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Abstract Mitton highlights a few seventeenth-century prophecies concerning the last days and uses that background information to explain the outlook that many people today have on modern revelation.

Editor's Introduction

CONCERN FOR THE THINGS OF ETERNITY

George L. Mitton, associate editor

The Angel with the everlasting Gospel hath already flown through the middle of the Earth; Happy be they who shall receive it, **nor despise this great treasure, by trampling it under their feet.** The Sun of Righteousness shall shine upon them in his full light, and dispel these horrible Clouds without any prejudice unto them.

Christopher Kotter, 1 June 1621,
vision and prophecy of the end time¹

Of much concern to the Latter-day Saints is the attitude and reaction of people when presented with the Book of Mormon and other revelations that God has called them to proclaim. Together with the Holy Bible, these scriptures provide the written word of God in these troubled times.

Recently I took the opportunity to read and ponder some claimed revelations from Europe in the early 1600s. The passage quoted above caught my attention since it alludes to the prophecy in Revelation 14:6 about an angel bringing the everlasting gospel to the earth in the last

1. *Prophecies of Christopher Kotterus, Christiana Poniatovia, Nicholas Drabicius: Three Famous German Prophets*, trans. R. C. Gent, comp. Robert Codrington, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for Robert Pawlet at the Sign of the Bible in Chancery-lane, near the Inner-Temple Gate, 1664), 47, emphasis added. Hereafter cited as *Prophecies*. All quotations in the present essay preserve the original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and other stylings.

days. It was given the visionary as he was shown scenes of the latter-day judgments. Latter-day Saints have always considered that the Book of Mormon helped fulfill that biblical vision in a marvelous way. Did the vision and prophecy of 1621 foresee the Book of Mormon coming as a warning before the destructions? At the least, it described in a terse and striking way the circumstance we find regarding the Book of Mormon today—received with great joy by some but strongly resisted or rejected by others.

My reading of these seventeenth-century prophecies and the conditions in which they were given was very instructive as to how the world reacts to prophecy. I found the revelations informative and very moving at times, although sometimes obscure, extravagant, or disappointing when compared with the plain and lucid revelations received through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I did feel great respect for those who claimed to receive them, for their purposes and their efforts to express the things their messages entailed. I also felt a keen appreciation for the persecution they suffered and the sacrifices they made in trying to convey these messages during the very difficult times of the Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618–1648). The visions are very apocalyptic, a form often found during times of great persecution, stress, and hardship. They assure the righteous that God has not forgotten them and that in his time and way he will provide a judgment by which the oppressors and evil powers will be overthrown and righteousness and peace will prevail. These prophecies would have provided comfort to those who embraced them. A short summary of the circumstances in which they were put forth will set the stage for brief comments on the attitude toward revelation today.

Comenius and the Desire for Immediate Revelation

Jan Amos Komenský (1592–1670) was a Bohemian Christian leader of great significance and accomplishment.² Better known as

2. See Daniel Murphy, *Comenius: A Critical Reassessment of His Life and Work* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995); and Matthew Spinka, *John Amos Comenius: That Incomparable Moravian* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967). A helpful commentary is found in Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and

Comenius, the latinized form of his name, he is a person of heroic stature. Comenius believed in and published the revelations I discuss here. Before the Thirty Years' War, he was the last bishop of the Bohemian Brethren, a Protestant denomination known as the *Unitas Fratrum* (United Brethren). That church derived from the devoted followers of John Hus (1369–1415), a very important Christian martyr at the beginning of the Reformation who was burned at the stake. Later, Comenius and his people suffered great violence and were scattered during the war. After a period of hiding when his life was in constant danger, he was driven from his Czech homeland and suffered the death of his wife and daughter and the loss of all his possessions, including his remarkable library and manuscripts. Although he was forced to remain in exile the rest of his life, he became famous, especially for his work and influence in Poland, the Netherlands, and England.

