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The Fulness of the Gospel: Christian Platonism and the Origins of Mormonism

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by

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Abstract

"The Fulness of the Gospel: Christian Platonism and the Origins of Mormonism"

Stephen Joseph Fleming

Scholars have long wondered about the source of Mormon doctrines, many of which differed significantly from the Protestantism that dominated Joseph Smith's environment. In 1994 John Brooke's *Refiner's Fire* proposed that Joseph Smith drew on Renaissance "hermeticism," esoteric beliefs influenced by the antique *Corpus Hermericum*. Mormon scholars criticized Brooke, often arguing for ancient connections inaccessible to Smith, while scholars of Western esotericism argued that the concept of hermeticism was problematic and that the esoteric ideas labeled hermetic were actually Platonic. This dissertation argues that Smith's quest to restore what he called "the fulness of the gospel," or the complete truth that was missing from contemporary churches and even the Bible itself drew from the thought of Christians influenced by Plato and is best understood as a form of Christian Platonism. Thus, for Smith, "the fulness of the gospel" included the restoration of divination, the central Christian-Platonic doctrine, as well as the rites and priesthood offices needed to achieve it.

Though Smith would not have designated himself a Christian Platonist (most Christian Platonists would not have either), he gravitated towards such ideas, which were available to him through a variety of routes, including popular forms of religiosity embraced by his family; the views of key followers; and the scholarship of his day as summarized in histories, encyclopedias, and other reference works. Viewing Joseph Smith's folk practices, utopianism, temple rituals, soteriology, marital practices, and political ambition through a Christian-Platonic lens allows us to see underlying connections that make intelligible many disparate and peculiar aspects of early Mormonism.

Table of Contents

List of Charts and Figures v

Introduction 1

Chapter One: The History and Democratization of Christian Platonism 42

Late Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages 43

Pendle Hill: Folk Christianity and the Democratization of Christian Platonism 65

Jane Lead's Circle 92

Other Figures: Newton, Wesley, Taylor, and Orpheus 105

Section One: Vermont, New York, Ohio, and Missouri 113

Chapter Two: Young Joseph Smith: Folk Christianity and Christian Platonism 116

Family Religion 118

The First Vision 141

Moroni 159

Chapter Three: The New Church 186

The Book of Mormon 187

Priesthood and Apostasy 226

Chapter Four: Kirtland and Missouri 249

Things in Heaven: Early Mormon Soteriology 279

Things on Earth: The Philosopher-King, Part One 264

Section Two: Nauvoo 318

Chapter Five: A Nucleus of Heaven 323

Baptism for the Dead 325

Celestial Marriage 351

Chapter Six: The Plan of Salvation 386

The Book of Abraham 389

The Designs of God 429

Chapter Seven: The Mysteries of Egypt 459

Conclusion: The Philosopher King, Part Two 505

List of Charts and Figures

Figure 1.1	Location and size of Mormon Conference in Great Britain, April 6, 1844	67
Figure 1.2	The Clitheroe Area	68
Chart 4.1	Smith's and Lead's Worlds	268
Chart 4.2	Comparing Smith's and Lead's different types of people	270
Chart 5.1	Marital Status of Smith's Wives	366
Chart 5.2	The Ages of Smith's Wives	366
Chart 5.3	The Change in Smith's Marital Policy, Summer 1842	380
Chart 5.4	The Resumption of Smith's Marriages, Spring 1843	382
Chart 6.1	Corresponding Themes in the *Timaeus* and the Book of Abraham	428

Introduction

"Mormonism is truth, the First Fundamental principal of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men." Joseph Smith, letter to Isaac Galland, March 22, 1839.

"Those real sages … who were sick of those arrogant and contentious sects,[1] which required an invariable attachment to their particular systems. And, indeed, nothing could have a more engaging aspect than a set of men, who, abandoning all cavil and all prejudices in favour of any party, professed searching after the truth alone, were ready to adopt, from all the different systems and sects such tenets as they thought agreeable to it." Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, discussing Alexandrian Platonism in the first centuries C.E. and its influence on Alexandrian Christianity, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1:138.

"[If the] Presbyterians [have] any truth, embrace that. Baptist. Methodist &c. get all the good in the world, [and] come out a pure Mormon." Joseph Smith, sermon, July 23, 1843.

"These sages were of opinion that *true philosophy,* the greatest and most salutary gift of God to mortals was scattered in various portions through all the different sects; and it was, consequently, the duty of every wise man, and more especially of every Christian doctor to gather it from the several corners where it lay dispersed." Mosheim discussing early Alexandrian Christians including Clement of Alexandria, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1:139.

"I cannot believe in any of the creeds of the different denominations, because they all have some things in them I cannot subscribe to though all of them have some thruth [sic]. but I want to come up into the presence of God & learn all things but the creeds set up stakes, & say hitherto shalt thou come, & no further.—which I cannot subscribe to." Joseph Smith, sermon, October 15, 1843.

"They were to raise above all terrestrial things, by the towering efforts of holy contemplation, those souls whose origin was celestial and divine … that thus, in this life, they might enjoy communion with the Supreme Being, and ascend after death, active and unencumbered, to the universal Parent, to live in his presence for ever." Mosheim, discussing Alexandrian Christian Platonist Ammonius Saccus and his Neoplatonic followers, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:142.

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[1] Smith said in his 1839 history that fighting between the "sects" in his day really bothered him (see Chapter Two). Christ in the Book of Mormon went so far as to say "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:29-30). Here Mosheim was referring to philosophical sects.

Comparing statements from Joseph Smith to the views of early Christian Platonists in Alexandria, particularly one named Ammonius Saccas (c. 175-250), as discussed in Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History,* a popular book that Smith likely owned, highlights important themes in this dissertation.[2] Smith, like the early Christian Platonists described by Mosheim, said that he sought the truth from eclectic sources and also stated his motivation for such a quest: to come into the presence of God.

In his seminal biography of Joseph Smith, *Rough Stone Rolling* (2005), Richard Bushman noted that such ideas were similar to Kabbalah, whose "central impulse was a desire to encounter God." Bushman then declared, "How Joseph could have tied into this line of religious inquiry remains a mystery." Though Smith had a tutor with knowledge of Kabbalah toward the end of his life, Smith's early revelations also had Kabbalistic ideas, and it was unlikely, argued Bushman, for Smith to have encountered Kabbalah at that early stage. "More reasonable is Harold Bloom's conclusion that Joseph's desire for God's presence came out of his own religious experience and genius. He had an uncanny ability to recover long lost traditions for use in modern times."[3] Bushman was citing Harold Bloom, the renowned literary critic, who declared in 1992 "that Smith and his apostles restarted what Moshe Idel, our great living scholar of Kabbalah, persuades me was the archaic or original Jewish religion." But for Bloom, like Bushman, the sources of these parallels remained mysterious. Thus, Bloom concluded, "I can only attribute to his genius or daemon, his uncanny recovery of elements in ancient Jewish theurgy that had ceased to be available either

[2] The record of the Nauvoo library listed Smith as donating "Mosheims Church History 1 Vol" to the library. Christopher C. Jones, "The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 192. The record did not say which volume Smith donated but Smith have the first was most likely since that was the one that seemed to interest the Mormons the most (see Chapter Three).
[3] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 451-52.

to normative Judaism or to Christianity, and that had survived only in esoteric traditions unlikely to have touched Smith directly."[4]

Bushman's statement highlights a trend in early Mormon historiography in which historians acknowledge the parallels between Mormon thought and earlier esoteric ideas, but claim that the case for actual historical links is weak, preferring to view the similarities as mysterious parallels that Smith could not have encountered in his early nineteenth-century environment. For Mormon scholars, these parallels thus serve to highlight the originality of Smith's views relative to his environment and, thus, in their view, help to buttress Smith's claim to new revelation. The work of Harold Bloom, a non-LDS scholar who also viewed the origins of Smith's views as mysterious, was well received by LDS scholars since it further buttressed these claims.

In 1994, John Brooke's *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* challenged the notion that Smith was untouched by esoteric traditions, arguing that Mormonism was a product of "hermeticism,"[5] a European mystical movement inspired by late antique texts called the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Drawing on Francis Yates's work on the subject (see below) Brooke argued that Smith was exposed to hermetism through radical sects, Freemasonry, folk magic, and alchemy. Brooke thus agreed that Smith's ideas were very different from the prevailing Protestantism of his time, but declared that "unless one rests ones argument on revelation, Jungian archetypes, or simple reinvention (all of which are of some importance to this problem), we have to ask from where these ideas came."[6] In

[4] Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 99, 101.
[5] Yates and scholars of late antiquity referred to the movement as hermetism, but later early modern scholars began to call it hermeticism to mean a broader range of ideas. Brooke also used hermeticism. Here I call it hermetism.
[6] John L. Brooke, *Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xvi.

making his case, Brooke—like many LDS scholars—suggested that claims of revelation were inconsistent with the presence of those same ideas in contemporary sources. Brooke's attempt to solve the "mysterious origins" problem won the Bancroft Prize and was generally very well received in the wider academic community. LDS scholars, understandably reluctant to solve the mysterious origins problem if it undercut LDS claims of revelation, received it much more critically.[7]

Whether or not claims of revelation were (or are) inconsistent with the presence of similar ideas in contemporary sources is at bottom a theological question that admits of different resolutions. This way of viewing the relationship—assumed by many Mormons and non-Mormons—has had historiographical consequences. Not only has it generated polemics, it has made it more difficult, if not impossible, to understand Smith's religious

[7] See John-Charles Duffy, "Clyde Forsberg's *Equal Rites* and the Exoticizing of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 1 (2006): 12-42. Davis Bitton, a Mormon historian at the University of Utah, stated the issue most clearly in a Mormon academic journal: "The discovery of similarities or parallels does not threaten Mormonism, for it is in the restored gospel that these are all fully integrated and properly understood. But this comfortable recognition hardly requires Mormons to accept any and all assertions of similarities, especially when coupled with a charge or claim of influence that preclude revelation." (Davis Bitton, review of John L. Brooke, *Refiner's Fire,* in *BYU Studies* 34, no. 4 [1994-95]: 182-83.) Bitton's non-Mormon colleague at the University of Utah, Paul Johnson, described *Refiner's Fire* in terms similar to Britton. "To those who examine Mormon beginnings and come up doubting," asserted Johnson, "the church has a standard answer: it is easier to believe that the Book of Mormon is ancient and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God than it is to believe that an ignorant farm boy could have made the whole thing up. By excavating the intellectual inheritance on which Smith drew, John Brooke has rendered that answer less effective." (Paul E. Johnson, "The Alchemist," review of John L. Brooke, *Refiner's Fire*, in *The New Republic* 212 [June 12, 1995]: 48.) The stakes could be high for believers in these historical debates.

Bushman—a Mormon, an emeritus professor of history at the Columbia University, and a Bancroft Prize winner himself— was the leading critic of *Refiner's Fire.* Bushman suggested that the source of Smith's ideas was an issue with *Refiner's Fire* in responding to an online review. Walter van Beek questioned why Bushman had left Brooke largely out of *Rough Stone Rolling*, to which Bushman responded, "I did slight Brooke's *The Refiner's Fire*, not because I dislike its thesis but because I think he failed to prove his case." Bushman then made a more telling statement: "Brooke should have marveled that Joseph picked up hermetic themes, as Harold Bloom marvels that Joseph echoes primitive Judaism without verifiable connections. Instead Brooke insists on causative influence that simply cannot be demonstrated." ("Walter van Beek on Joseph Smith," December 9, 2005, timesandseasons.org/index.php/2005/12/rsrwalter-van-beek-on-joseph-smith/). Bushman's language suggested comparing Mormonism to esoteric ideas was acceptable so long as one did not argue that they influenced Smith.

Many of these scholars' critiques of *Refiner's Fire* were valid; the book, like all books, had some problems. My point here is to highlight the debates over the source of Smith's ideas as a historiographical issue.

quest. As the introductory quotes suggest, not only were descriptions of relevant antique traditions available to Smith, but *Smith's revelations commanded him to seek out the truth in accessible sources*. An 1832-1833 revelation that instructed Smith to set up a kind of study group called "the school of the prophets" also commanded the saints to "teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom: seek learning even by study, and also by faith."[8] This is not to say that *Refiner's Fire* was without fault; the Mormon critics highlighted legitimate problems with the book and I offer my own critiques below. My point here is to argue that presenting revelation and the study of available texts as somehow antithetical misinterprets Smith's religiosity. This dissertation, therefore, seeks to remove this dichotomy, which has been used both to attack and defend Mormonism, in order to offer a more helpful way forward toward a deeper understanding of early Mormonism.

Thesis. Smith's religious quest was to restore what he called "the fulness of the gospel," or the complete truth that was missing from contemporary churches and even the Bible itself. The Book of Mormon said that it restored many of these lost truths, and many of the additional doctrines in the Book of Mormon that were not explicit in the Bible were Platonic; Christian-Platonic themes became even more overt in Smith's later revelations. I argue that Smith likely drew on particular sources for Christian Platonism including Universalism, visionaries like John Dee and Jane Lead, descriptions of Kabbalah (Jewish Platonic mysticism), and descriptions of Alexandrian Christian Platonists. At the same time, Smith saw himself as a visionary who received his knowledge directly from God, but as I note above, Smith revelations commanded study. The goal of Smith's doctrine was also Christian-Platonic: to come into the presence of God and to attain a divine status. Smith used

[8] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 107; current DC 88:118.

the word fulness to describe this process (Chapter Four).[9] Smith also sought to restore missing rites in addition to missing truths and used the word fulness to describe that quest as well. In Smith's later years he spoke of "the fulness of the priesthood," or the complete and final rites that would bestow the divinized status. Such rites had much in common with theurgy, or Neoplatonic rites that bestowed divinization, and Smith likely drew on descriptions of theurgy for his own rites (Chapter Four and Seven). "The question is frequently asked Can we not be saved without going through with all thes[e] ordinances &c," Smith related to his followers in 1844. "I would answer No not the fulness of Salvation."[10] Smith's rites were needed for the fulness. Thus, fulness in many ways describes Smith's religious quest: gathering the full truth and complete truth and rituals so that humans could become full and complete themselves.

Viewing Joseph Smith's folk practices, utopianism, temple rituals, soteriology, marital practices, and political ambition through a Christian-Platonic lens allows us to see underlying connections that make intelligible many disparate and peculiar aspects of early Mormonism. Though Smith would not have designated himself a Christian Platonist (most Christian Platonists would not have either) Christian-Platonic ideas were available to Smith and he gravitated towards such ideas. As Mosheim said of the Alexandrian Christians, "They preferred Plato to the other philosophers, and looked upon his opinions concerning God, the human soul, and things invisible, as conformable to the spirit and genius of the christian doctrine."[11]

Christian Platonism is simply the thought and practices of Christians who drew on Plato either deliberately or who drew upon the long tradition of those who had done so.

[9] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): section 82 (now 93).
[10] February 8, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 319.
[11] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:139.

Christian Platonists believed in *philosophia perennis*, the perennial philosophy of God's wisdom that was found in many sources including Plato, that often manifested itself as *prisca theologia* or ancient truth that originated with the patriarchs and had spread through many civilizations. They viewed Jesus as the ultimate locus of Wisdom but believed that Christ's truth had many precursors and that Jesus had manifested himself many generations prior to his coming. Plato and others could be a reservoir of the Word in the same way the Old Testament was.[12] Christian Platonism had a number of tenets including pre-existence of the soul, deification, utopianism, marriage in heaven, universal or near-universal salvation, post-mortal progression, and marital experimentation. Christian Platonists tended to believe in an animated universe with powers of an unseen world and in the superiority of that unseen world which was usually immaterial. There were many varieties of Christian Platonism, and, as there was no Christian-Platonist church, the varieties differed from person to person. Christian Platonists could embrace some of these tenets while seeing others as heretical or impractical. Early Mormonism embraced all of these tenets except for the notion of spirit over matter, but even the importance of matter gained ascendency in a number of Platonic traditions including Kabbalah.

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Nephi (c. 600 BCE) has a vision of the history of Christianity where he sees an important book (the Bible) and an angel tells him, "When it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord." But Nephi then sees a "great and abominable church" take "away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away"; that is, because of the removal of these truths, the Bible no longer

[12] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9-10.

contained "the fulness of the gospel." Nephi then sees the Book of Mormon and "other books" coming forth that "shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away."[13]

The Book of Mormon does not say specifically what the plain and precious truths were that it restored, but it does address a few Platonic themes that were not explicit in the Bible. The fact that the Christian-Platonic ideas in the Book of Mormon can be found in John Allen's *Modern Judaism* (1816), a topic that interested Smith, indicates that Smith believed that the Jews had much of this lost truth; again, the Book of Mormon said that the ancient Jews had the truth that the Gentiles removed from the Bible. In *Modern Judaism,* Allen described the Jewish notion of the oral tradition, or the belief that God gave additional instruction at Sinai that was not written down until much later.[14] The ideas in *Modern Judaism* that particularly aligned with Mormonism were Allen's descriptions of Kabbalah, a mystical Jewish tradition heavily influenced by Platonism that Kabbalists also claimed that God gave Moses at Sinai. Ideas that appear in *Modern Judaism* that also appear in the Book of Mormon include pre-existence, fortunate fall, the importance of the body, humans achieving great power (like gods), special knowledge to be revealed only to a select few, the rejection of sola scriptura, and the importance of the Jews in that rejection (Chapter Three). Ideas from *Modern Judaism* that appear in Smith's biblical revision include the importance of Enoch, God being in human form, and God weeping (Chapters Four and Six). Ideas that appear in Smith's early revelations include hell being temporary and post-mortal purgation (Chapter Four). Ideas found in Smith's book of Abraham include Abraham writing a book, a

[13] 1 Nephi 13:24, 26, 39-40.
[14] John Allen, *Modern Judaism: Or, a Brief Account of the Opinions, Traditions, Rites, and Ceremonies, of the Jews in Modern Times* (London, 1816), 22-27. Michael Quinn referred to the similarities between certain Mormon doctrines and Allen's description of Kabbalah in his *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (297-305), but there also were a number of other similar ideas in *Modern Judaism.*

pre-mortal council, and a description of souls being sent to earth in ways similar to Plato's *Timaeus* (Chapter Six). Ideas found in Smith's later speeches include equating spirit and matter, souls being uncreated, and the rejection of creation ex nihilo. Indeed, all of the similarities that Bloom noticed between Mormonism and Kabbalah can be found in *Modern Judaism*. These similarities lead me to conclude that Smith was actually trying to do what Bloom suggested: Smith wanted to recover "the archaic or original Jewish religion." Or, put another way, Smith believed that truth was missing from the Bible and he felt that the Jews' wisdom was one source of this missing truth.

Allen, however, not only denounced the Jewish notion of the oral tradition and but he also claimed that Kabbalah was "of heathen origin: and the agreement of their leading tenets with the dogmas of Alexandrian philosophy, has with high probability been thought by many learned men to justify the conclusion, that they were derived from that compound of Pythagorean, Platonic, and Oriental notions, which prevailed at Alexandria about the commencement of the Christian era."[15] This statement not only suggested that Smith was happy to ignore denunciations of ideas that he thought were true (the Book of Mormon even seems to condemn Allen's assertions, see below) but it also pointed to an additional source of wisdom that likely influenced Smith.

The above quotes from Mosheim were descriptions of the same movement: Alexandrian philosophy of the first centuries C.E. In addition to attempting to pull together all truth and entering the presence of God (similar to Smith's goals), Mosheim said that Ammonius Saccas taught that Jesus's "sole view, in descending upon earth, was … to remove the errors that had crept into the religions of all nations but not to abolish the ancient theology from whence they were derived." Mosheim went on to say that Jesus's "only

[15] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* vi-vii, 93-94.

intention was to purify the ancient religion, and that his followers had manifestly corrupted the doctrine of their divine master." Mosheim suggested that Ammonius believed that Jesus's followers had corrupted Christianity by removing truths that aligned with the "ancient theology." Just like the Book of Mormon said, according to Mosheim, Ammonius believed that truth had been removed, and as Mosheim said that Ammonius believed that the ancient theology was Platonic, the truth removed by Jesus's followers would align with the Platonic ideas found in the Book of Mormon and Allen's *Modern Judaism.* Thus, just like Ammonius, Smith sought to restore this lost truth: Mosheim called Ammonius's followers the "latter platonics" similar to Smith's Latter-day Saints.[16]

Furthermore, a number of other texts printed variations of Mosheim's passage including the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (reprinted in the United States by Thomas Dobson and known as "Dobson's encyclopedia,") Charles Buck's *Theological Dictionary*, Hannah Adams's *A Dictionary of All Religions*, and Alexander Campbell's periodical *The Christian Baptist*.[17] The encyclopedic texts (Dobson's encyclopedia, Buck, and Adams) had entries on

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[16] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:141, 143. Allen also referred to the Neoplatonists as "latter Platonists." Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 209. In a footnote, Mosheim noted that no works survive from Ammonius and that the tenets that Mosheim attributed to Ammonius were "gathered from the writings and disputations of his disciples, who are known by the name of the modern platonics," or the Neoplatonists. (143). That is, Mosheim took the teachings of the Neoplatonists and extrapolated them backward onto Ammonius. The notion that Ammonius taught that Jesus's disciples removed Platonic truth from Christianity probably came from Ficino. Hannegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 50-51; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 1:283-84.

[17] *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (1790), 1:624. Thomas Dobson pirated this encyclopedia in the United States as *Encyclopaedia; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798) and sold it for less. Robert D. Arner, *Dobson's Encyclopaedia: The Publisher, Text, and Publication of America's first Britannica, 1789-1803* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991). Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary* (Philadelphia, William Woodward, 1824). Buck's dictionary was very popular and went through numerous printings and the early Mormons used it (Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, "The Reverend Buck's Theological Dictionary and the Struggle to Define American Evangelicalism, 1802-1851," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no.3 (2009): 441-47). Hannah Adams, *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathan, Mahomoten, and Christian, Ancient and Modern*, 4th ed (Boston: James Eastburn, 1817), 23. Charles Buck borrowed considerable material from Adams for his *Dictionary*. Adams's previously titled *A View of Religions, in Two Parts* (Boston), came out before Buck's *Dictionary.* Alexander Campbell printed most of Mosheim's passage in an article titled "Essays on Ecclesiastical Characters, Councils, Creeds, and Sects" no. II, *Christian*

"Ammonius," "Ammonians," "Eclectics," "Mystics," "New Platonics," "Origen," "Origenists," "Plato," and "Platonism" (these entries referenced each other) that covered numerous concepts found both in Christian Platonism and Mormonism. These included themes like pre-existence, deification, uncreated souls, and rejection of creation ex-nihilo that were also found in *Modern Judaism*. Charles Buck's entry on "Origenists" had particularly striking similarities not only to Mormon theological concepts, but also to particular phrasings that appeared in Smith's revelations.[18] Thus Smith had access to Mosheim's description of Ammonius from several sources and the similarities between early Mormon doctrine and practices and the descriptions of Ammonius and his pupil Origen in these sources suggests that Smith did additional research on the topic.

Furthermore, Mosheim said not only that Ammonius practiced theurgy, rites to commune with gods and become divine oneself, but said that Christ was "the admirable *theurge.*"[19] As the Book of Mormon said the great and abominable church had removed "many covenants" or rituals in addition to truth and as Smith himself engaged in rites similar to descriptions of theurgy, Smith may have believed that theurgy was among the rites that the great and abominable church removed from Christianity. Mosheim described theurgy as "the pretended art of so purging and refining that faculty of the mind … as to render it capable of perceiving the demons,[20] and of performing many marvelous things by their assistance."[21] Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft,* a text that Smith likely used (Chapter Two),

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Baptist (Buffalo) 1, no. 10 (May 3, 1824): 229-35. Many early Mormons were followers of Campbell before converting to Mormonism. Mark Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Kofford, 2009),119.

[18] Similar to one of Smith's revelations from 1833 that claimed to be an expansion of John 1, Buck's entry said that Christ lacked "fulness" on earth and said that Christ was "before the beginning of the world," a particular phrase not found in John 1. "Origenists," in Buck, *Theological Dictionary,* 421-22. (Chapter Four).

[19] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 142.

[20] As described in Chapter Two, "demon" referred to "daemon" or a kind of angelic being in Hellenistic thought.

[21] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 142.

said, "There is yet another art professed by these cousening conjurors … called Theurgie; wherein they worke by good angels," and said that theurgy mostly consisted of cleanliness of the body and objects. "The cleanlines whereof, they saie, dooth dispose men to the contemplation of heavenlie things. They cite these words of *Esaie* for their authoritie; to wit: Wash your selves and be cleane, &c."[22] Other descriptions of theurgy were more positive. Samuel Johnson defined theurgy as, "The power of doing supernatural things by lawful means, as by prayer to God," and Noah Webster defined theurgy as "the power of performing supernatural things by an intercourse with the Deity."[23] Dobson's encyclopedia defined theurgy as, "the art of doing divine things, or things which God alone can do: or the power of working extraordinary and supernatural things, by invoking the names of God, saints, angels, &c."[24]

As described in Chapter Four, Smith's rites that he introduced after the founding of Mormonism also had the elements of ritual purification and prayer. Such rites culminated in Smith's Kirtland temple, where officiators washed participants' whole bodies and also used cinnamon. Temples and the use of cinnamon were connected to Old Testament rites—early modern theurgists also made references to Solomon's temple—and Mosheim said that early Christians had continued practicing Jewish rites for a time.[25] Thus Smith's rites suggest

[22] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nocholson (1584, reprint; London, 1886), 392. Scot was borrowing this description from Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), whose description was not as negative. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 699. *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* was a very popular and influential grimoire with numerous similarities to Mormonism.
[23] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 3d ed. (London, 1766), s.v. "theurgy." This same definition was repeated in a number of other dictionaries and encyclopedias like John Walker, *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* (New York: Collins and Hannay, 1823), 539; Noah Webster, *A Dictionary of the English Language; Compiled for the Use of Common Schools in the United States* (Hartford: George Goodwin, 1817), 320.
[24] "Theurgy," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 18:501.
[25] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:105.

similarities to both Jewish rites and theurgy, both of which Mosheim said certain early Christians had practiced.

Smith's school of the prophets, a kind of study group, had a number of similarities to Ammonius's and Origen's schools as described by Mosheim and the encyclopedias. As described in Chapter Four, both Smith and these Christian Platonists did rituals associated with the school, both were to study widely, and both were to be aware of those not of the faith. Mosheim noted how Christian schools divided the students between beginners and the more advanced and that the more advanced received higher teachings. Such led to the idea that there was a "secret doctrine" taught in the early church, said Mosheim; both early modern Catholics and Freemasons claimed that this secret doctrine included rites.[26] After Kirtland, Smith continued to expand his rites, the culmination of which was his endowment ritual at Nauvoo. I argue in Chapter Seven that for this ritual Smith drew on Freemasonry, descriptions of ancient mystery rites, and Catholicism, all of which contemporary sources said were connected to early Christianity. In a speech in 1843, Smith declared, "If a man gets the fulness of God, he has to get [it] in the same way that Jesus Christ obtain[ed] it & that was by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord."[27] Christ had performed the same rites in his lifetime that Smith said he had now made available to his followers. As with Smith's restoration of lost truths, Smith also drew on eclectic sources to restore lost "covenants."

Just as Allen had condemned Kabbalah as Platonic, Mosheim and the encyclopedias also condemned Ammonius and Origen. These sources went so far as to claim that these thinkers had corrupted Christianity. Mosheim began the passage by declaring, "A new sect

[26] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:101.
[27] June 11, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 212.

of philosophers arose of a sudden, spread with amazing rapidity throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire … and was extremely detrimental to the cause of Christianity." Mosheim then asserted, "This new species of philosophy imprudently adopted by Origen and many other Christians, was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel, and to the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines." Ultimately, said Mosheim, this philosophy led to "an unseemly mixture of platonism and Christianity."[28] Those who reprinted this passage reprinted these denunciations and Alexander Campbell in his introduction to Mosheim's passage declared, "Mosheim … satisfactorily shows, that the first 'Theological Seminary' established at Alexandria in Egypt, in the second century, was the grave of primitive Christianity." Such, said Campbell, "was the fountain, the streams whereof polluted the great mass of Christian professors, and completed the establishment of a paganized Christianity, in the room of the religion of the New Testament."[29] Mosheim and Campbell were repeating the popular notion that Platonism had corrupted primitive Christianity, a notion that Protestants had developed to attack both Catholics and Christian Platonists in their day (Chapters One and Three).[30]

As I argue in Chapter Three, Smith, though he promoted the notion that early Christianity had become corrupt, never adopted what I call here "the Platonic-corruption model." Smith, like other Christian Platonists, embraced ideas that orthodox Protestants condemned. The Protestants' condemnation of these ideas likely added to Smith's belief that Protestant churches were lacking the full truth and were thus seriously flawed: the Protestants had rejected the higher truth that was staring them in the face.

[28] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 138, 143-44.
[29] Campbell, "Essays on Ecclesiastical Characters," 229.
[30] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 77-113.

In the Book of Mormon, the Lord predicts that when the Book of Mormon came forth, "Many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." The passage then seemed to particularly condemn those who rejected additional truth from the Jews: "Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?" Again, John Allen rejected the Jewish oral tradition and the Book of Mormon, and Mormonism generally, contained many similarities to Allen's description of that tradition. Finally, the passage condemned those who rejected truth outside the Bible: "Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written."[31] Again, as quoted above, Smith told Isaac Galland, "We believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men" and Smith later declared in a speech that "the creeds set up stakes, & say hitherto shalt thou come, & no further.—which I cannot subscribe to." Smith was not going to be cut off from the truth by Protestant proscriptions.

All of these descriptions said that these modes of thought—Kabbalah and Alexandrian Christianity—were fundamentally Platonic. Mosheim said that Ammonius taught that the ancient philosophy was "preserved in its original purity by Plato."[32] As I argue in Chapter Six, the evidence strongly suggests that Smith used Plato's *Timaeus* in translating a portion of Egyptian papyri into what is now chapter three of his Book of Abraham. This chapter has a number of passages that align very closely to Thomas Taylor's translation of the *Timaeus* and Smith even used very similar language to Taylor's *Timaeus*

[31] 2 Nephi 29:3, 6, 10.
[32] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 141.

when describing the creation in his Nauvoo speeches. Both Allen's *Modern Judaism* and Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus* told myths of pre-mortal souls being sent to earth that had several elements from the *Timaeus*.[33] Many of the mentioned encyclopedic sources referred to the *Timaeus,* and Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on the mysteries, a description that had much in common with Smith's endowment ritual, said that the *Timaeus* was the cosmogony of the most ancient Egyptians.[34] The Book of Abraham claimed that Abraham taught astronomy to the Egyptians and a handful of early modern thinkers said that there were ancient divine accounts of the creation that were not included in the Bible. If the *Timaeus* was the cosmogony of the most ancient Egyptians and Smith was seeking to discover what Abraham had taught those Egyptians, then it made sense to study the *Timaeus* for clues to know what God had originally told Abraham. Again, the Book of Mormon said that plain and precious truths were missing from the Bible and Smith said he was willing to embrace truth from any source. Such a willingness apparently included Plato himself.

Yet Mormonism was not simply a product of Joseph Smith digging through texts that described early Christianity and Judaism (though he likely made use of such texts). Smith's earliest contact with Christian-Platonic ideas came through the Smith family's religiosity. A series of dreams that Smith's father had continually described the feeling that something fundamental was missing from the established churches; Smith's notion that that the established churches and even the Bible were missing truth likely came from his father. As I argue in Chapters Two and Three, Smith's father's dreams align with visions described in John Dee's spirit diary (1659). Dee and Smith had a number of additional similarities: both used a seer stone, wrote a book that was dictated by a person looking in a seer stone, made

[33] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 195-97; Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 254-59.
[34] "Mysteries" in *Encyclopaedia; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798), 12:593.

Enoch central to their theology, and had similar marital practices. Dee was heavily influenced by Christian Platonism (see below) and the similarities between Dee and Smith suggest that Smith felt that early modern visionaries could also have parts of the missing truth. Smith's grandfather was a Universalist and his father joined them at one point; Origen's writings inspired the rise of Universalism in early modern Europe.[35] In addition, the Smiths engaged in a number of traditions related to the cunning-folk, or those who either believed that they had special powers or believed that such could be derived from "magic" books called grimoires. Grimoires contained a lot of Neoplatonism (Platonic philosophy inspired by Ammonius), particularly theurgy.[36] Furthermore, evidence suggests that Smith's father had some association with a movement called the New Israelites, who, among other things, believed that they really were Israelites, a claim that the Mormons also made. These connections suggest that interest in Jews was part of the Smith family religion, an interest that may have led Smith to read Allen's *Modern Judaism*.

The writings of an early modern English visionary, Jane Lead (1624-1704), contain the most striking similarities to early Mormonism. Lead's visions were both full of Christian-Platonic themes and Lead's and Smith's revelations have so many similarities that it is difficult to believe that Smith or someone from his inner circle was not aware of Lead's revelations at some point. I discuss the likely candidates in Chapter One but I note here that the similarities between Lead and Smith were also likely due to those thinkers and movements that Lead inspired that also likely influenced Smith. I refer to these thinkers and movements as "Lead's circle" and also included John Dee (1527-1608) in this circle because

[35] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 17; D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).
[36] Stephen Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations and the *Ars Notoria*: Renaissance Magic and Medieval Theurgy," in *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies In English Renaissance Thought,* ed. Stephen Clucas, (Springer Dordrecht, The Netherlands: 2010): 231-74.

he likely influenced Lead. Lead's mentor, John Pordage, was linked to associates of John Dee and both Pordage and Lead had a number of similarities with Dee.

Lead, who also drew upon the visions of the German visionary Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) and the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists, formed a group that called themselves the Philadelphians in the late seventeenth century. Though they never gained a large following, Lead and the Philadelphians influenced a number of groups and individuals: in particular Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743), Freemasonry, the Dunkers or German Baptists, and Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Scotsman Andrew Michael Ramsay, known as Chevalier Ramsay, was a Philadelphian as a young man before heading to the Continent where he spent most of the rest of his life. His contribution to spreading Christian Platonism came through his book, *The Travels of Cyrus,* and through Freemasonry. *The Travels of Cyrus* used the story of Cyrus the king of Persia to explore notions of *prisca theologia* as Ramsay had Cyrus travel around the Near East to speak with the various sages of antiquity. *The Travels of Cyrus* was extremely popular going though numerous editions; Smith's local New-York library had a copy.[37] Ramsay also played a major role in shaping Freemasonry: Ramsay was the major innovator of Freemasonry's higher degrees, which pushed Freemasonry in more esoteric directions. Freemasonry had a number of influences on Smith, particularly on his endowment ritual that Smith performed at Nauvoo (Chapter Seven).

Lead had a German following and the German Baptists formed with the intent of putting Lead's visions into practice. Known also as the Dunkers, the group moved to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the home of many other German radicals in 1719. The

[37] Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 190-91; Quinn, *Magic World View,* 186.

Lancaster County milieu of German radicals produced a number of ideas and practices found in Mormonism; the Whitmer family, some of Smith's most important early followers, were from Lancaster County.[38] Lead's followers mingled with German Pietists and Emmanuel Swedenborg's father was a Pietist preacher; Lead's writings had been translated into Swedish. Swedenborg's and Lead's visions had many similarities, including three heavens, an idea also found in Mormonism. In 1840, Smith told a follower that he was familiar with Swedenborg's visions.[39] Thus Lead played a significant role in the ideas that shaped early Mormonism and helps to map how Smith was influenced by Christian-Platonic tenets.[40]

Lead and her circle were all accused of being Platonic; as orthodox Protestants argued that early Christian Platonists had corrupted early Christianity, the same commentators argued that people like those in Lead's circle were continuing that corruption. For instance, in Meric Casaubon's introduction to Dee's spirit diary, he attacked the notions found in the diary and added, "*Plato's* writings are full of Prodigies, Apparitions of Souls, pains of Hell and Purgatory, Revelations of the gods, and the like." Aristotle, said Casaubon, was a much better philosopher, "because he did not think that it was the part of the Phylosopher to meddle with those things that no probable reason could be given of."[41] Such statements were part of a larger debate over which philosopher was preferred in early modern Europe, with Protestants generally preferring Aristotle for the reasons Casaubon gave. D. P. Walker

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[38] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 239.
[39] Edward Hunter, Autobiography, in William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter, Faithful Steward* (Salt Lake City: Publishers, 1970), 316.
[40] Brooke also discusses Dee and Ramsay and even Lead at one point. Brooke, however, did not make a comparison between Dee's spirit diary and Smith's ideas and Brooke apparently relied on D. P. Walker's description of *Travels of Cyrus* in his *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), rather than making his own comparison. Similarly, Brooke made no examination of Lead's writing but only noted her influence on certain radical sects. *Refiner's Fire,* 16-17, 39, 95. Now that scholars have much easier access to these texts than Brooke did, this kind comparison work is much easier.
[41] Meric Casaubon, Preface in John Dee, *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Yeers between Dr. John Dee ... and Some Spirits*, ed. Meric Casaubon (London, 1659), [vii].

paraphrased early modern thinker G. F. Pico as saying, "Aristotelians believe too little, and Platonists believe too much."[42] Smith made it clear which side of this spectrum he was on in his very last speech: "I bel[ieve] all that God ever rev[eale]d & I never hear of a man being d[amne]d for bel[ievin]g too much but they are d[amne]d for unbel[ief]."[43]

Yet arguing for the influence of these various thinkers on Smith raises the issue that Smith never once mentioned any of their writings. Visionaries often did not cite their sources, however: Jacob Boehme, Jane Lead, Emmanuel Swedenborg, and William Blake said nothing about what they were reading other than the Bible. This has caused problems for scholars who have tried to contextualize these visionaries. Swedenborg's followers have tended to view claims of influence as delegitimizing and have argued against Swedenborg being influenced by other thinkers (similar to Mormon scholars' concerns), but as Brian Gibbons argues, "The tendency of Swedenborg's hagiographers to see his work as created *ex nihilo* is clearly untenable."[44] Scholars have vigorously debated what William Blake's influences might have been with Harold Bloom declaring that Blake "was not an antiquarian, a mystic, an occultist or theosophist, and not much of a scholar of any writings beyond the Bible and other poetry insofar as it resembled the Bible," while numerous other scholars have argued that Blake was influenced by esoteric ideas, particularly Neoplatonism. E. P. Thompson pointed a way forward in his arguments for how Blake engaged texts, an argument that seems applicable to other visionaries, including Smith. "We have become habituated to reading in an academic way…. We learn of influence, we are directed to a book or a 'reputable' intellectual tradition, we set this book beside that book, we compare

[42] D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic form Ficino to Campanella* (1958, reprint; University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 159.
[43] Smith, June 16, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 381.
[44] Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 200.

and cross-refer. But Blake had a different way of reading. He would look into a book with a directness which we might find to be naïve or unbearable, challenging each one of its arguments against his own experience and his own 'system.'" And this way of reading suggests why Blake didn't cite sources: Thompson argues, "He took each author (even the Old Testament prophets) as his equal, or as something less. And he acknowledged as between them, no received judgements as to their worth, no hierarchy of accepted 'reputability.'"[45] Thus, citing those sources likely wasn't important to him.

An early revelation to Oliver Cowdery (the scribe for the Book of Mormon and Smith's close associate) gives some insights into how revelation worked for Smith. The revelation told Cowdery that he was unable to translate the gold plates because "you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought, save it was to ask me; but behold I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right, I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right."[46] To receive revelation one needed to "study [something] out in [one's] mind" and then ask God if the conclusion that one came to was right. This statement suggested that revelation did not simply flow into the revelator; the revelator had to come up with an idea and then seek confirmation of that idea.[47] If such a notion of revelation applied to the truth that Smith found in eclectic sources, then Smith knew that certain items were truth because God had confirmed them. That is, God was the source of the truth more so than the writers of the text.

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[45] E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xii, xvi.
[46] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 162; DC 9:7-8.
[47] Though revelation may have taken different forms.

A very important vision that Smith and his better-educated associate Sidney Rigdon had may suggest an instance in which Smith and Rigdon had an idea confirmed (Chapter Four). In 1832, Smith and Rigdon were working on Smith's revision of the Bible when they came to John 5:29: "And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust." Smith and Rigdon then added, "Now this caused us to marvel."[48] Why this caused them to marvel is unclear since John 5:29 is a simple statement of the division of the righteous and wicked in the next life, an idea found in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Yet the vision that followed, coupled with the revelation to Cowdery, give clues as to why Smith and Rigdon were marveling. Smith and Rigdon's vision had numerous similarities to visions described by Jane Lead in her books *Enochian Walks with God* and *The Wonders of God's Creation*, which presented a complex view of the afterlife with different kinds of people going into different "worlds," a word that Smith and Rigdon used in describing their vision. If one needed to "study it out in [one's] mind" and then ask God "if it be right" in order to get a revelation, then perhaps knowledge of Lead's work was a catalyst for this revelation. Smith and Ridgon wrote, "And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened."[49] That is, they had a revelation "as they were meditating upon these things" and the simplicity of John 5:29 suggests that Smith and Rigdon had additional information on which to meditate. Lead's more complex view of the afterlife may have been the reason why Smith and Rigdon marveled over an otherwise straightforward passage. Furthermore, the vision that Smith and Rigdon then had as a result

[48] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 226; current DC 76:15-18.
[49] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 226; current DC 76: 19.

of their marveling would have trumped any prompt that caused them to "marvel" in the first place. The truth was what they themselves had experienced.

Furthermore, Smith at times indicated that he was being coy about his sources. In his 1840 letter to the Mormon apostles on the subject of baptism for the dead, he wrote, "I cannot in this letter give you all the information you may desire on the subject, but aside from my knowledge independent of the Bible, I would say that it was certainly practiced by the ancient church."[50] Smith said he had "knowledge independent of the Bible," but did not say what the source was. Later, in midst of one of his most radical sermons, Smith declared, "I suppose that I am not allowed to go into an investigation of anything that is not in the Bible—you would cry treason."[51] Being extra-biblical was a problem for both his critics and many of his followers and Smith seemed to have kept his extra-biblical sources to himself.

Smith's response to a follower's question about what he thought of Emmanuel Swedenborg is telling: "His answer I verially believe. 'Emanuel Sweadenburg had a view of the world to come but for daily food he perished.'"[52] Smith suggested that he believed that Swedenborg had legitimate visions ("had a view of the world to come") but lacked the full truth ("for daily food he perished"). Lacking that full truth, Swedenborg's visions weren't very important, especially since Smith had the fuller truth. One way or another, Smith suggested that other legitimate visionaries didn't merit much comment. Yet at the same time, Smith's response suggested that he believed that there were other legitimate visionaries out there. Indeed, though the early Mormons could be very critical of contemporary religions,

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[50] Joseph Smith, letter to "the Travelling High Council and Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS in Great Britain," Dec. 15 1840, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jesse (1984, reprint; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 521.
[51] Joseph Smith, April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 358.
[52] Edward Hunter, Autobiography, in William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter, Faithful Steward* (Salt Lake City: Publishers, 1970), 316.

they occasionally hinted that some people were inspired. For instance the Book of Mormon declared that Christ "manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." All who believed in Christ could have manifestations by the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, the same passage that condemned the Gentiles for rejecting additional scripture declared, "Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men … and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?"[53] Truth could be found not only among visionaries like Swedenborg (or Lead or Dee) but also among non-biblical civilizations (like those documented in Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus*). Yet it was Smith's revelations confirmed by God that mattered most.

Smith's own lack of education may be an objection to the claim that Christian Platonism influenced him. "Being in indigent circumstances [we] were obliged to labour hard," Smith said of his childhood. "Therefore we were deprived of the bennifit of an education[.] Suffice it to Say I was mearly instructed in reading writing and the ground rules of Arithmatic which constuted my whole literary acquirements."[54] His mother, Lucy, said Smith read less that her other children and his wife Emma said at the time he dictated the Book of Mormon, he "could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter."[55] Smith's writing skills were limited and he most often dictated what he wanted to communicate. But Smith was not cut off from the learning and literacy of his day. His mother said he read less than her other children, not that he didn't read at all, and both his mother's and his wife's statements were made in context of defending the validity of the

[53] 2 Nephi 26:13; 2 Nephi 29:7.
[54] Joseph Smith, History, 1832 in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents,* 27.
[55] Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1853), 84, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents,* 296; Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 1879, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:542.

Book of Mormon against the claim the Smith was the author. Lucy and Emma may have been exaggerating Smith's ignorance to bolster that claim. Though he grew up in a small, recently settled town, print was available to him: newspapers, bookstores, and libraries.[56] Smith also made attempts to engage intellectually with his peers by attending religious meetings and a local debating society.[57] Furthermore, Smith continually worked at his education; Smith even attended school when he was 20 to 21.[58] A major shift occurred when Smith founded his church. Smith now had more free time with which to read and many of his followers had better educations than he did; he even founded a study group, the school of the prophets. In an important sermon toward the end of his life, Smith declared after giving an exegesis of Genesis 1:1 along Christian-Platonic lines, "if you do not believe it you do not believe the learned man of God."[59]

Right after calling himself learned, Smith declared "Oh ye lawyers ye doctors I want to let you know that the H[oly] G[host] knows something as well as you do," suggesting that he felt that the Holy Ghost was the source of his knowledge. But the revelation to Oliver Cowdery mentioned above suggested that the Holy Ghost *confirmed* truth. Smith knew what was correct because of these promptings, and this process is what trumped the knowledge of the "lawyers" and "doctors."

At the same time, Smith not only claimed to receive a limited education in his autobiography, but he also claimed in another speech, "I am a rough stone, the sound of the hammer & chisel was never heard on me. nor never will be. I desire the learning & wisdom

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[56] Quinn, *Magic World View*, 179-90.
[57] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 37-38.
[58] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 52; Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chenago County, NY for 1869-70,* (Syracuse, 1869) p. 82-83 in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:219; Josiah Stowell, Jr. to John S. Fullmer 17 February 1843, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:77.
[59] Smith, April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 351.

of heaven alone."[60] But even these statements likely drew on motifs in Smith's environment. The story of *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* by the medieval Spanish Muslim Ibn Tufail had become very popular in the early modern period. *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* was shipwrecked as a baby on a desert island and his parents having been killed was raised by a gazelle. When the gazelle died, *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* used his reason to discover ultimate reality and was eventually visited by an angel who taught him the knowledge of God. When the boy was found, the civilized people marveled at his knowledge but ultimately *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*, discovering the frailties of human learning among the civilized, chose to go back to the island where he could enjoy pure knowledge apart from human corruption.[61] The idea of the one taught solely by heaven became popular in the eighteenth century and Andrew Michael Ramsay modified this story in *The Travels of Cyrus,* saying that the Egyptian sage Hermes went through a similar process.[62] Smith seemed to have applied these same motifs to himself. Furthermore, the Philadelphians referred to their followers as "rough-hewn stones … which must be cleaned and polished before they can become the foundation of the temple of the Lord."[63] Smith was literate, had access to books, and had a following that included better-educated people. With these resources, Smith was a life-long learner.

Historiography: American religious scholars have found Mormonism perplexing and difficult to categorize. Smith's theology departed from the orthodox Christianity of his day, which led scholars to ask why Smith departed and what sources he drew upon in doing so. Prominent nineteenth-century church historian Philip Schaff concluded, "I readily grant, that

[60] Smith, June 11, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 219-20.
[61] *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* was translated into Latin in 1671 by Edward Pococke as *Philosophus autodidactus.* It became very popular, inspiring works like Robinson Crusoe and perhaps John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*. G. A. Russell, "The Impact of the *Philosophus autodidactus*: Pocockes, John Locke and the Society of Friends," in *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden: Brill, 1994): 224-65.
[62] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 126-29.
[63] Walker, *Decline of Hell*, 247.

Mormonism is to me, still one of the unsolved riddles of the modern history of religion; and I therefore venture no final judgment upon it."[64] Sydney Ahlstrom declared that Mormonism "renders almost useless the usual categories of explanation. One cannot even be sure if the object of our consideration is a sect, a mystery cult, a new religion, a church, a people, a nation, or an American subculture; indeed, at different times and places it is all of these."[65]

In 1994, John Brooke's *Refiner's Fire* argued that locating Mormonism solely within an American context was a mistake.[66] "Joseph Smith's cosmology becomes comprehensible," he argued, "only when it is placed in a setting broader than that of antebellum America." Brooke traced the roots of Mormonism back to the religious radicalism of the English Civil War and argued that the roots of that radicalism were found in Renaissance "hermeticism."[67] In so doing, Brooke drew on Francis Yates's thesis about the influence of hermetism on the religion, science, and magic of early modern Europe. Marsilio Ficino's late fifteenth-century translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum,* a group of texts attributed to the mythical Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus, brought a new view of man and his place in the universe, argued Yates. Hermetic magic was central to constructing this worldview and constituted a major and previously understudied aspect of Renaissance thought that influenced "Hermetic Magi" like Cornelius Agrippa and John Dee.[68] "Quite

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[64] Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of its Political, Social, and Religious Character*, ed. Perry Miller (1856; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 203.
[65] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 508. On the place of Mormonism in American religious historiography see my "Becoming the American Religion: The Place of Mormonism in the Development of American Religious Historiography," *Mormon Historical Studies* 4, no. 1 (2003): 3-22.
[66] Portions of this discussion from Brooke are adapted from Stephen Fleming, Egil Asperm, and Ann Taves, *Refiner's Fire* and the Yates Thesis: Hermetism, Esotericism and the History of Christianity," *Journal of Mormon History,* forthcoming.
[67] Francis Yates used the term "Hermetism" but later scholars (including Brooke) used "Hermeticism" instead. Scholars of antiquity use the term Hermetism when referring to Hermetic texts and I will use that term in the dissertation except when referring to scholars who used the term Hermeticism.
[68] Francis Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979).

simply," Brooke argued "there are striking parallels between the Mormon concepts of the coequality of matter and spirit, of the covenant of celestial marriage, and of an ultimate goal of human godhood and the philosophical traditions of alchemy and hermeticism, drawn from the ancient world and fused with Christianity in the Italian Renaissance."[69]

While linking Mormonism to Yates's thesis was a great advance in contextualizing Smith's radical ideas, recent reevaluations of Yates's work allow us to now situate Mormonism within a richer understanding of the history of Christianity. Critiques of Yates relevant to Brooke's thesis include that Neoplatonism and Christian Platonism are better terms than hermetism for the movement Yates described; that the esoteric traits that Brooke called hermeticism did not suddenly emerge in the Renaissance, but that esoteric themes, often based on Plato, had been integrated in Christianity from the beginning; that many of the early fathers had themselves incorporated Platonism and that these fathers, particularly Origen, were central to the early modern esoteric movement that Brook sought to trace; and finally that "magic" is a problematic term and scholars need to find better terminology.

Even before scholars began critiquing Yates's work, D. P. Walker's work presented a model more in line with what scholars would later embrace. Walker's *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella* (1958) preceded Yates's *Giordano Bruno* and his *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (1964) came out the same year. *The Decline of Hell* focused on a particular aspect of Christian Platonism, the early modern revival of interest in the early Christian fathers, Origen in particular. His *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (1972) explained the notion of *prisca theologia* or the belief in a primal ancient wisdom that was so important to Christian Platonists, and used the term "Christian

[69] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire*, xiii-xvi.

Platonism." Brooke cited *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* and *The Ancient Theology* (though he didn't use the term "Christian Platonism"), but didn't use *The Decline of Hell* and made no mention of the early fathers.

Critiques of Yates began with Allen Debus review in 1964, but Brian Copenhaver began the major critiques of Yates's use of "hermetism" in 1988.[70] Copenhaver noted that Ficino's and Agrippa's practices derived from the Neoplatonist Proclus's "theurgic magic" rather than the *Hermetica.*[71] Ficino was interested in such rites, which he called "natural magic" but drew upon Neoplatonism rather than the *Hermetica*, "because the Hermetica say rather little about magic," noted Copenhaver. "The works of [Neoplatonists] Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Synesius, and Proclus," Copenhaver concluded, "are the most important ancient philosophical sources for the theory of magic in the Renaissance. Research on magic in the Renaissance should shift its attention to these text and to their interpretation in the early modern period."[72]

Copenhaver followed up these critiques two years later with his article, "Natural Magic, Hermeticism, and Occultism in Early Modern Science" (1990). Copenhaver again asserted the importance of Proclus and critiqued Yates's used of the term "hermetic." Copenhaver noted that early modern people did use the term "hermetic" to describe a particular attitude toward nature but argued that Yates "sometimes used this term as if it meant the same thing a 'magical' or 'occultist' broadly understood." As Yates pointed to the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* as the origin of hermetism in the early modern West,

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[70] Allen G. Debus, review of Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, Isis* 55, no.3 (1964): 389-91.

[71] The *Hermetica* are the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the hermetic text called the *Asclepius*, which had been translated earlier.

[72] Brian Copenhaver, "Hermes Trismegistus, Proclus, and the Question of a Philosophy of Magic in the Renaissance," in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988), 79-110.

Copenhaver argued that "the term 'hermetic' should be used primarily to name a [specific] set of texts." A more general understanding of the term, he argued, "can lead only to more confusion," argued Copenhaver. Finally, Copenhaver noted, "In ordinary modern English, 'magic' is a vague term," which can mean practices that "from the point of view of orthodox religion or philosophy or, more recently, science … seemed illegitimate, erroneous, somehow marginal." This lack of clarity made "magic" a problematic term.[73] Four years later Brooke, following Yates, lumped a number of practices and ideas like astrology, alchemy, and Kabbalah under the hermetic umbrella; made almost no mention of Plato and Neoplatonism; and lumped a vaguely defined "magic" with "hermeticism."[74]

Recently, the work of Wouter Hannegraaf, Gyorgi Szonyi, Richard Kieckhefer, Florian Ebeling, Owen Davies, Stephen Clucas, and Kocku von Stuckrad have worked to reconfigure the Yates thesis by questioning the use of the term hermetism, arguing for continuity with medieval thought and practice, and rejecting the use of the term magic.[75] First, the critics argued, that Yates's use of the term hermetism was too broad as Yates referred both to themes that the were in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and to movements that she

[73] Brian P. Copenhaver, "Natural Magic, Hermeticism, and Occultism in Early Modern Science," in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (1990): 261-302. Despite these critiques, Copenhaver concluded by praising Yates for "her catholic and imaginative desire to explore areas of thought and culture hitherto considered insignificant or inappropriate to serious historical discourse" (289).
[74] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire*, 10-12.
[75] Wouter J. Hanegraaff "The Study of Western Esotericism: New Approaches to Christian and Secular Culture," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Vol 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches*, ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geerts, and Randi Warne (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 489-520; Gyorgy E. Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Richard Kieckhefer, "Did Magic Have a Renaissance? An Historiographical Question Revisited," in *Magic and the Classical Tradition* (London: Warburg Institute, 2006), 199-213; Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times,* forward by Jan Assmann , trans by David Lorton (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007); Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Stephen Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations and the *Ars Notoria*: Renaissance Magic and Medieval Theurgy," in *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought,* ed. Stephen Clucas, (Springer Dordrecht: The Netherlands: 2010), 231-74; Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

saw as similar, like alchemy and Kabbalah, despite their not being mentioned in the *Corpus*. Said Gyorgi Szonyi, "Taking all this into consideration, one has to conclude that the category of hermeticism must either be enlarged ad infinitum to accommodate all the significant phenomena Frances Yates tried to bring under this label; or it has to be understood as a well-defined but by no means generally influential trend."[76] Furthermore, following Copenhaver, these authors argued that Neoplatonism rather than hermetism was the philosophy central to Ficino's project. "Frances A. Yates," asserted Florian Ebeling, "surely exaggerated when she claimed that Florentine Renaissance philosophy had a fundamentally Hermetic core"—Ficino's focus, Ebeling explained, was Plato.[77]

Second, these scholars argued for medieval continuity: "There was no 'rebirth of magic'" in the Renaissance, declared Owen Davies, "no great break with the past, but rather a continuation and development of medieval ideas."[78] "The strands making up most grand narratives, including those having to do with 'the Renaissance,' have come unraveled," asserted Keickhefer. "At every point where we think to have found innovation we look again and discover continuities."[79] Stephen Clucas called Yates's narrative "Burckhardtian": Yates spoke "of the civilizing force of Renaissance culture triumphing over narrow mediaevalism." In doing so, argued Clucas, "Yates consistently underestimates the continuity and persistence of mediaeval magical practices and techniques in early-modern magic."[80] Szonyi, Ebeling, Culcas, Davies, and Von Stuckrad all traced Neoplatonic ideas from the Arabic revival of classical thought in the twelfth century and noted the influence on early modern thinkers.[81]

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[76] Szonyi, *John Dee' Occultism*, 89.
[77] Ebeling, *Secret History of Hermes,* 68, 60-63.
[78] Davies, *Grimoires,* 46.
[79] Kieckhefer, "Did Magic Have a Renaissance?" 200.
[80] Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations," 236.
[81] Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism,* 41-77; Ebeling, *Secret History of Hermes,* 27-58; Davies, *Grimoires,* 25-40; Von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge,* ix.

Clucas was the most explicit, arguing for the influence of "medieval theurgy" on John Dee. By "medieval theurgy," Clucas meant a series of texts from Arabic sources attributed to Solomon with theurgic purposes.[82]

Third, these critics have also challenged the use of the term "magic." Gyrogi Szonyi admits, "The word magic makes one associate a variety of things which may have little in common."[83] Owen Davies concedes, "Defining the meaning of magic is a far trickier task. For all the time, paper, and intellectual energy spent on trying to do so, there is no overarching answer. Any useful understanding must be tied to the cultures of the people being studies in specific periods and places."[84] Hanegraaff's critiques were the most pointed. "The core irrationality in most academic theories of magic" is that "this distinction belongs to the domain of theological polemics internal to Christianity, and cannot claim any scholarly foundation. The lack of such a foundation has not sufficiently bothered scholars of religion. They uncritically adopted a purely theological notion, which eventually assumed the role of an unexamined guiding intuition in their discussions: an assumption too basic even to be perceived, and too self-evident to be in need of arguments." Such conditioning, Hanegraaff argued, seriously calls into question scholars' ability to analyze things deemed magical. The answer Hanegraaff proposed was to never speak of magic as an etic category, but only as an emic one. "Emic" meaning the terms used by the people being studied, and "etic" meaning the terms the scholars use themselves. "Only if the usage of terms such as 'magic' or 'the occult' will be consistently restricted to their occurrences as *emic* terms used in the polemical interplay between believer/practitioner and their critics, while new academically-neutral terms and concepts are developed for *etic* discussion of the beliefs and practices concerned,

[82] Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations," 240-41.
[83] Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism,* 4.
[84] Davies, *Grimoires,* 2.

will it become possible to envision an unbiased and sufficiently nuanced perspective on the historical dynamics of Western religion."[85]

The critiques of Yates culminated in Wouter Hanegraaff's recent *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (2012), which not only critiqued Yates but also effectively replaced her paradigm. For Hanegraaff, the development of what scholars term Western esotericism (which overlaps considerably with what Yates termed *hermetism*) was a process of exclusion, an attempt to strip out modes of thought that Western intellectuals deemed improper. These leftovers, argues Hanegraaff, are what scholars now term esotericism and the study of such constitutes the recovery of these lost modes of thought in Western history. Yates's work did much to recover these modes of thought, but Hanegraaff delineates the delegitimizing process that such underwent, most notably by Protestant reformers and Enlightenment thinkers.

Protestant scholars seeking to purify Christianity from what they believed were Catholic corruptions began to target what they believed to be Platonic corruption in Christianity and those who, like Ficino, believed that Christianity and Platonism overlapped. "But critics who investigated the Florentine agenda more closely were bound to discover a disconcerting truth: to a surprising extent, those paganizing heretics seemed to have the Fathers of the Church on their side!" Just as Walker had noted fifty years earlier, Hanegraaff reasserted the importance of the early fathers in these early modern debates. Since many of the early fathers had been heavily Platonic, the answer for these Protestant scholars was to argue that these fathers had themselves been corrupted by Plato. "It is not hard to see that [this claim] carried an enormous polemical potential from Protestant perspectives, since it strongly suggested that Roman Catholicism and its dogmatic tradition as a whole might be

[85] Hanegraaff, "The Study of Western Esotericism," 513-16.

exposed as a pagan perversion." Such Protestant scholars even developed a hermeneutic for determining who the corrupt Platonists were among contemporaries and determined that the tenets of a Platonist were the belief that the soul was uncreated and the denial of creation ex nihilo.[86]

Hanegraaff then describes how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestant scholars who worked to develop the modern discipline philosophy sought to separate Christianity from Platonism by arguing for a firm demarcation between revelation (the scriptures) and reason (Greek thought). These scholars sought to cast off the modes of thought that mixed the two and Hanegraaff argues that in the Enlightenment the terms "superstition," "magic," and "occult" became the favored terms for the knowledge that these scholars rejected. "Although the terms 'superstition,' 'magic,' and 'occult' have long histories, they were essentially reinvented during the period of the Enlightenment, in such a manner that they could serve to demarcate 'the Other of science and rationality.'" Because of the ideological foundation behind these terms, scholars need to find more neutral terms when exploring the past, argues Hanegraaff. "The term 'magic' is an important object *of* historical research, but definitely unsuitable as an etic instrument *for* doing research."[87] Ultimately, said Hanegraaff, the study of Western esotericism,

> questions the selective procedures by which historians since the period of the Enlightenment have been narrowing the study of philosophy down to what the consider "real" philosophy, the study of Christianity to that of "real" Christianity, the study of science to that of "real" science…. In short, it questions the canon of modern intellectual and academic culture and emphasizes that our common heritage

[86] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 94-95, 105-7.
[87] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 157, 168.

> is of much greater complexity than one would infer from standard academic textbooks…. Its goal is neither to defend nor attack 'pagan' or 'esoteric' claims, but to ensure that the currents to which these labels refer are recognized as significant historical factors in the development of Western culture.[88]

The problems created by Brooke's use of the terms magic and hermeticism are best demonstrated in Brooke's argument about Joseph Smith undergoing fundamental shifts. According to Brooke, Smith

> went through two critical transformations. He began his engagement with the supernatural as a village conjuror but transformed himself into a prophet of the 'Word,' announcing the opening of a new dispensation. Then, moving beyond his role as prophet and revelator, Smith transformed himself and the Mormon priesthood into Christian-hermetic magi, a role previously manifested in the medieval alchemist, the Renaissance hermetic philosopher, and the perfectionist sectarians of the Radical Reformation.[89]

Brooke asserted that there was something fundamentally different between these three roles requiring a "transformation" between each for Smith. "A prophet of the 'Word,'" which Brooke did not define, was something very different from a village conjuror or a "Christian-hermetic Mag[us]," according to Brooke. Brooke's three stages—village magician, prophet, magus—were in fact, essentially the same thing: the person with a divine calling, endowed with divine power. Instead of imposing modern categories on the past, scholars need to understand how seemingly disparate practices actually overlapped. Smith's thought and practice did develop over time, but from his early visions and scrying (not fundamentally

[88] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 152.
[89] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire*, 4.

different activities for Smith and many others) he saw himself as a visionary with a divine gift. Smith's notion of his mission developed over time, but instead of dividing Smith's thought and practices into distinct categories, this dissertation will explore the whole range of such acts, blending treasuring-digging, Bible-reading, and church-going.

Recently, Catholic philosopher Stephen Webb noted the similarities between Smith and the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus in his *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn From the Latter-day Saints* (2013): both Smith and Iamblichus promoted the importance of matter and both were accused of practicing magic.[90] In an earlier book, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (2012), Webb said that "Joseph Smith dismissed the Platonism of the early Church Fathers" in his embrace of matter, particularly by going so far as to say that God had a body. "Mormons put the Platonizing of Christianity at the heart of their critique of the ossification and corruption of Christianity," argued Webb. "Something went terribly wrong after the age of the Apostles, they argue, and that something has to do with the theological turn toward a metaphysics of immaterialism."[91] As I argue in Chapter Three, though Smith said that something did go wrong in early Christianity, that something was not Platonic corruption (Chapter Three). Later Mormons theologians did embrace the Platonic-corruption model and these theologians made a similar argument to Webb: Christianity was corrupted by Platonic immaterialism.[92] But as Webb noticed in *Mormon Christianity,* Neoplatonists like

[90] Stephen W. Webb, *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn From the Latter-day Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 62-68.
[91] Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 249. As I note in Chapter Six, Clement of Alexandria said that God had a body, while Origen said that God did not.
[92] B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1895); James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy: Considered in the Light of Scriptural and Secular History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 100-1. Webb probably got this notion that Mormons believed in the Platonic corruption model from contemporary Mormon theologians that he was in conversation with.

