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:200.

52. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.11.9.

53. See Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:200.

54. See Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.3.

55. Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:201.

56. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.4.

57. See Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: Clark, 1989), 4.

58. See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.2.7—9.

59. See ibid., 6.3.3.

60. See Jerome, *Apologia adversus Libros Rufini* 2.22.

61. See Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64.63.

62. See Jerome, *Letters* 51.4; see also Origen, *De Principiis* 1.2.10; 1.4.3; 2.9.

63. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.23.2.

64. See Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: Knox, 1985), 148.

65. See Origen, *Commentary on John* 6.1.8.

66. Trigg, *Origen,* 148.

67. See Allan Menzies, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 10:294.

68. See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.24.1.

69. Crouzel, *Origen,* 42.

70. See Origen, *De Principiis* 4.1.7.

71. See ibid.

72. Ibid., 4.1.10.

73. See ibid., 4.1.13.

74. Ibid., 4.1.19.

75. See ibid., 4.1.20.

76. Ibid., 4.1.14.

77. Ibid.

78. Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.6.

79. Ibid., 1.9.

80. Ibid.

81. See ibid.

82. See ibid., 1.10.

83. Ibid., 1.15.

84. Ibid., 1.23.

85. Ibid., 1.25.

86. Ibid., 2.3.

87. Ibid., 2.4.

88. See ibid.

89. Ibid., 5.4.

90. Ibid., 10.16.

91. See ibid., 10.18—20.

Ye Are Gods:
Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind

Daniel C. Peterson

> Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)[1]

> And the Word Himself now speaks to you plainly, putting to shame your unbelief, yes, I say, the Word of God speaks, having become man, in order that such as you may learn from man how it is even possible for man to become a god. (Clement of Alexandria, d. ca. A.D. 215)[2]

Latter-day Saints are fond of using John 10:34, itself a quotation from Psalm 82:6, to support their doctrine of eternal progression. The passage seems at first glance to be evidence for the concept that men and God are, in some sense at least, of the same species. Yet critics of the restored gospel often contend that such arguments misrepresent the original context—and thus the real meaning—of the two texts. Is their criticism true, or can the typical Latter-day Saint use of these two passages be defended? We shall examine both of them, starting first with John 10:22–39, in an attempt to determine their original meaning. Then we shall consider whether the Latter-day Saint understanding of the passages fits their apparent original sense and whether it does so as well as, or even better than, rival understandings.

John 10

According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus was at Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication, which took place in the winter. He was walking in the temple, in the area known as Solomon's porch. At this point "the Jews" demanded to know "plainly" whether or not Jesus was in fact the Christ, or the Messiah. Responding in a roundabout way, Jesus answered that his good works would tell who he was, at least for those who were receptive to the truth. But he followed that comment with a strong statement that clearly incensed his audience: "I and my Father are one," he declared.[3] At this point, the Jews took up rocks to stone him (see John 10:22–31).

Jesus then asked, in effect, "For which of my good works do you want to stone me?" (John 10:32). His question was obviously ironic, and it is clear that he actually knew the real reason for their anger. The Jews responded that they weren't stoning him for good works, but "because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).

What kind of a claim was Jesus asserting? First, we must keep in mind that the Greek here lacks the definite article. The Jews are, therefore, accusing Jesus of making himself "a god," but not necessarily of making himself "*the* God." He is not claiming to be the Father.[4] This is consistent with the Latter-day Saint view of the Godhead, as well as with the ancient view of the relationship between Yahweh and his Father that will be sketched in this paper. The same view, or something very much like it, also seems to appear in early Christian thought: "Justin," Oxford's Henry Chadwick notes of an important second-century Christian thinker, saint, and martyr, "had boldly spoken of the divine Logos as 'another God' beside the Father, qualified by the gloss 'other, I mean, in number, not in will.'"[5]

To understand what Jesus *was* claiming, we need to look closely at John 10:27–29. In those verses, Jesus had spoken of his "sheep" who "hear [his] voice." Their destiny, the destiny of those who keep the commandments of

God and who, consequently, merit his rewards, is glorious, and it is assured by the incomparable and irresistible power of God the Father, for "no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." "My Father, which gave them to me," Jesus declared, "is greater than all." But even in the midst of stressing the unique power and status of the Father, Jesus included himself with the Father. He did so, first, by using almost exactly the same language to describe his own power as he had used to depict that of the Father: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). And then, as if his meaning had not been clear enough, he announced that he and his Father were "one" (Greek *hen*).[6]

> Literally *hen* means "one." But the context suggests that this adjective be translated as "equal to" or "on a par with." Jesus claims far more than mere moral unity with God, which was the aim of every Israelite; such moral unity would never mean that mortals had become "god," as Jesus' remark is understood in 10:31–33. The very argument in John, then, understands *hen* to mean more than moral unity, that is, "equality with God."[7]

Though confronted by a hostile and potentially violent audience, Jesus did not back away from his claim to divine status. He did, however, implicitly respond to their accusation that he was making *himself* God. (This was a common allegation throughout his ministry.)[8] But he replied that the designation was not his own. It was God-given and scriptural.

> Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? (John 10:34–36)

"Jesus' reference to 'Son of God' in 10:36 does not weaken the argument by reducing the claim from 'god' to 'son of God,'" says Jerome Neyrey, "because if one continues reading Ps 82:6, the two terms are considered equivalent and parallel there ('I said, "You are *gods*, all of you, *sons of the Most High*"')."[9] The argument seems to be that the unbelieving Jews were silly to assault Jesus for so petty an offense as claiming to be the Son of God when, as an important Catholic commentary observes, "the scripture itself, God's own word, sometimes speaks of mere men as 'gods' or 'sons of God.'"[10] "If there is any sense in which men can be spoken of as 'gods,'" remarks the accompanying note in the evangelical Protestant New International Version of the Bible (or NIV), "how much more may the term be used of him whom the Father set apart and sent!"[11] "If scripture was not in error calling mortals 'gods' (Ps 82:6), then neither," writes Father Neyrey, paraphrasing the passage, "is there error in calling the one whom God consecrated and sent into the world 'the Son of God' (10:35– 36)."[12]

Having cited the Old Testament as a justification for his claim to divinity, Jesus returned to the testimony of the good works that he had performed and ended with the declaration that "the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38). Thereupon, provoked and angered once again by what they regarded as arrant blasphemy, his audience again assaulted him, but he escaped unharmed.

Psalm 82

Let us now examine the passage from the Hebrew Bible that underlies John 10:34. Jesus identified the passage *Ye are gods* as coming from the "law" (Greek *nomos*) of the Jews. Strictly speaking, of course, this is not entirely accurate, if the term *law* is taken to refer, as it often does, solely to the Pentateuch. For the passage is actually to be

found in Psalm 82:6, which would place it not in the Law or the Prophets, but in the Writings (Hebrew ketûbim). It is to this psalm that we now turn.

1. God *[ʾĕlōhîm]* standeth in the congregation of the mighty *[ʿădaṯ ʾēl]*; he judgeth among the gods *[bəqereb ʾĕlōhîm]*.

2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.

5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

6. I have said, Ye are gods *[ʾĕlōhîm]*; and all of you are children of the most High *[bənê ʿelyôn]*.

7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

8. Arise, O God *[ʾĕlōhîm]*, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

To whom is Psalm 82 addressed? This is not the easiest of questions. The poem is apparently very old, and its conceptual world is quite foreign to us.[13] As one commentator notes, "Though this piece is one of the most perfectly preserved psalms in the Psalter, the contents have given rise to numerous interpretations."[14] "Although its text is in almost perfect condition," says another, "and better far than the text of the vast majority of the Psalms, scarcely any psalm seems to have troubled interpreters more or to have experienced a wider range of interpretation and a more disturbing uncertainty and lack of finality therein than Psalm 82."[15] In any event, it is clear that the interpretation of verses 6–7, the passages most directly relevant to John 10, must depend on the interpretation of the first verse.[16] On the setting of that initial passage, widespread agreement occurs among careful readers of the psalm. "The scene," says the Catholic *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, "is the heavenly court."[17] The Hebrew phrase translated in the King James as "the congregation of the mighty," *ʿădaṯ ʾēl*, would be more accurately rendered as "the council of El" or "the council of God."[18] And the final verse is, clearly, the Psalmist's exclamation after witnessing the proceedings of that heavenly court.

But here the consensus ends. Commentators have offered four distinct and apparently conflicting identifications of the members of the divine court who are condemned to death in verse 7: (1) They are Israelite rulers or judges, ordinary men. (2) They are the rulers or judges of the other nations—again, apparently ordinary human beings. (3) They are the people of Israel, gathered at Sinai for the revelation of God. (4) They are the members of the divine council, the gods (in Canaanite religion and, probably, in early Israelite religion) or the angels (in later forms of Hebrew belief).[19] Mitchell Dahood's interpretation stresses that these are pagan gods.[20]

The first three interpretive options would appear to be consistent with Jesus' use of the passage in John 10, since his retort to the Jews can only have any force if the phrase *Ye are gods* refers to ordinary human beings. The fourth option seems, in contrast, to nullify Jesus' argument as it is recorded in John's Gospel. It would scarcely have been convincing to the skeptical Jews in his audience if Jesus, a seemingly ordinary and evidently mortal man, had

sought to justify his own claim to divinity by alluding to the divinity of some other order of being manifestly (in their eyes) quite unlike himself.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the conservative Protestant New International Version opts decisively for the application of the passage to ordinary human beings, explaining that "The words Jesus quotes from Ps. 82:6 refer to the judges (or other leaders or rulers), whose tasks were divinely appointed."[21] "In the language of the OT," claims the NIV "—and in accordance with the conceptual world of the ancient Near East—rulers and judges, as deputies of the heavenly King, could be given the honorific title 'god' . . . or be called 'son of God.'"[22] A common Jewish interpretation, which has been identified by some commentators as that followed in John 10:34, says that God's standing in the "divine council" is equivalent to his standing "in the midst of the judges."[23] And, indeed, there would seem to be at least an element of truth in all this. Knowledge of good and evil and the ability to distinguish or discern between them seem to be an essential part of what it means to be divine. We recall in this context Lucifer's promise to Adam and Eve that if they partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their eyes should be "opened" and they would then "be as the gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Though this is often dismissed as a Satanic lie, it is manifestly not, since God himself confirms a few verses later that, having eaten of the fruit of the tree, "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22, emphasis added). "Accordingly," write Cyrus Gordon and Gary Rendsburg,

> if we examine the story in Genesis objectively, we see that, while many elements go into making up the whole picture, it is not so much an account of the "Fall of Man" but rather of the rise of man halfway to divinity. He obtained one of the two prerogatives or characteristics of the gods: intelligence; but he was checked by God from obtaining immortality, which would have made him quite divine.[24]
>
> The element of disobedience is present in the story but only circumstantially. To stress the "evil" and overlook the "good" in the text would have no justification.[25]

With such considerations in mind, and in view of the obvious fact that the use of the passage in John 10 requires that it apply to ordinary human beings, "This interpretation of the psalm enjoyed considerable popularity during a certain period of Johannine scholarship."[26] It was, for example, the position adopted by James E. Talmage in his 1915 treatise *Jesus the Christ*, presumably drawn from the readings in conservative nineteenth-century Protestant biblical scholarship that informed his book generally.[27]

Yet this interpretation does not seem fully to work. It runs into difficulty, for example, when we read the New International Version's own explanation that "the congregation of the mighty" is "the assembly in the great Hall of Justice in heaven."[28] Who are these judges or rulers who are in heaven? The New International Version's editors try to overcome this rather apparent obstacle to their interpretation by explaining that, "As if in a vision, the psalmist sees the rulers and judges gathered before the Great King to give account of their administration of justice."[29] But, as a standard Catholic commentary observes, "obviously, the 'gods' cannot be human judges for their punishment is to die 'like men.'"[30] If they were already mortals, this would hardly be a serious penalty. Rev. Derek Kidner, a presumably conservative Protestant at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England, is surely correct in his judgment that "Verse 7, with its simile, *like men*, seems fatal to the view that these are human judges."[31]

Moreover, those who insist that the *'ĕlōhîm* of Psalm 82 are simply mortal humans typically point to Exodus 21:6 and 22:8–9, where the term has frequently (e.g., in the King James Bible) been translated as "judges." But there

seems no particular reason, other than theological squeamishness, to prefer such a translation. What these verses seem to describe is a divinatory practice where a case is brought before "God" or "the gods" for decision.[32] Rendering *ʾĕlōhîm* literally in these passages makes perfectly good sense. In fact, the ancient Latin Vulgate does exactly that (*deos*), as does the ancient Greek Septuagint (*theos*). These are, by a great distance, the most important and influential translations of the Old Testament in antiquity. Martin Luther's 1545 translation, so central to the Protestant Reformation, has *Götter* ("gods"), and the standard modern Jewish version has "God."[33] This should be a sufficient sample to show that Exodus 21:6 and 22:8–9 provide very weak support (if, indeed, they provide any support at all) for the notion that *ʾĕlōhîm* can ever denote merely human judges.[34] That interpretation seems to be a rather late, rabbinic one, and, as Julian Morgenstern notes, "has been approved, so far as I can see, by only one modern scholar, Kittel, and has been definitively rejected by all others on ample grounds."[35] "Nor can it be denied that the fundamental meaning of *ʿelohim* is 'gods,' and that only by a long stretch of the imagination and rather devious and uncertain hermeneutics can the meanings, 'rulers, kings' or 'judges,' be ascribed to it."[36] Lowell Handy accurately summarizes the dominant view among contemporary scholars when he declares of Psalm 82 that it "refers to 'gods' . . . and not 'angels,' 'rulers,' 'judges,' or 'tenured professors.' " [37]

But there is another and, for Christians, more fundamental problem. It does not seem that Jesus' citation of a metaphorical use of the term *god*, as applied to human beings, would go very far toward justifying his ascription to himself of literal divinity. So understood, Jesus would seem merely to be playing a word game, practicing a semantic sleight of hand, and, in fact, to be committing the logical fallacy of equivocation, wherein a word surreptitiously changes its meaning from one part of an argument to another. (The point of Jesus' argument is not that the Jews are unrighteous judges, but that it is not blasphemy for him to call himself divine.) It would be as if someone were declaring himself, madly enough, to be a vast ball of fusion-inflamed gases. We would scarcely be convinced if he were to offer, as evidence for the plausibility of his assertion, the fact that Rudolph Valentino, Lucille Ball, and John Wayne are generally called stars, and to demand that we, in fairness, grant the same title to *him*. The third-century Christian writer Novatian seemed to understand the argument well enough:

> If any angel at all subjected to Christ can be called God, and this, if it be said, is also professed without blasphemy, certainly much more can this be fitting for Christ, Himself the Son of God, for Him to be pronounced God. For if an angel who is subjected to Christ is exalted as God, much more, and more consistently, shall Christ, to whom all angels are subjected, be said to be God. For it is not suitable to nature, that what is conceded to the lesser should be denied to the greater. Thus, if an angel be inferior to Christ, and yet an angel is called god, rather by consequence is Christ said to be God, who is discovered to be both greater and better, not than one, but than all angels.[38]

Yet certain New Testament scholars have seemed willing to accept the notion that the argument advanced by Jesus rests on precisely that flagrant an equivocation. "One stream of critical opinion," writes Neyrey,

> takes the citation extrinsically, on a literal level as a mere play on words. If mortals, for whatever reason, can truly be called "gods" according to scripture, then the term is not *a priori* preposterously applied to Jesus. This type of explanation does not ask under what circumstances mortals might be called "gods," and it sees Jesus basically engaging in an evasive maneuver.[39]

Another interpretation of Psalm 82 that would be consistent with its use in the Fourth Gospel rests on the statement in John 10:35 that they are called "'gods,' unto whom the word of God came." "The Jews understood the

term 'gods' to be justified as applied to those who were the recipients of God's word; for this reason, this verse was often understood as having reference to all Israelites."[40] Father Neyrey argues that this New Testament formulation refers to the people of Israel as they were encamped at Sinai for the delivery of the word of God to Moses. Considerable evidence, in fact, reveals that such an identification flourished in Jewish circles in the early centuries of the common era.[41] Psalm 82, writes Neyrey, "was historicized in Jewish traditions to refer to Israel at Sinai when God gave it the Torah, making it holy and so deathless."[42] This deathlessness, he says, summarizing the data, was thought to have made Israel divine. But that divinity was then lost through sin, and Israel became mortal, merely human, once more.[43]

This interpretation has the advantage over the first two options in that it allows for the punishment of "immortal" beings by a sentence of death. In fact, claims Father Neyrey, it is the only interpretation of Psalm 82 that "has any bearing on the argument in John 10."[44] Nevertheless, at least two problems remain with the theory. First, the midrashic sources on which Father Neyrey draws for his portrayal of Jewish belief are all later than the Gospel of John, as Neyrey himself recognizes. Indeed, Jesus' use of Psalm 82 in this fashion would, if Neyrey's argument is valid, be the first instance of such use, with no clear parallel for at least a century or so.[45] Second, it is far from clear that Psalm 82 was originally intended to refer to the experience of Israel at Sinai. Father Neyrey implicitly acknowledges this when, as we have seen above, he passingly remarks that Psalm 82 "was historicized in Jewish traditions to refer to Israel at Sinai when God gave it the Torah." In other words, it was reapplied.

It must be said in his defense, of course, that Father Neyrey nowhere claims to be explicating the original meaning of Psalm 82. He intends simply to elucidate its meaning in John 10. For this reason, though, his interpretation appears unlikely to have much impact on the scholarly interpretation of Psalm 82 itself. What do contemporary scholars think was the intent of the author of Psalm 82? Who are the "gods" to whom it refers? This, as Morgenstern pointed out years ago in his influential treatment of the text, is the crux of the problem. Are they divine or human beings?[46] (We seek, for now, to know the original meaning of the passage, quite apart from its use in the New Testament.)

If John 10:34 must refer to ordinary human beings in order to have the force Jesus intended it to have, Psalm 82 seems virtually incapable of being so interpreted. Hans-Joachim Kraus remarks that the notion that Psalm 82's "gods" are human judges has been rendered *indiskutabel* (essentially, "not worth discussing") by modern discoveries.[47] The consensus of contemporary biblical scholarship, I would judge, is that the action depicted in this psalm occurs in the divine council, or the "council of El," just as the Hebrew text says.[48] The Septuagint, which normally endeavors to avoid all anthropomorphisms and routinely suppresses hints of polytheism, says this is all taking place "in the meetingplace of the gods."[49] "It is clear in Psalm 82:6," writes E. Theodore Mullen in his classic treatment, "that the beings condemned to die (v. 7) are gods [*ʾĕlōhîm*; *bənê ʿelyôn*], the members of Yahweh's [Jehovah's] council, and not human rulers or judges."[50] It is striking that the same term, *ʾĕlōhîm*, is used both for God and for the plural members of the audience to whom he addresses his remarks; the shared title seems to imply, strongly, that they share some kind of common identity. "In a courtroom scene," one Catholic commentary explains, "God accuses the *elohim* beings of injustice and lays down the law to them."[51] Another Catholic commentary, obviously troubled by the manifestly polytheistic implications of the psalm, declares it to be "a poet's fanciful picture of Yahweh, the Supreme God, condemning the gods of the nations as non-entities."[52] But nothing here implies that these "gods," whoever they are, are unreal. They seem very, very real indeed.

Morgenstern argued, on the other hand, that verses 2–4 of Psalm 82 must refer to humans, while Psalm 82:6–7 must refer to divine beings. Accordingly, he concluded that the two portions of the psalm have nothing whatever to do with each other and that one of the two must be an interpolation. (He identified verses 2–4 as the interloper, retaining verses 6–7 as belonging to the original text.)[53] If Morgenstern is correct, the only way to save Psalm 82 from a charge of textual corruption (and he himself, as we have seen, commented on the "almost perfect condition" of the text) is to find some way in which the references to human beings in verses 2–4 and to divine beings in verses 6–7 are not mutually exclusive or contradictory.

The Divine Council

We shall return to that issue. In the meantime, it will be helpful to survey the concept of the divine council.[54] To do so, I will be drawing on discussions of the cuneiform texts recovered from Ras-Shamra, which is the modern Arabic name of the site of the ancient city of Ugarit. It lies on the Mediterranean coast of Syria at roughly the latitude of the northern tip of Cyprus. Ugarit was a thriving seaport city at its height and the administrative center of a small kingdom that traded in olive oil, wines, and grain. The site of Ras-Shamra first attracted the attention of archaeologists in 1928, when a local peasant stumbled upon a nearby tomb dating from the thirteenth century B.C. Since that time, with exceptions during the Second World War and occasionally during the troubles of the 1970s, excavation has proceeded with little or no interruption at Ras-Shamra's large tell, or mound.

"Cuneiform texts" take their descriptive name from the Latin word for "wedge," *cuneus*, because they were produced when writers impressed wedge-shaped marks on clay by means of a reed stylus. When these clay texts were baked or otherwise allowed to harden, they became very durable, and they have tended to survive long beyond the time when papyrus and other writing materials have decayed. Many of the documents found at Ras-Shamra were written in the Akkadian language. But another class of texts proved to contain a previously unknown Semitic tongue closely related to biblical Hebrew. This language is now called Ugaritic.

The Ugaritic texts have come primarily from Ugarit's royal palace. But probably the most interesting documents, for our purposes, have emerged from a "priestly library" located in the vicinity of the Dagon and Baʿl temples. The most important of these texts come from the fourteenth century B.C. and include literary myths and legends related to the religion of ancient Ugarit. These documents are written in a style and a vocabulary highly reminiscent of the Hebrew Bible, and have, accordingly, shed considerable light on what we now term the Old Testament.[55] "No student of the Bible today can progress far without a working knowledge of the Ugaritic language and literature. . . . The Ugaritic tablets confront us with so many striking literary parallels to the Hebrew Bible that it is universally recognized that the two literatures are variants of one Canaanite tradition."[56] "The relevance of Ugaritic studies for reconstructing ancient Israelite religion is great indeed."[57] "It is absurd," wrote the great W. F. Albright, "to try to isolate any aspect of Hebrew literature from Canaanite-Phoenician influence."[58] From 1700 to 1200 B.C., the entire area from Ugarit in the north to the south of Palestine was a cultural unit, and Ugarit was Canaanite culturally, if not politically.[59]

The Ugaritic materials recount the deeds of various gods and goddesses who were important and very visible in the environment of ancient Israel—deities such as ʾĒl, Baʿl, Asherah, and Anat—and even elucidate obscure references in the Bible such as that to the legendary patriarch "Danel," who shows up in the book of Ezekiel as "Daniel."[60] In recent years, the texts recovered from Ras-Shamra have also awakened interest in the idea of "the

council of the gods" (Hebrew *ʿădaṯ ʾēl*; Ugaritic *ʿadatu ʾili-ma*), which scholars now recognize as "a primary motif in both the Ugaritic and early Hebrew traditions, as well as throughout the ancient Near East."[61]

The latter phenomenon, that of the council of the gods, goes under various names, and occasionally undergoes various metamorphoses, but one can easily discern it across the spectrum of adjacent cultures beneath its shifting titles. It is particularly evident in the civilizations nearest to the authors of the biblical record. "The concept of the divine council, or the assembly of the gods," writes Mullen, the leading authority on the subject, "was a common religious motif in the cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, Phoenicia, and Israel."[62] Furthermore, this concept showed an amazing uniformity across considerable distances of time and space. It is a clear feature, for example, of the relatively late Dead Sea Scrolls:

> He judges in the council of gods and men. In the heights of the heavens (is) his reproach and in all the foundations of the earth the judgments of his hand. (4Q511, frg. 10, 11–12)[63]

As Mullen observes, "The parallels between the council motifs in Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Israel clearly show that the concept of the divine council must be taken as one which was common to the ancient Near East."[64] In particular, "the concepts of the council in Canaan and Israel are strikingly similar."[65] Indeed, "the pre-exilic literature of Israel depicts the council of Yahweh in the same manner as does the description of the assembly of ʾĒl in Ugaritic mythology."[66] "Our major evidence for the council motif in the Old Testament is found primarily in Israel's preexilic literature, especially in the Psalms and other poetic writings where Canaanite influence is most easily seen. But the concept of the council runs throughout the Old Testament as a continuing theme of Yahweh's power and authority."[67] In the postexilic period, the influence of Hellenistic, Persian, and Babylonian religion upon Judaism led to the development of a very elaborate angelology, which is surely related to the concept of the divine council but is probably not to be identified precisely with it.[68]

El in the Ugaritic Texts

The council is known by various names in the Ugaritic materials, including "the assembly of the gods" and "the assembly of the sons of ʾĒl."[69] According to Canaanite belief, ʾĒl—or, as we shall most often refer to him in this paper, El—was the creator-god.[70] (Evidence strongly suggests that he was the original chief god of the Semites generally.)[71] As creator, however, he also stood at the head of the pantheon as the "father of the gods" or the "father of the sons of God" (*ʾabū banī ʾili*) and was called the "ancient one," the "patriarch," and the "eternal one." Consequently, the gods, as his sons, were designated collectively as "the sons of ʾĒl."[72] El was also called "the Father of Man" (*ʾabū ʾadami*).[73] A Phoenician incantation from the seventh century B.C., found at Arslan Tash in Upper Syria, depicts the father-god sitting, as it were, with his divine consort and their children:

> The Eternal One has made a covenant oath with us, Asherah has made (a pact) with us. And all the sons of El, And the great council of all the Holy Ones.[74]

The storm-god Baʿl was among the children of El. In Ugaritic literature he is the protagonist of an extremely important cycle of stories according to which he is linked to a sacred place known as Mount Zaphon. (This mountain has been identified as the Jebel al-Aqraʿ, located near the mouth of the Orontes River in northern Syria.) The story cycle tells of his battle against Lotan, or the Leviathan, and of his struggles against such adversaries as

Yamm ("Sea") and Mot ("Death"). Biblical depictions of Yahweh's encounters with watery enemies (as at Isaiah 51:9–10 and Psalm 74:13) may reflect Ugaritic influence. Along the way, Baʿl perishes and returns to life—a motif that evidently proved very appealing to Canaanite believers.