Comenius was greatly influenced by his friend and mentor Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), a German Lutheran pastor and probably the prime leader in the early Rosicrucian movement. This society taught through symbolism and allegory that “an illumination of a religious . . . nature” was “about to be revealed to the world” and would “bring about a general reformation.” There would be not only religious reform, which was paramount, but a reform “both of divine and human things.”³ The Rosicrucians anticipated a great advancement in all aspects of life. Indeed, the title of their primary publication in 1614 began, “Universal and General Reformation of the whole wide world.”⁴ Historian Frances Yates summarizes that “whilst involving

Kegan Paul, 1972), 156–70. I first encountered the revelatory complex being considered while reading this noted work of the late Dame Yates. Later informative discussions are Clare Goodrick-Clarke, “The Rosicrucian Afterglow: The Life and Influence of Comenius,” in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited*, ed. Ralph White (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1999), 193–218; Craig D. Atwood, “Comenius as a Public Theologian,” which includes a useful bibliography on Comenius and is available at <http://divinity.wfu.edu/pdf/comenius.pdf> (accessed 9 September 2008).

3. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 42–45, quotations on pp. 44, 45. For a summary of recent research on Rosicrucian origins, see Tobias Churton, *The Golden Builders: Alchemists, Rosicrucians and the First Freemasons* (Boston: Weiser, 2005); and Donald R. Dickson, *The Tessera of Antilia: Utopian Brotherhoods & Secret Societies in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 62–88.

4. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 42.

definite reforms in education, church, and law, this general reformation has millenarian overtones; it will bring the world back to the state in which Adam found it . . . [and will] presage ‘a great influx of truth and light’ such as surrounded Adam in Paradise, and which God will allow before the end of the world.”⁵ The Rosicrucian movement was an aspect of the late Renaissance, that marvelous and mysterious period that did so much to help prepare the world for what the Latter-day Saints see as the last days—for conditions that would allow the restoration and teaching of the everlasting gospel. It may be that we should consider the possibility that the Renaissance period was not only a preparation for but also a prefiguration and witness of what was to come, perhaps even a kind of grand allegory not told as a story or parable but actually acted out in history.

Comenius was a devout and admirable Christian. He did much to foster interest in Christianity and to help and comfort his scattered flock. Deeply concerned about the development of Christian unity, he traveled widely in Europe and became justly famous for his work and publications. His numerous books had religious overtones when treating many topics and frequently employed scriptural references and allusions. His interest in a general reformation motivated him to recommend improvements in many subject areas.⁶ He was not only a theologian and bishop but also a cartographer, hymn writer, novelist, lexicographer, politician, and social reformer.⁷ He became known as “Teacher of Nations” and is best known for his extensive writings and work on educational reform, generally being considered the father of modern educational methods and of the concept of free and universal education looking toward universal literacy.⁸ When he visited England in 1641–1642, he was influential in assisting in the development of the *Encyclopedia* and of the Royal Society, so important in the pro-

5. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 57.

6. John Amos Comenius, *Panorthosia or Universal Reform: Chapters 1–18 and 27*, trans. A. M. O. Dobbie (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

7. Atwood, “Comenius,” 1.

8. Will S. Monroe, *Comenius and the Beginnings of Educational Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900); John Edward Sadler, *J. A. Comenius and the Concept of Universal Education* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966).

gression of modern science.⁹ John Winthrop apparently offered him the presidency of Harvard College, but Comenius declined.¹⁰ It has even been claimed that his writings were used in the determination of some of the philosophy and symbolism in Freemasonry,¹¹ a movement so influential in the establishment of free government.

Clearly, it was his Christian convictions and anticipations that motivated and colored all that Comenius did. Soon after being forced from his homeland, he wrote a marvelous book, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*,¹² which expressed his outlook, desires, and expectations. While not as well known in the West as it should be, it is his most popular work and is considered by many to be one of the world's great books. Latter-day Saints should find it stimulating, amusing at times, insightful, and inspiring in many passages. In his dedication of the book, Comenius explained:

The first part depicts the ludicrous and senseless scenes of the world: how despite the exertions of all its powers the world accomplishes nothing; and how everything finally ends miserably either in laughter or in sorrow. The second part describes in a measure, either allegorically or objectively, the true and assured happiness of the sons of God: how truly they are blessed who, leaving behind the world and all mundane things, adhere and firmly cleave to God alone.¹³

In “using the traditional theme of a pilgrimage through the World-City, *Labyrinth* distinguishes itself from numerous similar allegories

9. Robert Fitzgibbon Young, *Comenius in England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932); G. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947). The encyclopedia referred to was later named the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

10. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (New Haven: S. Andrus, 1820), II, iv, 10, as cited by Spinka, *Comenius*, 85.