Iamblichus did embrace matter and as I argue in Chapters Three and Six, Smith's embrace of matter and a material God fit within certain Christian-Platonic themes.

As Webb's comparison between Smith and Iamblichus in *Mormon Christianity* indicates, Webb seemed a little uncomfortable with the claim that Smith was anti-Platonic. In *Jesus Christ, Eternal God*, Webb even asserted that Smith "would have liked the Platonic concept of pre-existent souls as well as Plato's portrait of the Demiurge as being not absolutely different from the world (*Timaeus* 29a-53)."[93] As I mention above and in Chapter Six, Smith did indeed like this portion of the *Timaeus,* going so far as using it in his translation of his Egyptian papyri. Furthermore, in his introduction to *Jesus Christ, Eternal God,* Webb lamented, "Unfortunately, creedal Christians rarely take Mormonism seriously. Perhaps the main reason for this neglect is the Mormon rejection of creation out of nothing, which puts it at odds with most of Western metaphysics and Christian theology. None of its philosophical positions has made it more prone to scholarly condescension than this one."[94] Yet Webb neglected to note that the rejection of creation ex nihilo was a thoroughly Platonic concept, one that was debated in Smith's day (Chapters One and Six).

In *Mormon Christianity,* Webb seemed even more perplexed with his assertions of Smith rejecting Platonic Christianity. Webb still asserted that Smith had a "quest to overturn traditional, Platonic metaphysics with an entirely new understanding of the nature of the spiritual world," but he not only went on to compare Smith to Iamblichus, he also gave a lengthy critique of how modern philosophers understand Plato. Webb noted the same trend that Wouter Hanegraaff did: Protestant theologians sought to separate philosophy from religion and in so doing worked to take any religious notions out of Plato. "This story,"

[93] Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God,* 249.
[94] Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God,* 5.

argues Webb, "has to deal with the fact that Plato himself was a lover of stories and many of the stories he told were about heavenly realities and mystical visions." "The standard story of philosophy, however, treats [stories like] the charioteer as a myth that Plato used for rational, not religious, purposes. The standard story denies that Plato took any of the details of the myth literally (or even seriously)." "By treating Plato as a lover of stories that he did not believe," Webb complains, "the standard story of philosophy is as hard to believe as any of the stories that Plato told." Because the Neoplatonists were overtly religious, asserts Webb, "modern philosophers often show little interest in them, and the many thinkers who populate the Platonic tradition … are rarely taught in undergraduate courses." That the Neoplatonists were seen to be involved with magic makes them even worse in contemporary philosophers minds, argues Webb, and leads such scholars to try to separate the Neoplatonists from Plato. "Plato is the West's greatest thinker, and to associate him with someone like Iamblichus is to impugn his reputation," is the attitude of contemporary philosophers, argues Webb.[95]

Though I argue against Webb's assertion that Smith was seeking to overturn the Platonism of the early church fathers, Webb, like Bloom and Brooke, points in a useful direction. However, additional scholarship and further research now suggest that in his quest to restore lost truth and practices missing from the Bible and contemporary churches, Smith turned to Christian-Platonic texts and descriptions to restore "the fulness of the gospel."

Method: Each chapter looks at particular aspects of Smith's thought during a certain period, places those ideas within the history of Christian Platonism, and then proposes possible sources of transmission of the ideas to Smith. In doing so, I am not attempting to rule out divine inspiration as a possibility, but determining whether God inspired Smith is

[95] Webb, *Mormon Christianity,* 35, 53-54, 61, 68.

beyond the scope of this dissertation. At the same time, this dissertation takes Joseph Smith claims to be sincere and seeks to contextualize them. When I propose possible sources for Smith's ideas, I look at the degree of similarity between the text and Smith's doctrine and the opportunities that Smith had for contact with that source. An important factor is the impetus Smith may have had in using a particular source. If a subject were a point of interest for Smith then Smith would have been motivated to learn more about that topic. Thus an easily accessible text with ideas very similar to Smith's on subjects that interested him would be an important possible source for his ideas. Other clues include books that Smith owned and statements made by his close followers; all these are factored into the possible sources of Smith's thought.

The texts that likely played the largest role in conveying Christian-Platonic ideas to Smith can be divided into two categories: grimoires that may have influenced Smith in his early years (particularly Dee's spirit diary, Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, and Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*) and texts that Smith likely engaged either as preparatory to the foundation of Mormonism or as part of its early development. The books that I argue were most important for that task were John Allen's *Modern Judaism,* Jane Lead's *Enochian Walks with God* and *The Wonders of God's Creation,* Andrew Michael Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus*, and J. L. Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History,* volume one. Reference works also provided an important source of information, most importantly the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and, to a lesser degree, Buck's *Theological Dictionary* and Adam Clarke's biblical commentary. I reference a number of other texts for additional possible context and influence, but the above list, I argue, were the most important, and I would argue that this reading list was not outside Smith ability in term of either volume or difficulty.

I have been able to establish that some of these texts were readily available to Smith. *The Travels of Cyrus* was very popular and was in Smith's local library, Smith owned Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, but I was not able to be as specific with Lead's and Allen's books. But Smith was in a very fluid environment with abundant texts and a large following, suggesting numerous possible sources of contact with these texts. Ultimately, I would argue that the similarities between both Lead's books and Allen's *Modern Judaism* are so striking, so numerous, and align with Mormonism in such particular ways as to strongly suggests that Smith had contact with those books. At this point, I don't see another plausible explanation for the similarities, nor do I see any evidence that Smith coming in contact with these books was implausible.[96] No doubt further research into these topics will modify the above list, but at this point it is useful to list the full range of possibilities.

Scope and Limitations: The scope of the dissertation is very large, technically beginning with Plato, though essentially starting with the early Christian Platonists and tracing Christian Platonism to the nineteenth century. Thus the comparisons I make are based on primary sources but I rely often on secondary sources when I talk about transmission. This dissertation will not attempt a complete analysis of Smith's theology and practice but will instead focus on key areas with Christian Platonic similarities. I argue, however, that the overlap between early Mormonism and Christian Platonism was extensive.

Dissertation Outline: The dissertation is divided into two sections and seven chapters. Chapter One, "Christian Platonism in the West," first gives an overview of Christian Platonism: how it rose, persisted, and particularly how it was available to Smith. The chapter uses Pendle Hill (on the border of Lancashire and Yorkshire Counties in

[96] With revelatory figures like Smith, revelation is always an alternative explanation, and as I discuss above, revelation is not an explanation that I am seeking to rule out. But again, Smith's revelations said that study was often required for revelation and Smith said he was seeking the truth in eclectic sources.

northwest England) and Jane Lead to show the various intersections of the myriad streams of Christian Platonism in the West and what was available to people like Smith. After the introductory Chapter One, Section One, "New York, Ohio, and Missouri," begins by focusing on the rise of Mormonism and its early years. Chapter Two, "Young Joseph Smith: Folk Christianity and Christian Platonism," focuses on Smith's activities and theophanies before he formed his church and the ways in which such manifested Christian-Platonic themes and suggested particular sources. Chapter Three, "A New Church," treats the formation of Smith's church focusing on Christian Platonic themes in the Book of Mormon and Smith's notion of a restored priesthood. Chapter Four, "Ohio and Missouri," centers on Smith's activities in Kirtland, Ohio, (1831-1838) which Smith made his headquarters after he moved from New York. The chapter is broken into two sections, the first focusing on Smith's soteriology and afterlife theology and the second focusing on Smith's similarities to the Platonic notion of the philosopher-king.

Section Two, "Nauvoo," looks at Smith's final years in Nauvoo, Illinois (1839-1844) where Smith theology came to its fruition. Chapter Five, "A Nucleus of Heaven," addresses Smith's religious desire to bind his loved ones to him for the next life through marital experimentation and sacraments (baptism) on behalf of the dead. Chapter Six, "The Plan of Salvation," looks at Smith's notion of God's divine plan of sending humans to earth so that they could become Gods. The chapter focuses on Smith's Book of Abraham, printed in 1842, which contained several key references to that plan. Chapter Seven, "The Mysteries of Egypt," focuses on the creation of Smith's temple rituals in Nauvoo and the possible sources for those rituals. The Conclusion, "The Philosopher King: Part Two" gives a brief overview of Smith's political ambitions in Nauvoo and the lead up to his death.

Chapter One: The History and Democratization of Christian Platonism

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the history of Christian Platonism in the West from its origins to the early nineteenth century in order to give context for how Christian Platonism influenced Smith. Going back thousands of years to give context for a nineteenth century movement may seem excessive, but giving a thumb-nail sketch of the antique sources is useful because early modern Christian Platonists did use those texts in their attempts to practice what they believed was true Christianity. Furthermore, Hanegraaff's argument that the Reformation and the Enlightenment engaged in a selective process of eliminating particular kinds of knowledge, makes it necessary to go back to before these eras to show how definitions of Christianity were changed during these period. The chapter therefore begins with an overview of Christian Platonism in antiquity and then traces how many of these ideas were transmitted through the Middle Ages to delineate in what forms Christian Platonism was available to early modern thinkers. With this background, the chapter then focuses on two case studies that best indicate how Christian-Platonic ideas could have made their way to Smith. For the first, I focus on the religious history of the Pendle-Hill area of Lancashire County, England, an area where the early Mormon missionaries were very successful, to illustrate the ways that popular medieval religiosity persisted in Protestant lands and the ways that Christian Platonism influenced that religiosity. For the second, I give an more in-depth overview of Jane Lead's circle, arguing that the people and movements that influenced and were influenced by Lead played a major role in transmitting Christian-

Platonic ideas to Smith. The chapter ends with a handful of other possible conduits of Christian Platonism to Smith, all to give context to the development of early Mormonism.

Late Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages

The following traces the rise and development of Christian Platonism from its origins in Hellenized Judaism to its ubiquity in the late Middle Ages. The accessibility of Christian Platonism in the late Middle Ages in the forms of medieval science, mysticism, theurgy, and Kabbalah all set the stage for Christian Platonism's democratization in the early modern period.

Origins. As Alfred North Whitehead famously said, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato…. His personal endowments … his inheritance of an intellectual tradition not yet stiffened by excessive systematization, have made his writing an inexhaustible mine of suggestion."[1] Yet it was Plato's tremendous impact on Western religion that is the focus of this dissertation. As mentioned in the introduction, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestant theologians worked to create a dichotomy between "reason" and "revelation," attempting to confine Plato solely to the category of reason.[2] In fact, what we would consider "religion" was central to Plato's writings: where we came from, why we are here, and how we return to the gods. No text made this more clear than the *Republic*, which Socrates concludes by declaring, "If we are persuaded by me, we'll believe that the soul is immortal … and we'll always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with reason in every way. That way we'll be friends both to ourselves and to the gods while we remain here on earth

[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Humanities Press, 1929), 63.
[2] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 142-47.

and afterwards—like victors in the games who go around collecting their prizes—we'll receive our rewards."[3] Later Platonists took Plato's thought into new directions but the religious component in Plato's writings was explicit from the beginning. In the words of medieval scholar M. D. Chenu, "Plato will always beget a truly religious philosophy."[4]

With the conquest of Alexander the Great, Greek philosophy spread, setting the stage for key developments in the history of Platonism. Platonism influenced the Jews and an important development within second-temple Judaism, Judeo-Christian apocalypses or texts about biblical figures making heavenly ascents and learning divine wisdom in heaven, had Platonic themes.[5] The apocalypses would have important influences on Christianity, particularly Christian Platonists like Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Jane Lead spoke of heavenly ascents, going through a heavenly temple (a major them in the apocalypses), and the major apocalyptic figure, Enoch. Mormon scriptures and rites had similar themes (Chapters Four and Seven).

Scholars have long debated the relationship between Christianity and the Greek mystery cults: similar rites appear in Christianity (baptism and the Eucharist) and Paul uses similar terminology.[6] Clement of Alexandria uses lots of the terminology of the mystery cults and such became popular with early modern Christian Platonists. Some Freemasons, particularly Andrew Michael Ramsay, sought to pattern the Masonry after the mystery cults and as I argue in Chapter Seven, Smith likely patterned his endowment ritual after both Freemasonry and descriptions of the mystery cults. Many Freemasons sought to restore what

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[3] Plato, *Republic*, 621c-d.
[4] M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West.* ed. and trans. by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 36.
[5] Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford, 1993), 43, 86. Ascent was a major theme in Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Symposium.*
[6] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

they believed was an ancient rite passed down from the patriarchs and many felt that the mystery cults were an echo of that primal rite. I argue that Smith felt the same way.

Though the influence of Platonism on the New Testament has been heavily debated, many scholars argue that Hellenistic philosophy made its may into the New Testament, particularly in the writings of Paul.[7] Protestants had long argued that early Christianity was corrupted by the Platonism of the early fathers (see below and Chapter Three) but scholars are now rejecting that assertion. As Illaria Ramelli argues, Christianity "was already Hellenised at its very origin. The New Testament itself stems from a deeply Hellenised Judaism."[8]

Middle Platonism. Not only did Plato influence the philosophy and religion of many cultures but later Platonic philosophers attempted to draw on "barbarian" wisdom. What scholars call Middle Platonists, the Platonist between the old academy and Plotinus, became particularly interested in barbarian wisdom. Such thinkers tried to harmonize barbarian thought with Plato, an attitude that scholars call "Platonic Orientalism." Early modern scholars called the Middle Platonists "eclectics" because of their desire to draw truth out of eclectic sources.[9] One indication of the eclectic nature of Middle Platonism was the hermetic writings, or those writings that purported to share the ancient wisdom of the Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus. Both Egyptian and Platonic themes appear in the texts, suggesting that they were a product of Hellenized Egypt.[10] Hermetic writings were later used to construct a

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[7] Anthony Meredith, *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (London: T and T Clark, 2012), 7.
[8] Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 261.
[9] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:138-39. The word "eclectic" came form Clement of Alexandria, see below.
[10] Dylan Michael Burns, "Out of Heaven: Myth, Eschatology, and Theurgy in the Sethian Gnostic Apocalypses of Nag Hammadi." (PhD. Diss. Yale University, 2011), 220, 135; Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times,* trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), 29-31.

genealogy of *prisca theologia* to argue that Platonic ideas were ancient.[11] Platonism continued to influence Jewish thinkers, particularly Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 CE-50 BCE) who drew heavily on Plato, arguing that Plato got his ideas from Moses.[12] Such claims set the stage for Christian-Platonist thinkers such as Clement of Alexandria (whom Mosheim classified as an eclectic, see below) and Origen.

An important theme in Middle Platonism was the issue of the embodiment. Plato's dialogues varied on the topic with the *Phaedrus* saying that embodiment was a fall into matter while the *Timaeus* said that souls were sent by design into bodies. These differing views created a tension over how to interpret embodiment in Middle Platonism.[13] Philo took a negative view of embodiment, differing from Plato, argues Charles Anderson; the Gnostics went so far as to argue that the creator was evil.[14] Hermetism, drawing on Egyptian religion, viewed embodiment positively and Christians, ambivalent on pre-existence, asserted the importance of the creation and the resurrection.[15] Stoics taught that nothing in the universe was immaterial, not even the mind; the soul, the stars, angels, and even God were made up of a more refined form of matter.[16] Smith would teach the same thing and the idea was suggested in Allen's *Modern Judaism* (Chapter Six).[17] Such a notion likely influenced the Neoplatonic notion of the *ochema* or vehicle, a kind of spirit body; Smith taught similar ideas

[11] Jan Assman, foreword, in Ebeling *Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus*, x.
[12] Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 30.
[13] Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 76. See also Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria,* 189-92.
[14] Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria,* 189, 191.
[15] Ebeling, *Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus,* 15-16, 31; Peter Brown. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 2.
[16] John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. (London: Duckworth, 1977), 83-84, 113.
[17] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 78.

(Chapter Three).[18] These debates were significant because Smith said not only said that the body was very important but also said that it was an essential part of the divine plan. Smith went so far as to say that God was embodied in flesh. Though such an idea would have been heretical to most Platonists and Christians, John Allen's descriptions of Jewish theology not only said that embodiment was essential (directly alluding to the *Timaeus,* Chapter Three) but also said that the Jews depicted God in human form (Chapter Six). Kabbalah pushed the *Timaeus*'s embodiment themes into particularly concrete directions and Smith did the same.

Clement of Alexandria. Clement (c. 150-215) was a convert to Christianity, from Athens, who later moved to Alexandria. Clement was heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian apocalypticism and claimed to have knowledge of a secret tradition, or ideas that he claimed had been taught to the apostles secretly by Jesus and that had been passed down secretly since then.[19] Clement, was widely read in Greek philosophy and poetry, and much of what has survived from Middle Platonism came from Clement's quotations.[20] "Before the advent of the Lord," wrote Clement, "philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration…. For this was a schoolmaster to bring 'the Hellenic mind,' as the law, the Hebrews, 'to Christ.' Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ."[21] Philosophy, said Clement, was either derived from the scriptures or given by angels.[22]

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[18] E. R. Dodds, "The Astral Body in Neoplatonism," in Proclus, *The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 313-322.
[19] Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 445-58.
[20] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* chapt. 1.
[21] Clement, *Stromata,* 1.5.
[22] Clement, *Stromata,* 1.1, 1.15, 1.17, 7.2.

Clement noted Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," but argued that Paul only meant bad philosophy, "after the tradition of men." Much philosophy was divine, argued Clement, particularly that which "teaches that we ought to aim at rising up to the power which assimilates to God."[23] One needed to sift through the various schools and take the good and reject the bad. "And philosophy—I do not mean the Stoic, or the Platonic, or the Epicurean, or the Aristotelian, but whatever has been well said by each of those sects, which teach righteousness along with a science pervaded by piety—this eclectic whole I call philosophy. But such conclusions of human reasonings, as men have cut away and falsified, I would never call divine." "So, then, the barbarian and Hellenic philosophy has torn off a fragment of eternal truth," Clement added later, "and He who brings again together the separate fragments, and makes them one, will without peril, be assured, contemplate the perfect Word, the truth."[24] It was this attitude that led early modern scholars to label Middle Platonists "eclectics" and to include Clement in their number.[25]

Clement influenced Origen, who overshadowed Clement in many ways, but Clement did reemerge in the early modern period. His works were translated into Latin in the sixteenth century and Clement was part of the rise of the interest in the fathers during the seventeenth century, though, again he was overshadowed by Origen.[26] There were numerous similarities between Clements's teachings and Smith's: I begin most of my discussions of Christian-Platonic tenets found in Mormonism with either Plato or Clement. Mosheim cited

[23] Clement, *Stromata,* 1.11.
[24] Clement, *Stromata*, 1.7; 1.13.
[25] Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 19-20.
[26] Francis Havey, "Clement of Alexandria," *The Catholic Encyclopedia.* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1908); D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).183

Clement's attitude of pulling out the truth from multiple sources that was very similar to Smith's (see introduction). Clement was used not only by the Universalists but Jane Lead's visions also had much in common with Clement (see below). John Wesley (see below) was a fan of Clement's description of the gnostic and Clement's ideas could be found here and there, such as his claim that the righteous preached to the dead after the death (an idea that Smith taught), which was referenced by Agrippa, and cited in the version of the *Shepherd of Hermas* that Smith owned (Chapter Five). A Freemason also cited Clement for evidence of a secret tradition in early Christianity, an idea that may have also influenced Smith (Chapter Seven).

Ammonius Saccas. Famous for being the teacher of both Origen and Plotinus, Ammonius remains enigmatic because he wrote little (none of which survives) though he took on a life of his own in debates over Christian Platonism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ammonius may have been from the East: Porphyry said in his biography of Plotinus that Plotinus "achieved such proficiency in philosophy that he was eager to acquaint himself with the corresponding practices of Persians and the way that was followed in India."[27] Elizabeth DePalma Digeser notes that the name Saccas suggested Buddhist connections and that Clement of Alexandria mentions Buddhism.[28]

Ammonius taught a "philosophy without conflicts," in which he sought to harmonize all the philosophical traditions, including Plato and Aristotle. Yet Plato was the highest authority for Ammonius and Ammonius said that Jesus was a prophet like Moses. Writers in antiquity debated whether Ammonius remained a Christian or not with Porphyry saying that

[27] Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of His Works,* 3 in Mark Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by Their Students* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 5-6.
[28] Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), 40-42; Clement, *Stromata* 1:15.

he became "lawful" (meaning not a Christian) and Eusebius saying that he remained a Christian until death. Such debates led later scholars to debate whether there were in fact two Ammonii. This notion was an outgrowth of the belief "that Platonist philosophers and Christian theologians would not interact with each other's circles, despite clear ancient evidence to the contrary," argues Elizabeth DePalma Digeser.[29] While mainline Protestants denounced him as a leading corrupter of Christianity, the numerous parallels between Smith's practices and theology and those ascribed to Ammonius and his pupil Origen suggests that Smith knew of those ascriptions and saw Ammonius as worthy of emulation. Interestingly, one Remond Conygnham wrote in 1831 that the Amish claimed their origins from Ammonius. While I have found no other such claims, Conygnham's assertion suggests that at least some people in Smith's day were claiming that Ammonius was a great Christian thinker despite Mosheim's denunciations. After citing Mosheim's description of Ammonius's followers ascending to heaven, Conygnham declared, "Ammonius was one of the most eloquent, learned, and highly gifted of his time—a great philosopher and the principal of the Platonists; but above all these, a Christian."[30]

Origen. Scholars have also debated if there were two Origens: one a Christian and the other a Platonist. Yet DePalma Digeser argues that Porphyry, a Neoplatonist who said he knew the Christian Origen, would not have been mistaken when he said that the Christian Origen studied under Ammonius Saccas.[31] "For this man, having been a hearer of Ammonius, who had attained the greatest proficiency in philosophy of any in our day," Porphyry said of Origen, "derived much benefit from his teacher in the knowledge of the

[29] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety,* 13-14, 17-19, 28-29, 35, 50-51.
[30] Remond Conygnham, "Papers Furnished by the Historical Society: History of the Mennonists and Aymenists or Amish," *Register of Pennsylvania* 7 (February 26, 1831): 129-32; (March 1831): 150-53.
[31] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety*, 29.

science."[32] "This presupposition of the irreconcilability of Christianity and philosophy, in particular Platonism, seems to die hard," argues Illaria Ramelli, "if most scholars still feel it absolutely necessary to postulate a pagan Origen, a Platonist, as a double of the Christian Origen, whereas it is perfectly possible to refer all available sources to one and the same thinker, the Christian Platonist."[33]

Clement was Origen's teacher when Origen was young but Clement left Alexandria during Severus's persecution in Alexandria in 200 when Origen was still a teenager. Origen became the pupil of Ammonius Saccas shortly thereafter. Following Ammonius, Origen smoothed over difficult passages in the Bible by reading them allegorically.[34] Furthermore, Porphyry declared that Origen "was continually studying Plato."[35] Yet as Ramelli argues, "Patristic Platonists like Clement, Origen, or Eusebius, for their part, would never have thought of their own contribution in terms of 'Platonising Christianity,' as a sort of superimposition of Platonism upon Christianity, since, in their view, Scripture and Plato were in fundamental agreement, and Moses was far more ancient than Plato, who was inspired by the same Logos that subsequently got incarnated."[36] Yet while Ammonius taught the Jesus was a prophet, Origen, following Clement, said Jesus was the Logos.[37] "What Origen did not accept of Platonism," argues Remelli, "is precisely what was incompatible with Christianity. In particular, he sharply rejected the doctrine of metensomatosis."[38] Eighteenth-century scholars were emphatic in linking Origen and Plato. The encyclopedia quoted one Dupin

[32] Quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 6.19.6.
[33] Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism," 239-40.
[34] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety*, 34, 52-58.
[35] Quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 6.19.6-8.
[36] Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism," 261.
[37] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety*, 56, 61.
[38] Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism," 250.

who said that Origen "was a person of most profound learning, he particularly studied Plato's philosophy, and was indeed too much addicted to it for a Christian."[39]

Origen's teachings were controversial during his life, particularly his suggestions of universal salvation, that may have even included the devil. Contemporaries also accused Origen of denying the resurrection: he was ambivalent about the physical nature of the resurrected body and was accused of denying its fleshy nature. Origen remained controversial after his death leading to his condemnation by the second Council of Constantinople in 553.[40] Yet Origen remained influential, inspiring a number of church fathers, as well as Neoplatonists (see below). Origen's popularity revived in the Renaissance, and Origen saw a full revival in the seventeenth century.[41] Some of the Cambridge Platonists began to teach universal salvation privately, drawing on Origen. The idea remained very controversial but was advocated by Jane Lead and Andrew Michael Ramsay, and Universalism as a denomination arose in the late eighteenth century, Joseph Smith's grandfather Asael was an early American Universalist; Smith's father was listed as a member. Universalism had an important influence on early Mormonism: though the Book of Mormon seemingly rejected universalism, Smith soon after had a revelation that said the post-mortal punishment would be temporary (Chapter Four). As mentioned in the introduction, a number of Smith's teachings and practices aligned with descriptions of Origen in contemporary sources.

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[39] "Origen," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798) 13:493.
[40] Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), 12, 249.
[41] Edgar Wind, 'The Revival of Origen," in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene* (Princeton, 1954) 412-24.

Plotinus and Neoplatonism. Plotinus, considered the founder of Neoplatonism, studied under Ammonius thirty years after Origen. Plotinus headed his own philosophical school at Rome and Origen's and Plotinus's followers had a number of things in common. "For example," explains DePalma Digeser, "Origenists and Plotinians shared the notion that an intelligible hypostasis or logos had emanated from a transcendent divinity, and that an ascetic regime drew attention away from the body so that one could focus on the return of the soul." Both groups also focused on determining textual authenticity and both read texts allegorically. Both also rejected animal sacrifice, seeing such as polluting and demon attracting.[42] Ramelli asserts Jean Danielou's argument that "rather than a 'Hellenisation' or 'philosophisation' of Christianity, he sees a Christianization of philosophy."[43] Such influence was even more overt in Iamblichus (below).

Despite such overlap between Christians and Platonists, DePalma Digeser argues that a rift emerged in the Ammonian community as Plotinus's disciple Porphyry sought to distinguish what he believed were the pure teachings of Plotinus from Origen and Iamblichus. Porphyry, who may have been a Christian at one time, regarded Christianity as unlawful. Porphyry not only wrote against Christianity, but was also a driving force behind the Diocletian persecution (303), argues DePalma Digeser.[44] These debates could have deadly consequences. Porphyry also fought with his own disciple Iamblichus over theurgy and matter (see below). The later Neoplatonic philosopher's Iamblichus and Proclus had a greater influence on Christian Platonism than did Plotinus, but a passage from Porphyry's biography of Plotinus referenced in the Dobson's encyclopedia paralleled an aspect of Mormonism. The entry said that while Socrates had a daemon for a spirit guide, Plotinus had

[42] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety,* 34, 6.
[43] Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism," 254.
[44] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety,* 5.

a god.[45] As discussed in Chapter Three, familiar spirits, daemons, and genii were part of the Smith's worldview and as discussed in Chapter Four, Smith had a higher and a lower priesthood: the lower priesthood had "the keys of the administering of angels" (like daemons), while the higher priesthood allowed one to be in the presence of God. The reference to Plotinus suggested a similar bifurcation: lower philosophers have daemons, more advanced philosophers had gods. Upgrading from a daemon to a God was important aspect of theurgy (Chapter Three).

Iamblichus and Theurgy. Iamblichus was Porphyry's student for a time, but before that he studied with a student of Origen's who would become a Christian bishop. The disagreements that Porphyry had with Iamblichus (the importance of matter and the important of theurgy) both had connections to Christianity. As DePalma Digeser argues, Iamblichus's materialism may have been influenced by Christianity; Smith also said that matter and the body were of primary importance (Chapters Three and Six).[46] The other point that Porphyry debated with Iamblichus was Iamblichus's assertion that theurgy constituted a universal path, or the idea that there was a religious path that all could follow to salvation. Platonists, Porphyry in particular, tended to believe that the philosopher had a particular advantage in being able to ascend back to the gods. Most people could not live philosophically and thus would continue to reincarnate until they were ready for such a life. Iamblichus, however, taught that theurgy, or what he interpreted as traditional rites used for Platonic ends, was a path that everyone could take.[47] Furthermore, Iamblichus argued that it was the only path to the gods. "You enquire, then, whether there is not some other road to happiness which we are ignoring," Iamblichus responded to Porphyry. "Yet what other

[45] "Plotinus," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 15:67.
[46] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety,* 3, 6-7.
[47] DePalma Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety,* 97, 112-14.

reasonable mode of ascent to it can there be apart from the gods?"[48] As Christianity was also a universal path, Iamblichus's statement is a further indication of Christian influence.

The rites of theurgy, or the work of god, were explained in a second-century text called the *Chaldean Oracles*. "The need of pagan believers to enter into a direct contact with their gods," explains Georg Luck, "led to the development of a certain technique or set of techniques." Theurgy was also called the "priestly art" and was seen as a mystery rite; "theurgy can be considered the ultimate development of the mysteries," says Luck, "because it represents an initiation into the highest mystery of all, the union of man and god." Theurgists expected not only to see God but also to become divine themselves. "Through the mystical union with the One and the release from the bonds of fate," says Luck, "humans become actually equal to the gods, at least for a short time."[49] "The theurgist" explains Gregory Shaw, "was simultaneously man and god."[50] Another important aspect of theurgy was gaining power: "There is a power available in the universe to those who know how to plug into it," explains Luck.[51] Rites of gaining power, seeing God, becoming like God would be central to medieval grimoires, or magic books, which drew on Neoplatonism. Such works continued to be popular and others continue to be written in the early modern period; evidence suggest that Smith both drew on such books, performed such rituals, and that such rituals likely informed the rites that Smith introduced to his church, particularly related to those performed in his temples (Chapters Four and Seven).

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[48] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* 10.1.
[49] Georg Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 185-89.
[50] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 51.
[51] Luck, "Theurgy," 189.

Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius. The most influential Neoplatonist was Proclus (413-485), who led a group of students at the Platonic academy in Athens. Proclus wrote extensively and many of his works survived and were translated into Latin in the late Middle Ages. Proclus's biggest influence on Christian Platonism came through Dionysius the Areopagite (also called Pseudo-Dionysius) whose work was heavily influenced by Proclus and who may have been a disciple.[52] Aquinas quoted Dionysius second only to Augustine.[53] Proclus was a theurgist and Dionysius said that the Christian sacraments were "theurgy" and were deifying.[54] Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus questioned the dating of Dionysius, noting that no early church fathers mentioned him and the Protestants didn't like him.[55] By the early nineteenth century, Dionysius was generally called a fraud, but Proclus's influenced thinkers like of Agrippa and Dee, as well as grimoires in general (see below). When denouncing the Kabbalists' belief in human pre-existence, John Allen cited Thomas Taylor's *The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus* (1788) as an example of a contemporary who was teaching such ideas.[56] "Taylor's work," argues Jay Bregman, "suggests that he was, metaphorically at least a 'reincarnation' of Proclus. His translations of all Greek philosophers evoke the Greek style of Proclus transliterated into English, as it were."[57]

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[52] Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Proclus as a Reader of Plato and Plotinus, and his Influence in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance," in *Proclus: Lecteur et interprete des Anciens* (Paris, 1987) 192-93.
[53] Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality," in *Pseudo-Dionysius, the Complete Works,* trans. by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1987), 21.
[54] Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 4 (1999): 573-99.
[55] Jean Leclerq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works,* trans. by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1987), 39.
[56] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 194, fn.
[57] Jay Bregman "Proclus Americanus," in *Late Antique Epistemology: Other Ways to Truth,* ed. Panayiota Vassilopoulou and Stephen R. L. Clark (Houndsmill, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 228.

Augustine. Perhaps the most important Western thinker, Augustine is difficult to classify. Augustine had been a gnostic in his youth and was influenced by Platonism.[58] "It is evident that none come nearer to us than the Platonists," Augustine declared in *The City of God.* Yet Augustine spent considerable time attacking Plato in that work. After noting that Labeo considered Plato to be a demigod, Augustine declared, "We for our part, indeed, reckon Plato neither a god nor a demigod; we would not even compare him to any of God's holy angels; nor to the truth-speaking prophets, nor to any of the apostles or martyrs of Christ, nay, not to any faithful Christian man."[59] Clifford Ando argues that despite Augustine's praise of Platonism, in *The City of God*, Augustine sought to distance Christianity from Platonism, going so far as trying to eliminate Plato's vocabulary from Christian theology and saying that Plato was not influenced by Moses (a favorite idea of Jewish and Christian Platonists).[60] In fact, Augustine opposed most of the Christian-Platonic tenets that would find their way into Mormonism: souls being co-eternal with God, expansive salvation (either universalism or near universalism; Augustine went so far as to promote predestination, and no hope of salvation for non-Christians) post-mortal progression, contact with the dead, Heavenly Mother, and Christian esotericism.

"Partly, though not entirely, under the influence of the controversy with Pelagius," argues Anthony Meredith, "a more somber, less Platonic understanding of human nature gathers force." Whereas Augustine had followed Plato and Plotinus in arguing that sin was simply error, Augustine now began to argue for sin as more real, a notion he solidified in his doctrine of "original sin." Augustine began to see sin as willfulness and pride, exhibited in

[58] Anthony Meredith, *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (London: T and T Clark, 2012), 119.
[59] Augustine, *City of God,* 8,5; 2.14.
[60] Clifford Ando, "Pagan Apologetics and Christian Intolerance in the Ages of Themistius and Augustine," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1996): 194-96.

the eating of the forbidden fruit. "It is a long way from the Platonic and Aristotelian visions of life where information leads to moral improvement and where no one willingly makes a mistake."[61] Though Meredith argues that Augustine did not advocate total depravity to the degree Luther and Calvin did, Allison Coudert labels the sixteenth century, the "age of Augustine" "because of the harsh and unflattering view of human nature prevailing among both Protestants and Catholics" at that time. Early modern Christian Platonists sought to overturn such a view of humans under the belief that man could be restore to his original purity in this life, a view that Smith also taught (Chapter Four).[62]

Furthermore, whereas Dionysius said that the Christian sacraments were theurgy, Augustine equated theurgy with goetia, or the rites of common magicians from which theurgists like Iamblichus worked hard to differentiate theurgy.[63] In *The City of God*, Augustine referred to

> incantations and formulae composed by an art of depraved curiosity which they either call magic or by the more detestable name goetia or by the honorable title theurgia. For they try to distinguish between these arts and condemn some men, whom the populace calls malefici, as devoted to illicit arts, for these, they say, are concerned with goetia; but others they want to make out praiseworthy as being engaged in theurgy. But they are both entangled in the depraved rites of demons who masquerade under the names of angels.[64]

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[61] Meredith, *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church,* 133-34.
[62] Allison P. Coudert, *Religion, Magic, and Science in Early Modern Europe and America* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011), xx-xxi.
[63] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature , 2003), 151, 187.
[64] Augustine, *City of God,* 10.9.

Such condemnation not only set the stage for condemnation of theurgical rites in the Middle Ages, but also highlights a fundamental difference between Augustine's and Smith's Christian Platonism. M. D. Chenu argues that theurgy was at the heart of the difference between the Platonism of Augustine and that of Dionysius. Chenu argues that for Augustine the idea of God as creator and God as savior "had been kept separate; and their separateness was reflected in the major distinction between nature and grace." That is, the divinity in the world was God's intervention, not so much nature itself. Dionysius, on the other hand, says Chenu, "was wholly theocratic and seemed to transplant into Christendom the theurgic prayer of Iamblichus…. The divinely willed predeterminations provided for within the system had nothing in common with the impromptu character of grace as Augustine conceived it."[65] Smith taught both the notion of a divine plan and the importance of the creation in that plan (Chapter Six), and the theurgic role of sacraments as a means for humans to fulfill their divine purpose (Chapters Four and Seven). Though Augustine was influenced by Platonism and was very influential in the West, he was not an important conduit for the Christian-Platonic ideas that influenced Smith. Just the opposite, "In flirting with ancient heresies," argues Peter Theusen, "especially Pelagius's denial of original sin and Origen's doctrine of pre-existence, Mormonism was in some ways simply the culmination of a much wider cultural rebellion against Augustinianism."[66]

Medieval Revival. The division between the Eastern and Western empires eventually resulted in the loss of Greek learning in the West, which meant that any texts that had not been translated into Latin were temporarily lost to the West. Half of the *Timaeus*

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[65] M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West,* ed. and trans. by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 85.
[66] Peter J. Thuesen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 130.

was the only one of Plato's works that had been translated by the time of the fall of the Western empire.[67] This text, however, would have a major influence on Platonism in the West all the way up to Joseph Smith.

Irishman John Scotus Erigena did learn Greek and translated Pseudo-Dionysius in the ninth century.[68] The major revival of Platonism, however, began in the twelfth century at the Chartres cathedral school in France that used both the *Timaeus* and Dionysius. The focus on *Timaeus* was part of a new view of the world, an attempt to understand it scientifically. "In the twelfth century, this dialogue was everywhere found in monastic and episcopal libraries" and citied by several authorities. "This was the first age, the golden age, of Platonism as such in the West," says M. D. Chenu, "an age which found in the *Timaeus* an entire physics, an anthropology, a metaphysics, and even a lofty spiritual teaching."[69] With the Reconquista in the eleventh century, Aristotle's writings became available to the West. Many Arabic commentaries on Aristotle were heavily Neoplatonic, such as those of Avicenna and the *Liber de causis*, a summary of Proclus's *Elements of Theology,* which was believed to be Aristotle's pinnacle work.[70] Several scholars wrote commentaries on the *Liber* and it was a principle text in the universities in the thirteenth century.[71] William of Moerbeke, a Latin bishop in Greece, translated a number of works, including some of Proclus's, in late thirteenth century.[72] In the fifteenth century, Ficino undertook a major translation of Platonic materials including the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the previously untranslated Neoplatonists

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[67] David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450.* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 38, 147-48.
[68] Jean Leclerq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works,* trans. by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1987), 26.
[69] Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century,* 11-13, 20-21, 30, 50, 65.
[70] Lindberg, *Beginnings of Western Science,* 226-29.
[71] Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 89-91.
[72] Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages* (1939, reprint; London: Warburg Institute, 1980), 18, 21.

Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Plotinus, and the rest of Plato and Proclus.[73] At that point, all the major Platonic texts had been translated into Latin.

Medieval Science and Alchemy. Platonism influenced the medieval West in a number of ways. Whereas "Augustine had tied procreation, Nature's great work, to original sin and had said nothing of Nature's other works," medieval scientists began to believe that man could control nature.[74] No science took this view more seriously than alchemy, whose practitioners were influenced by Proclus's *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. Paul of Taranto began his *Theoretica et practica* with a proem heavily dependent on the *Liber de causis.* Furthermore, alchemists, contra-Augustine, often taught that humans could restored to their state before the fall in this life, thereby giving humans control over nature.[75] "Whosoever therefore knows … that nature is subjected in universal to the superior intellect," asserted Paul of Taranto, "may easily observe that nature in particular is subjected to human intellect."[76] Medieval science and alchemy would have important influence on early modern theurgists like Cornelius Agrippa and John Dee, as well as mystics like Jacob Boehme and Jane Lead. "Alchemists were essentially a fifth column within every Christian denomination," argues Allison Coudert, "they carried forward the optimistic ideals of Renaissance Platonists into the age of the Enlightenment."[77]

Medieval scientists also appropriated the term "magic." "Magic" had long been condemned and by the Middle Ages, the term was usually used to either mean a series of rites usually associated with the pre-Christian religions or the improper use of rituals and

[73] Florian Ebeling, *Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus,* 60.
[74] Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century,* 45-46.
[75] William Newman, "Introduction" to *The Summa Perfectionis of Pseudo-Geber: A Critical Edition,* translation and study by William R. Newman (Leiden: Brill 1991), 29.
[76] Ebeling, *Secret History of Hermes,* 96; Newman, "Introduction," 26.
[77] Coudert, *Religion, Magic, and Science*, 164.

objects associated with the church.[78] Medieval scientists observed that there were unexplained wonders in nature and Roger Bacon (c. 1214-1294) argued that the "wise man" could learn to harness these powers. Bacon argued that the wise man was different than the magician: the wise man was pious and learned while the magician was unscientific and impious. Though not appropriating the term "magic" itself, Bacon did appropriate many of the concepts that contemporary and later thinkers would designate "magic." William of Auvergne (c. 1180-1249), bishop of Paris, coined the term "natural magic" to describe this phenomenon and natural magic essentially became a branch of science.[79] "Natural magic" demonstrates how this emic use of the term magic could overlap with the category of science, and natural magic set the stage for continued appropriation of the term magic in the early modern period.

Kabbalah. The rise of this form of medieval Jewish mysticism was also heavily influenced by Neoplatonism: a founding Kabbalistic text, the *Sefer Yezirah,* was influenced by Proclus and Kabbalah continued to draw on Neoplatonism generally.[80] Kabbalah influenced Christians from the Middle Ages onward and Christian Platonists became particularly fascinated with Kabbalah in the early modern period.[81] Particularly important for Mormonism was Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657), the Kabbalist whose quotations in John Allen's *Modern Judaism* had numerous similarities to Mormonism. Menasseh also played a

[78] C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 78, 90-96.
[79] Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 141-44, 21-22.
[80] Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Further Thoughts on the Origins of *Sefer yesirah*," *ALEPH: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 2 (2002): 203 n.7; Arthur Green, "Introduction," in *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1:xlii.
[81] Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 107-11.

significant role in promoting the idea that Native Americans were of Israelite descent, another major premise of the Book of Mormon.[82]

"Some [Christian Platonists] think that [Kabbalah] originated in the earlier and purer ages of the Jewish Church," noted Allen, "that various explications and interpretations were handed down, by oral tradition, from one generation to another; by which the faithful were taught the spiritual meaning of the legal ceremonies and types … that several of these divine truths, mingled, it is admitted, with many errors, are to be found in the cabbalistic writings."[83] Smith himself did not adopt Kabbalah wholesale, telling Robert Matthews in 1835 that belief reincarnation (an idea found in Kabbalah and other systems) "was of the Devil."[84] Smith maintained an interest in Jewish knowledge, however, hiring one Joshua Sexias to teach him and his followers Hebrew in 1836.[85] In 1841, Alexander Neibaur, a Jew-turned-Christian-turned-Mormon arrived from England and "went to work for J. Smith" nine days after his arrival; Neibaur knew several languages and tutored Smith in German and Hebrew.[86] Neibaur wrote an article on Jewish beliefs in the resurrection citing numerous Kabbalistic texts, notably Menasseh ben Israel's *Nishmat Hayyim,* a text that Allen cited frequently and that had numerous parallels to Mormonism in *Modern Judaism.*[87] As discussed in Chapter

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[82] Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1986), chapt. 3; "Menasseh ben Israel," jewishencyclopedia.com.
[83] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 85.
[84] Joseph Smith, Journal, November 10, 1835, josephsmithpapers.org. When discussing Jewish belief in reincarnation, Allen declared, "Porphyry, Jamblichus, Proclus, and others of the latter Platonists, from the third to the fifth centuries, were ashamed of the grosser parts of this dogma, and denied all migration into vegetables or even into brutes…. But while these Heathens were confining transmigration to human bodies, the Jews proceeded to extend it to things destitute of all life, animal or vegetable; thus, while they profess to derive their tenets from the volume of inspiration, yet in fact adopting and surpassing the absurdity of their heathen masters." Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 209.
[85] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 293.
[86] Lance S. Owens, "Joseph Smith and the Kabbalah: The Occult Connection," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 3 (1994): 174, 177.
[87] Alexander Neibaur, "The Jews," Times and Seasons 4 (June 1, 1843): 221. Allen writes the title of the book "Nishmath Chajim." *Modern Judaism,* 163, 166, 169, 183, 191, 199, 200, 204, 211. All references to the work came from John Peter Stehelin, *Rabinical Literature: Or, The Traditions Of The Jews, Contained in Their*

Six, Neibaur likely influenced some of Smith's terminology and biblical defenses of his theology. In the King Follett Discourse, one of Smith's most important sermons and the one that suggested Niebaur's influence, Smith declared the German Bible "to be the most correct that I have found & it corresponds the nearest to the rev[elatio]ns that I have given the last 16 y[ea]rs."[88] As Neibaur was Smith's German tutor and likely read the Bible in Kabbalistic ways (the King Follet Discourse suggested as much) Smith likely felt that such tutoring largely reiterated conclusions at which he had already arrived.

Medieval Theurgy. Theurgy followed the same paths into Europe that Christian Platonism did: Pseudo-Dionysius called the Christian sacraments theurgy and theurgical texts were translated from the Arabic like the *Picatrix*. Other theurgical text began to be written which incorporated the Christian liturgy like the *Ars Notoria* and the *Sworn Book* of Honorius.[89] Many church authorities condemned these texts as superstitious and attempting to perform rites to talk to angels was highly suspect because of the belief that the angel might be a demon in disguise. To prevent demonic deception, many theologians said talking to angels with unfamiliar names was heretical.[90] Despite these proscriptions, such texts had a major influence on early modern Christian Platonists/theurgists like Cornelius Agrippa and

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Talmud and other Mystical Writings (London 1748). William Hamblin, criticizing Lance Owen's above article, noted that the sources that Neibaur cited in the article could be found in Menasseh's *Nishmat Hayyim,* suggesting that Neibaur didn't need an extensive library of Jewish texts to write the article. William Hamblin, "'Everything is Everything:' Was Joseph Smith Influenced by Kabbalah?" *FARMS Review of Books* 8, no. 2 (1996): 297. But again, *Nishmat Hayyim*,was itself a very important Kabbalistic text.

[88] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 351.

[89] Claire Fanger ed., *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

[90] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 169.

John Dee who in turn would have a major influence on the dissemination of such ideas to Smith (see below).[91]

Medieval Mysticism. Dionysius had a major influence on Christian mystics as did Morebeke's translations of Proclus. Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler drew heavily on these writings: Tauler called Proclus "the great pagan master."[92] Eckhart taught the Platonic notion of the uncreated spark of the soul and also suggested human deification (Chapters Four and Six) and Eckhart and Tauler had a major influence on early modern mystics including Jacob Boehme. Such mystics influenced groups like the Quakers, and Boehme was a major influence on Jane Lead.

Kabbalah, science, alchemy, theurgy, and mysticism were the primary means, along with Platonic and Christian-Platonic writings themselves, by which Neo and Christian Platonism was available as the early modern period began. The following discusses ways in which Christian Platonism was disseminated in the early modern period and was made available to people like Smith.

Pendle Hill: Folk Christianity and the Democratization of Christian Platonism

After the Reformation, Christian Platonism filtered down to common people through the democratization of theurgical texts and mysticism. I use the religious culture in the area of Pendle Hill in Lancashire County, England, to illustrate the ways in which theurgical texts and mysticism could influence people like Smith. Furthermore, the Smiths engaged in folk

[91] Stephen Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations and the *Ars Notoria*: Renaissance Magic and Medieval Theurgy," in *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought,* ed. Stephen Clucas, (Springer Dordrecht, The Netherlands: 2010), 231-74

[92] Klibansky, *Continuity of the Platonic Tradition,* 18, 25-26; by Lucas Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 35; Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300-1500)* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1991), 243.

Christianity, the practices of those who continued folk medieval rites despite the Reformation. Such beliefs were prominent in this area of England and its practitioners open to the enchanted worldview of Christian Platonism because it rejected the disenchantment of the Reformation. Smith engaged in a number of folk rites and Mormonism had a number of Catholic elements including priesthood, intercession for the dead, miracles, and an elaborate rituals. Smith went so far as to say in his very last sermon that the "old Catholic church is worth more than all" relative to Protestantism.[93] The persistence of medieval practices, the prominence of cunning-folk, and the rise of Quakerism in the area all suggest ways that Christian Platonism tenets could make their way to and be accepted by common people.

Early Mormonism in the Pendle-Hill Area. In 1837 the first Mormon missionaries arrived in England and were immediately successful in Lancashire (see figure 1.1 for early Mormon success in England). One of the most remarkable incidents of Mormon success occurred at a little town called Chadburn near the border of Yorkshire at the base of Pendle Hill (figure 1.2). The missionaries began at Clitheroe where they baptized six people after their first sermon.[94] Later Kimball wanted to continue preaching to the north at Downham but was told by the some locals that "it was the worst place in the country; for the sectarian priest had preached there faithfully thirty years without making an impression."[95] Kimball went anyway and while at Downham, he was implored by Chadburn townsfolk to preach in their town where he baptized twenty-five people that same evening.[96]

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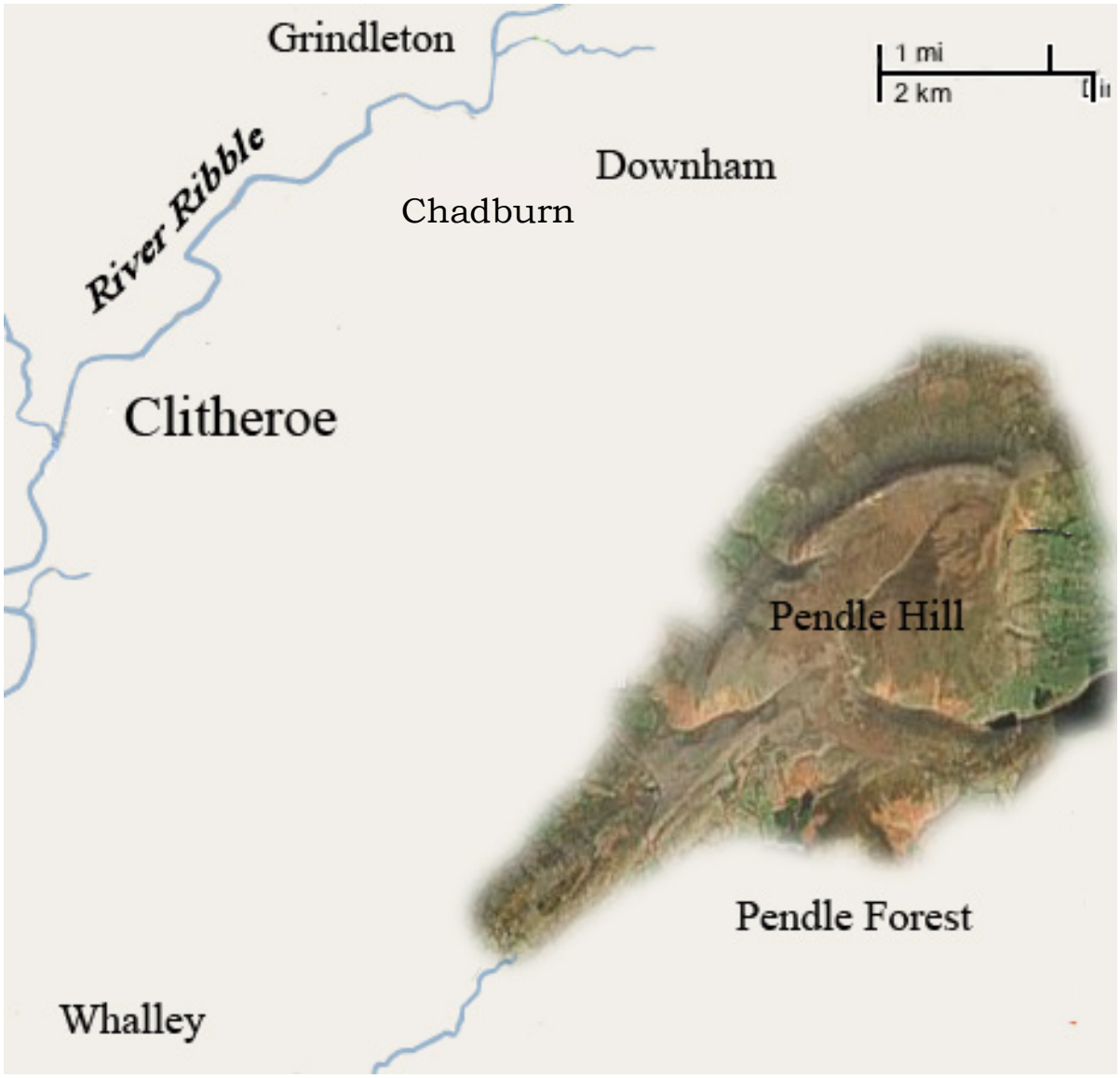
[93] June 16, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 381.
[94] James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837-1841* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 45.
[95] *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: England, 1854), 5:22.
[96] Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission,* 50; Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Heber C. Kimball: An Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Giving an Account of His Mission to Great Britain, and the Commencement of the Work of the Lord in that Land,* ed. R. B. Thompson (Nauvoo, Ill.: Robinson and Smith, 1840), 34.

Figure 1.1 Location and Size of Mormon Conferences in Great Britain, April 6, 1844[97]

[97] *Millennial Star* 4 (1845): 195. The line in the middle is calls the Wash-Severn line which divides the English North and West from the South and East based on Cedric Cowing, *The Saving Remnant: Religion and the Settling of New England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 13.

Figure 1.2 The Clitheroe, England, Area (see Clitheroe on figure 1.1)



This eagerness to join Mormonism suggested that something fortuitous was going on in the area in terms of Mormon receptivity. During Kimball's last visit to the area, he "walked down the street followed by numbers, the doors were crowded by the inmates of the houses to bid us a last farewell, who could only give vent to their grief in sobs and broken accents. While contemplating this scene we were induced to take off our hats, for we felt as

if the place was holy ground."[98] The locals seemed to particularly embrace the Mormon's supernaturalism: as Kimball's missionary companion reported, "Some of them said that if they could but touch us they seem better. They evidently believe that there is Virtue in Brother Kimball's Cloake."[99] Kimball later said, "My hair would rise on my head as I walked through the streets, and I did not know then what was the matter with me. I pulled off my hat, and felt that I wanted to pull off my shoes, and I did not know what to think of it." When Kimball told Joseph Smith of this experience, Smith replied, "Did you not understand it? That is a place where some of the old Prophets traveled and dedicated that land, and their blessing rested upon you."[100] The area did have a very interesting history that set the stage for the people's receptivity to Mormonism.

The North and West. Dubbed "the dark corners of the land" during the early modern period, much of the North and West of England was seen as backward compared to the South and East and the religious and cultural trends found at Whalley applied to much of that region.[101] The North and West were the most resistant to the Reformation, maintained folk Christianity, embraced supernaturalism and the religious groups that promoted such, including the Quakers, Methodists, and Mormons. Mormon missionaries were highly successful throughout the North and West (figure 1.1) and the evidence suggests that the American Mormon converts had a disproportionately high heritage from the English North and West.[102] These trends are discussed below in the context of Pendle Hill.

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[98] Kimball, *Journal,* 34.
[99] Quoted in Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission,* 51.
[100] *Journal of Discourses,* 5:22.
[101] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972, reprint; London: Penguin, 1991), 73-80
[102] Stephen J. Fleming, "The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism," *Church History* 77, no. 1 (2008): 73-104.

The Parish of Whalley. Pendle Hill was in the parish of Whalley, England's largest parish, containing more than twenty towns. Being so large created a different ecclesiastical structure than the parishes in southern England that averaged one parish per town. The parishioners of Whalley had less access to the parish church and would have had to rely more on chantries and monasteries for ecclesiastical services.[103] Larger parishes were found throughout England's North and West and may have played an important role in differing cultures between it and England's South and East.[104] The Pendle-Hill area, particularly the Pendle Forest, had a reputation for cultural backwardness, largely due to the famous witchcraft trials in the early seventeenth century (see below). In the introduction to the 1845 reprint of Thomas Potts's *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster,* James Crossley declared,

> The "parting genius" of superstition still clings to the hoary hill tops and rugged slopes and mossy water sides, along which the old forest stretched its length, and the voices of ancestral tradition are still heard to speak from the depth of its quiet hollows, and along the course of its gurgling streams. He who visits Pendle will yet find that charms are generally resorted to amongst the lower classes … that each locality has its haunted house; that apparitions still walk their ghostly rounds.[105]

The English Reformation. English historians engaged in a long debate over whether or not the English Reformation was popular, with scholars now generally agreeing that it was not.[106] The old religion remained popular in the North and West at the time of the

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[103] Michael F. Snape, *The Church of England in Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell, 2003).
[104] Dorothy Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 166–189.
[105] James Crossley, "Introduction," to Thomas Potts, *Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster* (Chetham Society, 1845), xliv-xlv.
[106] The major works that argued that the English Reformation was unpopular were Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping*

Reformation, particularly in Lancashire. Says Christopher Haigh, "For Lancashire to be backward in this respect, however, meant that pre-Reformation Catholicism was still strong in the county, so that the early sixteenth century found the old Church not at its nadir but at its high point."[107] The debate has now moved to the question of how Protestantism was imposed and how quickly it was accepted by the English people; yet for many English people, the destruction of the old religion was odious and many in the North and West resisted the imposition of Protestantism (see below).[108] Protestants outlawed many practices to which the people had long been attached: belief in miracles, protection against demons, prayers for the dead, holy objects, pilgrimage, particular funerals rites, the mass and so forth. As discussed below, many such practices continued in the folk religion in the North and West, particularly in the parish of Whalley. When the Mormons arrived proclaiming to have restored the power of the Bible, their message was enthusiastically received in the parish of Whalley.

Folk Christianity. Though Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth were able to impose legal Protestantism (though each faced major revolts, see below) the reform of the religion of the common people was more difficult. Many of the English became recusants, that is, Catholics who refused to attend English worship, but few of the common people had access to official Catholic rites (generally only the wealthy could do this).[109] Many such

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of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) and Christopher Haigh, *English Reformation: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[107] Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 65.

[108] Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994);
Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern* England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Peter Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[109] John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1975).

people maintained a kind of folk Christianity of folk rites and supernatural beliefs that lasted well into the nineteenth century (see below).

The Protestant clergy decried the religion of the masses as popish and magical and Catholics too sought to reform popular practice in the early modern era and had similar laments (though they didn't call the practices popish). Such laments were behind Jean Delumeau's famous argument that the common people had not actually been Christianized during the Middle Ages, but instead remained vaguely pagan. In the foreword to his *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire* (1971; English 1977), Delumeau declared, "The 'Christian Middle Ages,' as far as the (essentially rural) masses are concerned, is a legend which is being increasingly challenged. And if it is a legend, the two Reformations—Luther's and Rome—constituted, despite mutual excommunications, two complementary aspects of one and the same process of Christianization." On the eve of the seventeenth century, claimed Delumeau, the "climate of the people was characterized by a profound unfamiliarity with the basics of Christianity, and by a persistent pagan mentality with the occasional vestiges of pre-Christian ceremonial."[110]

Such an idea became popular, even influencing Jon Butler's award winning *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (1990) (which had implications for Mormon historiography, see below). Medieval and early modern scholars, however, have now overturned what has been termed the dechristization thesis. John Bossy and John Van Engan first challenged the notion,[111] but Eamon Duffy's monumental study of late medieval English religion, *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992), particularly rebutted Delumeau's

[110] Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation,* trans. by Jeremy Moiser (London: Burns and Oats, 1977), foreword, 176.
[111] John Bossy critiqued Delumeau in his introduction to Delumeau's *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire,* (vii-ix) and John van Engan "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," in the *American Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (1986): 519-52.

assertions. Said Duffy, "Any attempt to explain this dimension of late medieval piety in terms of pagan survivalism among the uneducated peasantry is misconceived. These prayers were clearly a manifestation of popular religion, but it was a popular religion which extended from the court downwards, encompassing both clerical and lay devotion." "This is not to suggest," said Duffy, "that all such actions remained within the bounds of orthodoxy…. Instead, they represent the appropriation and adaptation to lay needs and anxieties of a range of sacred gestures and prayers, along lines essentially faithful to the pattern established within the liturgy itself. This is not paganism, but lay Christianity."[112]

Yitzhak Hen's *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul* (1995), Richard Fletcher's *The Barbarian Conversion* (1997), and C. S Watkins's, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (2007) all argued that the "Christianization" of the common people occurred early in the Middle Ages. Said Hen, "Merovingian society, although recently converted, was clearly a Christian society, and liturgy became part and parcel of its culture." Furthermore, Hen argued, "There is no evidence to suggest that any of the pagan religions persisted beyond the fifth century…. Christianity crushed all sorts of religious systems which existed in Gaul even before the Frankish occupation."[113] In discussing early medieval conversions to Christianity, Fletcher asked, "What makes a Christian?" while noting that early medieval Christian writers believed that pre-Christian peoples who changed their rites to Christian ones had become Christian. Ultimately, argued Fletcher, the masses converted out of obedience to a new set of rituals: "There was nothing 'mere' about conduct for early

[112] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* 2d. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 278-79, 283.
[113] Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751* (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1995), 153, 160.

medieval men and women about the acceptance of a rite."[114] Watkins argued that in England there was a central/rural divide with the country people not likely hearing sermons at the cathedral very often. Yet Watkins asserted that rather than fostering the vestiges of paganism, it instead fostered local Christianities, as opposed to the universalizing attempt of the reformers. Official "teachings mingled in the localities with varied extra-ecclesial beliefs and practices which did not have their roots in the official." "It is not axiomatic," Watkins asserted, "that these [extra-ecclesial beliefs] were pagan, magical, unchristian, heretical or even heterodox so none of these labels will quite suffice." Watkins instead proposed to use the word "unofficial" instead. Furthermore Watkins argued that paganism simply did not survive into the central Middle Ages.[115]

Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons* (1997), while noting the criticism of Delumeau, added, "There is scarcely any doubt that 'Christianizing' was what reformers of all the major churches *thought* they were doing."[116] Beginning around 1400 at the University of Paris under their venerable chancellor Jean Gerson (1363-1429), late medieval reformers began to decry the "superstition" of the masses and set about to reform such practices.[117] In doing so, these reformers imposed their own definition of true Christianity in opposition to what the believed the benighted masses were doing; scholars like Delumeau have often implicitly accepted the reformers worldview.[118] As Fletcher argued, "The trouble is that the shrill

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[114] Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 65, 511-12, 515. Ultimately, says Fletcher, modern historians who have written on conversion have been too influence by William James for whom conversion was "intense and spiritual." Conversion for these people was "not about theology but about conduct and disposition." (514-15).
[115] C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 21, 78.
[116] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 530.
[117] Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.
[118] Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* 468.

denunciations of reforming rhetoric can easily conceal—sometimes intended to conceal—changing assumptions, expectations and definitions from view. Standards of observance have not been unvarying. It may be that historians of the Delumeau tendency have been culled by that rhetoric."[119] In the case of the English reformation, the reformers radically changed the standards of observance and much of the persistent folk Christianity in the centuries that followed indicated signs of the old religion.

What the late medieval and early modern reformers decried as the "superstition" and "magic" were the rites that the common people practiced. Christians had long condemned practices deemed magical but by the high Middle Ages such condemnations particularly focused on the improper use of ritual objects. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) decreed that local priests needed to keep a close watch on such objects and such rule persisted into the late Middle Ages. "The blessed water in the font was kept under lock and key to prevent its removal and use in magical rites," explains Eamon Duffy.[120] "Such fears about 'magical' uses of sacramental objects and substances suggest, paradoxically, how far Christian conceptions of the supernatural had come to saturate thought in the localities," argues C. S. Watkins.[121] The reforms of the late Middle Ages focused on "superstition," which argues Euan Cameron, "came to mean the worship of the true God by inappropriate and unacceptable means."[122] Superstition, explains Clark, "took on far more sinister connotations than anything deemed superstitious in modern behavior." While after the Enlightenment, superstition simply meant foolish behavior, in the late medieval and early modern periods,

[119] Fletcher, *Barbarian Conversion,* 511-12.
[120] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural,* 95; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* 280.
[121] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural,* 96.
[122] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe,* 4.

superstition had demonic connotations. By engaging in improper rites, common people had unknowingly invoked demons. Superstition, therefore, had to be rooted out.[123]

Again, following what Wouter Hanegraaff asserts about distinguishing between emic and etic categories when talking about magic (as well as superstition), the improper use of rites and ritual objects would best be described as "unofficial" Christianity, using Watkins's terminology. As Fletcher notes, the reformers often not only tried to *enforce* the proper rules, they were often engaged in *changing* those rules. Protestant reformers radically changed the rules and derided the common people who continued to practice vestiges of the old religion as superstitious and magical. Such followed what Ion Lewis calls "the well documented process by which today's religion (or ideology) reduced yesterday's religion to the status of magic, each successive religious vogue marginalizing its predecessor."[124] Such a dynamic highlights Durkheim's famous declaration, "There is no church of magic."[125] The official church does not see its own rites as magic; magic is by definition that which is outside of it. Here I refer to these unofficial rites as "extra-liturgical."