One of the most difficult and perplexing issues in the study of the religion and mythology of the Canaanites is the relationship between the high god El and Baʿl, who was the clearly subordinate god of weather and storms. ("Baʿl," we might note here, merely means "lord." It is not, as such, a proper name.) Though Baʿl was commonly referred to as "the son of Dagnu"—biblical Dagon, chief god of the Philistines (as at Judges 16:23, 1 Samuel 5:2–7, and elsewhere)—El was also called his father and creator.[75] Both Baʿl and El were depicted in the Canaanite materials as functioning kings. "While the major emphasis of the Ugaritic texts is upon the rise of Baʿl to his dominant position among the gods, the myths never lose sight of the position and importance of ʾĒl, the only god given the title *malku*, 'king.'"[76] Was there any rivalry between Baʿl and El? Evidently not.[77] This was probably because their kingships did not conflict, but were focused upon quite separate spheres. Mullen believes that the kingship of El is to be distinguished from that of Baʿl in the sense that El was king over the gods within the pantheon—distributing their assignments or stewardships among them—but Baʿl, although subordinate to El, was king over the cosmos.[78] "While it is important to recognize that the 'executive' functions of the cosmos, the maintenance of order and fertility, belong to Baʿl as king, the decision as to which god shall possess the position of administrator of these functions belongs solely to ʾĒl, who sits at the head of the pantheon."[79] Thus in Canaanite belief, we seem to have a father-god who had delegated administrative authority over the world to his divine son—rather like the Latter-day Saint view of the relationship between Elohim and Jehovah.[80] While Baʿl came near to mortal men and revealed himself in the storm cloud, El was transcendent, relatively aloof from the world of humankind. Baʿl was sometimes described in cosmogonic terms as the creator, but theogony (the origination of deities) was ascribed only to El, in his unique capacity as progenitor of men and gods.[81]

Indeed, El himself appears to have been the son of earlier generations of divine beings, who continued to enjoy a shadowy and rather vague existence in Canaanite mythology.

> The god ʾĒl stands at the 'transition point' between these olden gods, the natural pairs like his father (Heaven) and mother (Earth) and the deities who are active in the cultus. ʾĒl's role as creator fits into the theogonic scheme: he fathers the gods who take part in the cultus and the myths associated with the cult. . . . [ʾĒl] is the transition figure, standing as the last king in the generations of the olden gods and the first and supreme king in the cosmogonic myths.[82]

Sons of God in the Old Testament

The Canaanite terminology of "the assembly of the gods" and "the assembly of the sons of El" finds its parallels in the Hebrew Bible. In Psalm 29:1, which has long been recognized by scholars as an Israelite adaptation of an older Canaanite hymn, members of the council are referred to as *bənê ʾēlîm*.[83] The King James translation renders this phrase as "the mighty." The same Hebrew phrase occurs at Psalm 89:6, where the King James Version has "the sons of the mighty." Neither rendition is adequate. In both passages, the New Jerusalem Bible (or NJB), to choose one of the best of the modern translations, gets things precisely right by translating *bənê ʾēlîm* as "sons of God." Harvard's Frank Moore Cross offers his own rendition of the opening verses of the psalm, which he sees as addressed to the divine council:

> Ascribe to Yahweh, O sons of ʾēl, Ascribe to Yahweh glory and might; Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due his name. Fall down before Yahweh who appears in holiness.[84]

In Genesis 6:2, 4, and Job 1:6; 2:1, the members of the divine council are designated as *bənê hā-ʾĕlōhîm* ("the sons of God"). Psalm 97:7 addresses *kōl-ʾĕlōhîm* ("all [ye] gods"). There may once have been even more such references, since the evidence is rather clear that the Old Testament text has been tampered with in this regard.[85] Thus, for instance, following the Masoretic text of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 32:8 KJV tells us that, "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel [*bənê yiśrāʾēl*]." But the standard Greek Septuagint version of the same verse says, rather, that he set the bounds of the people "according to the number of the angels of God", and some Septuagint manuscripts even read, instead of "the angels of God," "the sons of God".[86] This is significant, in view of

> the admitted fact that the Greek translation of the Old Testament has occasionally preserved traces of readings which are manifestly superior to those of the Masoretic text. That text, it should be remembered, was constituted centuries after the Septuagint was already in vogue in the Greek-speaking portion of the Jewish and Christian world.[87]

And, indeed, contemporary scholars contend that it is very likely that the original Hebrew reading of the passage was *bənê ʾĕlōhîm* ("sons of God" or "sons of [the] gods") or, perhaps better still, in light of new evidence from Qumran, *bənê ʾēl* ("the sons of El").[88] In view of such evidence, Marvin Tate writes of Psalm 82 that "the conceptual horizon of v 8, and of the entire psalm, is that of the assignment of the gods to each nation as patron deities, who would be responsible for the welfare of each nation."[89]

Wherever it appeared, "The council was headed by the high god of the pantheon: Anu in Mesopotamia, ʾĒl in Canaan, and Yahweh in Israel."[90] In other words, the Mesopotamian Anu, Canaanite El, and Israelite Yahweh or Jehovah were functionally equivalent. Indeed, the equivalence of Canaanite El and Yahweh may have been more than merely functional. Various scholars have argued that the original god of Israel was El. (William Dever believes that a twelfth-century open-air hilltop sanctuary located in the territory of Manasseh belonged to El.)[91] In the earliest Israelite conception, according to this view, father El had a divine son named Jehovah or Yahweh.[92] El, or Elyon ("the Highest" or "the Most High"), and Yahweh were distinct.[93] Indeed, the apparent original reading of Deuteronomy 32:8–9, explained immediately above, seems to indicate a *number* of "sons of El," among whom Yahweh was the most prominent.[94] "Jewish monotheism, which gave birth to the Christian movement, was not," reports John J. Collins, "as clear cut and simple as is generally believed."[95] According to Larry Hurtado,

> Jewish monotheism can be taken as constituting a distinctive version of the commonly-attested belief structure described by Nilsson as involving a "high god" who presides over other deities. The God of Israel presides over a court of heavenly beings who are likened to him (as is reflected in, e.g., the OT term for them "sons of God"). In pagan versions, too, the high god can be described as father and source of the other divine beings, and as utterly superior to them. In this sense, Jewish (and Christian) monotheism, whatever its distinctives, shows its historical links with the larger religious environment of the ancient world. . . .

> This commitment to the one God of Israel accommodated a large retinue of heavenly beings distinguished from God more in degree than kind as to their attributes, some of these beings portrayed as in fact sharing quite directly in God's powers and even his name.[96]

Professor Hurtado is aware that some will find his picture of Judaism difficult or disturbing. "Part of the problem in estimating what Jews made of heavenly beings other than God 'ontologically,'" he writes, "is that scholars tend to employ distinctions and assumptions formed by Christian theological/philosophical tradition."[97] If we are to understand earliest Christian and Hebrew thinking, however, we must seek to understand it on its own terms. Unfortunately, neither post-Nicene trinitarianism nor Hellenistic presuppositions about the metaphysical virtues of oneness provide useful guidance in such matters.

There was a continuum of divine beings in ancient Hebrew belief. "Yahweh belongs to this class of beings," writes Peter Hayman, "but is distinguished from them by his kingship over the heavenly host. However, he is not different from them in kind."[98] Interestingly, as Christopher Stead points out, the original and "basic meaning" of the term *homoousios*, which played so important a role in the formulation of classical trinitarian doctrine at the Council of Nicaea, was something like "made of the same kind of stuff." It had a "quasi-material" sense to it.[99] The "gods" of Psalm 82, says one conservative Protestant discussion, are "divine beings . . . who share the divine nature (but who are subject to Yahweh) and who minister in the heavenly realm."[100]

Gradually, it seems, El faded into the background as Yahweh, his preeminent son, came to the fore. A similar process seems already to have occurred among the Canaanites themselves. Rather unexpectedly, the extant Ugaritic mythological literature revolves almost entirely around Baʿl, or Baʿl-Haddu as he was often known, despite the fact that El was his father and the chief of the gods and despite the fact that Canaanite liturgical texts clearly show that El was worshiped with sacrifices. Together with his consort, Asherah, El played only a secondary role in the mythology. Furthermore, while temples dedicated to Baʿl have been discovered, no temple or shrine to El has yet been found, and it would seem that Baʿl succeeded El as the major deity in the popular worship of Syria-Palestine by sometime shortly after the middle of the second millennium before Christ.[101] (It may not come as much of a surprise to learn that, in certain ancient circles, the names *Yahweh* and *Baʿl* seem to have been regarded as interchangeable.)[102] This fact is probably to be understood in light of the already mentioned fact that, in Canaanite understanding, El had apparently granted Baʿl administrative responsibility over the world of humankind, and that Baʿl was, accordingly, the divine being with whom humans had most contact. It would appear that El had already, in the Ugaritic literature that we now possess, begun the "fade" that would become virtually complete in the Bible. Eventually, for Jews too, the Father was utterly invisible, almost as if he had been absorbed by the Son. With its unembarrassed references to "the Gods," the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price belongs to the period prior to Yahweh's absorption of the functions of El and the divine council. By the tenth century B.C., however, El and Yahweh had come to be identified with one another.[103] (Professor Cross derives the divine name *Yahweh* from a verbal sentence [yahwe **ṣ**e**b̲ā**'ôt, "he [pro]creates the divine hosts"] that occurs commonly in the Hebrew Bible, but which, he contends, is commonly mistranslated as "Yahweh [or Lord] of hosts." The hosts in question are, of course, the hosts or armies of heaven, the sons of El, and Cross argues that the name Yahweh was originally part of an epithet pertaining to El. Accordingly, the original phrase would have read "El [pro]creates the divine hosts.")[104]

It is obvious from the Bible, in any case, that the name Yahweh or Jehovah was not the name commonly used for God by the patriarchs:

> And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. (Exodus 6:2–3)

Thus, after roughly the tenth century before Christ, no evidence of any distinct Israelite cult of El is extant, except in his guise as Yahweh.[105] This would seem to explain the otherwise rather puzzling fact, noted by many students of early Israelite religion, that, although El (ʾĒl) is the name of the high god of the Canaanite pantheon, the word *ʾēl* is frequently used as an epithet of Yahweh in the Hebrew scriptures. Moreover, although the Old Testament denounces the worship of the other gods and goddesses of the Canaanites, evidently no trace of any polemic against El is present in it. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the members of the divine council are never described in the Hebrew Bible as "the sons of Yahweh," just as the Canaanite myths regard the council as composed of the "sons of El" but never of the "sons of Baʿl." "Ugaritic literature nowhere presents Baʿl as engendering other gods of the pantheon. This function belonged only to ʾĒl."[106] Likewise, Mark Smith remarks that, while sexuality was ascribed to El, Yahweh was never described as sexually active.[107] Neither the phrase *sons of Yahweh* nor anything analogous to it appears in the Bible. It is, I think, also significant that Jesus, whom Latter-day Saints identify in his antemortal state with Yahweh or Jehovah, is said several times in the New Testament to be "the Son of the Highest" but is never himself identified as *being* "the Highest."[108] Nor is he ever called "son of the Lord." Designation as "the Highest" seems, thus, to belong uniquely to the Father. But it must surely be Jesus' identification as "the Son of the Highest" (a phrase whose plural form is equated in Psalm 82:6 with the term *elohim*) and his self-identification as "the Son of God" (John 10:36) that inflamed the Jews against him.

In any event, "The most striking similarity between the council in Ugaritic and in early Hebrew literature is the role played by the high god—ʾĒl in the Ugaritic texts and [eventually, at least] Yahweh in the Old Testament. Both are depicted as creator, king, and absolute ruler of the gods."[109] Both, therefore, preside over the divine council or assembly.

The Council as Corporate Entity

What was the character of the assembly of the gods in Ugaritic and Hebrew materials? "The very *raison d'être* of the council was to pass judgment, in both the heavenly and human spheres."[110] One of El's primary roles, as a wise patriarch, was to sit in judgment. "We see ʾĒl as the figure of the divine father," writes Cross.

> ʾĒl cannot be described as a sky god like Anu, a storm god like Enlil or Zeus, a chthonic god like Nergal, or a grain god like Dagon. The one image of ʾĒl that seems to tie all his myths together is that of the patriarch. Unlike the great gods who represent the powers behind the phenomena of nature, ʾĒl is in the first instance a social god. He is the primordial father of gods and men, sometimes stern, often compassionate, always wise in judgment.
>
> While he has taken on royal prerogatives and epithets, he stands closer to the patriarchal judge over the council of gods. He is at once father and ruler of the family of gods, functions brought together in the human sphere only in those societies which are organized in tribal leagues or in kingdoms where kinship survives as an organizing power in the society. He is a tent-dweller in many of his myths. His tent on the mount of assembly in the far north is the place of cosmic decisions.[111]

In Hebrew, Phoenician, and Canaanite sources, "The council of the gods met to decree the fate of both gods and humans."[112] It was not only a royal court, but a judicial court or quasi-legislative assembly.[113] Thus in 1 Kings 22:17–23, the Lord, speaking before the council, decrees the death of Ahab. In Isaiah 6, surrounded by angelic hosts, the Lord calls the prophet Isaiah and declares the impending doom of Judah. And Isaiah's experience has a clear parallel in Ugaritic or Canaanite mythology: "Keret seems to have participated in the divine assembly, much as the prophet Isaiah in his inaugural oracle saw the proceedings in Yahweh's cosmic temple and took part in its actions."[114] In Judges 5:23, we read the condemnation of Meroz, delivered by an angel, for his failure to send an army to the aid of Israel. In Zechariah 3:1–10, an angel of Yahweh, as messenger of the council, proclaims the high priest Joshua free of iniquity.[115] Job 1:6–12 and 2:1–6 record the decision made by Yahweh before the council to allow the testing of Job.

Did the divine council, which Mark Smith terms a "collectivity of deities,"[116] exist merely to rubber-stamp the decisions of the high god, or did it possess some authority of its own? "All the gods, even the highest in the pantheon, were subject to the decisions of the council," writes Mullen, speaking of the Canaanite evidence.[117] But "the god ʾĒl is equivalent to the entire council. The decree of ʾĒl is the decree of the gods."[118] Once the theogonic struggles of the Canaanite mythology were over, with El firmly seated and established on his throne, the military allies who had helped him attain victory disappeared into the background. They seem to have ceased to possess any kind of individual existence or personality.[119] "When the high god issues his decree from the chambers of his tent, the action is tantamount to the issuance of a decree from the assembly, for the power of the council of the gods is expressed only through the decree of ʾĒl."[120] "To address the council was to address ʾĒl, and vice versa."[121] We see, in the surviving Canaanite materials, a kind of corporate deity, in which a number of gods functioned as if they were, in fact, one god: "In the Ugaritic material the assembly appears frequently as the recipient of sacrifices in the liturgical texts. In Phoenician inscriptions they are invoked in blessings and curses. . . . [T]he assembly of the gods continued as an active object of worship. This can be explained by the fact that the assembly, in Canaanite thought, had no true existence apart from the decree of the high god ʾĒl."[122] "Like ʾĒl, the divine assembly is offered sacrifices, a fact that would seem to indicate that the council was in some sense hypostatized, becoming an entity unto itself"—a situation that continued into post-Ugaritic times.[123]

Parenthetically, it is noteworthy that the same process of hypostatization, of turning an abstraction into a substantial reality, occurred in the case of the Christian Trinity. And, clearly, although mainstream Christianity has gone seriously off course with its Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysical musings, the move was not entirely illegitimate. Jesus *did* say, during the exchange reported in John 10, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). *Elohim* truly is a plural word. One is strongly tempted to see these notions as shedding light both on Israelite "monotheism" and, even, on the nature of the Godhead itself. Common Latter-day Saint teaching that the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost consists in their absolute unity of purpose seems to fit quite nicely with the earliest doctrines of the Hebrews and their Semitic cousins, and it accords with both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Nicene concept of the Trinity, by contrast, draws on Greek philosophical concepts that have no root whatsoever in the Bible or the biblical world.

P. Kyle McCarter observes that even Israel's pagan neighbors were capable of viewing their gods as plural from one aspect and, from another, as one, even though they lacked the assistance of Aristotelian ontology.[124] A similar process occurred, for instance, in the case of the Mesopotamian council. Anu was the head of the pantheon, but when the divine assembly invests Marduk with power, "[his] decree is Anu." (This may explain, by way of analogy,

how, in the theology of ancient Israel, Yahweh could legitimately become El.) "When the gods granted him kingship and the power of decree, he became equivalent to the assembly itself."[125]

As it was at Ugarit, so it was also in Israel: "The word and decision of the council are the same as the decree of Yahweh. The council only serves to reemphasize and execute his decision. Its members carry out his decree exactly as commissioned."[126] Thus Mullen can speak of "the decree of Yahweh, which is the decree of the council."[127] In Hebrew writing, just as in the documents from Ras-Shamra, the military retinue of Yahweh continued to be active, although not individuated.[128] "The heavenly host . . . have little existence apart from Yahweh. They march with him and they worship him. More importantly, they carry out his decisions. Their existence is clearly depicted as being dependent upon the decree, the word of Yahweh."[129] "The members of the council are clearly inferior to Yahweh. . . . The 'Holy Ones' who constitute the assembly are gods, but they are not Yahweh's equals."[130] "The 'gods' are the divine beings who function as his counselors and agents."[131] As Susan Niditch observes of these celestial beings,

> The presence of angels . . . seems to imply an author who imagines Yahweh surrounded and accompanied by a retinue of heavenly beings. . . . God is not alone in heaven but, like any king divine or human, has a large support staff. Such images go back millennia in ancient Near Eastern portrayals of the deity and are continued in the religion of Yahweh, in which one particular deity dominates.[132]

> Typologically stylized scenes of the realm of heaven are found in 1 Kings 22:19–22, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1–3, and Daniel 7. In each case a seer receives a glimpse of the divinity, who is seated on a throne surrounded by his courtiers, angelic or cherubic beings arranged to his right and to his left. The visionary observes, overhears, or participates in the activities of the divine court.[133]

Thus in the Phoenician, the Canaanite, and the Israelite sources, "the divine council has no authority or power apart from the high god. Though a full hypostatization does not seem to have taken place, the assembly and the decree of the high god are inseparable."[134] Nonetheless some differentiation among the members of the heavenly court does seem to be evident, for another aspect of the divine council in Hebrew tradition, obviously related to its juridical function, was the assignment of its members to oversee the various nations as their stewardships—a notion that appears to be fundamental to the interpretation of Psalm 82.[135] We see this, for example, in Deuteronomy 32:7–9, to which we have already alluded. In the New Jerusalem Bible translation, this passage reads as follows:

> Think back on the days of old, think over the years, down the ages. Question your father, let him explain to you, your elders, and let them tell you! When the Most High [*'elyôn*] gave the nations each their heritage, when he partitioned out the human race, he assigned the boundaries of nations according to the number of the children of God [*bənē 'ēl*], but Yahweh's portion was his people, Jacob was to be the measure of his inheritance.

As we have seen, the King James Version of the Bible probably does not convey the original intention of the passage. Contemporary scholarship tends to agree that the idea underlying Deuteronomy 32:8 (which the text itself claims to be a very old one) is that "the Most High," the supreme deity (presumably El), assigned the various peoples of the earth to his sons, reserving the children of Israel to his preeminent son, Yahweh or Jehovah.[136] But the concept lasted a very long time, even if in somewhat altered form. "For this is the office of the angels," wrote the second-century Christian apologist Athenagoras of Athens, "to exercise providence for God over the things

created and ordered by Him; so that God may have the universal and general providence of the whole, while the particular parts are provided for by the angels appointed over them."[137] This, of course, cannot fail to remind us of the Canaanite understanding that El was king over the gods within the pantheon, distributing their assignments or stewardships among them.

The Host of Heaven

At ancient Ugarit, the Canaanite mother of the gods and wife of the chief god El, Athirat or Asherah, was believed to have seventy divine sons.[138] These gods, the offspring of El and Asherah, were assigned as guardians to the various nations while El himself, as the creator and father of mankind, had no special relationship with any particular ethnic group.[139] They are almost certainly to be connected with the seventy angels assigned by ancient Hebrew lore to the nations of the earth.[140] Traditional Jewish belief holds that there are seventy (gentile) nations,[141] and also, not surprisingly, that the languages of humankind likewise number seventy.[142] (The Savior's appointment of the seventy in Luke 10:1 can only be properly understood in this context. Similar conceptions must also explain the seventy elders of Israel mentioned in Exodus 24:1, 9, and Numbers 11:16, who, significantly for this study, stand in much the same relationship to Moses as that of the New Testament seventy to Christ—and, ideally, that of the seventy nations to God.)

For the most part, the transcendent father god delegated direct executive responsibilities to the members of his council. Israelites were, therefore, not to worship the gods of the nations and not to relinquish their uniquely elevated status, for their god was none other than Yahweh, the most important son of El. In this context, it is instructive to recall the warning given in Deuteronomy 4:15, 19 (compare 17:3):

> Take . . . heed . . . lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

The early second-century B.C. apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus, also known as the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach, seems to reflect a modified form of the same concept—modified in that, by this period, with El almost completely forgotten as a distinct patriarchal deity, Yahweh himself was the god who had chosen Israel—when it says, "For every nation he appointed a ruler, but chose Israel to be his own possession."[143] Similarly testifying to the notion is the pseudepigraphic book of *Jubilees*, which dates to approximately the same era:

> But he chose Israel that they might be a people for himself. And he sanctified them and gathered them from all of the sons of man because (there are) many nations and many people, and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler and he will protect them. (*Jubilees* 15:30–32)

Despite the rather cynical twist that *Jubilees* puts on the celestial rulers of the other nations when it declares that God intended them to mislead the gentiles, the general view of the divine council in ancient literature is far more positive. These angels, gods, or sons of God seem to be the "watchers" who are the guardians of the earth according to such pseudepigraphic texts as *1 Enoch*.[144] They had been assigned the task of ruling, and of ruling well. "The crux of the interpretation of [Psalm 82] revolves about vv. 2–4," remarks Mullen, "which concern the problem of the dispensation of justice. As we have seen, this task was specifically given to the members of the

divine council. In Deut 33:3, the 'Holy Ones' are called specifically the 'guardians of the peoples.' It was their task to administer justice rightly."[145] Still, as Moritz Steinschneider observes, among the Israelites the notion of being turned over to the stewardship of another angel or prince was regarded as a punishment.[146] According to *1 Enoch* 89:59–90:22, 25, the seventy angels of the council were appointed (instead of God, who had rejected his people) to rule over Israel until the day of judgment. At that time, according to *1 Enoch*, the angels themselves will be judged as having been too harsh on the Israelites. The relevance of this notion to Psalm 82 should be immediately apparent.