11. For example, Josef S. Roucek, “Jan Amos Komenský: The Spiritual Founder of [the] Modern Masonic Movement,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 15/4 (1963): 371–76.

12. John Amos Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, trans. Matthew Spinka (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1972). First published in 1623.

13. Comenius, *Labyrinth*, xi.

in world . . . and Czech literature by its artistic qualities and its elaborate style . . . [and it] has outlived many now forgotten compositions of similar theme and genre.”¹⁴ It is important to observe that this was a time when many thinkers and writers tried to envision an ideal, or utopian, community, and *Labyrinth* was influenced by that genre. Comenius was affected by utopian writings such as Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis*, and Thomas Campanella’s *The City of the Sun*. He was particularly stimulated by a utopian writing of his friend Andreae entitled *Christianopolis*.¹⁵ A significant aspect often found in these utopian writings is the concept that the ideal Christian community will have intense angelic guidance. This is notable in *Christianopolis*, but even more so in the *Labyrinth* of Comenius.

For my present purpose, it is important to note that Andreae’s *Christianopolis* clearly states that the underlying principle in envisioning the ideal Christian city-state is that everything is treated “as a prelude which imitates eternal life” and that “the best arrangement for a community is this, that it approximate as closely as possible to heaven.”¹⁶ Accordingly, *Christianopolis* is governed under the leadership of three men “modelled on the Trinity.”¹⁷ A temple is at the very center of the city, and it is a place where sacred plays are performed.¹⁸ Religious music is of great importance, for the choir sings “in imitation of the angelic choir, to whose songs of joy God Himself bears witness. And since they place the greatest emphasis on the service, protection, warnings and teachings of the angels and take steps to have the angels as near them as possible, it is their hope . . . that the choir of angels will join in with their singing.”¹⁹

14. Lubomír Doležel, *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 57.

15. J. V. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, intro. and trans. Edward H. Thompson (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1999). This work was first published in 1619. On its influence on *Labyrinth*, see Murphy, *Comenius*, 13, 76. For other influences, see Dickson, *Utopian Brotherhoods*, 160–61.

16. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, 196.

17. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, 96.

18. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, 61, 65, 257–58.

19. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, 235.

Comenius followed the same principle in describing the utopian aspects of *Labyrinth*. From his comments, I infer that the underlying concept was based on a wonderfully expansive interpretation of part of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).²⁰ A responsible Christian community will strive to follow the order of heaven so far as it has been revealed and in anticipation of the kingdom. It was this anticipation that motivated Comenius to seek to do many things that he felt would bring about improvement in the world, and he was remarkably successful in his contribution. In *Labyrinth* he discusses perceptively many aspects of Christian life and how improvement can be made. He depicts a Christian life and community where prayer is fundamental and the gifts of the Spirit are richly enjoyed. God is a constant source of comfort. The angels surround and protect, guide and instruct:

I have likewise observed . . . another benefit derived from this invisible holy company: namely; that they not only have angels as guardians, but also as teachers of the elect, to whom they often transmit secret hints and whom they teach the deep hidden mysteries of God. For since they ever look upon the face of the omniscient God, none of those things which a pious man desires to know can remain hidden from them. . . . From this source come the increase of the gifts of God within us. . . . Oh, the blessed school of the sons of God!²¹

Comenius held that not only do the angels protect the faithful, but they are also blessed with miracles and "God's own august presence."²² He even describes a visit of the Savior in such a striking, vivid, and moving way as to make one wonder whether the account reflects his own actual experience—or that of a friend.²³ It reminded me of Joseph Smith's vision and description of the Lord of Glory and illustrates the intense faith of Comenius in the reality of divine revelation. His

20. Spinka, *Comenius*, 84.

21. Comenius, *Labyrinth*, 123.

22. Comenius, *Labyrinth*, 124.

23. Comenius, *Labyrinth*, 104–5. That the passage has an affinity to one from Andreae is noted at 145.

expectations were great. Since the Protestant Reformation had already occurred, what more was he seeking? He yet anticipates a time of great illumination and fulfillment when the “result of that light which is promised is the conversion of all peoples to the Church, so that Jehovah shall be King over all the earth” and, as promised, “the Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole circle of the world, for a witness to all the peoples, before the end shall come.”²⁴