Noting that a number of scholars referred to the folk practices of out-of-the-way English people as "pagan," Michael Snape argues that in the parish of Whalley in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "The more conspicuous beliefs [of these people] could easily be accommodated within a broadly Christian, albeit non-Anglican, framework, many being survivals and developments of pre-Reformation beliefs…. Hybrid, heterodox and mutable folk Christianity may have been, but evidence from the parish of Whalley should

[123] Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* 477-79.
[124] Ion Lewis, *Religion in Context: Cults and Charisma,* 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 141.
[125] Cited in Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 165.

suggest that the primacy of its Christian component was both clear and emphatic."[126] The Smiths themselves were engaged in extra-liturgical rites and seeking to understand how the Smiths understood their activities is central to this dissertation.

Protestantism and Platonism. Protestants had attacked Christian Platonists from the beginning. Luther declared, "Dionysius is most pernicious; he platonizes more than he Christianizes." Though Calvin called Plato the "most religious and sober of the philosophers," he nonetheless went so far as to assert that Augustine, his favorite Father, was too Platonic, and condemned Dionysius for *curiositas*.[127] "But critics who investigated the Florentine agenda more closely," notes Hanegraaff, "were bound to discover a disconcerting truth: to a surprising extent, those paganizing heretics seemed to have the Fathers of the Church on their side!" "The implications proved far-reaching," Hanegraaff continues. "At stake was nothing less than the very nature and origin of Christianity, and the 'purity' of the Christian message." The solution for the anti-Platonists was to argue that the early fathers had corrupted the church with Platonism, an idea popular with Protestant scholars, argues Hanegraaff, "since it strongly suggested that Roman Catholicism and its dogmatic tradition as a whole might be exposed as a pagan perversion." Though some Catholics also attacked the fathers and Christian Platonism, "Protestants were overwhelmingly dominant in the anti-platonic camp."[128]

The primary attacks on Christian Platonism came from a series of seventeenth-century German Protestant scholars who "systematized the anti-pagan, anti-platonic and anti-

[126] Michael F. Snape, *The Church of England in Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell, 2003), 45, 71.
[127] Jean Leclerq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," in *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1987), 43.
[128] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 78, 94-96.

patristic perspectives … into a logically coherent narrative." Such scholars focused on what they argued was Platonism fundamental error, "its conviction that 'it is impossible for anything to be born out of nothing.' The true core of all pagan error was, in other words, its rejection of the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo,* in favor of *the eternity of the world.*" This error not only applied to the creation of the matter but also to souls or the belief that "souls or intelligences are not newly created by God but pour forth from his eternal essence." The belief in the eternity of souls, these scholars argued, led to the belief in personal revelation or "enthusiasm" as Protestants called it, because Platonists believed that the eternal, divine part of the soul (the nous, Chapter Six) could receive revelation. "Heresy," explains Hanegraaff, "could now be defined as any form of syncretism between Christianity (grounded in the doctrine of creation ex nihilo and strict biblical faith) and pagan philosophy (grounded in the doctrine of the eternity of the world and the pursuit of gnosis)."[129] In *Modern Judaism,* John Allen specifically denounced pre-existence, gnosis, and rejecting creation ex nihilo as Platonic.[130] Smith would embrace all of these tenets (Chapters Three and Six); again, Smith frequently embraced Platonic notions that Protestants condemned.

Resistance. The North and West of England were generally resistant to the English Reformation as demonstrated by a series of revolts throughout the sixteenth century and high rates of Catholic practice in the years after.[131] The parish of Whalley took part in the first revolt, the Pilgrimage of Grace, and had a local minister who essentially acted as a Catholic priest into the late sixteenth century; traditional rites continued at the local church into the

[129] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 102-7.
[130] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* v-vi, 78, 93. 190-94.
[131] A. G. Dickens, "The Early Expansion of Protestantism in England, 1520–1558," *Archive for Reformation History* 78 (1987): 187–222; Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions,* 5th ed. (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson, Longman, 2004).

seventeenth century.[132] "Within ten years of the accession of Elizabeth," notes Christopher Haigh, "Lancashire had acquired the reputation for a more vigorous resistance to official attempts to impose the new religion than any other county in England." In Lancashire, "It was widely felt that there was not much to commend a religion which did not provide the full sacrament for the solace of the living and prayers for the dead."[133] Ronald Hutton demonstrates that many aspects of the medieval liturgical cycle survived well into the nineteenth century, including rituals associated with Candlemas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter.[134] Most striking were the survivals from All Saints: particularly in the North, the English continued to ring bells, light bonfires, and give out cakes to the poor as rituals to aid the souls of the dead.[135] As mentioned, early Mormonism had a number of Catholic traits, which had persisted in folk Christianity and the rites of the cunning-folk.

The Cunning-Folk. In the early seventeenth century, the Pendle-Hill area was the site of what became England's most famous witchcraft trial because Thomas Potts printed the trial proceedings as *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (1612), and William Harrison Ainswroth later wrote a novel about the events: *The Lancashire Witches: A Romance of Pendle Forest* (1849). Called the Pendle witches, two cunning women, who went by the names Old Chattox and Old Demdike, were accused of killing cattle, harming people, and other malicious acts.[136] The cunning-folk were experts in the supernatural and Joseph Smith also claimed to have folk supernatural gifts, particularly

[132] Mullet Michael. "The Reformation in the Parish of Whalley" in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* Robert Poole ed., (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2002), 94. This occurred because the bishop was supportive and turned a blind eye despite numerous complaints. Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 217-18, 223.
[133] Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance,* 222, 221.
[134] Ronald Hutton, "The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore," *Past and Present* 148 (August 1995): 89–116.
[135] Hutton, "Evidence of Folklore," 104–8.
[136] Edgar Peel and Pat Southern, *The Trials of the Lancashire Witches* (New York: Taplinger, 1969).

"seeing" (Chapter Two). With their claims of supernatural gifts and the continued use of the Catholic rites, the cunning-folk were part of the popular resistance to the Reformation.

Medieval authors wrote numerous treatises against witchcraft but made a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable practices. Late medieval reformer Johannes Nider (c. 1380-1438) told a story in his famous anti-witchcraft treatise, *Formicarius* (1437), that illustrates the point.[137] A man suffering from a foot injury that he believed was the result of witchcraft had tried several "illicit" cures but to no avail. Finally he turned to his friend "Seriosa," who was known as a skilled healer. "She made the sign of the cross over him, whispered certain words, and immediately his foot was healed. Impressed by her power, yet not recognizing how she had actually cured him, he asked what 'incantations' she had used." Seriosa then rebuked the man for assuming she had used spells to heal him. "'Whether from weak faith or feebleness,' she addressed him severely, 'you don't adhere to the holy and approved rites of the church.'"[138] Seriosa's healing, Nider intoned, was orthodox Christianity. What is interesting about the story is that while Nider, an ardent opponent of witchcraft, approved of Seriosa's healing, Protestants certainly would have called it witchcraft. "Better that a bewitched child should die, thought the [Protestant] clergy, than that his life should be saved by a cunning man," Keith Thomas asserts.[139] Again, the medieval church had allowed the laity to engage in approved rites to invoke divine aid and the story of Seriosa suggests that some people were better at such acts than others. That is,

[137] Michael D. Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft Heresy and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 129-31.
[138] Michael D. Bailey, "The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early Modern European Witchcraft Literature," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 2 (2006): 389.
[139] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 265.

the cunning-folk continued this medieval invoking tradition; old Demdike was also a healer.[140]

In addition to healing, the cunning-folk were often experts in interacting with spirits. In her study of Scottish cunning-folk, Emma Wilby argues that such spirits, often called fairies or familiars, could be a wide range of spiritual entities, most often the dead. Wilby argues that interactions with familiars was fundamentally religious and compares such beliefs to more orthodox practices: "From this perspective, a Christian contemplative at her prayers who hears the voice of Jesus … in response to her supplications, could be said to be communicating with her spiritual guide." Ultimately, the practices of the cunning-folk, says Wilby, "could be interpreted as expressions of a popular mysticism."[141] Demdike had familiar named Tib and Chattox said that her familiar first appeared as "a thing like a Christian man" and called him Fancie.[142] Some of the Smiths' neighbors said that Smith's parents said that Smith had a "genius," or a kind of spirit guide, and Smith said that the angel Moroni, who showed him where the golden plates were buried, was a dead man (Chapter Two). Beliefs in such beings were particularly targeted in English and Scottish witchcraft trials and fairy belief was particularly ridiculed after the witchcraft trials ended.[143] However, early modern grimores continued to list rites for invoking spirit beings; I argue in Chapter Two that Smith may have used a particular ritual on the night he said he was visited by Moroni.

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[140] Peel and Southern, *Trials of the Lancashire Witches,* 21.
[141] Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2005) 16-17, 220, 217.
[142] Peel and Southern, *Trial of the Lancashire Witches,* 28-30.
[143] Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*; John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

In the words of Keith Thomas, "The Anglican Church had rejected holy water, the sign of the cross, and all the paraphernalia of the Roman Catholic exorcists, but they had nothing to put in their place." Thus many turned to cunning-folk: "Devout Catholics could pray to St Vincent or St Anthony of Padua for the recovery of goods which had been lost or stolen; Protestants only had the cunning man." The English clergy not only complained about the cunning-folk but they also complained about the common people's devotion to them. A character in George Gifford's *Dialogue Concerning Witches* (1593) said of a wise woman, "She doeth more good in one year than all these scripture men will do so long as they live." Ultimately, argues Thomas, "The attempt by theologians to wipe out the distinction between black and white witches by branding them both as diabolical never got through to the people to whom these witches ministered. On the contrary, they were more likely to believe that the cunning folk were taught by God, or that they were helped by angels, or even that they possessed some divinity of their own."[144] Says Owen Davies, "People could not understand why cunning-folk should be condemned for putting their biblical knowledge to beneficial use. From a popular point of view, they were only doing what the Anglican Church should have been doing more of—using the power invested in the Bible for practical as well as spiritual purposes." "In the nineteenth century," Davies continues, "clergymen continued to complain that people considered the charms provided by cunning-folk and charmers as somehow holy."[145]

Keith Thomas argues, "The conjurer's ritual, moreover, with its hallowings, fumigations and consecrations, was strongly reminiscent of the Roman Mass as many

[144] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 285, 264-66. Though "witches" isn't the rite term for these people.
[145] Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003) 62.

commentators pointed out."[146] "Leaving aside such partisan criticisms and expressions of intolerance," Owen Davies notes,

> there was an element of truth in the claimed association between cunning-folk and Catholicism. In their use of certain elements of prayer, exorcism and holy objects, cunning-folk borrowed from Catholic practices, not only at the time but also in subsequent centuries. Protestant suspicions were confirmed by the activities of people like Henry Clegate of Headcorn, brought before a Kent church court for curing bewitched people and cattle by repeating prayers and the creed. He confessed he had been taught to do so many years before by his mother and a neighbouring priest.[147]

Such overlap between the rites of the cunning-folk and Catholicism was prominent in Lancashire. One Thomas Hope, who was brought up on charges of healing in Lancashire in 1638, said that an uncle had taken him to Rome as a child where "he was washed in a chamber of water by virtue of which water he hath helped horses, beasts, and sondrie children," all of which he did "by the name of Jesus."[148] As Davies notes, such practices continued for centuries. In his 1845 introduction to Potts's *Wonderful Discovery of Witches,* James Crossley declared that in the Pendle Forest, "Each small hamlet has its peculiar and gifted personage, whom it is dangerous to offend; that the wise man and wise woman (the white witches of our ancestors) still continue their investigations of truth, undisturbed by the rural police or the progress of the schoolmaster." Crossley also claimed that locals demanded medieval rites from the clergy: "And little would his reputation of piety avail that clergyman in the eyes of his parishioners, who should refuse to lay those 'extravagant and

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[146] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 267-68.
[147] Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, 36.
[148] Kirsteen Macpherson Bardell, "Beyond Pendle: The 'Lost' Lancashire Witches," in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories,* ed. Robert Poole (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2002), 105, 116.

erring spirits,' when requested, by those due liturgic ceremonies which the orthodoxy of tradition requires."[149] A late nineteenth-century folklorist said that in the Pendle Forest, "Even the wives of clergymen have been known to consult 'wise men' on doubtful matters respecting which they desired more satisfactory information."[150] Early Mormonism demonstrated a blend of Catholic beliefs, exorcism, and folk rites.

Grimoires. A major element in the democratization of Neoplatonism was the grimoires or magic books that contained information on how to perform certain rites, which, by the seventeenth century, the cunning-folk increasingly used.[151] Such rites drew heavily on Neoplatonism and scholars have begun to call many of those rites theurgy.[152] Such books also continued to be written in the early modern period, perhaps the most important of which was Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy.* Agrippa said there were three categories of magic: natural, celestial (astrology), and ceremonial (theurgy). Though Agrippa's ceremonial magic was theurgical, Agrippa didn't use that word but instead called it "that part of magic which teacheth us to know and presently understand the rules of religion, and how we ought to obtain the truth by divine religion, and how rightly to prepare our mind and spirit, by which only we can comprehend the truth." Like theurgy "holy religion purgeth the mind, and maketh it divine, it helpeth nature, and strengtheneth natural powers, as a physician helpeth the health of the body."[153] Thus ceremonial magic for Agrippa was fundamentally religious. Not only that, argues Wouter Hanegraaff, for Agrippa, magic

[149] Crossley, "Introduciton," xlv.
[150] John Harland and T. T. Wilkinson, *Lancashire Folk-Lore* (1882, reprint; E. P.: East Ardsley: U.K., 1973), 165.
[151] Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), 119.
[152] Claire Fanger, ed. *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).
[153] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, 441.

was the *prisca theologia,* or the wisdom of the ancient sages.[154] Early modern scholars drew on a line from Plato for both of these notions: magic as ancient wisdom and religion. In the *Alcibiades*, Plato described the education of Persian princes, which included instruction from the "royal tutors." The first tutor, said Plato, "instructs him in the worship of their gods, the Magian lore of Zoroaster."[155] Sir Walter Raleigh declared in his *History of the World* (1614), "And, as *Plato* affirmeth, that the art of magic is an art of worshipping of God," a line that was repeated in both Hardick Warren's, *Magick and Astrology Vindicated* (1651) and Robert Turner's introduction to the spurious *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* (1655).[156]

Thus "magic" was not only used as a term of derision but was appropriated by those involved in the extra-liturgical rites found in the grimoires. The grimoires themselves often referred to the practitioners of the rites as magicians. Reginald Scot, who generally denounced such practices declared, "A magician is indeed that which the Latines call a wise man, as *Numa Pompilius* was among the Romans; the Greeks, a philosopher, as *Socrates* was among them; the *Aegeptians* a preest, as *Hermes* was; the Cabalists called them prophets."[157] Jane Lead referred to "Wisdom's Divine Magicians" and was probably doing performing extra-liturgical rites (see below).[158] Dobson's encyclopedia declared, "The word *magic* originally carried a very innocent, nay laudable meaning; being used purely to signify the study of wisdom, and the most sublime parts of knowledge," and only later became

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[154] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 176.
[155] Plato, *Alcibiades* 121e-122a. The authenticity of the *Alcibiades* is debates but was considered authentic to early modern thinkers.
[156] Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London, 1614), in *The Works of Sir Walter Ralegh* (sic), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1829), 2: 382; Hardick Warren, *Magick and Astrology Vindicated* (1651), quoted in Quinn, *Magic World View*, 10; Cornelius Agrippa, [pseud.] *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy,* trans. Robert Turner, ed. Donald Tyson (1655, reprint; Woodbury, Minn.: Llewellyn, 2009), 9.
[157] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nocholson (1584, reprint; London, 1886). 236. The term was particularly used in the appendix to the third addition, particularly for magic circles (471-74) and the genius ritual (483-84), rites that the Smiths likely engaged in (Chapter Two).
[158] Jane Lead, *The Tree of Faith or The Tree of Life, Springing up in the Paradise of God from Which All the Wonders of the New Creation, in the Virgin Church of the First born of Wisdom Must Proceed* (London: J. Bradford 1696), 116.

"odious."[159] What Smith thought of the word is hard to know: the Book-of-Mormon's two uses of "magic" were both negative but Smith's mother, Lucy, said the family was engaged in a number of extra-liturgical rites including "drawing magic circles" (Chapter Two).[160] Whatever Smith himself thought of the word, scholars need to keep in mind Hanegraaff's emic/etic distinction. Lucy said the family drew magic circles and performed other rites generally deemed magical to "remmember [sic] the service & welfare of our souls."[161] From Lucy's point of view, these rituals acts were salvific, that is, she used the term as Agrippa and Raleigh had. If Smith applied the word magic to these rites, he likely would have done so from the same perspective as his mother.

Grimoires were a major source through which Neoplatonism became democratized. Owen Davies argues that knowledge of grimoires by common people began at the end of the Middle Ages but really took off during the seventeenth century because of increased literacy and the loosening of censorship during the English interregnum. The most important grimoires, argues Owen Davies, were Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* particularly the third edition which included additional material published in 1665 and James Freake's translation of Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (1651) both of which had numerous Mormon similarities.[162] The Smiths also engaged in treasure digging, which involved supernatural beings and the grimoires were seen as essential in such activities.[163] The descendants of Smith's older brother Hyrum possess three lamens, or papers with ritual

[159] "Magic," in *Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 11:413.
[160] Mormon 1:19; 2:10; Lucy Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," LDS archives, in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:285.
[161] Lucy Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:285.
[162] Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40, 64, 70; Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), 121, 125. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 227.
[163] Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 92.

writings on them, that Michael Quinn argues were owned by Smith's family. Quinn also traced the writings on the lamens to particular grimoires.[164] Critics of Quinn argued that the grimoires were expensive and that the Smiths could not have owned them, but Owen Davies noted, "Quinn's thesis does not stand or fall on the basis that Smith owned copies of Scot and Sibly, since extracts from all three were to be found in the manuscript grimoires and charms kept by some English cunning-folk and in those sold by the London occult dealer John Denley. It is quite likely that some of those found their way to America where they were copied once again."[165]

Furthermore, the similarities between the descriptions of Smith's visit by the angel Moroni and a ritual described in the third edition of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* suggests additional contact with that book. One of the roles of theurgy was to discover whom ones genius was, and Scot's third edition described how to perform such a ritual (Chapter Two). That these themes showed up in the Smith family's religiosity indicates that grimoires were a means by which Neoplatonic concepts influenced common people.

Quakers. One of the most prominent events in the Pendle-Hill area occurred on Pendle Hill itself. In 1652, George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of Quakerism, traveled to the area from his home in Leicestershire and felt impressed to climb Pendle Hill. "There atop the hill I was moved to sound the day of the Lord; and the Lord let me see atop of the hill in what places he had a great people to be gathered."[166] Many mark the event as the beginning of Quakerism as Fox soon began converting those in the valley. In nearby

[164] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 104-14.
[165] Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 152.
[166] George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox.* 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Marcus T. C. Gould,1831),1:140.

Grindleton, the local curate Roger Brearly (1586-1637) had formed a group called the Grindletonians, precursors to the Quakers in many ways.[167]

The Quakers taught the importance of the inner light, an idea similar to a number of early modern radicals (Sebatian Frank, Caspar Schwenckfeld, Valentine Weigel, Hans Denck) who were influenced by the late medieval mystics Eckhart and Tauler.[168] The Christian-Platonic critics argued that the notion of the inner word was the same as the Platonic nous and highlighted the Quakers as a group that taught such a concept. Said Johann Christoph Adelung (1732-1806) "At bottom, this entire dream is nothing else but the old system of emanation… [that] has been continued by the Platonic and Kabbalistic philosophy…. The inner light, or as the Quaker and mystic calls it, the Christ in us, is then nothing else but the imagination, which according to such enthusiasts is the true divine soul."[169] A footnote to the encyclopedia entry on Origen said, "It is probable that the mystic theology of modern Quakers and other sects is derived from Origen."[170] The inner light did have some similarity to Christian-Platonic mystical notions; one of Smith important early followers, Martin Harris, had a Quaker heritage and Palmyra had a Quaker monthly meeting.[171]

The Enlightenment. While seventeenth-century German Protestant scholars condemned Plato and the early fathers, their eighteenth-century counter parts embraced philosophy by arguing that reason and revelation or philosophy and religion were fundamentally distinct categories. One should not use philosophy "to try to fathom the

[167] Hill, *World Turned Upside Down,* 81-85.
[168] Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
[169] Quoted in Hanegraaff, *Estoericism and the Academy*, 137.
[170] "Origen," *Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:492.
[171] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 32.

nature of the revealed mysteries about which God's Word keeps silent," as the Platonic fathers had done. Those who sought to mix philosophy and religion, like the Christian Platonists, corrupted both. The Platonic ideas that fell in between religion and philosophy were rejected as false including Neoplatonism, Kabbalah, alchemy, and mysticism. All these were lumped together in a single category of what would become Western esotericism, which became "the negative counterpart of both reason and faith, and therefore could not claim to remain a legitimate part of the history of either…. From now on, they began to vanish from the textbooks of history of philosophy and church history, where they still have the status of mere footnotes today." "Academic elites abandoned the field [of Western esotericism] almost completely," Hanegraaff continues. "As a result, it became the domain of amateur scholars."[172]

Furthermore, argues Hanegraaff, the beliefs that fell into this in-between category were often labeled "superstition," "magic," and "occult," and although these terms "have long histories, they were essentially reinvented during the period of the Enlightenment, in such a manner that they could serve to demarcate 'the Other of science and rationality.'" Those who continued to believe in God's active presence in the world were often ridiculed either as enthusiasts or "superstitious." Whereas in the Middle Ages, superstition had meant engaging in improper rites and thus had demonic overtones, in the Enlightenment superstition came to simply mean foolish beliefs. Hanegraaff argues, however, that such polemics were part of the same agenda of getting Christian Platonists and common people to stop interacting with spiritual entities. Enlightenment thinkers saw such beliefs as essentially pagan, which they defined as a "long-standing weakness for imagining the presence of spiritual realities in nature." For Protestants, argues Hanegraaff, "this was an extremely

[172] Hanegraaaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 109, 128, 131, 147, 154.

attractive perspective, for it allowed them to align themselves with scientific progress in a joint campaign to finish the job of purifying Christianity from its ancient nemesis." Yet now these thinkers used a particular tool for the task. "Enlightenment thinkers hardly bothered to refute 'superstitious' beliefs. They had discovered a simple and much more effective tool to rid the world of invisible spirits: ridicule."[173]

Similarly, Randall Styers argues that the term "magic," became the "other" of modernity for Enlightenment and modern thinkers. From the Enlightenment forward, argued Styers, scholarly definitions of magic "have functioned to delimit religion in a manner that renders it increasingly extraneous to modern culture. Whether framed as a policy against all beliefs in the supernatural or merely as a polemic advocating certain narrow religious norms, scholarly arguments against magic have commonly prescribed an increasingly limited role for religion…. The dominant theories of magic have regularly served to untether religion from life in the material world." Furthermore, argues Styers, "magic" was a way to describe the practices of the folk and non-Europeans as well. "The scholarly discourses on magic have regularly conformed to the interests of the dominant classes of Europe and America seeking to regulate and control both their colonial possessions and their domestic populations, especially the troublesome groups on the margins of society."[174]

Describing Folk Christianity and Western Esotericism. Thus when scholars began to study the beliefs and practices of "the troublesome groups on the margins of society," they were hampered by problematic terminology. If one applies terms like "magic" or "occult" to historical practices, argues Hanegraaff, one runs the risk of "anachronistic distortions, because Enlightenment preoccupations are thereby projected upon materials that

[173] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 157, 163-64.
[174] Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10-11, 16.

have very little to do with them."[175] Scholars therefore need to strip away this terminology when studying the past.

While scholars seldom use "superstition," "magic" and "occult" still remain popular and have been central to the ways in which scholars have described the Smith family's folk activities. Michael Quinn labeled his magisterial study of the Smith's folk supernaturalism *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* and Jon Butter drew heavily on Quinn when discussing Mormonism in his *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People.* In describing such unorthodox practices in the American colonies, Butler applied Jean Delumeau's dechristianization paradigm to the American colonies: "Christianization—meaning a regular if not vigorous attachment to Christian institutions, theologies, and norms—was in a crisis that continued unabated as Europeans poured out of the Old Word into the New." In addition to Christianity, argued Butler, "Magic, astrology, and divination—what detractors then (and moderns now also) called the occult—thrived as well."[176] Yet as Hangraaff argues, "occult" was not a subculture of belief, "rather, they are the reflection of intellectual traditions that have become unfamiliar to us."[177] Butler claimed that in the nineteenth century, "A dramatic American religious syncretism … wedded popular supernaturalism with Christianity"—thus asserting that "popular supernaturalism" was not "Christian." One of Butler's chief examples of the blending of "popular supernaturalism" and "Christianity" was Mormonism because of Smith's involvement with folk practices (what Butler labeled "occult") and belief in miracles.[178] Brooke used the terms "magic" and "occult" in *Refiner's Fire*, and Richard Bushman declared that "ordinary people

[175] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 157.
[176] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 8-9.
[177] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 191.
[178] Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith,* 226, 243-45.

apparently had no difficulty blending Christianity with magic" and that "magic and religion melded in Smith family culture," when discussing the Smiths' folk practices.[179] Again, this dissertation adopts Hanegraaff's method of restricting words like "magic" and "occult" to emic terms in order to explore how the Smiths understood their beliefs and actions.

The religious culture of Pendle Hill contained many of the leftovers that Protestantism and the Enlightenment hoped to eradicate: blatant supernaturalism, wariness of Protestantism, extra-liturgical rites, and belief in continuing revelation. Scholars like Yates, Quinn, Butler, and Brooke played essential roles in unearthing such practices, but as scholarship continues to work to remove the Protestant and Enlightenment labeling of such acts, we will better understand how the practitioners viewed their beliefs. Doing so helps to explain the Mormons' success in the Pendle-Hill area.

Jane Lead's Circle

While the Smiths' folk Christianity suggests ways in which they may have encountered certain aspects of Christian Platonism, the influence of the late seventeenth-century visionary, Jane Lead (1624-1704), suggests additional and more direct ways in which Christian Platonism influenced Smith. The similarities between the visions and practices of Lead and those of Smith are so numerous and striking as to warrant considerable attention in this dissertation. John Dee may have influenced both Lead and Smith, but most of the possible connections between Lead and Smith likely came through people that Lead influenced: Andrew Michael Ramsay, Freemasonry, the German Baptists or Dunkers, and Emmanuel Swedenborg. I refer to this group as Lead's "circle" meaning her circle of

[179] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 50-51.

influence. On the whole, Lead's circle provides some of the best explanations for how Christian Platonism influenced Smith.

John Pordage. Pordage (1607-1681) was a controversial English clergyman who organized a small group of followers in the 1640s that he called the "family" and used various undescribed techniques that Pordage called "experimental" for contacting angels and ascending to the heavens. Pordage was brought up on trial in 1651 and 1654 and was accused of saying that married couples should not engage in sex while at the same time engaging in free love; Pordage was deprived of his living after 1654. He met Jane Lead in 1663 and she joined Pordage's following in 1668. Pordage encouraged Lead to write and publish her revelations; he died in 1681.[180]

Pordage and his followers were heavily influenced by the writings of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), a sixteenth-century German mystic who was influenced by the same group of early modern mystics that influenced the Quakers and who drew upon Eckhart and Tauler.[181] Pordage's writings indicate the influence of Platonism and also the alchemical imagery used by Boehme; Jane Lead's writing would also show this tendency. Pordage was also likely influenced by John Dee. Pordage was associated with Thomas Browne and Elias Ashmole (1617-1692) both of whom were associated with John Dee's son Arthur Dee (1579-1651). Ashmole was particularly connected to both of the Dees, possessing several of John's manuscripts and translating Arthur's alchemical *Fasciculus Chemicus* into English. Brian Harris argues that Dee's angel invocations may have influenced Pordage's "experiments."[182]

[180] Harris, "Theosophy of Jacob Boehme," 111, 140-43.
[181] Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 17, 130, 148.
[182] Harris, "Theosophy of Jacob Boehme," 114, 125-29.

Lead and Pordage both referred to receiving revelation in a "glass," similar to how Dee's scryers received revelation.[183]

John Dee. Dee (1527-1608) the English mathematician and scholar who turned to angel invoking in the 1580s, likely influence both Lead and Smith. Dee employed scyrers, most notably Edward Kelley (1555-1597), to look into Dee's seer stones (particularly his black "shew-stone" that Dee said he received from angels) in order to speak with angels. Kelley would dictate what he saw and heard in the shew stone and Dee recorded the conversations in his spirit diary. Meric Casaubon (1599-1671) published the diary in 1659 by as a warning against those who might attempt such practices.[184] As described in the introduction, Dee was central to Francis Yates's arguments about the importance of hermetism in early modern Europe and later scholarship on Dee dealt with Yates's assertions. The important point in this context is that Neoplatonism was central to Dee's thought and that Dee drew upon both medieval science and medieval theurgical texts for that Neoplatonism.

That Dee drew upon and used medieval theurgy is important considering Dee's likely influence on Smith; whereas most of the influences on Lead would not have influenced Smith directly, Dee may have done so. Dee's ideas that were similar to Smith's are almost all found in Dee's published spirit diary. These similarities include both of them using a seer stone—Dee was perhaps the most famous seer-stone user—and both of them writing books dictated by a person using a seer stone. In fact, Dee is the only person I have found who did this before Smith (Chapters Two and Three). Both made numerous references to Enoch in

[183] Harris, "Theosophy of Jacob Boehme," 175; Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out be a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), [2], 13, 27, 37.
[184] John Dee, *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Yeers* [sic] *between Dr. John Dee … and Some Spirits*, ed. Meric Casaubon (London, 1659).

their revelations and both had revelations that said Enoch was a seer (Chapter Four). Both were commanded by God to engage in the highly unorthodox marriage practices and both were threatened by angels to comply. The angels commanded Dee and Kelley to have all things in common including their wives and I argue in Chapter Five that Smith engaged in what I call "composite marriage" where men *and* women could have multiple spouses. In Plato's *Republic*, wives were shared. Perhaps the most striking similarities between the Smiths and Dee are found in Smith's father's dreams that his mother, Lucy, recorded. Lucy recalled seven of her husband's dreams, all of which had similarities to visions that Dee recorded in his published spiritual diary (Chapter Two).

Dee's spirit diary may have circulated in the same circles as the grimoires that influenced the Smiths. John Denly, the same London book dealer that Owens Davies said sold grimoires (cited above), also had Dee's spirit diary for sale in 1820.[185] Davies's statement that such grimoires could have influenced the Smiths because they circulated among cunning-folk could apply to Dee's spirit diary as well. Furthermore, some of the grimoires that were sources for the Smiths' lamens mentioned Dee and his spirit diary. For instance Ebenezer Sibly's *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences* said, "A full account of [Dee's] conversation and intercourse with spirits, is now extant, written with his own hand, and esteemed a very curious and singular performance."[186] Francis Barrett's *The Magus* reported, "But what will give most light upon this subject, is a book, now extant, wrote by Dee, entitled Dee's Conferences with Spirits….. This book is truly curious in respect of the many magical operations there displayed, it being wrote journal-fashion by the Doctor's own hand, and relates circumstantially the conferences he held with some spirits

[185] Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 138-39.
[186] Ebenezer Sibly, *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences* (London, 1790), 2:1099.

(either good or bad)."[187] These grimoires referenced Dee's spirit diary in ways that cunning-folk would have found appealing: "very curious" and "truly curious." Such people would likely have wanted to read it and Denly's book list indicates that it was available.

The Cambridge Platonists. Plato and the early church fathers were popular among the Cambridge Platonists of the late seventeenth century, the leaders of which included Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, and Lady Anne Conway. Thus these ideas were prominent in certain circles in Lead's era. A critic of Lead's argued that Pordage had written Lead's works because "there are many things ingredient in [Lead's] style, which are quite out of the way of the education, or conversation, or even reading of women," including "the old Platonic mystical divinity."[188] Such a claim missed the mark particularly since many of the leading Cambridge Platonists were women, but the remark does indicate the prominence of Platonism in Lead's writings. The Cambridge Platonists also had major influence on Lead's follower Andrew Michael Ramsay, whose *The Travels of Cyrus* was heavily influenced by Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678).[189]

The Philadelphians. Lead was born to a gentry family from Norfolk in 1624 and was given a good education.[190] Lead met Pordage in the 1660s and her own visions started shortly after the death of her husband in 1670. Pordage encouraged Lead to publish her visions; Lead published her first book, *The Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking*, in 1681, the year Pordage died. In 1694 Oxford-educated Francis Lee met Lead and introduced her to his

[187] Francis Barrett, *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer* (London, 1801), book 2:196.
[188] Harris, "Theosophy of Jacob Boehme," 152-53.
[189] G. D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1952),114-15; Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* x.
[190] Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: UK: Ashgate, 2005), 13-15.

colleague Richard Roach, which marked the beginning of the Philadelphian movement. Lead published more of her works and began to attract more followers.[191]

Lead reported numerous visions with abundant Platonic motifs and vocabulary. Lead's writings also suggests extensive influence from Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Origen was revived by the Cambridge Platonists who began to hint at the idea of universal salvation. Cudworth and More asserted that they did not believe in universal salvation, but Anne Conway, did as did the author of the anonymous *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen* (1661) who was probably George Rust. The *Letter* was the first early modern work to advocate for universal salvation in print but Jane Lead's *Enochian Walks with God* (1694) was the first work to declare universal salvation openly.[192] While it is unclear to what degree Lead influenced the later development of Universalism in which the Smith family was involved, Universalism was a similarity between Lead and Smith.[193]

A couple of unusual ideas that Clement of Alexandria taught also show up in Lead's writings. Clement taught there were eight heavens and that the eighth was a return to the beginning: in *The Wonders of God's Creation* Lead said there were eight "worlds" but also said that the eighth world was a return to the beginning.[194] Clement also taught that there were seven "gods," or what Clement called *protoctists* just below the Trinity and Lead saw "seven spirits" in heaven and was told they were "equal with the Trinity." Both Clement's

[191] D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 219-21.
[192] Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 9-10.
[193] Smith ended up promoting near-universalism, or the idea that almost all would be saved eventually. Universalism, however, had important parallels with Smith's revelations (Chapter Four).
[194] Clement referred to the "eighth grade" of heaven in *Stromata,* 6.14; see also Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 451. Jane Lead, *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, In the Variety of Eight Worlds* (London, 1695), 19-25, 40-41.

protoctists and Lead's seven spirits also worked to aid lower beings (postmortal humans) ascend the chain of being toward the ultimate goal of deification.[195]

Yet the Philadelphians were short lived; they thought they were ushering in a new age and were disappointed when the English did not respond to their message with the enthusiasm they had hoped. As early as 1699 they felt the English had rejected them and in 1703 they stopped proselytizing and only met privately. Lead died in 1704. The Philadelphians had a few short-lived revivals in England after Lead's death but their major success was on the continent. Lead had German followers and patrons from the beginning of her movement, but Lead's major influence among the Germans took were the German Baptists or Dunkers (discussed below).[196] E. P. Thompson argues for "a revival of interest in Jane Lead" in the late eighteenth century.[197]

The similarities between Lead and Smith are so numerous that they are difficult to list; this dissertation gives context for Smith's major doctrinal assertions and Lead's ideas appear in almost all of these discussions. The major difference between Lead's and Smith's visions is that Lead's are more amorphous while Smith's are more concrete. One could argue that Smith effectively put Lead's visions into practice (which was actually the goal of the Dunkers, discussed below), though it is unclear if such was Smith's intent. Either way, when the president of the Mormons' British mission came across Lead's writings in 1858, he

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[195] Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 256, 260, 264; Clement of Alexandria, *Ecolae Propheticae* 57; Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out be a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), 23, 25. Agrippa spoke of "those seven intelligences, who stand before the face of God," (Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 587) and Scot's third editions said, "According to the deepest Magicians, there by *seven good Angels,* who do most frequently become particular Guardians, of all others, each to their respective capacities," (Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nocholson [1584, reprint; London, 1886], 497).

[196] Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 251-57; Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35 no. 4, (2002): 523-25.

[197] E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast: William and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 43.

declared, "We have seldom read anything more pointed or expressive of the Latter-day Work than the foregoing. It is another evidence that those who are spiritually minded, according to the light and advantages they have, can seek after God and learn of His ways—that He giveth liberally to all who ask wisdom of Him, and upbraideth not."[198]

Andrew Michael Ramsay. Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus* was very popular, going through numerous editions; a copy was in Smith's local library in New York.[199] Since *The Travels of Cyrus* advocated universalism, Universalists, like the Smith family, likely would have been aware of it. Ramsay (1686-1743) joined the Philadelphians in his early adult life but with its disillusionment at the death of Lead, Ramsay set out to find other mentors. Ramsay soon came across Francois Fenelon and Madame Guyon, Catholic mystics in the tradition of Eckhart and Tauler. Under their tutelage, Ramsay converted to Catholicism and later worked as a tutor to the exiled Jacobite prince, Charles Edward Stuart, who lived in France.[200]

The Travels of Cyrus told a fictionalized, didactic account of Cyrus the king of Persia, who travels among the classical civilizations of antiquity to gain wisdom. In doing so, Cyrus learns that all the civilizations had very similar religions and cosmological myths and also to be an enlightened monarch. Cyrus concludes his travels by going to Babylon to speak with the Jews, including the priest Eleazar and also the prophet Daniel. To the accusation that Eleazar sounded too much like Origen, Ramsay responded that Origen's theology was the

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[198] "Extracts for the Revelations of Jane Leade," *Millennial Star* 20, no. 8 (Feb 20, 1858) 124, commentary by the editor Samuel W. Richards. This last line was a reference to James 1:5, the scripture that Smith said inspired him to ask God what church he should join which he said resulted in a vision, see Chapter Two. I have not been able to find the exact passages that the *Millennial Star* quoted. The periodical said they were translated from the German (Lead had a devout German following, see below) and the translator may have taken certain liberties.

[199] Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 190-91; Quinn, *Magic World View,* 186.

[200] G. D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1952), 20, 31-35, 85.

prisca theologia found in all nations.[201] The numerous Christian-Platonic ideas in *The Travels of Cyrus* that found their way into Mormonism including human pre-existence, the same word that Smith used for pre-mortal beings ("intelligences") (Chapters Three and Six), eternal marriage (Chapter Six), marriage as a mystery rite (Chapter Seven), the importance of Egypt (Chapter Six), creation out of materials (instead of nothing) (Chapter Six), the soul vehicle (Chapter Three), the philosopher-king, and deification (Chapter Four). *The Travels of Cyrus* also contained Mormon concepts that were not necessarily Platonic, such as ancient writings on gold tablets,[202] and a similar view of the Trinity (Chapter Two).

Freemasonry. Ramsay's other major contribution also had an important influence on Mormonism: higher-degree Masonry. This influence in addition to *The Travels of Cyrus* made Ramsay one of the most important influences on Smith. Freemasonry was an extensive initiation rite that had its roots in medieval masonry guilds. Jane Lead's circle was connected to Freemasonry and its development through both Ramsay and John Pordage's colleague, Elias Ashmole. Ashmole is credited with being the first English gentleman to be initiated into Freemasonry, which he did in 1646. Ashmole remained involved with the Masons until his death in 1692.[203] Pordage's and Lead's writings show a number of similarities with Masonry, including the focus on Solomon's temple and the all-seeing eye.[204] Furthermore the Philadelphians referred to initiations when they spoke of their more esoteric doctrines.

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[201] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* xvi.

[202] There was the ancient Greek practice of writing on gold tablets associated with the cult of Orpheus but I have found no references to that practice in books written in Smith's era. As discussed in Chapter Two, the writings that Ramsay said were on the gold tablets were Platonic aphorisms that had concepts found in Mormonism.

[203] David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13-25, 113, 218-223.

[204] Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 120-27, 172-73, 184; David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica: William Williams, 1829), 82.

One said that the doctrine of universal salvation should not be taught to "any that are not yet Initiated into the most Holy Rites of *Wisdom's Disciplehood*."[205]

The first Masonic Grand Lodge was established in 1717 in London. A rift soon developed in Masonry between the "Antients" who wanted to "return" to a focus on Solomon's temple and the "Moderns" who wanted to retain the original Masonic rites. This led to "competing Masonic groups" says Paul Kleber Monad, that "offered new mysteries and even new degrees that promised higher levels of secret knowledge." The most important figure in what would become Masonry's higher degrees was Andrew Michael Ramsay.[206] The similarities between Lead's visions and the higher-grade Masonry include greater imitation of Solomon's temple, priestly vestments, and Melchizedek priesthood (Chapter Seven).[207]

A number of Smith's family and friends were Masons, including his brother Hyrum.[208] Smith's expansion of the Bible had some similarities to Masonic views of biblical history, but the major similarity came in the development of Smith's lengthy temple ritual (which he called the "endowment") which had many similarities with Masonry. Smith himself had been initiated into Masonry shortly before he began initiating his followers into the endowment. One follower reported to another Mormon that Smith had said there was a similarity between Masonry and the Mormon priesthood (Chapter Seven). Freemasonry therefore was another likely conduit from Lead to Smith.

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[205] Quoted in Walker, *Decline of Hell*, 247. Thought the wording here was metaphorical, the fact that Pordage engaged in "experimental" rites and was associated with Ashmole, coupled with Lead's descriptions certain liturgical rites and a heavenly temple in her visions (Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 2, 22), suggests that the Philadelphians may have performed some type of initiation rite.
[206] Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 159, 218, 187, 256-57.
[207] Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out by a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694); David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica, William Williams, 1829), 124-41, 168-69.
[208] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 449.

The Dunkers. Lead had a major influence on German Pietists and several groups formed that saw themselves as followers of Lead: the Evan von Buttlar society, The Brethren, the Inspirationists, and the Herrhut Community of Brethren. The most important of these were the Schwarzenau Brethren, who were founded by Alexander Mack in 1708 and later became known as the Dunkers, German Baptists, or Brethren in the American colonies, where they moved in 1719. Based on Lead's writings, the Dunkers asserted the notions of a pure, gathered community and also the idea of a royal priesthood based on the figure of Melchizedek. The Mormons asserted these ideas as well (Chapters Three and Four).[209] In 1732, Conrad Beisel broke from the main body of the Brethren to form a monastic group at Ephrata, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Like the Mormons, the Ephrata cloister claimed to have the Melchizedek priesthood, and even advocated the very Mormon practice of proxy baptism for deceased persons whom they felt had not been baptized by the proper authority (Chapter Five).

The Whitmers, who were among Smith's earliest followers, were from Lancaster County, though the family's religious heritage is not known.[210] Furthermore, the entry on the Dunkers in Buck's *Theological Dictionary* listed a number of traits found in Mormonism such as rejecting the belief that sin was passed down from Adam, believing that the righteous preached to the dead, and even using the word "supererogation," suggesting that the righteous could do something to aid the dead.[211] Smith himself visited the Mormons in southeastern Pennsylvania in the winter of 1839-40; the Mormons had a lot of success in the area, starting the previous year. A local history said the practice of the baptism for the dead

[209] Marcus Meier, *The Origin of the Schwarzenau Brethren*, trans. Dennis L. Slabaugh (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 2008), 2, 78, 131-34, 144.
[210] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 239.
[211] Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary*, (Philadelphia: Joseph J. Woodward, 1830), 159.

was still being practiced in the 1840s in the area. In the fall of 1840 Smith first introduced the practice of baptism for the dead to his followers (Chapter Five).

Emmanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg (1688-1782), the eighteenth-century Swedish aristocrat and scientist turned visionary, likely knew of and was influenced by Jane Lead.[212] Lead had an important influence on German Pietism, which strongly influenced Swedenborg's father; some of Lead's works had been translated into Swedish by that time.[213] Like Lead, Swedenborg reported extensive and vivid visions and like Lead, Swedenborg's visions described three heavens, advancement through those heavens (Chapter Four), and marriage in heaven (Chapter Five), ideas that Smith would also teach. Again, one of Smith's followers who was interested in Swedenborgianism asked Smith in 1840 "if he was acquainted with the Sweadburgers [sic], His answer I verially believe. 'Emanuel Sweadenburg had a view of the world to come but for daily food he perished.'"[214] As I argue in Chapter Five, I take Smith to mean that he believed that Swedenborg had legitimate visions ("had a view of the world to come") but that Swedenborg did not put together a proper system for his followers ("for daily food he perished.") In fact, Swedenborg refused to found a church, saying instead that a "new church" was coming and that it would form

[212] McDowell, "The Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," 517; Hirst, *Jane Leade,* 141; Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)**,** 199-200.

[213] Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason,* trans. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), xiii, 4-7, 10; Nils Thune, *The Behemists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Uppsala, 1948); 150-51. In 1856, one Clifton Barry went so far as to argue that "Swedenborg was indebted to Jane Lead for much of the ground-work of his so-called system." Clifton Barry, "Jane Lead and Swedenborg," *New Churchman* 2 (November 1856), 130. The editor responded, "We think it may be safely supposed that Swedenborg never read a line of Jane Lead's" but as Brian Gibbons argues "The tendency of Swedenborg's hagiographers to see his work as created *ex nihilo* is clearly untenable." Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 200.

[214] Edward Hunter, Autobiography, in William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter, Faithful Steward* (Salt Lake City: Publishers, 1970), 316.

when the world was ready for it; Swedenborg only intended to prepare the world for the new church. Shortly after his death, Swedenborg's followers founded "The New Church."[215]

Smith's teachings and visions had a number of similarities with Swedenborg in addition to those shared with Lead, including material angels, a material God, (Chapter Six) and preaching to the dead (Chapter Five). As with John Dee, statements from Smith's father suggested Swedenborgian influence. In blessings that Joseph Smith Sr. gave his son's followers, he promised a number that they would visit other planets and preach to the dead, two activities that Swedenborg claimed to have done (Chapter Five).[216]

Smith and Lead. As stated above, the similarities between Lead's and Smith's visions are so striking as to warrant considerable analysis. Mormonism started out with a handful of similarities to Lead and these similarities only increased as time went on. This all leads back to the question, was Smith ever aware of Lead's writings and if so, when? Lead's writings were all printed around the turn of the eighteenth century and only a few were reprinted in English.[217] Many were reprinted in German, however. The German connection highlights the possibility of the Whitmers who were from Lancaster County, where Lead's followers the Dunkers lived. Again the Whitmers' prior religious affiliation is unknown. However, The Whitmers' possible connection to Lead's ideas is complicated by the fact that in 1887, David Whitmer, having split with Smith in the late 1830s, wrote a memoir stating

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[215] Benz, *Swedenborg,* 487-91.

[216] Spiritualists who were heavily influenced by Swedenborg claimed to do these activities later in the nineteenth century. Cathy Gutierres, "Deadly Dates: Bodies and Sex in Spiritualist Heavens," in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaf and Jeffry J. Kripal (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 308-32.

[217] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations: Particularly as an Essay Towards the Unsealing, Opening, and Discovering the Seven Seals, the Seven Thunders, and the New Jerusalem State* (J. Pratt, 1804); Jane Lead, *The Wars of David and the Peaceable Reign of Solomon: Symbolizing the Times of Warfare and Refreshment of the Saints of the Most High God. To Whom a Priestly Kingdom is Shortly to Be Given, after the Order of Malchizedeck* (London, 1816), and Divine Revelations and Prophecies, Part the First (Nottingham: H. Wild, 1830), which contained some portions of Lead's journal along with other visionaries' writings like Joanna Southcott.

that he had never liked Smith's priesthood innovations. Whitmer particularly attacked the Mormons' notion of Melchizedek priesthood, and as Melchizedek priesthood was a major was a major theme in Lead's revelations, it seems unlikely that the Whitmers would have been the conduit of these ideas to Smith.[218]

Whitmer said a number of Mormon priesthood concepts "originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. He explained these things to Brother Joseph in his way, out of the old Scriptures, and got Brother Joseph to inquire, etc."[219] Though Whitmer's assertions on these issues are problematic (for instance, the Book of Mormon does use the term "high priesthood"), Rigdon, who had important influences on Smith, may have been a conduit of Lead's ideas to Smith. For instance, Smith and Rigdon's vision of the afterlife (introduction and Chapter Four), had numerous similarities to Jane Lead's *The Wonders of God's Creation*. While Rigdon is a good candidate for introducing Lead's ideas to Smith, Christian-Platonic themes in the Book of Mormon can mostly be found in Lead, (though they can also be found in Allen's *Modern Judaism* and John Dee's spirit diary), making it unclear when exactly Smith encountered Lead's ideas. Either way, Smith was certainly influenced by Lead, either through those whom she influenced or more directly. If Smith did encounter Lead's ideas directly, his response likely would have been similar to his response to his contact with Kabbalah through Neibaur discussed above: further light added to a path that he was already on.

Other Figures: Newton, Wesley, Taylor, and Orpheus

[218] David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), 64.
[219] Whitmer, *Address to All Believers in Christ,* 64.

While Lead and her circle were the major source of how Christian-Platonic ideas got to Smith, there are a handful of other important figures that do not fit neatly in the above categories. Isaac Newton, John Wesley, Thomas Taylor, and descriptions of Orpheus were all likely additional conduits of Christian Platonism to Smith.

Isaac Newton. Newton's (1642-1727) religiosity is a complex subject since he kept many aspects of it secret. The issue was further complicated by the discovery of many of his private papers in the 1930s, which demonstrated a considerable interest in alchemy, complicating the image of Newton as the over-turner of old, false notions (like alchemy). Scholars have rejected such whiggish notions of the history of science, but Newton's attitudes toward alchemy were varied and complex; furthermore Newton was also very critical of the Platonists of his day.[220]

Though Newton cannot be termed a Platonist, his possible influences on Smith do fall into that category. Newton may have influenced Smith's notions of deity but likely did so through protégés rather than directly. Smith's notion of the Trinity was similar to Newton's—three separate beings (Chapter Two) and an embodied, pre-mortal Christ (Chapter Three). Ramsay summarized the views of Newton's protégé Samuel Clarke on the Trinity in *The Travels of Cyrus,* views that Newton also held (Chapter Two). This notion of the Trinity was not particularly Platonic, but Newton's likely influence on a Benjamin Franklin's "First Principles," a peculiar statement of belief penned by Franklin at age eighteen, had important Platonic themes. In "First Principles," Franklin described the various solar systems in the universe as being ruled by individual gods, who were lower on the scale than the universe's high God. Our own solar system was ruled by one of these, said Franklin,

[220] Allison P. Coudert, *Religion, Magic, and Science in Early Modern Europe and America* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011), 151, 156; Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 100-5, 110.

and Franklin also suggested that these lower gods could move up the universe's scale and other beings could take their place. Smith taught similar ideas toward the end of his life (Chapter Six). Scholars argue that Newton was likely a source of these ideas as he mused about similar concepts in private. Franklin wrote "First Principles" shortly after a trip to London, where although he was unable to meet his hero Newton, he did meet with one of Newton's colleagues. Scholars note that Franklin's "Frist Principles" has a number of themes in common with Plato's *Timaeus*: a high god over lower gods and righteous humans ascending to stars after death (Chapter Six). Franklin's statement was published with his other papers in the early nineteenth century and went through several editions, providing a possible link between Newton and Smith.[221]

John Wesley. Smith was involved with Methodism in his early years and this influence was apparent in Mormonism: the Book of Mormon had a fundamentally Arminian soteriology and early Mormonism borrowed many of Methodism's ecclesiastical structures.[222] Wesley (1703-1791) himself shouldn't be termed a Christian Platonist but Wesley had a number of connections to individuals and movements listed above. Arminianism had certain sympathies with Origen because of Origen's emphasis on free will.[223] Wesley was a fan of Clement of Alexandria and based his "Character of a Methodist" on Clement's description of the "Gnostic" in the *Stromata.* Wesley also borrowed from Clement for his own notions of perfection and holiness. Cambridge Platonist John Norris, argues Ted Campbell, "transmitted to Wesley the Cambridge Platonists' concern with the

[221] Benjamin Franklin, *The Posthumous and Other Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 3d ed. 2 vols, (London, 1819), 1:1.
[222] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 251, 254.
[223] Walker, *Decline of Hell*, 10.

religious experience as a valid source of human knowledge."[224] Furthermore, William Law, one of Wesley's early mentors, was a mystic and fan of Jane Lead's; one contemporary accused Law of reading Lead "with … the same … Veneration … that other People read the Scriptures."[225] Interestingly, Smith told Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright, "We Latter-day Saints are Methodists, as far as they have gone, only have advanced further."[226] This statement well summarizes how Smith probably viewed his relationship with Methodism: its Arminianism and ecclesiastical structure provided an essential foundation for the more esoteric, Platonic notions that Smith also wanted to embrace (Chapter Two).

Thomas Taylor. Taylor (1758-1835) was a scholar and Platonic devotee, whose major contribution was the translation of Platonic and Neoplatonic texts into English, most of which had not been translated before. Taylor's translations influenced a number of Romantics and Transcendentalists but these figures' influence on Smith likely would have been slight.[227] However, I argue that a reference to Taylor in Allen's *Modern Judaism* in addition to one of Taylor's translations likely did influence Smith. In his lengthy denunciation of the Kabbalists' notion of pre-existence, Allen lamented, "The last few years have witnessed, in this enlightened country, an attempt to revive these obsolete and long exploded errors," and cited Thomas Taylor's *The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus* (1788) as an example. Allen gave the page numbers where Taylor discussed the idea and lamented, "It has even been maintained that human souls must

[224] Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville, Tenn.: Kingswood, 1991), 56-57, 66-67.
[225] Quoted in Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35 no. 4, (2002): 517.
[226] Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher*, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curtis, 1856), 342.
[227] Givens, *When Souls Had Wings,* 240-41; Jay Bregman "Proclus Americanus," in *Late Antique Epistemology: Other Ways to Truth,* ed Panayiota Vassilopoulou and Stephen R. L. Clark (Houndsmill, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 228-49.

necessarily have existed from eternity," an idea that Smith also taught. "The reveries of this writer, however, seem not very likely to gain many disciples," said Allen because of the heretical ideas that Taylor espoused. These included "the existence of a multitude of gods," another doctrine that Smith eventually taught. Taylor, said Allen, went so far as to declare that even though "the religion of the Heathens has, for many years been the object of ridicule and contempt, yet he is not ashamed to own himself a convert to it in every particular, as it was understood by the Pythagoric and Platonic philosophers," and therefore "its restoration is the object of his most ardent desires."[228]

Again, Smith embraced the doctrines of pre-existence and multiple gods that Allen not only condemned but also said were "of heathen origin" and a "compound of Pythagorean, Platonic, and Oriental notions."[229] The fact that Allen also condemned the ideas as "Alexandrian," the thinkers that Smith emulated in a number of ways, suggests that Smith likely would have felt sympathetic to Taylor's agenda based on Allen's description. Smith not only wanted to "restore" many of the same doctrines that Taylor did, but Taylor also called the Neoplatonists "Latter Platonists," similar to Smith's Latter-day Saints.[230] Taylor rejected Christianity in the book, a move that Smith did not embrace, but the similarities between Allen's descriptions of Taylor and Smith's doctrine suggest this was one way in which Taylor influenced Smith.

Another likely influence on Smith was Taylor's translation of Plato's *Timaeus*.[231] As I argue in Chapter Six, a section of Smith's Book of Abraham, a translation that Smith said

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[228] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 194, fn.
[229] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 93-94.
[230] Thomas Taylor, *The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus, on the First Book of Euclid's Elements. To which Are Added, A History of the Restoration Platonic Theology, by the Latter Platonists,* 2 vols. (London, 1792).
[231] Plato, *The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides and Timaeus of Plato*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London, 1793).

he did of some Egyptian papyri, shows striking similarities to portions of the *Timaeus* (see chart 6.1). In addition, in one of his speeches, Smith used the same word for create as Taylor's translation of the *Timaeus*—"composed"—and in the same speech, Smith referred to the earth being created out of the same elements that the *Timaeus* said they had: earth, wind, water, fire.[232] Furthermore, William Phelps's "Paracletes" also had numerous similarities to the *Timaeus* (see chat 6.2). I argue that Smith and Phelps engaged in research to translate the papyri that eventually pointed them to the *Timaeus* as an important text on ancient cosmogony; the *Timaeus* became a tool for Smith and Phelps's translation efforts (see Chapters Six and Seven).

Orpheus. Orpheus was a somewhat mythical early Greek sage to whom was attributed important aspects of Greek philosophy and rituals. Orpheus was described in many histories of the ancient world including Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus.*[233] There were a handful of descriptions of Orpheus in sources that may have influenced Smith that described Orpheus much as Smith described ancient patriarchs, particularly Melchizedek and Enoch. Agrippa said in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* that Orpheus had keys that granted power similar those Smith associated with the Melchizedek priesthood. More striking are the similarities in Dobson's encyclopedia's description of Orpheus.[234] Orpheus was not only important for Greek philosophy but he was also "the first inventor of the religious mysteries of the Greeks." As I argue in Chapter Seven, the similarities between Smith's endowment ritual and the description of the Eleusinian mysteries in the same encyclopedia suggests that Smith was interested in Greek mysteries. The entry on Orpheus also said that he descended into Hades to try and rescue his wife but lost her before they

[232] January 5, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 61.
[233] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 201, 331, 364.
[234] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 656.

could escape. Smith's baptism for the dead ritual was heavily influenced by the Christian tradition of Christ's descent into hell, a similar concept (Chapters Four and Five).

The entry's most striking similarity is between the powers of Orpheus's music and Smith's description of Enoch's power in his revision of the Bible. The encyclopedia said that when Orpheus played the lyre that he received from Apollo, "even the most rapid rivers ceased to flow, the savage beasts of the forest forgot their wildness, and the mountains came to listen to his song."[235] Smith's expansion of the Bible said that "so great was the faith of Enoch that … he spake the word of the Lord and the earth trembled and the Mountains fled even according to his command and the rivers of watter [sic] were turned out of their course and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness."[236] Like Orpheus, Enoch had power over mountains, rivers, and beasts. These similarities suggest that Smith may have taken a similar view of *prisca theologia* as had numerous Christian Platonists before him: the great things attributed to the ancient Greeks were originally performed by the patriarchs. "Whosoever understandeth truly the Hymns of Orpheus and the old magicians," said Agrippa, "shall find that they differ not from the Cabalistical secrets and orthodox traditions."[237] The *prisca theologia* was a universal truth found in many places.

Conclusion

Christian Platonism was therefore deeply imbedded in Western thought and practice by the early modern era and was available to Smith in many forms. Palmyra itself had a number of points of contact: Quakerism, treasure digging and the reliance on grimoires, and Methodism. Such practices could overlap. Martin Harris, one of Smith's first converts who

[235] "Orpheus," in *Encyclopaeida* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:515.
[236] Smith, Old Testament Revision, [16]; Moses 7:13.
[237] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, 467.

paid for the printing of the Book of Mormon, had a Quaker heritage, took interest in Methodism, and was described by a neighbor as "a firm believer in dreams, and vision, and supernatural appearances."[238] The Chases, Smith's associates in treasure seeking, also had a Quaker heritage, and Willard Chase was a Methodist exhorter at the time of his involvement with Smith.[239] This kind of mixing was part of a larger trend, argues Owen Davies. "The birth of new evangelical, mystical, and prophetic movements, such as the Swedenborgians, also sustained a favourable environment for the continued interest in Neoplatonic magic in certain social circles, mostly among inquisitive young men form artisans or middling-sort backgrounds."[240] Furthermore, the Whitmers were from Lancaster County, home to numerous radical German sects including the Dunkers (followers of Lead), and Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus* was in the local library.

Yet the most important influence on Smith was his own family's religiosity, particularly that of Smith's father. Joseph Sr. was also involved in treasure digging, and early Mormonism had a number of similarities to certain grimoires, particularly Dee's spirit diary, which contained visions similar to Joseph Sr. dreams. Smith's grandfather was a Universalist (Joseph Sr. also participated), and Joseph Sr. was also likely involved with a radical sect call the New Israelites, suggesting interest in modern Judaism and possibly John Allen's book. Finally, Joseph Sr.'s blessings to his son's followers suggest Swedenborgian influence, another visionary likely influenced by Lead. The next chapter focuses on the role Smith's family's religiosity played in his early spiritual experiences, setting the stage of Smith's continued engagement with Christian Platonism.

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[238] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire,* 62–63; quoted in E. G. Lee, *The Mormons, or, Knavery Exposed* (Philadelphia: George Webber, 1841), 8.
[239] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire,* 151; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 50.
[240] Davies, *Grimoires,* 132.

Section One: Vermont, New York, Ohio, and Missouri

The Smiths, who moved at least seven times in Vermont (once into New Hampshire) before moving to New York in 1816, were often on the move and Joseph Smith Jr. continued that trend after founding Mormonism.[1] After establishing Mormonism in western New York in 1830, Smith moved to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831 and soon after had many of his followers begin settling in western Missouri, the site of his New Jerusalem. Smith would eventually move there in 1838, but the Mormons were expelled from Missouri in 1839. The Mormons then settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, and a few years after Smith's death in 1844, many of Smith followers moved to what would become Utah.

Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805; his father, originally from Topsfield, Massachusetts, having moved to Vermont in 1791.[2] As discussed in Chapter Two, those on the New England frontier (including Vermont) engaged in evangelical Protestantism and folk religion, two important influences on Mormonism. Smith's family was his first major influence, particularly his father, who was engaged in extra-liturgical rites including the supernatural search for buried treasure. Joseph Sr. was probably also connected to a proto-religious movement called the New Israelites that had a number of beliefs similar to Mormonism and the Cowderys, early converts to Mormonism, were probably involved as well. Oliver Cowdery became Smith's principal scribe for the Book of Mormon (Chapter Three) and the better-educated Cowdery ran the Mormons' early newspaper at one point. Along with David Whitmer and Martin Harris, two important early supporters of Smith's in

[1] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 19.
[2] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 15.

New York, Cowdery was one of what the Mormons term the three witness, or those who said that an angel showed them the golden plates.[3]

Not long after Mormonism's founding in 1830, Parley Pratt visited the Smiths in New York and quickly converted. Pratt then brought Cowdery to preach to his former congregation headed by Sidney Rigdon in Kirtland, Ohio. Rigdon and many of his followers had been followers of Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Disciples of Christ. Ridgon broke with Campbell over the belief in spiritual gifts: Ridgon said they were still essential to the church and Campbell said they had ceased with the apostles. Pratt and Cowdery quickly made a number of converts in Kirtland including Ridgon, and Rigdon quickly became on important adviser to Smith. Rigdon was older and better educated than Smith and worked with Smith on his biblical translation in which Smith edited and made additions to the Bible by revelation.[4]

Finally, William Phelps was a newspaper editor in western New York before he joined the Mormons in 1831 and became the Mormon's first newspaper editor shortly after his conversion.[5] I argue that Cowdery, Rigdon, and Phelps were the most important members of Smith's inner circle in terms of doctrinal ideas. All believed him to be a prophet but they were also involved in the study that Smith and the Mormons were commanded to do. These individuals (and others like Parley and Orson Pratt) gave Smith access to broader learning. I discuss later influences (like John Bennett and Alexander Neibaur) in the next section, but Cowdery, Rigdon, and Phelps, in addition to Joseph Sr., were likely Smith's most important influences in Mormonism's early years. The chapters in this section (Two,

[3] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 227, 78.
[4] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 123-24, 142, 148-49.
[5] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 184.

Three, and Four) trace the development of Mormonism's early years, from Smith's youth to the Mormon's expulsion from Ohio and Missouri.

Chapter Two: Young Joseph Smith: Folk Christianity and Christian Platonism

Introduction

When Joseph Smith ran for president of the United States in 1844 (see Conclusion), he wrote a letter to the Green Mountain Boys of Vermont asking for their support. Smith appealed to a shared heritage with the Green Mountain Boys, but the Green Mountain Boys responded negatively, saying that they felt Smith had left out a number of details when discussing his family's background. "[Y]ou ought to have given [Joseph Sr.'s] full history," they wrote, "for you was old enough when you left here to remember a great many things about him and how he used to tel[l] about your being born with a veil over your face, and that he intended to procure a stone for you to see all over the world with."[1] A number of other neighbors reported that Smith's parents felt the Smith was set apart in some fashion (similar to being born with a "veil" or caul) and Smith eventually did acquire and use a seer stone (see below). The Green Mountain Boys felt that the Smiths' belief in these forms of folk supernaturalism was problematic and possibly risible and accused Smith of hiding the information.