The primary function of the members of the divine council in Canaanite tradition was to serve as heralds, as the messengers who delivered or even executed the decrees of El, which (as we have seen) were the decrees of the council. "After the commissioning of the messenger, the message was delivered in precisely the same words that had been given to the divine couriers. The form of the message, as repeated, leaves no doubt as to the concept of the authority of the messenger—the envoy had the same authority as the deity who dispatched him."[147] Likewise, the primary function of the members of the divine council in the Hebrew Bible was to serve as heralds, as the messengers who delivered or even executed the decrees of Yahweh.[148] Our word *angel*, of course, reflects this: The Greek *angelos* simply means "messenger."

Prophets as Messengers

Canaanite deities who served as envoys of the council could be described as "messengers" or "angels," using the Ugaritic equivalent of the virtually identical Hebrew word. But the same word could be applied, in Hebrew, to human prophets as messengers.[149] One inescapably thinks of the biblical prophet known to us as "Malachi." This may or may not be a personal name; it means, in Hebrew, "my messenger." The "angels" of the seven churches of Asia (in Revelation 1–3) may similarly be simply the human representatives of those churches. In both Revelation 19:10 and 22:7–9, an obviously supernatural or superhuman angel describes himself as a "brother" to John the Revelator and even identifies himself as one of the prophets.

"God dwells in a parallel realm," writes Niditch regarding the Israelite tradition, "a king surrounded by courtiers, but lucky mortals may at times join the council's meetings."[150] "Thus the prophet becomes in effect the *mal'āk* or herald of Yahweh's council, and like a supernatural ambassador mediates the divine pronouncement."[151] Significantly for our present purpose, Hebrew tradition could make human beings serving in the role of prophets the equivalent, at least temporarily, of Canaanite gods.[152] "The Israelite traditions of the council," Mullen notes,

> while paralleling those of Canaan and Phoenicia, introduce a new element—the prophet as herald/courier of the council. In the Ugaritic myths, the messages of the council (*'Ēl*) were carried by divine beings; in Hebrew prophecy, the decree of Yahweh was delivered by the human prophet. The similarity between the divine messenger and the human prophet is remarkable. Both carried the absolute authority of the deity who dispatched them. They, in effect, represented the presence of the deity in the decree.[153]

Commenting on the dramatic scene depicted in Isaiah 6, Morgenstern observes that

> In its basic features the situation here is quite similar to that of 1 Ki. 22.19–23. Yahweh needs a messenger to fulfill His purpose with the object of His judgment and His sentence of destruction. But whereas there one of the "host of heaven" offers himself for the service and is accepted, here apparently

> none of the *s^{e}rafim* seems qualified for this particular task, and the Deity must therefore have recourse to a mortal being who has providentially appeared upon the scene at just the right moment and who, after due preparation, through a process of purification which, impliedly, strips from him some of the disqualifying conditions of human nature and endows him with certain qualities of divinity, such as ability to understand divine speech, offers himself spontaneously for this service.[154]

"The very designation *nābī'*, 'one who is called' (cf. Akkadian *nabī'um*) implies the background of the council, for the prophet was called to proclaim the will of the deity which was issued from the assembly."[155] (Cross interprets Isaiah 35:3–4 and 40:1–8, with their plural imperatives, as samples of the instructions given to members of the heavenly assembly.)[156] "The prophet's role is clear—he is the herald/courier of the council, whose task it is to deliver the judgment of the assembly."[157]

> Form-critical analysis of the prophetic forms of speech has yielded the information that the prophet's office is that of messenger and that the fundamental message he brings is the judgment, Gerichtswort. The oracle of judgment properly carries overtones of a judicial decree or verdict, and rests upon a basic legal metaphor. More concretely, the prophet is the messenger of the divine court or council, and his authority rests upon the absolute authority of the council, its great Judge or great King who pronounces the judgment which the prophetic messenger is to transmit. The prophet himself receives the word of the Judge and court normally in vision or audition, most frequently the latter.[158]

Sôd/Council/Counsel

It is apparent from a study of the relevant Old Testament passages that Hebrew prophets conceived themselves as standing in Yahweh's assembly.[159] A few examples should make this clear. First, however, an understanding of the Hebrew term *sôd* is crucial for appreciating these passages. In the Old Testament, that word denotes confidential discussions or secrets (as at Proverbs 3:32 and 11:13). It also refers to the council setting in which such confidential discussions are conducted, or to a circle of intimate friends.[160] In fact, the two meanings must always be kept in mind together, for, as a recent discussion of the term notes, "*sod* never in Biblical Hebrew came to express a simple 'secret,' but only a 'counsel' or 'decision' taken in secret 'council,' that the wise man does not bruit about." Thus *sôd* has "the dual meaning 'council/counsel' (Ratsversammlung/ Rat), i.e., the body and the decision of the body."[161]

"Which of them," Jeremiah asked rhetorically of the false prophets who opposed him, "has stood in the council [*sôd*] of the Lord, seen him and heard his word? Which of them has listened to his word and obeyed?"(Jeremiah 23:18 New English Bible, or NEB).[162] Clearly, Jeremiah was implying that, while the pseudoprophets had never been admitted to the divine council and so could claim no valid authority for their declarations, he, Jeremiah, had been and therefore could assert such authority. Access to the decrees of the council was the unique qualification of true prophets. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing," declared the prophet Amos, "but he revealeth his secret [*sôd*] unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).[163] Of false messengers, the Lord said to Jeremiah: "I did not send these prophets, yet they went in haste; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. If they have stood in my council [*sôd*], let them proclaim my words to my people and turn them from their evil course and their evil doings" (Jeremiah 23:21–22 NEB). Attacking Job as a pretentious but ordinary man, a man who had no corroborating authority for what he was saying, the uncharitable Eliphaz asked him, "Do you listen in God's secret council [*sôd*] or usurp all wisdom for yourself alone?" (Job 15:8 NEB). Mullen's summary of the biblical data is succinct:

> The prophet is the herald of the divine council. He delivers the decree of Yahweh, which is the decree of the council. The authority of the prophet as the herald/messenger of the assembly is that of the power which sent him. He is the vocal manifestation of the deity who dispatched him. The parallel position of the prophet and the messenger-deity in Canaanite literature makes this fact undeniable. . . . The Hebrew prophets, like the messenger-deities described in the Ugaritic myths, are clearly envoys who carry both the message and authority of the divinity who dispatched them. In the case of the prophets, this was Yahweh, and ultimately the council that surrounded him.[164]

Such concepts underlie the accounts of Yahweh's interactions with the members of his court, as they are recorded in Isaiah 6:1–8 and 1 Kings 22:19–23. In the latter passage, the prophet Micaiah informs Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah of his vision of a heavenly council: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him" (1 Kings 22:19–21).[165] (Note the strongly anthropomorphic character of this and other passages relating to the heavenly council.)[166] Isaiah, on the other hand, in his account of his own call to prophethood, "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).[167]

Deified Dead

We thus see, in biblical and other ancient references to the council of El, a blurring of the distinction between mortal human beings and angels, between mortal human beings and gods. This blurring is further evident in the fact, noted by contemporary scholars, that both Canaanite and Hebrew texts seem to suggest that the term *gods* could have been used, very anciently, for deceased human beings.[168] Thus, for instance, when Saul, who went to the witch of Endor to attempt a seance with the deceased prophet Samuel, asks her what she saw as the process began, she replies, "I saw gods [*'ĕlōhîm*] ascending out of the earth" (1 Samuel 28:13)."[169] "The 'gods' (*'ĕlōhîm* or, more frequently, *'ēlîm*) are the souls of the dead, deified in Sheol," says Niditch. "Concepts of the dead as 'gods' . . . were probably popular among Israelites throughout their history."[170] In the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, which likely dates to the latter half of the first century B.C., the wicked, summoned for divine judgment, are astonished to see a righteous man (whom they had mocked and oppressed while in mortality) exalted in the presence of God:

> How has he come to be counted as one of the children of God and to have his lot among the holy ones?[171]

Their surprise is understandable. He has indeed risen high. As we have seen above, the terms *holy ones* and *children of God* (or *sons of God*, as the New English Bible renders the Greek) commonly refer to the members of the divine council, the assembly of the gods. "The 'heavenly court' that played a large role in Hebrew thought . . . now is seen," observes the noted Catholic scholar Roland Murphy of this text, which was probably written just a few decades before the birth of Christ, "as a goal, a group to whose ranks one might aspire."[172]

And such views were perhaps not as isolated as one might at first assume.[173] The covenant community at Qumran worshiped El alone as God, but recognized a large court of heavenly beings subordinate to him (archangels, angels, the *'ēlîm*, the Holy Ones). It is often impossible to distinguish, with any certainty, whether heavenly angels or earthly Qumranites are intended in a given text, and "the concept that the Qumran male could evolve into angelic

status indicates that the categorical distinction between angels and humans had broken down."[174] Consider the following texts, for example:

> He has given them an inheritance in the lot of the holy ones, and with the sons of heaven has He associated their company to be a council of unity and a foundation for a holy building, to be an eternal plantation for all coming time. (1QS xi.7 f.)[175]

> The perverted spirit didst Thou cleanse from much transgression, that he may take his place in the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the sons of heaven, and Thou hast cast for man an eternal lot with spirits of knowledge. (1QH iii.21 f.)[176]

> . . . who came together for Thy covenant . . . and arrange themselves before Thee in the fellowship of the holy ones. (1QH iv.24–25)[177]

> To them whom God elects He gives this as an eternal possession and gives them a share in the lot of the holy ones, and to the sons of heaven does He join their circle [*sôd*] (1QS xi.7–8)[178]

"It is . . . expressly said," remarks Helmer Ringgren, "that the members 'stand in one and the same lot as the angels of the presence' (1QH vi.13), and it is apparently thought that the elect as the result of their entrance into the community become in some way citizens of the kingdom of heaven."[179]

Several texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that a human being could hope to be enthroned among the gods.[180] "Even in a conservative Jewish community like Qumran, such an idea was not taboo."[181] Thus, for instance, the anonymous speaker in column 1 of fragment 11 of 4Q491 declares that

> El Elyon gave me a seat among] those perfect forever, a mighty throne in the congregation of the gods. None of the kings of the east shall sit in it and their nobles shall not [come near it]. No Edomite shall be like me in glory, and none shall be exalted save me, nor shall come against me. For I have taken my seat in the [congregation] in the heavens And none [find fault with me]. I shall be reckoned with gods and established in the holy congregation. . . . In my legal judgment [none will stand against] me. I shall be reckoned with gods, and my glory with [that of] the king's sons.[182]

Similarly, several hymns from the Qumran community praise God for the grace that he bestows upon sinful humanity, demonstrating beyond cavil that belief in an exalted potential for humankind is not incompatible with a profound sense of human unworthiness and a reliance upon divine mercy.

> I thank you, Lord, because you saved my life from the pit, and from Sheol and Abaddon you have lifted me up to an everlasting height, so that I can walk on a boundless plain. And I know that there is hope for someone you fashioned out of clay to be an everlasting community. The corrupt spirit you have purified from the great sin so that he can take his place with the host of the holy ones, and can enter in communion with the congregation of the sons of heaven.[183]

> For your glory, you have purified man from sin, so that he can make himself holy for you from every impure abomination and blameworthy iniquity, to become united with the sons of your truth and in the lot of your holy ones, to raise the worms of the dead from the dust, to an [everlasting] community and from a depraved spirit, to

your knowledge, so that he can take his place in your presence with the perpetual host and the [everlasting] spirits.[184]

And he will not be able to compare with my glory. As for me, my place is with the divinities, [and glory or splend]our for myself I do not [buy them] with gold or with refined gold or precious metals. . . . Sing, favoured ones, sing to the king of [glory, be happy in the assem]bly of God, exult in the tents of salvation, praise in the [holy] residence, exalt together with the eternal hosts. . . . Proclaim and say: [Great is the God who works wonders,] for he brings down the arrogant spirit without even a remnant; and he raises the poor from the dust [to an eternal height,] and extols his stature up to the clouds and cures him together with the divinities in the congregation of the community.[185]

Likewise, the fragmentary Melchizedek scroll recovered from Cave 11 at Qumran seems to identify Melchizedek with the god who rises to judgment in Psalm 82;[186] elsewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Melchizedek is identified as the archangel Michael. In a play about the exodus from Egypt written by Ezekiel of Alexandria in the second century B.C., God, who is depicted in the form of a "noble man," gives Moses his scepter and his royal crown and allows the prophet to sit upon his throne; a host of stars fall to their knees before Moses in an attitude that can only be described as worship.[187] The angels Uriel and (Ye)remiel, who appear frequently in Jewish texts after the close of the Old Testament, may be "heavenly personifications" of the human biblical prophets Urijah or Uriyahu (see Jeremiah 26:20) and Jeremiah.[188]

Slavonic or *2 Enoch*—a text of very uncertain date and provenance, but one without any clear Christian features—offers a first-person account of a mortal human's purported entry into the divine council:

> And I fell down flat and did obeisance to the Lord. And the Lord, with his own mouth, called to me, "Be brave, Enoch! Don't be frightened! Stand up, and stand in front of my face forever." And Michael, the Lord's greatest archangel, lifted me up and brought me in front of the face of the Lord. And the Lord sounded out his servants. The Lord said, "Let Enoch come up and stand in front of my face forever!" And the glorious ones did obeisance and said, "Let him come up!" The Lord said to Michael, "Take Enoch, and extract (him) from the earthly clothing. And anoint him with the delightful oil, and put (him) into the clothes of glory." And Michael extracted me from my clothes. He anointed me with the delightful oil; and the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance like myrrh; and its shining is like the sun. And I gazed at all of myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference.[189]

The very important first-century Rabbi Johanan is reported to have declared, citing Isaiah 43:7, that "The righteous are destined to be called by the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, for it is said, 'Everyone who is called by my name, him have I created, formed and made that he should also share my glory.' " Rabbi Elazar, in the second century, explained that "The trishagion [i.e., 'Holy, Holy, Holy'] will be said before the righteous as it is said before the Holy One, blessed be He." "In a later passage in the Tanhuma and in the condensation in Bereshit Rabbati," remarks Morton Smith, commenting on these statements, "this potential divinity and predicted worship are presented as the direct consequences of man's being the image of God."[190]

"Jews were quite willing," writes Hurtado,

> to imagine beings who bear the divine name within them and can be referred to by one or more of God's titles (e.g., Yahoel or Melchizedek as *elohim* or, later, Metatron [Enoch] as *yahweh ha-katon* ["the lesser

> Yahweh"]), beings so endowed with divine attributes as to be difficult to distinguish them descriptively from God, beings who are very direct personal extensions of God's powers and sovereignty. About this, there is clear evidence. This clothing of servants of God with God's attributes and even his name will seem "theologically very confusing" if we go looking for a "strict monotheism" of relatively modern distinctions of "ontological status" between God and these figures, and expect such distinctions to be expressed in terms of "attributes and functions." By such definitions of the term, Greco-Roman Jews seem to have been quite ready to accommodate various divine beings.[191]

In Daniel 12:3, we read that, in the future resurrection, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." This concept is echoed by the Savior himself, at Matthew 13:43: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." "Be hopeful," the author of *1 Enoch* advises the faithful,

> because formerly you have pined away through evil and toil. But now you shall shine like the lights of heaven, and you shall be seen, and the windows of heaven shall be opened for you. . . . [Y]ou are about to be making a great rejoicing like the angels of heaven. . . . [F]or you are to be partners with the good-hearted people of heaven. (*1 Enoch* 104:2, 4, 6)

Second Baruch, a Syriac text whose Hebrew original probably dates to the period between A.D. 100 and 120, says of "those who are saved" that

> they shall see that world which is now invisible to them, and they will see a time which is now hidden to them. And time will no longer make them older. For they will live in the heights of that world and they will be like the angels and be equal to the stars. . . . And the excellence of the righteous will then be greater than that of the angels.[192]

"In the idiom of apocalyptic literature," John Collins observes of such passages, "the stars are the angelic host. When the righteous dead become like the stars, they become like the angels; in the Hellenistic world, to become a star was to become a god."[193] But the notion that we can become stars when we die long predates the Hellenistic era. The famous Greek comic poet Aristophanes refers to it as a well-known idea in his play *Peace*, written around 421 B.C.[194]

The great third-century Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria believed that faithful humans could take the place of fallen angels.[195] "The life of the soul," writes one scholar in summary of Origen's views,

> is a journey in which it learns about God, and a completion in which it knows God. . . . If the soul was virtuous enough in this life, it had nothing to fear from the heavens, where indeed it would receive new opportunities to become like God. In this journey too there were different levels of achievement and so different levels of glory among those who ascended to heaven. As the stars differed in their shining according to their merits, so too there was not one fixed destiny for the soul after death but many different ways in which it might travel.[196]

Deification in Early Christianity

It is important to note that, in the familiar manner of Hebrew literary parallelism, Psalm 82:6 equates "gods" with "children/sons of the Most High." Jesus Christ, as we have seen, is identified several times in the New Testament as "the Son of the Most High," and this seems to have infuriated his Jewish audience. Thus, it is remarkable that Luke 6:35 promises faithful disciples that, if they love their enemies and do good and lend without expectation of return, their reward shall be great: "Ye shall be the children of the Highest." Since, biblically, the "children of the Highest" or of the "Most High" are "gods," *'ĕlōhîm*, this seems in itself to be a promise of deification.[197] As St. Augustine points out, "If we have been made sons of God, we have also been made gods."[198] It is scarcely surprising, then, that faithful disciples will, at the end of time, participate in rendering divine judgment as do the elohim of Psalm 82 (see, for example, Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29–30).

St. Justin Martyr, a very important early Christian writer (d. A.D. 165), was expressly discussing Psalm 82 when he wrote to Trypho that

> the Holy Ghost reproaches men because they were made like God, free from suffering and death, provided that they kept His commandments, and were deemed deserving of the name of His sons, and yet they, becoming like Adam and Eve, work out death for themselves; let the interpretation of the Psalm be held just as you wish, yet thereby it is demonstrated that all men are deemed worthy of becoming "gods," and of having power to become sons of the Highest; and shall be each by himself judged and condemned like Adam and Eve.[199]

"We have learned," Justin wrote elsewhere, "that those only are deified who have lived near to God in holiness and virtue."[200] (Of course, it is only such persons who would be qualified, even potentially, to be divinely designated as judges.) Expressly discussing Psalm 82, Origen wrote of the angels and the gods, mentioning in this connection the "thrones," "dominions," "powers," and "principalities" alluded to in several places by the apostle Paul. On the basis of the biblical passages, he declared, "we see that we men, who are far inferior to these, may entertain the hope that by a virtuous life, and by acting in all things agreeably to reason, we may rise to a likeness with all these." Concluding, he cited 1 John 3:2, varying slightly from the text as we have received it: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like God, and shall see Him as He is."[201] "Christians," Origen said,

> are benefactors of their country more than others. For they train up citizens, and inculcate piety to the Supreme Being; and they promote those whose lives in the smallest cities have been good and worthy, to a divine and heavenly city, to whom it may be said, "Thou hast been faithful in the smallest city, come into a great one," where "God standeth in the assembly of the gods, and judgeth the gods in the midst;" and He reckons thee among them, if thou no more "die as a man, or fall as one of the princes."[202]

Other church fathers took similar positions. They do not seem to have entertained the notion that the psalm was condemning sinful mortal judges.[203] St. Irenaeus (d. ca. 200) and Clement of Alexandria identified the "gods" of Psalm 82 as virtuous or saved human beings who had received adoption.[204] "Each of them," observes Annewies van den Hoek, "firmly integrated human divinization, as viewed through the Psalm text, into the larger scheme of their theologies of salvation."[205] Clement writes of "the future life that we shall lead, according to God, and with gods."[206] "'God stood in the congregation of the gods,'" Clement quotes from the Psalm.

> "He judgeth in the midst of the gods." Who are they? Those that are superior to Pleasure, who rise above the passions, who know what they do—the Gnostics [i.e., those who know], who are greater than the world. "I said, Ye are Gods; and all sons of the Highest." To whom speaks the Lord? To those who reject as far as possible all that is of man.[207]

> On this wise it is possible for the Gnostic already to have become God. "I have said, Ye are gods and sons of the highest." And Empedocles says that the souls of the wise become gods, writing as follows: — "At last prophets, minstrels, and physicians, And the foremost among mortal men, approach; Whence spring gods supreme in honours."[208]

Tertullian (d. ca. A.D. 225) taught that it is impossible for humans to become gods—unless they receive godhood from God himself. "For we shall be even gods, if we shall deserve to be among those of whom He declared, 'I have said, Ye are gods,' and, 'God standeth in the congregation of the gods.' But this comes of His own grace, not from any property in us, because it is He alone who can make gods."[209]

Clement of Alexandria, too, acknowledged the Redeemer's essential role in *theosis*, the common Christian Greek term for human deification. Of those saved in heaven, he explained that "they are called by the appellation of gods, being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first put in their places by the Saviour."[210] "If one knows himself," wrote Clement, "he will know God; and knowing God, he will be made like God. . . . [H]is is beauty, the true beauty, for it is God; and that man becomes God, since God so wills."[211] St. Irenaeus exhorted Christians to follow "the only true and stedfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is himself."[212] Likewise, St. Athanasius, the great Alexandrian father of the Nicene creed, recognized that deification came through the incarnation and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and not solely because of human nature. (Like Irenaeus and Clement, Athanasius saw the "gods" of Psalm 82 as evidence for divine adoption.)[213] In fact, it was his insistence upon salvation as deification that led Athanasius to oppose Arianism. He felt that an only partially or metaphorically divine Savior, a redeemer who was not fully God, would be unable to deify us.