The Revelations of *Lux in Tenebris*

In his travels, Comenius met many visionary persons, apparently showing that revelatory experiences were significant in that day.²⁵ Clearly he took an interest in such claims that purported to give guidance on the future. Some of his friends persuaded him to compile a book on the subject. This he did, and he published it in 1657 under the title *Lux in Tenebris* (“Light in Darkness”).²⁶ It was a title bearing rich allusions, such as to God’s separation of light and darkness in the creation or to a New Testament theme: “the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:78–79). The title derives from the Latin Vulgate version of John 1:5, which in our more familiar English version reads, speaking of Christ: “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” The book contained some commentary by Comenius and his Latin translation of revelations claimed by three persons he knew. For this preliminary review, I have relied on the selections and English translation of the Latin published in 1664 by Puritan writer and translator Robert Codrington (d. 1665), hereafter cited as *Prophecies*.²⁷

The three prophetic figures quoted by Comenius are Christopher Kotter, a Lutheran; Christina Poniatowska; and Nicholas Drabik—

24. Comenius, *The Way of Light*, 198, as cited by Spinka, *Comenius*, 83.

25. Murphy, *Comenius*, 14.

26. Comenius, *Lux in Tenebris* (Amsterdam, 1657). An enlarged edition entitled *Lux e Tenebris* was published in 1663 and 1665. I am citing these rare books from Spinka, *Comenius*, 139, 161. Most copies were destroyed, having been consigned to the flames.

27. See n. 1 above.

scattered members of the United Brethren church. All of them experienced great hardship as a result of the Thirty Years' War between Catholic and Protestant factions. Kotter, a tanner from Silesia who proclaimed his prophecies unto many, was thrown into prison and later exiled to Saxony. Poniatowska was a young refugee orphan from Bohemia whom Comenius cared for in his own family. She married a priest and tutor of royalty and died at age 34. Drabik, a Moravian who was appointed to the ministry in 1616 at the same time and place as Comenius, was exiled and became a cloth merchant. He claimed many revelations and was a martyr and witness of great cruelty when religious freedom did not exist. He was beheaded in 1671 for his effrontery.²⁸ Comenius had great respect for these people.

Approached from the viewpoint of Latter-day Saints today, these revelations appear to be of mixed quality. I find some rewarding aspects both moving and faith promoting, while other things are problematic, even raising the question of failed prophecy. These interesting writings need to be approached with caution like all noncanonical writings that claim inspiration. What the Lord said in relation to the Apocrypha is instructive here: "There are many things contained therein that are true, . . . [and] there are many things . . . that are not true. . . . Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand, for the Spirit manifesteth truth" (Doctrine and Covenants 91:1–4). Even the Book of Mormon allows the possibility of human error within inspired scripture: "Whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these" (Mormon 8:12). This is a most remarkable comment and promise. These revelations collected by Comenius afford an instructive opportunity to gain experience in confronting this problem. I will first outline what I see as the more positive aspects of them, and then I will comment on some rather difficult passages.

28. On the lives of these people, see *Prophecies*, 20–27, 56–61, 91–95; Wilhelmus Rood, *Comenius and the Low Countries* (Amsterdam: Van Gendt, 1970), 30, 35, 44, 52, 100–101, 108, 169–74, 177–79, 237–38; Murphy, *Comenius*, 14, 41–42; and Sadler, *Comenius and Universal Education*, 16–17, 306–7, 309.

A Witness of Eternal Things

Today our view of what is most important in these writings likely differs from that of people in Comenius's day, preoccupied as they were with wartime trauma and a great concern for what was to come. The most striking and important thing we may see in these writings is their witness of the ministry of angels, the nature of Deity, and the reality of the heavenly realm. Since that time, in addition to biblical accounts, a remarkable number of sacred writings from the past have been recovered, offering useful comparisons with the prophecies collected by Comenius. The discovery of an ancient Book of Enoch a century after Comenius was an important milestone in understanding Enoch's heavenly vision, or "ascent," and that of other visionaries. That book begins with this summary passage: "Enoch a righteous man, whose eyes were opened by God, saw the vision of the Holy One in the heavens, which the angels showed me, and from them I heard everything, and from them I understood as I saw."²⁹ The strong involvement of the angels as instructors or heavenly guides is a conspicuous motif among ancient visionary accounts.³⁰