The Smiths did hold a number of these beliefs but rarely mentioned them in the various family histories they wrote. The Green Mountain Boy's scorn suggests a reason why the Smiths tried to keep these practices quiet—they knew they would be met with ridicule. Smith was even brought up on trial for such practices in both 1826 and 1830.[2] The ridicule of the Smiths' folk practices came to a head with the publication of a series of affidavits

[1] Green Mountain Boys to Thomas Sharp, February 15, 1844, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:597.
[2] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 52, 116-18.

collected by one Philastus Hurlbut in 1833. Hurlbut had been a follower of Smith's but after an acrimonious falling out, Hurlbut traveled to Palmyra, New York, to collect negative information on the Smiths. These were later published in E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unvailed* [sic] in 1834.[3] The reports were very negative, presenting the Smiths as lazy, foolish, ne'er-do-wells, who engaged in a number of ridiculed folk beliefs, particularly supernatural treasure digging.[4] As a result, the Smiths were guarded about discussing these practices, but a picture of the Smiths' religiosity can be pieced together from both friendly reminiscences of those who were less guarded in addition to those from critical neighbors. These sources, coupled with excellent recent scholarship on European folk religiosity, allow for scholars to piece together the nature of the Smiths' beliefs.[5] As I argue in Chapter One, these beliefs were not only central to the development of Mormonism, but they were also fundamental to how Christian Platonism and crypto-Catholicism influenced Smith. Christian Platonism also suggests a context both for these folk practices and for Smith's theophanies;

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[3] Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed: Or, A Faithful Account of the Singular Imposition and Delusion* (Painesville, Ohio, 1834).

[4] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 231-33.

[5] The Smiths' folk rites have been both a point of ridicule by critics and a point of concern for Mormons for a long time. William Alexander Linn, *The Story of the Mormons* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 15-22. Mormons responded by attacking the validity of the Hurlbut affidavits, Richard Anderson, "Joseph Smith's New York Reputation Reappraised," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 (1970): 283-314. Such research came to a head when Mark Hoffman forged a document called the "Salamander letter," in the early 1980s, which asserted Smith's connection to such beliefs. This spawned a number of important scholarly works including Alan Taylor, "Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith's Treasure Seeking," *Dialogue* 19, no. 4 (1986): 18-27; Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (1987); and John Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). All these authors argued for continuity between the Smith's folk practices and Mormonism. Mark Ashurst-McGee's lengthy master's thesis ("A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet," (MA thesis, Utah State University, 2000) and Richard Bushman's 2005 biography of Smith—*Rough Stone Rolling*— also argued for continuity while arguing for a shift toward "religion." Brant Gardner, recently argued for a break between Smith's early "magical" practices and his later "religious" ones. *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2011), 102. Samuel Brown, though rejecting the magic/religion divide, still argued for a discontinuity between the Smiths' folk rites and the development of Mormonism. "Reconsidering Lucy Mack Smith's Folk Magic Confession," *Mormon Historical Studies* 13, no. 1-2 (2012): 1-14.

Again, I argue here that the dichotomy between "magic" and "religion" is a false one, that the Smiths' folk practices were central to their religiosity, and that these practices were also central to the development of Mormonism.

such a context paints a picture of the Smith family's religious quest of seeking the presence and power of God so that Joseph Jr. could fulfill what they believe was his divine calling.[6]

Family Religion

This dissertation focuses on the various possible influences on Joseph Smith and, like most people, no influence was greater than that of his own family. As discussed in Chapter One, the Smiths' progenitors hailed disproportionately from the North and West of England, and manifested the religious traits of that heritage. These progenitors joined the Yankee diaspora of those who moved to the New England frontier after the Great Awakening. Alan Taylor and Stephen Marini argue that religion was an important factor in this migration as those with a more radical or evangelical bent sought to free themselves from the New England religious establishment.[7] The Smiths demonstrated their religious radicalism when Joseph Jr.'s grandfather, Asael, became an adherent of John Murray, who essentially brought Universalism to the American colonies.[8] Universalism would play a major role in Mormonism and was a primary means by which Christian Platonic ideas (particularly those of Origen and Clement of Alexandria) influenced Smith (Chapters Three and Four). Smith's parents also demonstrated the religiosity of the New England frontier by mingling folk practices and membership in evangelical churches. Mormonism drew heavily on the Smith family religiosity with Joseph Jr. as the chosen son seeking to fulfill the family's religious quest.

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[6] As I explore Smith's theophanies, my intent is not to try to discover the ontological nature of those theophanies but instead to place how Smith described them in various contexts. At the same time, I assume that Smith believed he was a visionary and that he was motivated by that belief.
[7] Alan Taylor, "The Free Seekers: Religious Culture in Upstate New York, 1790-1835," *Journal of Mormon History* 27, no. 1 (2001): 48-52; Stephen A. Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[8] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 17.

Joseph Sr.[9] Joseph Sr. seems to have been a major source for his son's religiosity. Understanding Joseph Sr.'s religiosity is difficult because though he was listed on the Universalists' membership record in Tunbridge, Vermont, he generally remained unaffiliated with organized religion and was often hostile towards it.[10] Furthermore, though Smith's mother Lucy dictated an extensive biography, Joseph Sr. wrote little. Yet Joseph Sr.'s religiosity can be pieced together from reminiscences from family and friends as well as another important source: an extensive number of blessings that he gave to his son's followers.[11]

The Green Mountain Boys remembered Joseph Sr.'s "frequent declarations that the whole bible was the work of priestcraft … that Voltairs writings was the best bible then extant, and Thomas Paines age of reason, the best commentary."[12] The Bible was very important to Smith and the early Mormons, but they tended to read it in unorthodox ways; Smith went so far as to make his own revisions of the Bible.[13] Smith's mother Lucy reported that when she and her husband began attending Methodist meetings in 1804, Asael Smith, her father-in-law, "came to the door one day and threw Tom Pain's age or reason into the house and angrily bade him read that untill he believed it."[14] The Smiths were not deists, but Joseph Sr.'s may have turned to the critiques of deists in his antipathy toward the establish churches. According to Alan Taylor, those on the Yankee frontier believed in "the spiritual power of dreams, visions, and inner voices…. They longed to experience His power directly,

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[9] My focus on Joseph Sr. here does not mean to imply that Smith's mother, Lucy, was unimportant. However, Smith explicitly rejected the church his mother attended, Presbyterianism, and, as described below, Mormonism had a number of things in common with his father's beliefs.
[10] Tunbridge Town Record, 6 December 1797 in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:634.
[11] *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. H. Michael Marquardt (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007). Joseph Smith Sr. gave blessings from 1834 until his death in 1840, at which time his son Hyrum became the patriarch.
[12] Green Mountain Boys to Thomas Sharp, 1:597.
[13] Joseph Smith, Revision of the Bible. josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/old-testament-revision.
[14] Lucy Smith, "Preliminary Remarks," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:250.

physically, visually, and emotionally."[15] Joseph Sr.'s hostility toward the religious establishment was based largely on his religious inclination toward supernaturalism.

Joseph Sr.'s supernaturalism took a number of forms, including the supernatural quest for treasure. Grimoires were important to treasure diggers and a number of clues suggest that Joseph Sr. had some knowledge of grimoires.[16] One indication of this knowledge are three lamens, or papers with invoking diagrams on them, owned by the family of Joseph Sr.'s son Hyrum, which drew upon diagrams found in different grimoires (see below). In addition, Lucy recorded a number of Joseph Sr.'s dreams in her autobiography that had a number of similarities to visions found in John Dee's writings (see below).

One of the best clues for understanding Joseph Sr.'s influences were the "patriarchal blessings" that he gave to his son's followers. Joseph Jr. appointed his father to the office of patriarch in 1834 with the responsibility of giving Mormons blessings like the biblical patriarchs had done for their children. Such blessings of parents to children were also a medieval and early modern folk practice. Keith Thomas refers to the practice, "based on patriarchal authority," in which children received "blessings from their parents. This was no sentimental triviality, but a solemn act which Puritans regarded as an obnoxious Popish survival."[17] Joseph Sr. made a number of promises in his blessings that were similar to what the grimoires promised those who invokes spirits: the ability to fly, the ability to visit other

[15] Taylor, "Free Seekers," 51.
[16] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 93. Argues Owen Davies, "While there is no evidence that the Smiths and their followers owned copies of Scot, Sibly, or Barrett, there is little doubt that the Smith parchments were used for overly magical protective purposes, and were derived primarily from Scot and Sibly." Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 149.
[17] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (1971, reprint; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 505.

lands, and the ability to know where treasure was buried.[18] Joseph Sr. was said to have been involved with a proto-religious group called the New Israelites that have many similarities to Mormonism. A statement about finding gold to pave the streets of the New Jerusalem from one of Joseph Sr. blessings provides additional support to the claim (see below). Finally, blessings that Joseph Sr. gave that promised those being blessed that they would visit other planets and preach to the dead suggest Swedenborgian influence since Swedenborg claimed to do both of these things in his spirit journeys (see Chapter Five).

This is not to say the Joseph Jr. was the unadulterated embodiment of his father's religiosity. In his youth, Joseph Jr. embraced Methodism seemingly in opposition to his parents' practices, and Joseph Sr. lamented to his family, "It is a source of grief to me that I have not been more fruitful to the Lord in the days which are passed than I have: I have not always set the example before my family that I ought: I have not been diligent in teaching them the commandments of the Lord, but Have rather manifested a light and a trifling mind." Joseph Sr. went so far as to suggest that he may have been an embarrassment to his children and suggested that drunkenness may have been a reason for this. Nevertheless, Joseph Sr. felt that his children had stood my him, telling Joseph Jr. in a blessing, "Thou has stood by thy father, and like Shem, would have covered his nakedness, rather than see him exposed to shame."[19] Joseph Jr. not only appointed his father to the office of patriarch in his church but he also expressed considerable joy when his father was first baptized into his church.[20] In

[18] *Early Patriarchal Blessings,* 104, 105, 119 for flying to other lands, 105, 109, 155 for treasure. Compare to Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nocholson (1584, reprint; London, 1886), 477, 482 for flying, 340, 347, 355, 474, 477, 495, 496.
[19] Joseph Smith Sr. Introductory Comments, Blessing for Hyrum Smith, Blessing for Joseph Smith Jr., in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:468-71.
[20] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 110.

many ways, Joseph Jr., the chosen son, fulfilled his father's religious hopes, and in so doing, fulfilled his own.

Dreams. In Joseph Sr.'s remarks to his children, he said that despite his shortcomings, "The Lord has often visited me in visions and in dreams, and has brought me, with my family, through many afflictions, and I this day thank his holy name."[21] Dreams were very important to the Smiths; Lucy recorded several of hers and her husband's dreams in her history.[22] Interestingly, the dreams of Joseph Sr.'s that Lucy recorded had a number of similarities to some of John Dee's visions recorded in his published angel diary. In the first dream, Lucy recorded Joseph Sr. saying, "I seemed to be traveling in an open barren field … I could see nothing but dead fallen timber." Dee's seer, Edward Kelley, said he saw "a great plain like unto a field, as though it were Mile over in the end of it there is a great high rotten Tree." Joseph Sr. said that he had a spirit guide who told him that "this field is the world which is ina[n]imate & dumb as to the things pertaining to the true religion or the order of heavenly things all is darkness." At then end of the vision of the tree, Kelley heard a voice declare, "*Wo be unto the World … how wicked are those that are governed by you, how wicked are you; and how abominable.*" The guide then told Joseph Sr. to look for a box, "whose contents will make you wise." Joseph Sr. found the box, opened it, began to taste the contents, but then "all manner of beasts and horned cattle and roaring animals rose up on every side and rushed upon me … I was forced to drop the box and fly for my life … I awoke trembling with terror."[23] In an earlier vision of a tree, Kelley saw horned men coming out of the tree and saw that one of the horned men "pulled his horns, skulled and all, *and thereof gave to eat* [John Dee and Edward Kelley] and the other seven; and they *did eat:* and so all

[21] Smith Sr., Introductory Comments, 1:469.
[22] Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 1:254-59, 278-79, 283, 287.
[23] Smith, "Preliminary Remarks," 1: 255-56; Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 445.

the Vision did vanish away."[24] Despite the similarities between Dee's and Joseph Sr.'s visions, Dee was able to attain things that Joseph Sr. was not.

Lucy's next recorded vision of her husband's is very similar to Lehi's dream in the Book of Mormon[25] Lehi's dream also had a number of similarities to both Joseph Sr.'s first dream and John Dee's vision of the tree and Dee's tree vision also had a number of similarities to another tree vision in the Book of Mormon: the vision of the olive tree. I discuss the similarities between these tree visions in the next chapter, where I discuss the Book of Mormon. The point to be made here is that this dream of Joseph Sr.'s also had similarities to visions that Dee recorded in his spirit diary.

Joseph Sr.'s next dreams bore resemblance to another of Dee's visions. Joseph Sr. said he dreamed he was sick and lame and that his guide told him that if he made it to a particular garden he would be healed. The guide told Joseph Sr. to walk until he got to a large gate and then go inside. Dee also described a vision of people trying to get into a garden and passing through a gate; both gardens also contained beautiful flowers. Joseph Sr. said that in the garden, twenty-four wooden statues that lined the path bowed down to him as he passed. "Then I asked my guide what was the meaning of all this he began to explain the vision when I suddenly awoke." Dee did not describe bowing statues but the angel told Dee that a person with "testimony" was worthy to enter the garden but if he or she did not have the proper "garments," "*lo, is alwayes* as a mist *between him and true wisdom, yet he thinketh* himself satisfied."[26] Without the proper clothing, the angels told Dee, those who entered the garden would not understand, and Joseph Sr., who did not mention receiving the proper clothing said he did not understand what happened in the garden.

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[24] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 376, emphasis in original.
[25] Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 1:256-59.
[26] Smith, "Preliminary Remarks," 1: 278-79; Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 220-21.

Joseph Sr.'s final two dreams both focused on him lacking something. In the first, Joseph Sr. saw many hurrying toward a "meeting" which he believed to be the last judgment. When he got to a building many people were trying to get in and Joseph Sr. stood back feeling there was no hurry. But when he came to the door it was shut and a person at the door told him he was too late. Despairing, Joseph Sr. prayed to the Lord and an angel appear who asked "if he had not [le]ft something undone if he had done all that was necessary in order to get admission." Joseph Sr. responded, "I done all I know." Joseph Sr. then pled with God to forgive his sins and he was allowed to enter. Joseph Sr.'s final dream was even more explicit about him missing something. Joseph Sr. dreamed that he saw a peddler who told him that he could not trade with Joseph Sr. any more but that he had come to tell Joseph Sr. "there is but one thing lacking pertaining to your souls salvation." Joseph Sr. asked the peddler to write what it was on a piece of paper, but as he looked for pen and paper "in my excitement I awoke."[27] Thus Joseph Sr. never discerned in his dreams what he lacked.

The angel told Dee that there would be "a mist *between him and true wisdom*" for those who did not have the proper clothing and those who underwent Joseph Jr.'s temple ritual wore ritual clothing and were given an undergarment to always wear; Joseph Sr.'s son made sure that the faithful received the proper clothing (Chapter Seven). Many years later, Joseph Sr.'s grandson, Joseph F. Smith, the nephew of Joseph Jr. who would become president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, reported having a dream very similar to that of his grandfather. He too dreamed he was on a journey and felt that he needed to hurry and at last came to "a wonderful mansion." As he hurried to the mansion he saw a sign that said "Bath" so he stopped to clean himself and then put on "white, clean garments." Joseph F. then hurried to the door of the mansion, which, as in his grandfather's

[27] Smith, "Preliminary Remarks," 1: 283-84, 287.

dream, was closed. Joseph Jr. opened the door, "He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said: 'Joseph, you are late.'" Joseph F., however, replied confidently, "'Yes, but I am clean—I am clean.'" Joseph Jr. then led Joseph F. into the mansion.[28] Though, like his grandfather, Joseph F. was late, unlike Joseph Sr. who had to plead for forgiveness in order to enter the building, Joseph F., having undergone the proper ritual and having on the proper clothing, was already clean.[29]

Joseph Sr.'s dreams suggest that he yearned to have what the faithful had received in Dee's visions: the divine wisdom that came from the holy food and the holy garments. Joseph Sr.'s dreams convinced him that he could not receive such wisdom from the established churches. After her husband's first dream, Lucy wrote, "From this forward, my husband seemed more confirmed than ever, in his opinion that there was no order or class of religionists that knew any more concerning the Kingdom of God, than those of the world, or such as made no profession of religion whatever."[30] Again, the Book of Mormon said that truth was missing from the Bible and the churches, and Joseph Sr.'s religiosity likely influenced such a belief. Joseph Sr. and Jr. would therefore have to look elsewhere for this fuller truth and John Dee may have been one source of inspiration for how to proceed.

The New Israelites. Possibly the most significant, and certainly the most debated, aspect of the Smiths foray in Vermont was Joseph Sr.'s possible involvement with a proto-religious movement called the New Israelites. Led by Nathaniel Wood, a radical Congregationalist pastor, who was kicked out of the church for his radical, supernatural beliefs, the New Israelites of Middletown, Vermont, believed that among the settlers of the

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[28] Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections From the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith* (1919, reprint; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 541-43.
[29] Washing and clean clothing were part or a number of rituals including those found in grimoires. Smith's temple ritual also included those rituals (Chapter Seven).
[30] Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 1:56-57.

area were those who were of unbeknownst Israelite descent. Such individuals could be discovered by revelation through diving rods and one Winchell taught the New Israelites to use the diving rods and to search for buried treasure. One participant said "they had found that there was a vast quantity of [treasure] in the earth … and expected to get enough to pave the streets of the New Jerusalem." The New Israelites expected the advent shortly and their leader predicted an earthquake that would wipe out the Gentiles. Such claims aggravated the other townspeople who called out the militia to disperse the New Israelites. The principle historian of the movement, Barnes Frisbee, claimed in his history in 1867 that both Joseph Smith Sr. and Warren Cowdery, the father of Oliver Cowdery, may have been involved with the New Israelites and declared, "that it is my honest belief that this Wood movement here in Middletown was one source, if not the main source, from which came this monster—Mormonism."[31]

Frisbee's claim has brought considerable debate from scholars.[32] Written in 1867, Frisbee's account is late and the Smiths said they were living forty miles away at Tunbridge, Vermont, during that time.[33] Yet there were a number of similarities between Mormonism and the New Israelites—claims to Israelite descent, treasure digging, revelation, and millenarianism—and these were described in an 1828 newspaper article on the New Israelites.[34] Furthermore, Frisbee said that the Winchell who introduced the New Israelites to

[31] Barnes Frisbee, *The History of Middletown, Vermont* (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1867) in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:600-21, quotes at 613 and 621.
[32] Richard L. Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching," *BYU Studies* 24 (1984):489-560 and Larry E. Morris, "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years and the Origins of Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 39 no. 1 (2000): 106-29 argue against Mormon connections to the Wood Scrape while Michael Quinn, *Magic World View*, 121-27, argues for the connection.
[33] Smith's grandfather Asael moved to Tunbridge with his family in in 1791 and Joseph Sr. bought a farm there in 1795. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 15. Quinn notes that a Joseph Smith shows up on the census records for 1800 both at Turnbridge and Poultney, near Middletown, where the Cowderys lived. Neither record described the Smith family precisely. Quinn, *Magic World View*, 125.
[34] "The Rodsmen," *Vermont American*, August 6, 1828.

divining rods and treasure digging stayed in Warren Cowdery's home and Frisbee argued that this same Winchell also prompted Joseph Sr.'s treasure digging in New York.[35] That Warren's son Oliver, though a stranger to Smith, began serving as Smith's scribe for the Book of Mormon just two days after the two met suggests the Smiths and the Cowderys may have had a prior connection.[36] In terms of the Smiths' connection to Winchell, Michael Quinn found evidence of one Justus Winchel in western New York who spent time in Palmyra.[37] In addition to the general similarities between Mormonism and the New Israelites, Joseph's Sr.'s patriarchal blessings would tell those being blessed which tribe of the house of Israel they belonged in addition to general blessings. Frisbee said the New Israelites determined which people were of Israelite descent by using diving rods, and even described an incident where a New Israelite used the rod to determine to which tribe a person belonged.[38] Even more striking was Joseph Sr. blessing to Nathan Cheney: "Thou shalt have powers to bring up treasures of gold hid in the earth 4000 years Thou shalt have gold enough to pave the streets of the New Jerusalem, if thou exertest thyself having faith in God."[39] Again, Frisbee said that the New Israelites had made a similar claim.

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[35] Frisbie, *History of Middletown*, 1:618. One of Smith's early revelations also said the Oliver Cowdery had "another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod." *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion [Jackson County, Missouri]: W. W. Phelps, 1833), 19. This suggested that Cowdery used a divining rod like Winchell and the New Israelites. This passage was later changed in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants to "the gift of Aaron," (161). Current DC 8:6. Aaron, the brother of Moses, had a special rod by which he performed miracles. Exodus 7:9-12, 19-20; 8:5, 16-17.

[36] Smith recorded "On the fifth day of Aprile Eighteen hundred and twenty nine Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until when I had never seen him." Joseph Smith, Manuscript History, *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:74. It is possible that the families knew each other but that this was the first time that Joseph Jr. and Oliver had met. Smith used the pronoun "I" instead of "we." If the Smiths and Cowderys were connected by association with the New Israelites, a group that was seen as so odious that they were violently suppressed, they may have wanted to keep the connection quiet.

[37] The local paper said that Justus Winchel had unclaimed mail in Palmyra in 1819 and 1824. Quinn, *Magic World View,* 121-22.

[38] Frisbie, *History of Middletown*, 1:612.

[39] *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. H. Michael Marquardt (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 109.

All these similarities and possible connections indicate that the Smiths likely had some connection to or knowledge of the New Israelites. If so, the religious aspirations of the New Israelites, with many similarities to Mormonism, would have been a part of the Smith family's religiosity, and would have inclined Smith to read and be influenced by Allen's *Modern Judaism*.

Lucy's Statement. The Smiths engaged in rites meant to facilitate supernatural contact that were denounced by the established churches, but the Smiths rarely if ever mentioned such activities in their family histories. For instance, in their histories, both Smith's mother, Lucy, and Smith admitted that Smith was involved in treasure digging. Smith, however, left out the detail that he had used his seer stone and Lucy only made a cryptic reference to her son's seer stone: she said that Josiah Stowell hired Smith to dig for treasure "on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye."[40] Lucy did occasionally let some details slip, however. In her original dictation of her history (the passage was not printed in the book), after describing the hard work the family did on the farm including making "1000 lbs" of maple sugar a year, planting an orchard, and preparing to build a house, Lucy declared,

> I shall change my theme for the present, but let not my reader suppose, because I shall pursue another topic, that we stopped our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of buisness. We never, during our lives, suffered one important interest to swallow up

[40] Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:309-10. Lucy also said that her son called a pair stones he brought back with the plates "a key" (328).

every other obligation. But whilst we worked with our hands, we endeavored to remmember the service & welfare of our souls.[41]

The topic that Lucy then went on to describe was her son's visit by the angel Moroni, an event of great religious importance to the Smiths. Critics had charged that the Moroni visit was related to Smith's treasure-digging activities and perhaps Lucy worried that her telling of the story would invite those critiques.[42] The Smiths' critics also accused the family of being lazy and Lucy's defense is particularly interesting: the Smiths were involved in many worthwhile activities—they "never … suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation" and they "endeavored to remember the service and welfare of our souls" in addition to working on the farm. And yet, the wording she used for these additional activities was the kind of wording that would invite ridicule and charges of magic; she even used the term "magic circles." Perhaps since Smith did perform rituals deemed magical in relation to the Moroni visit (discussed below) and since Lucy knew that critics had leveled the charge of magic against the Moroni story, she used somewhat caricatured language as a way to defer criticism or perhaps make light of the charges.

Whatever Lucy's motivations were for making the statement, there is evidence that the Smiths were engaging in related activities. "Magic circles" in particular were a central part of treasure digging as described by many of the Smiths' associates.[43] Magic circles had been a means to invoke spirits, some of whom were expected to tell the practitioners where treasure was. By the early republic, magic circles were used in the digs themselves; the diggers drew circles where they believed the treasure to be as a way of controlling the

[41] Lucy Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:285.
[42] Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Moroni: Angel or Treasure Guardian?" *Mormon Historical Studies* 2 no. 2 (2001): 39-75.
[43] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 46, 70-72; Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast," *American Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1986): 11.

treasure and protecting themselves from the treasure guardians.[44] The magic circle was an act of creating sacred space, argues Stephen Clucas.[45] A rite described in the third edition of Scot's *Dicoverie of Witchcraft* said that as a result of the rituals performed, the practitioners "do alter the property of the ground, that from common (as they say) it becomes sanctifi'd, and made fit for Magical uses."[46] Sacred space was very important in Catholicism and was a point of debate between puritans and Arminians in the seventeenth-century England.[47] Sacred space was very important to Smith as demonstrated by his building of temples; the New Israelites, who were also involved in treasure digging, were said to have been planning to build a temple.[48] Invokers would often recite Solomon's temple dedicatory prayer when consecrating the area where they performed their rites.[49]

The King James Version used the term "soothsaying" for illicit divinatory practices in ancient Israel,[50] but the 1828 edition of Samuel Johnson's dictionary defined words related to soothsaying in neutral or positive ways, including, "Sooth … truth, reality"; "Soothsay … to predict, to foretell"; "Soothsayer … foreteller predicter"; "Soothsaying … foretelling future."[51] The 1834 edition defined "Soothsaying" as "True saying; veracity; prediction."[52] In fact, "soothsaying" often had positive definitions before the printing of the King James

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[44] Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy," 11.
[45] Clucas compares magic circles to Mircea Eliade's notion of "consecrating a territory." Stephen Clucas "*Regimen Anomarum et Corporum*: The Body and Spatial Practice in Medieval and Renaissance Magic," in *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Nina Tauton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 116.
[46] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 417.
[47] Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2009), chapt. 2; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in England Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78.
[48] Frisbee, *History of Middletown,* 1:608-9
[49] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 479; Agrippa [pseud.], *Fourth Book,* 92.
[50] Joshua 13:22; Isaiah 2:6; Daniel 2:27, 4:7, 5:7, 11; Michah 5:12; Acts 16:16.
[51] *Johnson's Dictionary, Improved by Todd,* (Boston: Benjamin Perkins, 1828), 316.
[52] *Johnson's English Dictionary, as Improved by Todd, and Abridged by Chalmers* (Boston: Cottons and Barnard, 1834), 858.

Version. For instance, in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, when describing great destruction, Spenser wrote, "The wise sooth-sayer seeing so sad a sight/ Th' amazed vulgar tells of wars and mortal fight." With "vulgar" simply meaning the common people at that time, Spenser's use here suggests that the "wise sooth-sayer" actually saw a true vision. In another passage, upon finding misfortune, Paridell exclaims, "the signs be sad, And but God turn the same to good soothsay."[53] Soothsay here meant prognostication, an activity in which God himself could be involved. Furthermore, Spenser and many other sixteenth-century writers used the word "sooth" to mean speaking the truth, which was its original meaning.[54] *The Faerie Queene* was on sale in the vicinity of Palmyra and Royal Skousen's linguistic study of the Book of Mormon found that it contained sixteenth-century English idioms; that is, idioms that predated and were not found in the King James Version.[55] The *Faerie Queene* was thus one possibility for how such idioms might have circulated in Smith's environment.[56]

The 1651 English translation of Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* conflated soothsaying with Platonic notions of prophecy. "Soothsaying" said Agrippa, "is that which the priests or others were stricken withal, and discerned the causes of things, and foresaw future things, viz. when oracles and spirits descend from the gods … which descending the Platonists call the falling down of superior souls on our souls." Agrippa

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[53] Edmund Spencer, *The Fairy Queen* 2 vols. (London, 1758), 1:70, 472. This was a reprint of the original 1596 *The Faerie Queene.* A version of the *Faerie Queene* was on sale in Smith's vicinity and I therefore cite the 1758 edition as a possibility. Quinn, *Magic World View,* 181.

[54] References to using the word "sooth" in the *Faerie Queene* include *Fairy Queen,* 1:51, 388, 392, 398, 442. The introduction to the 1610 English version of the Augustine's *City of God* even used the word "sooth," though "sooth-sayers" are wholly condemned in the text. Augustine, *Citie of God,* trans. J. H. (London, Greege Eld, 1610), 98, 133, 140, 690. The 1834 edition of Johnson's dictionary gave sources for definitions and cited Shakespeare, Spenser, Chaucer, and Sidney for the various related definitions. *Johnson's English Dictionary* (1834), 857-58. Spencer did use the term negatively in another passage: "All those were idle thoughts and fantasies,/Devices, dreams, opinions unsound,/Shews, visions, sooth-sayes, and prophesies;/And all that feigned is, as leasings, tales, and lies." *Fairy Queen,* 1:296.

[55] Royal Skousen, 'The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 25, no. 5 (2005): 2-6.

[56] A particularly important sixteenth-century text was Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* originally published in 1584. For its significance, see below.

equated this Platonic notion of prophecy by spirit possession with Christian ideas, citing 2 Peter 1:21 about prophesying by the Holy Ghost and also Isaiah 41:23: "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."[57] *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* therefore, provided another positive use of soothsaying.

The King James Version was important to Smith and even Book-of-Mormon passages from the King James Version used the term "soothsayer" negatively.[58] There was, however, an instance in which another term related to folk divination—"familiar spirit"—which was also used negatively in the Bible and Book of Mormon, was reconfigured to a positive meaning in the Book of Mormon.[59] Familiars were spirit guides, often the dead, that church officials usually viewed as demons; those who were said to converse with familiars were targeted as witches in the early modern period.[60] Yet the idea of the familiar was embraced in a particular Book of Mormon passage, which reconfigured Isaiah 29:4. When prophesying of the destruction of "Ariel, the city where David dwelt," Isaiah says, "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

The Book of Mormon interpreted this passage to be a prophesy of the destruction of Native Americans (the descendants of Book of Mormon peoples), and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (the record of their ancestors, the Nephites).

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[57] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 129, 616. The verse in Isaiah is condemning other religious beliefs, but Agrippa read the Bible in unusual ways.
[58] 2 Nephi 12:6 is based on Isaiah 2:6 and 3 Nephi 21:16 is based on Micah 5:12.
[59] References to "familiar spirit" in the Bible include Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, 27 and Isaiah 8:19 which was reprinted in the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 18:31.
[60] Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2005); John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

> After they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten. For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust.

The passage goes on to explain that the Nephites will speak "even as it were out of the ground" through their writings in the Book of Mormon.[61] Since the Mormons believed the Book of Mormon to be a holy record, the fact that it had a "familiar spirit" (it spoke the words of the dead) was a good thing despite the negative use of the word in the King James Version.

Lucy use of "sooth saying" may also have fit this pattern. The Protestant establishment, including those who translated the King James Version, had wanted to crush the religious practices of the folk including beliefs in familiar spirits and soothsaying; using "familiar spirit" and "soothsaying" for practices condemned in the biblical text would have been part of that agenda. The Smiths' embrace of those terms was indicative of their embrace of folk religiosity in opposition to the Protestant establishment. Though important to the Smiths, the Smiths were willing to read the King James Version in unorthodox ways.

"Winning the faculty of Abrac" showed up as an unexplained phrase in early Masonic writings; few understood what it meant for sure, but many speculated about its meaning.[62]

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[61] 2 Nephi 26:16-17.

[62] John Fellows, *An Exposition of the Mysteries or Religious Dogmas and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, Pythagoreans, and Druids. Also: An Inquiry into the Origin, History, and Purport of Freemasonry* (New York: Gould, 1835), 226.

Some interpreted it to mean special knowledge that one would gain through Masonry,[63] while Masonic scholar George Oliver said it had to do with Abraxas, a deity of the Gnostic Badilideans. Oliver said it related to "a charm to prevent misfortune"; those using this rite would draw a circle with the word Abracadabra in it, with the word repeated above it minus one letter, repeated until at the top was just the letter A. This formed a triangle. This drawing, Oliver said, "was supposed to convey perpetual health and happiness, and protection from temporal dangers."[64] The encyclopedia entry under "magic" said "we are taught by *Serenus Sammonicus,* that the word ABRACADABRA is an infallible remedy for semiterian fever or ague; and to banish grief of heart."[65] Smith's grandfather Asael wrote a letter of advice to his family that included the admonition, "Above every thing avoid a Melaancholly Disposition…. Shun as Death this humour, which will work you to all unthankfulness against god, unlovingness to men, and unnaturalness to your Sevles and one another."[66] Gaining knowledge, invoking deities/angels, and seeking divine protection were all important aspects of theurgy, and were also important in Mormonism (see below). "Trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing magic circles or sooth saying" were all theurgical in one way or another, all accorded with Mormonism, and all gave context to Smith's Moroni visitation.

The Chosen Son. Associates of the Smiths in Vermont and New York said the Smiths spoke of Joseph Jr. as the chosen son. Smith had a number of traits that would have set him apart in folk culture. The Green Mountain Boys said that the Smiths said that Joseph

[63] Henry Dana Ward, *Free Masonry: Its Pretensions Exposed in Faithful Extracts of Its Standard Authors* (New York, 1828), 71.
[64] George Oliver, *The Antiquities of Free-Masonry* (London: G. and B. Whittaker, 1823), 123.
[65] "Magic" in *Encyclopaedia; or, a Dictionary or Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798), 11:414.
[66] Quoted in Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 16.

Jr. was "born with a veil," which meant born with the caul: being born with the caul set children apart in European folk culture, often meaning that the child was a seer.[67] The Green Mountain Boys seemed to link that claim to Joseph Sr.'s desire to find a stone for his son by which he would "see all over the world," suggesting the caul and seeing with a stone were linked; Smith himself would claim the ability to "see" with a stone. Joseph Jr. was named after his father even though he was the third son; the Smiths tended to name third sons and daughters after their parents.[68] Seventh sons were particularly important in folk culture but third and fifth sons and daughters were also important.[69] Another trait that set children apart in European folk culture was being born near Christmas: Smith was born on December 23. European folk culture referred to such as "Christmas children" and they were said to have seeric abilities.[70] Thus Smith definitely had two important folk traits that could make a child a seer (the third child and being born near Christmas) and may have had a third (born with the caul). If any one of these traits could have made a child a seer, having all three of them would have made a child very special.

In addition, a number of neighbors recalled Smith parents saying that he was the "genus" of the family; one neighbor remembered Smith's mother saying that Smith "was born with a genius."[71] Genii (plural of genius) were guardian spirits—angels essentially—

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[67] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 43; Michael Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowen and Littlefield, 2007), 146; Eva Pocs, *Between the Living and the Dead: A Perspective on Witches and Seers in the Early Modern World,* trans. by Szilvia Redey and Michael Webb (Budapest: Central University Press, 1999), 33-34, 109, 125, 129; Ashurst-McGee, "Pathway to Prophethood," 109.
[68] Ashurst-McGee, "Pathway to Prophethood," 113-14.
[69] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 43.
[70] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit,* 43; Pocs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, 125.
[71] Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton, 1867), in *Early Mormon Documents,* 3:93; Anna Ruther Eaton, *The Origin of Mormonism* (New York: Woman's Executive Committee of Home missions, 1881), in *Early Mormon Documents,* 3:146; "Origen of Mormonism. A Contemporary of the Prophet Relates Some interesting Facts," San Francisco Chronicle, 14 May 1893, in *Early Mormon Documents,* 3:212.

and were frequently referenced in grimoires. The "genius" was the Latin term for the Greek daemon, whom Hesiod said were guardian spirits. Plato cited Hesiod's references to daemons approvingly and said not only were the daemons the messengers of the gods but that righteous humans could become daemons in the next life.[72] In the *Republic*, Socrates recounted the near death experience of a soldier who said that the souls of the dead, after they had either been purged of their wickedness or enjoyed paradise, chose "a daemon or guardian spirit" before they entered another cycle. The better one chose, the better off one would be in the next cycle.[73] In the *Timaeus*, Timaeus said the "divinity assigned this to each of us as a daemon; and that it resides in the very summit of the body, elevating us from earth to an alliance with the heavens…. As such a one always cultivates that which is divine, and has a daemon most excellently adorned residing in his essence, he must be happy in the most eminent degree."[74] In the *Apology*, Socrates said he had *daimonion,* or "divine something," that began to speak "when I was a child."[75] Socrates explained later that "my familiar prophetic power, my spiritual manifestation, frequently opposed me, even in small matters, when I was about to do something wrong."[76]

Iamblichus likewise said that souls selected daemons before they were born and that the daemon "stands as a model for us even before the soul descend into generation." The daemon "personally regulates the particulars of the life of the soul; and all our reasonings we pursue thanks to the first principles which it communicates to us, and we perform such

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[72] Plato, *Cratylus* 398 a-c; Plato, *Symposium*, 202e-203a.
[73] Plato, *Republic*, 617d-e.
[74] Plato Timaeus, 90. Citing Thomas Taylor's translation of the *Timaeus*. Plato, *The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides and Timaeus of Plato*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London, 1793), 550-51. I cite Taylors translation because Smith's book of Abraham and Nauvoo speeches had a number of similarities to Taylor's translation of the *Timaeus*, see Chapter Six. When I cite Taylors translation, I add the standard numbering system for Plato's works, in this case Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a-d.
[75] Plato, *Apology,* 31d; Pierre Destrée, "The Daimonion and the Philosophical Mission: Should the Divine Sign Remain Unique to Socrates?" *Apeiron* 38, no. 2, (2005): 63.
[76] Plato, *Apology,* 40a.

actions as it puts into our minds."[77] Christians would claim that daemons were in fact demons, or evil spirits working for Satan, but Christians spoke of guardian angels in ways similar to the way that the Hellenes spoke of daemons.[78] Gregory Thaumaturgus (213-270) referred to "that being who, by some momentous decision, had me allotted to him from my boyhood to rule, and rear, and train—I mean that holy angel of God who fed me from my youth."[79]

The 1651 English translation of Agrippa used the word "demon" instead of daemon and said that all souls had three of them: holy, nativity, and profession. "The holy demon," explained Agrippa, "is one, according to the doctrine of the Egyptians, assigned to the rational soul, not from the stars or planets, but from a supernatural cause, from God himself, the president of the demons." Calling God "the president of the demons" sounds jarring, but this makes sense when demon is understood as daemon, or a kind of angelic being. The demon of the nativity, explained Agrippa, was called the Genius and descended from the cosmos. "Whosoever therefore have received a fortunate Genius, are made thereby virtuous in their works, efficacious, strong, and prosperous. Wherefore they are called by the philosophers fortunate, or luckily born." "The demon of profession is given by the stars," Agrippa continued, and it would change as a person's profession changed. "When therefore a profession agrees with our nature, there is present with us a demon of our profession like unto us, and suitable to our Genius, and our life is made more peaceable, happy and

[77] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* 9.6.
[78] Valerie Flint, "The Demonisaiton of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe,* vol. 2: *Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Begnt Ankerloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 279-348.
[79] Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen*, 4.

prosperous; but when we undertake a profession unlike, or contrary to our Genius, our life is made laborious, and troubled with disagreeable patrons."[80]

In his *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences,* where Agrippa repudiated his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* Agrippa complained of wicked practitioners who "carry about them familiar spirits, as we read of Socrates."[81] Here, the translator conflated the daemon with the English folk notion of the familiar. Reginald Scot also referred to Socrates's "familiar divell" and the third edition spoke of how to "consult with the *Familiars* or *Genii.*"[82] Referring to Socrates's daemon as a familiar indicates that by the seventeenth century, the classical notion of the genius and the folk notion of the familiar were conflated.[83] John Dee spoke of angels in a manner similar to the genius. One angel told Dee, "*Unto men, according unto their deserts, and the first excellency of their Soul, God had appointed a* good Governour or Angel, *from amongst the order of those that are Blessed.… Therefore according to his excellency we* [angels] *are appointed as Ministers from that order, whereunto his Excellency accordeth.*" Dee also referred to one *Aphlafben* as "my good Angel."[84]

Yet orthodox churchmen were generally uncomfortable with angelic conversations. As mentioned in Chapter One, people who claimed to speaking to angels with unknown names were generally suspect and often legislated against. Meric Casaubon, though

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[80] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 527-28.
[81] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 695. After writing his *Three Books of Occult, Philosophy,* Agrippa wrote *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences,* which denounced all such learning. It was later published with *Three Books of Occult Philosophy.* Donald Tyson, "The Life of Agrippa," in Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* xxix.
[82] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nicholson (1584, reprint; London, 1886), 419, 483.
[83] Meric Casaubon also wrote of Socrates's "*Familiar Spirit,*" in his preface to John Dee's spiritual diary. Casaubon, though he published Dee's diary to warn against such spirit invocation, asserted both that Socrates's familiar "is attested by so many, so grave Authors … that I know not how it can be questioned by any man," and asserted further that "For my part I ever had a Reverend opinion of *Socrates,* and do believe (if there be no impiety in it, as I hope not) that he was, as among Heathens some respect, a fore-runner of Christ." Meric Casaubon, "Preface," in Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* [ix-x.]
[84] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 22, 43.

condemning such actions, admitted "that ancient Platonic Phylosophers of the latter times, understood [the nature of spirits] much more then most Christians," but said that good Christians would not enquire into such matters. Good Christians, said Casaubon, would not "hazard so glorious a hope, by prying through unreasonable, unprofitable curiosity, into the nature of these vassal Spirits, which God hath forbidden."[85] New England divine Cotton Mather likewise asserted that good Christian would not enquire about the nature of angels.[86]

Despite such warnings, both the fascination with antiquity and the desire for greater knowledge of the heavens prompted scholars to continue to write on subjects like the daemon/genius/familiar. At the deathbed of Cyrus's mother in Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus,* his mother tells Cyrus that she and Cyrus's dead wife Cassandana "shall be always with you, though invisible, we will descend in a cloud and be your protecting genii."[87] Dobson's encyclopedia had extensive entries under both the words genius and daemon, which included a discussion of Socrates's daemon. The encyclopedia entry felt stuck between its praise of Socrates and an unacceptable belief. Socrates was too dignified to engage in trickery and too modest to be influenced by "blind enthusiasm." However, the authors wrote "we would rather esteem Socrates an enthusiast in this instance, than degrade him to the base character of an imposter, or suppose that a spiritual being actually revealed himself to the philosopher, and condescended to become his constant attendant and counselor."[88]

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[85] Casaubon, "Preface," [xxxix-xl.]
[86] Hebert Leventhal, *In the Shadow of the Enlightenment: Occultism and Renaissance Science in Eighteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 250.
[87] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 266.
[88] "Daemon" and "Genius" in *Encyclopaedia; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1798), 5:646-47; 7:623.

Though the encyclopedia was uncomfortable with the notion of a "constant attendant and counselor," Ebenezer Sibly's *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences* (1790) embraced the idea. Sibly began his discussion of the genius saying he would give "a certain description of good and holy spirits, whose province is to watch over the affairs of men, and to guard them from the invisible assaults of the devil." Sibly then described the genius in the way Platonists had: "According to the disposition of the mind or soul, a good or evil *Genius* … accompanies invisibly every person born into the world. Their office is principally that of forewarning the person they attend of any imminent impending danger, sometimes by inward instinct, or by outward appearances; and sometimes by dreams in the night." Finally Sibly referred to "the seven *good* angels or Genii," making his conflation of angels of genii explicit.[89] Thus by the eighteenth century, genii, angels, and familiar spirits were conflated in the grimoires.[90] In his *Modern Judaism,* John Allen cited a rabbi who said, "Every man has his angel who speaks for him, and prays for him."[91]

Thus classical concepts influenced Anglo-American notions of supernatural entities. That the Smiths may have said that Joseph Jr. was "born with a genius" is an indication that such concepts trickled down to common people. Similar to Ramsay's statement that Cyrus's mother and wife became his genii after their deaths, early Mormon Edward Hunter said that Smith's brother Hyrum told him that Hunter's recently deceased son "will act as an angel to you—not your guardian angel but an auziliary [sic] to assist you in extreme trials."[92] The claim that Smith had a genius added to Smith's family's sense of his choseness. With a

[89] Ebenezer Sibly, *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences,* 2 vols. (London, 1790), 2:1092-94.
[90] Sibly used "familiar spirit" as a generic term for spirits. Sibly, *New and Complete Illustration*, 2:1100, 1102, 1106, 1113, 1123-24.
[91] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 156.
[92] Edward Hunter, autobiography, in William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter: Faithful* Steward (Salt Lake City: Publishers, 1970), 317.

father who felt resentful toward Protestant hostility toward folk supernaturalism, and who hoped to find fulfillment through accessing the power of God outside of the established rites of the Protestant churches, Joseph Jr.'s calling and gifts were a central aspect of the Smith family's religiosity.

The First Vision

Smith described undergoing a religious awakening in his youth that in some ways likely pulled him away from his family. Smith said that revivals in Palmyra in his youth split his family between his mother's Presbyterianism and his father's non-affiliation. Yet Smith was headed down a different path: "In the process of time," said Smith, "my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to desire to be united with them."[93] Methodists would have looked down on Smith's parents' religious choices: the Calvinism of his mother's Presbyterianism and what they would have called the irreligion and superstition of his father. Youths defying their families by joining the Methodists was a common early Methodist conversion motif, argues Gregory Schneider.[94] "But so great was the confusion and strife among the different denominations," Smith added, "that it was impossible for a person young as I was and so unacquainted with men and things to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong."[95]

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[93] Smith, "Manuscript History," 1:59. Neighbors remembered Smith being more heavily involved. Orasmus Turner said that "after catching a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting, away down in the woods," Smith "was a very passable exhorter in the evening meeting." Tuner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement*, in *Early Mormon Documents,* 3:49. Pomeroy Tucker said that Smith joined a Methodist class meeting but that "his assumed convictions were insufficiently grounded or abiding to carry him along to the saving point of conversion, and he soon withdrew from the class." Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism,* in *Early Mormon Documents,* 3:94.

[94] A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993), chapt. 5.

[95] Smith, "Manuscript History," 1:59.

Smith said that a vision from God (called the "first vision" by Mormons) convinced him not to join the Methodists but Smith seemed to remain somewhat nostalgic about his youthful affiliation with Methodism. As mentioned in Chapter One, not only would Smith draw on a number of Methodist practices and tenets, but he also later told Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright, "We Latter-day Saints are Methodists, as far as they have gone, only have advanced further." Mormonism "advanced further" than Methodism by embracing aspects of Christian Platonism and Smith's narratives of his first vision demonstrate a combination of Methodist and Christian-Platonic visionary motifs. Smith's descriptions of his vision had much in common with evangelical conversion experiences,[96] yet at the same time, Smith's accounts also contain the Christian-Platonic motif of enlightenment through knowledge. This combination of Methodist and Platonic themes would continue in early Mormonism; Smith's first vision narratives act as a kind of microcosm of this larger tendency.

Smith's first-vision narrative, particularly his 1839 account, also served as Smith's explanation for how and why Smith broke with Methodism in his youth. Smith told Cartwright that the Methodists "had stopped short by not claiming the gift of tongues, of prophecy, and of miracles."[97] The supernaturalism and esotericism of Mormonism was the direction that the Methodists should have taken: the Methodists, felt Smith, should have embraced his visions.

Vision Motifs. Smith's accounts of his first vision had several similarities to other narratives of the search for truth: in particular, Benjamin Abbott's (1732-1796) account of his conversion to Methodism (1805), Andrew Michael Ramsay's story of Hermes in his *The*

[96] Christopher C. Jones, "The Power and Form of Godliness: Methodist Conversion Narratives and Joseph Smith's Frist Vision," *Journal of Mormon History,* (37, no. 2 (2011): 88-114.
[97] Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher*, ed. W. P. Strckland (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curtis, 1856), 342.

Travels of Cyrus that was based on the medieval Arabic story of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe), and the quest for knowledge described in theurgical rites in grimoires. Here I compare these narratives to Smith's 1832, 1835, and 1839 accounts of his visions, while also comparing the differences between those accounts.

In the accounts, Smith said he had a spiritual awaking during his youth but that the competing churches in Palmyra confused him; he was not sure which church to join. In his 1832 account, Smith said his awakening happened around the age of twelve which led him to read the scriptures, where he "found that mankind did not come unto the Lord by that they had apostatised from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the Gospel of Jesus as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own Sins and for the Sins of the world." By looking to nature, "[M]y heart exclaimed well have the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power."[98]

Looking to nature to find God was a common motif: Plato's *Timaeus* says that we become godlike "through diligently considering the harmonies and circulations of the universe."[99] Language similar to Smith's is found in Ramsay's story of Hermes Trismegistus in *The Travels of Cyrus*. Ramsay based his story on Ibn Tufail's *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan,* which was about a baby boy who shipwrecks on a desert island and is raised by a gazelle. When the gazelle dies, the boy seeks to discover the nature of the universe by studying his surroundings and is eventually visited by an angel who gives the boy complete knowledge.[100] In Ramsay's

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[98] Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith History, 1832, in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:27-28.
[99] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 551; 90d. See Gabor Betegh, "Cosmological Ethics in the *Timaeus* and Early Stoicism," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (2003): 273-302.
[100] *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* was translated into Latin in 1671 by Edward Pococke as *Philosophus autodidactus.* It became very popular, inspiring works like Robinson Crusoe and perhaps John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*. G. A. Russell, "The Impact of the *Philosophus autodidactus*: Pocockes, John Locke and the

story, Hermes is raised by a goat but goes through a similar process after the goat dies. "He sought a long time for the cause of this change," and observing the power of the sun over life "he imagined that this star was the principle of all things, and he exposed the carcass to its rays, but the life did not return." As a result, Hermes concludes "that there was in nature of First Mover more powerful than the sun or the stars, and which gave activity and motion to all bodies." Hermes also concludes, "Man, in the midst of beings which can give him no succor, is in a wretched situation. But when he discovers the idea of a being who is able to make him happy, there is nothing which can compare with his hopes and his joys." Finally,

> The desire of happiness, inseparable from our nature, made Hermes wish to see that First Mover, to know him, and to converse with him. If I could, said he, make him understand my thoughts, and my desires, doubtless he would render me more happy that I am. His hopes and his joys were soon disturbed by great doubts. Alas! said he, if the First Mover be as good and as beneficent as I imagine him, why do not I see him? Why has he not made himself known unto me? And above all, why am I in this mournful solitude, where I see nothing like myself, nothing which seems to reason as I do, nothing which can give me assistance?[101]

In his 1839 account, Smith likewise said that he felt that he was without guidance: "[F]or how to act I did not know and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had would never know, for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passage of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible."[102]

Society of Friends," in *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden: Brill, 1994): 224-65.

[101] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 126-29.

[102] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:60.

Early modern theurgical rites were often the quest for knowledge and the prayers in such texts often sounded similar to Hermes's quest and Smith's accounts. A prayer in the early modern theurgical text *Arbatel* implores,

> Because I earnestly desire perfectly to know the arts of this life and such things as are necessary for us, which are so overwhelmed in darkness, and polluted with infinite human opinions, that I of my own power can attain to no knowledge in them, unless thou teach it to me; grant me therefore one of thy spirits, who may teach me those things which thou wouldst have me to know and learn, to thy praise and glory, and the profit of our neighbor.[103]

John Dee described his quest for heavenly knowledge to the Emperor Rudolph II in the same way. "All my life time I had spent in learning … and I found (at length) that neither any man living, nor any Book I could yet meet withal, was able to teach me truths I desired and long for: And therefore I concluded with my self, to make intercession and prayer to the giver of wisdom and all good things, to send me such wisdom, as I might know the natures of his creature. And also enjoy means to use them to his honour and glory."[104] In another place, Dee even referred to "what good Counsell the Apostle James giveth, saying, Si quis vestrum careat sapientia, postulat a Deo, &c," that is, "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God" (James 1:5.)[105] Smith's 1835 and 1839 accounts also said that he was prompted in his spiritual quest by James 1:5. "At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in

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[103] *The Arbatel of Magic, or the Spiritual Wisdom of the Ancients* in Agrippa, *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, 372.
[104] John Dee, *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed between Dr. John Dee and Some Spirits*, ed. Meric Casaubon (London, 1659), 231.
[105] John Dee, quoted in Stephen Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations and the *Ars Notoria*: Renaissance Magic and Medieval Theurgy," in *John Dee Interdisciplinary Studies In English Renaissance Thought,* ed. Stephen Clucas (Springer Dordrecht: The Netherlands, 2010), 248. This quote was not in print, but the above quote which seems based on the logic of James 1:5 was.

darkness and confusion or else I must do as James directs, that is, Ask of God," said Smith's 1839 account.[106]

Smith's 1839 account had a number of details in common with Benjamin Abbott's, a popular Methodist preacher from New Jersey, whose conversion narrative was published in 1805. Like Smith, and most evangelical conversion narratives, Abbott became convinced of his sins and went to camp meetings to learn more. Smith said he "attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit … but so great was the confusion and strife amongst the different denominations that it was impossible for a person young as I was and so unacquainted with men and things to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong." Abbott said that after he heard the Methodist preacher preach, "the people flocked round the preacher, and began to dispute with him about the principles of religion" and on another occasion, Abbott said that such disputes prevented him from speaking with the Methodist preacher. Abbott said he was tormented by his sins until in desperation he "went to a lonely placed and kneeled down to pray" in the woods. Smith also went to the woods to pray, and both Abbot and Smith said they then prayed with a vocal voice for the first time.[107] Abbott's description of what happened in the woods was similar to Smith's 1835 account of his vision: both said that they worried that someone else was there, both looked around and saw no one, and both then resumed praying.[108] Smith said he then had his vision while Benjamin Abbott continued going to meetings until one night after waking from a dream he "saw, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ" and "the Ancient of Days," both of whom forgave him of his sins. Abbott then asked if he should join the Baptists, Presbyterians, or

[106] Joseph Smith, Diary, November 9, 1835 in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:43; Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, 1:60.
[107] John Ffirth, *The Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott* (New York, 1805); 10-14; Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, 1:59-60.
[108] Ffirth, *Labours of Benjamin Abbott,* 12; Smith, Diary, November 9, 1835, 1:43-44.

Methodists and that the Lord told him, "'You must join the methodists for they are my people, and they are right.'" In his 1839 account, Smith said he also asked which of those three churches he should joined but said the Lord told him to join none of them.[109]

A key difference between Smith's 1839 account and Abbott's is that, while Abbott said the Father and Son forgave him of his sins, Smith skipped straight to asking them what church he should join. The difference is particularly striking since Smith said that he was forgiven of his sins in both the 1832 and 1835 accounts. Smith not only left the forgiveness of sins out of his 1839 description, but he also did not mention feeling sinful in the lead up to the vision, which he had in the 1832 account.[110] Thus while the 1832 and 1835 accounts sounded more like typical evangelical conversion narratives of the sinner turning to God and being forgiven, the 1839 account focused on the Christina-Platonic motif of gaining salvation by gaining wisdom. Even the biblical passage that Smith said led him to ask God focused on wisdom, James 1:5.

Knowledge and Seeing God. As a result of Hermes's prayer in *The Travels of Cyrus*, **"**The great Osiris [who] loves a pure heart, and always hearkens to its desire … ordered the first Hermes, or Mercury, to take human form, and to go and instruct him." The first Hermes then taught the second Hermes Egyptian and all the sciences; by seeking God, the second Hermes received divine knowledge from a divine being.[111] This process that Hermes underwent of studying nature to discover truths about God, and then seeking and eventually encountering God was essentially the same process that Socrates describes in Plato's *Republic.* The philosopher, explains Socrates, "looks at and studies thing that are

[109] Ffirth, *Labours of Benjamin Abbott,* 16-17; Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, 1:61.
[110] Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, 1:60-61; Smith, History, 1832, 28; Smith, Diary, November 9, 1835, 1:43-44.
[111] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 129-30.

organized and always the same, that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it, being all in a rational order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can." Socrates then gives the allegory of the cave: this world is simply an illusion, shadows on the wall. The philosopher will seek to free him or herself and ascend upward out of the cave to the sunlight. Socrates then explains that outside the cave "the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm."[112]

Salvation through knowledge was a major tenet of Christian Platonism. The *Timaeus* said, "But it is necessary that he who is sedulously employed in the acquisition of knowledge, who is anxious to acquire wisdom and truth, and who employs his most vigorous exertions in this one pursuit;—it is perfectly necessary that such a one, if he touches the truth, should be endowed with wisdom about important and divine concerns; and that he should participate of immortality, as far as human nature permits, without leaving any part behind."[113] Clement of Alexandria said that people were "perfected through knowledge." "If, then, the love of knowledge produces immortality," said Clement later, "and leads the kingly man near to God the King, knowledge ought to be sought till it is found."[114] In 1843 Smith asserted, "Knowledge is necessary to life and Godliness. wo unto you priests & divines, who preach that knowledge is not necessary unto life & Salvation. Take away Apostles &c. take away knowledge and you will find yourselves worthy of the damnation of hell…. Knowledge is the power of God unto Salvation."[115] The embrace of salvation by

[112] Plato, *Republic,* 500b-c, 517b-c.
[113] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 551; 90d.
[114] Clement, *Stromata,* 6.9; 6.15;
[115] May 21, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 207.

knowledge featured in Smith's 1839 account thus fit the larger trend of Christian Platonism and Smith's later theology.

Seeing God face to face, as Moses had, was the highest state of knowledge for Jewish and Christian Platonists.[116] Ultimately, said Clement of Alexandria, knowledge "by its own light conveys man through the mystic stages of advancement; till it restores the pure in heart to the crowning place of rest; teaching to gaze on God, face to face, with knowledge and comprehension."[117] Such was a purpose of theurgy; explains Georg Luck, "The divine fire that theurgists hope to see at some point will help them understand all of theology in a flash."[118] The beatific vision, or seeing God in pure vision in the next life also accomplished this goal (see below), and knowledge remained one of the central goals of medieval theurgical rites such as the *Ars Notoria,* or notary arts, that helped the practitioner learn the seven liberal arts.[119]

Claims to seeing God were controversial throughout the history of Christianity and were an important tendency in Christian Platonism. The Bible reported instances of prophets seeing God; Matthew 5:8 declares, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"; but 1 John 4:12 says, "No man hath seen God at any time." Seeing God also suggested controversial issues related to Platonism as demonstrated by Justin Martyr's description of his conversion to Christianity. Justin sought wisdom and tried different philosophic schools, including Platonism. Under the Platonist's tutelage, Justin "progressed, and made the

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[116] Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); 158; Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 450.
[117] Clement, *Stromata,* 7.10.
[118] Georg Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 192.
[119] Stephen Clucas, "John Dee's Angelic Conversations and the *Ars Notoria*: Renaissance Magic and Medieval Theurgy," in *John Dee Interdisciplinary Studies In English Renaissance Thought,* ed. Stephen Clucas (Springer Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2010), 231-74; Claire Fanger, ed., *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

greatest improvements daily…. I expected immediately to look upon God, for this is the end of Plato's philosophy." Not long after, Justin encountered an old Christian man who questioned the validity of Platonism and its goal of seeing God. When the old man asked Justin how the philosophers know God, Justin responded, "But, father, the Deity cannot be seen merely by the eyes, as other living beings can, but is discernible to the mind alone, as Plato says; and I believe him." The old man then asked, "Will the mind of man see God at any time, if it is uninstructed by the Holy Spirit?" "Plato indeed says that the mind's eye is of such a nature," Justin responded, "and has been given for this end, that we may see that very Being when the mind is pure itself." The old man then attacked the notion that soul had a kinship with God: "For God alone is unbegotten and incorruptible," said the old man, "and therefore He is God, but all other things after Him are created and corruptible."[120] Justin said he was convinced by the old man's reasoning, and having rejected the soul's kinship with the divine, converted to Christianity.

The issue of the soul's kinship with God was important in both Christian Platonism and early Mormonism (Chapter Six) as were the issues of both how one saw God and whether one could see God in this life. Augustine discussed these themes in his *De Genesi ad litteram,* where he listed his very influential typology of vision. Based on Aristotle, there were three types of vision: the bodily, the spiritual or imaginary, and the intellectual. We see images with out eyes, we can picture the images in our minds, but the highest form was contemplation in our intellects. Augustine said that seeing God in our intellects in this life is possible and that this is how Moses and Paul saw God. Augustine interpreted the phrase, "no man can see God and live" to mean that those who see God are transformed in some sort of

[120] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapts. 2-5.

way. Smith's scriptures would also speak of holy men seeing God and being transformed to do so.[121]

Seeing God was the soul's ultimate desire according to Augustine, and this became the foundation for the notion of the beatific vision in the Middle Ages: in the next life, righteous soul would rest in the vision of God, the ultimate happiness.[122] Although Augustine said that the intellectual vision of God was possible in this life, Augustine's typology was used in the medieval and early modern periods to limit the validity of such visions. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton argues that Augustine's typology led to confusion in the Middle Ages over what was a true vision because Augustine had said that the intellectual was the highest and the sensory the lowest.[123] By the late Middle Ages scholars began to argue that these lesser types of vision were suspect because demons could corrupt them.[124] Kirby-Fulton argues that Julian of Norwich censored her own visionary writings: she took out "overtly visionary" passages and only left "intellectual" ones.[125] Yet people still desired such a vision in this life. The medieval theurgical text, *The Sworn Book* of Hornorius described a lengthy ritual that lasted several weeks, and at the end the practitioner was promised to see God in a dream.[126] Such books were condemned as "superstitious" and seeing God remained controversial. One

[121] Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teachings of SS Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, (London: Constable, 1932), 74-85.
[122] Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History,* 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 59, 89-90.
[123] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 21.
[124] Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45, 49.
[125] Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion,* 315.
[126] Robert Mathiesen, "A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book* of Honorius of Thebes," in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 143-62.