> For therefore did he assume the body originate and human, that having renewed it as its Framer, He might deify it in Himself, and thus might introduce us all into the kingdom of heaven after His likeness. For man had not been deified if joined to a creature, or unless the Son were very God; nor had man been brought into the Father's presence, unless He had been His natural and true Word who had put on the body. And as we had not been delivered from sin and the curse, unless it had been by nature human flesh, which the Word put on (for we should have had nothing common with what was foreign), so also the man had not been deified, unless the Word who became flesh had been by nature from the Father and true and proper to Him. For therefore the union was of this kind, that He might unite what is man by nature to Him who is in the nature of the Godhead, and his salvation and deification might be sure.[214]

"For," insisted Athanasius, "as the Lord, putting on the body, became man, so we men are deified by the Word as being taken to Him through His flesh, and henceforward inherit life everlasting."[215] "He was made man that we might be made God [or gods]."[216] "For He has become Man, that He might deify us in Himself . . . and that we may become henceforth a holy race, and 'partakers of the Divine Nature,' as blessed Peter wrote."[217]

In another text, Tertullian again draws upon Psalm 82 as biblical justification for terming Jesus Christ the Son of God:

> If, indeed, you follow those who did not at the time endure the Lord when showing Himself to be the Son of God, because they would not believe him to be the Lord, then (I ask you) call to mind along with them the passage where it is written, "I have said, Ye are gods, and ye are children of the Most High;" and again, "God standeth in the congregation of the gods;" in order that, if the Scripture has not been afraid to designate as gods human beings, who have become sons of God by faith, you may be sure that the same Scripture has with greater propriety conferred the name of the Lord on the true and one-only Son of God.[218]

Again, there is nothing here to hint or suggest that an early Christian writer saw the "gods" of Psalm 82 as evil. Quite the contrary. Mark D. Nispel makes the underlying reasoning of the passage explicit for modern readers as it relates to John 10. "The scripture calls righteous men 'gods', the argument goes, therefore how much more so should the Son of God receive the title 'God.' The requirement, as it were, of this argument, as also in the Gospel, is the minor premise that righteous men or believers are called 'gods.'"[219] St. Cyprian (d. A.D. 258), the bishop of Carthage, understood the argument in precisely the same way. "But," he wrote, "if they who have been righteous, and have obeyed the divine precepts, may be called gods, how much more is Christ, the Son of God, God!"[220]

"We cast blame upon Him," said St. Irenaeus concerning God,

> because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods; although God has adopted this course out of His pure benevolence, that no one may impute to Him invidiousness or grudgingness. He declares, "I have said, Ye are gods; and ye are all sons of the Highest." But since we could not sustain the power of divinity, He adds, "But ye shall die like men," setting forth both truths—the kindness of His free gift, and our weakness, and also that we were possessed of power over ourselves. For after His great kindness He graciously conferred good [upon us], and made men like to Himself, [that is] in their own power; while at the same time by His prescience He knew the infirmity of human beings, and the consequences which would flow from it; but through [His] love and [His] power, He shall overcome the substance of created nature. For it was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that man should be made after the image and likeness of God, having received the knowledge of good and evil.[221]

"It is a curiosity," writes Nispel, "to note the large place occupied by the concept of salvation as deification in the theology of the Greek fathers and at the same time how little attention western scholarship has given to this idea."[222] It is perhaps especially puzzling since the doctrine is not utterly absent even from the fathers of the West. For instance, St. Augustine of Hippo (d. A.D. 430), perhaps the greatest of all the early Christian fathers, wrote of Christ that "He that justifieth doth Himself deify, in that by justifying He doth make sons of God. 'For he has given them power to become the sons of God.' If then we have been made sons of god, we have also been made gods."[223]

Modern Western scholars who have given thought to the subject often presume that the doctrine of deification arose under Greek influence after Christianity had spread among the pagans of late antiquity.[224] But, as the examples cited in this essay should make abundantly obvious, the doctrine has its roots in Jewish sources and

originated well before Hellenism had taken hold of Christian theology. Even A. N. Williams, who appears to be unaware of the early origin of deification teaching, offers a useful caveat for those who would dismiss it as a pagan-inspired aberration. "Early in the Christian tradition," he writes,

> from the third century onwards, theosis became the dominant model of the concept of salvation. The Fathers writing on deification drew on two sources: the Bible and the Platonic tradition. . . . The early tradition can be viewed as too indebted to the pagan tradition. . . . This view, however, vastly underestimates the importance of biblical warrants in early Christian writing on deification. Chief among the biblical sources was 2 Peter 1:4: "Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion and may become participants in divine nature." Other texts of importance include Psalm 82:6, John 10:34 (quoting Psalm 82), Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:49 and 2 Corinthians 8:9.[225]

Nispel goes yet further, contending that

> the origin of this concept among the early fathers is largely to be found in the church's Christological use of Psalm 82 in the east and west as early as the late first century. This can be demonstrated by observing that Psalm 82:1, 6–7 were regularly used as Christological proof texts in the early collections of *testimonia* against the Jews, and further, that the use of these texts required that all believers in some way be considered "gods." . . . The use of Psalm 82 as a proof text for deification in the later fathers of the East is well known.[226]

And there is, of course, an abundance of language in the New Testament that would suggest something like a doctrine of exaltation for the righteous saints. "To him that overcometh," says Christ in Revelation 3:21, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." "And I saw thrones," says John the Revelator himself in Revelation 20:4, 6, "and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. . . . Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Images of royalty and reign recur. "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" (Revelation 4:4; compare Revelation 4:10).

John J. Collins, in his Hermeneia commentary on the book of Daniel, helps to elucidate such passages, pointing out that

> The background of this notion lies in ancient traditions about the council of 'El, where the gods sit on their "princely thrones." In the later period, compare Matt 19:28, where the apostles are promised that they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and Rev. 20:4 ("and then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgement had been committed").[227]

"And when the chief shepherd shall appear," says 1 Peter 5:4, 6, "ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. . . . Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." At 1 Corinthians 6:2–3, the apostle Paul, irritated with the Corinthian Saints for their propensity to take one another to court, demands of them, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Presumably he is reminding them of things they already know. "Paul's understanding of salvation," says James Tabor, "involves a rather astounding (at least to modern ears) scheme of 'mass apotheosis.'"[228] Indeed, Paul

speaks of the exaltation of faithful Christians as an event so certain that, in a sense, it has already occurred: God, he says, "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

> The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory. In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. . . . We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. (Romans 8:16– 19, 22 NJB)

One is forcibly reminded of the French philosopher Henri Bergson's declaration that "the universe . . . is a machine for the making of gods."[229] Such a phrase might not have seemed altogether inappropriate to Paul as a description of his own view:

> And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18 NJB)

> We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good. He decided beforehand who were the ones destined to be moulded to the pattern of his Son, so that he should be the eldest of many brothers; it was those so destined that he called; those that he called, he justified, and those that he has justified he has brought into glory. (Romans 8:28–30 NJB)

Commenting on this passage, Tabor explains that

> Jesus' transformation or glorification foreshadows that of the many "in Christ" who follow. "First-born" [=New Jerusalem "eldest"] as used here is therefore anticipatory, pointing toward recapitulation. It means more than preeminence; it implies there are those who will be "later-born." The equation of Jesus the Son of God, with the *many* glorified sons of God to follow is God's means of bringing into existence a *family* (i.e., "many brothers") of cosmic beings, the *Sons of God*, who share his heavenly *doxa* ["glory"]. Or, to put it another way, Jesus already stands at the head of a new *genus* of cosmic "brothers" who await their full transformation at his arrival from heaven. [230]

Nearing his own death, Paul reflected that

> I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7–8)

This is a familiar passage, quoted often among Christians. But its familiarity should not be permitted to obscure its implications nor to dull its force. Professor Tabor draws out the full and stunning meaning of the apostle's language:

> One must not miss the radical implications of Paul's understanding of the destiny of the elect group. Paul develops his exegesis from Gen. 1:27 and Psa. 8:6 as well. These texts speak of man in the "image" (*eikōn*)

> of God, having "all things placed under his feet." Paul interprets this in the light of Christ, who is the "image of God" (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18) and has been given all rule and authority (1 Cor. 15:24; Phil. 2:10) with "all things" subject to him. So it takes on the vastly expanded meaning of *cosmic* rule, power, and exaltation. What is said of Jesus as glorified Son of God, is also said of those "many brothers" who follow. In the wider context of Hellenistic religions, it makes little sense to speak of an exalted, heavenly, group of immortals, who are designated "Sons of God," as *human beings*. The old rubric, "Gods are immortal, humans are mortal" is apt here. Paul's understanding of salvation involves a particularly Jewish notion of *apotheosis* [deification], and would have been understood as such by his converts. . . . I would argue that this idea of heavenly *glorification* is the core of Paul's message. . . . Paul is consumed with *two great insights*—the vision he has had of the exalted and glorified Christ whom he knows to be the crucified man Jesus, whose followers he had once opposed; and his conviction that by grace through faith this same heavenly glorification is the destiny of the elect group.[231]

"He that overcometh," says the voice of "the Alpha and Omega" in Revelation 21:7, "shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." This language of our potential to be adopted as the children or sons of God is highly significant, and particularly so in view of our earlier discussion about the Savior's argument in John 10. "Jesus' reference to 'Son of God' in 10:36 does not weaken the argument by reducing the claim from 'god' to 'son of God,'" wrote Father Neyrey, "because if one continues reading Ps 82:6, the two terms are considered equivalent and parallel there ('I said, "You are *gods*, all of you, *sons of the Most High*" ')."[232] It seems clear that, in adopting us as his children, God makes us like his Son Jesus Christ. He appoints us his heirs and exalts us to the position of, precisely, gods. Such, at least, is the teaching of the New Testament.

You must see what great love the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God's children— which is what we are! The reason why the world does not acknowledge us is that it did not acknowledge him. My dear friends, we are already God's children, but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed. We are well aware that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is (1 John 3:1–2 NJB).[233]

Praise

But we cannot leave the ancient Semitic council of the gods behind just yet. There is more to be learned about it that will help us to understand its function in the Bible and its relevance to the issue of human deification more clearly. Just as it was the duty of every individual Israelite, of the priests, and of the nations to praise the Lord, the members of the divine council were also there to praise God.[234] Thus, again, we read in Psalm 29:

> Ascribe to the Lord, you gods [*bənē ʾēlîm*], ascribe to the Lord glory and might. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name; bow down to the Lord in the splendour of holiness. (Psalm 29:1–2 NEB)[235]

In Psalm 89, the divine assembly is summoned to hymn the incomparable greatness of the Lord, Yahweh or Jehovah:

> Let heaven confess your wonders, Yahweh, Your faithful deeds in the council of holy ones. For who in the heavens compares with Yahweh? Who may be likened to Yahweh among the gods [*bənē ʾēlîm*]? The god terrible in the council [*sôḏ*] of the holy ones, Great and dreadful above all around him. Yahweh, god of hosts, who is like you? (Psalm 89:6–9)[236]

Psalm 148 likewise calls upon the heavenly host to praise God:

> Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. (Psalm 148:1–3)

Another interesting text on the praise offered God in the divine assembly is the Septuagint Greek version of Deuteronomy 32:43. The first two lines of that verse are omitted in the Masoretic Hebrew text and therefore also in the King James Version, which is based on that Hebrew tradition. They read:

> Rejoice with him, O heavens! And prostrate yourselves to him, all you sons of God!

Such passages can hardly fail to remind us of the question posed to Job, which is often used by Latter-day Saints as a text illustrative of premortal existence:

> Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4, 7)

Note the parallelism of this passage, which seems to make "the sons of God" equivalent to "the morning stars." It comes as little surprise, therefore, to learn from Mullen that "the stars are seen in both Ugaritic and Hebrew literature as members of the council."[237] Stars and gods (in some cases, the deified dead) were commonly linked in early Semitic thinking.[238] (In classical pagan thought, too, as well as in early Christian belief and in Hellenistic and late antique Judaism, stars were often regarded as divine or angelic and, significantly, as akin to human souls. Indeed, the souls of human beings were sometimes thought to have originated in the stars, and human salvation consisted in a return to the stars.)[239] As an example of early Semitic thinking, consider the following fragmentary passage from an ancient Canaanite text:

> [And tell,] that the sons of ʾĒl may know, [And that] the assembly of the stars [may understand] [——] the council of the heavens [may ?][240]

In this light, Lehi's prophetic call, as it is described at the very beginning of the Book of Mormon, takes on yet another dimension. An eighth–seventh-century B.C. surge in piety directed toward the heavenly bodies is detectable not only in the biblical text but in visual symbolism recovered from the western portions of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Such symbolism is notably present in seventh-century B.C. Judah, out of which Lehi emerged.[241] There is evidence that Yahweh was regarded as a sun god,[242] and some scholars believe that the Jerusalem temple was, from its beginning, a solar shrine.[243] Certain recently recovered materials also seem to fit the Egypto-Hebraic cultural background that 1 Nephi claims for Lehi: A 649 B.C. tablet recording a land transaction includes stellar and lunar symbolism accompanied by the name of the property's Judahite owner; of the witnesses to the transaction, one was apparently Egyptian. A seventh-century B.C. tablet from Haran, which may have been the homeland of astral symbolism, shows not only stars but the name *Laban* and an Egyptian *ankh* sign (the symbol of life).[244] Characters bearing the name *Laban* appear, of course, both in Genesis 24–31 (where it is associated with Haran) and in 1 Nephi 3–4. Thus, Lehi's prophetic call appears, in these regards as in others, to fit precisely the time and place claimed for it:

> [Lehi] was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God. And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day. And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. (1 Nephi 1:8–10)[245]

Here, not only the Son of God (the "One") but his twelve apostles—who are not generally regarded as divine—are evidently premortal beings who have been sent as representatives of the heavenly council.[246] And Lehi's prophetic authority is seen, furthermore, to rest at least in part on his having had access to the council.

In both Canaanite and Hebrew traditions, the stellar members of the divine assembly were sometimes also viewed as warriors.[247] Thus the song of Deborah exults that "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5:20).[248] Ugaritic legends recall the attempt by the god Sea, or Yamm, to seize control of the divine council, and his defeat at the hands of El's son, Ba'l.[249] In the Bible, too, Yahweh is surrounded by divine soldiers who fight on his behalf:

> Yahweh from Sinai came, He beamed forth from Seir upon us, He shone from Mount Paran. With him were myriads of holy ones At his right hand marched the divine ones, Yea, the purified of the peoples. (Deuteronomy 33:1–3)[250]

Who are these divine soldiers? Although the passage is difficult and ambiguous, it should be noted that the "holy ones," the "divine ones," seem in the passage just quoted to be identified with "the purified of the peoples." Is there a possible reference here to postmortal human beings? We have already mentioned evidence that suggests that, in very early Israelite and Canaanite belief, the dead could be referred to as "gods." However that question may be answered, though, it would seem that Psalm 68:18 speaks of the same moment in history when it reads:

> The chariots of God are two myriads Two thousand the bowmen of Yahweh When he came from Sinai with the Holy Ones.[251]

Rebellious Gods

But this was not the only conflict possibly involving members of the assembly. Eliphaz, addressing Job, implied that things have not always been altogether right even within the divine council itself:

> Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly. (Job 4:17–18)[252]

"It is a noteworthy fact," writes Kurt Marti of Psalm 82, "that Yahweh does not, as a matter of course, dispute the godhood of the gods in this ancient psalm. On the contrary, he calls upon them to finally take their godhood seriously or, in other words, to act among human beings in a divine way."[253] The psalm, says Handy, "assumes the existence of deities who rule aspects of the cosmos independent of, but under the jurisdiction of, the head deity. They have become corrupt and now are condemned to oblivion for their misbehavior."[254] In the third Christian century, Origen of Alexandria and others believed that an angel stands watch over every nation and that each angel would be held accountable for the handling of his stewardship. Moreover, Origen, who equated stars with

angels, taught that they were capable of sin and, citing 1 Corinthians 15:41, thought that the varying degrees of glory in the heavens reflected or foreshadowed God's judgment of them.[255]

Similarly, Isaiah 24 seems to speak of judgment for misdeeds in the heavens, as well as for those committed here below: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isaiah 24:21).[256] We recall here too the rhetorical question posed at Isaiah 14: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Isaiah 14:12). (Especially intriguing is the fact that the Hebrew words rendered in the King James Bible as "Lucifer, son of the morning" could just as easily be translated as "morning star, son of dawn"—which draws us again into the astronomical imagery often connected with the divine assembly.) Incidentally, Mullen and Cross locate El's legendary dwelling place, Mount Zaphon, in the Amanus mountain range, to the north of Ugarit.[257] This seems clearly related to the allusion to the fall of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:13–14, where we read his boast, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God [*kawkabī ʾēl*]: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation [Hebrew: the mount of the council (of El?)], in the sides of the north [Hebrew: *Zaphon*, i.e., the sacred mountain]: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High [*ʿelyōn*]."[258] Yet, although Satan or Lucifer is named among the sons of God at Job 1:6 and 2:1, Christ saw him "as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18).[259]

Thus war in heaven took place at least once.[260] And Lucifer, as we all know, did not fall alone. The pseudepigraphic text *1 Enoch* 86:1–6 has *many* stars falling from heaven to earth. Accordingly, there was a danger that such rebellious members (or former members) of the assembly would lead people on earth astray. We have already noted, in another context, that the book of Deuteronomy warns against being misled in such a manner. But that passage bears repeating here:

> Take . . . heed . . . lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. (Deuteronomy 4:15, 19; compare Deuteronomy 17:3)

To worship the heavenly bodies was to worship "other gods." "These olden gods, completely demythologized in Israel's liturgical life, were not viewed as active members of the cultus. The Israelite cultus could recognize the worship of Yahweh alone."[261] Deuteronomy 17:2–7 stipulates capital punishment for anyone who "hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded" (Deuteronomy 17:3; compare Jeremiah 19:13). But the warnings were not always heeded:

> And he [Manasseh, king of Judah] did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove [*ʾăshērāh*], as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord. . . . And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. (2 Kings 21:2–5)[262]

Jeremiah prophesied of a future period when such sins would be done away with and their perpetrators would be punished, if only posthumously:

> At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. (Jeremiah 8:1–2)

Psalm 82, Again

Let us return, now, to a consideration of Psalm 82 itself. Perhaps it will be wise to repeat the text of the psalm, this time in one of the newer translations—one that is informed by recent scholarship (especially in the wake of the discoveries at Ras-Shamra):

> God [*ʾĕlōhîm*] takes his stand in the court of heaven [or "assembly of God"; *ʿădaṯ ʾēl*] to deliver judgement among the gods themselves [*bəqereḇ ʾĕlōhîm*].
>
> How long will you judge unjustly and show favour to the wicked? You ought to give judgement for the weak and the orphan, and see right done to the destitute and downtrodden, you ought to rescue the weak and the poor, and save them from the clutches of wicked men. But you know nothing, you understand nothing, you walk in the dark while earth's foundations are giving way. This is my sentence: Gods [*ʾĕlōhîm*] you may be, sons all of you of a high god [or "of the Most High"; *bənê ʿelyôn*],[263] yet you shall die as men die; princes fall, every one of them, and so shall you.
>
> Arise, O God [*ʾĕlōhîm*], and judge the earth; for thou dost pass all nations through thy sieve. (Psalm 82 NEB)

We need not take Psalm 82's portrayal of judgment and condemnation within the divine council as literally accurate, as representing an actual historical event (although, obviously, it might), any more than we are obliged to take as literally true the depiction of Satan in Job 1–2, freely coming and going within the heavenly court and even placing wagers with God. The psalms are, after all, poetry. Much as the *Thousand and One Nights*—though the events narrated in them are fictional—convey a wealth of background information about the details and assumptions of the culture that produced them and that they claim to depict, Psalm 82 and related texts tell us a great deal about the theological presuppositions of the writers of scripture. And we have seen that the concept that underlies both Psalm 82 and Job 1–2—that of a council of divine beings surrounding the supreme God—is surprisingly widespread in and out of the Bible and surprisingly consistent wherever it appears. The author of Psalm 82 seems to be expressing, in poetic and perhaps even fictional form, something like the idea that we have already met in the book of *Jubilees*, according to which the obvious evil and disorder of the world is to be blamed on the gods who were assigned to the other nations of the earth. The psalm thereby exalts Israel's God, Yahweh, as alone reliable and competent to govern not merely Israel, but the whole planet. Thus, in what might be described as an outburst of inspired local patriotism nicely caught in Mitchell Dahood's rendition of the psalm's final verse, the poet calls upon his deity to assume universal command:

> Arise, O God, govern the earth, rule over all the nations yourself![264]

"Yahweh's position," writes Mullen of this poem, ". . . is in the midst of the gods [*bəqereḇ ʾĕlōhîm*]. This corresponds exactly to the other Israelite conceptions of the position of Yahweh in his council—he is enthroned, surrounded by

the other deities. . . . Yahweh is clearly the central god in the assembly, the deity about whom the other council members gather."[265] Still, he is simply "the preeminent member of the divine assembly."[266] "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord," says Psalm 86:8.[267] This is, as we have seen, a common motif—and a rather odd one for those who wish to insist on the supposed strict monotheism of Hebrew religion: "While the monotheistic tendencies of Israelite religion prohibited the worship of other gods," Mullen remarks, "divine beings surrounded Yahweh in his council."[268] "Despite the tendency of interpreters to view the Hebrew materials from a monotheistic viewpoint," Mullen observes elsewhere, "it is apparent that the biblical materials themselves envisioned Yahweh surrounded by his heavenly court, the lesser deities who made up the divine entourage."[269] Professor Cross agrees:

> In both Ugaritic and biblical literature, the use of the first person plural is characteristic of address in the divine council. The familiar "we" of Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image . . .," Gen. 3:22, "Behold the man is become as one of us . . .," and Gen. 11:7, "Come, let us go down and let us confound their language . . .," has long been recognized as the plural address used by Yahweh in his council.[270]

The situation was the same in Canaanite lore. The Phoenician account of Sanchuniathon, which is recorded by Philo Byblius, indicates that El was surrounded by allies who were named after him: "And the allies of Elous, who is Kronos, were surnamed Eloim".[271] This attempted etymology leaves little doubt that these warrior allies were the Ugaritic *ʾilm* or *bn ʾilm*, the "gods" or "sons of God." "They were no doubt the minor deities who surrounded ʾĒl," writes Mullen, who proceeds to observe that "ʾĒl's retinue was composed of gods who were named and fashioned after him."[272]

How, then, was ancient Israelite religion different from the faith of those who surrounded the Hebrews? We must avoid imposing later notions and anachronistic judgments, particularly those derived from Hellenistic philosophy rather than from the biblical data, upon the early Israelites.

> In many "monotheistic" traditions the gap between God and human beings is filled by the intermediary forces of angels, constellations, and demons. The world of divinity becomes a kind of complex bureaucratic system, or an emanated chain of being according to the neo-Platonist conceptions of emanation, from the one to the many. . . . Hierarchical . . . conceptions of the world of divinity stand in opposition to the picture of simple unity of the philosophers, and as a result the conception of idolatry is conceived differently. The metaphysical gap between those who reject paganism and the pagans becomes smaller, since pagan conceptions also involve a pantheon with one god at the head. What distinguishes them is not the answer to the question of what forces there are in the world, but rather the answer to the question of who one is permitted to worship, of whether worship must be exclusive to the figure at the head of the hierarchy. The exclusivity of God, as the only metaphysical power who constitutes unity within himself, is undermined, and the argument turns upon the exclusivity of the worship of one power. . . . [I]ntermediate forces exist and have influence, but their worship is nevertheless forbidden.[273]

Such, it seems, was the view of "the world of divinity" among the early Israelites. Thus, Psalm 89:6–9 reads,

> The heavens praise Thy wondrousness, O Yahweh, Likewise Thy trustworthiness in the assembly of the gods.
>
> For who in the skies can be compared with Yahweh; Who among the gods is like unto Yahweh?

> A god who inspires awe in the council of the gods, Who is great and fearful beyond all those who surround Him.[274]

This is also the worldview presupposed in Psalm 82. "That other gods exist alongside Yahweh, the psalm does not deny. It is, rather, concerned with the question, To which god do precedence and predominance belong? Naturally, another question stands behind that one: To which people do precedence and predominance belong?"[275] In the Dead Sea Scrolls, we read of the "God of the gods" (*ʾēl ʾēlîm*)[276] and of the "prince of the gods" (*śār ʾēlîm*): "Behold, Thou art prince of the gods and king of the honored ones, Lord of every spirit."[277] Biblically, God is commonly referred to as the "Lord of hosts," but he is also "Prince of princes," "God of gods, and Lord of lords."[278]

Who were these other divine beings? Specifically, who were they in the Hebrew biblical context? It will be useful here to recall the four major interpretations that have been offered of the "gods" condemned to death at Psalm 82:7: (1) They were Israelite rulers or judges, ordinary men. (2) They were the rulers or judges of the other nations—again, apparently ordinary human beings. (3) They were the people of Israel, gathered at Sinai for the revelation of God. (4) They were the members of the divine council, the gods or the angels.

Mullen (whose widely recognized and highly esteemed scholarship on the divine council we have been following, to a great degree, in this paper) recognizes only three leading interpretations for the gods of Psalm 82. They were, he writes, either (1) Israelite rulers or judges, (2) rulers or judges of the other nations, or (3) members of the divine council, the angels or the gods. He argues that "the latter two must be combined in order for us to interpret the text correctly,"[279] and it seems clear that he is correct. But an interpretation of Psalm 82 that makes its "gods" angelic or divine superterrestrial rulers of other nations seems to leave Jesus liable to a charge of proof texting in John 10, vulnerable to the accusation that he misapplied the passage in his dispute with the Jews. If Psalm 82 applies to the divine council, and if the Jews to whom Jesus addressed his comments were—because they were Israelites and because they were mortal—completely distinct from the members of the divine council, it seems clear that Jesus' statement to them is inaccurate in its use of the Old Testament and, essentially, beside the point. This is, nonetheless, the option accepted by quite a number of commentators. The Catholic *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, for instance, seems to damn with faint praise when it says forthrightly of Jesus' response to the Jews that "this was good rabbinic exegesis, which disregarded the original sense and context of scriptural words."[280]

I suspect that I am not alone in feeling uncomfortable with such a solution. Is there any way of maintaining the interpretation of Psalm 82 that modern scholarship has largely and (I think) convincingly settled on, without accusing the Savior of misuse of the passage? It seems to me that there may well be such a possibility. We should, I am convinced, think in this regard of the remarkable vision of premortal humanity granted to the patriarch Abraham and recorded in Abraham 3:22–23:

> Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

Here we have God standing in the midst of premortal spirits who are appointed to be rulers, in a scene that is really a textbook instance of the motif of the divine assembly. These are premortal human beings. Can they truly be called "gods" in any sense?