Angelic guidance is also prominent in the visions preserved by Comenius. Frances Yates thought it extraordinary that "Kotter's visions were brought to him by angels, so he believed, who would suddenly become visible to him, show him a vision, and return to invisibility. In the illustrations, the angels are shown as young men, without wings, in long robes."³¹ Latter-day Saints will appreciate that detail, as they will Kotter's report that an angel appeared again and "repeated the same words" along with additional instruction.³² The angel would allay his fears: "giving his right hand to [Kotter], he admonished him to put off all Fear, for no evil should come unto him."³³ When Kotter was introduced to another angel in the vision, the angel

29. 1 Enoch 1:2, in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:188.

30. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 200.

31. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 159. Compare *Prophecies*, 59.

32. *Prophecies*, 28, 41.

33. *Prophecies*, 29.

said: “Give me the fellowship of thy Right Hand.”³⁴ The same motif appears in Poniatowska’s visions where the heavenly figure “came unto me in a long white rayment, and giving me his right hand, said unto me, My strength and my victory be to thy eternal comfort, and to the eternal ruin and destruction of those who vainly trust in their own greatness.”³⁵ The judgment motif is often present, but the revelations give a warm feeling of close association offered from the heavenly world to mankind. This brought to mind the Lord’s direction and promise through Joseph Smith: “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10).

The concept of God in these visions is strongly anthropomorphic. Poniatowska refers to the heavenly figure teaching and assisting her as “the Antient of dayes” or “Ancient of Times” and as an elderly looking man.³⁶ This may be a restrained allusion to Deity or to one very near to God who is personally serving as guide.³⁷ This guide introduces Poniatowska to the vision of God on his throne, surrounded by the angels, so characteristic of other apocalyptic accounts. It is not unlike the prophet Lehi’s vision in the opening chapter of the Book of Mormon. The description reads:

Lifting up my eyes I beheld the Heaven to open, and the old man looking down upon me, and saying to me, *Come up to me*: but I answering, Lord, *I cannot*, He replied, *Give me your hands*. I therefore held out both of my hands unto him, and he drew me up from the hill into Heaven, and said unto me, *Pray thus*, O Lord prepare my heart, and all my senses to understand thy wonderful works.

This prayer being ended I beheld a great company, and a large plain in which they stood, so full of light that I could hardly behold it for the glory of it. I demanded therefore of

34. *Prophecies*, 39.

35. *Prophecies*, 73.

36. *Prophecies*, esp. 59, 77. See also 62–64, 67–78, 82, 86–87.

37. Compare usage in the book of Daniel and the concept of “the angel of his presence” in Abraham 1:15.

the old man, what spacious and shining place it was: He answered, It is the throne and the Majesty of the living God, attend diligently and behold.³⁸

The “opening of the heavens” is an important biblical concept, and such visions are found in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse. A key New Testament passage appears where the Lord promises Nathaniel that “hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (John 1:51). Joseph Smith referred to such revelations as “the visions of eternity” or “the visions of heaven” as they were experienced in the church.³⁹

In Poniatowska’s account, the visionary was given to understand many things about the divine order: how the angels praise the Lord for his goodness, mercy, and cosmic power over both heaven and earth; and how angels go between heaven and earth with swiftness (as on wings or flying), reporting to God and pleading before him for the benefit of those oppressed who thus are not being forgotten. The coming judgments of God are represented in several circumstances, often with quite some complexity and in symbolic ways. Assurances are given that God’s judgment will certainly provide rewards and punishments and will put all things in order. In a striking resurrectional figure, the “Church of Christ” is likened to one “alone in a corner like a dead Body,” but the Lord will yet come in mercy and bring the church “forth into the light, and my countenance shall shine upon [it] bright as the Sun,” while the church will be known as “the City of Righteousness, and my faithful Sion.”⁴⁰

Apocalyptic Visions and the Question of Failed Prophecy

These visions invite brief consideration of the question of failed prophecy. They give promise of divine intervention and judgment in cases of hardship and claim that certain kings or powers will be deposed or others will be instated. Some of these prophecies seem to

38. *Prophecies*, 62–63.