Pieronne the Breton was burned at the stake in the fifteenth century for claiming that "God often appeared to her in his humanity."[127]

With the Reformation, says Stuart Clark, "Protestants continued to pay lip service to the possibility that apparitions might be good angels but, in effect, they had narrowed spectral visual phenomena almost entirely to the realm of the demonic." People could experience God through the scriptures, not visions.[128] Yet people in Protestant lands continued to see visions, often to the chagrin of the clergy. The eighteenth-century evangelical revival resulted in numerous visionary claims because Christians were encouraged to have a saving spiritual experience, which resulted in visions for some. Ministers worked to censor and suppress such claims among their parishioners.[129] Eighteenth-century Scottish minister William McCulloch's extensive collection of religious experiences of his congregants contained reports of numerous visions, but the manuscript was heavily edited, often removing or qualifying visionary claims. "They thus cut out almost all mention of ecstatic religious experience," Leigh Eric Schmidt notes, "such as visions, voices, and trances—all of which potentially threatened the authority of Scripture as well as the authority of those who were the superintendents of that Word." The editors were often willing to leave in visionary claims if the claimant said that he or she saw the vision "by the eyes of faith" or "with the eyes of the mind." Claims to seeing the vision with the bodily eyes were most likely to be edited. Thus the Protestants continued to use Augustine's typology that made bodily visions lowest and most suspect. Schmidt argues that the

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[127] Andre Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices,* ed. Daniel E. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame: Ind. University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 262.
[128] Clark, *Vanities of the Eye,* 217, 165.
[129] Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 21-42.

ministers sought to downplay the visionary aspects of the experiences "in order to save revival supporters from charges of enthusiasm and disorder."[130]

McCulloch's colleague, James Robe wrote a book describing the revivals and demonstrated the same tendencies. Robe was worried about the "exceeding great misrepresentations" of those who claimed that the revivalists were seeing visions. To prevent such, Robe said he "instructed the congregation, by the help of grace, in the expressest, strongest, plainest manner I could, That Jesus Christ in the body cannot be seen by any with their bodily eye in this life." Since bodily visions in this life were impossible, said Robe, then any visions his congregants reported were unimportant. "And therefore if any of them should afterwards think they got any such sights; they would be well persuaded, that it was owing to the strength of their imaginations, to the disorder of their head, and the humours of their bodies at that time: and that it was not real." As a result, said Robe, any visionaries were "easily persuaded that no weight was to be laid upon any of these things."[131]

Benjamin Abbott said he saw God and Christ "by faith," while Smith simply said he saw them. Schmidt argues that the distinction between the "eye of faith" and the "eye of the body" was likely lost on the laity.[132] Smith himself was always loath to minimize the full implications of his experiences in anyway. "I cannot believe in any of the creeds of the different denominations," said Smith in 1843, "because they all have some things in them I cannot subscribe to though all of them have some thruth [sic]. but I want to come up into the presence of God & learn all things but the creeds set up stakes, & say hitherto shalt thou

[130] Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communions and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 146, 148.
[131] James Robe, *Narratives of the Extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God, at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, etc.* (Glasgow, 1790), 200-1.
[132] Schmidt, *Holy Fairs*, 148.

come, & no further.—which I cannot subscribe to."[133] While ministers like Robe were eager to convince visionaries that "no weight" was to be placed upon their visions, Smith insisted in placing the full weight upon his own. Any wording that would reduce the full implications of seeing God was therefore unacceptable to Smith. Seeing God was one of the central ambitions of early Mormonism. One of Smith's early revelations declared, "Verily thus saith the Lord, It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh their sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am."[134]

Trinity. Despite the differences between the accounts, both the 1832 and 1839 accounts contain both Methodist and Christian-Platonic elements. The 1832 account had elements similar to the story of Hermes in *The Travels of Cyrus* (Platonic) but also had forgiveness of sins (evangelical). The 1839 account left out forgiveness of sins and focused on knowledge (Platonic) but had striking similarities to Benjamin Abbott's account (evangelical). There were some important differences between the accounts, however. In Smith's 1839 account, he said he saw the Father and the Son, while in his 1832 account he only mentioned one being, "the Lord," who "was crucifyed for the world," while in his 1835 account Smith said he saw two beings but didn't way who they were.[135] This coupled with the fact that the Book of Mormon draws little distinction between the Father and the Son (often referring to Jesus as "the Father and the Son"),[136] has led historians to claim an evolving notion of the Trinity in early Mormonism, from modalism (the same being) to

[133] October 15, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 256.
[134] Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, 210; current, 93:1.
[135] Smith, History, 1832, 1:28. Most of the other accounts of Smith's visions say that he saw two beings but do not say who the beings were. Orson Pratt, *A Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840) in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:151; Orson Hyde, *Ein Ruf aus der Wuste* (Frankfurt, Germany, 1842), in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:163; Joseph Smith to John Wentworth, *Times and Season* 3 (1 March 1842), in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:170.
[136] Mosiah 15:2-5, 3 Nephi 1:14.

homoiousianism (three different beings).[137] By the end of his life, Smith would state explicitly that the Trinity were three distinct beings.[138]

Who one saw when one claimed to see God was an important question. This issue came to a head in 399 when Egyptian monks were criticized by other Christians for their claims to seeing an embodied God. Paul Patterson argues that these monks sought the Eternal Word or the Son in prayer; they did not say that they could see the Father. The belief in a visible, embodied Son or Logos, and an invisible Father was a widely held belief in early Christianity but after Nicaea, many Fathers were uncomfortable with assigning different natures to the Father and the Son, arguing that such a view smacked of Arianism. Augustine felt this way, argues Paul Patterson: "Although [Augustine] was not willing to state dogmatically what one *ought* to believe about the vision of God, he was sure of what one ought *not* to believe—anything that would compromise the doctrine of the divine incorporeality or distinguish too sharply between persons of the Trinity."[139]

Throughout the history of Christianity, claims to seeing the Father were much rarer than claims to seeing the Son. The woman who was burned at the stake for claiming to see the Father suggest that such claims were particularly controversial. Jane Lead gave vivid descriptions of the Trinity as separate beings in her heavenly visions and a side note in Dee's spirit diary said, "The Trinity distinct," in reference to the different aspects of Godhead.[140] The issue of the Trinity was hotly debated in the eighteenth century with both Unitarians and Arians putting forth claims. One Samuel Clarke, a clergyman for the Church of England and

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[137] Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, ed. Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 17-33.
[138] June 16, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 378. Notions of the Trinity could vary considerably in Smith's day. See Hnnah Adams, *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathan, Mahomoten, and Christian, Ancient and Modern*, 4th ed (Botson: James Eastburn, 1817), 290-92.
[139] Paul A. Patterson, *Visions of Christ: The Anthropomorphite Controversy of 399 CE* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck: 2012), 60, 90.
[140] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 26-29; Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 371.

protégé of Isaac Newton's was censured in the early eighteenth century for teaching that the Trinity were separate beings.[141] Andrew Michael Ramsay summarized Clarke's views in *The Travels of Cyrus*. Said Ramsay, "In order to silence the incredulous, and make this mystery intelligible to them, a famous doctor of the church of England, and, as I am assured, the greatest philosopher of modern times, believed that it would do no prejudice to the faith, to consider the three Persons of the Trinity as three individual agents, or three distinct beings, though of the same substance."[142] Again, Smith would assert the position of "three distinct beings" in his later speeches;[143] his 1839 First Vision account, said that the Father and Son were distinct beings.

Clarke was accused of Arianism, the third and fourth century heresy that taught that Christ was subordinate to the Father and created by him. Ramsay, wanting to defend Clarke against this charge, declared, "This opinion is as far from Arianism, as Arianism is from Socinianism…. Arius held, that he was created or produced out of nothing like finite beings, but yet from all eternity, that is, before all time. The learned Dr. Clarke maintains every where, that the Word is not a creature, but an emanation from the Father, co-eternal and consubstantial … and consequently that the Word is not a precarious being which God may annihilate."[144] Scholars now argue along with Ramsay that Clarke was not an Arian, but instead promoted homoiousianism, or three separate but alike beings.[145] Smith did not seem particularly concerned to avoid the charge of Arianism but he never said that the Son was

[141] Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Context, Sources, and Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), chapt. 5.
[142] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 349.
[143] June 16, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 378.
[144] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 349.
[145] Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke,* 136-37.

created or particularly subordinate.[146] Smith would teach that all beings, including Christ and pre-mortal humans, were uncreated and co-eternal with the Father (Chapter Six). Similar to Ramsay's description of Clarke's views, an early Mormon poem used the word "emanate" to describe the relationship between humans and God. Copied into Mormon apostle Wilford Woodruff's ledger, the authorship is unclear, though a member of Smith's inner circle likely wrote it. The hymn tells of a vision that Enoch had of the pre-mortal Adam who "em/-enated and came down from God."[147] An adaptation of this hymn was printed in the Mormon's periodical, *The Evening and Morning Star,* in 1833. This version declared that Enoch "rent the vail and wonders see. With God he saw his race began,/ And from him emanated man."[148] Origen said that Christ was "an unsullied emanation of [the Father's] almighty glory," said that the Father and the Son were distinct, and Charles Buck's entry on Origenists said that "the spirits created by God are emanations and streams from his own abyss of being."[149]

Scholars now argue that Clarke's position was the same as Isaac Newton's. Newton had taken the Arian position in his earlier writings but later switched to the homoiousian position.[150] After studying the writings of the fourth-century fathers, Newton concluded that the homoiousian position was the original intent of those who wrote the Nicene creed.[151] Again, Smith position seems to have been similar to Newton's and Clarke's; this was one

[146] I am not aware of that charge of Arianism was ever made against Smith. Theologians probably would have considered the charge of Arianism to be too mild.
[147] *The Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books,* edited by Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 509-511.
[148] "Songs of Zion," *Evening and Morning Star* (May 1833), 96.
[149] Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 68, 75; "Origenists," Buck, *Theological Dictionary,* 422; "Origenists," Adams, *Dictionary of All Religions,* 212.
[150] Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke,* 175.
[151] Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, "Was Isaac Newton an Arian?" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 1 (1997) 57-80.

instance in which Newton's ideas were similar to and may have influenced Smith's notions of deity (Chapter Six).

Rejection. Smith did not mention Methodism in his accounts before 1839 and Methodism generally played a lesser role in the various accounts written after 1839. Methodism may have been on Smith's mind because certain Methodists had played key roles in the Mormons' violent expulsion from Missouri in 1838.[152] Smith had been involved in Methodism in his youth and the recent violent attacks by certain Methodists may have made Smith view his youthful affiliation with that church as a significant aspect of his youthful conversion. Indeed, Smith's 1839 account could be read as a kind of satirization of Abbott's account, particularly in the similarities between their accounts of the rejection of their stories by preachers. Abbott said that after his vision, his wife's Presbyterian minister asked Abbott to visit him and that after dinner, "He told me he understood that God had done great things for me; whereupon I related my conviction and my conversion[,] he paid a strict attention until I had done, and then told me that I was under strong delusions of the devil."[153] In Smith's 1839 account he said he mentioned his vision to only one person:

> I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist Preachers who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement and conversing with him on the subject of religion I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had. I was greatly surprised by his behavior, he treated my communication not only lightly but with great contempt, saying it was all of the Devil, that there were no such things

[152] Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 132.
[153] Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labour,* 19-20.

as vision or revelations in these days, that all such things had ceased with the apostles and that there would never be any more of them."[154]

The contrast here is striking: Abbott's vision was rejected by the Presbyterian minister, and Smith said that his vision had been rejected by the Methodist minister, who was of same faith as Abbott. Furthermore, in Smith's 1839 account, he said that Christ told him to join none of the churches because they had "a form a Godliness but they deny the power thereof."[155] Having the form of godliness but denying the power was a charge that evangelicals often made against those who criticized belief in divine manifestations, or whom evangelicals called "formalists."[156] Smith seemed to be saying that in rejecting him and his vision, the Methodists had become formalists and had betrayed the religion of Benjamin Abbott. Smith also did a seeming play on words with Abbott's account in a retelling of the vision toward the end of his life. Abbott said that when he asked God what church he should join, God told him "'You must join the methodists for they are my people, and they are right.'" In this account, Smith said that he asked God "must I join the Methodist church," and that God responded, "No—they are not my People, have gone astray."[157] As Smith told Peter Cartwright, the Methodists had "stopped short" by not embracing supernaturalism to the degree that the Mormons had. "If the Methodists would only advance a step or two further, they would take the world," said Smith. "We Latter-day Saints are Methodists, as far as they have gone, only have advanced further."[158]

Moroni

[154] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:61-62.
[155] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:32.
[156] Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions,* 16-17.
[157] Alexander Neibaur, Journal, May 24, 1844, in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:190.
[158] Cartwright, *Autobiography*, 342.

Though Smith dictated the 1839 account nearly twenty years after the event, the Methodists of the era would have had problem with the degree to which Smith took his supernaturalism. Jon Butler argues that Methodism underwent a change around 1820, the years Smith said he had his vision: "Memoirs of second-generation itinerants say little or nothing about dreams. Methodists revivals of the 1830s paled in comparison to those that Abbott led in the 1790s."[159] I argue here that feeling that the Methodists had rejected his experience and gifts, Smith turned to his father's folk Christianity to find expression of the power of God.[160] This religiosity consisted of various rites and practices deemed magical, which included the supernatural search for buried treasure. Quinn notes a connection between Smith's dating of his vision and Smith's treasure digging activities; Smith's first treasure digging activities may have started shortly after his first vision.[161]

Treasure digging was often part of the larger folk religiosity prevalent on the New England frontier. Just as the supernatural expressions of evangelical religion expanded on the Yankee frontier, Alan Taylor notes, "It was not until the late eighteenth century that treasure seeking proliferated in the Yankee's new backcountry settlement in northern New England and western New York." As religious experience was paramount for frontier evangelicals, "For some," argues Taylor, "no experience with the supernatural seemed more tangible than the pull of the diving rod or the precise creation of a magic circle."[162] Smith likely felt that such practices would aid him in his religious quest of discovering holy knowledge lost to the world and absent from the established churches. Most importantly,

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[159] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 241.
[160] A number of scholars argue that Smith may have turned toward folk practices as a result of his vision. Ashurst-McGee, "Pathway to Prophethood," 219.
[161] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 136, 141.
[162] Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast," *American Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1986): 15, 22.

such practices would allow Smith to practice and develop his own supernatural gifts. This quest had a culminating moment in what Smith described as a visit from the angel Moroni who told Smith of his calling, which included finding and translating golden plates.

The Seer. An often vital part of treasure digging was the seer.[163] Seers were those with the special gift of second sight, who could see aspects of the invisible world, including treasures in the ground. Such were often young and were set apart in ways described above: born with the caul, born near Christmas, or born in a particular order. Other important qualifications were youth, virginity, and the possession of a seer stone.[164] Again, young Joseph Smith possessed these qualifications and thus would have been ideal. Seeing treasures was just one of the seers' abilities; seers also could find lost objects. In his 1826 trial, Smith declared that "while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds; that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone for lost property for 3 years."[165] But seeing treasure in the ground was one of the most prized abilities of seers.[166] Joseph Jr.'s reputation was such that in 1825 he was hired by Josiah Stowell to help search for treasure in northern Pennsylvania.[167]

Smith was brought up on charges as a disorderly person as a result of his work for Stowell in 1826.[168] A 1736 English law against cunning folk outlawed "pretending" to perform divining acts. Such was an important shift for how the courts viewed the cunning

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[163] Taylor, "Early Republic's Supernatural Economy," 20.
[164] Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 152; Eva Pocs, *Between the Living and the Dead: A Perspective on Witches and Seers in the Early Modern World,* trans. by Szilvia Redey and Michael Webb (Budapest: Central University Press, 1999), 8, 32, 143; Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life* (Houndsmill, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008), 234.
[165] "A Document Discovered," *Utah Christian Advocate* (Salt Lake City) 3 (January 1886) in *Early Mormon Documents* 4:249.
[166] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 152; Pocs, *Between the Living and the Dead,* 8, 143.
[167] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 48.
[168] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 52.

folk, argues Owen Davies. "In legal terms, at least, they were no longer considered to be doing the devil's work, and their magical activities were no longer considered as technically feasible but rather explicitly fraudulent pretenses designed to fool the credulous."[169] "Pretending" was at the heart of the charges against Smith: the law for disorderly person in New York included those "pretending … to discover where lost goods may be found."[170] Stowell and others testified on Smith's behalf by arguing that Smith's abilities were real, but such efforts were futile because the court had no mechanism for declaring seers legitimate. The trial record used the word "pretended" in both Smith's and Stowell's testimony when describing Smith's ability even though that was clearly not a word that Smith or Stowell would have used. Those who testified against Smith simply said that Smith claimed that he could see in his stone; thus Stowell and Smith's accusers were both providing the same condemning evidence. The final witness, one Jonathan Thompson, testified that "he is certain that Prisoner, can, divine things by means of said Stone and Hat; that as evidence of fact—Prisoner looked into his hat to tell him about some money Witness lost 16 years ago, and that he described the man the Witness supposed had taken it, and disposition of money." Immediately after this statement, the transcript recorded, "And therefore the court finds the defendant guilty," demonstrating that regardless of Thompson's belief in Smith's ability, his testimony only proved Smith's guilt.[171] Though Smith was only fined $2.68 and a local later said that he was "allowed to escape," Smith had learned a lesson in keeping such activities quiet; he could not be exonerated as a legitimate seer in the courts.[172]

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[169] Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), 21.
[170] *Laws of New York, Revised,* 1813, 1:114, sec. 1, cited in *Early Mormon Documents,* 4:248, n. 6.
[171] "Document Discovered," 4:249-55.
[172] "Document Discovered," 4:256; [Abrum W. Benton,] "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* (Utica: New York) 2 (April 9, 1831): 120 in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:97

The trial revealed other aspects of the Smiths' practices. One W. D. Purple recalled Smith's father testifying at the trial that "both he and his son were mortified that this wonderful power which God had so miraculously given him should be used for filthy lucre … he said his constant prayer to his Heavenly Father was to manifest His will concerning this marvelous power."[173] Joseph Sr.'s statement suggests a certain ambivalence toward the practice.[174] His son's gift should not be used for filthy lucre, but at the same time, many treasure diggers felt that God ought to bless the righteous poor. Says Alan Taylor, "Many rural folk reached the hopeful conclusion that God would signify His favor by bestowing material good fortune on the deserving."[175] A European prayer to Saint Corona implored, "Whoever asks you in the name of Jesus Christ your dear bridegroom, in his name you have power to give worldly goods to me, a poor and needy person, so I beg you with all my humble heart, oh virgin and martyr Corona relieve me from my needs and my poverty by giving me 50000 florins of good gold for the salvation of my soul through the redemption of the needy body."[176] Taylor also argues that treasure digging was "a supernatural economy" that acted as "an alternative to a disappointing natural economy."[177] Capitalism had been hard on the Smiths: Joseph Sr. lost big on a failed foray into ginseng and lost the family farm

[173] W. D. Purple, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism. Historical Reminiscences of the Town of Afton," *Chenago Union* (Norwich, New York) 30 (3 May 1877) in *Early Mormon Documents,* 4:135.
[174] Smith's early associate Martin Harris later said reported, "Joseph said the angel told him his must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them. He must not lie no swear, no steal." Martin Harris, interview, *Tiffany's Monthly* (May) in *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* ed. William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (1958, reprint; Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1994), 31.
[175] Taylor, "Early Republic's Supernatural Economy," 22.
[176] Quoted in Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 88-89.
[177] Taylor, "Early Republic's Supernatural Economy," 8.

in Tunbridge, Vermont.[178] Joseph Jr. worked for Stowell when his family was struggling to make the payment on their farm in Palmyra, which they would also eventually lose.[179]

The ethics of treasure digging also stipulated that those who prayed to find treasure would dedicate much of the treasure to good works, particularly helping the poor. One treasure ritual said that if the supplicant were pious and took the Eucharist, then on Christmas Eve a large gold box of money would be delivered to him or her on condition that he or she gave a large part of it to the poor.[180] The Book of Mormon expressed a similar ethic. As the Nephites began to search for gold in the New World, the prophet Jacob warned them that "because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they." Such attitudes would bring on the Nephites the punishment of God, warned Jacob. To avoid God's wrath, the Nephites were to

> Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.[181]

God would help the righteous who had "obtained a hope in Christ" find treasure because they would do good things with it.

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[178] Bushamn, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 18-19.
[179] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 46-48.
[180] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 87.
[181] Jacob 2:13-19.

Treasure digging had a number of other religious aspects that were also central to Mormonism, including creating sacred space,[182] aiding the dead,[183] finding holy things in the ground,[184] and needing priesthood and revelation to find the treasure.[185] Such similarities also set the stage for Smith's encounter with the angel Moroni.

The Angel. In Lucy Smith's history of her son, after describing the family's hard work in Palmyra she said that she would turn to another topic but that she didn't want the to reader to think that in discussing the other topic "that we stopped our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of buisness." Again, Lucy wanted to make clear that the family worked hard, and that the other topic was not a distraction from their hard work. Furthermore, by listing the activities of "trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing magic circles or sooth saying" as things the reader might suppose because she pursued the other topic suggests that these activities were somehow related to the other topic. The topic that Lucy then turned to in her history was her son's visit by the angel Moroni.[186]

As I argue at the beginning of the chapter, "trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing magic circles or sooth saying" were all activities to invoke the power of God and were in accordance with acts that the Smiths did perform, particularly those related to treasure digging. The primary purpose of magic circles was to invoke spirits and thus was a

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[182] Stephen Clucas "*Regimen Anomarum et Corporum*: The Body and Spatial Practice in Medieval and Renaissance Magic," in *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Nina Tauton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 113-30. See below.
[183] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 74-78. See Chapter Five.
[184] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 49-50. See below.
[185] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 154, 167. See Chapter Three.
[186] Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," 1:285, 289-90. In the manuscript version, there are two visions of Joseph Sr. that correspond to the print version that were inserted between Lucy's quoted statement and the Moroni visit. Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," 1:287, 289. In the printed version, Lucy also added details about the life of Joseph Jr. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 1:286-89.

theurgical act, argues Stephen Clucas.[187] Many such acts were done to "bind" neutral or evil spirits. One of the rituals in the Scot's third edition declared, "*Seeing God hath given us the power to bruise the Serpents head, and command the Prince of Darkness, must more to bear rule over every airy Spirit: Therefore by his strong and mighty Name* **Jehovah** *I do conjure you.*" The logic here was that the righteous should have power over demons similar to exorcists. In fact, Scot's third edition referred to spirit invokers as exorcists.[188] Scot himself equated invoking with Catholic exorcism: "The papists you see, have their certeine general rules and laws, as to absteine from sinne, and to fast, as also otherwise to be cleane from all pollusions, &c.: and even so likewise have the other conjurors. Some will saie that papists use divine service, and praiers; even so doo common conjurors (as you see) even in the same papisticall forme."[189] In the words of Owen Davies, "In their use of certain elements of prayer, exorcism and holy objects, cunning-folk borrowed from Catholic practices, not only at the time but also in subsequent centuries."[190]

Early Mormons also engaged in exorcism, and Smith, particularly in his later speeches, spoke of the importance of gaining power over spirits. In May 1843, Smith declared, "Salvation is nothing more or less than to triumph over all our enemies & put them under our feet & when we have power to put all enemies under our feet in this world & a knowledge to triumph over all evil spirits in the world to come then we are saved."[191] Smith's ultimate goal for both himself and his followers was deification: Smith's 1843 revelation declared that when one achieved that state "then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be Gods, because they have all power, and

[187] Clucas "*Regimen Anomarum et Corporum*," 113-30.
[188] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* quote at 481, references to exorcists, 471-72, 476, 481-84.
[189] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 377.
[190] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 36.
[191] May 14, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 200.

the angels are subject unto them."[192] One of Smith's early revelations even alluded to binding. The Lord explains to the Saints the importance of keeping his commandments and then adds, "I the Lord am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."[193] Though the passage stressed obedience to God, its reference to being bound may have been an allusion that those involved in spirit invocation would have understood.[194]

"Trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing magic circles or sooth saying" could all be deemed theurgical acts; it made sense for Lucy to refer to such rites as a lead into the Moroni story because as Michael Quinn convincingly argues, the details surrounding Smith's Moroni visitation suggests that Smith performed some kind of ritual. The evidence for this claim includes, 1) Smith remembered the exact date the visitation (while his memory of the date of the First Vision was very inconclusive) suggesting that that date was important, 2) the date the visitation was the autumnal equinox and Quinn found instances of such rites being performed on that day,[195] 3) the Smiths possessed lamens, or ritual parchments, one of which was for invoking angels,[196] 4) Oliver Cowdery's letter to W. W. Phelps said that Smith prayed earnestly to "commune with some kind of messenger," suggesting the anticipation of an angel,[197] and 5) Smith was visited by an angel.

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[192] "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1 (January 1853): 8; current Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20.
[193] Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, 220; current 82:10.
[194] There were instances, like that of invoking the genius discussed below, of encouraging holy spirits to enter in to a glass that were not presented as coercive but more of a holy persons relationship with a holy being. This was similar to how theurgists in late antiquity would invoke spirits into statues.
[195] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 141, 154.
[196] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 104, 115. The diagrams on the Smiths' lamens suggest that they were for theurgical purposes: one for angel invocation and two for protection against evil spirits and other forms of harm (104). Iamblichus said that one of the purposes of theurgy was to "ward off some other of the dangers that menace us," and invoking divine beings was central to theurgy. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 1:11, 4:2, 5:23.
[197] Cited in Quinn, *Magic World View,* 143.

An additional piece of context for the Moroni visit was the statement from the neighbor that Smith was "born with a genius." Again, this was a Platonic notion that remained prevalent in grimoires. According to Iamblichus, one of the important aspects of theurgical rites was to discover who your daemon was.[198] Because the daemon or genius was so important to how people lived their lives, said Agrippa, it was vital "in the first place know thy good Genius." "The ancient magicians did teach an art to finding out the name of a spirit," Agrippa explained further and then described a rite of casting letters onto some sort of astrological diagram. "By this art some of the Hebrew and Chaldean masters teach that the nature, and name of any genius may be found out."[199] Again, John Dee said that he had a "good angel" and toward the end of his life, Dee's friend John Pontoys asked to Dee ask the angels who his "good angel" was.[200] John Heydon, a seventeenth century English theurgist, said that by performing such a rite, he discovered "the name of my genius *Malhitiriel,* who *had upon Earth familiarity with Elias.*"[201] Dobson's encyclopedia defined theurgy as "the power of working extraordinary and supernatural things, by invoking the names of God, saints, angels, &c."[202]

The third edition of Reginald Scott's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* actually contained a ritual for invoking the genius, which contained some parallels to Smith's Moroni visitation. "First," the third edition explains, "after the manner prescribed by Magicians, the Exorcist must inform himself of the *name* of his good *Genius,* which he may find in the Rules of

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[198] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* 9.5.
[199] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, 528, 547. Agrippa added, "The Platonists say that Socrates perceived his Demon by sense indeed, but not of this body, but by the sense of the ethereal body concealed in this: after which manner Avicen believes the angels were wont to be seen, and heard by the prophets: that instrument, whatsoever the virtue be, by which one spirit makes known to another spirit what things are in his mind, is called by the apostle Paul the tongue of angels" (530).
[200] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, sect. 2:44.
[201] Quoted in Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 73, emphasis in original.
[202] "Theurgy," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 18:501.

Travius and *Philermus*; as also, what *Character* and *Pentacle,* or *Lamin,* belongs to every *Genius*.'"[203] The descendants of Smith's older brother Hyrum possess a handful of items for theurgical purposes, including three lamens. Quinn's research on the Smiths' lamens, particularly the "Holiness to the Lord" lamen, demonstrates that the diagrams on the lamen were meant to invoke angels and that the diagrams came from Scot's *Discoverie*, Ebenezer Sibly's *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences*, the pseudonymous *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, and Francis Barrett's *The Magus,* which copied material from all these books.[204] The logic of the Holiness-to-the-Lord lamen, however, seems to have been undergirded by the genius invocation rite in the third edition of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

The Rules of *Travius* and *Philermus* were not extant, so whoever drew up the Holiness-to-the-Lord lamen would have had to rely on other information. In the middle of the Holiness to the Lord lamen, there is a twelve-point star with the word Rafael written in the middle, with some kind of lettering written on the points.[205] Again, the genius ritual said in order to "inform himself of the *name* of his good *Genius,*" one needed to the right "*Character* and *Pentacle*." Barrett's *The Magus* had a picture of the same symbol; whoever composed the lamen may have believed that that symbol was the correct pentacle for Smith's genius.[206] Barrett also copied instructions from the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, which said, "And in the center of the lamen, let there be drawn a character of six corners; in the middle whereof, let there be written the name and character of the star, or of the spirit his

[203] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 483.
[204] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 104-14.
[205] Quinn has a picture of the lamen in *Magic World View,* fig. 50.
[206] The picture of the star in is Francis Barrett, *The Magus* (London, 1801) facing page 2:106. Quinn compares the images in *Magic World View,* figs. 79 and 80.

governor, to whom the good spirit that is called is subject."[207] For Scot's genius ritual, "The Magician must also perfectly be informed to what Hierarchy the Order the *Genius* belongs, and how he is dignified in respect of his Superiours and Inferiours; for this form of Conjuration belongs not to the Infernal or Astral Kingdom, but to the Celestial Hierarchy."[208] The composer may have believed that Smith's genius was of the order of Raphael.

Because the genius was part of the celestial hierarchy, Scot's third edition explains, "Great gravity and sanctity is herein required, besides the due observation of all the other injunctions, until the time approach wherein he puts the Conjuration in execution."[209] Many of the ritual descriptions emphasized the need for holiness and purity when performing the ritual. In the same ritual that described how to make lamens similar to the Smiths', the *Fourth Book* described a ritual where one should be "ritually disposed for many days to such a mystery"; the invoker should be "chaste, abstinent," confessed, and fasting.[210] In Smith's description of the Moroni visit, he said that because of his rejection by the churches as a result of his vision,

> I was left to all kinds of temptations, mingling with all kinds of society I frequently fell into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and the foibles of human nature which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God. In consequence of these things I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when on the evening of the above mentioned twenty first of September, after I had retired to my

[207] Henry Cornelius Agrippa [pseud], *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, trans. Robert Turner, ed. Donald Tyson (1655, reprint; Woodbury, Minn.: Llewellyn, 2009), 97. Barrett's reprint of these instructions is in *Magus*, 2:94.
[208] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 483.
[209] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 483.
[210] Agrippa [pseud], *Fourth Book,* 95-96. Such rules were common for these rituals. Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 344, 347, 479.

> bed for the night I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me that I might know of my state before him.[211]

Not only were invokers supposed to be pure when they performed rituals, seers or scyers were generally supposed to be young virgins.[212] Smith said his Moroni visitation occurred when he was seventeen, a time when he was both losing his youth and was in the throws of sexual maturity. This state may have caused Smith to wonder if he still retained his seeing gift. One of the Smiths' lamens was specifically designed to aid a virgin in retaining his or her purity.[213]

As part of need for ritual purity, the *Fourth Book* also added that one needed "to separate himself as much as may be done, from all perturbation of mind, and from all manner of foreign and secular business."[214] If invokers were to avoid secular business, this may have been a reason why Lucy said, "let not my reader suppose, because I shall pursue another topic, that we *stopped our labor*." If these rituals called for avoiding "secular business" at the time of ritual, the Smiths may have occasionally done so. Many of the Smiths' neighbors accused the Smiths, Joseph Jr. in particular, of being lazy, though a number of Smiths' friends and employers said he was a very hard worker.[215] If Smith was to avoid secular business at times, this could explain this dichotomy.

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[211] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:63.
[212] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 152; Michael Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowen and Littlefield, 2007), 101; Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts,* 296.
[213] Quinn, *Magic World View*, 114.
[214] Agrippa [pseud.], *Fourth Book*, 96.
[215] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 232-33, 48. Daniel Hendrix recalled that Lucy "always declared that [Smith] was born with a genius, and did not have to work. 'Never mind about my son Joseph,' said she one day when my employer had rallied her upon her heir's useless ways, 'for the boy will be able some of these fine days to buy the whole of Palmyra and all the folk in it. You don't know what a brain my boy has under that old hat.'" "Origen of Mormonism," in *Early Mormon Documents*: 3:212.

These rites were to be performed so that the practitioner was prepared "when the day is come wherein the Magician would invocate his proper *Genius.*"[216] In a number of accounts, Smith said he was visited by Moroni on September 21st or 22nd.[217] This was the time of the autumnal equinox and Quinn found instances of angel invoking on the equinox; but this does not seem to have been common.[218] One of the descriptions of a ritual in the third of edition of Scot said, "In the Construction of Magical Circles, the hour, day, or night, and season of the year, and the Constellation are to be considered; as also what sort of Spirits are to be called."[219] As astrological considerations were important and since Raphael ruled Mercury, Quinn also noted that Mercury was the planet for several groups of days of the year including September 21-30. This coupled with the fact that 1823 was Mercury's year, September 21 or 22, 1823, was a good time to call upon angels associated with Raphael.[220] The genius ritual then says, "He must enter into a private closet, having a little Table and Silk Capet, and two Waxen Candles lighted."[221] Smith said Moroni appeared to him at his bedside. The Smiths lived in a small cabin and had a number of children who would have shared bedrooms but Smith may have been allowed to pray privately; his family members who described the visitation did not say they or anyone else was in the room with Smith when Moroni appeared.[222] Either way, Smith would construct holy buildings (temples) that, among

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[216] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 483.
[217] Smith, History, 1832, 1:29 says September 22; Smith, Manuscript History, 1:63, says September 21.
[218] Quinn, *Magic World View*, 141, 154.
[219] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 480.
[220] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 113.
[221] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 483. The *Fourth Book* described rituals with similar practices. Agrippa [pseud], *Fourth Book,* 96. John Dee also had private rooms set aside for their angel communications, one of which he referred to as a "goodly little Chappel." Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 388, 409, 445.
[222] Lucy described the visit in her "Preliminary Manuscript," 1:289-90. Her published account quoted her son's account. Smith's brother William gave a brief description in an interview with James Murdock, printed as "The Mormons and Their Prophet,' *Congregational Observer* (Harford, Conn.) 2 (3 July 1841): 1 in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:478. How exactly Smith proceeded on the night of the visitation is speculative, but the many similarities that the Smiths' descriptions had with Scot's genius ritual suggests that that ritual may have been a guide.

other purposes, were sacred spaces with altars for the purpose of communing with holy beings (Chapter Four).

The genius ritual said the invoker also needed "a Chrystal Stone shaped triangularly about the quantity of an Apple."[223] Lucy said that the night her son returned home with the plates he also brought home with him two stones that he said were buried with the plates. "Upon examination," said Lucy, she "found that it consisted of two smooth *three-cornered* diamonds set in in glass."[224] The invoker was then to bless the stone and other objects on the altar,[225] and then say the following prayer:

> *O thou blessed* **Phanael** *my Angel Guardian, voushsafe to descend with thy holy Influence and presence into this spotless Chrystal, that I may behold thy glory and enjoy thy society…. If ever I have merited thy society, or if my actions and intensions be pure and sanctified before thee, bring thy external presence hither, and converse with thy submissive Pupil, by the tears of Saints and Songs of Angles, In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are one God for ever and ever.*"[226]

That the invoker was to refer to his or her genius as "my Angel Guardian" again demonstrates that the idea of the genius and guardian angel overlapped.

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[223] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 483.
[224] Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 1:328-29, emphasis mine.
[225] Stephen Clucas notes that these private theurgical rites imitated Catholic rites. Clucas, "*Regimen Anomarum et Corporum,*" 118. Blessing objects on the mass altar was a medieval practice. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science: During the First Thirteen Centuries of Our Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923) 2:391-92. Joseph Sr. was said to have blessed treasure-hunting objects in the Mormons' Kirtland temple and Wilford Woodruff, then president of the LDS church, later blessed Joseph Jr.'s seer stone in a temple in Utah. Quinn, *Magic World View,* 243, 265.
[226] Scot, *Dicoverie of Witchcraft,* 484. Neoplatonic theurgist likewise attempted to invite gods to inhabit statues. In the words of Gregory Shaw, "The theurgist did bring the gods down into the world, but he did so at their command and to fulfill their will…. Making the soul an embodiment or actualization of their will." Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 187.

Though Lucy said that Smith received the stone with triangles later, Smith had other seer stones at the time of the Moroni visit. Smith said that Moroni appeared in his room by the foot of his bed, but as Smith left any mention of his seer stone out of all of his narratives, his use of his seer stone was a possibility in this case, especially since a number of acquaintances said that Smith used the stone for numerous activities including finding where the plates were buried.[227] The genius ritual then said that the practitioner should stare into the stone for a while and that he or she would eventually start seeing images. After fifteen minutes of seeing images, the invoker would see his or her genius "in the very same apparel and similitude that the person himself is in." Smith said Moroni "had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness…. His hands were naked and his arms also a little above the wrists. So also were his feet naked as were his legs a little above the anckles."[228] The instruction for the genius ritual didn't say how to dress, but a number of other rituals described in the *Discoverie* said to where a black robe over a white garment.[229] The ritual described in the *Fourth Book* said to wear "a long garment of white linen, close before and behind, which may cover the whole body and the feet, and girt about you with a girdle." "You must not enter into the holy place," the instructions continued "unless it first be washed, and arrayed with a holy garment; and then you shall enter into it with your feet naked."[230] These instructions, coupled with the instructions of the genius prayer and the importance Dee's garden vision (that was similar to Joseph Sr.'s) placed on holy clothing, indicate that Smith himself may have been dressed as he described Moroni. Smith had those initiated into his temple rite at Nauvoo dress in white robes as part of the ceremony, and when the initiates

[227] Ashurt-McGee, "Pathway to Prophethood," 286.
[228] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:63.
[229] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 471, 476.
[230] Agrippa [pseud.], *Fourth Book*, 96; Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 347, also talked about wearing "cleane white cloathes."

reached the holiest room they were told to "take off your shoes, 'the place on which you stand is Holy Ground.'"[231]

After the genius appeared in the glass, he would give "instructions unto the Exorcist how to lead his life and rectifie his doings."[232] Martin Harris said that the angel told Smith "he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them. He must not lie, swear, nor steal."[233] Lucy said that when Moroni told her son about the plates, he added "you cannot get it until you learn to keep the commandments of God For it is not to get gain."[234] In his 1839 account, Smith said that Moroni told him "that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family) to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbid me."[235] Smith said he then underwent a four-year process of preparing himself to receive the plates. Lucy recorded that her son came home late one evening, "seemingly much exhausted he was pale as ashes." Upon inquiry, Smith told his father, "I have received the severest chastisement that I ever had in my life." Smith explained further that the angel "says I have been negligent that the time has now come when the record should be brought forth and that I must be up and doing that I must set myself about the things which God has commanded me to do." Smith was happy to report that "I know what course I am to peruse an[d] all will be well."[236] Like the genius was expected to do, the angel told Smith "how to lead his life and rectifie his doings."

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[231] Mr. and Mrs. McGee [Increase Van Deusen], *The Mormon Endowment; A Secret Drama, or Conspiracy, in the Nauvoo Temple, in 1846* (Syracuse: N. M. D. Lathrop, 1847), 9; Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of Their Iniquities* (Lynn Mass.: The Author, 1848), 10.
[232] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 484.
[233] Martin Harris interview in *Tiffany's Monthly* (May 1859) in *Among the Mormons,* 31.
[234] Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," 1:290.
[235] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:66.
[236] Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," 1:324-25.

The description of the genius ritual concluded, "But especially (which is the proper work of the *Genius*) he will touch his heart and open his senses and understanding, so that by this means, he may attain to the knowledge of every Art and Science, which before the opening of his Intellect was lockt and kept secret from him."[237] Not only did Smith later teach that knowledge was salvific, but Lucy also said that that angel told her son that the plates were "not to get gain But it is to bring forth light and intelligence which has been lost from the Earth."[238] Thus the Moroni story as told by Smith and his mother paralleled the genius ritual in Scot's third edition in many ways, lending support to the Smiths' neighbor's claim that Lucy said her son had been "born with a genius." In 1854, Mormon apostle Orson Hyde said that Moroni was "the guardian angel of America."[239]

These similarities demonstrate ways in which Platonic concepts had influenced and mixed with folk rites and how people like the Smiths used them. Though such rituals relied on books that the Smith's probably didn't own, in the words of Johannes Dillinger, "The true expert did not necessarily own the book or all the books needed for a treasure hunt. However, he did know which books were best and where to find them."[240] In the words of Owen Davies, "The Neoplatonic discourses on the angelic and spiritual hierarchies contained in the *Arbatel, Heptameron, Book Three* and *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy,* and the *Steganographia,* and the keys they provided to direct celestial communication, appealed to

[237] Scot, *Disoverie of Witchcraft,* 484.
[238] Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," 1:290.
[239] *Journal of Discourses,* 6:369. My thanks to Mark Ashurst-McGee for this quote.
[240] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 93. Argues Owen Davies, "While there is no evidence that the Smiths and their followers owned copies of Scot, Sibly, or Barrett, there is little doubt that the Smith parchments were used for overly magical protective purposes, and were derived primarily from Scot and Sibly." Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 149. Quinn asserts that the Smiths likely had mentors for their rituals, either Justus Winchel, who was involved with the New Israelites or Luman Walters, or both. *Magic World View,* 116-24.

the prophetic and revelatory aspects of Protestant theology."[241] The similarities between the Smiths' description of the Moroni visit and the genius prayer in Scot, suggests that the Smiths felt this way.[242]

The Golden Plates. Since Moroni told Smith that he was supposed to dig up a book of golden plates, many in Smith's day and in subsequent years noted the many similarities between Smith's Moroni account and the supernatural search for treasure, in which Smith was also involved.[243] "There is no denying the fact that this is a treasure hunting narrative," argues Johannes Dillinger. "The topic of the story is obviously a supernatural find of an old object of very high material value that was hidden in the ground and that nobody could claim ownership of."[244] Furthermore, treasure guardians often insisted that the treasure be put to good use and Moroni insisted that the plates could not be used for getting rich but for God's purposes only. Treasure lore said that ghosts haunted treasures because the treasure represented unfinished business related to the ghost. Smith said that Moroni had buried the plates, which contained Moroni's and Moroni's people's writings, and the Book of Mormon prophets (including Moroni) said they were eager for their writings to come forth.[245] Thus the buried plates represented Moroni's unfinished business; he needed to deliver the plates to Joseph Smith (who also happened to be a treasure digger).[246] Treasure lore said that once the treasure was found and put to good use, the ghost could move on to heaven: finding treasure was the equivalent of saving the dead.[247] Smith did not refer to his interactions with Moroni

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[241] Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53.
[242] Though Davies did not include Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* in the above list, he said elsewhere that it was "the most influential vehicle for the dissemination of high magic to a wider audience. Davies, *Popular Magic,* 125.
[243] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 139-42.
[244] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 177.
[245] 2 Nephi 3:20; 26:16; Enos 1:12-18; Mormon 8:14-16, 24-28; 9:36.
[246] Mormon 9:34.
[247] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 74, 78.

in these terms, but Moroni did insist that the treasure be put to good use and performing rituals to save the dead did become an important early Mormon practice (Chapter Five).

Early Mormon critics charged that Moroni was in fact a treasure guardian and that Smith later changed his story by saying that Moroni was an angel.[248] Yet this is a false dichotomy: "The angel replaced the ghost," noted Dillinger in reference to Smith's story, "however, saints and angels as treasure guardians were not unheard of."[249] Indeed, the figure of Moroni suggested an overlap between treasure guardian, ghost, saint, and angel—the kind of mixing of categories typical of the folk who were uninterested in the categorical boundaries of theologians. Moroni was a dead human, whose returning soul could be thought of as a ghost;[250] he was the one who had buried the treasure and then told Smith how to find it, and thus was a treasure guardian; like a saint, Moroni led the way to a holy object; and Smith called Moroni an angel. That humans could become angels was a major theme in Judeo-Christian apocalypticism and was taught by Christian Platonists like Clement of Alexandria.[251] The third edition of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* reported that the Pythagoreans

> have strange and antick opinions, concerning Souls, and Ghosts, or starry Spirits: whom they alledge to be frequently converted into *Gods,* or *Daemons,* or *Demi-Gods,* and *Heroes*: (as the *Platonicks* do,) … and then they do frequently appear, to those

[248] Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Moroni: Angel or Treasure Guardian?" *Mormon Historical Studies* 2 no. 2 (2001): 39-75.
[249] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 177.
[250] Protestants, following Augustine, taught that humans could have no contact with the dead, but people in Protestant lands continued to see ghosts. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghost in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society,* trans. Taresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 8-20. "More than any other manifestation of popular religious culture," argues Peter Marshall, "belief in ghosts challenged the Protestant maxims that the dead had no interest in the affairs of the living, and the living no role to place in securing the happiness of the deceased." Peter Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 234.
[251] Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford, 1993); Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 264.

> that be like themselves; instructing, and forewarning them: It was also the belief of many wise, and antient Philosophers, that the *Oracles* were from such *Daemons,* as had been the Ghosts, or Souls of the wise and excellent men.[252]

This grimoire, therefore, reported the Platonic notion of deification (an important theme in Mormonism, Chapters Four and Six) and said that holy people could return and perform functions similar to Moroni.

Dillinger argues the treasure-digging motifs were based on medieval relic lore: "There was significant parallels between the stories about relics in medieval hagiography and early modern treasure lore. The vision, usually the miraculous apparition of the saint, mirrored the appearance of a ghost. Both—the saint and the ghost—were 'special' dead."[253] "Smith," argues Dillinger, "resacralized the treasure. His treasure story was evidently religious in character. He brought the treasure motif back to its roots in the medieval stories about saints and relics. However, the sacred object in his narrative was no longer about *memoria*, the sacred memory of a saint. In a strangely 'enlightened' fashion, the treasure was now about a doctrine. In a way, the treasure—the golden Book of Mormon—was the doctrine."[254] The Book of Mormon was also about *memoria*—the Nephites—yet it was doctrine that the Book of Mormon writers said they wanted remembered.[255]

Some treasure digging stories had striking similarities to Smith's narrative of finding the golden plates. While preaching in Delaware, Benjamin Abbott "met with a man that gave

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[252] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 504. Cambridge Platonist Henry More argued in 1659 that ghosts did return and that they did good things. Peter Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 263. The encyclopedia entry on daemons quoted Plutarch assertion "that souls of virtuous men are advanced to the rank of daemon; and that from daemons, if they are properly purified, they are exalted into gods," and that such had been the case of Isis, Osiris, Hercules, and Bacchus. "Daemon," 5:646.
[253] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 177, 49-50. The term "special dead" was coined by Peter Brown in reference to saints. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[254] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 178.
[255] Jacob 4:2-5.

me a strange relation—That he had seen a spirit, and knowing it to be his mother, he was much surprised." His mother's spirit "told him that at a certain spring, at such a tree and such a distance from the tree, she has buried half a dozen plates for him when he was a small child. When she had concluded, she vanished out of his sight…. He went to the place, found the spring and the tree, and soon found the plates; he took them up, and brought them home, and they were then in his possession."[256] Though very similar to both Smith's Moroni account and treasure digging narratives, Abbott did not record what type of plates they were or what their significance was.

Buried books have a long history such as in the Nag Hammadi library. Owners of grimoires would sometimes bury them: John Dee encouraged Edward Kelley to bury his grimoires and seventeenth-century English shepherd John Reed buried two grimoires when he moved from Somerset to Dorset.[257] As grimoires were especially important for teaching treasure diggers how to find treasure, argues Dillinger, "The hunt for treasure often implied the hunt for magic books. These could be regarded as so valuable that they became part of the treasure." Sometimes the books could be received through other divine means; Dillinger cites the case of Kaspar Greissing who, when brought up on trial in 1770, "told the court indignantly that he did not own any 'Doctor books' and had no need for them. God himself and the Virgin Mary had given him two books with golden letters by the angels."[258] The angels also told Dee to print the books they told him to write in gold and another told Dee, "the doctrine I taught you was true; and is worthy to be graved in golden Tables."[259] Jane

[256] Ffrith, *Labours of Benjamin Abbott,* 100.
[257] Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and* Religion (London: Routledge, 1988), 212; Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 197.
[258] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting,* 92-93.
[259] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 20, 217, 373.

Lead's first visions of Mother Wisdom have similarities both to treasure hunting and to Smith's finding of the golden plates. In Lead's first vision, Wisdom told Lead, "I am to unseal the Treasures of God's deep Wisdom unto thee," and in her second, Wisdom held "out a Golden Book with three Seals upon it, saying, Herein lieth hidden the deep Wonders of Jehovah's Wisdom, which hath been sealed up, that none could, or ever shall break up, but such as of her Virgin-Offspring shall appear to be."[260]

The idea of a forthcoming book was taught by Gerard of Borgo San Donnino in the thirteenth century. Gerard was a follower of Joachim of Fiore, who taught that there were three ages of the earth—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and that in the forthcoming age of the Spirit, the institutions of the world would become holy. Gerard believed that in the age of the Spirit a new holy book would superseded the Bible, just as the New Testament had superseded the Old.[261] Joachim influenced Jacob Boehme who influenced Lead, and Lead used the same Joachimite logic as Gerard to argue for her own new revelations.[262] In response to the objection that not all her visions were biblical, Lead wrote,

> In Answer to this, it is given from him, who Was, and Is, and Will be the true Inspirer, to open new Volumes of his Mind, which are not to be less reputed and credited than the foregoing Scriptures: The Old Testament having been appropriated to the Ministration of the Father, the New to the Son; now the Third Day is come, in

[260] Jane Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens Watered by the Rivers of Divine Pleasure and Springing up in All the Variety of Spiritual Plants* (London: J. Bradford, 1696), 18-20.
[261] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 51, 130.
[262] Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 75. I am not arguing that Gerard influenced Lead or Smith, only that like Lead, Gerard was influenced by Joachim and that both Gerard and Lead spoke of new scripture.

which the Holy Ghost will have His, which will Excel all before it, to Unseal and Reveal what yet never was known or understood.[263]

Similar to how Lead referred to God continuing to reveal new truth, the Book of Mormon uses the phrase, God is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," several times to argue for continuing revelation.[264] Also similar to Lead, one of Smith's revelations declared in reference to Mormon preachers, "And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, shall be scripture; shall be the will of the Lord; shall be the mind of the Lord; shall be the word of the Lord; shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation."[265]

Other references to golden plates with holy writings include the Masonic myth of Enoch's golden triangle with God's name written on it that was found in the temple.[266] In Andrew Michael Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus,* Cyrus entered the temple of Jupiter with Pythagoras and saw statues of the gods each holding a golden tablet with a Platonic aphorism written on each one. These included, "*I give being, life and motion to all creatures; no one can know me, but he who seeks to resemble me*"; "*The gods make themselves known to the heart, and conceal themselves from those who endeavor to comprehend them by the understanding alone*"; and "*The divine laws are not a chain to fetter us, but wings to raise us to the bright Olympius*."[267] All these ideas were can also be found in Smith's revelations.[268]

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[263] Jane Lead, *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, In the Variety of Eight Worlds* (London, 1695), 8. Lead's mentor, John Pordage, specifically cited Joachim to argue that there would be no "Third Testament." Harris, "Theosophy of Jacob Boehme," 181. Whether Lead disagreed with Pordage or not on this point, she did argue for the legitimacy of her own extra-biblical revelations.

[264] 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 2:4; 27:3; 29:9; Alma 31:17; Mormon 9:9; Moroni 10:19. The Doctrine and Covenants does as well: 20:12; 35:1. The phrase is similar to Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

[265] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 148, current DC 68:4.

[266] David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica, William Williams, 1829), 205.

[267] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 200.

Thus Smith's treasure quest became a theurgical quest of contacting a guardian angel that would lead him to divine knowledge. The divine knowledge was a special golden book for which there were similarities in treasure hunting lore, from special golden books delivered by angels to special books buried in the ground.

Conclusion

Smith's early theophanies, therefore, were greatly influenced by his family's religiosity. Hostile to Protestantism and embracing an enchanted worldview of spiritual gifts and the supernatural search for lost treasure, it was the religiosity of Smith's father in particular that influenced Joseph Jr. Smith's theophanies were all interactions with his father's religiosity: Smith's first vision was a result of his questions over joining the Methodists (which would have been in opposition to his father) but the rejection of the vision by the Methodist preacher turned Smith toward his father's religiosity and to embracing his gift of seeing. Such an activity suggests connections to John Dee (a famous seer-stone owner), whose spirit diary had a number of visions in line with Joseph Sr.'s recorded dreams. The similarities between the Smiths' description of Joseph Jr.'s visitation by the angel Moroni and the genius ritual found in Scott's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, suggests another way in which Smith embraced the cunning-folk religiosity that his father practiced. Furthermore,

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[268] For the first statement, Plato's *Theaetetus* says people should become "as like God as possible" (176b.) Plato also says that we become like God by studying his work, the universe (*Republic* 500c, *Timaeus* 90b-d). Deification was important in early Mormonism (Chapters Four and Six). For the second, the Neoplatonic theurgists argued that philosophy only could only lead one so far; theurgy, or the aid of the gods, was needed for full understanding (Emma C. Clark, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell, "Introduction," to Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], xlix-l.) Smith's revelations stressed the importance of study and faith (2 Nephi 9:28-29; DC 88:118). For the third, Plato used "wings" as a metaphor for how humans ascend to the gods (*Phaedrus* 248c) and in *Timaeus*, God gives pre-mortal humans instructions on how to return to heaven (42b). One of Smith's revelations declares, "And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you; or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation." (DC 82:8-9).

Joseph Sr.'s likely involvement with the New Israelites suggests interest in modern Judaism and John Allen's book. For Joseph Sr., things were missing from the churches and even the Bible, and it was his son's calling to restore this lost truth.

Scholars have long noted the Smiths' involvement with practices considered magical, but setting up the false dichotomy between religion and magic has clouded the nature of the influence of these activities on the development of Mormonism, with scholars generally arguing for Smith transitioning from magic to religion. Brooke did so, as mentioned in the introduction, and Michael Quinn, whose *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* was so important for advancing the scholarship on the Smiths' folk practices, though he argues for continuity between those rites and early Mormonism, muddies the issue with his continued insistence on "magic" as an etic category. Ultimately Quinn is unable to explicate exactly what a "magic world view" was in distinction from a "religious" one (other than orthodox Protestantism.)[269] Mormon scholars have generally upheld the religion/magic divide; Samuel Brown, who attempts to avoid the use of the term magic, still engages in describing folk rites as fundamentally different than "religion."[270] Alan Taylor made an excellent argument for the fundamental religiosity in the Smith's folk practices, arguing that the "transition from treasure seeker to Mormon prophet was natural, easy, and

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[269] Quinn, *Magic World View*.

[270] Busham, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 50; Mark Ashurst-McGee argues for continuity, but still attempts to make a distinction in Smith's practices between religion and magic, arguing at one point, "Rather than confirming Mormonism as a magical phenomenon, Moroni's visit indicates that Mormonism originated in distinction from 'magic.'" Mark Ashurst-McGee, "A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet," (MA Thesis, Utah State University 2000), 295.Samuel M. Brown, "Reconsidering Lucy Mack Smith's Folk Magic Confession," *Mormon Historical Studies* 13, no. 1-2 (2012): 1-14. An example of the kinds of categorization that Brown uses in includes the statement, "The Abrac triangles and magic circles were not designated to save souls, they were intended to achieve proximate temporal ends, to provide safety from harm, and to find buried treasure…. A reference by a pious former Presbyterian to the 'service' and 'welfare' of 'souls,' even one who actively participated in folk esotericism, would not be a reference to charm drawings, papers, or talismans" (7). As argued above, this statement is simply inaccurate. Further, Brown concludes that there is that "no compelling evidence of a later centrality of such rites to the major body of the Church" (8). I argue that such rites were foundational in the development of the early Mormon liturgy in Chapter Four.

incremental."[271] Yet I would even go further to argue that this wasn't much of a transition: the Smiths believed that Joseph Jr. was chosen by God and blessed with certain gifts and the Smiths continued to believe this after Smith founded Mormonism. Smith did undergo something of a transition as he sought to bring his heavenly knowledge to a wider audience. Founding and leading a church was certainly a new role for Smith, but such a role was the fulfillment of his childhood calling. Such beliefs and practices were foundational for the institution and development of Mormonism. Thus there was no break between the supposed "magic" of Smith's early years and the "religion" of Mormonism.

[271] Taylor, "Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith's Treasure Seeking," 21.

Chapter Three: The New Church

Introduction

In Joseph Smith Sr.'s first recorded dream, his wife said he saw a field filled full of "dead fallen timber" and had a spirit guide tell him that "this field is the world which is ina[n]imate & dumb as to the things pertaining to the true religion or the order of heavenly things[.] all is darkness."[1] In Joseph Sr.'s dreams, he wanted something that he wasn't able to obtain; the world he lived in did not have the true religion that Joseph Sr. sought. Such an attitude was called Seekerism, the general belief that the true religion was not on the earth but that it would be restored some day. Seekers usually believed that the true authority had been lost with the early church and such people hoped that God would bring back the true church and the apostles soon; Dan Vogel argues that the many of the Smiths and also their followers had Seeker beliefs.[2] I argue here that the Mormonism suggested a very distinctive type of Seekerism, one that aligned with Philadelphianism. Not only did Smith claim to restore the lost authority of the apostles, but he also called that authority "priesthood" and said that the highest authority was "Melchizedek priesthood," like Jane Lead did. Smith not only claimed to restore the spiritual gifts of the New Testament, but Smith also claimed to bring forth lost scripture in a golden book (as had Lead) and also promised new revelation (as had Lead). Thus in founding what Smith originally called the Church of Christ in 1830 in New York, with its new scripture and new claims to authority, Smith fulfilled or was in the process of fulfilling many aspects of Lead's religious vision. The following chapter explores

[1] Smith, "Preliminary Remarks," 1:255.
[2] Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1988).

these key aspects of Mormonism's founding—the Book of Mormon and Mormon claims to authority—in the context of Catholic and Christian-Platonic ideas, ideas that line up particularly well with those of Jane Lead and her "circle," including John Dee.

The Book of Mormon

Not only did Smith's story of receiving the gold plates from an angel have folk-Christian and Christian-Platonic themes but the story of Smith's translation of the record did also. The Book of Mormon said it was written in a kind of Egyptian writing ("reformed Egyptian") that could only be translated through revelation. Platonists had long been fascinated by hieroglyphs and declared that they not only contained a higher truth but also said that that truth could only be understood through revelation. Smith used seer stones to perform the revelatory translation of the record. John Dee wrote his spirit diary by having Edward Kelley dictate what the angels said to him when he was looking in Dee shew stone. Other similarities to Dee are in the text itself: two tree visions in the Book of Mormon were similar to two tree visions in Dee's spirit diary.

The Book-of-Mormon tree visions address a major theme in the Book of Mormon: the scattering and gathering of Israel, particularly focusing on Native Americans as a lost branch of Israel. The Book of Mormon's purpose was to let the Natives know of their ancestry in addition to restoring lost truth removed from the Bible. Interestingly Allen mocked Thomas Taylor's hope of restoring Platonism by saying, "Not less visionary or pitiable are the expectations of the modern Jew, who anticipates the Talmud over the Gospel, and the establishment of the Synagogue on the ruins of the Church. See *Crool's Restoration*

of Israel."[3] The restoring of Israel was a central theme throughout the Book of Mormon as was incorporating Christian Platonism into Smith's fulness of the gospel. Thus the Book of Mormon promoted both of the restorations that Allen mocked. These restorations, however, would be fundamentally Christian: the Book of Mormon prophesied that the book "shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews … that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance."[4] Yet Israel would be restored through the fulness of the gospel: Christianity that included truths lost to Protestantism.

To give a brief synopsis, the Book of Mormon begins c. 600 BCE with the prophet Lehi and his family leaving Jerusalem to avoid the Babylonian destruction of 592. Lehi and his family travel in the wilderness for many years before building a boat and sailing to the promised land (the Americas) where Lehi's sons split into two groups: the righteous followers of the fourth son Nephi (Nephites), and the wicked followers of the oldest son Laman (Lamanites). Covering one thousand years of Nephite history, the text contains lots of war and preaching, including a visit from Christ himself shortly after his resurrection. Eventually the Nephites grow wicked to the point that the God allows the Lamanites to destroy them, and after wandering for a number of years, the last Book-of-Mormon prophet, Moroni (the son of the major record-compiler, Mormon), buries the plates. In addition, the Book of Mormon contains a short account of the Jaredites who journeyed to the New World shortly after the tower of Babel. Led by the very righteous "brother of Jared," his family's descendants undergo cycles of righteousness, wickedness, and destruction until they finally

[3] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 194.
[4] Mormon 5:14.

become so wicked that they totally destroy each other around the time the Nephites arrive. The Nephites then find the Jaredites' record and include an abbreviation of it with the other Book-of-Mormon texts. The narrative of the Book of Mormon itself isn't particularly Platonic except for the story of Abinadi, a prophet killed by the evil king Noah, whose story has a number of parallels to the trial of Socrates. Both teach against the establishment, are brought up on trial, are condemned to die, pronounce a curse on their executors, and inspire younger followers to continue their work.[5]

Much has been written on the possible sources of the Book of Mormon text with battle lines generally drawn between believers who see it as ancient and critics who see it as a product of Smith or an associate. This dissertation will not weigh in on that debate but will instead look at Christian-Platonic themes in the Book of Mormon that set the stage for later theological developments.[6]

Translation. Smith said he finally received the plates on the night of September 22, 1827, but the writings on the plates were in a different language.[7] The Book of Mormon said the writings were in "reformed Egyptian" and that "no other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore [the Lord] hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof."[8] The "means for the interpretation" were the seer stones that Smith said he found buried with the golden plates. These seer stones, the Book of

[5] Mosiah 11-17; Plato, *Apology*.
[6] I do discuss possible contexts for a handful of ideas in the Book of Mormon and placing Book-of-Mormon ideas in the nineteenth-century context can be seen as arguing against the book's validity since the book claims to be ancient. Again, it is not my intent to argue against the book's validity and the belief that truth is timeless or the claim that Smith, with his nineteenth century context, played a active role in the translation (see Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2011]) are believer's ways to account for such similarities. My intent isn't to argue for the validity of the Book of Mormon either, my purpose here is simply to analyze a few Book-of-Mormon passages that have Christian-Platonic themes.
[7] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:68.
[8] Mormon 9:32, 34.

Mormon said, were given to the brother of Jared by the Lord.[9] The Nephite king Mosiah seems to have obtained those stones: when the Nephite found a Jaredite record, one explained that Mosiah "can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And these things are called interpreters."[10] In Smith's 1839 account, he said Moroni told him "there were two stones in silver bows and these stones fastened to a breastplate constituted what is called the Urim & Thummim deposited with the plates, and the possession and use of these stones was what constituted 'seers' in ancient or former times and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book."[11] After an angel took away John Dee's shew stone because Dee and Edward Kelley balked at the command to share wives (Chapter Seven), Christ told them (in another seer stone) after they began to acquiesce, "*And behold, this that is taken away shall be restored again to you with more power. And Might shall be in it, and a breastplate unto you, of Judgement and Knowledge*."[12] Dee would get a better stone, "*a breastplate unto you*"; Smith likewise received better seer stone with a breastplate.

The Urim and Thummim was part of the breastplate of judgment in ancient Israel and was used for divining.[13] "That God was often consulted by *Urim* and *Thummim,* is sufficiently evident from *several* Scriptures," asserted Adam Clarke in his biblical commentary, "but *how,* or in *what manner,* he was thus consulted, appears in *none*."[14] "In short, there are as many opinions concerning the urim and thumim as there are particular

[9] Ether 3:23, DC 17:1.
[10] Mosiah 8:13. The genius ritual discussed in the previous chapter said that the genius would descend into the stone and the encyclopedia said that genii "were the interpreters and agents of the gods." "Genius," in *Encyclopaedia* (1798), 7:623.
[11] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:64.
[12] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, pt. 2, 19.
[13] Exodus 28:30; 1 Samuel 28:6.
[14] Clarke, *Biblical Commentary*, Exodus 28:30.

authors that wrote about them," noted the encyclopedia.[15] Reginald Scot said the Jews were "informed by Urim: so as the preests by the brightness of the twelve pretious stones conteined therein, could prognostice or expound anie thing," a concept that came from Josephus.[16] Smith's Urim and Thummim only had two stones to Josephus's twelve, but the encyclopedia reference to Josephus on the topic just said "the precious stones set in the high-priest's breast-plate, which by extraordinary lustre made known the will of God to those who consulted him."[17] That is, the reference only mentioned "stones" and did not give the number. Adam Clarke cited Rabbi Meachem "The *Urim* and *Thummim* were not the work of the artificer … but they were a *mystery* delivered to Moses from the mouth of God; or they were the work of God himself."[18] The Book of Mormon said that the brother of Jared received the stones directly from God himself.[19] The brother of Jared apparently took the stones with him to the New World, so the text did not claim that they were the same as the Urim and Thummim in ancient Israel. Smith's Book of Abraham, said that Abraham had visions by the Urim and Thummim; apparently there were multiple Urim and Thummim.[20] Smith would later teach that "the white stone mentioned in Rev. c 2 v 17 is the Urim & Thummim … and a white stone is given to each of those who come into this celestial kingdom."[21] Thus all the righteous would eventually get such a stone.[22] Jane Lead spoke of

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[15] "Urim and Thummim," *Encyclopaedia* (1798), 18:691.
[16] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nocholson (1584, reprint; London, 1886), 139; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 3.8.9 in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus,* trans. William Whiston (Worcester, Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), 1:242-44. Medieval scholars cited the idea of the powerful stones on the high-priest's breast plate as proof that certain stones had supernatural power. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science: During the First Thirteen Centuries of Our Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), 2:389.
[17] "Urim and Thummim," 18:691.
[18] Clarke, *Biblical Commentary,* Exodus 28:30.
[19] Ether 3:23.
[20] Abraham, 3:1.
[21] April 2, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 169.
[22] In the same speech, Smith said that God lived on "the great Urim & Thummim whereon all things are manifest both things past, present & future and are continually before the Lord. The Urim & Thummim is a

imitating ancient Israelite temple worship including "the most *holy Breastplate,* where is that *Urim* and *Thummim,* the *shut-up Oracle* … through which *Gods Mind* is well understood."[23]

In addition to John Dee's using a seer stone and Christ's making a reference to a breastplate, Dee said that he received his special "shew stone" from an angel and that it had a gold frame.[24] Smith said the Urim and Thummim were two stones set "in silver bows." Dee and Kelley's angel conversations at one point took on the element of translating an ancient text in an unknown language: the Book of Enoch. Enoch spoke the pure language of heaven that was lost to the world, which the angels taught to Dee through Kelley.[25] Enoch was also important in Mormonism (Chapter Four) and the notion of pure, Adamic language was also discussed among the early Mormons.[26] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the angels also spoke to Dee of writing in and on gold, similar to the writings on Smith's golden plates.