Humans as Sons of God

Yes, they can. We should first note Psalm 8:3–6, in which the Psalmist addresses an important question to God. The passage reads as follows in the King James Version of the English Bible:

> When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and with honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.

Our concern here is specifically with verse 5, which, in the King James translation, places human beings "a little lower than the angels." This is a strong statement and one that is often quoted in order to illustrate the majesty and dignity of humankind. Yet, even so, it is too weak. The Hebrew word underlying KJV "angels" is actually *elohim*. The "angels" of Psalm 8:5 KJV are, literally, "'elohim' beings, the members of the heavenly court."[281] The passage should therefore almost certainly be translated, rather, as "thou hast made him a little lower than God" or, even, as "thou hast made him a little lower than the gods."[282]

But biblical thought on the subject goes even further than that. Writing to the saints at Ephesus, the apostle Paul spoke of "one God and Father of us all" (Ephesians 4:6).[283] How literally did he mean it? Preaching on Mars Hill in Athens, to a pagan audience, Paul approvingly cited one of their own pagan poets—the third-century B.C. Aratus of Cilicia—to make his case that human beings are God's "offspring" (Acts 17:28–29).[284] The word rendered "offspring" by the King James translators is the Greek *genos*, which is cognate with the Latin *genus* and means "family" or "race," or "kind," or, even, and most especially interesting for our present purpose, "descendants of a common ancestor."[285] Paul was saying that human beings are akin to God—the word *kin* is itself related to *genos*—or, to put it differently, that he and they are of the same genus. (The Latin Vulgate rendering of the same passage uses exactly that word, *genus*.) What does this mean? The great third-century philosopher Porphyry of Tyre explained in his *Isagoge*, one of the most important and widely read treatises on logic from the ancient world, that the primary meaning of the term *genos* or *genus* refers to

> a collection of things related to one another because each is related to some one thing in a particular way. In this sense, the Heraclids are said to be a family *[genos]* because of the relationship of descent from one man, Heracles. The many people related to each other because of this kinship deriving from Heracles are called the family of the Heraclids since they as a family are separate from other families.[286]

Porphyry's explanation that the nature of a *genus* consists at least partly in its separation from other *genera* seems to accord very well with the argument at Acts 17:29, where Paul contends that, because we and God are of the same *genus*, "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Such things, such *genera*, he says, are separate from our *genus*, and, hence, are not appropriately worshiped by human beings. They are beneath us.

"The basic language of the Bible and of the Christian religion," wrote G. Ernest Wright, albeit in another context,

> is an anthropomorphic language, drawn from the categories of personality and community. Confusion with metaphors drawn from other realms should be avoided because there is a basic relatedness and kinship between God and human life which does not exist in the same sense between God and nature.[287]

Aratus's declaration, which Paul endorsed, may perhaps represent a quite venerable position among Greek thinkers. "One is the race of men with the gods," wrote the great fifth-century B.C. lyric poet Pindar, using the same word, genos, that appears in Acts 17.[288] The so-called *lamellai*, or "Golden Plates," found in tombs in Thessaly, Crete, and Italy are among the most intriguing documents from antiquity and provide still further evidence. These *lamellai* were apparently placed in the hands of the dead to remind the soul of powerful phrases that it was to use when confronting the powers of the underworld; they would thus help the soul to attain salvation. Among them is a plate from Petelia, dating to the mid-fourth century before Christ, that seems to make a point rather similar to Paul's own. Describing the terrain and the guards that the deceased soul will encounter in the spirit world, the text advises him to declare, "I am a child of Earth and starry Heaven; but my race *[genos]* is of Heaven alone."[289] In other words, the deceased person belongs there, in heaven; he is akin to heavenly things and not to the mundane objects of earth.

That Paul intended to call his audience's attention to the familial resemblance and relationship that exists between God and humanity receives support from a survey of translations of Acts 17:28–29: The King James rendering of *genos* as "offspring" is followed by the New American Standard Bible, the New International Version, the Amplified Bible, the Rheims New Testament, the New American Bible, the New English Bible, and the New Revised Standard Version, as well as by Hugh Schonfield's so-called *Authentic New Testament*.[290] The New Jerusalem Bible says that "We are all his children." The modern translation by J. B. Phillips concurs.[291] Likewise, the 1990 Arabic New Testament says of God that we are his *abnā'* ("children").[292] The modern Hebrew New Testament, using a word derived from the root meaning "to beget," also says that we are God's "children" (*yəlādîm*). The paraphrastic *Living Bible* explains that we are the "sons" of God. The modern French version called *Bonnes Nouvelles Aujourd'hui* agrees, reporting that we are his "enfants."

William Tyndale's 1525 New Testament has "generacion," and identifies humanity as "the generacion of God." The Calvinist Geneva Bible of 1560 follows Tyndale, using precisely the same terms. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Tyndale's use of the word as an illustration for the meaning of *generation* as "offspring, progeny."

The 1950 Arabic Catholic New Testament, published in Beirut, says that we are God's *dhurriyya*, which means that we are his "progeny," "descendents," "children," or "offspring."[293] The 1972 Turkish Bible uses precisely the same word (in its Turkicized form [*zürriyet*]), with precisely the same meaning.[294] Western versions have used analogous language. Deploying a word obviously cognate with the term *genos*, the 1556 Latin translation prepared by the Calvinist Theodore Beza says that we are the *progenies* of God. We are also *progenie di Dio*, or "God's progeny," according to the 1914 Italian Bible.[295] This is the same word that the University of Chicago's Constantine Trypanis chooses to translate *genos* in the original passage of Aratus's astronomical poem *Phaenomena*, from which Paul was quoting.[296]

The 1991 Hebrew translation of the Bible Society in Israel says that we are God's *ṣe'ṣā'īm*, using the common modern Hebrew word for "descendants." The popular-language German translation of the New Testament entitled *Die Gute Nachricht* says, "Von ihm stammen auch wir ab" ("We also descend from him").[297] The roughly equivalent modern-language Spanish New Testament entitled *Dios Llega al Hombre*, straightforwardly indicates that "Somos familia de Dios" ("We are the family of God").[298] The 1904 translation of the Bible into Farsī or Persian says that we are of the *nasl-i Khudā*, "the lineage of God."[299]

Martin Luther's historic German Bible renders Acts 17:28 as "Wir sind seines Geschlechts" ("We are of his race") and expands on this, in the next verse, by saying that we are "göttlichs Geschlechts" ("of divine race").[300] This is a very strong claim. One of the standard manuals of German etymology explains that the word *Geschlecht* means, essentially, "what strikes out in the same direction"[301] or "things of similar kind." "It was chiefly used in the sense of 'descent *[Abstammung]*, [noble] extraction,' and in the sense of 'people of the same descent *[Abstammung]*.' "[302] Konstantin Rösch's early twentieth-century Catholic New Testament concurs with Luther, explaining that "Wir sind von seinem Geschlecht" (i.e., again, "We are of his race"), "von Gottes Geschlecht" ("of God's race"), as does the 1958 translation by Rupert Storr ("Sind wir doch seines Geschlechtes"), which proceeds, like Luther's, to speak of our "divine race" ("Sind wir nun so göttlichen Geschlechtes").[303] Ulrich Wilckens's 1972 translation uses precisely the same terminology.[304] The relatively recent *Einheitsübersetzung*, which takes its name from the fact that it represents a collaborative effort on the part of the Roman Catholics and the major Protestant denominations of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, renders the passage even more strikingly: "Wir sind von seiner Art," it says, which means "We are of his type," or "We are of his kind."[305] James Moffatt's early twentieth-century translation declares that "We too belong to his race."[306] "Car nous sommes aussi de sa race," says the original Jerusalem Bible, as produced by the Ecole Biblique, which reads in the following verse that we are "de la race de Dieu": "We are of his race . . . of the race of God."

Thus for Paul, humans are the offspring or the children of God. They are, as in the words of the Hebrew Bible, *bənê ʾĕlōhîm*. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to conclude that, for Paul, just as in ancient Semitic belief, God is the father of man (*ʾabū ʾadami*)—or, as the epistle to the Hebrews (12:9) puts it, "the Father of spirits."[307] "Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever" (1 Chronicles 29:10; compare Psalm 89:26). The Jewish opponents of Christ described in John 8:41 merely reflected traditional Hebrew belief when they claimed God as their father.[308] "Ye are the children *[bānîm]* of the Lord your God," declares Deuteronomy 14:1.[309] This is also the doctrine that appears to undergird Hebrews 2:11, where that epistle says of Christ, the divine Son, and of those whom he saves, that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one *[ex henos]*: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."[310] And again, those whom Christ calls "my brethren" in Matthew 25:40 are not limited to believing Christians, as if Jesus were summoning us only to treat with kindness the poor and afflicted whom we find theologically acceptable.[311]

The Latter-day Saint understanding that humans are of the same genus or species as God is thus clearly biblical. "The line separating the divine from the human in ancient Judaism was not as absolute as is sometimes supposed."[312] As the distinguished Anglican church historian Alan Richardson contends, the theologians who produced such classical creeds as the famous Definition of Faith of the fifth-century Council of Chalcedon, unduly dominated by the philosophy of their day, exaggerated the gulf between divine and human. And they have been enormously influential in subsequent Christian thought. Still, centuries of creedal Christianity notwithstanding, says Richardson, "God and man are fundamentally akin."[313]

But can human beings be called "gods" *now?* In an obvious sense, no. Yet just as an acorn is much more to be called an oak than it can be termed a soup or a submarine or even a palm tree, there is another sense in which they clearly *can* be termed "gods" even now. And at least some early Christians were apparently quite willing to do so. The illustrious third-century church father Clement of Alexandria, for example, wrote that Heraclitus, the equally illustrious pre-Socratic philosopher, correctly declared that "Men are gods, and gods are men."[314] And, once again,

we must note that Clement does not limit application of this dictum to Christian believers. (Heraclitus obviously cannot have had any such limitation in mind since he lived, a pagan, several centuries before Christ.) The first-century A.D. *Life of Adam and Eve*, a Jewish text, has the angels worshiping the newly created Adam, at God's command.[315]

Even sources reluctant to come right out and say it acknowledged that the term *god* could be used in various ways, some of which were applicable to human beings: "Learn this also," says Peter in a passage from the third-century *Clementine Homilies* that bears obvious relevance to the controversy recorded in John 10:

> The bodies of men have immortal souls, which have been clothed with the breath of God; and having come forth from God, they are of the same substance, but they are not gods. But if they are gods, then in this way the souls of all men, both those who have died, and those who are alive, and those who shall come into being, are gods. But if in a spirit of controversy you maintain that these also are gods, what great matter is it, then, for Christ to be called God? for He has only what all have.[316]

Note, incidentally, that humans are said here to be of the same "substance" as God.[317]

Some will object, of course, that the thesis advanced by this paper violates monotheism. But ancient Jews and Christians would, it seems, have disagreed, and we must be careful neither to impose our own assumptions on the Bible and other early texts nor to presume that our presuppositions are necessarily correct. While some might suppose that the other "gods" were so in name only, Origen of Alexandria insisted that "Scripture distinguishes between those gods which are such only in name and those which are truly gods."[318] "And by this name 'gods,' " said Origen, "we are not to understand the objects of heathen worship (for we know that 'all the gods of the heathen are demons'), but the gods mentioned by the prophets as forming an assembly, whom God 'judges,' and to each of whom He assigns his proper work."[319] In fact, Origen was scornful of those who refused to take language of "gods" and deification as literally true. "Whilst there are thus many gods and lords," he wrote,

> whereof some are such in reality, and others are such only in name, we strive to rise not only above those whom the nations of the earth worship as gods, but also beyond those spoken of as gods in Scripture, of whom they are wholly ignorant who are strangers to the covenants of God given by Moses and by our Saviour Jesus, and who have no part in the promises which He has made to us through them.[320]

The eminent evangelical scholar Larry Hurtado warns against

> a tendency to proceed deductively from *a priori* presumptions of what monotheism must mean, instead of building up a view inductively from the evidence of how monotheism actually operated in the thought and practice of ancient Jews. There seems to be an implicit agreement . . . that more than one transcendent being of any significance complicates or constitutes a weakening of or threat to monotheism.

"It is clear," he continues, "that ancient Jews were not characteristically monists or unitarians, but does this mean that they were not monotheists?" He decries

> a tendency to proceed as if we can know in advance what "monotheism" must mean, which turns out to be a very modern, monistic form of monotheism, and can accordingly evaluate ancient Jewish texts and beliefs as to whether or how closely they meet an a priori standard of "pure monotheism."[321]

Whether or not a community is monotheistic, according to Hurtado, is not to be deduced from "this rather Aristotelian approach," and not by judging the implications of its doctrines, as we see them, against the standard of our own theology. Instead, the crucial indicator is to be found in the community's worship practices, in its liturgy, and in its self-understanding. He urges scholars

> to work more inductively, gathering what "monotheism" is on the ground, so to speak, from the evidence of what self-professed monotheists believe and practice. In fact, I suggest that for historical investigation our policy should be to take people as monotheistic if that is how they describe themselves, in spite of what we might be inclined to regard at first as anomalies in their beliefs.[322]

> We should take as "monotheism" the religious beliefs and practices of people who describe themselves as monotheistic. Otherwise, we implicitly import a definition from the sphere of theological polemics in an attempt to do historical analysis. . . . If we are to avoid *a priori* definitions and the imposition of our own theological judgments, we have no choice but to accept as monotheism the religion of those who profess to be monotheists, however much their religion varies and may seem "complicated" with other beings in addition to the one God.[323]

The monotheism of the early Hebrews and, indeed, of the early Christians need not look exactly like the monotheism that normative Christianity expects today, centuries after the great ecumenical councils synthesized the doctrine of the Trinity. When Trypho the Jew demanded that the second-century St. Justin Martyr "show us that the Spirit of prophecy [i.e., the Bible] admits another God [i.e., Jesus] besides the Maker of all things," Justin didn't instruct him in the mystery of one God in three persons. Trinitarianism hadn't yet been formulated. Rather, he set about, quite cheerfully and at considerable length, to do exactly what Trypho had requested—concluding with a discussion of Psalm 82.[324] Similarly, albeit no doubt surprisingly to some, early Christian monotheism did not rule out the teaching of human deification:

> The description of salvation as deification is at first glance an unlikely development in early Christian theology. In the case of worshiping the pagan gods or honoring deified rulers, the earliest Christian authors explicitly and vehemently reject the idea of any creature being considered a god as this was contrary to the church's monotheistic confession. Pagan deification is roundly decried as deriving from the serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve in Paradise that "you will be like gods", which event is even pinpointed as the original source of pagan polytheism. In addition to disobedience, it was the belief in other gods and the desire that Adam and Eve "themselves could become gods" which burdened "the soul of man like a disease." This activity of the early fathers reflects their conflict with the surrounding culture. On account of this refusal to venerate the gods and worship the emperor, the church in places suffered persecution. And the rejection of such pagan ideas of deification earned the early Christians the label "atheists". Clement of Alexandria simply follows the tradition before him when he completely rejects the pagan deification of the heavens, of people, of passions, and of bodily shapes and calls it all "the manufacturing of gods." The idea and language of deification, therefore, would seem unlikely to find a positive use in Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, a well-known and deeply traditional description of salvation as deification in the early fourth century is explainable as a natural development of the church's theological use of Psalm 82 in the late first and early second centuries.[325]

However unlikely it may appear, a doctrine of human deification was present across the early Christian church, very much including Clement of Alexandria himself. Nispel is at pains to distinguish pagan *theosis* from a Hellenized

Christian version of human deification, and to separate both from a very early Christian doctrine of divinization that arose on entirely biblical soil.[326] And it must frankly be admitted that the later mutation of the doctrine of human deification, as it appears in the church fathers, tends to move further and further away from the very literally conceived doctrine of the early Christians and their biblical forebears. For one thing, the doctrine of divine anthropomorphism, of a corporeal deity, gradually disappeared from official Christian teaching,[327] and any concept of *theosis* divorced from belief in an anthropomorphic God must inevitably differ sharply from the earlier doctrine that presupposed such a deity. A related development saw the emergence, in Christian thought, of a chasm between God and humankind, with the Greek fathers, particularly, insisting on the unapproachable superessential *ousia*— the ontological uniqueness—of God.[328] Such concepts and such language are, of course, utterly foreign to the Bible, as to the first Christians. But even the later Hellenized doctrine of *theosis* recalls the richer teaching of the early church—of which it is, albeit distorted, a conspicuous fossil remnant—and foreshadows the full concept as revealed in the restoration.

Conclusion

Once we have divested ourselves of certain theological prejudices that are, apparently, foreign to ancient Hebrew and early Christian thought, the Latter-day Saint claim that God and humankind are akin seems a promising basis upon which to resolve the apparent disagreement between the reference of Psalm 82:6 to heavenly gods and the reference of John 10:34 to mortal human beings. For John 10 must apply to human beings, or its narrative makes no sense, yet it must also involve genuinely divine beings or Christ's argument comes down to little more than sophistic equivocation. The Latter-day Saint position also seems to suggest a way to deal with Morgenstern's charge of textual corruption against Psalm 82, by showing that, even if verses 2–4 are taken as referring to human beings, this is not necessarily incompatible with the clear reference to divine beings in verses 6–7. Finally, the Latter-day Saint conception of humanity and divinity seems to allow a reconciliation of the broad contemporary consensus that Psalm 82 is speaking of celestial beings with the necessity, in order to see Jesus' argument as logically respectable, that it also refer to human beings.

The precise details of the psalm remain somewhat difficult, and perhaps there is no real point in trying to pin them down with theological precision in any event. Psalm 82 is poetry, not a treatise on systematic theology. But its broad underlying conception of man and God, interpreted from a Latter-day Saint perspective, makes sense. "The theme of human divinization" is indeed, as Annewies van den Hoek has written, "implicit in the Psalm. . . . The Psalm text and its Johannine interpretation . . . provide the legitimatization for followers of Christ to identify themselves as 'gods' or 'angels,' just as Rabbinic traditions do for the Israelites."[329] Again, as St. Justin Martyr said, "let the interpretation of the Psalm be held just as you wish, yet thereby it is demonstrated that all men are deemed worthy of becoming 'gods,' and of having power to become sons of the Highest."[330] Moreover, it seems to accord with what we are now learning about very early Hebraic and pan-Semitic ideas.

We have seen that little or no distinction is made in the biblical texts between mortal human prophets as heralds of the divine council, on the one hand, and, on the other, gods as heralds of the divine council. We have noted that ancient biblical and Semitic documents appear to use the term gods for deceased human beings. We have learned that, according to at least two Jewish texts from the period just before the birth of Jesus, the righteous dead can be exalted to participation in the heavenly council. (Indeed, it may be worth noting that, in the epigraph to this paper from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the reference is to a *singular* "council of gods and men.")[331] Moreover, we have seen abundant Jewish and early Christian evidence for a doctrine of *theosis* or human deification. We have seen that, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, the premortal spirits of humankind seem to be included in the

membership of the divine assembly.[332] We have also noted that biblical and other relevant ancient documents appear to describe both gods and humans as the children of God.

Once again, we recall the four standard interpretations of the "gods" in Psalm 82: They were either (1) ordinary mortal Israelite rulers or judges, (2) ordinary mortal rulers or judges of the other nations, (3) the ordinary mortal people of Israel gathered at Sinai for the revelation of the law, or (4) angelic or divine members of the council of El. Any of the first three would be compatible with Jesus' use of the passage in John 10. Unfortunately, though, none of the three seems, on its own, to be compatible with the best recent scholarship on the original intent of the psalm itself. Only combined acceptance of the fourth interpretive option and one or more of the first three can make consistent sense of both Psalm 82 and John 10 without accusing Jesus, in the New Testament, of misrepresenting the real meaning of the former passage. More basically, only if the genus "gods" and the genus "humans" overlap can the Savior's application of Psalm 82 to mortal human beings be a legitimate one. We have seen that, according to both the apostle Paul and a plausible reading of the Hebrew Bible, they do overlap. Yet, to my knowledge, in all Christendom it is only the Latter-day Saints, to whom a doctrine of the antemortal existence of human beings and of their literal kinship with God has been revealed, who recognize that gods and men form a single class, differentiated along a spectrum of holiness, wisdom, and power. Consequently, it would seem that the Latter-day Saints are in a uniquely strong position to reconcile the original sense of Psalm 82 with the Savior's use of it in John 10.

Notes

It is a very great pleasure to offer this article in tribute, however inadequate, to Professor Richard Lloyd Anderson. If his life's work consisted only of the two books *Understanding Paul* and *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, he would still rank among the most significant scholars of the restored church. But, of course, he has given us much more still.

I wish to thank my friends and colleagues Professors William J. Hamblin and Stephen D. Ricks for helpful comments on various drafts of this paper. Roger D. Cook, Daniel McKinlay, Stephen D. Ricks, Royal Skousen, John Tvedtnes, and Bryan J. Thomas assisted with important references. While making final adjustments to the essay, I profited from the lengthy and revealing e-mail exchange between Professor Hamblin and a professional anti-Mormon named James White on the interpretation of Psalm 82 that has been posted, complete and unedited, at http://www.shields-research.org/Critics/A-O_01b.html. (Mr. White has also placed a cropped and vigorously "spin-doctored" version of that exchange at his own web site.) Of course, the argument and the conclusions (and any attendant errors of fact or judgment) are mine alone.

1. Unless otherwise specified, biblical quotations in this paper are taken from the King James Version.

2. Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation to the Greeks* 1; English rendering from G. W. Butterworth, trans., *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 23.

3. John 10:30.

4. Compare the distinction made by Philo, *On Dreams* 1:229, between the being who is "truly God" and who is, accordingly, uniquely identified by use of the Greek article with the word for *God*, and he who is divine by extension or analogy, for whom the article is omitted. Philo Judaeus, or Philo of Alexandria, was a contemporary of Jesus and John. "Philo does not seem to regard the use of 'God' as a designation for the Logos as improper," writes

John J. Collins, "although he clearly distinguishes between the supreme God and the intermediary deity." See John J. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," in *Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One*, ed. Hershel Shanks and Jack Meinhardt (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1997), 93; compare 96. *Logos*, of course, is the term used for Jesus in John 1.

5. Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1967), 85–86.

6. My analysis here is indebted to that of Jerome H. Neyrey, " 'I Said: You Are Gods': Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108/4 (1989): 651–53.

7. Ibid., 651–52. The relevance of this to passages in the Bible (e.g., John 17:11, where the same Greek word, *hen*, is used) and in the Book of Mormon where the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are said to be "one" should be obvious. Such terminology does not, though, commit us to seeing Jesus and the Father as somehow ontologically "one," in the fashion of traditional trinitarian metaphysics. Larry W. Hurtado, "What Do We Mean by 'First-Century Jewish Monotheism'?" *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 351, is right to recognize "the rather flexible ability of ancient Jewish monotheism to incorporate a plurality in the operation of the sovereignty of the one God." *Hen* is the neuter form of the Greek "one"; *heis* is the masculine form. "I note in passing," Hurtado continues (on pp. 356–57), "that monotheistic rhetoric, e.g., the use of *heis* and *monos* formulae in references to the divine, can be found in non-Jewish sources of the Greco-Roman period as well. . . . But in religious practice, this pagan 'monotheism' amounted to the recognition of all gods as expressions of one common divine essence or as valid second-order gods under a (often unknowable) high god, and, as such, as worthy of worship. This was categorically different from the exclusivist monotheism of Jews who rejected the worship of beings other than the one God of the Bible." Is it altogether different, though, from early Christianity, which encouraged worship both of God the Father and of Jesus Christ?