39. *History of the Church*, 1:83.

40. *Prophecies*, 79, 80, 81.

have created false hopes since it does not appear that the events they foresaw came to pass at the time. I do not doubt the possibility of false prophecy, human error, or even the deceptions of the evil power. However, the question should be considered whether true prophecies may not always be intended as literal, but perhaps may be given as examples of contingent actions, or the type of things that will result if repentance does not follow stern warning. From God's eternal perspective, and when there may be many aspects of a thing that we don't even know about, does it really matter when a correction or judgment is carried out, as long as "all's well that ends well"? Could stark things be shown in vision to emphasize the gravity of a thing and the *type of result* that will eventually follow if wrong choices are made? Kotter quoted an angel as saying that "God pronounceth his judgement against a Nation or Kingdom which he intends to destroy and break in pieces: but if that Nation or Kingdom shall truly repent them of their evil ways, God will repent himself of the evil which he intended to bring upon them."⁴¹ God is merciful, patient, and desirous of repentance wherever possible and allows mankind agency in all things.

In one of the revelations, the visionary is told that "this day the judgements of the Lord shall be shown unto you, and his power by which he will cast down the proud from their thrones, and exalt the humble in their places."⁴² Can and will God carry out this great reversal? It is the *power* that is being made evident here, as in the grand scene of the heavenly court, providing the assurance that it can and will be done in the Lord's due time. To make evident that power and establish confidence in it is an important purpose of the revelation. Thus, at the end of the marvelous throne vision one of the angels exclaims:

Rejoyce you righteous in the strength of this mighty King, for now in a short time he will arise to help you; he will multiply the gladness of your hearts with the greatness of his power, he will comfort you, and fill your hearts with abundant joy. Use

41. *Prophecies*, 53.

42. *Prophecies*, 82.

but a little patience, and be assured that *Iehovah* the God of Hosts will perform it.⁴³

From the life of Comenius comes a helpful example. In 1619 he was present at the Prague cathedral for the coronation of Frederick V as king of Bohemia. That ceremony “was the last official act of the church to which he belonged before its suppression.”⁴⁴ Comenius and the church anticipated great things from the reign of Frederick and even “expected a world reformation from his rule . . . [and] were attempting reforms in society and in education under his auspices.”⁴⁵ Their disappointment was great when he was soon overthrown in the war and forced to flee to The Hague in the Netherlands. He lived there in exile the rest of his life. In the prophecies of Kotter, it appeared that Frederick would be restored to his kingship, although that did not come about. Yates has translated a passage from Kotter to illustrate this:

Frederick, . . . King of Bohemia, crowned by God, the supreme King of all Kings, who in the year 1620 fell into danger, but . . . will again recover all and far greater riches and glory.⁴⁶

Placing great confidence in this prophecy, Comenius took an illustrated manuscript of Kotter’s revelations to show the exiled king at the Hague:

He presented him with a precious copy of the prophecies, in which was given the prospect of a return to Prague. When Frederick V saw the volume in folio size, he was amazed that there were so many of such predictions. He opened the beautifully written work and saw that it was illustrated with appropriate pictures. In one of these pictures he saw a man who stood out clearly in the midst of an army, whilst being presented with a golden book.⁴⁷

43. *Prophecies*, 66–67.

44. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 158.

45. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 160.

46. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 159; from *Lux in Tenebris*, 42–43.

47. Rood, *Comenius and the Low Countries*, 29.

The king wondered what it all meant. Comenius then explained that there would come to pass the preaching of the gospel to the unbelieving nations and the liberation of the church from its persecutors.⁴⁸ What should we think of this prophecy? Could it not be viewed from an eternal perspective to see Frederick receive a glorious crown as promised the faithful in the resurrection, one of eternal duration, power, and influence and far more important and glorious than any earthly diadem? As for preaching the gospel to all nations, four centuries have gone by, but we still have reason to believe it will come about with the assistance of a “golden book.” We need to enlarge our view and to strive to see prophecy and all things from God’s eternal perspective.