The Book of Mormon, however, was written in "reformed Egyptian," "being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech," says Moroni.[27] Egyptian hieroglyphics were long believed to hold secret, divine information, especially among Platonists. For Plotinus, explains Erik Iversen, understanding hieroglyphics was "not a result of reasoning or mental reflection, but was acquired spontaneously by means of divine inspiration and illumination … they revealed, in fact, the ideal world of the soul." "In this interpretation, and with Plotinus' authority behind them, the hieroglyphs ceased to be mere objects of curiosity or historical interest. They became illustrations of Neo-Platonic

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small representation of this globe. The earth when it is purified will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim & Thummim." April 2, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 169.

[23] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations* (London: Jane Lead, 1683), 117.

[24] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, references to the frame, 9, 93, 166, 445, to the frame being gold, sect. 2:19, to receiving the stone from the angels, 231, 239.

[25] Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1988), 209-11.

[26] Samuel Brown, "Joseph (Smith) in Egypt: Babel, Hieroglyphs, and the Pure Language of Eden," *Church History* 78, no. 1 (2009): 26-65.

[27] Mormon 9:32.

conceptions of the allegorical nature of things."[28] This notion was revived in the Renaissance: John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* purported to be tool to unlocking mysteries of nature.[29] Yet while the Book of Mormon claimed to contain sacred information, Moroni says the Nephites wrote in reformed Egyptian for utilitarian purposes. "Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection," Moroni asks his readers. "If our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record."[30] The passage suggests that they wrote in reformed Egyptian because more could be conveyed in a smaller space than Hebrew. Egyptian writing in it self did not hold a higher meaning, says Moroni, it just took up less space; it was inferior to Hebrew in terms of conveying meaning.[31]

The idea that Egyptian was simply a writing system and not some esoteric conveyer of wisdom had become popular among scholars of the day. In his very influential *The Divine Legation of Moses,* Bishop William Warburton argued that hieroglyphics were simply a writing system and that they were not used for esoteric purposes until later in Egyptian history. The encyclopedia summarized Warbruton's arguments while still asserting, "Hieroglyphics are properly emblems or signs of divine, sacred, or supernatural things, by which they are distinguished from common symbols."[32] Though the Book of Mormon asserted that reformed Egyptian was simply a useful writing system, Smith's revelations did assert the Platonic idea that revelation was needed to read the Egyptian writings and the

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[28] Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* (1961, reprint; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 46.
[29] Iversen, *Myth of Egypt,* 64; Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy,* 77-82.
[30] Moroni 9:31-33.
[31] The superiority of Hebrew may be interpreted as utilitarian as well since the book says that the Nephites were originally from Jerusalem and thus would have been native Hebrew speakers, and thus would better at writing in Hebrew than in Egyptian.
[32] "Hieroglyphics," in *Encyclopaedia* (1798), 8:504.

writings did purport to be sacred. Again, according to Moroni, "Because that none other people knoweth our language," God prepared seer stones for Joseph Smith to translate the record. Jesuit scholar Athanathius Kircher claimed to translate hieroglyphics by study and revelation in the seventeenth century. "There was no doubt in Kircher's mind that he knew what the hieroglyphics inscriptions contained," says Erik Iversen. "It was based on the best sources: the classics, the Neo-Platonists, the Hermetic literature, and the cabbalah, and the final proof of its indisputable truth was its absolute conformity with his own mystic conception of science and its aims."[33] By the 1820s Champollion finally cracked the code of Egyptian hieroglyphics using the Rosetta Stone, and a number of commentators crowed over Kircher's now-proven failure. At the same time, esotericists (Swedenborgians in particular) were certain that while Champollion had made a useful contribution, only those initiated into higher wisdom could fully understand the deeper meaning of the hieroglyphics.[34]

Such issues were circulating among the American intelligentsia when Joseph Smith entered the fray. In February 1828, Smith's patron, Martin Harris, travelled to New York to seek out the opinions of America's most learned classicists. Accounts differ on why Harris went, with some saying that he went to get an alphabet of characters from the plates translated and others saying he went to verify a translation that Smith had performed. Either way, Harris was eventually directed to Charles Anthon, professor of classics at Columbia University. Harris and Anthon differed markedly on what happened during their meeting, with Harris saying that Anthon verified Smith's translation before Harris told him what the source of the characters was and Anthon saying he told Harris that the characters were

[33] Iversen, *Myth of Egypt*, 95-96.
[34] John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 5-10.

fraudulent.[35] Either way, Harris and Smith interpreted the meeting as a fulfillment of prophecy. Harris said that Anthon told Harris to bring the record to him and Harris then said he could not because part of the record was sealed, (see below), to which Anthon replied, said Harris, "I cannot read a sealed book."[36] Harris and Smith saw this as fulfillment of Isaiah 29:11-12: "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned." Anthon could not translate the holy book but the unlearned Smith, with God's help, could.

The passage was reworked in the Book of Mormon:

> But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book: Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them unto the learned, saying: Read this, I pray thee. And the learned shall say: Bring hither the book, and I will read them. And now, because of the glory of the world and to get again will they say this, and not for the glory of God. And the man shall say: I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed. Then shall the learned say: I cannot read it. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say: I am not learned. Then shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.[37]

[35] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 63-65.
[36] Smith, Manuscript History, 1:70.
[37] 2 Nephi 27:15-20.

Thus in the midst of the debate over how to properly translate Egyptian, the older revelatory notion of hieroglyphic translation had triumphed over the newer "secular" method in Smith and Harris's view. Smith then set about translating the record by use of his seer stones: reports say that Smith would essentially read off text that he saw in the stone to his scribe, usually Oliver Cowdery. Smith published the Book of Mormon in 1830.[38]

Tree Visions. As discussed in Chapter Two, Joseph Smith Sr.'s dreams, as recounted by his wife, had a number of similarities with visions recorded in John Dee's spirit diary. An additional dream, added to the published version of Lucy's autobiography, was very similar to Lehi's dream found in the Book of Mormon, and two tree visions recorded in Dee's spirit diary were similar to both of these dreams. Furthermore, another tree vision in the Book of Mormon, the olive-tree vision, is also similar to the two tree visions recorded by Dee. Thus the similarities between tree visions found in Dee's spirit diary, in Joseph Sr.'s dream, and in the Book of Mormon are a further indication of additional possible influences of John Dee on Joseph Jr. and also suggest Joseph Sr. as a conduit for that influence. Furthermore, the Book-of-Mormon tree visions formed the basis of the book's statements about the history of Christianity that informed the early Mormons' statements on this topic (discussed below). The similarities between Dee, Joseph Sr., and the Book of Mormon are complicated further because all these tree visions were similar to a handful of biblical references (particularly Ezekiel 19, Revelation 12, and Romans 11) suggesting that Dee, and perhaps the Smiths drew on these motifs.[39] I therefore compare four different texts: tree motifs from the Bible,

[38] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 72, 82.

[39] My thanks to John Thompson for his help with these biblical allusions. Furthermore, Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on baptism said that in early Christianity, when the one being baptized was anointed, it "signified, that they were now cut off from the wild olive, and were ingrafted into Christ, the true olive-tree," an important theme in these tree visions. "Baptism," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 2:791. The description of the early Christian baptism in this passage was very similar to descriptions of Smith's washing and anointing rites connected to his Nauvoo Temple ritual (Chapter Seven).

tree visions in Dee's spirit diary, Joseph Sr. tree vision, and two tree visions from the Book of Mormon.

Lehi's dream and one of Joseph Sr.'s dreams that Lucy recounted in her published autobiography were extremely similar.[40] Both Lehi and Joseph Sr. found themselves in a large field and then were shown where to go by an angelic guide who led them to a narrow path. The path followed a stream, which led to a beautiful tree with dazzlingly white fruit, which filled its partakers with exceeding joy. Both Joseph Sr. and Lehi then went and got the rest of their families to come and eat the fruit. Both then noticed a "spacious building" on the other side of the river filled with people in "fine" clothing mocking those who were eating the fruit.[41] The guide then explained some of the symbolism of the dream to Joseph Sr. and used very similar language that an angel used to explain Lehi's dream to Lehi's son, Nephi, in the Book of Mormon. The guide told Joseph Sr. that the fruit "was the pure love of God, shed abroad in the hearts of all those who love him" and the angel told Nephi that the tree "is the love of God, which sheddeth itself in the hearts of the children of men." The guide told Joseph Sr. that the spacious building "is Babylon, and it must fall" and the angel told Nephi that the building "was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great."[42] The only significant differences between the two accounts was the fact that Joseph Sr. said a rope led along the path to the tree while Lehi says it was an iron rod (an

[40] Lucy said the dream occurred in 1811 and Lucy's account of the dream first appeared in print in 1854; it was not in Lucy's original 1845 recording. Lucy added material to the original manuscript but that revised manuscript addition was lost. (Dan Vogel, "Editorial Note," in *Early Mormon Documents* 1: 227.) So if Joseph Sr.'s dream influenced the reporting of Lehi's vision in the Book of Mormon, the Book of Mormon likely could have also influenced Lucy's account of her husband's similar dream that was printed in 1854. The fact that the editor of Lucy's published version often added published material from her son suggests that either she or an editor may have drawn on the Book of Mormon in this case. Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 1:289, n. 89.
[41] Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:256-58; 1 Nephi 8.
[42] Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 1:258-59; 1 Nephi 11:25, 36. Again, though Smith may have had a similar vision, Lucy or the editor may have borrowed language from the Book of Mormon.

important detail), and Joseph Sr. said all of his children came to the tree, while Lehi's oldest sons refuse.[43]

In Dee's first tree vision, Kelley saw "an endlesse thing like a red Sea" and saw that a severed head "appeareth to come out up of that bloudy Sea." Next he saw a tree on a hill "in a desolate place, besides the former water," all suggesting an allusion to Ezekiel 19:10 and 13: "Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters" that ended up being "planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground."[44] In Dee's second tree vision, Kelley first saw "a great plain like unto a field," like Lehi's dream but then saw "a great high rotten Tree" instead of the tree of life. But then "a beam as of fire from Heaven" penetrated the tree, which caused water to come "out of the root of the Tree … and spreadeth all the plain over." A man then came out of the tree covered in a white garment but then disappeared. An unknown voice then gave Kelley commentary on the vision and prophesying that power from heaven would come "*into the stemme and into the roote … So that like a Woman with Child, he shall bring forth in the Church of God, a man, clothed with a white garment.*"[45]

This statement suggests an allusion to Revelation 12, when the woman clothed with the sun brings forth a child "who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron."[46] The voice also referred to a rod of iron, telling "*you Sonnes of men*" that when the earth is beautified "*you shall be subject to verity, and be controuled with an iron rod, by him that came out, and walked on the waters: Then shall be peace and rest*."[47] Thus the man that Kelley saw come out of the tree was the son, suggesting that the tree was the woman; again Ezekiel called the plant in the blood "thy mother." The Book of Mormon made explicit connections between

[43] Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 1:258-59; 1 Nephi 8: 17-19.
[44] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 375.
[45] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 445-46.
[46] Revelation 12:5.
[47] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 446.

the tree of life and Revelation 12 in the commentary that Nephi receives from an angel; Nephi's vision ends with the angel telling him that John the revelator will write the remainder of the vision.[48] In Nephi's vision, the angel shows Nephi the tree that his father saw and asks Nephi, "What desirest thou?" to which Nephi responds, "To know the interpretation thereof." The angel then shows Nephi a "virgin" in the city of Nazareth (Mary): "the mother of the Son of God." That is, Mary is the meaning of the tree, similar to how Dee's tree was also the mother; shortly thereafter Nephi "looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms."[49]

Revelation 12:4 says the man-child would "rule all nations with a rod of iron," while in Lehi's dream, the rod of iron led one to the tree. Ezekiel 19:11 says that the mother vine "had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule," but that in her desolate state "she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule." Dee's visions linked Ezekiel 19 and Revelation 12, suggesting that when the mother (tree) gave birth to the son, he restored the strong (or iron) rod. In his vision, Nephi says, "I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life."[50] As "the word of God" is a common metaphor for Christ, in Lehi's dream the rod of iron becomes a tool to reach the tree. Dee's tree visions do not have a journey to the tree like Lehi's dream but in Dee's first tree vision, Dee, Kelley, and seven others appeared under the tree and were given something to eat.[51]

[48] 1 Nephi 14:20-28.
[49] 1 Nephi 11:10-11, 13, 18, 20.
[50] 1 Nephi 11:25.
[51] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 376.

Another important aspect of the tree visions is the water. In Dee's second tree vision, after the heavenly fire went down into the tree, water came out of the tree.[52] The water seemed to be caused by the fire from heaven; that is, it was a good thing. Special water coming out of the temple of Jerusalem was mentioned in a number of biblical prophesies and Revelation 22:1-2 linked such water to the tree of life.[53] Ezekiel 19:13 said the vine was "planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground," and the angel said in the second tree vision, "*Wo, wo, wo, unto such a generation, which lacketh moisture,*" suggesting that water would help remedy that condition. Yet Revelation 12:15 said that after the woman flew away from the dragon or serpent, "the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." Here the water was bad and came from the serpent rather than the tree. Similarly Lehi says that the water came from where his family was standing, not from the tree.[54] That the water was bad is made clear by the angel to Nephi: "And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell."[55]

Interestingly, Joseph Sr. described the river as "beautiful"; Lehi says people could drown in the water but gives no charged description of the water.[56] Nephi later explains to his brothers, "The water which my father saw was filthiness; and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water." At the same time, Nephi says, "I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a

[52] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 445.
[53] Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:8.
[54] 1 Nephi 8:13-14.
[55] I Nephi 12:16.
[56] Smith, *Biographical Sketches,* 1:257; 1 Nephi 8:13, 17, 19, 32.

representation of the love of God."[57] That is, there was good water in the tree but one had to journey to the tree, like Joseph Sr. and Lehi, to receive that water. Thus the Mormon accounts (Joseph Sr.'s and Lehi's dreams) showed a clash between notions of good and bad water, a clash indicative of the tensions found in Revelation.

Joseph Sr.'s and Lehi's dreams then add an element not found in Dee's tree visions. Lehi said that many people journeyed along the narrow path, using the rod of iron to make it to the tree, but that "after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed. And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth." The great and spacious building was filled with well-dressed people who were mocking those eating the fruit. Many of the eaters were ashamed "and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost."[58]

The angel's explanation to Nephi again suggests similarities to Revelation 12. In Revelation 12, after the devil and his angels are cast out of heaven, "he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child."[59] Nephi after seeing the ministry of Christ and Christ's crucifixion, then sees "the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb…. And the multitude of the earth was gathered together; and I beheld that they were in a large and spacious abuilding, like unto the building which my father saw."[60] As the tree paralleled the woman who gave birth to the child, the great and spacious building paralleled the devil and his angels that persecuted the woman. Revelation 12 said that the devil tried to attack the woman (church) by sending a flood; it

[57] 1 Nephi 15:27; 11:25.
[58] I Nephi 8:25-28.
[59] Revelation 12:9, 13.
[60] I Nephi 11:34-35.

made no allusion to a building. However, the whore described in chapter 17 was "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" had "BABYLON THE GREAT" written on her forehead. Considering that Nephi then saw the great and spacious building fall, that Revelation made several references to the fall of Babylon, and that Joseph Sr. said his guide told him that the spacious building "is Babylon, and it must fall," suggests additional, similarities.[61] In a different vision, one of Dee's angels asked rhetorically, "*Who threw down the Towers of Babylon, and the great Harlot*?"[62]

Dee's tree visions also had much in common with the Book-of-Mormon olive-tree vision, an extensive allegory similar to the basic premise of Romans 11:13-24. Both speak of branches being broken off of an olive tree and Gentiles as "a wild olive tree" being grafted into the original tree in place of the branches that had been removed. Paul implies what the olive-tree vision states explicitly: that the parts of the House of Israel had been removed and Gentiles had taken their place when the Gentiles converted to Christianity. Paul then warns the Gentiles of their tenuous status, "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee," and warned that God could graft the original branches back in "if they abide not in unbelief." The olive-tree vision is an extensive allegory of this process. A vineyard owner sees that his olive tree begins to decay and he therefore spreads the tree's good branches to different spots in the vineyard, and grafts wild branches into the original tree. This process works for a while but eventually all the trees bear bad fruit so the master and his servant pluck off the worst branches from the original tree and graft the original,

[61] 1 Ne 11:36; Revelation 14:8, 18:2, 21.
[62] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 139.

scattered branches back into the original tree. The story acts as an allegory of the scattering and gathering of Israel, a major theme in the Book of Mormon.[63]

Dee's tree visions mentioned similar themes. In the first tree vision, Kelley said the tree "is sprung of a graft, which hath been grafted in" and that "there lyeth by it the top of a Tree cut off, and dead withered," suggesting that the top had been cut off and other branches had been grafted in as in Romans 11 and the olive-tree vision.[64] Kelley then saw a hand with an axe come out of heaven that cut off some of the branches and then saw the angel Michael "putteth on the dead bough on the former tree." After rain watered the tree, the branches "springeth together very freshly." Similar to the olive-tree vision, some of the grafted branches were removed from the original tree and the original branches were grafted back in. In Dee's second vision, Kelley saw "a great high rotten Tree, all the graffe is as though it were withered and burned," and then saw fire from heaven penetrate the tree which brought forth water and the man in the robe.[65] The olive-tree vision ends with the master saying that "when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard" he will separate the good from the bad, "and then commeth the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire."[66] Kelley saw the tree withered one last time before fire came out of heaven.

While the full olive-tree allegory is presented later in the Book of Mormon (in the Book of Jacob), Lehi mentions the basic themes of the allegory shortly after his dream and Nephi gives commentary on Lehi's statements shortly after Nephi's vision of his father's

[63] Jacob 5.
[64] The olive-tree vision said that as the original olive tree began to have problems, "the main top thereof began to perish," suggesting that it was the part that was originally cut off. Jacob 5:6.
[65] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 375-76, 445.
[66] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 445-46; Jacob 5:77.

dream.[67] Just as the olive-tree allegory and the vision of the tree of life were linked in John Dee's visions, they were also closely connected in the Book of Mormon. And just as Nephi received additional instruction on his father's dream of the tree of life, Nephi made additional comments on his father's olive-tree statement. Smith's own father had had a dream similar to Lehi's; perhaps Joseph Sr. was also interested in Dee's statements about tree-grafting that were similar to Romans 11. Nephi tells his brothers, "I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father."[68] Joseph Jr. may have felt the same way about his father's possible statements. These similarities again suggest additional possible influences of Dee's spirit diary on Joseph Smith and also suggest Joseph Sr. as a conduit for that influence.

Plain and Precious Truths. Christian Platonists generally felt that there was truth not contained in the Bible. For instance, Andrew Michael Ramsay declared, "We must accept the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton and other theologians, that several books on the creation by pre-Mosaic Patriarchs have been lost, and that Genesis is only a very brief summary of these."[69] In the introduction to *The Apocryphal New Testament*, a book that Smith donated to the Nauvoo Library toward the end of his life, William Hone, the compiler, argued for the value of such works and in doing so, Hone attacked the process by which the texts of the Bible were canonized. "The Editor has been charged with expressing too little veneration for the councils of the Church. He feels none." Hone was particularly critical of Nicaea, noting that while Constantine considered the edicts of the council to be the word of

[67] 1 Nephi 10: 12-14; 15:7, 12-19.
[68] 1 Nephi 15:12.
[69] D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 243. Newton's *Chronology of Ancient Kingdom's Amended,* (1728) sought to understand the religion of Noah "partly maintained by the Jews, but debased elsewhere into paganism." Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 165.

God, many of the bishops did not. "Whosoever takes these things into due consideration," argued Hone, "will not be disposed to pay a blind deference to the authority of general councils but will rather be inclined to judge that 'the council held by the Apostles at Jerusalem was the first and the last in which the Holy Spirit may be affirmed to have presided.'"[70] It is unclear when Smith became aware of this book, but it contained texts—*The Gospel of Nicodemus* (Chapter Four) and *The Shepherd of Hermas* (Chapter Five)—that contained ideas that Smith embraced.

John Allen said that the early church fathers had accused the Jews of removing things from the scriptures, a charge that Allen rejected.[71] The Book of Mormon said that the Bible originally went "forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles" but the great and abominable church took plain and precious truth out of the Bible.[72] The Gentiles were to blame for the corruption of the scriptures not the Jews. However, in Smith's important King Follett discourse that he gave toward the end of his life, he declared that Genesis 1:1 had been tampered with by "an old Jew."[73] Such a claim was in line with the statements of the fathers that Allen rejected. The Book of Mormon did have negative things to say about the Jews in the biblical era (in both pre-exilic and leading up to the time of Christ). Nephi says that the pre-exilic Jews' works "were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations," which would lead to the Babylonian destruction. Nephi's younger brother Jacob says, "the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand." Because the Jews "despised the words of plainness," says Jacob, "God hath taken away his plainness from

[70] *Apocryphal New Testament,* xiv-xv. Christopher C. Jones, "The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 192.
[71] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 6.
[72] 1 Nephi 13:25-26.
[73] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 345.

them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble."[74] It was not the Old-Testament prophets' fault that their words were hard to understand, it was the fault of their listeners (the Jews). Similarly, Dobson's encyclopedia said that Origen "thought it necessary, for the sake of the heathens, who despised [the Bible's] plainness and simplicity, and of rendering it more useful to the world, to give mystical and allegorical interpretations of everything in it."[75] Like the Old Testament prophets, it was Origen's audience that "despised plainness."

The Book-of-Mormon prophets, on the other hand, use plainness. Nephi declares that he "shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn."[76] At the beginning of Allen's explanation of Kabbalah, he said, "The limits of the present work will only permit a brief summary of the leading points of the system, which shall be given with as much plainness of language, and as little of the jargon they are sometimes expressed."[77] An angel told Dee, "For whosoever talketh of God and Christ expounding the Scriptures, ought to talk plainly, truly, and openly, that that which they speak may be under stood."[78] Nephi's brother Jacob declares, "He that prophesieth, let him prophesy to the understanding of men."[79] The angel then told Dee, "But the doctrine I taught you was true; and is worthy to be graved in golden Tables."[80] Nephi says, "After I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry

[74] 2 Nephi 25:2; Jacob 4:14.
[75] "Origen," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:492.
[76] 2 Nephi 25:4.
[77] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 77-78.
[78] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 373.
[79] Jacob 4:13.
[80] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, 373.

and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates."[81] Thus, rather than using the confusing style of the Jews, the Book-of-Mormon prophets use "plainness" like Allen and Dee.

Pre-Existence. The soteriology taught in the Book of Mormon was for the most part conventionally Arminian, but it also hinted at a few Christian-Platonic themes. The one Book-of-Mormon reference to pre-existence is somewhat cryptic. During the prophet Alma's speech to the people of Ammonihah on priesthood, he refers to the time when "the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order…. And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling." The speech also made reference to Melchizedek "who was also a high priest after this same order" and said that this order was "without beginning of days or end of years," similar to Hebrews 7. This statement from the Book of Mormon had particular Christian-Platonic overtones in that it seemed to refer to pre-mortal humans making good choices in the pre-existence and being foreordained to the priesthood on earth as a result. "And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren."[82]

Human pre-existence was fundamental to Plato's thought and this Book-of-Mormon passage had similarities to the *Phaedrus*, one of Plato's most important discussions of pre-

[81] 1 Nephi 19:3.
[82] Alma 13:1-4, 7, 14.

existence. Socrates explains to Phaedrus that souls lived with the gods in heaven and were given the opportunity of seeing true reality beyond heaven by travelling with the gods. However, human souls are like a charioteer trying to control two horses, one obedient and the other not. Souls with less control over their chariots see less or even none of the true reality beyond heaven because their horses distract them and drag them down. "After so much trouble, [such souls] leave the sight of reality unsatisfied, and when they have gone they will depend on what they think is nourishment—their own opinions." If such a soul "takes on a burden of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, then it is weighed down, sheds its wings and falls to earth." After falling to earth, such souls will engage in different professions depending on how much of the true reality they saw. Those who saw the most reality will become philosophers, while those who saw the least will become tyrants. Most souls will not be able to regrow their wings for ten thousand years and many cycles of life, but philosophers can regrow their wings more quickly. Thus souls who learned to control their horses in heaven will have a view of the true reality, and glimpses of this reality on earth (like beauty) will remind such individuals of that reality. Such reminders will aid them in their quest to regrow wings so that they can return to live with the gods.[83] Thus like the Book-of-Mormon passage, those who were more righteous in the pre-existence have greater privileges on earth.

Alma's high priests were called "to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest," while in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates described the philosopher as seeking wisdom and reality on his own.[84] In the *Republic*, however, Socrates says the true philosopher will seek to enlighten others as he or she is enlightened (see below and Chapter Four). Clement of Alexandria suggests the idea of a foreordained priesthood in

[83] Plato, *Phaedrus,* 247-49.
[84] Alma 13:6. Socrates says that priests were one of the professions fallen souls could assume but ranked them lower than philosophers. *Phaedrus,* 248e.

the seventh book of the *Stromata.* In discussing the legitimacy of the Catholic Church as opposed to the Gnostics, Clement said, "Therefore in substance and idea, in origin, in pre-eminence, we say that the ancient and Catholic Church is alone, collecting as it does into the unity of the one faith … those already ordained, whom God predestinated, knowing before the foundation of the world that they would be righteous."[85] Yet Clement does not explicitly say here or elsewhere that humans pre-existed.[86]

Origen, however, made human pre-existence a cornerstone of his theology, and spoke of it in ways very similar to the above Book-of-Mormon passage. Like the Book of Mormon, Origen said there was "first" place where pre-mortal humans, "noi" or "intellects," lived.[87] God, Origen said, "created all whom He made equal and alike, because there was in Himself no reason for producing variety and diversity." At the same time, God gave pre-mortal humans "the power of free and voluntary action, by which the good that was in them might become their own, being preserved by the exertion of their own will." Humans unfortunately used this free will to fall through sloth (similar to how Plato described the fall in the *Phaedrus*). "This freedom of will," Origen explained later, "incited each one either to progress by imitation of God, or reduced him to failure through negligence. And this, as we have already stated, is the cause of the diversity among rational creatures, deriving its origin not from the will or judgment of the Creator, but from the freedom of the individual will."[88] The Book-of-Mormon passage is thus similar to concept found in Plato, Clement, and Origen: a foreordained priesthood based on good choices made in the pre-existence.

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[85] Clement, *Stromata,* 7.17.
[86] Jean Danielou argues that Clement may have discussed such ideas in his lost *Hypotyposes*. Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 455.
[87] McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism,* 113.
[88] Origen, *De Principiis,* 2.9.6.

Origen's followers continued to preach pre-existence but Augustine did not like the doctrine though he refused to say when spirits were created. Platonic influence kept notions of pre-existence alive in the Middle Ages: pre-existence was a prominent feature of Kabbalah, and Meister Eckhart taught that humans possess an uncreated divine spark (Smith would teach a similar idea, Chapter Six).[89] Pre-existence was very popular among the Cambridge Platonists and Jane Lead spoke of pre-existence and foreordination. In language very similar to the Book of Mormon, Lead said that those who were "installed" "to this holy *Melchizideck*-Order," were "chosen of him hereunto before the Foundation of the World."[90] In another work, Lead saw "Simplified Spirits, that were ordained to garnish that Globe," that would at some point go to earth to inhabit the bodies of humans that were already there. Such spirits "will infuse their Powers, and qualifie with Souls, that from before all Worlds were preordained to be Spirited after this kind."[91] Holy spirits being sent to inhabit the bodies of living beings was not a Mormon idea, but Lead's notions did assert the idea of pre-existence and foreordination.[92] Another reference to foreordination is found in in the theurgical text, the *Arbatel*: "Call therefore upon the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. This thou shalt do, if thou wilt perform that end for which thou art ordained

[89] Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71-188; Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300-1500),* vol. IV of the *Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 150.
[90] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations* (London: Jane Lead, 1683), 113-14.
[91] Jane Lead, *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, In the Variety of Eight Worlds* (London, 1695), 41, 43.
[92] Origen seemed to suggest a similar idea. "As holy and immaculate souls, after devoting themselves to God with all affection and purity, and after preserving themselves free from all contagion of evil spirits, and after being purified by lengthened abstinence, and imbued with holy and religious training, assume by this means a portion of divinity, and earn the grace of prophecy, and other divine gifts…. And the result of this is, that they are filled with the working of those spirits to whose service they have subjected themselves." Origen, *De Principiis,* 3.3.3.

of God, and what thou owest to God and to thy neighbor."[93] Individuals had foreordained callings that theurgical rites would allow them to fulfill.

Pre-existence was one of the four major themes that Ramsay wanted to demonstrate about ancient religion in *The Travels of Cyrus*. Ramsay drew heavily on the *Phaedrus* in articulating these beliefs: his accounts of the various cosmogonies of the different civilizations (even the Hebrews) all had much in common with the *Phaedrus.* The Greek cosmogony was essentially a summation of the *Phaedrus,* and Ramsay quoted extensively from the pre-existence portions of the text at the end of the book. At the same time, though Ramsay said that difference in the pre-existence accounted for difference here on earth, he does not suggest foreordination.[94] Ramsay also added important Christian details to the various cosmogonies: a devil who causes the fall of pre-mortal beings by his rebellion and a savior who comes to earth to save fallen humanity.[95] The Book of Mormon also mentions the fall of Satan, and redemption through Christ is one of the central messages of the book.[96]

"Modern Jews have generally received the doctrine of what is called the pre-existence of souls," declared John Allen in *Modern Judaism*. "The want of any foundation for the notion of a pre-existence of souls, in the writings of Moses and the prophets, justifies something beyond a suspicion that the rabbies borrowed it from the Heathen," Allen countered. Though Menasseh ben Israel argued that the "Gentile philosophers" got the idea from the Jews, "he offers no proof or argument in support of the assertion. There is not the least evidence of it having been adopted by any Jews, till within a century before the Christian era.—One of the most distinguished advocates of this opinion, who died above

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[93] *The Arbatel of Magic, or the Spiritual Wisdom of the Ancients* in Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, trans. Robert Turner, ed. Donald Tyson (Woodbury, Minn.: Llewellyn, 2009), 372.
[94] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 202, 292, 370-73.
[95] This appears in several of the nation's cosmogonies in *The Travels of Cyrus*: Egypt 131, Tyre 259, Israel 292.
[96] 2 Nephi 2:17; 2 Nephi 9:8. Smith's later revelations also discussed these themes, see Moses 4:1-4.

three hundred years before the birth of Christ, was Plato." To prove his point, Allen quoted a passage from the *Phaedo* about "remembrance": "When did our souls acquire knowledge? For it is not since we were born human beings.—Then it must have been before.—Consequently, souls existed without bodies, and were endued with intelligence, before they came into human form."[97] Allen thus made it clear that pre-existence was a Jewish belief and that this belief was connected to Plato. Finally, encyclopedic entries on Origen stressed that he believed in pre-existence. Buck's entry declared that the first major tenet of Origenism was "That there is a pre-existent state of human souls." Such souls were originally "placed in those regions of the universe which were most suitable to the purity of essence they then possessed."[98] Like Alma's declaration, pre-existent souls were in a "first place." Thus Alma's statement most closely resembles Buck's statement about a first place and Lead's statement about foreordination and a Melchizedek order.

Fortunate Fall. Origen said the Garden of Eden story was an allegory of the human's pre-existent fall and Buck's entry on Origen declared that the second major tenet of Origenism was, "That souls were condemned to animate mortal bodies, in order to expiate faults they had committed in a pre-existent state."[99] Most of the encyclopedic entries on Origen and Neoplatonism said similar things about the souls fall into matter, but the Book of Mormon taught fortunate fall, or that not only was mortality part of the divine plan but also that the fall from the Garden of Eden was as well. "And now, behold," the prophet Lehi explains to his son Jacob,

> if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the

[97] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 192-93; *Phaedo*, 76c.
[98] Charles Buck, "Origenism," in *Theological Dictionary,* 421.
[99] Buck, "Origenists," 421; Origen, *De Principiis*, 4.16.

> same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore 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. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.[100]

The fall didn't throw a wrench in the divine plan—the fall was central to that plan. Though the *Phaedrus* said the humans underwent a pre-mortal fall, in the *Timaeus*, humans were sent to earth by the creator without a fall.[101] Because of these two models, explains Alan Scott, "There was therefore a good deal of disagreement among the later Platonists about the character of the cosmos and the soul's incorporation. Was the world and our life part of a divine plan? Those who adopted this understanding of Plato interpreted the soul's incorporation as providential and the heavenly bodies as assistants to a kindly design."[102] Origen saw descent as a fall but Iamblichus and Proclus argued that descent was a good and proper function of the soul.[103] Fathers like Ambrose and Augustine argued that God brought good out of evil. "It was always difficult for an acute-minded theologian," argues Arthur Lovejoy, "with a strong sense of the divine sovereignty to admit that Adam's sin had really frustrated the will of God, and had compelled the deity to perform, unwillingly, acts which he would not otherwise have performed." The phrase *felix culpa* was included in a hymn in the

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[100] 2 Nephi 2:22-25.
[101] Plato, *Timaeus,* 42b-c.
[102] Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 76. See also Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 189-92.
[103] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 24; Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. I, Book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis,* trans. with an introduction and notes by Harold Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 95, n. 22.

Easter liturgy and the idea of fortunate fall became popular among seventeenth century poets, Milton in particular.[104] At the same time, Augustine coined the term original sin, emphasizing the nature of the fallen world and fallen humanity's willful disobedience. As mentioned in Chapter One, original sin was an idea that Christian Platonists tended to reject, Mormons included.

Jane Lead described the fall in ways very similar to Mormonism. Lead said she had a vision where she was able to see God's pre-existent plan for the creation, an idea that was important in Smith's revelations, particularly the Book of Abraham (Chapter Six), but also hinted at in these Book-of-Mormon passages. Lead then described (in mystical terms) the creation of Adam in the Garden of Eden, "which was pure, as immediately proceeding from the most Holy." "But how soon did this Glory fade and return to Earth again," Lead continued; "whereas if he had kept his first Estate, he would have been advanced to higher degrees of Perfection, and become fruitful in Gods Virgin off-spring." With the fall, God's plan for humanity was disrupted; the Book of Abraham would use the term "kept his first Estate" to describe the pre-mortal state.[105] Lead then added another important detail: "But though so desperate a Fall hath overtaken the whole Creation, yet is it but as the fading or cropping of a flower, whose eternal Root remaining, will put forth and spring a-fresh in a more glorious Beauty and Figure, than the first ever had."[106] Not only was the fall temporary, but through a rebirth, the results would also be better "than the first ever had."

[104] Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," *Journal of English Literary History* 4, no. 3 (1937): 161-79.
[105] Abraham 3:26.
[106] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations* (London: Jane Lead, 1683), 8.

Charles Buck's entry on the Dunkers, German followers of Lead, said they rejected original sin; Allen said, "The Jews deny original sin."[107]

Smith would eventually teach similar ideas—it was through coming to earth that humans could progress and become Gods (a more advanced state than they previously had, Chapter Six)—but the Book-of-Mormon passage is simpler. The logic of the Book-of-Mormon passage that explains fortunate fall centers on a particular concept: opposition. Lehi explains,

> For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.[108]

This passage combined with the one quoted above suggests that Adam and Eve were in bliss in the Garden, but didn't realize they were because they had never experienced the opposite. Thus they needed to experience bad things in order to truly appreciate the good things.

In Eleazer's speech to Cyrus's in *The Travels of Cyrus*, which addressed similar themes as Lehi's speech to Jacob, Eleazer tells Cyrus that fallen humans must be allowed to suffer because, "The only means to hinder free beings from relapsing into disorder, is to make them feel for a time the fatal consequences of their error…. Natural evil is necessary to cure moral; suffering is the only remedy for sin. All will suffer more or less in proportion, as

[107] Charles Buck, "Dunkers," in *Theological Dictionary,* 159; Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 109.
[108] 2 Nephi 2:11.

they are more or less gone astray."[109] While Smith's revelations made similar statements about post-mortal suffering (Chapter Four), the fact that the Book of Mormon taught fortunate fall indicated that humans were not being punished for pre-mortal guilt. In this passage in the Book of Mormon, humans experience earthly suffering simply to understand the contrast to heavenly bliss. At the same time, bad choices made on earth *can* lead to instructive suffering. In Smith's expansion of Genesis, the Lord tells Adam, "In as much as thy Children are conseived [sic] in sin even so when they begin to grow up sin conceiveth in their hearts & they taste the bitter that they may know to prize the good."[110] Origen suggested a similar idea. For Origen, this life was a kind of school by which humans could learn through trials how to return to be like God.[111] This opposition was caused by devils: "And hence it is that the whole of this mortal life is full of struggles and trials, caused by the opposition and enmity of those who fell from a better condition without at all looking back, and who are called the devil and his angels."[112] Proclus said in his commentary on the *Timaeus,* "The account of the war and the victory [of the Greeks over Atlantis] has symbolized for us the opposition that is fundamental to the cosmos."[113]

Embodiment. Embodiment was central to the tension over whether or not being sent to earth was part of the plan or whether it was a fall. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates cites Orpheus who said "that the soul is being punished for something, and that the body is an enclosure of prison in which the soul is securely kept … until the penalty is paid."[114] In the *Phaedo*,

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[109] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 299.
[110] Smith, Old Testament Revision, 14; current, Book of Moses, 6:55.
[111] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 114.
[112] Origen, De Principiis, 1.6.3.
[113] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, *Volume II, Book 2: Proclus on the Causes of the Cosmos and its Creation,* trans. and ed. by David T. Runia and Michael Share (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 41.
[114] Plato, *Cratylus,* 400c.

Socrates describes the body as the source of evil going so far to say, "It is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body."[115] Again, in the *Timaeus,* beings are sent to earth and told they will be rewarded if they learn to master their passions: the body is something than can be controlled and embodiment seems to have a positive purpose. A. J. Festugiere calls the view of the universe in the *Phaedo* "pessimistic" and the view in the *Timaeus* "optimistic" and argued that this split influenced later Platonic thinkers. Charles Anderson classifies Philo as a pessimist who took his pessimism much further than did Plato. Such pessimism made Philo a "pre-gnostic" argues Anderson, though he did not go so far as to say that the creator was evil.[116] Many of the Gnostics took a very negative view not only embodiment but also the created world itself. Christian and Neoplatonist attacked the Gnostics for these views, arguing that they had misunderstood Plato. Clement of Alexandria, while acknowledging many negative statements toward the body in Plato declared that Plato saw the world and the creator as good. "I think I have shown clearly enough that Marcion took from Plato the starting-point of his 'strange' doctrines, without either grateful acknowledgment or understanding," Clement concluded. Ultimately, Clement argued, "Birth is holy. By it were made the world, the existences, the natures, the angels, powers, souls, the commandments, the law, the gospel, the knowledge of God…. Without the body how could the divine plan for us in the Church achieve its end?"[117]

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[115] Plato, Phaedo, 66e.
[116] Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 189, 191.
[117] *The Ante-Nicean Fathers* that I have been using for Clement's works left chapter three of the *Stromata* in Latin, so here I use *Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translation of Clement and Origen*, trans. and ed. by John Ernest Leonard Oulton and Henry Charwick (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 48-49, 89.

Plotinus also attacked the Gnostics for saying the creation was evil and also argued that they had bastardized Plato.[118] Iamblichus went even further in his critiques of Porphyry's view of matter. For Iamblichus, argues Gregory Shaw, "Embodiment was a creative and sacramental act." Furthermore, argues Shaw, "The theurgist's highest good was not realized by escaping from materiality but by embracing matter and multiplicity in a demiurgic way."[119] Later Christians did adopt ambivalence toward the body, particularly its sexual nature. As Bernard McGinn points out, "It is fashionable to blame [Ambrose's] Neoplatonism for this, and some influence can scarcely be denied. But concentration on sexuality as the most evident mark of the imperfection of at least our present mode of bodily existence was primarily a Christian creation in which Ambrose played a large part, both in his own right and through his influence on Augustine." McGinn goes on to note that Platonic mysticism in Judaism and Islam "were usually either indifferent to sexual practice or at times even anxious to incorporate it into the mystical path."[120] Thus, Platonism was not the source of Christian negative views of the body, argues McGinn. Smith later asserted that embodiment was essential to the divine plan and though he pushed the idea further than had the early Platonists, positive views of the body were not out of harmony with those Platonists' teachings.

Kabbalah embraced embodiment: medieval Kabbalist Moses de Leon (c. 1250-1305) said, "At first before descending to this world, the soul is imperfect; she is lacking something. By descending to this world, she is perfected in every dimension."[121] Allen's

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[118] Dylan Michael Burns, "Out of Heaven: Myth, Eschatology, and Theurgy in the Sethian Gnostic Apocalypses of Nag Hammadi" (PhD. Diss. Yale University, 2011), 58.
[119] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 238, 125, 24.
[120] McGinn, *Origin of Mysticism*, 214.
[121] Quoted in Givens, *When Souls Had Wings,* 141.

Modern Judaism quoted rabbis making similar claims. "When the Creator said, 'Let us make man,' he addressed himself to the soul: and hence our rabbies have concluded, that God did not force souls into the prison of the body without their consent." The *Timaeus* also had God discussing embodiment with souls in a divine council, as did Smith's Book of Abraham (Chapter Six). Allen then went on to describe another story told by a rabbi of a soul resisting embodiment. The story said that God would tell an angel to bring him a spirit to embody.

> Then says Jehovah to him: Betake thyself into this matter. Instantly, the spirit excuses himself, and says to him: Governor of the world, I am satisfied with the world in which I have been from the day I was created. If it please thee, do not oblige me to betake myself into this putrid matter; for I am holy and pure. Jehovah says to him: The world into which I am going to send thee, is better than the world where thou now art: besides, when I formed thee, I did not form thee but for this very matter. Immediately God forces him, whether willing or unwilling, into the midst of matter.[122]

This story demonstrates the inherent tensions in Plato's myths: it said that the earth and embodiment were better states but didn't say why. Such was a major issue in Christian Platonism and was one that Smith pondered as well (Chapter Six).

The Book of Mormon suggests some ambivalence toward the body. Lehi tells his sons to "choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit; and not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein," but one of those sons, Jacob, declares later that "if the flesh should rise no more [after death] our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and

[122] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 195-96.

became the devil, to rise no more."[123] Needing the body to overcome the devil in the next life is an idea I have not found elsewhere (this idea would be important to Smith's later thinking, Chapter Six), but the resurrection was fundamental to most Christians. At the same time, the idea of resurrection was generally a violation of Hellenistic and particularly Platonic thought.[124] Origen was accused of denying the resurrection, a charge that he denied but was one that nevertheless later got his ideas condemned.[125] Medieval thinkers said the body was necessary both to see God and to receive a fullness of joy.[126] One of Smith's revelations declared, "The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy."[127] Allen said the Jews taught resurrection and quoted Menasseh ben Israel declaring, "that after the resurrection, those who are raised will exercise the same animal functions, experience the same natural necessities, and perform the same corporeal actions, in the future world, as they do in the present."[128] Smith would embrace matter to a similar degree (Chapter Six).

The Spirit Body. One of the few issues where Smith differed from Jane Lead was the body and the resurrection. Lead continually spoke of the need to put off the flesh and while the Book of Mormon made similar statements, Lead spoke of leaving behind the flesh in the next life and putting on a "fine Robe made up of a Diaphanous Matter" that was like

[123] 2 Nephi 2:28-29; 9:9.
[124] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 31; Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 2.
[125] Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), 132.
[126] Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body,* 164-66. Aquinas rejected the idea that the soul needed the body to see God, and Aquinas's view eventually won out (266, 279.)
[127] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 212; current DC 93:33-34.
[128] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 134.

"the first *Adam's* Paradisiacal Body."[129] Thus Mormonism followed Kabbalah more than Lead on this issue, but the belief in a spirit body was central both to Christian Platonism and Mormonism.

Origen also spoke of a "spiritual body" and wondered about "how pure, how refined, and how glorious are the qualities of that body." Origen's critics used such statements to argue that he denied the resurrection.[130] Iamblichus and Proclus spoke of a soul vehicle or *ochema* that was made up of very fine matter that the soul acquired as it descended and would keep after death.[131] A statement from the Book of Mormon also suggests that souls acquired "bodies" before their birth. In the Book of Ether, the brother of Jared has such great faith that he first sees the finger of the Lord and then sees the Lord's whole body. The Lord explains, "Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh."[132] That is, the Lord, before his incarnation, had a "spirit body." Such was in accord with certain Jewish and Christian notions in late antiquity and Iamblichus even said that the gods had a vehicle; Isaac Newton made a similar claim about the pre-mortal Christ.[133] Smith's revelations and speeches insisted that humans followed the same path as Christ (Chapter Four); that is, if Christ had a spirit body then it would fit Smith's theology for humans to have one as well. A year after Smith's death, William

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[129] For references to putting off the flesh, see Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out be a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), 2, 6, 31; for the "robe," see Jane Lead, *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, In the Variety of Eight Worlds* (London, 1695), 35.
[130] Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), 88-92.
[131] Georg Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 190.
[132] Ether 3:16.
[133] Paul A. Patterson, *Visions of Christ: The Anthropomorphite Controversy of 399 CE* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck: 2012), 60, 146; Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism," 190; Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 82.

Phelps wrote a piece that essentially argued that humans did receive spirit bodies in the pre-existence (Chapter Six).

Agrippa spoke of the soul vehicle in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* "Therefore man's soul being such, according to the opinion of the Platonists … whence first of all in a descent, it is involved in a celestial and aerial body, which they call the celestial vehicle of the soul, others the chariot of the soul." After death "the soul flieth away with the celestial vehicle, and the Genius his keeper and the demon follow it being gone forth, and carry it to the judge."[134] Ramsay gave a very detailed description of the vehicle in *The Travels of Cyrus*. In it Pythagoras says that before the fall, "the soul was not then imprisoned in a gross mortal body, as it is now; it was united to a luminous heavenly body, which served it as a vehicle to fly through the air, rise to the stars, and wander overall the regions of immensity" until humans fell into mortal bodies. Ramsay later repeated these same notions when giving a summary of Pythagoras's views and said that Paul taught the same thing quoting 1 Corinthians 15:42, 44, and 50: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption … it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.—Now this I say, brethren, because that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Ramsay said that our "celestial, spiritual, active and glorious body, which being unveiled and enlarged at the resurrection, will appear in all its beauty," and that "this notion renders the doctrine of the resurrection intelligible and philosophical."[135] In a passage that the Mormons quoted in their periodical from popular scientist Thomas Dick, Dick said that after death, "The immaterial principle by

[134] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 585.
[135] Ramsay, T*ravels of Cyrus,* 202, 338.

which it was animated, continues to think and act, either in a state of separation from all body, or in some material vehicle to which it is intimately united."[136]

The Book of Mormon and Smith's revelations insisted on the resurrection of the body and Smith would eventually go so far as to say that God the Father had a body of flesh and bone. Though a seemingly violation of Platonism, such claims did have a foundation in the more materialist Neoplatonists, as well as in Christian insistence on the resurrection, and the Platonic notion of deification (Chapter Six).

Gnosis. Though the soteriology of the Book of Mormon was fairly standard, the Book continually hints at the notion of higher knowledge, or gnosis. "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God," Alma explains, "nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him."[137] The Book-of-Mormon writers often say that material "cannot be written," either because the writers have to be brief or because the information is too sacred to write. 3 Nephi 26, where Mormon gives a summation of Christ's visit to the Nephites, explains this dynamic:

> And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people…. And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken. And when they shall have received

[136] "Extracts from Dick's Philosophy," *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 3 (December 1836): 425.
[137] Alma 12:9. This is similar to Christ's statement "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." Luke 8:10; Mark 4:11.

> this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.[138]

The Book of Mormon, therefore, contained the basic truths, and if the Gentiles believed those truths, they would be given the higher truths.

Furthermore, Moroni says that a certain portion of text that he copied from the visions of the brother of Jared were "sealed."

> Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up.… For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord. And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ…. Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.[139]

This passage coupled with Martin Harris's statement to Charles Anthon that a portion of the plates were "sealed," (see above) suggests that the Book of Mormon contained writings that were not to be revealed except to the pure in heart.[140] Just like Allen said the Jews believed that Moses was given a secret teaching at Sinai, the brother of Jared was given a secret teaching from God on a mountain.

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[138] 3 Nephi 26:6-9.
[139] Ether 4:5-7, 13.
[140] On the "sealed" portion of the Book of Mormon, see Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2011), 121-27.

The idea of higher knowledge, or gnosis, was central to Christian Platonism. In the *Stromata,* Clement of Alexandria explained that the Lord "allowed us to communicate of those divine mysteries, and of that holy light, to those who are able to receive them. He did not certainly disclose to the many what did not belong to the many; but to the few to whom He knew that they belonged, who were capable of receiving and being moulded according to them. But secret things are entrusted to speech, not to writing, as is the case with God." Clement called the one who could obtain this higher teaching the "Gnostic." "The Gnostic alone is able to understand and explain the things spoken by the Spirit obscurely…. For the Lord says, 'He that has ears to hear, let him hear,' declaring that hearing and understanding belong not to all…. It is the prerogative of the Gnostic, then, to know how to make use of speech, and when, and how, and to whom."[141] Here Clement referred to what became known as the "secret tradition," or special secret knowledge that was believed to have been taught secretly by Christ to the apostles and handed down to special initiates (Chapter Seven).[142] Contemporary Freemasons said the secret tradition was Masonry and Allen explained that Kabbalah referred to special teachings "handed down by a secret tradition from the earliest ages."[143] For Origen, gnosis was found in the scriptures by those with "the key of knowledge."[144] The later Neoplatonist said that higher knowledge was only given by revelation to those who underwent theurgy. Esoteric knowledge was central to the Western esoteric tradition up to the time of Joseph Smith; the notion of hieroglyphs containing higher

[141] Clement, *Stromata*, 1.1; 6.15. Paul also spoke of special teachings only given to the "perfect." 1 Corinthians 2.6.
[142] Guy G. Stromousa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism,* 2d ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
[143] Theodore Temple, *The Secret Discipline Mentioned in Ancient Ecclesiastical History, Explained* (New York: James Ormond, 1833); Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 65.
[144] DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety* 58; Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 465.

knowledge (discussed above) was just one example of this belief.[145] The Book of Mormon continually suggests that further "mysteries" were forthcoming, and Smith did not disappoint.

These themes comprised only a small portion of the Book of Mormon text but they laid the groundwork for later theological developments. I discuss the themes of politics, deification, and universalism in the next chapter even though these themes are also motioned in the Book of Mormon because these themes were fleshed out in Smith's revelations that came shortly after the Book of Mormon.

Priesthood and Apostasy

The Book of Mormon was the restored truth, but Smith also claimed to receive lost authority. Shortly after the founding of Mormonism in 1830, an Ohio newspaper reported that Oliver Cowdery, who was preaching in the area, taught "that the ordinances of the gospel, have not been regularly administered since the days of the Apostles, till the said Smith and himself commenced the work."[146] A few weeks later the same paper reported that the local Mormons "state that Mr. Oliver Cowdry has his commission directly from the God of Heaven, … and as such, said Cowdry claims that he and his associates are the only persons on earth who are qualified to administer in his name."[147] The idea that Christian authority had been lost with the apostles had been taught by "Seekers," and Jane Lead not only taught that the true priesthood had been lost in the early church but was anticipating its restoration. Seekers also anticipated the restoration of apostolic authority, but Lead

[145] Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism," 192; Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 74-75.
[146] "The Golden Bible," *The Painesville Telegraph* 2 (November 16, 1830).
[147] "The Book of Mormon," *The Painesville Telegraph* 2 (December 7, 1830).

anticipated the restoration of the "Melchizedek priesthood": "there shall arise a Melchizedeck Priesthood, which shall know the way into the Holiest of all," declared Lead. Smith and Cowdery would claim to receive this Melchizedek priesthood from the angels.[148] Again, Mormon notions of the loss of Christian authority and its need for restoration lined up particularly well with Lead's visions.

Priesthood. Mormonism also had priests as an office from the very beginning and the Book of Mormon made references to priesthood, both the reference to foreordained high priests mentioned above and also references to priests and high priests in the Nephite church.[149] Claiming to need ordination to priesthood was unusual in the context of early nineteenth-century American Protestantism, which generally rejected priesthood ordination. Radical evangelicals were hostile to "priestcraft,"which generally meant professional clergy (the Book of Mormon condemned this also), and Protestants often taught the idea of the "priesthood of all believers" rather than individual ordination to the priesthood.[150] Such people saw charismatic authority as sufficient and did not claim the need for angelic ordination.

Grimoires contained references to priesthood including the *Arbatel*, mentioned above, that said that to receive the calling for which one had been ordained, one needed to perform the particular rite. There were a number of instances of folk practices that drew on ideas of Catholic authority. In Europe treasure diggers sought out priests, even in Protestant lands, because priests were seen as experts on managing the spirits involved with the treasure. If no

[148] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations* (London: Jane Lead, 1683), 91.
[149] "The Articles and Covenants of the Church" written in 1830 makes several references to priests, Doctrine and Covenants (1830), 77-82; current DC 20. 2 Nephi 5:26; Mosiah 23:16; Alma 4:20; 30:20; 46:38.
[150] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New York: Oxford, 1989); 2 Nephi 26:29; Alma 1:12. Episcopalians did have priesthood ordination, but Episcopalianism was not prominent on the American frontier.

priests were available, treasure diggers would call on cunning-folk who played roles similar to priests.[151] Cunning-folk who aided such tasks often used Catholic rites and claimed Catholic authority.[152] The New Israelites referred to their leader, Nathaniel Wood, as "Priest" Wood, and the New Israelites engaged in treasure digging.[153] Orestes Brownson, Catholicism's most prominent antebellum American convert, was from a town in Vermont where the Smiths had lived, where he "was warned in 1815 by an old woman to avoid all churches except that persisting from apostolic times."[154] Brownson's brother, Oran, wrote him in 1846, stating, "You inform me you and family are Catholics[.] The reason assigned I understand to be because no other church possessed proper authority[.] I have changed my opinions for the same reason because I consider the proper authority rests among the Mormons."[155]

Smith set himself apart not only in claiming priesthood authority but also in his claims of how he got the authority. In his 1832 history, Smith gave a list of the most important miraculous events related to the founding Mormonism. These included "the reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministering of Aangels to administer the letter of the Gospel" and also "the kees of the Kingdom conferred upon him."[156] Smith claimed not only to receive the priesthood from angels but also to receive "keys." The notion of keys as a dispensation of heavenly authority was central to early Mormonism and had its root in Christian-Platonic and Catholic ideas. Keys in this context could mean heavenly knowledge,

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[151] Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 154, 167.
[152] Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English* History (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), 36; Kirsteen Macpherson Bardell, "Beyond Pendle: The 'Lost' Lancashire Witches in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories,* ed. Robert Poole (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 105.
[153] Barnes Frisbie, *The History of Middletown, Vermont,* in *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:607.
[154] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire,* 145.
[155] Matthew Grow, "'I Consider the Proper Authority Rests among the Mormons': Oran Brownson to Orestes Brownson on Oran's Conversion to Mormonism," *Mormon Historical Studies* 4, no. 2 (2003): 196.
[156] Smith, History, 1832, 1:26.

priesthood authority, or divine power: Smith used all of these meanings. Smith's most likely sources for these ideas about such keys were Agrippa, Dee, and Lead (writers who also drew on Catholicism and Christian-Platonism) though Smith mixed and combined these meanings to form a distinctly Mormon concept of post-mortal angels grating divine authority.

Smith and Cowdery later said that they received the lower "Aaronic," priesthood from the post-mortal John the Baptist and then the higher, "Melchizedek," priesthood from the post-mortal Peter, James, and John.[157] The claim to have received priesthood power from Peter, James, and John had certain Catholic overtones of the Petrine Doctrine in Matthew 16:18-19. Smith's revelation that mentioned the ordination by Peter, James, and John even said that Christ had "committed the keys of my kingdom," to them and later revelations made clear that Smith now had those keys.[158] Smith used the term "keys" to refer to priesthood authority, similar to the Catholic "power of the keys" which referred to the authority of Peter. The early church fathers used the term to mean the authority of the church over the heretics, whereas the medieval church linked the term to mean priesthood authority: Canon I of the fourth Lateran Council declared in referring to the Eucharist, "This sacrament no one can perform except a priest who has been duly ordained according to the keys of the church."[159] Such was similar to Smith's claim that "reception of the holy Priesthood" allowed him "to administer the letter of the Gospel."

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[157] *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 13-16; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 180; current DC 27: 8-13. While Mormon scholars have discussed the various time lines of Smith's statements, the question I focus on here is why did Smith feel that he needed priesthood authority from angels. Dan Vogel, Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1988), chapt. 5; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1994), chapt. 1; Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of the Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1995).
[158] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 180; current DC 27:12-13. Other references DC 64:5, 65:2, 81:1-2; 97:14.
[159] "The Power of the Keys," *The Catholic Encyclopedia,* (New York: Robert Appleton Company); Clement, *Stromata,* 7:17; Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 448.

John Dee made a number of references to authority in his spirit diary. On one occasion, the angels told Dee to "cleave" to the Catholic Church, telling Dee "*you cannot authorize your selves, and without authority you can do nothing.*" Authority was essential and the Catholic Church had it. On another occasion, Edward Kelley wanted a priest to confirm what the angels were commanding Dee and him to do, to which the angels responded that they (the angels) were the church triumphant (or the church of those who were in heaven, including the angels) and had higher authority than the church militant (the church on the earth, the Catholics).[160] Similar to Smith's conceptions, angels had authority. The angels seemed to be telling Dee that authority was essential, that the Catholics had authority, but that the angels' authority was higher. Such statements suggest a certain hierarchy: first the angels, then the Catholics, and finally (by implication) Protestants, who had no authority. Clement said that "the grades here in the Church, of bishops, presbyters, deacons, are imitations of the angelic glory," and that one could obtain an angelic office independent of any earthly church office.[161] Lead's revelations suggested similar ideas: they were full of Catholic themes (including Mary, purgatory, and priesthood) and two of Lead's most important disciples (Francis Lee and Andrew Michael Ramsay) converted to Catholicism after her death.[162] Yet Lead's anticipation of the Melchizedek priesthood and keys delivered by Elijah (see below) suggests that she hoped for authority that neither the Protestants nor the Catholics had. Smith suggested similar ideas in his very last sermon

[160] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 386, 412. Emphasis in original.
[161] Clement, *Stromata* 6.13.
[162] Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: UK: Ashgate, 2005),137-38; G. D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1952), 35.

when he declared that the "old Catholic Church is worth more than all" in comparison to the Protestants (see below).[163]

At the same time, Christ said in Luke 11:52, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." Keys as knowledge was a major theme in Smith's revelations. In reference to the keys Smith received, one of his revelations said, "And I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things which were from the foundation of the world, and the things which shall come from this time until the time of my coming."[164] Keys as knowledge was a major theme in Christian Platonism. Kocku von Stuckrad notes that in "almost all representation of ancient esotericism, be they Christian, Jewish, gnostic, pagan, or Manichean," those who undergo heavenly ascents (either ritually or physically) "are linked to a secretive discourse of revelation in which the adept receives the key for accessing divine knowledge."[165] Origen said that the "key of knowledge" was necessary to understand the true meaning of the scriptures.[166] The idea of keys to unlock hidden knowledge was common in grimoires, in fact, "key" was often used in the titles of grimoires, such as the *Key of Solomon*.[167] The angels made a number of references to keys as knowledge in John Dee's spirit diary: Gabriel told Dee and Kelley that "*In these keyes which we deliver, are the mysteries and secret beings and effect of all things moving, and moved within the world.*" Later an angel told them that if they were obedient, "*Before August shall* those Keyes be delivered unto you: which give entrance, yea, even in the privy Chambers of

[163] June 16, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 381-82.
[164] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 117, 181; current DC 28:7; 35:18.
[165] Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western* Identities (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 74-75.
[166] DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety,* 58. A reference to Luke 11:52.
[167] *Lemegeton, Or, Clavicular Solomonis Regis, Or the Little Key of Solomon the King* (1713).

wisdom." Another angel told them, "*You called for wisdom, and God hath opened unto you, his Judgement: He hath delivered unto you the keyes, that you may enter*; But be humble. *For, many have ascended, but few have entred.*"[168]

Smith's description of keys had a number of theurgical overtones: knowledge was a major quest of the theurgists (Chapter Two) as was receiving power from angels.[169] The theurgical nature of Smith's keys is perhaps best illustrated by two statements on keys from Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Agrippa first declares, "Iamblichus saith, that celestial bodies, and the deities of the world have certain divine and superior powers in themselves … which Orpheus calls the key to open and shut and that by those we are bound to the fatal influences, but by these to loose us from fate."[170] Here Agrippa not only said that keys open the powers from celestial beings, but the phrase "key to open and shut" and the words "bound" and "loose" were also similar to Matthew 16:19. The Orphic poem to Pluto said, "Earth's keys to thee, illustrious king belong, Its secret gates unlocking, deep and strong," and early modern scholars likened Pluto's keys to Christ's "keys of hell and of death" in Revelation 1:18.[171]

Agrippa then said that certain Orphic sacrifices were "keys which open the gate of the elements, and the heavens, that by them a man may ascend to the supercelestials; and the intelligences of the heavens, and the demons of the elements may descend to him."[172] Here Agrippa gave a list of activities very similar to what Smith said that holders of the Melchizedek priesthood could do. Just as Orpheus's keys could unlock the powers of heaven

[168] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 94, 117, 145.
[169] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 57, 67, 218, 233.
[170] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 656.
[171] "To Pluto," in *The Hymns of Orpheus* (London 1792), 142; R. and J. Westinious, and W. Smith, "Miscellaneous Remarks upon Several Passages of ancient Authors," *The Present State of the Republic of Letters* 1 (January 1728): 32-33.
[172] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 657.

and the elements, Smith's expansion of Genesis 14 said that those ordained to the "order of the Son of God" could have power to "break up Mountains to divide the seas, to dry up watters [sic] to turn them out of their course to put at defience [sic] the armies of nations to divide the earth to break every band to stand in the presence of God."[173] In addition to powers of heaven and ascending to heaven, Agrippa also said that the Orphic keys gave humans the powers so that "the demons of the elements may descend to him." Moshiem said that theurgy rendered the mind "capable of perceiving the demons, and of performing many marvelous things by their assistance."[174] Smith said that the lower, Aaronic priesthood had the "keys of the ministering of angels."[175]

While Smith's priesthood was to perform functions similar to Agrippa's description of Orphic keys, Smith's revelations divided the priesthood between two levels: the lower, Aaronic priesthood with the keys of the ministering of angels, and the higher, Melchizedek priesthood with power of the elements, and the power to come into the presence of God.[176] Interestingly, theurgy had similar levels: the theurgist began by contacting his or her daemon, and then as the theurgist progressed, a god would become the theurgist's guide; in this process, the theurgist obtained power and became deified.[177] The encyclopedia entry on Plotinus said, "Plotinus had also his familiar spirit, as well as Socrates; but according to Porphyry, it was not one of those called demons, but of the order of those who are called gods; so that he was under the protection of a genius superior to that of other men."[178] Plotinus had progressed from an angelic guardian to a divine one.

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[173] Joseph Smith, Old Testament Revision, 34; expansion of Genesis 14.
[174] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 142.
[175] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 83, 90, current DC 84:26, 107:20; Smith, Manuscript History, 1839, 1:75.
[176] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 83; current DC 107:18-20.
[177] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 57, 67, 218, 233.
[178] "Plotinus," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 15:67.