8. See, for example, John 5:18; 10:33; and 19:7, 12. An analogous accusation is frequently made against the Latter-day Saints. We are, our critics charge, "the God Makers." Our response should be analogous, as well. For a brief survey of some of the voluminous evidence for early Christian teaching of a doctrine of human deification, see Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), 75–92, which gives numerous references for further reading.

9. Neyrey, "I Said: You are Gods," 653, emphasis in the original source.

10. Raymond E. Brown, John A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2:446 [63:120]; hereinafter referred to as *JBC*.

11. Kenneth Barker et al., eds., The NIV Study Bible: *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1617n; hereinafter referred to as NIV.

12. Neyrey, "I Said: You Are Gods," 53.

13. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 269, dates the psalm to the period before the Israelite monarchy. So, too, do Kurt Marti, *Die Psalmen 73–106: Annäherungen* (Stuttgart: Radius, 1992), 59; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen: 2. Teilband* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966), 570. On the other hand, Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 333–34, sees it as relatively late.

14. E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 228.

15. Julian Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 14 (1939): 29–30. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 569, also affirms the excellent state of the text.

16. See Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns, eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Nelson, 1975), 472; hereinafter referred to as *NCCHS*.

17. *JBC*, 1:591 [35:98]; compare *NCCHS*, 472.

18. Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, expanded ed., trans. Emilie T. Sander, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 202, says that among the common terms the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls used for their own community was *ʿēdāh*, or "congregation," "an ancient term for Israel's cult-community." The term also appears in such passages as Numbers 26:9; 31:16; Joshua 22:17; and Psalm 1:5. Clearly, though, its use to indicate earthly councils of mortal humans no more implies the humanity of Psalm 82's *ʾĕlōhîm* than the existence of earthly thrones implies the mere humanity of God because he is described biblically as sitting upon a throne.

19. See Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 228 n. 195; compare Neyrey, "I Said: You Are Gods," 647. One minority strand of interpretation that we can safely ignore even takes Psalm 82:6 as ironic: When the psalmist, speaking for Yahweh, says, "You are gods," this interpretation maintains that he is really saying something along the lines of "You call yourselves gods!" (*NCCHS*, 472.) But there seems nothing in the text to suggest this, and it is not at all obvious that Jesus would have strengthened his position by quoting to the Jews an ironic description of mortal human beings as gods which really intended precisely the opposite. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 268, 270, takes a more sophisticated but related view, with some actual grounding in Hebrew usage, but his interpretation, too, seems to make impossible any unified understanding of Psalm 82 and John 10. Nor does it appear to have found much acceptance among other scholars.

20. See Dahood, *Psalms II*, 268.

21. NIV, 1617n.

22. NIV, 873n.

23. *NCCHS*, 472. And, in fact, Psalm 82:2–4 could be seen as supporting something like this interpretation. According to this view, Psalm 82:5, then, would simply affirm "you are divinely appointed judges."

24. Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 1997), 37.

25. Ibid., 37 n. 9.

26. Neyrey, "I Said: You Are Gods," 648.

27. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962), 489, 501. Malcolm R. Thorp, "James E. Talmage and the Tradition of Victorian Lives of Jesus," *Sunstone* 12 (January 1988): 8–13, discusses the

bibliographical resources that Elder Talmage drew upon for *Jesus the Christ*. Of course, Elder Talmage's deservedly revered work, while surely correct in the broad picture, has never been held to be either canonical or inerrant in all its details.

28. NIV, 873n. For the heavenly assembly, see such biblical passages as Psalm 89:5–7 (where the King James translation rather obscures the proper meaning); 1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6; 2:1; and Isaiah 6:1–4.

29. NIV, 873n.

30. *JBC*, 1:591 [35:98].

31. Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: A Commentary on Books III, IV, and V of the Psalms* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 299. Rev. Kidner's example and the examples of others cited in these notes indicate that it is misguided to suggest that rejection of the interpretation of Psalm 82's *ʾĕlōhîm* as human judges simply reflects lack of faith. (This is the accusation leveled by Mr. White in his exchange with Dr. Hamblin.)

32. See Numbers 5:11–31 for a possible parallel.

33. Martin Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrifft Deudsch* [1545], ed. Hans Volz (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1972); *Tanakh—The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988).

34. It is true that both the Septuagint and the Vulgate render *ʾĕlōhîm* as "angels" at Psalm 8:5. But that fact is entirely consistent with the theological evolution presupposed in this paper.

35. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 30. And, as Morgenstern points out in n. 3 on the same page, even Kittel eventually abandoned it.

36. Ibid., 38; compare 75.

37. Lowell K. Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana V. Edelman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 40. The interpretive ancient Aramaic Jewish Targum to Psalm 82:6 didn't hesitate to flatly change the text from "gods" and "sons of the Most High" to "angels," in order to lessen the passage's impact.

38. Novatian, *Treatise concerning the Trinity 20*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (hereinafter *ANF*), ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1885; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 5:631.

39. Neyrey, "I Said: You Are Gods," 654.

40. *JBC*, 2:446 [63:120].

41. See Neyrey, "I Said: You Are Gods," 654, 655–59, 662. See also Morton Smith, "The Image of God: Notes on the Hellenization of Judaism, with Especial Reference to Goodenough's Work on Jewish Symbols," in Morton Smith, *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:121.

42. Ibid., 648.

43. See ibid., 656.

44. Ibid., 649.

45. See ibid., 647, 663.

46. See Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 30–31.

47. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 570–71. The conservative Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 340–41, likewise dismisses the "human judge" interpretation.

48. *NCCHS*, 472; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 569–74. In his e-mail exchange with Mr. White, Dr. Hamblin summarizes a search of twenty-two commentaries on Psalm 82. Twelve had been published in 1970 or before (going back to Calvin in the sixteenth century). Of these, eight hold that the psalm's "gods" are actually human judges, while three allow that they might be either earthly judges or celestial beings, and one (which appeared in 1968) insists that they are heavenly persons. Ten of the commentaries had been published in 1971 or later. All of these, not excepting even conservative Protestant writers, declare the "gods" of Psalm 82 to be celestial beings. My impression is that Dr. Hamblin's sample is representative. The discovery of the Ugaritic materials has affected biblical studies dramatically, here as elsewhere (on which, see below). Earlier interpretations of Psalm 82 were offered on the basis of less information and knowledge.

49. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 329 n. 1.d, points out that "It is probable that the Greek versions represent a variant Heb[rew] textual tradition. . . . It is unlikely that the [Septuagint] translators would have gone to the plural . . .'gods,' without finding it in the Heb[rew] texts." Manfried Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera": Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: Das biblische Bilderverbot* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1992), 147–48, contend that the original phrase was "council of the gods," rather than "council of God," the text having, they say, been altered in the direction of monotheism by later editors. For other examples of such possible editing to suppress an earlier polytheism, see Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 39 n. 22, 118 n. 167.

50. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 236.

51. *JBC*, 1:590 [35:98].

52. *NCCHS*, 472. From conservative Protestants, compare Alton H. McEachern, *Layman's Bible Book Commentary: Psalms* (Nashville: Broadman, 1981), 104–5; G. C. D. Howley, F. F. Bruce, and H. L. Ellison, *A Bible Commentary for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1979), 659. Kidner, Psalms 73–150, 297, says the beings involved are angels.

53. See Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 31–35, 38, 71–73, 114.

54. Usefully concise accounts are G. Ernest Wright, "The Faith of Israel," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952), 1:360; E. Theodore Mullen Jr., "Divine Assembly," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:214–17.

55. Interpreters should, however, bear in mind the important caveats offered by Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress,

1998), 11–12, 395–96, and by Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 89. Morton Smith, "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952): 135–47, had offered a similar caution many years before, but then proceeded, as the title of his article indicates, to sketch numerous parallels between the varied theologies of the Israelites and their neighbors.

56. Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 88–89; compare 20, 88, 138 n. 11. Some readers will recognize Cyrus H. Gordon, the eminent author of *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965).

57. Theodore J. Lewis, review of *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, by Mark S. Smith, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118/1 (1999): 170.

58. William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 255.

59. See ibid., 114–16.

60. Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3; see Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 289. He is not to be confused with the Daniel of the Babylonian captivity, who has a biblical book named after him.

61. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 3; compare 284; see also Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 44–45, 183, 186; Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 191–93.

62. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 113; compare Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 39 n. 22, 40. At pages 113–14, Mullen contends that the Egyptian "synod of the gods" is of less relevance to the Bible than the concepts of other Near Eastern cultures. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 269, identifies Psalm 29:1–2; 77:14; 89:6–9; 95:3; 96:4; and 148:2 as alluding to the divine council.

63. As rendered in Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 373–74.

64. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 115. I would contend that the notion survives even into the sacred text of Islam, dictated in the seventh century A.D. Both Qur'**ā**n 37:8 and 38:69 speak of *al-mal**ā**' al-a'l**ā***, the "exalted assembly" or "high council," which is clearly placed in heaven and associated with the angels of God's presence.

65. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 120, 147, 278–79, 283–84.

66. Ibid., 5; compare 181, 208–9.

67. Ibid., 116.

68. See ibid., 113 n. 1. Mullen sees the beginnings of "individualization of the members of the council" in Job 1–2, Zechariah 3, and Daniel 7, which he evidently dates to a relatively late period. On the terminology for angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which includes "sons of heaven" (1QS iv.22; xi.8; 1QH iii.22), see Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 83–84. "Sons of heaven" may have been a reverential euphemism for the older "sons of El" or "sons of the Most High." Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 58–59, 65–66, offers some interesting insights into the shift from a council of gods to an angelic hierarchy, which is already occurring within the Bible itself. Compare

Wright, "The Faith of Israel," 360. It is instructive to note that the third-century B.C. Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint ("LXX"), routinely rewrites the Hebrew *gods* to read *angels*. Examples include Psalms 8:6 and 97:7 (=LXX 96:7). The fifth-century A.D. Syriac Peshitta does the same at Psalm 82:1.

69. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 117–19.

70. See ibid., 13–15. Mullen notes that some of the epithets applied to El as creator-god are applied, in the Hebrew Bible, to Yahweh.

71. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 13–15.

72. Ibid., 15, 42–43; Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 15; Mark S. Smith, The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 21; see also Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 113–16, where El's position as father of the gods is compared to that of Amun in the Egyptian pantheon. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 234, alludes to legendary accounts of El sacrificing his "only" son for the sake of humankind; the Greek word translated by "only," monogen**ē**s, is rendered as "only begotten" in the King James Version of the New Testament.

73. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 15–19, 42–43, 180; Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 24–25, 32, 250 n. 225; Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 97.

74. The translation is from Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 17.

75. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 16, 19, 21–22.

76. Ibid., 84.

77. Ibid., 92–109, takes issue with the commonly held idea that Baʿl actually deposed El.

78. See ibid., 9 n. 3, 84–85, 92, 109–10, 119–20.

79. Ibid., 41.

80. Compare Conrad E. L'Heureux, *Rank among the Canaanite Gods: El, Baʿal, and the Rephaʾim* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 3–28.

81. On this point, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 43.

82. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 44–45; compare 109–10, 146; see also Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 40–41; and L'Heureux, *Rank among the Canaanite Gods*, 69.

83. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 151–52, 152 n. 23.

84. Ibid., 155; compare 152 (in Hebrew). Professor Cross discusses the proper interpretation of the phrase *b**ə**nê ʾ**ē**lîm* at pp. 45–46.

85. On the notion that the Old Testament as we now have it suppresses important facts about ancient Israelite religion, see William G. Dever, "Folk Religion in Early Israel: Did Yahweh Have a Consort?" in Shanks and Meinhardt, *Aspects of Monotheism*, 27–56; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 11–12, 390–91, 396; Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 49–50; Susan Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23, 27, 31.

86. Compare Psalm 82:6; possibly also Genesis 6:2–4 and Job 38:7. Wright, "The Faith of Israel," 360, flatly pronounces the Septuagint variant "the correct text." (Writing at the very beginning of the 1950s, he may not have known about the Dead Sea Scrolls version mentioned immediately below.) Perhaps significantly, the ancient Arabs, a Semitic people who were akin to the Hebrews, seem to have identified at least certain angels as the sons or daughters of God, and to have spoken of them, also, as gods and goddesses. See the critique of this idea offered by the rigorously monotheistic Qur'**ā**n in the early seventh century (e.g., at 16:57–59; 17:40; 21:26–29; 23:91–92; 37:149–53; 43:16–19; 52:39; and 53:19–28).

87. F. C. Conybeare and St. George Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (1905; reprint, n.p.: Hendrickson, 1995), iii.

88. See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 269, 365; also Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 119 n. 19; 202–3 n. 153; compare Smith, *Early History of God*, 7, and 114 n. 138, where it is suggested that the Masoretic text was tampered with in order to suppress anthropomorphism.

89. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 340.

90. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 209.

91. See Dever, "Folk Religion in Early Israel," 29; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 118, also suggest the possibility. Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 48, writes that "The usual designation for God [in the Dead Sea Scrolls] is the archaic *'ēl*." They also use the term "the Most High" (*'elyôn*), e.g., at 1QS iv.22.

92. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 7, also 18; compare Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville: Westminster, 1992). See also Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1998), and Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," 81–105, for rather different but, I think, relevant and intriguing approaches. Smith, *Early History of God*, 22, proposes, in the development of Hebrew religion, "an early stage when Israel knew three deities, El, Asherah, and Yahweh." I discuss this subject in my article "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 191–243. On Asherah, see now also Dever, "Folk Religion in Early Israel," 27–56; P. Kyle McCarter, "The Religious Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah," in Shanks and Meinhardt, *Aspects of Monotheism*, 74–80. Yahweh seems also to have been worshiped among ancient pagan polytheists in Syria in the first and second millennia before Christ. See Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 38 n. 11, 113, 250–51; also Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 314 n. 35. Gordon and Rendsburg believe that Yahwism was originally non-Hebraic.

93. See Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 120, 120 n. 175.

94. See, for example, Smith, *Early History of God*, 7, 21; Baruch Halpern, "'Brisker Pipes Than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine,

and Ernest S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 85; John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105/3 (1986): 387, 387 n. 9; Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42/1 (1991): 1–15; Dietrich and Loretz, "Jahwe und seine Aschera," 155– 57. In our Bible as it currently reads, see Job 1:6 and 2:1, as well as Psalm 29 (in its original Hebrew), Psalm 82, and Micah 4:5.

95. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," 82. For a somewhat different approach, arguing for a pre-Christian Jewish "ditheism," see Ioan P. Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of Gnostic Dualism," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions, Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 78–91. Culianu seems to have been unaware of the original reading of Deuteronomy 32, just presented.

96. Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 365, 367; compare Smith, "Common Theology," 135–47.

97. Ibid., 364 n. 69.

98. Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42/1 (1991): 5.

99. Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 167. Latter-day Saints, of course, can easily affirm *that* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

100. Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 376.

101. See Frank Moore Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 234; compare 241– 42; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 48; Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 9, 10, 88, 93; Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 119–20.

102. See Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 205, 260–61, 279; Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 199–200.

103. Smith, *Early History of God*, xxiii, xxvii, 8–12, 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, 89, 146, 161, 163; Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd ed. (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1990), 133; Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," 253–57; Otto Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956): 25–37; J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1958): 225–42; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 113–14, 207 n. 31, 232, 280, 311–12; Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 144–45. Herbert Niehr, "The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion," in *The Triumph of Elohim*, 45, summarizes the majority view but appears vaguely to disapprove of it. Frank Moore Cross certainly believes that Yahweh inherited (at least) the epithets of Canaanite El, but insists that Yahweh was equated with El at a very, very early period. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 52, 71, 72, 186. Patai, Hebrew Goddess, 128, and Halpern, "'Brisker Pipes Than Poetry,'" 80, discuss the common motif of the withdrawal of the elder gods.

104. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 65, 70–71, 105.

105. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 9. Which is not to say that there is no evidence of worship of El by Israelite *individuals* in later times. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 310–11, cite inscriptional evidence for such veneration during the Iron Age IIB–C period (900–586 B.C.); compare the materials discussed

at 208–10, where the context, though geographically near, appears to be non-Israelite. I use the term *cult*, of course, in its primary and original religious sense, without pejorative intent. See Peterson and Ricks, *Offenders for a Word*, 193– 212, for a discussion of the term and its frequent abuse by critics of the church.

106. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 108.

107. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 164, 165. See also Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 23, 23 n. 56, 24, 43.

108. Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32, 35; 8:28. For other occurrences of "the Highest" or "the most High," see Luke 1:76; 6:35; Acts 7:48; 16:17; and Hebrews 7:1.

109. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 4.

110. Ibid., 226; compare 232.

111. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 42–43; compare 17, 39, 177, 189–90.

112. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 279.

113. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 105. On pp. 188–89, Cross discusses the biblical motif of the divine *rîḇ*, or lawsuit, as it pertains to the council of the gods.

114. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 179–80.

115. Ibid., 187, says that, "In Zechariah 3:1–10, the prophet is shown the proceedings of the council in the matter of Joshua the priest. Both the advocate, the *mal'āḵ*, 'herald' of Yahweh and the adversary stand in the council."

116. Smith, *Early History of God*, 25.

117. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 115.

118. Ibid., 142; compare 227, 281, 282; compare Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 177.

119. See Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 185.

120. Ibid., 147; compare 209.

121. Ibid., 282.

122. Ibid., 185.

123. Ibid., 268–74, 279. The quotation is from p. 268.

124. See McCarter, "Religious Reforms," 67–69.

125. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 177–78.

126. Ibid., 207.

127. Ibid., 226, 282.

128. See ibid., 187; compare Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 56, which suggests an earlier, more individuated phase. See also Deuteronomy 33:2–3.

129. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 190.

130. Ibid., 192; see also Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 40, 43, 59.

131. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 335. Tate, writing in a distinctly conservative Protestant commentary series, lists Genesis 6:2; Exodus 15:11; Job 1:6; 2:1; Psalms 8:6; 29:1; 82:6; 89:6–7; 95:3; and 96:4 in support of his view.

132. Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 42 (referring specifically to the story of Jacob's ladder, in Genesis 28).

133. Ibid., 44.

134. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 279.

135. Dietrich and Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera,"* 139. For manifestations of this belief in the Judaism of the centuries immediately before and after the time of Christ, see Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations," 78–91.

136. Compare Deuteronomy 14:1–2. Recall, again, Luke 1:32, 35, and the designation of Jesus as "the Son of the Highest."

137. Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* 24, in *ANF*, 2:142.

138. See Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of 'Asherah': A Study according to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 62–63 (drawing on the standard published version of the Ugaritic materials, *Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, 1.4.VI.46, ed. Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquin Samartín, 70); Dietrich and Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera,"* 134, 149, 154–57; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 74 and 74 nn. 13–14; Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 121.

139. See Dietrich and Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera,"* 146, 148, 155.

140. Ibid., 149, makes the connection. For the seventy angels, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 2:214; Moritz Steinschneider, "Die kanonische Zahl der muhammedanischen Secten und die Symbolik der Zahl 70–73," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1850): 145–46; Samuel Krauss, "Die Zahl der biblischen Völkerschaften," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 19 (1899): 3; Moritz Steinschneider, "Die kanonischen Zahlen 70–73," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 57 (1903): 481; Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations," 78–91. The notion of the seventy shepherds in *1 Enoch* 89:59 may also be relevant here. The two articles by Steinschneider offer useful surveys of the general significance of the number seventy in ancient Semitic conceptions and beyond. Stephen D. Ricks was of great assistance in tracking down most of the rabbinic and secondary references in this and the immediately succeeding footnotes.

141. See, for instance, Israel Slotki, trans., *Sukkah*, in *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Mo'ed*, ed. I. Epstein (London: Soncino, 1938), 3:269 n. 9; *Midrash Psalm* 9:7; *Numbers Rabbah* 14:10; *Yalqut Shimoni;* TB *Sukkah* 55b; also S. Kent Brown, "The Seventy in Scripture," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 25–45; Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 2:214; Steinschneider, "Die kanonische Zahl," 150–51, 169; Krauss, "Die Zahl der biblischen Völkerschaften," 1–14; Steinschneider, "Die kanonischen Zahlen 70–73," 481, 486; Samuel Krauss, "Zur Zahl der biblischen Völkerschaften," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 20 (1900): 38–43. The seventy nations also appear in early Arabic folklore. See Steinschneider, "Die kanonischen Zahlen 70–73," 491.

142. See Henry Freedman, *Shabbath*, in *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Mo'ed*, 1:420 n. 2; Targum Jonathan on Genesis 11:7; Deuteronomy 32:8; Mishnah *Sota* 7:5; Mishnah *Sheqalim* 5:1; TB *Shabbat* 88b; also Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:214; Steinschneider, "Die kanonische Zahl," 153–55, 169.

143. Sirach 17:17 (New English Bible; hereinafter NEB); compare Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 236; Krauss, "Zur Zahl der biblischen Völkerschaften," 40–41.

144. See, for example, *1 Enoch* 10:9; 12:2, 4; 14:3; and 15:2–3.

145. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 236.

146. See Steinschneider, "Die kanonische Zahl," 156.

147. Ibid., 209–10; compare 140, 143, 144. Some Latter-day Saint readers may find it significant that the message is delivered by the divine messengers in "precisely the same words" as those in which they received it.

148. See ibid., 199, 205, 282; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 177.

149. Mullen, The *Assembly of the Gods*, 212, 215.

150. Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 48.

151. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 187.

152. The situation sketched in Exodus 7:1 may be relevant in this context: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." See also Exodus 4:16.

153. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 279; compare 283–84. Modern scripture clearly teaches the same idea. See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 68:4; and 84:36–37, 89. Compare Exodus 7:1; Matthew 10:40; Luke 9:48; 10:16; and 1 John 4:6. Revelation 19:10 and 22:7–9 supply a case where an angel speaks as if he were himself Jesus Christ; understandably but mistakenly, John twice falls down in worship and is rebuked.

154. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 55–56.

155. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 216.

156. See the discussions at Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 171 n. 105, 173, 187–88.

157. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 225.

158. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 189.

159. On this, see Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 218–20.

160. See the references in Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, n.d.), s.v. "sôd"; also W. J. Harrelson, "Council, the Council, Council House, Counsel," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:710.

161. Dennis Pardee, review of Gottes himmlischer *Thronrat: Hintergrund und Bedeutung von sod JHWH im Alten Testament*, by Heinz-Dieter Neef, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116/1 (1997): 117, 118.

162. I use the New English Bible here because the King James Version has clearly missed the implication of the word *sôd*.

163. In this context, note the humble disclaimer that Qur'**ā**n 38:69–70 puts in the mouth of Mu**ḥ**ammad: "I have no knowledge of the exalted assembly when they argue. All that has been revealed to me is that I am to be a clear warner." Yet, in fact, Mu**ḥ**ammad does know such things as that which the Lord said to the angels about his imminent creation of Adam (38:71–85). Since Mu**ḥ**ammad cannot possibly have been present for the event as an ordinary mortal human, this story, according to which Iblīs rebels against the divine decree to bow before Adam, can only have come to him, in the view of believers, as revealed information about the divine council.

164. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 226. Again, one can scarcely avoid thinking of such passages as Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 68:4; and 84:36–37, 89.

165. On this passage, see Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 205–7.

166. Smith, *Early History of God*, 101–2, 114 n. 138, comments on the notably anthropomorphic language that generally appears in such accounts. Roger D. Cook, "How Deep the Platonism? A Review of Owen and Mosser's Appendix: Hellenism, Greek Philosophy, and the Creedal 'Straightjacket' of Christian Orthodoxy," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 294–95 n. 64, supplies a good representative sample of modern biblical scholars who recognize the anthropomorphic character of the Old Testament portrayal of God. Morton Smith, in his articles "The Image of God," 116–59, and "On the Shape of God and the Humanity of Gentiles," in Morton Smith, *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, 1:150–60, offers excellent examples of anthropomorphic views among the ancient rabbis. Analogous references could be furnished virtually at will but are properly the subject of another paper.

167. Compare Abraham 3:27, which fits perfectly into this ancient pattern. One Ugaritic text, recounting the story of the ailing prince Kirta or Keret, depicts the supreme god El posing the following formulaic question four times to the members of the divine assembly: " 'Who among the gods will cast out the illness, will drive out the sickness?' No one among the gods answered him." See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 181.

168. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 128 (referring also to Akkadian and Phoenician materials); Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 261–64, 261 n. 241; Dietrich and Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera,"* 48–49, 52 n. 27, 63–65, 66 n. 54, 68, 69 n. 66, 73 n. 73, 73–74; Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 120; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 43, 45, 51, 53. See also Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 92, 115; Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 168 n. 43, 203–6. Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy*

in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), denies that a cult of the dead existed in early Canaan and Palestine, while conceding that, in doing so, he is going against "a virtual consensus" (p. 267) among modern scholars. "In recent years," writes Wayne T. Pitard in *AAR/SBL Abstracts* 1998 (Annual Meeting 1998, Orlando, Fla.), 394, "a consensus seems to have developed concerning the identity of the beings called rpum in the Ugaritic tablets. Most scholars today understand them to be spirits of deceased kings and perhaps other members of the nobility." (His paper, "The Identity of the Rapi'uma, Again," dissents from that consensus.) For evidence of a cult of the dead among the ancient Arabs (one that lingered even into Islamic times), see Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S. M. Stern (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1966), 1:209–38. The New Testament image of "Abraham's bosom" as the destination of the righteous dead and Abraham's role in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (as arbiter and receiver of petitions) seem to imply a deified Abraham. See Luke 16:19–31; compare Doctrine and Covenants 132:29.

169. 1 Samuel 28:13. See, too, the discussion of Deuteronomy 33:1–3 on p. 532, above. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 201–20, considers 1 Samuel 28 fiction and redates it to postexilic times, as part of his argument that there was no necromancy in preexilic Israel. This is a move that presumably few conservative Protestant critics of Mormonism would be willing to make.

170. Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 47, 48; compare 65–66, 84.

171. Wisdom of Solomon 5:5 NJB. The New Jerusalem Bible note on the passage points to the ambiguity of the phrases *children of God* and *holy ones*, showing, with several references (including one to Psalm 82), that the terms can refer either to angels or to the elect among postmortal humanity. To Latter-day Saints, of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive.

172. Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 94. For the dating of the Wisdom of Solomon, I rely on Father Murphy's brief discussion at pp. 83 and 95 n. 2.

173. Again, see Peterson and Ricks, *Offenders for a Word*, 75–92, for further references on this subject.

174. Charlesworth, introduction to Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, xx.

175. As rendered at Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 85.

176. As rendered at ibid., 85–86.

177. As rendered at ibid., 127. Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 217, 228, says that, among those who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, the liturgy of the temple or of Qumran itself was thought to have its precise counterpart in a heavenly temple, and the angels, who led the worship in heaven, were also expected to participate in the ceremonies of their earthly community.

178. As rendered at Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 127–28.

179. Ibid., 127.

180. See the discussion by John J. Collins, "A Throne in the Heavens: Apotheosis in Pre-Christian Judaism," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (Albany: State University of

New York Press, 1995), 43–58. Thus, although Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 47, is largely correct in saying that "There is a general tendency within postexilic Judaism strongly to emphasize that God is exalted and transcendent," some of his statements now require qualification: It is apparently untrue, for instance, that "Qumran teaches salvation but not the deification which is found in Gnosticism." See Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran*, 119–20; compare 250.

181. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," 91.

182. As translated by Morton Smith, in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 2:74–75.

183. 1QH XI 19–22, as rendered by García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 332.

184. 1QH XIX 10–13, as rendered in ibid., 353.

185. 4Q427 frg. 7, col. I, 11–15, and col. II, 7–9, as rendered in Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 364–65.

186. See 11QMelchizedek (11Q13 [11QMelch]), in García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 139–40. Compare Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations," 89.

187. See the discussion of these two documents at Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," 85–86, 89.

188. See Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations," 89–91.

189. 2 Enoch [A] 22:4–10, in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (hereinafter *OTP*) (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:137, 139; compare 2 Enoch [J] 22:4–10, in Charlesworth, OTP, 1:136, 138. See also Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations," 87–89, where Enoch is seen to have been granted a title that is elsewhere given to the archangel Michael, who himself plays the role in the "council" in certain documents that other texts reserve for God.

190. Smith, "The Image of God," 121. Compare pp. 140 and 146, where Smith notes the interesting equation, in ancient Jewish sources, of the image of a tree, representing a Jewish saint, with the menorah, representing God. The quotations from R. Johanan and R. Elazar are found, with their references in the primary sources, on pp. 120–21.

191. Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 364. For discussion of a truly rigorous monotheism, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Al-Kirmani on the Divine *Tawḥīd*," in *Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies*, Part 2, Mediaeval and Modern Persian Studies, ed. Charles Melville (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1999), 179–93. There is nothing remotely approaching such a view among the biblical writers.

192. *2 Baruch* 51:7–10, 12, in Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:638.

193. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," 88.

194. See Aristophanes, *Peace* 832–41.

195. See Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 156.

196. Ibid., 158–59.

197. This point is made in Dr. Hamblin's messages to Mr. White.

198. Augustine, *On the Psalms* 50.2, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (hereinafter *NPNF*), ed. Philip Schaff (1888; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:178.

199. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 124, in *ANF*, 1:262.

200. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 21, in *ANF*, 1:170.

201. Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.29, in *ANF*, 4:509.

202. Ibid., 8.74, in *ANF*, 4:668. Origen seems to have viewed himself and his fellow Christians as "God Makers"—to use the anti-Mormon epithet hurled against the Latter-day Saints in recent years —and to have regarded the fact as worthy of honor.

203. Perhaps Novatian (d. ca. A.D. 258), the rigorist schismatic who led the movement named after him, did, but the text is not entirely clear. He links the "gods" with "the men of the synagogue," but also with angels. See Novatian, *Treatise concerning the Trinity* 20, in *ANF*, 5:631. The fourth-century *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles or Apostolic Constitutions* 2.26, in *ANF*, 7:410, identify the gods of Psalm 82 as the Christian bishop sitting in council with his congregation.

204. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.6.1, in *ANF*, 1:419; Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 1.6, in *ANF*, 2:215. See also Mark D. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53/3 (August 1999): 297.

205. Annewies van den Hoek, " 'I Said, You Are Gods . . .': The Significance of Psalm 82 for Some Early Christian Authors," in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 219. I thank Paul Owen for kindly bringing this article to my attention. He is, of course, not responsible for my use of it.

206. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.10, in *ANF*, 2:539.

207. Ibid., 2.20, in *ANF*, 2:374.

208. Ibid., 4.23, in *ANF*, 2:437.

209. Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes* 5, in *ANF*, 3:480. Latter-day Saints agree, of course. We cannot save ourselves. We require the grace made available by the atonement of Christ. But, by the same token, while humans can receive deification, there is no biblical or patristic warrant for imagining that, say, dogs or canaries can. The innate capacity to receive it must be present.

210. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.10, in *ANF*, 2:539.

211. Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 3.1, in *ANF*, 2:271.

212. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5 (preface), in *ANF*, 1:526.

213. Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 1.39, in *NPNF*, 4:329.

214. Ibid., 2.70, in *NPNF*, 4:386. Compare Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* (=De Synodis) 51, *NPNF*, 4:477.

215. Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.34, in *NPNF*, 4:413; compare ibid., 1.39, in *NPNF*, 4:329.

216. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 54, in *NPNF*, 4:65.

217. Athanasius, Letters 60.4 ("To Adelphius"), in *NPNF*, 4:576; the reference is to 2 Peter 1:4. Compare Athanasius, *Letters* 61.2, in *NPNF*, 4:578–79.

218. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 13, in *ANF*, 3:608.

219. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," 295.

220. Cyprian, *Treatise* 12; *Three Books of Testimonies against the Jews* 12.2.6, in *ANF*, 5:518. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," 296, argues persuasively that Tertullian and Cyprian are mutually independent sources on this question.

221. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.38.4, in *ANF*, 1:522.

222. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," 289.

223. Augustine, *On the Psalms 50.2*, in *NPNF*, 8:178. The reference is to John 1:12.

224. This is the position advocated, for example, by evangelical scholars Paul Owen and Carl Mosser in their review of *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*, by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, FARMS Review of Books 11/2 (1999): 90.

225. A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27.

226. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," 290–91; compare 292, 304. Van den Hoek, " 'I Said, You Are Gods . . . ,' " 203–19, also emphasizes the role of Psalm 82 in the development of the Christian idea of human deification, although she concentrates on the later, more Platonized version of the doctrine.

227. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 301. Note 212, on the same page, supplies useful references for further reading on ancient belief in the heavenly enthronement of human beings.

228. James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in Its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (New York: University Press of America, 1986), 9.

229. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (New York: Holt, 1935), 306.

230. Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 12, emphasis in the original.

231. Ibid., 18–19, emphasis in the original.

232. Neyrey, "I Said: You Are Gods," 653, emphasis in the original.

233. John knows that we will be like God but does not fully know what that will involve. So it is, too, with the Latter-day Saints: We know that we will be like God, but what that likeness precisely entails "has not yet been revealed." Notions such as creating and ruling over our own planets and ideas about how spiritual offspring are created typically rest more on speculation than on revelation.

234. For the duty of mortals to praise God, see, as a sample of the many references that could be cited, 2 Samuel 22:50; Ezra 3:10; and Psalm 117:1. On the praises of the divine council, see Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 205.

235. The KJV's "O ye mighty" fails, again, to represent the real significance of the Hebrew *bənê ʾēlîm*. As we have seen at p. 502 above, the New Jerusalem Bible renders that phrase as "sons of God."

236. As translated by Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 160.

237. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 149 n. 65, 195–96. This may also be the case in 1 Enoch 104:2, 6. See also Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 104; Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 93 n. 112, 96.

238. See Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 347; Dietrich and Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera,"* 14, 48, 50–51, 63–65, 66 n. 54, 74, with the accompanying references. For references to the deified dead as stars, see especially pp. 63– 65, 66 n. 54, and 73–74. It may be significant that, at p. 141 n. 13, Dietrich and Loretz suggest that the Hebrew *śār*, which the King James Bible renders as "prince[s]," might be translated as "shining one[s]." Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 98 n. 120, sees in *śār* a title for an angel or some "exalted, divine being."

239. See Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars*, for a fascinating treatment of the subject.

240. Cited in Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 195.

241. See Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 59–120; also Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 53, 290, 294, 314–16, 318, 345, 351, 358, 367, 369, 402; Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 266–67, 271, 273.

242. See Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 277, 279, 354, 389, 401.

243. See, e.g., Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 103–4; Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 60–63.

244. On these two tablets, see Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 79, 100, 100 n. 19.

245. Compare *1 Enoch* 86–88 for a very negative use of astral imagery.

246. Alert Latter-day Saints will recognize the temple echo here.

247. In addition to what follows, see Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 345, 347.

248. Joshua 10:12–13 should perhaps also be read with this motif in mind. And Qurʾ**ā**n 37:6–8 may reflect a related notion: "Truly, we have beautified the lower heaven with the adornment of the stars, and as a protection against every rebellious demon. They [i.e., the demons] do not listen to the exalted assembly and they are bombarded from every side." (All Qurʾ**ā**nic translations, unless otherwise identified, are mine.) Rudi Paret's interpretive German translation *Der Koran* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983), 312, proposes that the rebellious demons of 37:6–8 are bombarded with stars. This suggestion accords well with other passages. Thus, for instance, Qurʾ**ā**n 21:32 represents God as saying, "We have made the heaven a canopy well guarded." In Qurʾ**ā**n 41:12, we are told that God created seven heavens, of which he "beautified the lower heaven with lamps and as a protection." According to another passage, these "lamps" were made in order to stone the demons *[rujūman lil-shayāṭī*n*]* (67:5). Paret's rendition of 67:5 says that this was done "in order to chase them away . . . when curiosity led them to draw too close to that lowest heaven." Qurʾ**ā**n 15:16–18 tells us that God guards the zodiacal signs in the heavens "against every accursed demon" *[min kulli shayṭā*n *rajīm]*, adding that any demon that manages to gain a hearing is pursued by "a manifest flaming meteor." It might be noted here that the terms rujūm and rajīm both derive from a verb whose primary meaning is "to stone (someone)," and only secondarily "to curse (someone)." In Qurʾ**ā**n 72:8–9, we are allowed to listen to reminiscences of some of the outcasts themselves: "We touched the heaven, and we found it filled with terrible guards and with meteors. We used to sit in various places to listen. But now, whoever listens finds a blazing meteor lying in ambush for him."

249. On this, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 93, 97–99. Cross sees echoes of this story in Psalm 24, explaining the otherwise rather strange image of the "gates" being summoned to "lift up" their "heads" as an allusion to the members of the divine council, waiting nervously by the gates of their heavenly residence for the return of the warrior-god.

250. Translated by Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 101.

251. Ibid., 102.

252. Furthermore, the council is not immune to fear, at least according to one poetic text: Leviathan is described in Job 41:25 as stirring up or frightening the *ʾēlîm*, the divine beings or gods. The notion of conflict within the divine council is very old, and it survives for a very long time. A recent and quite extensive treatment of the theme is Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Seldom if ever noticed in this context is the seventh-century Qurʾ**ā**n (38:69– 70), where, it will be recalled, Muḥammad is told to declare that he has "no knowledge of the exalted assembly when they argue *[yakhtaṣimūna]*." A. Y. Ali's harmonizing, apologetic translation tries to eliminate the negative connotations of the verb *yakhtaṣimūna* by rendering the passage containing it as "when they discuss (matters) among themselves." A. Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: American Trust Publications, 1977), 1231. But Paret's "als sie miteinander stritten" (*Der Koran*, 321) and Arthur J. Arberry's "when they disputed" (A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted* [New York: Macmillan, 1969], 163) certainly capture much more fully the implication of the Arabic root *kh-ṣ-m*, which gives us such common words as *khuṣūm* ("enemies") and *khuṣūma* ("argument," "lawsuit"). Medieval commentators generally recognized the note of strife contained in the verb and connected it with the famous refusal by Iblīs, the *diabolos* or Satan, to prostrate himself before Adam, which is recorded in the verses immediately following (38:71–

85). See, for example, al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Taʾwīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.), 3:381–82; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʾAzīm* (Aleppo: Maktabat al-Irshād, 1980), 4:42– 43; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān: Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, n.d.), 7:5670.

253. Marti, *Die Psalmen 73–106*, 62 (my translation). Discussing an ancient Babylonian myth, Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 43 n. 20, remark, "Note that a god can die. Nor is Kingu a god who was resurrected. We must avoid generalizing on the nature of divinity. Thus, far from being omniscient, the gods of Mesopotamia are often ignorant and error-prone. In the Egyptian pantheon, all the gods except Thoth are illiterate." We need not admit the Mesopotamian and Egyptian materials as accurate depictions of deity, of course, but it is also important that we not impose upon biblical texts concepts of the divine that really derive from Greek philosophical notions of perfection instead of from the Bible itself. On this issue, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Editor's Introduction: Fictionary," *FARMS Review of Books* 10/2 (1998): v–xx. Thus it is insufficient, as a refutation of the proposition that Psalm 82 means "gods" when it uses the Hebrew term that means "gods," to point out that these *elohim* don't accord with the concept of God in Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Anselm, or Thomas Aquinas.

254. Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," 40–41.

255. See the discussion at Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars*, 123, 135–43, 156. Compare Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians* 24, in *ANF*, 2:141–42.

256. The imagery of Ezekiel 28 may be drawn from a similar story.

257. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 26–28; Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 147–54.

258. The divine mountain, discussed in fascinating detail by Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), was associated in common Semitic belief with the waters of life, which emerged from its base, and was thought to be the place where both the gates of heaven and the passage into hell could be found. It was the place of the test or river ordeal at the entrance to Sheol, the world of departed spirits. See also Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 38, 39, 113, for its link with Isaiah 14. The connections of the cosmic mountain to the temple should be obvious, but are, in any event, worthy of another paper.

259. The Dead Sea Scroll fragment 11QMelchizedek (11Q13 [11QMelch]) interprets Psalm 82 in terms of the trial of Satan and the gods/angels who followed him.

260. See Revelation 12:7. Compare Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:22–28; and Doctrine and Covenants 29:36. Also *Book of Adam and Eve* 13:1–6; Andreas Caesariensis, "Commentarius in Apocalypsin," in *Patrologiae Graecae* (hereinafter *PG*), ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1845), 106:325C; Arethra Caesareae Cappodociae Episcopus, "Commentarius in Apocalypsin," in *PG*, 106:665A; Cassiodorus, "Complexiones in Apocalypsin," in *Patrologiae Latinae*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1845), 70:1411C; C. Detlef G. Müller, *Die Engellehre der koptischen Kirche* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959), 9. Stephen D. Ricks and Daniel C. Peterson, "The War in Heaven: A Comparison of Interpretations," *Tangents III* (Spring 1975): 99–105, summarily sketches the widespread ancient motif of strife within the heavenly council, showing how post-Augustinian commentators tried to explain it away, as well as how the restoration of a true account of it through Joseph Smith has received support from modern scholarship.

261. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 197.

262. For Josiah's attempts to eradicate such things, see 2 Kings 23:4–5.

263. The New English Bible, which I am using here, suggests "of the Most High" as an alternate translation. I consider it the preferable rendition.

264. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 268. On p. 271, Father Dahood explains that he takes the Hebrew *kī ʿattāh* ("yourself") as emphatic.

265. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 231.

266. Smith, *Early History of God*, 101. Smith's brief discussion here is very useful.

267. Marti, *Die Psalmen* 73–106, 59, argues that this passage is preexilic and that Psalm 96:5 ("all the gods of the nations are idols") represents the purer monotheism of the period following the Jews' Babylonian exile.

268. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 279. On apparent polytheism in primitive, preexilic, or pre-Deuteronomistic Hebrew faith (despite its tendency toward monolatry), see Smith, *Early History of God*, xix, xxiii, xxvii, 25, 145, 146, 152, 154, 156; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 2–5, 134, 140, 280, 385; Dever, "Folk Religion in Early Israel," 56; McCarter, "Religious Reforms," 67; Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 95–96 (for a useful discussion of the Deuteronomic reform, see pp. 82– 88); Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 85, 148–49, 180–81, 187–88, 232–33, 291–92. Smith, *Early History of God*, contends (on pp. xxii, xxiii, xxxi, 1, 3, 4, 146, and 156) that the Israelite religion was a subspecies of Canaanite religion and not something utterly different; compare Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 280; also Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 51, 82, 87 (cf. the rather arbitrary methods used by biblical law to differentiate Israelites from Canaanites, alluded to at p. 161). I would judge that this view represents the current consensus among scholars. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 143, agrees, in any event. On pp. 190–91, Professor Cross explains why, at a certain point in history, Canaanite religion (to which Hebrew religion is manifestly very closely related) became a threat and had to be opposed by the biblical prophets. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 153, remarks that, "Though the Patriarchs were unmistakably immigrants from Mesopotamia, with historical traditions as well as religious lore and customary law derived from the northeast, the Hebrew language and poetic style were quite certainly Canaanite in origin."

269. Mullen, "Divine Assembly," 2:215.

270. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 187 n. 176; compare Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 58 n. 46. See also Isaiah 6:8. Compare the plurals that are so characteristic of the creation narrative in Abraham 3:22–5:21. The Qurʾān invariably uses the first-person plural for the speech of God, which is typically, though not altogether convincingly, dismissed as a "royal we." If El was the original high god, of course, he rather than Yahweh would be the speaker addressing the council.

271. In Greek mythology, of course, Kronos was the father of Zeus. He seems to have been a pre-Hellenic deity, with origins in Asia Minor. Zeus overthrew him and replaced him as the head of the gods. See N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 573–74. The analogy between this episode and Yahweh's or Baʿl's displacement of El is difficult to miss. Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 19 (compare also 95, 97, and 107), point out the usefulness of even relatively late Greek materials for the study of the ancient Near East.

272. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 184, 185.

273. Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, Idolatry, trans. Naomi Goldblum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4.

274. As translated in Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 66–67.

275. Marti, *Die Psalmen 73–106*, 59 (my translation; emphasis in the original). In Jewish tradition, it was the Sadducees who, along with denying the resurrection, denied the existence of angels or other divine beings; see Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 40 n. 25, 124.

276. In 1QM xiv.16; perhaps also in 1QM xviii.7.

277. 1QH x. 8–9.

278. At, respectively, Daniel 8:25 and Deuteronomy 10:17; compare 1 Timothy 6:15 and Revelation 17:14. See Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," 40–41 n. 25.

279. Mullen, *Assembly of the Gods*, 228 n. 195.

280. *JBC*, 2:446 [63:120].

281. *JBC*, 1:577 [35:26].

282. The latter is the option preferred by Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 48.

283. See also Numbers 16:22; Malachi 2:10; Romans 8:16; and Hebrews 12:9.

284. It is crucially important to note that Paul was addressing Athenian pagans. Some critics of Latter-day Saint doctrine have claimed that humans are not naturally children of God, but become such only through being born again in Christ. There is, of course, an important sense in which this is true. (See, for example, John 1:12 and Doctrine and Covenants 76:24.) Clement of Alexandria, in his *Instructor* 1:6, in *ANF* 2:215, seems to suggest that it is in baptism that we are adopted and become the children of God, and he connects this explicitly with an exegesis of Psalm 82 (compare his *Exhortation to the Heathen* 12, in *ANF*, 2:205–6). But it is clear from Paul's comments, as well as from the passages from the Old Testament cited below, that non-Christians are also children of God in some sense. (Clement, again, in his *Exhortation to the Heathen* 11, in *ANF*, 2:202–3, speaks of Adam, the ancestor of all men, as a child of God who disobeyed his Father. Yet few if any Christians other than the Latter-day Saints believe that Adam was baptized, so, even from their point of view, he must have been a child of God in some other sense than the one Clement allowed for in the passage to which we alluded immediately above. The genealogy of Jesus that culminates in Luke 3:38 relates Adam to God in the same way that it relates Jacob to Isaac and Isaac to Abraham—that is, as son to father.) Furthermore, the idea of kinship with God through covenant is fundamental to the earliest layers of the Old Testament and long antedates the coming of Christ. See Frank Moore Cross, "Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel," in Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), 3–21. Professor Cross's thesis is neatly summarized in Hershel Shanks, "God as Divine Kinsman: What Covenant Meant in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1999): 32–33, 60.

285. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 155; see Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:684–85. For the meaning of the term in classical or pagan Greek (which is identical), see any of the numerous editions of the standard Liddell and Scott lexicon. The same term, *genos*, is used in the modern Greek translation of the Bible (Athens: Biblike Hetairia, 1971).

286. Porphyry the Phoenician, *Isagoge*, trans. Edward W. Warren (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), 28–29. Compare Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.1.3.

287. Wright, "The Faith of Israel," 359.

288. Pindar, *Nemean Odes* 6.1. The phrase is admittedly ambiguous. It could also mean "one is the race of men, another the race of the gods," and is frequently, if not generally, so rendered. However, I follow the interpretation of the passage advanced by John C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion: A Study in Survivals* (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1964), 65 and 65 n. 1, and endorsed by Stylianos V. Spyridakis, "Reflections on Hellenic Theanthropism," in *TO EΛΛHNIKON: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis Jr.*, ed. John S. Langdon et al. (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Coratzas, 1993), 1:9, 16 n. 2. Dawson W. Turner, *The Odes of Pindar Literally Translated into English Prose* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), 371, gives the passage as "Men and the Gods above one race compose."

289. The Greek text of the plate, in both transcription and reconstruction, is published at Günther Zuntz, *Persephone: Three Essays on Religion and Thought in Magna Graecia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 358–59.

290. See Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Authentic New Testament* (London: Dobson, 1955), 234. The survey of translations that follows is not meant to be exhaustive or systematic, but I believe it is sufficiently comprehensive to be "statistically significant." It rests almost entirely on versions of the Bible in my home library.