Apparently Comenius had such a perspective. He published these prophecies some years after the premature death of Frederick, when it was known he would not recover his kingship. He felt the revelations still had great value. When he visited England in 1641–1642 at the invitation of members of Parliament,⁴⁹ he tried to create interest in *Lux in Tenebris* and provided prominent persons with copies, despite the opposition of some.⁵⁰ Yates has noted how that visit demonstrated “the great importance which Comenius attached” to the book.⁵¹ After the deaths of Kotter and Poniatowska, he placed reliance on the prophecies still being given by Drabík, but these caused him much disappointment and criticism when it became evident the throne would not be restored at Prague. Drabík’s revelations were problematic, and his life became unstable. He was subjected to great stress and hardship, culminating in his execution. Nevertheless, Comenius appears to have kept his confidence in the revelations of *Lux in Tenebris*. Where they lacked fulfillment,

he regarded prophecy as being dependent upon man’s response to God’s will and therefore believed that particular events must be interpreted in the light of the ultimate purpose

48. Rood, *Comenius and the Low Countries*, 29–30.

49. Young, *Comenius in England*, 11, 52.

50. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, 377–81.

51. Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 158 n. 3.

of God to establish his rule on earth. It was necessary to distinguish between things fundamental, instrumental and accidental.⁵²

What appears most significant is that since Comenius was working earnestly with others to plan for an ideal kingdom upon the return of Frederick, when that hope was thwarted it caused him to turn his energies to seek reform and improvement on a worldwide basis. This resulted in a greater, lasting influence and a contribution that helped prepare the world for the glory of the latter days. One of his biographers has concluded:

In his literary work he left to his nation and to the whole world a great legacy; whilst preserving his national individuality, he kept in mind mankind as a whole; through the ennobling and improvement of his own nation he endeavoured to further the interests of the whole world. Under the most unfavourable conditions he always thought of the good of others. Christian humanity spoke from every one of his actions. A true patriot and son of his Church, he was free from all national or religious prejudice. Owing to the loftiness of his aims and the greatness of his personality he held the attention of the eminent men of all nations.⁵³

On the Reaction to Revelation or Prophecy

I have dwelt upon the experience of some Christians of the seventeenth century because I feel they should be better known and their struggles and contributions appreciated. Living as I do now in a day of fulfillment, their revelations have stimulated my faith but also made me grateful for the plainness of the scriptures received for our dispensation through the Prophet Joseph Smith. They also help me to consider that God has provided a witness in many times and places or, as the title page of the Book of Mormon says of Christ, that he is

52. Sadler, *Comenius and Universal Education*, 310.

53. Jan Jakubec, *Johannes Amos Comenius* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 59.

“manifesting himself unto all nations.”⁵⁴ Christ is the all-important message, not only of the Bible, but of the more immediate revelations espoused by Comenius. Kotter reported that the angel impressively said to him:

Do thou adhere to this thy Lord and Saviour: first, as thy Advocate, Intercessour, and Patron to his Father; who best knoweth thy own necessities, and can send thee a deliverance from them. Secondly, Adhere unto him as thy Saviour and Redeemer, unto whom all the Prophets, and the Scriptures lead thee, and to no other. Trust thou in God, and rejoyce, in his goodness, so shalt thou overcome all temptations, especially, if thou wilt apply thy selfe unto prayer, and the hearing of the Word of God.⁵⁵

Comenius and the visionaries found there was much opposition to their testimony. He often tried to share the revelations, but many found a reason to reject them. They thought he was foolish or for other reasons would turn them aside, even when they greatly respected him in other matters. They failed to see that the heavenly things from the Bible and the further revelations provided his zeal and enthusiasm and gave him his expansive, reforming view. The visionary persons found much opposition and persecution. Kotter related that the angel directed him to witness to public officials, but when he did they feared he was mad or dishonest, warned him against his efforts, and refused to give him credence.

Latter-day Saints have also found that many do not want to hear of revelation or consider it in any way. Others like to find fault and sometimes go to extravagant lengths to find what they think is a basis to reject it. They trample it under their feet. Orson Pratt, who directed much of the church’s early missionary work, held that

the conduct of millions in relation to the Book of Mormon goes to show that they would reject all true revelation as well

54. See the discussion of revelation in the medieval period in Carol Zaleski, *Other-world Journeys* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 45–60, 206–9.