Beyond the keys of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood, Smith and Cowdery said they received additional keys after the dedication of the Mormons' first temple in 1836. Smith and Cowdery said that in the temple, Jesus appeared to them first, after which a few biblical figures appeared who gave them keys. Moses "committed unto them the Keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the Eearth [sic]"; Elias "committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham"; but most importantly, Elijah then appeared and declared,

> Behold the time has fully come which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying, that he should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Therefore, the Keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands, and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.[179]

The return of Elijah was an important theme in Christian millenarianism and Smith later said that the power of Elijah was central to the Mormons' practice of baptism for the dead (Chapter Five).[180] Smith's language about keys and the role of Elijah was very similar to a statement from one of Jane Lead's visions. Lead said that God's true followers needed the spiritual gifts that had been lost to the world. Lead listed the gifts of the testimony of Jesus, of revelation, and of vision and then proceeded "to the fourth Gift, which Key that openeth the Kingdom of Power; which being endowed with, do coe-work with the Powers in Heavenly Places, for binding, and loosing and shutting up, and opening; which Power will be granted to act, and do mighty, and marvelous Wonders, according to what the Saints in

[179] Revelation 3 April 1836, http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary?target=x319; current DC 110.
[180] Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 155.

former Ages have been carried forth in the World to do." Referring to a key, to binding and loosing, and to doing "mighty, and marvelous Wonders, according to what the Saints in former Ages" were all central to Smith's notions of priesthood. Lead's statement became even more specific. "Seeing that the Confusions and distresses throughout all Nations look so dreadful upon us, that all Need there is of an *Elijah's* Spirit to arise up among us, that may turn the Heart of the Fathers to Children, and pour out Oil for Reconcilement, and healing the bleeding Wound of Wars and Divisions."[181] Smith would say that the spirit of Elijah was for binding the living and the dead but did say that such was central to peace and harmony on the earth.[182] Considering that in addition to notions of keys and the role of Elijah, Lead also anticipated the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood suggests that Smith's notions of priesthood particularly aligned with Lead's.

Apostasy. In his very last sermon, Joseph Smith asserted a similar notion of priesthood hierarchy to Dee and Lead's. The "old Catholic Church is worth more than all," in comparison to Protestants, Smith declared. Smith then asserted that the Protestants' authority was false using a metaphor that Mormon writers had used previously. "Here is a princ[iple] of logic," said Smith, "I will illustrate an old apple tree—here jumps off a branch & says I am the true tree. & you are corrupt—if the whole tree is corrupt how can any true thing come out of it." Similar to what Parley Pratt and Benjamin Winchester had said (see below), Smith was asserting that since Protestants said that the Catholics were a corrupt tree, then the Protestants would have no authority unless Protestants claimed new divine authority (which they didn't do). Without new authority, the Mormons argued, the Protestants' authority was also corrupt. Smith continued, "God always sent a new dispensat[io]n into the

[181] Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out be a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), 29.
[182] March 10, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 329.

world—when men come out & build upon o[the]r men's foundat[io]n—did I build on anot[he]r mans foundt[io]n but my own—I have got all the truth & an indepen[den]t rev[elatio]n in the bargain— & God will bear me off triumphant."[183] Since Smith claimed to have received his authority from angels, he did not "build on anot[he]r mans found[a]t[io]n" as he claimed the Protestants had. Thus as Dee and Lead had asserted, the angels' authority (which Smith said he had) was the best, the Catholics ("worth more than all") were next, and the Protestants, who had no authority, were last.

Despite praise for the Catholics, the Mormons asserted that there was no true church on the earth before Mormonism and that the true authority had also been lost. "By Searching the Scriptures," Smith said of his youth in his 1832 history, "I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and liveing faith and there was no society of denomination that built upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own Sins and for the Sins of the world."[184] Though Smith made few declarations about Christian history before his last sermon, other Mormon writers did. Such claims were not thorough or systematic but did stress certain themes. The Mormons focused on the loss of priesthood in early Christianity, the lack of priesthood among the Protestants, and the corruption of Catholicism accompanied by claims that the Protestants were just as bad if not worse. Furthermore, the early Mormons never promoted the Platonic-corruption model of the apostasy that was popular among Protestants. Thus the Mormon's apostasy narrative had a distinctly Philadelphian flavor with its emphasis on priesthood and lack of condemnation for Platonism.

[183] June 16, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 381-82. The notes of this sermon are very choppy but still convey particular ideas.
[184] Smith, History, 1832, 1:28.

The Mormons' earliest statements on the corruption of Christianity came from Nephi's vision of his father's dream discussed above. After seeing the "the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb," and the fall of the great and spacious building, Nephi then sees a vision of this history of his descendants,[185] followed by a vision of "the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles," presumably the Europeans.[186] Like the earlier portions of the vision, this portion of the vision that covers the corruption of early Christianity had a number of similarities to Revelation, this time chapter 17. Whereas Revelation 17 shows the visionary "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication," who was "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," Nephi sees "the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity."[187] Protestants had long argued that the whore was the Catholic Church,[188] however, for Nephi the designation seemed to apply to all European churches, or at least all those that were in power.[189] Nephi sees the discovery of America: he sees the spirit inspire certain "Gentiles" to go "forth out of captivity, upon the many waters." Since it was the great and abominable church that held people in captivity, this suggests that that the American colonists escaped

[185] 1 Nephi 12.
[186] The contrast between the European "Gentiles" and the native "Israelites" is a major theme in the Book of Mormon but not one that I treat here.
[187] Revelation 17: 1, 6; 1 Nephi 13: 1-5.
[188] Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James Durham *A Learned and Complete Commentary upon the Book of Revelation* (Glasgow, 1788), 673.
[189] Condemnation of the Protestant establishment along with the Catholics was a tenant of the Seekers and was also common among puritan migrants to New England. Many Protestants, particularly the Puritans saw the Church of England as corrupt and viewed migration to America as a way to escape it. Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7.

the great and abominable church when they traveled to the promised land; Protestants as well as Catholics were escaping from the great and abominable church. In their rhetoric about the apostasy, the early Mormons often condemned the Protestants even more strongly than they did the Catholics.

Yet the vision didn't say anything about the loss of authority; instead it spoke of lost truth. Nephi sees the great and abominable church take "many plain and precious things … away from" the Bible, and "because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them." The angel then promises Nephi that "Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in," and promises that the Book of Mormon and other forthcoming records "shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them."[190] Thus this passage spoke of truths that were lost that would be restored but made no mention of priesthood. Nevertheless, the idea of an evil-persecuting church that removed truth from the Bible would remain an important part of the early Mormons' apostasy narratives.

The Mormons very quickly added authority to the narrative: again, Oliver Cowdery was reported saying, "The ordinances of the gospel, have not been regularly administered since the days of the Apostles." Cowdery offered a succinct summation of the Mormon's views of the apostasy in a letter to William Phelps in 1834. The early church, said Cowdery, had the authority "till it lost its visibility on earth; was driven into darkness, or till God took the holy priesthood unto himself, where it has been held in reserve to the present century, as a matter of right, in their free country."[191] Cowdery seemingly brought the concept of

[190] 1 Nephi 13: 26, 29, 32, 40.
[191] Oliver Cowdery "Letter II to W. W. Phelps," in *Messenger and Advocate,* 1 (October 1834): 8.

priesthood into what the Book of Mormon said about the apostasy: the priesthood (like the full truth) was lost in the early church, but was restored in America (like the truth in the Book of Mormon). Jane Lead also spoke of lost priesthood. Lead said that Christ had given authority to the apostles "so might they also have on Earth after his Departure, to carry on their Apostolical Dispensation, which only lasted for a while, and being lost, a feigned Form was set up in stead of it, without any sealing Effects of Spirit or Power."[192] The reference to 2 Timothy 3:5, which would later be used by evangelical to condemn "formalists," would also show up in Smith's 1839 telling of his first vision (Chapter Two).

There are almost no recorded statements from Smith on Christian history until his very last speech (mentioned above) but other Mormon thinkers besides Cowdery made statements on the topic. Such statements became more specific after 1841 and seem to have influenced Smith's own declaration. In 1834, Sidney Rigdon attacked Protestantism and declared that the central issue that divided the true church from the false churches was revelation.

> The perfect folly of all the pretended reformations of ancient and modern times, when there were not inspired men at the head of them, both apostles and prophets; for without such, the God of heaven never at any time produced a reformation, nor did he ever bring back an apostate race at any time, by any other means, than by raising up and inspiring men from on high, and giving unto them the spirit of revelation in the knowledge of himself…. Any man proclaiming himself a reformer in religion, and in the next sentence denying inspiration and revelation, declares to all the world, that God never sent him.[193]

[192] Lead, *Revelation of Revelation,* 120.
[193] "Faith of the Church of Christ in These Last Days, III," *Evening and Morning Star* 2 (May 1834): 153-54.

That the Reformers did not claim to be led by revelation would be repeated in later narratives.

A dialogue that Mormon apostle John Taylor recorded with one John James, a minister in the Church of England in Liverpool, in many ways set the stage for the 1841 statements. James declared, "There has been a priesthood of apostolic succession, and a pure church, from the Savior's day until the present," a point that the Mormons denied. For proof of this assertion, James declared, "I refer you, sir, to Mosheim's and Milner's Church history, who shew that thing clearly." When Taylor balked at this, James replied, "We ought to have confidence in the testimony of good, accredited historians." When Taylor wanted to shift the discussion to church practices, James countered by asserting, "The Church of England ordains as you do," to which Taylor declared, "But they sprinkle infants, sir, and that is unscriptural."[194] The Mormons' statements starting in 1841 focused on the issues raised here: Protestant claims to authority, the use of church histories, and the proper mode of baptism.

On January 1, 1841, two Mormons printed assertions about Protestant authority that made the same basic claims. Wrote Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt in the Mormon's English periodical, "All the Protestant would agree that the Roman Catholic, or mother church, is so corrupt, and so far apostatised from the truth, that a reformation was not only needed but absolutely necessary." Pratt then noted that with the Reformation, "most of her population became protestants, they were excommunicated from the communion of the mother church, and withdrew from her fellowship…. But still she professed to retain the priesthood and ordinances which she had received from the Catholic or mother church—that is, her bishops

[194] John Taylor, "Extract from Elder John Taylor's Journal, Liverpool, May 5, 1839," *Times and Seasons,* 3 (February 15 1842): 634.

and clergy claimed NO NEW COMMISION FROM HEAVEN, AND HER MEMBERS WERE NOT CHRISTENED ANEW." "Now comes the application of our text," he continued, "If the mother church was a good tree, why should protestant England leave her communion. If, on the other hand she was a bad tree, how could her priesthood and ordinances be good?"[195] The very same day, Benjamin Winchester, the leader of the Mormons in Philadelphia, printed the same claims in his periodical. "Now if the Catholic Church is corrupt her authority is not good: then as the most of the Protestants are branches that sprung from them, of course their authority, or church power, is not pure. 'A corrupt fountain cannot send forth pure water.' What authority had Luther, Calvin, Henry the VIII, and many others to establish churches. I answer, they denied immediate revelation, consequently they were not commissioned at all."[196]

The Mormons also began using Christian histories to make their claims, particularly Johann Lorenz von Mosheim's very popular *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*. The Mormons were eager to demonstrate that something had gone wrong in the early church and used statements from Mosheim to make the claim. An anonymous article titled "Fallen Away" appeared in the Mormon periodical in 1842 citing Mosheim's claims about the corruption of the fifth century church (Mormons frequently highlighted that century, see below.) "The doctrines of religion were, at this time, understood and represented in a manner that savored little of their native purity and simplicity," declared Mosheim.[197] In 1843, two works appeared that both used Mosheim to argue that the rite of baptism had been changed in the early church. Both also used Catholic historian William Gahan's *A Compendious*

[195] [Parley P. Pratt,] "Grapes from Thorns and Figs from Thistles," *Millennial Star* 1 (Jan. 1, 1841): 236-37.
[196] Benjamin Winchester, "The Present Condition of Both the Jews and Gentiles in Regard to Religion," *Gospel Reflector* (Philadelphia) 1, no. 1 (Jan 1, 1841): 12.
[197] "Fallen Away," *Times and Seasons* 3, (October 15, 1842): 954.

Abstract of the History of the Church of Christ to make the same claim that Christians originally used immersion baptism. One "Junior" then went on to cite Mosheim's descriptions of the baptismal liturgy in later centuries, condemning the practices as unbiblical.[198] Benjamin Winchester also made this claim in his *The History of the Priesthood from the Beginning of the World to the Present Time* (1843) and also cited Mosheim and Gahan. "The testimony of these men is of undoubted authority, and probably would not have been given, could they have honourably avoided it: for in doing it, they have condemned themselves, both having adopted another mode."[199]

Winchester's *History of the Priesthood* was the closest thing to a Mormon systematic historical theology in Joseph Smith's lifetime, and, like other Mormons, Winchester used the concept of priesthood as the central element of true Christianity. In his chapter entitled "Prophetic Account of the Apostacy," Winchester argued that the man-child of the woman clothed with the sun in Revelation 12 was the priesthood and that the child being taken into heaven and the woman being driven into the wilderness were representative of the loss of the priesthood in early Christianity. Yet Winchester declared that "there is no way of finding out the exact time when the priesthood was taken from the church; however it is evident, it took place about the time the popish hierarchy supplanted the primitive order of it."[200] Winchester argued that the corruptions of the Catholic Church proved that they did not have true priesthood authority and then went on to reassert his and Pratt's earlier argument that Protestants didn't have the authority either. Winchester called the English Reformers "dissenters from the Catholics; or rather, they were a set of insubordinate characters. Indeed,

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[198] "Junior," "Baptism—The Mode of Its Administration—Its Efficacy—Dr. Moshiem [sic]—State of the Religious World—The Apostasy, &c., &c," *Times and Seasons* 4 (October 1, 1843): 339-40.
[199] Benjamin Winchester, *A History of the Priesthood from the Beginning of the World to the Present Time* (Philadelphia : Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1843), 85.
[200] Winchester, *History of the Priesthood,* 76-79.

all these celebrated reformers were apostates from the Mother church" and thus had no authority. Smith made a similar declaration in his last sermon: "the char[acte]r of the old ones have always been sland[ere]d by all apos[tates] since the world began—I testify again as God never will acknowledge any apost[ate]: any man who will betray the Catholics will betray you."[201] Winchester went so far as to assert that, "Many of these noted reformers, were men of the most infamous character" and cited the work of William Cobbett, an English political radical who wrote a book in the 1820s that claimed the English Reformation "was engendered in beastly lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and cherished and fed by plunder, devastation, and by rivers of innocent English and Irish blood."[202]

Thus Winchester used a variety of church historians to make his claims and seemed to have sought out those critical of Protestantism. Again, priesthood was the ultimate issue for Winchester who declared that the Protestants "certainly received no priesthood from heaven, for they universally denied immediate revelation from God to themselves, and made no pretentions to the administration of angels; therefore, of the two, I would take the authority of the Catholics in preference to that of the Protestants; but it is evident that neither have any that God acknowledges to be legal."[203] Winchester therefore declared a similar priesthood hierarchy as Dee, Lead, and Smith: angels, Catholics, Protestants.

Though the Mormons drew on church historians like Mosheim to assert their claims, they used those historians for their own purposes. The Mormons cited Mosheim to argue that

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[201] Smith at this time was embroiled with internal dissent that would play a major role in his assassination two weeks later (see the Conclusion). Declaring Protestants to be Catholic apostates was likely motivated by the animosity he felt toward both Protestants and his own dissenters.

[202] Winchester, *History of the Priesthood,* 89-90; William Cobbett, *History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland, Showing How that Event Has Impoverished the Main Body of the People in Those Countries*, 2 vols. (London, 1824-29), 4. Cobbett was not a Catholic himself, but worked hard for Catholic emancipation. Ian Dyck, "Cobbett, William (1763–1835)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[203] Winchester, *History of the Priesthood,* 90.

early Christianity had become corrupt but the Mormons' claims about what had corrupted early Christianity were fundamentally different than Mosheim's. Mosheim continued to promote the Platonic-corruption model asserted by Protestants in previous centuries (Chapter One), and asserted that Alexandrian Christian Platonism "was extremely detrimental to the cause of Christianity."[204] Yet despite the fact that Mosheim was very popular and that Joseph Smith owned a copy of his work, no early Mormon writer promoted the Platonic-corruption model. The Book of Mormon presented a fundamentally different version of early Christian corruption than did Mosheim. The Platonic-corruption model said that Christianity was corrupted because pagan elements were added to it, while the Book of Mormon said that early Christianity was corrupted because "plain and precious truths" were *removed* from the Bible. As I noted in the introduction, such a claim was similar to how Mosheim described Ammonius Saccas's views: Jesus's "only intention was to purify the ancient religion, and that his followers had manifestly corrupted the doctrine of their divine master."[205] Christ's followers had removed truth from the gospel, Mosheim said that Ammonius claimed, and, as argued above, much of the restored truth of Book of Mormon was Platonic. Adding Plato wasn't the problem; removing Plato, the major expositor of "the ancient religion" was. Smith turned Mosheim on his head and likely used Mosheim to do so.

Furthermore, the Book of Mormon defined the great and abominable church as a church, "which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity." Interestingly, Mosheim did not list persecution as a characteristic of early Christian corruption. In fact, Mosheim argued for the exact opposite. When describing the corruption of the fifth-century

[204] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:138.
[205] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:143. Mosheim probably got this idea from Ficino who asserted that

church, Mosheim condemned the Christians of that era for being too tolerant. "It will appear still more astonishing, that the platonic philosophers [of the fifth century], whose opposition to Christianity was universally known, should be permitted, in Greece and Egypt, to teach publicly the tenets of their sect, which were absolutely incompatible with the doctrines of the gospel." Mosheim listed a handful of fifth-century Platonists who wrote against Christianity and declared, "All this shows, that many of the magistrates, who witnessed of these calumnious attempts against the gospel, were not so much christians in reality, as in appearance; otherwise they would not have permitted the slanders of these licentious revilers to pass without correction or restraint."[206]

Interestingly, although they never said why they did so, a number of early Mormons pointed to the fifth century as the time when the early church lost the true priesthood. While the first reports of Cowdery's preaching in Ohio said that Cowdery said the authority had been lost after the apostles, another Ohio local reported the first Mormon missionaries saying, "There was no legal administrator, neither had been for fourteen hundred years," placing the loss of authority in the fifth century.[207] Alexander Campbell's father Thomas also said that the first Ohio missionaries taught "there has been none duly authorized to administer baptism, for the space of fourteen hundred years up to the present time."[208] When William Phelps defended Smith's retranslation of the Bible, he declared, "It will be seen by this that the most plain parts of the New Testament have been taken from it by the Mother of Harlots … from the year A.D. 460 to 1400. This is sufficient reason for the Lord to give

[206] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:401-2.
[207] Milton V. Backman, ed., "A Non-Mormon View of the Birth of Mormonism in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 12, no. 2 (1972): 308.
[208] Thomas Campbell to Sidney Rigdon, 4 Feb. 1831, in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* (Painsville, Ohio, 1834), 121.

command to have it translated anew."[209] In 1840, an anti-Mormon tract reported that Mormons taught that the apostasy occurred in 450.[210]

This date was odd since primitivists tended to focus on the second or third century as the time when Christianity became corrupt and Protestants had long pointed to the sixth and seventh centuries as the time when the papacy corrupted the church; the fifth century was something of no-man's land for apostasy claims.[211] However, in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon stressed how Christians had persecuted other groups and focused on the fifth century. In chapter 47, Gibbon detailed the persecutions perpetuated by Cyril of Alexandria against the Novatians, the Jews, and the Platonic philosopher Hypatia. The marginal note next to this section said, "His tyranny A. D. 413, 414, 415 &c," the fifth century. Gibbon called the Novatians "most innocent and harmless of sectaries" and also praised Hypatia, suggesting that these may have been "saints" that the Church persecuted.[212] Condemning the murder of Hypatia was common in Smith's era: John Toland wrote a book called *Hypatia: Or, the History of a Most Beautiful, Most Vertuous, Most Learned, and Every Way Accomplish'd Lady; Who was Torn to Pieces by the Clergy of Alexandria, to Gratify the Pride, Emulation, and Cruelty of the Archbishop* (1720) and the encyclopedia's entry on Hypatia also praised Hypatia and condemned Cyril.[213] In the same chapter, Gibbon went on to detail the persecutions of the other Christians by the

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[209] W. W. Phelps, *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (June 1832): 3.
[210] Erastus Snow replied, "We do not set any precise time when it was lost, or when the covenant was broken, but I believe that the apostacy of the church from the Apostolic order was a gradual decline." Erastus Snow, *E. Snow's Reply to the Self-Styled Philanthropist, of Chester County* (n.p. 1840), 8. The Book of Mormon narrative ends in the fifth century when the Lamanites wipe out the Nephites but no Mormons who referred to this date made reference to the destruction of the Nephites. Phelps's reference to the fifth century as the time when the great and abominable church did its works suggests that the date applied to events in the Old World.
[211] Vogel, *Religious Seekers,* 11; Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom,* 22-29.
[212] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1788), 4: 547-49. Gibbon also condemned the persecution of the Jews, which acts the Book of Mormon also generally condemned (2 Nephi 29:4-5; 3 Nephi 29:8).
[213] "Hypatia," in *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 9:42.

Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, indicating that the trend begun by Cyril in the fifth century continued.[214] Thus Mosheim took a very different view of Christian tolerance in the fifth century than did Gibbon. The Book of Mormon, which declared that persecution of the saints was one of the chief characteristics of the great and abominable church, lined up better with Gibbon.

The early Mormons presented a view of the priesthood and the apostasy that was similar to ideas found in the writings of John Dee and Jane Lead: the loss of priesthood and the hierarchy of authority with angels at the top and Protestants at the bottom suggested that receiving authority from the angels would be highly desirable. Smith not only claimed to receive such authority from angels but said he received "Melchizedek priesthood," the same authority that Jane Lead had hoped for. The Mormons attempted to construct a view of Christian history based on such a view. The priesthood had been lost by a corrupt early Christian Church and because the Protestants made no claim to priesthood restoration their authority was worse than the Catholics. The Mormons also rejected the Platonic-corruption model frequently presented by Protestant historians. The Mormons thus rejected many of the tenets of Protestant histories, embracing Philadelphian tenets instead.

Conclusion

With claims to restoring both "plain and precious truths" lost from the Bible as well as lost authority, the new "Church of Christ" or what the Mormons would later rename "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," put forward a handful of Christian-Platonic and Catholic claims that that Smith would expand in later revelations. As Christian Platonists had long argued, the Mormons declared that there was additional truth outside the Bible, and

[214] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall,* 579-81.

the Book of Mormon included such Christian-Platonic notions as pre-existence and fortunate fall in addition to the promise that more truth was forthcoming. The Book of Mormon was not very clear on what truths were taken out of the Bible but its handful of Christian-Platonic themes aligned with passages from Allen's *Modern Judaism* and Jane Lead's visions, and it also contained tree visions that had numerous similarities to tree visions in Dee's spirit diary. These similarities suggest that Allen, Dee, and Lead played an important role in pointing Smith in particular directions for finding lost truths: Jewish truths that aligned with Alexandrian Christianity and particular early modern visionaries.

Smith's restoration, both the Book of Mormon and Smith's notions of priesthood and apostasy, particularly aligned with Lead's visions: a restoration of a lost Melchizedek priesthood, visions that aligned with Lead's and Christian Platonism, and a golden books that would expound these truth. And while it is unclear exactly when Smith may have come in contact with Lead's visions, Smith's and Lead's visions would become increasingly similar. One way or another, Smith in many ways, would bring many of Lead's visions to fruition. While Smith and the Mormons made claims to being the true church, Smith quickly moved beyond conceiving of his movement as a church to viewing it in larger political terms. For Smith his movement quickly became the beginnings of the kingdom of God on earth that would gather in the elect in anticipation of Christ's second coming. In doing so, Smith's ambitions went far beyond church leader and lined up more with those of the Platonic philosopher-king.

Chapter Four: Kirtland and Missouri

Introduction

The Book of Mormon promised that those who believed what it taught would receive additional knowledge. Smith kept that promise as his revelations quickly expanded the theology of the Book of Mormon. The major themes that Smith's revelations expanded were the nature of heaven, what the saints needed to do to get there, and how the saints could create heaven on earth. Thus I divide the chapter into two sections—"things in heaven" and "things on earth"—a play on one of Smith's revelations where the Lord tells the Mormons to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom … things both in heaven, and in the earth."[1] This revelation commanded the Mormons to begin a kind of study group called "the school of the prophets," which Smith started in the winter of 1832. As discussed in Chapter Two, Smith, like other Christian Platonists, taught that knowledge was exalting.

Another revelation told the saints "to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion."[2] "Zion" was not a metaphor for Smith: Zion was the kingdom of God on earth that was to be built in Jackson County, Missouri, in anticipation of Christ's second coming. Thus Smith was much more than a denominational leader. Smith's role was similar to the Platonic philosopher-king: the one enlightened by heaven that could bring love, peace, and harmony to the earth in a literal utopian kingdom. Smith said that the ancient prophets had accomplished such utopianism—particularly Enoch and Melchizedek—through their tremendous priesthood

[1] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 104; current 88:77, 79.
[2] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 213; current 93:53.

power. Enoch and his people were so righteous that the Lord took their entire city into heaven; in the Bible, Enoch walked with God, in Smith's expansion of the Bible Enoch's whole city walked with God. Such was Smith's goal; like the philosopher-king, Smith sought to lead his followers into the presence of God.

Things in Heaven: Early Mormon Soteriology

Book-of-Mormon soteriology was conventionally Arminian: all who believed and followed Christ could be saved and God would be merciful to those who had not heard the gospel message. But those who did hear the gospel and rejected it would be damned. The afterlife consisted of heaven and hell for these two different groups of individuals. Yet two of Smith's revelations greatly altered this model. The first was received before the Book of Mormon was in print and said that post-mortal punishment would be temporary, suggesting that all would eventually be redeemed. Such was a statement of universalism, a doctrine that the Book of Mormon had seemingly condemned.[3] But universalists from Origen to his early modern followers had said that universalism was a higher doctrine not for the masses and that is should not be taught openly. The Book of Mormon said that higher doctrine would be revealed to the believers and in this case the doctrine was revealed before the Book of Mormon was published. The next major revelation on the topic came in what Mormons called "The Vision," an extensive revelation that Smith and Sidney Rigdon said they had of the afterlife. Here Smith and Rigdon said they saw three ranked heavens: people would go to a different heaven in the next life depending on how the had behaved here. Everyone would eventually go to one of these heavens except for a very few "Sons of Perdition" that would suffer with the devil and his angels forever. Thus "The Vision" taught near-universalism:

[3] Alma 1:4, 15:15, 21:6.

almost all would be saved. Universalism and graded heavens were both major themes in Christian Platonism.

Universalism. Smith's 1829 revelation declared that although

> every man must repent or suffer … nevertheless, it is not written, that there shall be no end to this torment; but it is written endless torment.
>
> Again, it is written eternal damnation: wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory: wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you, to know even as mine apostles…. For behold I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand, is endless punishment, for endless is my name: wherefore—
>
> Eternal punishment is God's punishment:
>
> Endless punishment is God's punishment.[4]

Thus post-mortal punishment will end and this concept was secret knowledge that Christ had reveled to his apostles. The idea that "eternal" didn't mean forever was a central universalist argument. Universalists pointed to Jude 1:7 where Jude said that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah "are set forth an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" as proof that eternal didn't mean forever since those cities were only burned for a finite amount of time. Origen said that eternal only meant a very long time, and Jane Lead responded to "that great Objection made from Christ's Words, Go ye Cursed into Everlasting Punishment," by arguing that such punishment "is opposed to the short Limits of this World; and admits only of number of ages, which Suffering, and Punishments there may yet be, yet it is not to be beyond the Time of CHRIST … for GOD was, is, and so hath designed in

[4] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 174-75; current DC 19:4-12.

CHRIST to reconcile all to himself which was at odds with him."[5] Allen cited Menasseh ben Israel as saying, "The souls of the wicked shall at length be delivered from punishments," and Charles Buck listed as one of Origen's teachings, "That, after long periods of time, the damned shall be released from their torments."[6]

The statement "it is written eternal damnation: wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men," suggested that the revelation was saying that the phrase "eternal damnation" was useful for motivating people. Starting with Origen, universalists argued that universalism ought to be kept from the masses. Critics of universalism argued that it would lead to moral anarchy because if people didn't have damnation to fear they would not fear to sin, and many universalists agreed that the idea should only be taught to the spiritually mature. Thus a private revelation teaching a higher "mystery" that went beyond or even contradicted the soteriology of the Book of Mormon was consistent with universalist thought.[7]

Yet to disabuse Harris and anyone else of the notion that the wicked would get off easy, the revelation continued,

> Therefore I command you to repent, repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore: how sore you know not! how exquisite you know not! yea, how hard to bear you know not! For behold, I, God have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent, but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I: which

[5] Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: In Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 101; Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out be a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), introduction, [3].
[6] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 132; Charles Buck, "Origenists," *Theological Dictionary,* 422.
[7] D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 5, 19. Lead saw herself as revealing this high truth: the "Latitude of redeeming Love you will in this Volume find declared, of being also a revealed Truth, which I was not from the World to conceal," wrote Lead. (Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* introduction, [3].)

> suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit: and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink … wherefore, I command you again to repent lest I humble you with my almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken.[8]

Those who did not repent in this life would suffer in the next, as the universalists taught; the wicked would not get off easy. Lead herself offered "this Word of Caution and Counsel, That none presume to turn This Grace of GOD into a vitious and careless way of Living, For Anguish and Terrour, of Soul, and Suffering, will be upon them here, and hereafter."[9] With this revelation the Mormons had adopted the universalism of Smith's grandfather.

This revelation stated the basic tenets of universalism that went back to Origen and had their roots in Plato: eternal suffering is in fact temporary but it is severe. Plato taught that for the wicked, "Their benefit comes to them, both here and in Hades, by way of pain and suffering, for there is no other possible way to get rid of injustice." For most of the wicked, these punishments were temporary and curative; only those who had committed particularly heinous acts and were thus incurable would suffer forever.[10] Plato went into more detail in book ten of the *Republic* where he described the near-death experience of one Er. While dead, Er said he saw judges divide the just from the unjust: the just were sent up to heaven and the unjust down into the earth. He also saw people coming out of those places

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[8] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 175; current DC 19:15-20. The phrase "bleed at every pore," suggests an allusion to Christ's suffering in the garden of Gethsemane mentioned in Luke 22:44 "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The idea that Christ suffered for sins not only on the cross but in Gethsemane was discussed in the early modern period. Bishop Hugh Latimer preached that Christ "would not suffer only bodily in the garden and upon the cross, but also in his soul, whit it was from the body, which was a pain due for our sin." Quoted in William Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described, Especially the English Miracle Plays* (London, 1823), 128.

[9] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* introduction, [3-4].

[10] Plato, *Gorgias,* 525b-c.

who reported what they had experienced. Those who came out of the earth were "weeping as they recalled all they had suffered and seen on their journey below the earth, which lasted a thousand years, while the latter, who had come from heaven, told about how well they had fared and about the inconceivably fine and beautiful sights they had seen." The unjust explained that in the underworld they had to suffer for every unjust thing they had done once every hundred years. Since they spent a thousand years in the underworld, they suffered ten times for all their injustices. At the same time, tyrants and a few others who were "incurably wicked" were never allowed out of hell, just like Plato had said in the *Gorgias*. When such individuals tried to leave after their thousand years were over, "Savage men, all fiery to look at … grabbed some of the criminals and led them away." The fiery men then bound the incurably wicked and "dragged them out of the way … telling every passer-by that they were to be thrown into Tartarus."[11] Smith similarly taught that a certain group of particularly wicked people would suffer forever (see below).

The reference to a thousand years was similar to a reference in the Revelation 20 (later universalists seemingly combined themes from Er's vision and Revelation 20 in ways that sounded similar to Smith's visions, see below). In Revelation 20, the visionary saw an angel cast the devil "into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him … till the thousand years should be fulfilled." In the meantime, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God … and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." However, "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished…. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection … they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." As in the *Republic*, different types of people were given their different rewards for a thousand

[11] Plato, *Republic,* 614b-615b.

years: the righteous were blessed, the devil was cast "into the bottomless pit," and "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." "And when the thousand years are expired," the visionary continued, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison," which brings on the battle of Gog and Magog, after which "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." All people are then resurrected and "judged out of those things which were written in the books…. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Similar to the *Republic*, there are those that are cast into a tortuous place (the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and "whosoever was not found written in the book of life") where they will stay forever.

The Book of Mormon makes a number of references to "first resurrection" and "second death," and the prophet Alma speaks of a "space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection," when "the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow" while "the spirits of the wicked" are "cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." The souls are then resurrected and judged as in Revelation 20, after which "the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God" while "an awful death cometh upon the wicked."[12] Where there are differences between Revelation and the *Republic*, Alma's descriptions tend to be more similar to the *Republic.* Whereas the *Republic* and Alma say that the wicked suffer before they are resurrected, Revelation 20 just says that they "do not live." Both the *Republic* and Alma say that the wicked engage in weeping during that time while Revelation

[12] Alma 40:6, 12, 13, 19, 25, 26.

20 does not use that word (though it is used throughout the New Testament to describe the wicked after death). Revelation 20 says that the righteous will "reign" with Christ for a thousand years while the *Republic* says the righteous behold "inconceivably fine and beautiful sights"; a statement more similar to Alma's description of the righteous's "state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow."[13] The *Republic* likely influenced universalist thought and there are particular similarities between these aspects of the afterlife and the teachings of Johann Wilhelm Petersen, a follower of Jane Lead, discussed below

Clement and Origen also insisted that post-mortal suffering was curative and for the most part temporary. "God's punishments are saving and disciplinary," wrote Clement, "leading to conversion, and choosing rather the repentance them the death of a sinner; and especially since souls, although darkened by passions, when released from their bodies, are able to perceive more clearly, because of their being no longer obstructed by the paltry flesh."[14] Origen argued that just as doctors sometimes have to amputate or use fire to stop disease in the body, "much more is it to be understood that God our Physician, desiring to remove the defects of our souls."[15] Yet while Jeffrey Trumbower notes that "Clement does not speak of an inevitable universal salvation here; his language clearly presupposes that some might reject the offer," Origen did suggest that all would be saved. Origen spoke of the *apocatastasis* "the restitution of all things" and argued that "eternal" only meant a very long

[13] The statement that may be most similar comes from William Hone's summation of the views of the early fathers in his *Ancient Mysteries Described* (1823) (a book with a number of Mormon similarities, see below and Chapter Seven). The fathers, said Hone, say the dead go to a place to "await the final doom; the good in a state of quiescence, the bad in a state of torment" (131). Hone said the fathers said that this place was in the center of the earth, while Alma says "the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life," (Alma 40:11), probably not in the center of the earth. Alma's statement is confusing however since the next verses make clear that the wicked are not with God.
[14] Clement, *Stromata*, 6.6.
[15] Origen, *De Principiis,* 2.10.6.

time. The wicked would suffer but all would eventually return to God. Origen's critics even accused him of saying that the devil would eventually be redeemed.[16]

Augustine rejected the idea that any of the unbaptized could go to heaven and he also argued that there was no post-mortal progression.[17] At the same time, the medieval church did teach purgatory: those who had unshriven sins would suffer for them in the next life before they could go to heaven. The suffering would purge them in ways similar to what Clement and Origen had said. D. P. Walker argues, "The Protestant rejection of purgatory is of great importance in our attempt to discover why the doctrine of hell began to be questioned when it did." Walker assumes that "it must have been the case that in a personal way the abolition of purgatory produced for many Protestants a painful situation," and notes that Johann Wilhelm Petersen felt that Protestants had gone too far in getting rid of purgatory because he felt that people should have additional opportunities to progress in the afterlife. At the same time, notes Walker "advocates of this doctrine are always at great pains to point out how their afterlife differs from the Roman Catholic purgatory."[18]

Jane Lead, however, didn't seem worried about using this terminology. In her *Enochian Walks with God,* Lead declared universal salvation, saying that at the Last Judgment "will this Judge reserve in himself the liberty to Release, and Remission give, to all that in fiery Purgations have passed, and are humbled thereby" and also spoke of "the finishing of the great Mystery, when all Souls will have passed through their Purgation in their several degrees."[19] John Allen said that for the Jews, "Infernal punishment is frequently

[16] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 99, 116-18; Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), 66-67.
[17] Augustine, Letter 164, 4.12-13 (discussed below).
[18] D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 59-60.
[19] Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out be a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), introduction [3], 18.

represented as a purgatorial process, necessary in almost all cases, to qualify for a state of future happiness."[20] "Expiatory pains are a part of [God's] adorable plan," Charles Buck said of Origen's teachings.[21] In 1843 Thomas Ward, the editor of the Mormons' periodical in England, reasserted that Mormons "do not believe in the eternal duration of future punishments," and then noted, "the taunt that is frequently thrown out 'oh! You are as bad as papists; you believe in purgatory!'" Ward then added this admission, "For we believe, that fallen as the Roman church may be, she has traces of many glorious principles that were once in the church of Christ, of which (however corrupted by her) the protestant world knows nothing." Ward goes on to concede, "And if it be said that we believe in a purgatory, by believing that men are judged according to the deed in the body, and that there is a termination to their punishment as well as various degrees of it, we acknowledge the truth of the charge."[22]

Yet purgatory was only for baptized Christians; all the unbaptized would be damned.[23] This issue was debated, however. William of Auvergne (c. 1180-1249), the bishop of Paris, reported theological complaints from those in his diocese:

> Why they ask did the mercy of God choose so few for salvation, but leave so many in perdition—especially since he is believed to be more ready to save than to condemn? … It can seem presumptuous for a few Christians to think they alone will be saved, and the whole rest of humankind left to perdition—that is, bad Christians (who far outnumber the good), as well as Jews, Saracens, and pagans…. Can the mercy of

[20] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 182.
[21] Buck, "Origenists," 422.
[22] [Thomas Ward,] "On Future Punishments," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool) 3 (March 1843): 177-78.
[23] D. P. Walker argues that purgatory was not a "dynamic" view of the afterlife since those in purgatory are saved, they just need further purging, but their state doesn't change. Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 60.

> God, which is infinite and beyond measure, endure so painful a slaughter? Why, they ask did he create such a multitude of the damned?... It upsets the ignorant and unbelieving that sin is momentary and takes only a short time to commit. How, they ask, can it be just to inflict eternal punishment for it?[24]

These parishioners were listing classic universalist arguments, suggesting that either Origen's writings, which were available but condemned, had made some inroads or that these people had arrived at similar conclusions. Margery Kemp (1373-1438) was uncomfortable with eternal damnation and a number of religious women sought to relieve those in purgatory by their own suffering and even hoped to relieve the suffering of the damned. That the suffering of those in hell could be relieved was against the teaching of the church, and this led to questions of why didn't God's love exceed that of these saintly women, argues Barbara Newman.[25]

Renaissance thinkers like Pico Della Mirandolla began to defend Origen and the Socinians, a sixteenth-century Polish movement, were accused of teaching universal salvation.[26] By the seventeenth century, Origen gained followers among the Cambridge Platonists and in 1661, one of them (probably George Rust) published *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions,* which fully embraced universal salvation. Jane Lead's *Enochian Walks with God* (1694) was the first work to embrace universal salvation non-anonymously and unequivocally. The eighteenth century spawned different varieties of universalism, from near to total universalism, and different ideas about how long

[24] Quoted in Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 135.
[25] Newman, *Virile Woman to WomanChrist,* 121-30.
[26] Edgar Wind, 'The Revival of Origen," in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene* (Princeton, 1954) 412-24.

the suffering would last, whether there were stages that one passed through (see below), and if the devil would be redeemed.[27]

Another possible universalist influence on Mormonism was the phrase "the restoration of all things." Universalists since Origen had called universalism "the restoration of all things" or *apocatastasis* based on "the restitution of all things" mentioned in Acts 3:26; Jeremiah White even wrote a universalist book called *The Restoration of all Things,* published in (1712). Smith's revelations used this term when speaking of the work he was to perform. One revelation said that Elias had "committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things, or the restorer of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began," and another told Smith, "Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain, through you and your lineage, until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."[28] While this language was somewhat vague, Mormons came to interpret the phrase to mean the restoration of priesthood keys that Smith received. Parley Pratt wrote in 1841, "At length the full time had arrived for the great restoration of all things to commence, for the great and last dispensation to be ushered into the world. The Lord uttered his voice from the heavens, an holy angel came forth and restored the priesthood and apostleship, and hence has arisen the church of the Saints."[29]

Smith therefore turned toward universalism with his 1829 revelation which not only stated universalist claims but standard justifications for those claims. At the same time, such

[27] D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 8, 239-40.
[28] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 99, 180; current DC 27:6; 86:10.
[29] [Parley P. Pratt,] "Grapes from Thorns and Figs from Thistles," *Millennial Star* 1 (Jan 1841): 237.

universalist assertions seemed to raise an additional number of questions that Smith sought answers from God to resolve.

The Vision. One of the chief complaints that critics of universalism had was that it was not fair for the righteous and wicked to end up with the same reward even if the wicked had to undergo punishment to get to that reward.[30] The Book of Mormon expressed a similar idea. The prophet Alma asks the Nephites what will become of them if they do not repent: "Do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?"[31] Furthermore, Mormonism's move toward universalism was complicated by an 1830 revelation that not only reasserted the idea of a permanent hell, but also seemed to specifically reject post-mortal progression. "And the righteous shall be gathered on my right hand unto eternal life," the revelation declared, "and the wicked on my left hand will I be ashamed to own before the Father; wherefore I will say unto them, depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And now behold I say unto you, never at any time have I declared from mine own mouth that they should return, for where I am they cannot come, for they have no power."[32] Contrary to what universalists taught, the revelation declared, the wicked will not return to God. Technically, the 1829 revelation just said the wicked's suffering would end, not that they would return to God, so this revelation didn't technically overturn the previous one, though it did overturn the universalist implications of that revelation. A revelation called "The Vision" that Smith and Sidney Rigdon had in 1832 further expanded the Mormon afterlife and encompassed principles from both of these prior revelations.

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[30] Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 60.
[31] Alma 5:28.
[32] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 114; current DC 29:27-29.

In February 1832, while working on Smith's retranslation of the Bible, Smith and Rigdon came to John 5:29: "And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust." Smith and Rigdon then added, "Now this caused us to marvel."[33] Why this caused them to marvel is unclear since John 5:29 is a simple statement of the division of the righteous and wicked in the next life, one that had been reasserted in the 1830 revelation. The fact that the Vision greatly complicated the heaven and hell bifurcation suggests that perhaps Smith and Rigdon themselves wondered if the afterlife were more complicated than this. In fact, Christian thinkers had long asked this question. When Epiphanius (c. 310-403) criticized Origen for saying that the devil may one day be saved, he complained, that "all differentiation on the basis of merit would be eradicated if the devil were to be made equal to the blessed saints."[34] Jerome (c. 347-420) argued that there would be differentiation in heaven based on merit. "Will Paul and that penitent who had lain with his father's wife be on an equality, because the latter repented and was received into the Church: and shall the offender because he is with him on the right hand shine with the same glory as the Apostle?"[35] Jerome pointed to John 14:2, "In my Father's house of many mansions" as proof of gradation in heaven, and pope Gregory the Great made the same assertion.[36] Protestants even discussed degrees of glory and as D. P. Walker points out, "For strict Lutherans and Calvinists the theory of graded heavenly joys was incompatible with the doctrine of salvation, according to which a man is saved solely by faith through grace, independently of

[33] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 226; current DC 76:15-18.
[34] Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), 99.
[35] Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, 2.22.
[36] Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, 2.28; Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 65.

his virtues of merits; but neither Luther nor Calvin did in fact reject the gradation of pains and joys."[37]

One of the most common claims to gradation in heaven was the assertion that there were three heavens. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago," declared Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2, "such an one caught up to the third heaven." Clement of Alexandria asserted, "Conformably, therefore, there are various abodes, according to the worth of those who have believed…. These chosen abodes, which are three, are indicated by the numbers in the Gospel— the thirty, the sixty, the hundred," a reference to the parable of the sower, where the seeds on good ground brought forth different amounts of fruit (Matthew 13:8). Clement drew heavily on Judeo-Christian apocalypticism and many of those text said there were three heavens.[38] Origen talked about "gradations" and "heavens" but was unclear as to how many.[39] Proclus said there were three heavens and medieval mystic Mechthild of Magdeburg (1207-1282) had a vision of three heavens.[40] Some medieval scientists said there were three spheres beyond the seven the planetary spheres.[41]

Jane Lead said there were three heavens in *Enochian Walks with God* and Swedenborg also saw three heavens in his *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell*.[42] Swedenborg even called one of the heavens the same thing that Smith's revelations called the highest

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[37] Emma Disley, "Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 42, no. 1 (1991): 77-106; Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 66.
[38] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 15.
[39] Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.11.6.
[40] Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 95-96; Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 100.
[41] David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450.* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 259.
[42] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 16.

heaven, "the Celestial Kingdom."[43] The Vision said of those who go to the highest heaven "These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun,"[44] a reference to 1 Corinthians 15:40-42: "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." The Vision made references to this passage throughout: the heaven below the celestial world is the "terrestrial world … whose glory differs from that of the church of the first born, who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament." The lowest heaven is the "telestial world," telestial not being a word found in 1 Corinthians or anywhere really,[45] but this lowest kingdom is "the glory of the stars" competing the triad of sun, moon, and starts that the passage mentioned.[46] Jerome also pointed to 1 Corinthians 15:40-42 as justification for gradations in heaven.[47] Adam Clarke's commentary on this passage said, "That is, the bodies of the dead, though all immortal, shall possess different degrees of splendour and glory, according to the state of holiness in which their respective souls were found. The rabbins have some crude notions concerning different degrees of glory, which the righteous shall possess in the kingdom of heaven."[48]

The view of the afterlife that had the most similarities to Smith's Vision was Lead's *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, in the Variety of Eight Worlds* (1695); like

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[43] Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell* (Baltimore: Anthony Miltenberger, 1812), p. 56, sect. 21; DC 88:4, 20, 22, 25.
[44] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 229; current DC 76:78.
[45] The only references to "telestial" I found for Smith's era on Google Books was the word "celestial" with smudges over the "c." Samuel Brown postulates that Smith simply combined "celestial" and "terrestrial" to get "telestial." *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224.
[46] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229, 230; current DC 76:71, 98.
[47] Jerome, *Against Jovinianus,* 23.
[48] Clarke, *New Testament*, 1 Corinthians 15:42.

Smith, Lead referred to the afterlife states as "worlds." The big difference between the two was that in this revelation Lead now said that there were eight worlds, instead of three, which she had said in an earlier vision. "I did not know when I published my two last Treatises, that of the *Enochian Life*, and the other of the *Paradisiacal Laws*," wrote Lead, "that my God would ever have had made use of me any more in this kind…. But my LORD doth still follow me with fresh Revelations … by which hidden and unknown Worlds must be made manifest in this last Age of Times."[49] Eight worlds was the ancient notion of the Ogdoad, the seven planetary spheres plus the earth; Lead's vision included the earth in her eight worlds.[50] Clement of Alexandria also spoke of the Ogdoad, or eight post-mortal "grades."[51] At the beginning of the section where Clement said there were three heavens, he said, in heaven "are gathered the philosophers of God … who do not remain in the seventh seat, the place of rest, but are promoted, through the active beneficence of the divine likeness, to the heritage of beneficence which is the eighth grade; devoting themselves to the pure vision of insatiable contemplation."[52] Clement seemed to be saying that while there were three heavens, there were eight "grades" within those heavens. Mechthild of Magdeburg also spoke of several levels within the three heavens.[53] Smith himself later declared, "Paul had seen the third heavens and I more."[54] In 1844, Smith said, "There are many mansions for those who obey a

[49] Jane Lead, *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, In the Variety of Eight Worlds* (London, 1695), 7-8.
[50] Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 27.
[51] Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 451; Clement of Alexandria, *The Exceprta Ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, trans. and ed. by Robert Pierce Casey (London: Christophers, 1934), 83.
[52] Clement, *Stromata,* 6.14.
[53] McDannell, *Heaven,* 100.
[54] May 17, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 202.

celestial law—& there are other mansions for those who come short of that law."[55] Like Clement and Lead, Smith had more gradations on top of his three heavens.

The main difference between Lead's afterlife and Smith's was that Lead saw the worlds as stages that post-mortal souls progressed though, whereas Smith's Vision indicated that placement in different words was more static, though the Vision did speak of those in lower kingdoms being ministered to (similar to Lead), perhaps suggesting that such ministration could have the effect of helping people progress.[56] For Lead, people were placed into different worlds depending on how righteous they had been on earth but they had a chance to progress after their original placement.

There were a number of similarities between Smith's and Lead's worlds. Lead's first world was the earth but the next was "the Dark Hellish World" that "is allotted a Receptacle for Lucifer, and the rest of the Apostatized Angels of that Hierarchy." There "the Fiery Purgation, until the Venom of Sin in every Evil Property, shall by the means of it expire, both as to Angels of the Hellish source, and to such Souls as have been deceived and captivated by them."[57] Smith's Vision said that those who are to go to the lowest, telestial world "are they who are thrust down to hell: these are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil, until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work."[58] Like the wicked in Lead's vision, Smith's wicked will suffer with the devil and his angels before they move onto the lowest, telestial world. Such was similar to the *Republic* and to how Johann Wilhelm Petersen, a disciple of Jane Lead, described the afterlife in his *Mysterion* (1700). Lead herself warned, "I must solemnly Profess to all such as do loosely

[55] May 12, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 368. An 1832-33 revelation described admittance to the various kingdoms in term of following the laws of those kingdoms. DC 88:22-24.
[56] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229; current DC 76:87-88; Lead, *Enochian Walks with God*, 23.
[57] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation*, 10, 11, 13.
[58] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229; current DC 76:84-85.

and vainly live, That they will have no part in the first Resurrection, but be cut off from all those pleasant and unconceivable Joys."[59] Petersen, following Revelation 20 and with emphases similar to the *Republic* and the Book of Mormon, said that people are divided between the wicked and righteous at death: the righteous peacefully await the millennium when they alone will be resurrected, while all the rest will undergo curative punishment. The non-righteous are then resurrected at the end of the millennium and those who have repented will enter into bliss, like those who go to the telestial world in the Vision, while those who have not will go back into hell.[60] Smith similarly said that a certain group of people would continue to endure punishment after the bulk of the wicked were resurrected (the sons of perdition, see below).

Souls would continue to be purged of their sins in Lead's next two worlds—"watery elemental" and "astral"/"aerial"—though purgation in these higher worlds was no longer painful. The only pain in these worlds is the denial of the vision of God, which the soul craved. Good, though not particularly holy, people would skip the hellish world and start at one of these higher worlds when they died. Together these four were the lower worlds, the worlds where sin existed.[61] No sin existed in Lead's four higher worlds and it was these higher worlds that most resembled Smith's worlds (chart 4.1). The lowest of Lead's four higher worlds was "the angelical world," and in Smith's Vision "the telestial receive [glory] of the administering of angels."[62] Lead's next world was "Mount Sion," which was "Christ's the Lord's Kingdom"; Smith's next world was the "terrestrial" whose inhabitants "receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father." In addition, those in the

[59] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* introduction, [4].
[60] Walker, *Decline of Hell,* 239-40.
[61] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 6, 15-17.
[62] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation*, 6, 20; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229, current DC 76:88.

terrestrial world "are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father." For Smith the highest, celestial world was where "the fulness of the Father" was and for Lead, "The Third Heavenly World is the Royal and Principal Seat of God the Father."[63] Lead said that the third world was "the Great City, called the *New Jerusalem*"; Smith's Vision said that those who went to the highest world went "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all."[64]

Chart 4.1: Smith's and Lead's "Worlds"

Wonders of God's Creation	**The Vision**
8 Still Eternity	
7 New Jerusalem (6, 20, 27) "the Royal and Principal Seat of God the Father" (6) "the Great city" (6)	**3 Celestial** "the fulness of the Father" (71) "the city of the living God" (66)
6 Mount Sion (6, 27) "Christ's the Lord's Kingdom is in great Magnificence" (6)	**2 Terrestrial** "the presence of the Son" (77)
5 Paradisiacal (6, 19-20) "this Angelical World" (20)	**1 Telestial** "the administering of angels" (88)[65]
4 Astral/Aerial[66]	
3 Watery Elementary	
2 Dark Hellish "Receptacle for Lucifer, and the rest of the Apostatized Angels" (11) "the Fiery Purgation, until the Venom of Sin in every Evil Property, shall by the means of it expire" (13)	Wicked are "thrust down to hell: these are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil, until the last resurrection" (84-85)
1 Corporeal Visible "in which we now live" (10)	

[63] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229; current DC: 76: 71; Lead, *Wonder's of God's Creation,* 6.
[64] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 6-7, 27; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 228; current DC 76:66.
[65] The Vision also says that the telestial people receive "of the Holy Spirit" (86).
[66] Lead was not consistent in how she placed the order of the Astral/Aerial world in relation to the Waterish Elementary world. Sometimes Astral was higher, sometimes Waterish.

Another important similarity between Lead's *Wonders of God's Creation* and Smith's Vision were the categories of people they described: for Lead, there were essentially five types of people, which roughly corresponded to Smith's three types (see chart 4.2). For Lead, the first type were those "who depart out of the Body in the Diabolical Spirit" and for Smith the telestial people were "liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie."[67] Smith's next type of people, the terrestrial ones, correspond to Lead's next two types. Lead's second type were "such as are Ignorant of God" and Smith described the terrestrial people as "they who died without law" and who "received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it."[68] Lead's third type were those who believed "in GOD and CHRIST … yet cannot come off clearly from the Worldly Principle…. In which Millions of Souls are deceived." Smith additionally described terrestrial people as "honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men" and who were "not valiant in the testimony of Jesus."[69]

Lead's fourth and fifth types of people corresponded to Smith's celestial people. Lead's fourth type were "such as have attained to a good degree of Regeneration, being Born of the Spirit, and as have been partakers of the Baptism of Water, Blood, and Spirit for Renovation," and Smith said that celestial people "were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name … that, by keeping the commandments, they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands."[70] Finally, Lead said, "it is very rare that any Souls do come up to be with CHRIST the Lord, immediately upon the departing from the Body. Though I do not say but

[67] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 15; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 230; current DC 76:103.
[68] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 15; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229; current DC 76:72, 74.
[69] Lead, Wonder's of God's Creation, 16; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 229; current DC 76:75, 79.
[70] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 19-20; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 228; current DC 76:51-52.

some may reach to such a perfect degree of Christlikeness." Though such people were rare, some did exist, making them Lead's fifth type. Lead went on to say, "It ought then to be known, how that those Souls that are Born of God, and so Renewed in every part, the whole Man being changed into a Deified Nature" and Smith said of those in the celestial world, "Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God."[71]

Chart 4.2: Comparing Lead's and Smith's different types of people

Wonder's of God's Creation **(page)**	**The Vision (current verse)**
5 "some may reach to such a perfect degree of Christlikeness" (20) "changed into a Deified Nature" (21) **4 "**being Born of the Spirit, and as have been partakers of the Baptism of Water, Blood, and Spirit for Renovation" (19)	**Celestial people** "they are gods" (58) "were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name … washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands." (51)
3 "Believing in GOD and CHRIST… yet cannot come off clearly from the Worldly Principle…. In which Millions of Souls are deceived." (16) **2** "Ignorant of God" (15)	**Terrestrial people** "honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. (75) "not valiant in the testimony of Jesus" (79) "Died without law" (72) "received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh" (74).
1 Die "in the Diabolical Spirit" (15) Devil's angels and "such Souls as have been deceived and captivated by them" (13)	**Telesial people** "liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie." (103)

Therefore, in both the descriptions of the worlds and the different types of people, Smith's Vision had numerous similarities to Lead's *Wonders of God's Creation.* There was, however, one important difference.

Near-universalism. Smith had an additional class of people that Lead did not.

[71] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 20, 21; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 228; current DC 76:58.

> Thus saith the Lord, concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves, through the power of the devil, to be overcome, and to deny the truth, and defy my power: they are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born; … concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come.[72]

Here the Vision described another category, "the sons of perdition," a reference to John 17:12: "and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition," a reference to Judas. The Vision applied this scripture more broadly, saying that Christ "saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him."[73] The Vision linked the sons of perdition to the New Testament's statements about blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31, Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10): "Having denied the Holy Spirit, after having received it, and having denied the only begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves, and put him to an open shame."[74] The Vision shifted the issue from blasphemy to denial and linked the sin to what was described in Hebrews 6:4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Such passages had been used to attack universalism and the Vision revolved this problem by saying that there was a special class that would experience eternal damnation. Thus the Vision declared near-universalism rather than full universalism.

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[72] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 227; current DC 76:31, 32, 34.
[73] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 227; current DC 76:43.
[74] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 227; current DC 76:35.

Plato himself was a near-universalist: as described above, Plato said that though most post-mortal suffering was curative, there were "incurable souls." Hebrews 6 and the Vision seemed to suggest the same thing. Yet even among the sons of perdition, the Vision held out possible hope for an end of suffering. The Vision said that Christ "saves all except them—they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment."[75] Again the 1829 revelations said that "eternal" and "endless" didn't mean forever (though it didn't say anything about the word "everlasting.") The Vision then said that in that state, "Fire is not quenched," but then added, "And the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows, neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof."[76] This language suggested that such suffering may end, but was not clear.

If the Vision did suggests that the suffering of the sons of perdition could end, then it painted a picture very similar to that of Johann Wilhelm Petersen, whose ideas about the dead during the millennium were similar to Smith's, mentioned above. Petersen said that after the millennium most the wicked would be released from hell, similar to what Smith said. Those who would be released from hell, said Petersen, were those who had been reformed by their time there. Such people would now have their names "written in the book of life," while those who had still not repented would not have their names in the book and would be cast back "into the lake of fire," following Revelation 20. Such individuals would undergo further punishment for ages and ages until they finally turned to God. Eventually even the devil would be released from hell, but this would take 50,000 years, said Petersen's wife.[77]

[75] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 227; current DC 76: 44.
[76] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 228; current DC 76:44-46.
[77] Walker, *Decline of Hell*, 239-40.

Furthermore, having heavenly gradations opened up the possibility for people to only make it so far up the scale. Referring to gradations in heaven, Clement of Alexandria said,

> Now to know is more than to believe, as to be dignified with the highest honour after being saved is a greater thing than being saved. Accordingly the believer, through great discipline, divesting himself of the passions, passes to the mansion which is better than the former one…. The greatest torments, indeed, are assigned to the believer…. And though the punishments cease in the course of the completion of the expiation and purification of each one, yet those have very great and permanent grief who are found worthy of the other fold, on account of not being along with those that have been glorified through righteousness.[78]

Lead indicated that people moved up through the heavens, but suggested only the fifth, holiest type, could make it to the eighth heaven.[79] Though the Vision hinted at the possibility of progression, Smith's 1830 revelation that said, "for where I am they cannot come, for they have no power," indicated that the wicked, once purged, would receive a state of glory but that glory would come short of the higher glories of the Father and the Son.

The Harrowing of Hell. Furthermore, the Vision said that the terrestrial people (the middle world) were "they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it." Central to the early Christian Platonists' arguments for extensive salvation was the belief in Christ's Harrowing of Hell: that Christ descended to hell after his death and preached to and redeemed many if not all of the dead in hell. The idea was based on 1 Peter 3:18-20,

[78] Clement, *Stromata,* 6.14.
[79] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation*, 20.

> For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water,

and 1 Peter 4:6, "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

A number of Greek myths told of heroes descending into Hades to rescue loved ones:[80] two such stories in appeared in texts that Smith likely read. The encyclopedia entry on the mysteries (Chapter Seven) said that the lesser mysteries at Eleusis "were instituted in favour of the celebrated Hercules. The hero being commanded by Eurystheus to bring up Creberus from the infernal regions, was desirous of being initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries before he engaged in the perilous undertaking."[81] Smith would link temple rites (similar to the mysteries) with saving the dead (Chapters Five and Seven). The encyclopedia entry on Orpheus (which said that Orpheus was "the first inventor of the religious mysteries of the Greeks") described Orpheus's power as very similarly Smith's Enoch (see below) and also described Orpheus's attempt to rescue his wife from Hades.[82] Again, Christian Platonists had long argued that the Greeks took their "true" ideas from the patriarchs.

In the second century C.E., Christians interpreted 1 Peter 3:18-20 and 1 Peter 4:6 to mean that Christ had descended into hell between his death and resurrection to preach to the dead.[83] "Do not [the Scriptures] show that the Lord preached the Gospel to those that

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[80] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 91.
[81] "Mysteries," *Enceyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 12:591.
[82] "Orpheus," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13: 514-15.
[83] Trumbower, *Rescue the Dead,* 46.

perished in the flood," Clement of Alexandria asked rhetorically. "If, then, He preached the Gospel to those in the flesh that they might not be condemned unjustly," Clement explained further, "how is it conceivable that He did not for the same cause preach the Gospel to those who had departed this life before His advent?" "So I think it is demonstrated," Clement concluded, "that the God being good, and the Lord powerful, they save with a righteousness and equality which extend to all that turn to Him, whether here or elsewhere. For it is not here alone that the active power of God is beforehand, but it is everywhere and is always at work."[84] Clement also referred to the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Chapter Five) to argue that Christ's apostles also preached to the dead after their death. Smith also suggested that the righteous preached to the dead (Chapter Five); *The Apocryphal New Testament* that Smith donated to the Nauvoo Library contained the *Shepherd of Hermas*.[85]

Both Origen and Ambrose defended the doctrine that Christ saved the dead at his descent.[86] The most influential account of Christ's descent into hell was the *Gospel of Nicodemus,* a composite document, portions of which were written as early as 200 C.E though the whole was compiled later.[87] The narrator of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* describes a vision: "When we were placed with our fathers in the depth of hell, in the blackness of darkness," the narrator declares, "on a sudden there appeared the colour of the sun like gold…. Presently upon this, Adam the father of all mankind, with all the patriarchs and prophets, rejoiced and said. That light is the author of everlasting light, who hath promised to translate us to everlasting light." The Prince of Hell tries to bar hell's gates against Christ's entry, but "the King of Glory trampling upon death, seized the prince of hell deprived him of

[84] Clement, *Stromata,* 6.6.
[85] Christopher C. Jones, "The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 192.
[86] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 100-4.
[87] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 106.

all his power, and took our earthly father Adam with him to his glory." The Prince of Hell is furious at Satan (two different people in this narrative) for crucifying Christ, which led to the Harrowing of Hell: "He has broke down our prisons from top to bottom, dismissed all the captives, released all who were bound, and all who were wont formerly to groan under the weight of their torments have now insulted us and we are like to be defeated by their prayers. Our impious dominions are subdued, and no part of mankind is now left in our subjection, but on the other hand they all boldly defy us." Christ then takes Adam and the saints out of hell and leads them to Michael who leads them to paradise.[88] *The Apocryphal New Testament*, which contained the *Shepherd of Hermas,* also contained *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, and early Mormons alluded to this imagery of the Harrowing of Hell when discussing proxy baptism for the dead (Chapter Five).[89]

In his letter to Evodius, Augustine referred to those who believed that at Christ's descent he preached to all those who had never heard the gospel, that all who believed were released from hell, and that only "those who are contumacious and unbelieving shall be punished even with eternal fire." Augustine attacked such claims by asserting that many after Christ's death had never heard the gospel preached and therefore would have the same excuse. Augustine noted that these same people believed that those who died after Christ but had not heard the gospel could still believe in Christ because the "report" of the gospel was still remembered in hell. Augustine felt that if contemporaries could be preached to in hell it would negate the responsibility of Christians to preach to the living, which was unacceptable to Augustine. For Augustine, unbaptized Gentiles, whether they had died before or after

[88] *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, chapt. 13-20 in *The Apocryphal New Testament,* 80-87.
[89] Jones, "Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library," 192.