291. J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (n.p.: Macmillan, 1958).

292. *Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas: Al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Muqddis fī al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, 1990). I have found only one translation obscuring the genetic link between God and humankind that is so clearly the point of this passage, and, perhaps not surprisingly, it is an Arabic version. The contemporary New Testament called *Kitāb al-Ḥayāt*, which bears the significant subtitle *Tarjama Tafsīriyya* (i.e., "An Interpretative Translation"), says that we are God's *khalīqa*, his "creation" or "creatures." (*Kitāb al-Ḥayāt: Tarjama Tafsīriyya* [Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1982].) One can certainly understand that translators into Arabic would seek the least disturbing possible interpretation of this passage, since the overwhelmingly dominant religious tradition of the Arabic cultural region affirms, as a central article of its faith, that God "does not beget, nor is he begotten *[lam yalid wa lam yūlad]*" (Qurʾān 112:3)—a proposition that has obvious implications not only for the thesis of this paper but for the central doctrine of Christianity. The fact that even most Arabic Bibles seem, so far as I have been able to determine, to support a genetic relationship between God and humankind is impressive.

293. *Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas: Al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd li-Rabbinā Yasūʿ al-Masīḥ* (Beirut: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kathūlūkiyya, 1950).

294. See Kitabi Mukaddes: Eski ve Yeni Ahit (Istanbul: Kitabi Mukaddes Sirketi, 1972).

295. *La Sacra Bibbia* (Rome: Deposito di Sacre Scritture, 1914).

296. See Constantine A. Trypanis, ed., *The Penguin Book of Greek Verse* (London: Penguin, 1971), 308.

297. *Die Gute Nachricht: Das Neue Testament in heutigem Deutsch* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1971).

298. *Dios Llega al Hombre: El Nuevo Testamento de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo*, 2nd ed. (Asunci—n: Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, 1970).

299. *Kitāb-i Muqaddas* [1904] (n.p., 1982). The relevant meanings for nasl given by F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* [1892] (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1975), are "offspring, progeny, lineage, pedigree; relationship; stock, race, breed, caste, family." The term is a borrowing from Arabic, cognate with the Arabic verb *nasala/yansulu* ("to beget").

300. Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrifft Deudsch* [1545]. More recent revisions of the Luther Bible have retained his rendering of this passage. See, for example, *Das Neue Testament und die Psalmen* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1956).

301. As close inspection might suggest, Geschlecht derives from the same Germanic root as the verb *schlagen*, "to strike." German-English dictionaries typically give, as equivalents of *Geschlecht*, "genus," "kind," "species," "race," "family," "stock," and "generation"—as well as "sex" and "gender," which are obviously less likely here.

302. Günther Drosdowski, Paul Grebe, et al., *Duden Etymologie: Herkunftswörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1963), 215.

303. Konstantin Rösch, trans., *Das Neue Testament* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1946); Paul Riessler and Rupert Storr, trans., *Die Heilige Schrift des alten und des neuen Bundes* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1958).

304. Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Neue Testament* (Hamburg and Zürich: Furche, Benziger, and Theologischer Verlag, 1972).

305. *Die Bibel: Altes und Neues Testament: Einheitsübersetzung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980).

306. James Moffatt, *The Parallel New Testament* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1935).

307. Certain Hebrew biblical names may reflect such an understanding: Consider, for instance, *Abiel*, the eleventh century B.C. Benjaminite grandfather of King Saul and of Abner, his military commander. Abiel means "God is my father," or "El is my father." See 1 Samuel 9:1; 14:51. (Another Abiel, this one from the tenth century B.C., is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 11:32.) The personal name *Eliab* ("My God is father," or "El is father") is also worthy of note. It is attached in the Hebrew Bible to at least six distinct individuals, including the leader of the tribe of Zebulon in the time of Moses (Numbers 1:9; 2:7; 7:24–29; 10:16) and the eldest brother of David the king (1 Samuel 16:6). The common personal name *Abijah*, of course, may represent Yahweh's assumption of the role of El —as, for that matter, may Deuteronomy 14:1 (where the Hebrew word translated in the KJV as "Lord" is Yahweh). The name *Ahijah* ("My brother is Yahweh" or "Yahweh's brother") belongs to eight different characters in the Hebrew Bible, one of them a prophet. (Compare, too, the *Ahiah* or *Ahijah* of Nehemiah 10:26.) It has long been argued in certain scholarly circles that the earliest Semites—i.e., the proto-Hebrews and their relatives—saw themselves as literally akin to their God or gods. See, for example, W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*

(1889; reprint, New York: Meridian Library, 1956), 39–61; George A. Barton, "The Kinship of Gods and Men among the Early Semites," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 15 (1896): 168–82.

308. The Qurʾān, which appeared in Arabia in the early seventh century A.D., describes both Christians and Jews as believing themselves to be the "sons" or "children" of God (*abnāʾ Allāh*). See Qurʾān 5:18. By contrast, in John 8:42–44, Jesus uses a clearly distinct understanding of covenant kinship (related, it seems likely, to the usage referred to in John 1:12 and Doctrine and Covenants 76:24) to deny their relationship to God because of their sinfulness.

309. Compare Job 21:19; Hosea 1:10; Malachi 2:10; perhaps also Genesis 6:2–4 and Job 38:7. Psalm 68:5 likewise speaks of God as a father to human beings, but probably only in a metaphorical sense.

310. It is worth noting, incidentally, that the word henos, in the phrase *ex henos* ("of one"), is simply the grammatically genitive form of the word *hen* ("one") that, as mentioned at the beginning of this essay, is used to characterize the relationship between the Father and the Son in John 10:30.

311. See Matthew 25:31–46 for the context of the statement.

312. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," 88.

313. See Alan Richardson, *Creeds in the Making: A Short Introduction to the History of Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM, 1990), 86; see also 85–88. Perhaps there is significance in the fact that there are two very widespread legends concerning the reason for Satan's fall: According to one, he fell because he rebelled against God; according to the other (which is common in Jewish and Islamic lore), he fell because he refused to do homage to Adam. Of course, in the latter case, he was also rebelling against the express will of God.

314. Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 3.1, in *ANF*, 2:271. For a survey of the semantic range and complexity of the term *theos* among pagan Greeks of the Roman period, see S. R. F. Price, "Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984): 79–95. Price cautions his readers against imposing on antiquity modern "Christianizing assumptions," lest they fail to understand the evidence on its own terms. Such a survey needs to be done for ancient Jews and Christians, as well, and with the same caution in mind.

315. See *Life of Adam and Eve* 13, in Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:262. The same notion appears in the Qurʾān, where Satan refuses to worship. See Qurʾān 2:30–34; 7:11–22; 15:26–35; 17:61–62; 18:51; 20:120; and 38:75–86.

316. Peter, *Clementine Homilies* 16:16, in *ANF*, 8:316. The term god is not univocal even in the scriptures. For a particularly striking example of this, where it is applied to a mortal man, see Exodus 4:16 and 7:1. See also the note on Psalm 45:6 at NIV, 831. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 2.26 (as translated in *ANF*, 7:410) says of the fourth-century Christian bishop that "he is, next after God, your earthly god, who has a right to be honored by you."

317. I thank Barry Bickmore for reminding me of this passage. It is discussed in his very interesting book, *The Restoration of the Ancient Church: Joseph Smith and Early Christianity* (Ben Lomond, Calif.: The Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, 1999).

318. Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.4, in *ANF*, 4:641.

319. Ibid., 8.3, in *ANF*, 4:640.

320. Ibid., 8.5, in *ANF*, 4:641.

321. Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 354. Compare Wright, "The Faith of Israel," 361–62.

322. Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 354–55.

323. Ibid., 356. (I cannot resist remarking the structural similarity of Professor Hurtado's argument to that advanced in Peterson and Ricks, *Offenders for a Word*.) Hurtado cites Orthodox and Catholic veneration of Mary as an example of a practice that might trouble Protestants like himself, but declares that Protestant historians, as historians, must nonetheless accept such veneration as a genuine manifestation of monotheism. His suggestion of a more inductive approach may actually bring those who accept it to a more biblical way of thinking: "I have repeatedly pointed out," wrote W. F. Albright, "that the Hebrew Bible is the greatest existing monument of empirical logic and that this logic is more exact than formal logic in some important respects. After all, it is based on the cumulative experience of men, and not on postulates or presuppositions which may or may not be correct, as is inevitably true of most postulational reasoning outside of mathematics and the exact sciences." Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 177.

324. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 55–124, in *ANF*, 1:222.

325. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," 290–91.

326. As at ibid., 292, 301–3.

327. For a good discussion of this subject, see David L. Paulsen, "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *Harvard Theological Review* 83/2 (1990): 105–16; David L. Paulsen, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives," *BYU Studies* 35/4 (1995–96): 6–94.

328. See, for example, the discussion of Van den Hoek, " 'I said, You Are Gods . . . ,' " 203–19, which focuses mostly on the later, Platonized version of the doctrine of human deification and notes the gulf that the Platonized Fathers insisted on retaining between God and humankind.

329. Ibid., 208, 209.

330. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 124, in *ANF*, 1:262.

331. 4Q511 frg. 10, line 11, as given in García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 373.

332. Perhaps Novatian, *Treatise concerning the Trinity* 20, in *ANF*, 5:631, had something analogous in mind.

Adam's Fall in the Book of Mormon, Second Temple Judaism, and Early Christianity

Stephen D. Ricks

In Father Lehi's justly famous sermon to his son Jacob, Adam's transgression is depicted in a remarkably favorable light: the fall was a necessary precondition for mortality, for redemption, and for joy; the serpent figure in the Garden of Eden was Satan, an angel who fell from heaven. The figure of Adam and the story of Adam's fall square well with the depiction of him in Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings, where a positive, if not admiring picture is drawn. But that view diverges sharply from the picture of Adam and his transgression in early Christianity, expressed in definitive form by Augustine, who has a pessimistic outlook on Adam and his fall, a perspective that may have been freighted with his Manichaean baggage.

Adam and the Fall in the Book of Mormon

The consequences of Adam and Eve's transgression are outlined succinctly in 2 Nephi 2 and in King Benjamin's equally famous sermon to the Nephites at the time of Mosiah's assumption of royal authority, presented in Mosiah 3:

1. *A vital precondition for the fall was the expulsion of Satan from the presence of God.* According to Lehi, an "angel of God had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God." Because of his expulsion from the presence of God he "had become miserable forever" and "sought also the misery of all mankind." Satan tempted Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit, saying, "Ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (2 Nephi 2:17—18).

2. *The fall of Adam resulted in the conditions of mortality.* Lehi further stated: "After Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the Garden of Eden, to till the earth" (2 Nephi 2:19). The fall also resulted in the conditions of mortality that predispose a person to sin, that is, to being a fallen, "natural man," since "the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19; cf. Mosiah 16:3). However, as Robert Matthews points out, "there is nothing in our present Old or New Testaments that clearly and unequivocally explains just how the fall of Adam applies to children—whether mankind actually *sinned* in Adam, or whether man only suffers the *consequences* of the Fall."[1] Matthews inclines to accept the latter interpretation: thus the "natural man" is fallen in that he is predisposed to sin and does in fact sin.

3. *All are descendants of Adam and Eve.* Again, Lehi stated: "And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth" (2 Nephi 2:20). This is like the traditional Christian teaching concerning monogenism (a doctrine or belief in descent from a single individual or pair), but without the accompanying misconception of inherited sinfulness.

4. *Without the fall, no one would have been born into mortality.* "And they would have had no children" (2 Nephi 2:23). This directly contradicts a statement from the Baltimore Catechism, reflecting the current teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that the fall prevented children from being born in the Garden of Eden without pain or sin.[2]

5. *Mortality becomes a time of probation for descendants of Adam and Eve.* "And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh" (2 Nephi 2:21; cf. Alma 34:3;

42:4).

6. *Without the fall, Adam and Eve and their posterity would not have experienced joy:* "They would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. . . . Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:23, 25). In the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, Adam and Eve learned that redemption and joy were the result of their transgression: "Eve, his wife, . . . was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters" (Moses 5:11—12). Joseph Fielding Smith reflected the same sentiment: "I am very, very grateful for Mother Eve. If I ever get to see her, I want to thank her for what she did and she did the most wonderful thing that ever happened in this world and that was to place herself where Adam had to do the same thing that she did or they would have been separated forever."[3]

7. *The atonement redeems men and women from the effects of the fall.* "And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall" (2 Nephi 2:25; cf. 2 Nephi 9:21; Mosiah 3:11).

8. *Adam was prevented from partaking of the tree of life in his sinful state.* As a final note concerning the Book of Mormon's view of the effects of Adam's transgression, let us consider a statement made in Alma's sermon to his son Corianton that cherubim "and a flaming sword" were placed "at the east end of the Garden of Eden . . . to keep the tree of life . . . lest [Adam] should put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever" (Alma 42:2—3).

Images of Adam and His Transgression in Second Temple Jewish Literature

The story of Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, and Adam's transgression is well-known from Genesis 1—3. In an unadorned account, the creation of Adam (man) and Eve (woman), their placement in the Garden, their partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God's confronting Adam and Eve, and their consequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden are related. No judgment is given in the Genesis account about the character of Adam. No statement is made concerning hereditary sinfulness since "original sin is . . . certainly not in chapters one to three of Genesis."[4] A strikingly favorable portrait of Adam and his transgression is presented in Second Temple Jewish literature, which includes the apocryphal Ben Sira (Sirach) (a "wisdom" writing), the pseudepigaphic *Wisdom of Solomon* (also a "wisdom" writing), *Jubilees*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the *Apocalypse of Moses*, and the enigmatic *2 Enoch*.[5]

Adam is accounted among the most eminent of the patriarchs described in Second Temple Jewish literature. According to the puzzling *2 Enoch* 32, Adam is formed of "earth" (which, according to Francis Andersen, "implies that Adam, made in a heavenly paradise from materials brought from the earth, is now sent back to his native element to live there").[6] In the "wisdom" writings he is on the list of Israelite heroes[7] and is also portrayed as a "just man."[8] As with all heroic figures, Adam is portrayed in *Jubilees* as a priestly Israelite.[9]

The "wisdom" writings of Second Temple Jewish literature refrain from mentioning Adam's transgression because of their "view that death and mortality are natural aspects of life; they do not result from a primeval transgression."[10] According to other writers, however, Adam's transgression resulted in his expulsion from Eden. The *Apocalypse of Moses* relates how Adam, following his transgression, was about to be expelled from the Garden

of Eden. He then asked the Lord if he might yet eat of the tree of life. The Lord denied this request, saying, "You shall not now take from it; for it was appointed to the Cherubim and the flaming sword which turns to guard it because of you, that you might not taste of it and be immortal forever."[11]

In the pseudepigraphic *Life of Adam and Eve*, a lengthy account of Satan's expulsion from the presence of God in heaven is presented. In this passage Satan tells Adam that "because of you I am expelled and deprived of my glory which I had in the midst of the angels, and because of you I was cast out onto the earth."[12] Satan was called upon to worship the image of the Lord God. When he refused, Satan and his angels were banished and cursed "till the Day of Judgment."[13]

Fourth Ezra, which "expresses the inner turmoils of the Jews during the first generation following the destruction of Jerusalem,"[14] gives a pessimistic view of the effect of Adam's transgression on his posterity: "For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained. . . . O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants."[15] But "we should note at this point," Robert Matthews reminds us, that "there is a difference between a child's inheriting the actual sin itself and his inheriting only the *consequences* of the sin."[16] Still, though death came into the world through Adam's transgression, men are free to act in such a way as to please or displease God. *Second Baruch*, which attempts to understand the catastrophe of A.D. 70—the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple—insists on this point:

> For, although Adam sinned first and has brought death upon all who were not in his own time, yet each of them who has been born from him has prepared for himself the coming torment. And further, each of them has chosen for himself the coming glory. Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam.[17]

After Adam and Eve had been driven out of paradise, they made a tent for themselves and "mourned for seven days, weeping in great sorrow."[18] After not eating for over two weeks, they were compelled to repent before the Lord: "Let us repent with a great penitence; perhaps the Lord God will be forbearing and pity us and provide for us that we might live."[19] Adam told Eve to stand in the Tigris River with water up to her neck, while he stood in the Jordan. Though Satan had deceived Eve, both Adam and Eve ultimately obtained forgiveness from God, and Adam was taken up into the paradise of God.[20]

Let us briefly summarize our inquiry into Book of Mormon and pseudepigraphic writings:

1. Satan's expulsion from the presence of God was a necessary precondition for the temptation and fall (see 2 Nephi 2:17—18; *Life of Adam and Eve* 12—17).

2. Adam's fall resulted in the conditions of mortality (see 2 Nephi 2:19; *2 Baruch*).

3. Man becomes "natural," i.e., predisposed to sin, but he remains free (2 Nephi 2:26—27; Mosiah 3:19).

4. Adam's transgression resulted in expulsion from paradise (see Alma 42; *Apocalypse of Moses* 28:3).

Adam's Transgression in Early Christianity

The key passage for understanding the early Christian views of Adam and of Adam's transgression is Romans 5:12—21: "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Augustine used this as the basis for his own discussion of human sinfulness in his long-standing dispute with Pelagius,[21] a "footloose monk" who came to Rome from England and justly earned a reputation for piety.[22] According to Pelagius, God blesses us with his commandments, with baptism, with the example and the atoning sacrifice of Christ, but he does not burden us with a sinful nature inherited from our first parents. Augustine's life experience with sin—and possibly also his experience with Manichaeism's somber view of man's nature—left him convinced of man's total depravity, which he could only attribute to original sin passed on to Adam and Eve's descendants. Pelagius's insistence on maintaining his stance—with an assist from episcopal synods that found him innocent of heresy and from popes who died before their decisions could be carried out, as well as Augustine's theological running battles on "original sin" with others, including Julian of Eclanum[23]—permitted the controversy to persist during the last decade and more of Augustine's life and radicalized rather than softened his position.

In the end Augustine won, changing the complexion of Catholic Christianity forever.[24] He won through the force of his eloquence and the power of his own passionate nature. But the doctrine of "original sin," according to George Riggan, "expressly conceived as involving true guilt, is a novel Augustinian construction, with no unequivocal prece dent in the whole antecedent literature of the Hebrew-Christian community. Augustine's claim to its ecumenicity is fundamentally unsustained."[25] Augustine's position won the day, although his impulses as a "residual Manichaean dualis[t]"[26] were "reasserting themselves."[27] As Julian of Eclanum said of him, "just as an Ethiopian cannot change his skin or a leopard change his spots, nor could he, Augustine, change his Manichaeism."[28]

Conclusion

On the question of original sin, Augustine's stance was triumphant, and all others, fellow Catholics and Protestants after him—Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin—followed him, with only a few caveats and modifications. Although the Reformation represented a veritable revolution in views on grace and nature, on church organization and government, little or nothing else changed about the nature of God, about the nature of man, about the fall of Adam and "original sin." A restoration, not a Reformation, was required.

In the concluding chapter of Herbert Haag's *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* the author includes a summary containing the following points:

1. "The idea that Adam's descendants are automatically sinners because of the sin of their ancestor, and that they are already sinners when they enter the world, is foreign to Holy Scripture. The well-known verse from the psalms, 'Behold I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me' (Psalms 51:7; 50:7), merely means that everyone born of woman becomes a sinner in this world, without fail. The Bible often uses the device of attributing a man's later deeds or achievements to him from the time of his conception and birth. (Cf., for example, Jeremiah 1:5, where Jeremiah is made a prophet in his mother's womb.)"

2. "The 'inheritance' of Adam's sin means rather that sin, after its entrance into the world, so spread that consequently all men are born in a sinful world and in this sinful world become themselves sinners."

3. “No man enters the world a sinner. As the creature and image of God he is from his first hour surrounded by God’s fatherly love. Consequently, he is not at birth, as is often maintained, an enemy of God and a child of God’s wrath. A man becomes sinner only through his own individual and responsible action.”[29]

These passages are reminiscent of Joseph Smith’s statement in the “Wentworth Letter” that has since become the second Article of Faith: “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.” While tentative academic reconsideration of Adam’s position or Adam’s transgression still does not mean acceptance of teachings of the restoration over the Reformation or a concession to the more favorable views of ancient Israel or Second Temple Judaism, it does represent a welcome reassessment of early doctrines.

Notes

1. Robert J. Matthews, “The Fall of Man,” in *The Man Adam*, ed. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 57.

2. See Herbert Haag, *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* trans. Dorothy Thompson (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 51.

3. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Take Heed to Yourselves*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 291—92.

4. Haag, *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* 19.

5. See John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 31.

6. With this we may compare a sermon by Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:90; he states that Adam and Eve were placed on the earth from another world. The idea that Adam was created in a heavenly garden and transported to earth is also found in Qurʾān 2:30, 35—36; 7:24.

7. Compare Ben Sira 49:16.

8. Ben Sira 10:1—2.

9. See *Jubilees* 3:26—31; 19:23—25; 22:11—12.

10. Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 155.

11. *Apocalypse of Moses* 28:3.

12. *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (hereafter *OTP*), ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:262.

13. Qurʾān 38:77; compare Qurʾān 2:34; 7:11; 15:31; 17:61; 18:50; 20:116; and 38:73—78.

14. Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 113.

15. *4 Ezra* 3:21—23; 7:48 [118].

16. Matthews, "The Fall of Man," 56.

17. *2 Baruch* 54:15, 19.

18. *Life of Adam and Eve* 1:1, in *OTP*, 2:258.

19. *Life of Adam and Eve* 4:3, in *OTP*, 2:258.

20. See *Life of Adam and Eve* 6:1—3; 17:3; 25—29; cf. *Apocalypse of Moses* 37:1—6, in *OTP*, *2:*258, 260, 264, 266, 268, 289, 291.

21. George A. Riggan, "Original Sin in the Thought of Augustine" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1949), 10.

22. See Will Durant, *The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), 69.

23. See Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 202; Riggan, "Original Sin," 13.

24. See Brown, *Religion and Society*, 206—7.

25. Riggan, "Original Sin," iii. The doctrine of original sin was not the only teaching that appeared relatively late in the history of the early Christian church. Infant baptism was another. In T. Vincent Tymms's rather overenthusiastic estimation in *The Evolution of Infant Baptism and Related Ideas* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1915), 445: "Infant baptism is not an original institution of the Christian religion, and was not generally adopted in the 'Catholic Church' until the fifth century." In the more sober assessment of E. Glenn Hinson, "Infant Baptism," in the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1997), 1:571, "The first explicit evidence for baptism of very young children appears in Tertullian's *On Baptism*, composed before his conversion to Montanism ca. 206." Both Tertullian and Origen mention infant baptism and original sin but, according to Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100—600)*, The Christian Tradition, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 291, "Although Tertullian seemed to have the makings of a doctrine of original sin, he did not have its necessary corollary, the practice of infant baptism; while Origen, on the other hand, affirmed the apostolic origin of infant baptism, he did not formulate an anthropology adequate to account for it." Besides the negative evidence of silence on the question of infant baptism, we have the positive evidence of the expressed belief in the sinlessness of small children. In Franz Bücheler, *Carmina latina epigraphica* (Gotheburg: Eranos' Förlag, 1912), insc. 1439 (cited in Franz Cumont, *After Life in Roman Paganism: Lectures Delivered at Yale University on the Silliman Foundation* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922], 140; cf. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* [Paris: Geuthner, 1949], 327) we read the following tomb inscription: "Thou hast been received, my daughter, among the pious souls, because thy life was pure from all fault, for thy youth ever sought only innocent play"; cf. 1400: "Vos equidem nati caelestia regna videtis/ Quos rapuit parvos praecipitata dies (You children, whom sudden death snatched away so young/ Will see the heavenly realms)"; cf. the following inscription that affirms a child's sinlessness before the age of accountability: "Eusebius, *a child without sin because of his age*, admitted to the abode of the saints, rests there in peace." Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq, *Reliquiae liturgicae vestustissmae* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1912), 1:1:2917; cf. 2974; 3153.

26. William E. Phipps, "The Heresiarch: Pelagius or Augustine?" *Anglican Theological Review* 62/2 (1980): 132.

27. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 679.

28. Cited from Julian of Eclanum in Augustine, *Incomplete Work against Julian* 4.142; cf. Phipps, "The Heresiarch," 132; J. van Oort, "Augustine and Mani on concupiscentia sexualis," in *Augustiniana traiectana: Communication Présentées au Colloque Internationale d'Utrecht*, ed. J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1987), 137—52; J. van Oort, "Augustine on Sexual Concupiscience and Original Sin," in *Studia Patristica XXII* (Leuven: Peters, 1989), 132—36.

29. Haag, *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* 106—7.

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