55. *Prophecies*, 44.

as false ones: they are determined to reject, at all hazards, without the least inquiry, every thing under the name of new revelation. They seem to be absolutely certain, as their conduct abundantly indicates, that God will never favor man with another communication of his will concerning them.⁵⁶

In rejecting revelation, people are denying themselves much joy. We can only hope and pray that more people will begin to lift their eyes to heaven for inspiration and guidance. Kotter quoted the angel as saying “it hath been always the custom of the wicked world to despise heavenly things and to esteem things that are earthy to be heavenly.”⁵⁷ It is the “light in darkness” theme again. The Lord said to Joseph Smith: “A light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; but they receive it not, for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men” (D&C 45:28–29).

In closing this discussion of these portentous eternal things, I am reminded of an apt comment of the late Hugh Nibley. While considering Egyptian texts and their deep concern with preparation for the afterlife, he was moved to say: “Granted its mind-expanding scope, is the Egyptian experience at all relevant to the modern world? The answer is no; and neither is Mormonism relevant to the distracted modern world, which has no concern with the things of the eternities and will soon be forgotten.”⁵⁸

In This Number of the *FARMS Review*

We have an interesting variety of articles in this number of the *Review*, many of which will help keep our minds focused on eternal things. We particularly commend the thoughtful essay by Richard Williams on the glories of the gospel restoration and its correction of errors together with its great enhancement of faith and understanding.

56. Orson Pratt, “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” no. 1, p. 2, in *A Series of Pamphlets, by Orson Pratt* (Liverpool: R. James, 1851).

57. *Prophecies*, 51.

58. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005), 31.

Those who enjoy a philosophical discussion will appreciate James Faulconer's essay on modernism and postmodernism, viewed from a gospel perspective.

On matters of doctrine, we note with great interest the growing number of studies among students of the Bible and Christian history that are concerned with the doctrine of deification, or the concept that mankind has the possibility to attain to godhood. Recent numbers of the *Review* have carried discussions of new studies on this subject or noted their publication. This development is of special interest to Latter-day Saints, who have been ridiculed as attempting to be "Godmakers" and whose sacred doctrines have been treated with disdain. Tom Rosson reviews a new book by Daniel Keating, written from a Catholic viewpoint, that again reflects the position that the idea of deification was an important aspect of the Christian faith. James Farmer provides a review of a helpful new book by Frank Salisbury on the concept of divine design, a topic of current interest regarding the creation. Sandra Thorne reviews a book by Kim Clark on divine protection.

Several essays touch on important concerns about the scriptures. Terryl Givens offers a meaningful essay on the origin of the Book of Mormon and the manner of its origin as witnessing profound doctrinal and ecclesiastical truths. The Book of Abraham continues to demand attention, and Egyptologist John Gee discusses the status of research with the Joseph Smith Papyri and addresses questions of interest pertaining to these remarkable documents that are somehow related to Joseph Smith's production of the Book of Abraham. Brant Gardner considers Diane Wirth's new book on Book of Mormon geography, and Don Brugger samples a new "timechart" of Mormonism and the scriptures.

Mormon culture and history meet us in Larry Morris's review of Frederick Babbel's inspiring account of his mission with Elder Ezra Taft Benson to bring assistance to the Saints in Europe at the end of World War II. Long out of print, this book is now available as a reprint. Oxford University Press has recently published an insightful history of Mormon culture by Terryl Givens that is reviewed here by Cherry Silver.

Our detractors are still at work. We offer two responses. One concerns a recent book by the atheist writer Sam Harris that has attracted much attention. It is reviewed by Gregory Smith. Hank Hanegraaff, a perennial source of disparagement, has produced a book in the tradition of Walter Martin. Ara Norwood has written an “open letter” in response.

In addition to the above, we present a number of brief Book Notes, calling attention to other works that may be of interest to Latter-day Saints.

Editor’s Picks

As customary, we offer our selection of books of particular interest, according to the following ratings:

- **** Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely
- *** Enthusiastically recommended
- ** Warmly recommended
- * Recommended

The recommendations:

- *** Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture*
- *** Frederick Babbel, *On Wings of Faith: My Daily Walk with a Prophet*
- ** Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace*

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