Christ, could never make it to heaven.[90] Augustine later went so far as to declare the idea that Christ had emptied hell at his descent a heresy.[91] Nevertheless, the Harrowing of Hell not only survived in the Latin Middle Ages but also became quite popular largely through the influence of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Translated into Old English, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* had a major influence on medieval English theology and iconography.[92] The *Gospel of Nicodemus* influenced such literary works as *Piers Plowman* and also works outside of England like Dante's *Divine Comedy*.[93] The eighth-century Apostles' Creed, which asserted that "Christ descended into hell" was also authoritative throughout this period.[94]

With the Reformation, Protestants sought to scale back the importance of the Harrowing. Luther said that what Christ did in hell was unknown and people should not speculate about it. Calvin rejected the descent, saying that it only meant death on the cross. Christ conquered death at the resurrection and the patriarchs did not need to be saved because they were already in heaven.[95] In England, Edward VI's articles of religion maintained that after his death, Christ's spirit "was with the spirits which were detained in prison, or in hell, and preached to them, as the place in St. Peter testifieth."[96] During Elizabeth's reign, however, English theologians began to say that Christ went to triumph over the devil and assert his dominion, not to save souls.[97] Elizabeth's articles of religion simply stated "that Christ descended into hell" with no further explanation.[98] By the sixteenth century, English

[90] Augustine, Letter 164, 4.12-13.
[91] Trumbower, *Rescue the Dead,* 133.
[92] Karl Tamburr, *The Harrowing of Hell in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: UK: D. S. Brewer, 2007).
[93] Cindy Vitto, *The Virtuous Pagan in Middle English Literature (*Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989), chapters 3 and 5.
[94] Tamburr, *Harrowing of Hell,* 4.
[95] Tamburr, *Harrowing of Hell,* 171-74.
[96] John Pearson, *An Exposition on the Creed* (1659, reprint; London: Baynes and Son, 1821), 2:45.
[97] Tamburr, *Harrowing of Hell,* 174.
[98] Pearson, *Exposition on the Creed,* 2:46.

Protestants argued that hell in the New Testament simply meant the place of the dead.[99] John Pearson, who wrote the major treatise on the Apostles' Creed in 1659, asserted that "the ancients" only believed that Christ preached to those in hell "because other apocryphal writings led them to that interpretation." Pearson blamed the *Shepherd of Hermas* for the idea, "whereas the book itself is of no good authority." Christ went to hell, argued Pearson, "that he might undergo the condition of a dead man as well as of a living." "This he undertook to do, and did," claimed Pearson, "though the ancient fathers by several additions of other ends have something obscured this."[100]

The Protestant rejection of Christ descent to preach to souls in hell continued into the nineteenth century: an 1824 article in Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine agreed with Pearson's interpretation.[101] Jane Lead, however, like Christian Platonists before her, argued that Christ freed people when he descended into hell. "For this Gospel will so far extend, beyond the Limits of time, to Creatures in ages yet confined," argued Lead, "as the LORD CHRIST did go and preach to the Spirits that were disobedient in the days of Noah, (or before and since) who in Bonds did remain in low Regions, at whose appearance did Then find deliverance." Lead then argued against those who argued that Christ did not liberate those in hell during his descent, "or else to what end did he preach to them? as you may see in Peter." Such would

[99] Tamburr, *Harrowing of Hell,* 175.
[100] Pearson, *Exposition on the Creed*, 2:73, 74, 88. One of the best summaries on the history of Christian interpretations of Christ's descent was written by William Hone, the same person who compiled the *Apocryphal New Testament* that Smith owned. In his *Ancient Mysteries Described, Especially the English Mystery Plays* (1823), Hone described a set of medieval mystery plays and so gave an extensive overview of the idea of Christ's descent into hell in his chapter on the medieval play about Christ's descent. Starting with *The Gospel of Nicodemus,* Hone gave an extensive overview of just how widespread the idea had been in the history of Christianity: starting with Clement and other fathers and going through the Middle Ages, including an extensive quotations from *Piers Plowman*. Hone simply notes that exactly what Christ did in hell, or even if he went there, was disputed both by the early fathers and by contemporary theologians. (William Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described, Especially the English Miracle Plays* (London, 1823), 120-33). Hone also described plays with similar themes to Smith's endowment (Chapter Seven).
[101] "On Our Lord's Descent into Hell: To the Editor of the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine," *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 47 (1824): 29.

lead to universal salvation, argued Lead: at the last judgment, "will this Judge reserve in himself the liberty to Release, and Remission give, to all that in fiery Purgations have passed, and are humbled thereby."[102]

Smith's revelations outside of the Book of Mormon on the nature of the afterlife quickly took a turn in a universalist direction and were most similar to the revelations of Jane Lead. Thus like so many of Smith's tenets, they accorded with Christian Platonism and Lead and her circle were the likely conduits.

Things on Earth: The Philosopher-King, Part One

"Until philosophers rule as kings," Socrates declares in the *Republic* "or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide … cities will have no rest from evils, Glaucon, nor, I think will the human race."[103] As discussed in Chapter Two, souls fell (or were sent) from heaven and desired to return, and the philosopher, who spurned the love of material things for truth and wisdom, was on the correct path. In Plato's *Theaetetus,* Socrates explains that because of the persistence of evil on earth "a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God when he become just and pure, with understanding."[104] But as Socrates explains in the *Republic,* once enlightened, the philosopher now had an obligation to help the unenlightened, "to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and

[102] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* introduction, [3].
[103] Plato, *Republic*, 473 c-e.
[104] Plato, *Theaetetus,* 176b.

honors."[105] The goal of the philosopher-king was to build the ideal city, the one patterned after heaven where all things were held in common.[106]

Smith's political ideals were similar to the pattern laid out by Socrates. Not only had Smith claimed to have seen and interacted with God and angels, not only did he want others to also do so, but he also sought to create what he called Zion, the kingdom of God on earth where all things were held in common. This pattern was found in Smith's revelations: numerous prophets in the Book of Mormon and Smith's biblical revision (what I call here "prophets of great power") were enlightened by God, obtained great power, and either brought peace to their land or created an ideal city. The ultimate figure was Enoch, who in Smith's biblical revision created a city that was so holy that it was taken up into heaven. Not only did Enoch "walk with God" as the Bible said, but in Smith's revision, Enoch, fulfilling his prophetic role, also got all his followers to "walk with God." Building Zion became one of Smith's primary ambitions until the end of his life (see Conclusion).

Deification. Before the philosopher-king could lead others, he or she had to become divinized. This was done by studying the true reality, "the things that are," explains Socrates. "Then the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can. And if he should come to be compelled to put what he sees there into people's characters whether into a single person or into a populace," the philosopher would be able to do so. Thus the philosopher could lead others but first had to obtain enlightenment him or herself. As discussed in Chapter Two, the goal of Christian Platonists was seeing God, and this was a deifying process. "Or do you think that someone can consort with things he

[105] Plato, *Republic,* 519 d.
[106] Plato, *Republic,* 462-466.

admires without imitating them?" Socrates asks.[107] "To behold God is inevitably to become like him," Charles Andersen says of Philo's theology.[108]

"The divinization of man in Plato is not simply an imitatio dei," argues Dominic O'Meara. "The suggestion is also made that there is a divine element in man, the highest aspect of the soul, which has an affinity with the transcendent Forms and which, on separation from the body, may join the company of the gods. This, however, can only be achieved through the practice, here below, of the highest degree of imatatio dei, of moral assimilation to the gods."[109] "'Like is known by like,' as Greeks as far back as Empedocles had claimed. Hence, the soul is both divine in origin and capable of being divinized," explains Bernard McGinn.[110] Smith taught both the idea that the soul was uncreated and that humans needed to imitate Christ to become divinized (see below and Chapter Six).

Notions of human deification began with shifting views of the afterlife among Jews and Greeks, argues Naomi Janowitz. "In the older vision, both Greek and Hebrew, the major barrier between humans and gods was that humans were destined for miserable existences in Hades or Sheol after their death." New notions of the afterlife appear in Daniel, the Wisdom of Solomon, and 1 Enoch, which presented the possibility of the righteous becoming stars after death.[111] Clement of Alexandria quoted numerous passages from Plato on deification with approval and argued that the Greeks got this notion from scripture. "The gnostic must, as far as is possible, imitate God," wrote Clement, "and the poets call the elect in their pages godlike and gods, and equal to the gods, and equal in sagacity to Zeus, and having counsels

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[107] Plato, *Republic,* 500b-d.
[108] Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 156.
[109] Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 36.
[110] McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism,* 33.
[111] Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (London: Routledge, 2001), 71.

like the gods, and resembling the gods—nibbling, as seems to me, at the expression, 'in the image and likeness.' Genesis 1:26."[112] Origen quoted the line from the *Theaetatus*: "The highest good, they say, is to become as like to God as possible. But this definition I regard not so much as a discovery of theirs, as a view derived from holy Scripture." Origen interpreted, "Let us make man in our own image" to mean that man "might acquire it for himself by the exercise of his own diligence in the imitation of God."[113]

Clement in particular made deification central to the purpose of Christianity. In his exhortation to the Greeks (*Protrepticus*), Clement declared, "And now the Word Himself clearly speaks to you, shaming your unbelief; yea, I say, the Word of God became man, that you may learn from man how man may become God."[114] Knowledge of God, said Clement, "leads us to the endless and perfect end, teaching us beforehand the future life that we shall lead, according to God, and with gods.… And 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." Clement even suggested that the gnostic could attain a kind of deification in this life: "Rightly, then, Plato says, 'that the man who devotes himself to the contemplation of ideas will live as a god among men.'" Later in the *Stromata*, Clement declared, "He who obeys the Lord and follows the prophecy given through him, is fully perfected after the likeness of his teacher, and thus becomes a god while still moving about in the flesh."[115]

"In the first three centuries these ideas were not interpreted as vague metaphors, but as goals the appropriate rites could effect," argues Janowitz. "In Jewish, Christian and Greco-Roman texts, the transformation of a human into a divine being was thought to be

[112] Clement, *Stomata,* 4.26.
[113] Origen, *De Pincipiis,* 3.6.1.
[114] Clement, *Protrepictus,* 1.
[115] Clement, *Stromata,* 7.10, 7.16, 4.25.

effected by a stunning variety of techniques and combinations of techniques: burial, a vision of the deity, an ascent through the heavenly realm, being a vegetarian, and being drenched in blood, dipped in water, or drowned in the Nile."[116] Deification was a central goal of the Neoplatonists. In Plotinus, explains Dominic O'Meara, "Human nature … is, at its root, soul, and therefore divine…. We can live the life of beasts, or the life of gods. Indeed we can become a god, or rather come back to live the life of the god that we essentially are." Theurgy, argues O'Meara was "a process for making man god."[117] For Iamblichus, explains Gregory Shaw, "The theurgist was simultaneously man and god." "The perfect theurgist became an embodied Demiurge whose presence was enough to create harmony out of discord and drive away evil."[118] "In the first centuries," say Janowitz, "using human hands to employ divine power was always to some extent putting on the image of deity."[119] Proclus interpreted the *Timaeus* as saying that the reward of the righteous was deification after death. For Proclus, argues Robbert Van Den Berg, "The soul that has grown wings administers the universe with the gods."[120] "Like theurgists," says Shaw of Iamblichus, "divinized souls after death share in the creation and preservation of the cosmos."[121]

Pseudo-Dionysius argued that deification was central to Christianity. In his *Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius declared, "You will notice how God's word gives the title of 'gods' not only to those heavenly beings who are our superiors, but also to those sacred men among use who are distinguished for their love of God." Though no one is really like God, one who

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[116] Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 84, 71.
[117] O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 37-38, 129.
[118] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 51, 57.
[119] Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World,* 85.
[120] Robbert Van Den Berg, "'Becoming Like God' According to Proclus' Interpretations of the *Timaeus*, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the *Chaldean Oracles,*" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2003): 192.
[121] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 115.

"tries as hard as possible to imitate God—such a one surely deserves to be called divine."[122] Again, Dionysius called the Christian sacraments theurgy, and "The role of the Eucharist in deifying the participant is clearly spelled out in ps. Dionysius," argues Janowitz.[123]

Deification was controversial, however, for two reasons. As mentioned in Chapter Two, many early Christian were uncomfortable with the claim that a part of the human soul was uncreated. Said the old man to Justin, "For God alone is unbegotten and incorruptible, and therefore He is God, but all other things after Him are created and corruptible…. For that which is unbegotten is similar to, equal to, and the same with that which is unbegotten."[124] Smith would argue that exact opposite: saying that human souls were created diminished humans (Chapter Six). Andrew Louth argues that deification became one of the issues that Christian anti-Platonists had with Christian Platonism. "Central to Platonism is its conviction of man's essentially spiritual nature … the belief of his kinship with the divine. But, for Christianity, man is a creature; he is not ultimately God's kin, but created out of nothing by God and only sustained in being by dependence on His will. There is an ontological gulf between God as his creation, a real difference of being."[125] The ontological difference between humans and God was a result of the doctrine of creation ex nihilo or creation out of nothing, argues Louth. "The soul's kinship with the divine was destroyed by the doctrine of creation ex nihilo," because the soul was now a "creature" of the divine, a created thing and not coeternal. "Neither for Plato nor for Origen were souls created: they were pre-existent and immortal."[126]

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[122] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*,12.3.
[123] Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World,* 84.
[124] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho,* 2.
[125] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), xiii.
[126] Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 75-76.

Another major issue that claims of deification raised throughout the history of Christianity was the question of to what degree people could obtain divine status in this life. Plato used the phrase "as far as possible" when speaking of the philosopher's goal for this life, but Clement quoted Plato to suggest that the divine status could be achieved in this life. "The notion that a human being might become a god or daemon after death had a course long been familiar: it is often asserted on pagan tombstones of the Hellenistic and roman periods" writes E. R. Dodds. "But that a man should become a god in his lifetime, 'a god walking about in the flesh', as Clement puts it, must seems to us rather odd, if we leave aside the conventions of Hellenistic and Roman ruler-cult. Yet we find this language repeatedly used not only by pagans like Plotinus, Porphyry and the Hermetists, but by Irenaeus and Clement, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa."[127] Says Naomi Janowitz, "Christians who were engaged in power struggles rejected claims to divinity made by their opponents. Thus Irenaeus railed against Christians who claimed special knowledge and considered themselves equal with the gods. Some rabbinic authorities argued so distinctly against the notion that people can become divine it disguises the fact that some individuals within their own communities believed in this idea."[128]

Belief in deification through the Middle Ages followed the path of Christian Platonism but came to a head at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Maurgerite of Porte was burned at the stake in 1310 for charges including what scholars call "autotheism," or the belief that one has achieved deification. Next, the Council of Vienne (1311) condemned what was called the heresy of the Free Spirit, what was believed to be a subversive mystical

[127] E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1965), 74.
[128] Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World,* 84.

movement that claimed autotheism and antinomianism.[129] The mystical friar Meister Eckhart was brought up on charges in the 1320s that included autotheism and though he died before his case was finalized, he was posthumously condemned.[130] Eckhart always claimed to be an orthodox believer but Robert Lerner argues that there were mystics who pushed Eckhart's teachings in these directions.[131] For instance, a manuscript called *Sister Katherine* tells of a dialogue between sister Katherine and her confessor where Katherine, through much self-denial, finally arrives as a state where she exclaims, "Father, rejoice with me, I have become God."[132] Christine de Pizan in *City of Ladies* (1405) ends with a quotation from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, "Just as those who possess divinity are gods and one who has felicity is a god. Thus all the blessed are gods; although by nature there is only one God, by participation these are many.'"[133]

Protestant Reformers had a complicated relationship with mysticism. A text that Luther called the *German Theology*, promoted mystical union and had an important influence on Luther's early thought. Luther eventually rejected such notions, but the *German Theology* had a major influence on early modern German radicals.[134] Of mystics, Luther said, "They taught that humans can converse and deal with the inscrutable, eternal majesty of God in this mortal, corrupt flesh without mediation. This is the doctrine which is regarded as highest divine wisdom; I also was in that camp for some time, not without great harm to myself. I admonish you to shun like the plague that 'Mystical Theology' of Dionysius and similar

[129] Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 1, 46.
[130] Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2005), 103-7.
[131] Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit,* 89, 105, 163.
[132] McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany,* 345.
[133] Quoted in Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddess: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 31.
[134] Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 14-24.

books which contain such idle talk." "Dionysius is most pernicious," Luther had said earlier, "he platonizes more than he Christianizes."[135] Leading Protestants soon developed an orthodoxy that sought to remove Platonic corruptions from Christianity and stop Platonic infiltration into Protestantism. Such writers declared the belief in deification to be a Platonic heresy.[136]

One of the principal places deification was taught was in the grimoires. Gyorgy Szonyi calls deification "*exaltatio*" and declares *exaltatio* "the intellectual foundation of magic." Szonyi further notes the influence of Neoplatonism on Renaissance philosophers and asserts, "The final goal remained the same: the deification of man, a program which was corroborated by the biblical doctrine according to which man was created after the image of God and shared all God's characteristics." Such philosophers did not want to wait for death to be deified, argues Szonyi, "Magic tried to overcome the existential limits of the human species and elevate the individual soul to the world of ideas during earthly life."[137] Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* which drew heavily on Neoplatonism, made a number of references to deification. Through alchemy, said Agrippa, man "will ascend to so great a perfection, that he is made the son of God, and is transformed into that image which is God, and is united with him, which is not granted to the angels, the world, or any creature, but to man only, viz. to have power to be made the son of God, and to be united with him." Agrippa also discussed frenzy or rapture as a kind of out-of-body experience and linked this experience to a statement attributed to Pythagoras: "If thou by leaving the body shalt pass

[135] Quoted in Karle Froehlich, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1987), 43.
[136] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 106.
[137] Gyorgy E. Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs* (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), xiv, 23, 24.

into the spacious heavens, thou shalt be an immortal god." Deification also allowed people to obtain great power: "For by how much the more we have relinquished the animal and human life, by so much more we live like angels, and God, to which being conjoined, and brought into a better condition, we have power over all things, ruling over things." Agrippa went so far to say that there were "mortal gods," including "kings, princes, and priests." Such, "if they be just," Agrippa continued, are "companions of the gods, and endowed with like power. Hence they cure diseases by their touch and word, and sometimes command the times and heavens."[138]

Agrippa had a major influence on John Dee, and Szonyi argues, "It was the desire for *exaltatio* which framed and tied together the otherwise amazingly heterogeneous thoughts and activities of John Dee."[139] Many of Lead's circle spoke of deification, particularly Lead herself. As mentioned above, Lead said the purpose of ascent to God was for "the whole Man being changed into a Deified Nature." Seeing God was central to this deifying process: "To see Thee as Thou are will surely change us into the same Similitude of likeness unto Thee." Lead spoke of putting "*on the Deiformation of Christ the Lord*" and Lead went even further in *The Wonders of God's Creation*. "Those Souls that are Born of God," said Lead, "and so Renewed in every part, the whole Man being changed into a Deified Nature, must needs enjoy, and know beforehand the Joys and Pleasures of these Worlds to which they do belong, according to that degree which any in this Life-time do reach to."[140] As mentioned above, Lead said that certain people could achieve "such a perfect degree of Christlikeness."

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[138] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 580, 629, 643, 576-77.
[139] Gyorgy E. Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs* (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), 28, xiv.
[140] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God*, 13, 30-33; Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 21.

Pythagoras in his debate with Anaximander in Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus* declares,

> Such is the immutable law of Themis; the human virtues are acquired with pleasure, but deification only by sufferings, and being stript of every thing that is mortal and terrestrial in us. It was thus that Hercules found exquisite pleasure in his twelve labors, and in all the exploits of an heroic virtue; but he was not deified till he had passed through the purifying flames of Themis, which your poets have represented by those of his funeral pile on Mount OEta."[141]

Ramsay also played a major role in the development of Freemasonry and argued that it was the continuation of the ancient mystery cults. Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on the ancient mystery cults (which Smith likely read, Chapter Seven) said that in the Eleusinian mysteries, the initiates were taught how through great piety heroes had become gods and the entry suggested that the initiates could do the same: "As the two principal ends proposed by these initiations were the exercise of heroic virtues in men, and the practice of sincere and uniform piety by the candidates for immortal happiness.… The virtuous conduct and heroic exploits of the great men and demigods of early antiquity, were magnified." "But as all the candidates for initiation might not aspire to the rank of heroes and demigods," the entry continued, the mysteries also taught generic rewards and punishments in the afterlife, suggesting that only a few would reach divine status.[142]

A document that declared many radical ideas about deity very similar to Smith's ideas, Benjamin Franklin's "First Principles," declared there to be a high God over many gods in the universe (including our own) and that such gods may progress and "and others

[141] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 212-13.
[142] "Mysteries," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 12:594.

supply their places," possibly deified humans.[143] Franklin likely got these ideas from Isaac Newton (see Chapter Six) who taught in his "On Our Religion to God, to Christ, and the Church," that "to give the name of God to angels or kings, is not against the First Commandment. To give the worship of the God of the Jews to angels or kings, is against it." Newton then added that through his sacrifice, Christ has "made us kings and priests," suggesting human deification if kings could be called Gods.[144] Smith's Vision equated being a king and priest with godhood. Celestial people were "they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory … wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God."[145]

John Allen described the Jewish legends about Enoch and the angel Metatron in *Modern Judaism* that not only highlighted Smith's own focus on Enoch but also suggested human deification. Metatron was so powerful according to the Jews, argued Allen, that "the rabbies [sic] must have regarded the Metatron as a divine and eternal subsistency, in essence and quality corresponding with what Christians understand by the second personality of the Godhead." At the same time, Metatron was the post-mortal Enoch. Allen quoted a rabbi describing how Enoch was transformed into Metatron after death: "my flesh was presently changed into a flame, my sinuses into fire" and so forth. When the other angels complained to God that a human had joined their ranks, "God pacified them by explaining the cause of his translation," and when God himself asked Metatron why he was the greatest angel, Metatron replied, "Because I am Enoch, the son of the Sacred." Thus great men could be

[143] Benjamin Franklin, *The Posthumous and Other Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 3d ed. 2 vols, (London, 1819), 1:1-4.
[144] Quoted in Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Context, Sources, and Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 163. This was likely a reference to kings and priests in Revelation 1:6 and 5:10.
[145] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 228; current DC 76:56, 58.

deified in the next life (Metatron was similar to Christ's place in the Trinity, said Allen). Enoch was not the only person to achieve this status: Allen quotes rabbis saying, "Out of Enoch is made Metatron, and out of the body of Elijah is made Sandalphon," another important angel.[146]

Some of these ideas even influenced more mainline Protestants at the time. Adam Clarke, the great Methodist biblical commentator, when discussing the fate of different beings in the universe asked,

> how far our virtue may excel that of other beings, who are not subjected to our long and heavy trials; may not a virtue, firm and steady under our present clogs, inconveniences, discouragements, persecutions, trials, and temptations, possibly surpass the virtue of the highest angel, whose state is not attended with such embarrassments? Do we know how far such as shall have honourably passed through the trials of this life, shall hereafter be dispersed through the creation? How much their capacities will be enlarged? How highly they shall be exalted? What power and trusts will be put into their hands? How far their influence shall extend, and how much they shall contribute to the good order and happiness of the universe? Possibly, the faithful soul, when disengaged from our present incumbrances, may blaze out into a degree of excellency equal to the highest honours, the most important and extensive services. Our lord has made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, and we shall sit together in 'heavenly places,' and reign with him.[147]

Thomas Dick, a popular evangelical scientist, hinted at such ideas in a passage that the Mormons reprinted in their periodical. Dick compared humans to caterpillars and asked, "Is

[146] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 160-61.
[147] Adam Clark, "A Key to the Apostolical Writings," in *New Testament*, 2:xxii-xxiv.

it not reasonable, from analogy, to believe, that man, in his present state, is only the rudiments of what he shall be hereafter in a more expansive sphere of existence?"[148]

Alan Taylor argues that deification was central to Smith's folk rites: "Joseph was after something more than mere material wealth: by accumulating spiritual understanding he hoped to attain divine power. He earnestly wanted to become godlike." Taylor points to Smith's Jupiter talisman, an object later found among his possessions, that had a Latin phrase "Confirmo O Deus potentissimus" or "Make me, O God, all powerful," and he also points to the reports of Smith's 1826 trial that said that Smith said the seer stone he found made it so that he "possessed one of the attributes of Deity, an All-Seeing Eye."[149] As Szonyi argues, "The most important" characteristics of deity "were omniscience and omnipotence, which all magi craved."[150] As mentioned in Chapter One, cunning-folk had drawn on grimoires and their Neoplatonic content for a long time. Furthermore, deification seems to have been a trait cunning-folk claimed: Keith Thomas lists a handful of instances in which cunning folk were thought of as gods.[151]

Finally, Hannah Adam's entry on Platonism said that for Platonists, "Our highest good consists in the contemplation knowledge of the supreme Being, whom he styles the *good*. The end this knowledge is to make men resemble the Deity, as much is compatible with human nature."[152] Thus, the Christian-Platonic notion of deification had made its way

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[148] "Extracts from Dick's Philosophy," *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 3 (December 1836): 424.
[149] Alan Taylor, "Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith's Treasure Seeking," *Dialogue* 19, no. 4 (1986): 24. For the Jupiter talisman see Quinn, *Magic World View*, 82-83; for Smith's trial account see W. D. Purple, "Joseph Smith, the Originator of Mormonism. Historical Reminiscences of the Town of Afton," *Chenago Union* (Norwich, New York) 30 (3 May 1877) in *Early Mormon Documents,* 4:135.
[150] Szonyi, *Dee's Occultism*, 23.
[151] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (1971, reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 266.
[152] Hannah Adams, "Platonists," *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations,* 224.

into Smith's world through a number of channels and Smith had a number of sources to draw on for the idea.

Prophets of Great Power. Just as Smith's early supernatural invocations suggested a desire for divine power, a number of the people in the Book of Mormon and Smith's biblical translation obtain such power. Nephi is given power to shock his brothers and the knowledge to build a boat, Ammon is given power to drive off bandits and read minds, Alma is given power to break his bands and knock down a prison, but even greater power is given to Nephi the son of Helaman (whom I call Nephi2 here), the three disciples (whom I call the three Nephites here), the brother of Jared, and Melchizedek and Enoch in Smith's biblical revision. God gives Nephi2 the power to know secret events and also the power to cause a famine. When the wicked Nephites try to throw him in prison, "he was taken by the Spirit and conveyed out of the midst of them."[153] The three Nephites ascend into heaven, see unspeakable things and are given power to burst out of prisons, withstand fiery furnaces, and play with wild beasts; Mormon goes so far as to say "that the powers of the earth could not hold them."[154] The brother of Jared moved a mountain; Melchizedek, "when a child he feared God and stop[p]ed the mouths of Lions and quenched the violence of fire."[155] Enoch perhaps had the greatest power. Smith's revision of the Bible said,

> And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God and their enemies came to battle against them and he spake the word of the Lord and the earth trembled and the Mountains fled even according to his command and the rivers of watter [sic] were turned out of their course and the roar of the Lions was heard out of the

[153] Helaman 7-10, quote at 10:16.
[154] 3 Nephi 28:13, 14, 19-22, 39.
[155] Ether 12:30; Smith, Old Testament Revision, [33].

wilderness and all nations feared greatly so powerful was the word of Enoch and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.[156]

Such powers were similar to powers described in sources that Smith likely used. John Allen said that medieval Kabbalists preformed rituals for "extinguishing fires, and to achieve other wonderful exploits," similar to Smith's Melchizedek.[157] A number of sources claimed that mythical figures had this kind of power. The powers attributed to Orpheus in Dobson's encyclopedia were most similar to Smith's description of Enoch: when Orpheus played the lyre that he received from Apollo, said the encyclopedia, "Even the most rapid rivers ceased to flow, the savage beasts of the forest forgot their wildness, and the mountains came to listen to his song."[158] Agrippa attributed great power to Orpheus in *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (Chapter Three) and Agrippa also quoted Lucan saying that through the power of evil magicians, "And of the rivers for to turn the course/ The mountains level."[159] In *The Travels of Cyrus*, the Egyptian priest told Cyrus that during the Egyptian golden age, before the fall, "Nature was then obedient to the voice of the sages; they could put all its hidden springs in motion; they produced the most amazing prodigies whenever they pleased."[160] Christian Platonists had long claimed that the pagans had borrowed their ideas from the patriarchs and thus Smith may have attributed such powers to the patriarchs.

Smith's scriptures suggested that the prophets of great power took on a divine status. God tells Moses, "Thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy

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[156] Smith, Old Testament Revision, [16], josephsmithpapers.org; Moses 7:13. Enoch was a major figure in the writings of John Dee and Jane Lead. Smith's Enoch had some similarities to Dee's: Enoch was a seer in both Dee's spirit diary and Smith's biblical revision and Kelley saw a weeping angel while Enoch saw God weep in Smith's biblical revision. (Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 163, 196; Moses 6:35-37; 7:28-29). The apocryphal Book of Enoch had recently been translated but did not have much in common with Smith's Enoch.
[157] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 58.
[158] "Orpheus," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:515.
[159] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 695.
[160] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 119.

command as if thou wert God."[161] In order to see God, Moses says he was "transfigured," "for I should have withered & died in his presence but his glory was upon me."[162] The principle example of this transformation was the three Nephites. The three Nephites were among the "twelve disciples" that Jesus chooses to lead the Nephite church. Before leaving, Jesus asks the disciples if there is anything they want from him and nine of the twelve want to enter heaven when they die but three wish to remain on earth to "bring the souls of men unto [Christ] while the world shall stand." Christ tells them, "Ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, … desired of me," a reference to John 21:21-23.[163] Proclus taught that there were beings he called "incorruptible souls," who, although they had achieved perfection and could ascend to the gods, chose to stay on earth to help others.[164] The three are then taken up into heaven where "it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God." The three then will not die till Christ returns and do the various marvelous acts described above. "And they are as the angels of God," says Mormon, "There was a change wrought upon them, insomuch that Satan could have no power over them, that he could not tempt them; and they were sanctified in the flesh, that they were holy, and that the powers of the earth could not hold them."[165]

The description of the three Nephites was similar to Charles Buck's entry on how eighteenth-century mystic William Law described humanity's state before the fall. Adam

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[161] Smith, Old Testament Revision, [2]; current, Moses 1:25. Such was similar to Exodus 7:1: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."
[162] Smith, Old Testament Revision, [1]; Moses 1:11. Augustine said that people had to be changed in order to see God and that Moses had gone through this process. Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teachings of SS Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, (London: Constable, 1932), 80-81.
[163] 3 Nephi 28:6, 9.
[164] Lucas Siorvances, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 128.
[165] 3 Nephi 28:15, 30, 39.

"was made in the image of the Triune God, a living mirror of the divine nature, formed to … live on earth as the angels do in heaven. He was endowed with immortality, so that the elements of this outward world could not have any power of acting on his body."[166] Being restored to the state before the fall was a primary goals of Christian Platonists. A. D. Nock describes the idea among certain early Christians "that Christ became man in order that man in his entirety might become as God; so could soul and body alike recover Adam's lost radiance."[167] Whereas Protestants tended to view the fall and original sin as having made Adam's prelapsarian state unattainable in this life, Allison Coudert argues that speculation about Adam's pre-fallen state led to "attempts to restore man to Adam's original perfection," so that "by the end of the seventeenth century what might be described as an 'anthropological revolution' had occurred: a more optimistic view of human nature emerged and along with it a positive attitude toward life and the ability of humans to change and improve their world and themselves."[168] Buck's entry said that Law taught that the spark of divinity in the soul could "bring forth, by degrees, a new birth of that life which was lost in paradise."[169] The description of the three Nephites in the Book of Mormon suggests that they achieved this state while on earth.

However, Mormon then says, "This change was not equal to that which shall take place at the last day…. At that day they were to receive a greater change." Christ suggests that the three will experience full deification at that point: "Ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father … and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father."[170] The prophets

[166] Charles Buck, "Mystics," *Theological Dictionary*, 401.
[167] A. D. Nock, "Review of Meecham's Epistle to Diognetus," *Journal of Religion* 31 (1951): 214.
[168] Allison P. Coudert, *Religion, Magic, and Science in Early Modern Europe and America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), xxi.
[169] Buck, "Mystics," 401.
[170] 3 Nephi 28:39, 10.

of great power make the point that they are not gods;[171] their great power sometime leads people to think they are.[172] Ammon's description of seers summarizes the point: "A seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God."[173] Full deification for Smith was more than a return to the prelapsarian state. Again, the Book of Mormon taught fortunate fall: humans came here as part of God's plan and as Smith would make clear in his Nauvoo speeches, that plan was for humans to have the opportunity to achieve full deification in the next life (Chapter Six). Those who followed the pattern of the prophets of great power while on earth would become gods in the afterlife. The Vision said that celestial people "are priests of the Most High after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son: wherefore, as it is written, they are gods."[174]

Building the Heavenly City. Another theme that the prophets of great power have in common is using their power for political purposes: to either try to make the local government better or to try create the perfect city where peace reigns and all things are in common. Thus the prophets of great power often played the role of the philosopher-king: the divinized human who could then be the ideal ruler. Nephi becomes the Nephite's first king, Nephi2's warns the people of the corruption of their government but the major figures to link great power with ideal politics were biblical figures. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Alma says that Melchizedek "was king over Salem, a land that had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination." "But," Alma explains, "Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and

[171] Alma 18:17-19.
[172] Alma 18:2-4; 19:25, Helaman 9:41.
[173] Mosiah 8:16.
[174] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 228; current DC 76:57-58.

received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace."[175] Jesus plays this role when he visits the Nephites. Prior to his descent, he creates tempests, earthquakes, moves mountains, and divides the earth. Jesus then descends from heaven, heals all the sick Nephites, and then initiates over two centuries of peace, in which all things were held in common among the Nephites.[176] The goal of the philosopher-king was to imitate the creator god, writes Dominic O'Meara. "As the philosopher king orders a city after the divine pattern … so, on a larger scale, does the divine craftsman (the 'demiurge') of the world put it into order after the pattern of the Forms. The world is chaos brought into order, divinized."[177]

In Smith's biblical revision, Enoch acted as the ultimate philosopher-king. Enoch uses his power to lead "the people of God" and despite the wickedness in the land "the Lord came and dwelt with his people and they dwelt in righteousness … and the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart and one mind and dwelt in righteousness and there was no poor among them … and it came to pass in his days that he built a City that was called the City of holyness [sic] even Zion." The city of Zion was so righteous that "Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwellt [sic] in the midst of Zion and it came to pass that Zion was not for God received it up into his own bosom and from thence went forth the saying Zion is Fled."[178] Whereas Enoch's powers were very similar to the encyclopedia's description of Orpheus, Enoch's political aspiration paralleled Mosheim's description of the Neoplatonists quoted in the Introduction: "They were to raise above all terrestrial things …

[175] Alma 13:17-18.
[176] 3 Nephi 8:5-18; 11:8; 17:7-10; 4 Nephi 1:3, 25.
[177] O'Meara, *Platonopolis,* 36.
[178] Smith, Old Testament Revision, [16, 19]; Moses 7:13, 16, 18-19, 69.

that thus, in this life, they might enjoy communion with the Supreme Being, and ascend after death, active and unencumbered, to the universal Parent, to live in his presence for ever."[179] The Bible only said Enoch walked with God, Mosheim suggested that the Neoplatonists desired this as a group, similar to Smith's city of Enoch. Adam Clarke said in his biblical commentary that Enoch "was a patriarch, the king, the priest, and prophet of a numerous family."[180] Thus while Melchizedek was a king, and religious politics were a major theme in the Bible and Book of Mormon, Smith added that Enoch was a political leader seeking to bring the righteous into God's presence, much like the philosopher-king.

Lead's *Enochian Walks with God* encouraged all the righteous to be like Enoch and walk with God. Furthermore, Lead spoke of gathering the faithful: "Therefore all that are Watchmen, and Holy-Seers are to sound out That Trumpet of the Spirit, that may gather the Dove-Spirits together to wait in Love-Unity, that the Thousand Years Reign may have a speedy beginning," Lead declared in *Enochian Walks with God*.[181] In *The Wonders of God's Creation*, Lead spoke of this gathering in political terms: "For Scepters and Crowns must be thrown down to the Lamb of God…. For a mighty CYRUS there is already raised, whom the most High will in such manner uphold, and endue with his Spirit, as he shall be able to bring forth his Temple-Glory and Praise; that so out of all Kingdoms, Countries, and Languages, there may be a Gathering, and that as Eagles they may fly to that high Mountain, where the Olive Tree will drop the Unctuous Oyl most freely."[182] Smith himself would stress the importance of gathering the faithful as did Lead's German followers, the Dunkers, as well as

[179] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:142.
[180] Clarke, *Biblical Commentary,* 5:22.
[181] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 32.
[182] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 52.

being "endowed" in a temple (see below).[183] Jane Lead, therefore, also spoke of heavenly ascents and holy communities and made the figures of Enoch and Melchizedek important archetypes.

Creating the ideal city was a long-held human aspiration and was a major theme in Plato. After describing the most just city in the *Republic*, Socrates's companion Glaucon refers to that city as "the one that exists in theory, for I don't think it exists anywhere on earth." "But perhaps," Socrates answers, "there is a model of it in heaven, for anyone who wants to look at it and to make himself its citizen." The ideal city, says Socrates, was like that of Mormon scripture: all things in common.[184] Acts 4:32 said the Christians at Jerusalem "were of one heart and of one soul" and "had all things common." The philosopher-king was the Neoplatonists' political aspiration and Plotinus tried to persuade the Emperor Gallienus to build a utopia.[185] Proclus led a group of followers at his academy in Athens and like Smith's prophets of great power, Proclus used his power to lead his followers. "A theurgist," explains Brent James Schmidt, "was a hero of wisdom and love, ideals that inspired communal harmony…. Through the principles of love and unity, Proclus often brought out the best in the members of his community. Thus, Proclus was able to set the proper pious, religious example for his neo-Platonic utopia." "Proclus' authority over the community," Schmidt explains, "came from his perceived intellectual gifts and supernatural powers…. Members of the community believed Proclus had a perfect knowledge of theurgy which, according to the

[183] Marcus Meier, *The Origin of the Schwarzenau Brethren*, trans. Dennis L. Slabaugh (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 2008), 128-31.
[184] Plato, *Republic,* 592a-b, 462-466.
[185] O'Meara, *Platonopolis*; Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 65.

beliefs of his followers, could control the elements and influence the gods for their benefit."[186]

Monasticism was a form of communalism, thus that idea persisted in the Middle Ages. The *Picatrix* (one of the first medieval theurgical works to come from the Arabs) tells of Hermes setting up an ideal city in ancient Egypt in which, by the powers of the heavens, "the inhabitants remained virtuous, free from wickedness and vices."[187] Theurgists continued to aspire to create the ultimate city in the early modern period including seventeenth-century Italian theurgist Tomasso Campanella and his "city of the sun."[188] John Dee proposed that he be a special adviser to Queen Elizabeth.[189] Thomas More's utopia became the foundation for early modern utopian thought. Heavily indebted to the *Republic*, More sought to make improvements: wives were not held in common in Utopia.[190] Utopia was on sale in Smith's neighborhood and utopianism became quite common in the United States.[191] Robert Owen had established a number of communities in the Midwest and followers of Sidney Rigdon were living communally in the Kirtland before they converted to Mormonism.[192]

While utopianism was common in the United State, perhaps the ultimate Platonic political text was Ramsay's *The Travels of Cyrus.* One of the principal tasks that Cyrus undertakes is to study the governments of the various classical kingdoms to learn how to be a

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[186] Brent James Schmidt, *Utopian Communities of the Ancient World: Idealistic Experiments of Pythagoras, the Essenes, Pachomius, and Proclus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2010), 180, 190. Proclus was said to have ascended into heaven, healed the sick, brought rain to end a drought, and even to have caused an earthquake. (Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 82; Marinus, *Proclus*, 101-4; Schmidt, *Utopian Communities of the Ancient World,* 190).
[187] Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 76.
[188] D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella* (1958, reprint; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), chapt. 7.
[189] Nicholas H. Cluless, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1988), 190-91.
[190] Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought,* 117-36.
[191] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 181.
[192] Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2009), chapts. 5 and 6.

great ruler. The idea state seemed to be the Egyptian golden age when sages had great power, described above. It was then that "shepherds were heroes, and kings philosophers." Mercury later tells the second Hermes that in the gold age, "Mankind lived then without discord, ambition or pomp, in a perfect peace, equality and simplicity." Mercury tells Hermes that he will reform Egypt and then the current king of Egypt, Meris rescues Hermes and adopts him as his son. Hermes becomes the king after Meris's death and he "made Egypt for a long time happy by his wise laws."[193] Hermes, who through studying nature discovered God, was visited by a divine being (Chapter Two), and then became a wise ruler, was the epitome of the philosopher-king.

Smith who claimed to go through a similar process of enlightenment also sought to build the ideal city. It would be the New Jerusalem, which his revelations said would be near Independence, Missouri. There the revelations instructed Smith how he would build a separate nation where Christ would eventually rule.[194] Smith would spend most of his time in Kirtland where most of his followers remained while others, beginning in 1831, worked to build Zion in Missouri, including having all things in common.[195]

The Endowment of Power. An 1831 revelation promised the saints that in Ohio, "I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high."[196] An allusion to Luke 24:49, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," references to being endowed in Christian-Platonic sources referred to special power from God and often deification (see below). As Pseudo-Dionysius said, "The first leaders of our hierarchy

[193] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 119, 130-33.
[194] Mark Ashurt-McGee, "Zion Rising: Joseph Smith's Early Social and Political Thought," (PhD diss: Arizona State University, 2008), chapt. 6.
[195] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 161.
[196] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 119; current DC 38:32.

received their fill of the sacred gift from the transcendent Deity. Then divine goodness sent them to lead others to this same gift. Like gods, they had a burning and generous urge to secure uplifting and divinization for their subjects."[197] Smith sought to likewise bring his followers into the presence of God and worked to develop the process that would allow this. An 1833 revelation, section 82, (now 93) laid out the program for how the saints could become deified. "Verily, thus saith the Lord," the revelation began, "it shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh their sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am."[198] The revelation then went on to explain that Christ himself became deified and that the proper sacraments were an important part of the process (see below). Smith used priesthood, rituals, learning, diet, and sacred space to bring the endowment of power. This process was in line with theurgy and descriptions of early Christian practices found in Mosheim and the encyclopedic sources (particularly relating to Ammonius Saccas and Origen) coupled with rites found in grimoires.

Thomas Taylor's translation of the *Timaeus* said that "he who is sedulously employed in the acquisition of knowledge, who is anxious to acquire wisdom and truth, and who employs his most vigorous exertions in this one pursuit;—it is perfectly necessary that such a one, if he touches the truth, should be endowed with wisdom about important and divine concerns; and that he should participate of immortality, as far as human nature permits."[199] Plato said that this knowledge came from studying heavenly bodies, and Agrippa gave a further explanation of this process in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. By studying the sun, said Agrippa, "This man shall be filled with the light thereof … with the illustration

[197] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* 1.5.
[198] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 210; current DC 93:1.
[199] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 551; 90d.

whereof his intellect being endowed and truly like to it, and being assisted by it shall at length attain to that supreme brightness, and to all forms that partake thereof. And when he hath received the light of the supreme degree, then his soul shall come to perfection." Agrippa also said that "kings and priest (if they be just) [are] companions of the god, and endowed with the like power."[200] Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on mysteries said that initiates were taught that heroes and demigods were "beings endowed with an ineffable measure of power, wisdom, and purity, goodness, &c."[201] Buck's *Theological Dictionary* cited William Law saying that before the fall, Adam was "endowed with immortality, so that the elements of this outward world could not have any power of acting on his body."[202]

Smith sought this power in Ohio, where he moved in February 1831.[203] A revelation that April promised, "And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power."[204] The expectation mounted for a conference held on June 4, 1831, where Smith ordained a few to the high priesthood and one, Lyman White, claimed to see God and Christ immediately after his ordination.[205] Additional power was promised the saints in the temple that they were commanded to build; Jane Lead said the one who was "endued" would "be able to bring forth his Temple-Glory."[206] The temple would be built at the New Jerusalem, which a revelation that August said would be built in western Missouri.[207] Violence and poverty would keep the Mormons from building a temple in Missouri but a revelation called the "Olive Branch" later instructed the saints to build a

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[200] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 431, 577.
[201] "Mysteries," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 12:594.
[202] Charles Buck, "Mystics," *Theological Dictionary,* 401.
[203] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 125.
[204] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 126; current DC 43:16.
[205] Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2009), 156-62.
[206] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 52.
[207] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 122, 154; current DC 42:36, 57:1-3.

temple in Kirtland. "Establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God," the revelation commanded.[208] Soon after this revelation, another revelation linked building the Kirtland Temple with the endowment of power: "Yea, verily I say unto you, I gave unto you a commandment that you should build an house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high: for this is the promise of the Father unto you: therefore I command you to tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem."[209]

As discussed in Chapter Two, sacred space was vitally important to spirit invokers and some rituals called for saying Solomon's dedicatory prayer to consecrate space and objects. "When you consecrate any place or circle," said the spurious *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, "you ought to take the prayer of Solomon used in the dedication of the Temple; and moreover you must bless the place with the sprinkling of holy water, and with fumigations."[210] Jane Lead's revelations are full of temple allusions and metaphors; Lead even described going through a heavenly temple in *Enochian Walks with God*.[211] Lead explicitly linked such experiences to deification (as would Smith): in her *Revelation of Revelations*, Lead made references to temple rituals and said that through such "*fallen Man is to be restored to a degree above the Angels*."[212] Solomon's temple became a major topic of curiosity in late seventeenth-century England and such had an important influence on the development of Freemasonry.[213]

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[208] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 107; current DC 88:119.
[209] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 233; current DC 95:8-9.
[210] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 477; Agrippa [pseud.], *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy,* 92.
[211] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 10-11, 21.
[212] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations* (London: Jane Lead, 1683), 117.
[213] Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 161-68.

Ordinances and Covenants. References to a temple suggested additional rites beyond baptism and the Eucharist. Smith not only instituted additional rites associated with the Kirtland temple, but the Book of Mormon also said that the great and abominable church removed "many covenants" in addition to "plain and precious truths" from the Bible. Covenants between God and his chosen people are a very important theme in the Book of Mormon as they are in the Bible, but the Book of Mormon also indicated that covenanting was central to baptism, a common assertion in Smith's day. Alma asks his followers, "What have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?"[214] The blessing on the Eucharist (simply called the "bread and wine" in the Book of Mormon) repeated this covenant. The blessing on the bread calls for the bread to be blessed "to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them."[215] Thus the loss of "many covenants" suggested that loss of sacraments or what the Book of Mormon calls ordinances.

Smith began to add to the standard two sacraments with rituals associated with the school of the prophets (see below) and Smith's revelations suggested that properly performed ordinances were deifying. "In the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest ... for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live."[216] As Smith's biblical translation said that Moses needed the power of God to stand in God's presence, this

[214] Mosiah 18:10.
[215] Moroni 4:3.
[216] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 90; current DC 84: 19, 20, 22.

revelation suggested such power could be had through the ordinances of the high priesthood. Like theurgy, Smith's ordinances were "a process for making man god."[217] Smith would continue to expand these rituals throughout his life.

Section 82 went so far as to assert that Jesus himself had become deified through ordinances. The revelation claimed to give additional information to John 1. Whereas John 1:16 said, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," this revelation declared that Jesus "received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness."[218] The passage suggested that Jesus became deified during his life. Charles Buck's entry on "Origenists" said that Origen taught, "The humanity of Christ was so God-like he emptied himself of this fulness of life and glory, *to take upon him the form of a servant.*"[219] The same entry also said that Origen taught "that the soul of the Messiah was created before the beginning of the world," and section 82 said "that [Christ] was in the beginning, before the world was."[220] While John 1:1 said, "In the beginning was the Word," John 1 didn't use the words "before the beginning of the world" and it said nothing about Christ lacking fulness. An entry in Dobson's encyclopedia on an early Christian group called the "Origenists" also suggested the belief that Jesus became deified while on earth. The entry said the Origenists taught "that Christ is the son of God by adoption; that he has been successfully united with all the angelical natures, and has been a cherub, a seraph, and all the celestial virtues one after another."[221] Similar to the statement in

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[217] O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 37-38, 129.
[218] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 211; current DC 93:13.
[219] This is a reference to Origen *De Principiis,* 1.2.8, emphasis in original. Mark Julian Edwards discusses similar themes in Origen and in early Christianity. *Origen against Plato,* 71-72.
[220] Buck, "Origenists," *Theological Dictionary,* 422. Emphasis in original. The same wording appears in Hannah Adams, "Origenists," *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathan, Mahomoten, and Christian, Ancient and Modern*, 4th ed (Boston: James Eastburn, 1817), 211. Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 210; current DC 93:7.
[221] "Origenists," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:494.

section 82 about Jesus continuing "from grace to grace, until he received a fulness," the Origenists entry said that Jesus moved up the celestial hierarchy "one after another."

While I've found no references to the "Origenists" sect the encyclopedia mentions, there were certain early Christians that taught that Jesus was adopted as the son of God, most of whom said this occurred at his baptism.[222] Section 82 also suggests that Jesus became deified at his baptism: after describing Christ's baptism, the revelation says that John heard "a voice out of heaven saying, this is my beloved son" a statement found in the synoptic gospels (Mark 1:11; Matthew 3:17; Luke 3:22) but not John which simply says "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). Section 82 then states, "And I John bare record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; and he received all power, both in heaven and on earth; and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him."[223] The statement suggests that Jesus was deified at his baptism like adoptionists taught; the encyclopedia entry on Origenists said "that Christ is the son of God by adoption." At the same time, section 82, like John 1 asserts Christ's pre-existent divinity, which the Book of Mormon also taught. Morton Smith argues that a number of New Testament passages attempt to combine pre-existence and adoptionism but the passage most resembles Buck's entry on Origen—the pre-existent divinity who emptied himself of his fulness—suggesting the importance of the passages in Buck and the encyclopedia which would indicate Smith's interest in Origen.[224]

Furthermore, the entry suggested that the rites Jesus underwent were deifying. In 1843, Smith taught, "If a man gets the fulness of God, he has to get [it] in the same way that

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[222] Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47.
[223] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 211; current DC 93:17.
[224] Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 246-47.

Jesus Christ obtain[ed] it & that was by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord."[225] By that time, Smith had greatly expanded the Mormons' deifying rites, but the idea that the Mormons could become defied like Jesus by being initiated into the same rites was suggested in section 82. Similarly, Mosheim said that Ammonius "acknowledged Christ to be a most excellent man, the friend of God, the admirable *theurge*."[226] The entry suggested that Ammonius saw Jesus as a man, not as a God, but as theurgy were rites to become God, calling Jesus "the admirable *theurge*" suggested that he became God through rituals. That is, Jesus could have become God through theurgy though Mosheim's passage doesn't specifically say this.[227] Section 82 told the saints, "If you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness and be glorified in me as I am in the Father: therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace" just as Jesus had.[228] In 1836, Smith's father blessed Solomon Warner that "The Lord shall make the[e] mighty, even like unto his son, having all power of the holy priesthood."[229]

The School of the Prophets. The first formalized additional early Mormon rites were related to Smith's "school of the prophets" a kind of holy study group.[230] Not only was learning essential to salvation in Platonism and Mormonism but sources available to Smith also used the word endow to refer to knowledge and learning. Allen said that "the present chief Rabbi of the Portuguese Jews in London" called Menasseh ben Israel "a Divine

[225] June 11, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 212.
[226] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 143.
[227] The passage does say that Ammonius and his followers "were to raise above all terrestrial things, by the towering efforts of holy contemplation, those souls whose origin was celestial and divine … that thus, in this life, they might enjoy communion with the Supreme Being, and ascend after death, active and unencumbered, to the universal Parent, to live in his presence for ever," suggesting a kind of deified state. Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:142.
[228] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 211; current DC 93:20, 29.
[229] *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. H. Michael Marquardt (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 146.
[230] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 103, 107; current DC 88: 119, 66, 127.

Philosopher, endowed with profound learning and extreme piety" and Dobson's encyclopedia said the Origen was "endued with a quick apprehension and a strong imagination."[231] I argue here that Smith's school of the prophets was patterned after descriptions of the practices of Ammonius Saccas and Origen in Mosheim and Dobson's encyclopedia.

Mosheim wrote, "Schools were every where erected … from the very commencement of the Christian church…. We may, undoubtedly, attribute to the apostles themselves, and their injunctions to their disciples, the excellent establishments." John established a school at Ephesus and Polycarp established one at Smyrna, said Mosheim. Mosheim's English translator and editor, Archibald Maclaine, went even further in a footnote: "The Alexandrian school was renowned for a succession of learned doctors, as we find in the accounts of Eusebius and St. Jerome; for, after St. Mark, Pantaenus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and many others, taught in it the doctrines of the gospel and rendered it a famous seminary for christian philosophy and religious knowledge."[232] Thus the best of these schools not only went back to Mark but was the one run by Clement and Origen in Alexandria, the philosophers that Mosheim denounced as corrupting Christianity. Mosheim specifically said that "this new species of platonism was embraced by such of the Alexandrian christians" including "Athenagoras, Pantaeaus, Clemens the Alexandrian, and all those who, in this century, were charged with the care of the public school." Mosheim then said that "Ammonias Saccas … taught, with the highest applause, in the Alexandrian school,"

[231] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 72; "Origen," *Encyclopaeidia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:492.
[232] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:100-1. "Some have doubted the existence of 'the Catechetical School in Alexandria,'" Mark Julain Edwards notes. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 18.

suggesting that Ammonius taught at the same school (he actually ran a different school).[233] Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on Origen also said he ran a school at Alexandria.[234] Thus Mosheim and the addition by Maclaine said that Origen and Ammonius were excellent teachers in a tradition that went back to St. Mark.

There were a number of similarities between the descriptions of these schools and Smith's school of the prophets. Dobson's encyclopedia said that Origen "was neither ignorant of history nor mythology; and he had a great knowledge in all the profane science, as those who studied nothing else. He particularly excelled in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, which he learned all by heart."[235] Those in the school of the prophets were also supposed to study broadly. The revelation commanded,

> Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed … in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that is expedient for you to understand; of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been; things which are; things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home; things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations; and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries, and of kingdoms.[236]

Furthermore, Dobson's encyclopedia said, "Origen had a great concourse of auditors who attended his school, some of whom were of the faithful, and the others pagans. He confirmed

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[233] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:139. Mark Julian Edward explains, "A school in the ancient world more often consisted of a self-appointed pedagogue, a group of regular listeners, and a larger audience at occasional lectures. If the teacher had a successor, he gained that post informally, perhaps having been regarded as a colleague of his predecessor during the latter's lifetime, and any income that either received would result from a personal bargain with the clients." Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 18.
[234] "Origen, *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 13:492.
[235] "Origen," 13:493.
[236] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 104; current 88:78-79.

and strengthened the first in their faith, and converted most others."[237] Smith's revelation instructed, "As all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom: seek learning, even by study, and also by faith."[238] The Mormons needed to be prepared like Origen to instruct those who didn't have "faith."

Furthermore, the members of the school would enter with a ritual greeting, and engage in ritual prayer, and in ritual footwashing.[239] Connecting ritual with education in addition to the fraternal nature of the school gave the meeting a Masonic feel and Neo and Christian Platonists had engaged in holy and ritualized learning from the beginning.[240] As noted in the introduction and above, Smith said that rites were missing from Christianity, and Mosheim said that Ammonius engaged in theurgy which contemporary descriptions said involved ritual washing and prayer. Furthermore, Mosheim said, "This art, which the disciples of Ammonius called the *theurgy*, was not, however, communicated to all the schools of this fanatical philosopher, but only to those of the first rank."[241] The school of the prophets was only for Mormon priesthood holders, though that was technically most of the men.[242] Mosheim said that early on, only the more intelligent, advanced Christians were "initiated into all the mysteries of the chrisitian faith" and that this division between the advanced and the simple led many scholars to assume that the early Christians had "a *secret doctrine*." Mosheim admitted that the more advanced received higher teachings but added,

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[237] "Origen," 13:492.
[238] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 107; current DC 88:118.
[239] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 108; current 88:132-33, 138-39. Footwashing was practiced by a handful of radical Protestant groups, (Sam 154-55) including Sidney Rigdon's followers before they converted to Mormonism. Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth,* 154-55; Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 40.
[240] Dylan Michael Burns, "Out of Heaven: Myth, Eschatology, and Theurgy in the Sethian Gnostic Apocalypses of Nag Hammadi" (PhD. Diss. Yale University, 2011), 91-94, 114-18.
[241] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:142.
[242] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 107-8; current DC 88:127.

"Those who consider the *secret doctrine* of this century in any other light, or give to is a greater extent than what we have here attributed to it confound the superstitious practices of the following ages, with the simplicity of the discipline which prevailed at the time of which we write."[243] As discussed in Chapter Seven, Mosheim argued that the Christian liturgy was later corrupted by pagan mystery rites and wanted to argue here that secret initiations were not part of the "secret doctrine." Early modern Catholics and Freemasons in Smith's day argued that rituals were part of the secret doctrine and as Smith argued that Jesus was initiated into the same ritual that Smith initiated his followers at Nauvoo, Smith likely believed that secret initiations were also part of the lost "covenants" that he needed to restore.

The Word of Wisdom. The school of the prophets prompted further revelations on how the saints were to prepare. A story was later told that Smith's wife was bothered by the mess tobacco made in the room where the school met and that Smith prayed to the Lord at her urging and received instructions on health.[244] In what became known as "the Word of Wisdom" the Lord told the saints that tobacco, strong drinks, and hot drinks were not for the body. Mosheim said, "To this monstrous coalition of heterogeneous doctrines, its fanatical author [Ammonius] added a rule of life and manners, which carried an aspect of high sanctity and uncommon austerity." Ammonius's followers "were ordered to extenuate, by hunger, thirst, and other mortifications, the sluggish body, which confines the activity, and restrains the liberty of the immortal spirit."[245] Alexander Campbell declared in a footnote to this passage (which exaggerated Neoplatonic austerity), "Modern religious fasts and austerities

[243] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:100-1.
[244] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 212.
[245] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:142.

are just the same as those of Ammonius and the Egyptians."[246] Fasting was important in early Mormonism but the Word of Wisdom was "adapted to the capacity of the weak, and the weakest of all saints."[247]

The saints were promised that those who kept the health code, "shall receive health in their navel, and marrow to their bones and shall find wisdom, and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures."[248] Diet was important to the Neoplatonists and Agrippa said, "Whosoever therefore doth, by quiet and religious meditation, and by diet temperate and moderated according to nature, preserve his spirit pure, doth very much prepare himself, that by means he may become divine, and knoweth all things."[249] The Word of Wisdom also said, "Flesh … of beasts and of fowls of the air … are to be used sparingly."[250] Agrippa wrote, "Many others also taking meat sparingly, enjoyed thereby health and agility of body, as Moses, and Elias, who fasted forty days: whence his face shined, and he lifted up, could easily guide his body as if it were a spirit."[251] Thus the health code was another purification rite; health ideas were popular at the time, but the Word of Wisdom had ritual significance in line with Christian Platonism.[252]

The Kirtland Temple. The Kirtland temple was finished in 1836 and in preparation for its dedication, the saints engaged in additional rites. Oliver Cowdery reported, "after the

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[246] Alexander Campbell, "Essays on Ecclesiastical Characters, Councils, Creeds, and Sects" no. II, *Christian Baptist* vol 1, no. 10 (May 3, 1824): 233.
[247] Doctrine and Covenants (1835): 207; current DC 89:3. Socrates encouraged a similar ethic in the *Republic*. The wise man "won't entrust the condition and nurture of his body to the irrational pleasure of the beast within or turn his life in that direction, but neither will he make health his aim or assign first place to being strong, healthy and beautiful, unless he happens to acquire moderation as a result. Rather, it's clear that he will always cultivate the harmony of his body for the sake of the consonance in his soul." Plato, *Republic,* 591c.
[248] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 208; current DC 89:19.
[249] Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, trans. Thomas Taylor. (1818, reprint, London: John M. Watkins, 1965), 24; Marinus of Neapolis*, Proclus, or on Happiness*, in *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by Their Students*, trans. by Mark Edwards (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 86.
[250] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 208; current DC 89:12.
[251] Agrippa, *Three Book of Occult Philosophy,* 633-34, 643.
[252] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 212.

pure water was prepared, called upon the Lord and proceeded to wash each other's bodies, and bathe the same with whiskey, perfumed with cinnamon. This we did that we might be clean before the Lord of the Sabbath, confessing our sins and covenanting to be faithful to God."[253] Ritual washing and the use of cinnamon were biblical rites.[254] Mosheim said that early Christians continued to practice Jewish rites for a time; perhaps Smith felt that such rites were among the covenants removed by the great and abominable church.[255] Furthermore, the grimoires, which drew heavily on Catholic liturgical practices, often listed confession as one of the purification rites.[256] The next week the group met again to perform anointings with oil that they first blessed "and consecrated … in the name of Jesus Christ." After the leaders anointed Smith, his father "sealed upon me the blessings," and many others were washed, anointed, and sealed afterwards.[257] Washing, anointing, and sealing were biblical rituals but no biblical ritual combined them all. A ritual described in the third edition of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* did, however: "When particular Instruments are to be sanctified, the Magitian must sprinkle the same with consecrated Water, and fumigate them with fumigations, anoint them with consecrated Oyl: And lastly, Seal them with the holy Characters; after all which is performed, an Oration or Prayer must follow, relating the particulars and Consecration with Petitions to that Power in whose Name and Authority the Ceremony is performed."[258]

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[253] Quoted in David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 2002), 12.
[254] Exodus 30:23; Revelation 18:13.
[255] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1;105.
[256] Grimoires often drew on the Bible for their rites. Said Agrippa on theurgy, "But the greatest part of all ceremonies consist in observing cleanness, and purity, first of the mind, then of the body … according to the word of Isaiah, be ye washed, and made clean, and take away the evil of your thoughts." *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 699. For confession, see Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 344.
[257] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 311-13.
[258] Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 479.

Smith said he had a vision of the throne of God shortly after his washing, anointing, and sealing, and at the temple's dedication in March many said they saw angels. The next week Smith and Cowdery said they were visited in the temple by Moses, Elias, Elijah, and Christ (Chapter Three).[259] As I argued in Chapter Two, the evidence suggests that Smith engaged in some sort of ritual to invoke Moroni that likely included consecration of space and the soul and body of the invoker. Smith engaged in what were likely similar rites that he said also led to angelic visitations in his temple. With the establishment of his church, Smith, like the philosopher-king, sought to lead his followers to the presence of God by theurgical means.

Conclusion

Smith quickly began expanding the theology of the Book of Mormon with revelations that appeared even before the Book of Mormon was in print. Smith's soteriology quickly adopted Universalist themes and soon moved in the direction of Jane Lead's soteriology. The similarities to Lead culminated in Smith's vision of multiple heavens, which had numerous similarities to Lead's *Wonders of God's Creation.* Lead said that the particularly righteous could ascend to more advanced heavens in the next life, giving them an advantage for eventually making it to the highest heaven, and that the archetype for such a figure was Enoch as described in her *Enochian Walks with God.* Smith saw Enoch and himself as political leaders and like Lead, both sought to gather the faithful with the ultimate goal of leading them to the presence of God. Smith's process of leading his followers to deification was likely based on Mosheim's and other sources' descriptions of the Alexandrians. Mosheim said that the followers of Ammonius (the Neoplatonists) sought to ascend to God,

[259] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 312, 317-20.

that they used theurgy to do so, and that education and diet were an important part of the process. Such themes and practices were tied together in Jane Lead's visions: Enoch, Melchizedek priesthood, temples, and ascent to God.

Yet the realities of this life soon caught up to Smith and his followers. "Economically, the temple was a disaster," says Richard Bushman. The saints could not afford the temple and the Kirtland economy fell apart in the panic of 1837, leading to the collapse of Smith's program in Ohio.[260] Missourians found the Mormons very threatening and violence broke out in 1833, which would continue until the Mormons were driven from the state. Yet despite these setbacks, Smith would continue his agenda in the Mormon's next gathering area: Nauvoo, Illinois.

[260] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 217, 330-32.

Section Two: Nauvoo

Smith's kingdom building came crashing down with a bank failure in Kirtland and violent expulsion from Missouri. Jackson Country, Missouri, was to be the site of Smith's New Jerusalem, where the saints would have all things in common and dwell together in unity and love. The rapidly growing Mormon community in western Missouri antagonized the original settlers who drove the Mormons out of Jackson County in 1833. The Mormons moved north of Jackson County but further conflicts ensued. Smith, who moved to Missouri from Kirtland in 1838, decided to fight back, further antagonizing the Missourians. Smith surrendered to the state militia on October 31, 1838, and soon found himself awaiting trial at a jail in Liberty, Missouri, with all his plans and revelations seemingly in ruin. During this period, a significant number from Smith's inner circle left or turned on him including the Whitmers, Oliver Cowdery, and William Phelps (dissension in general had been a major problem).[1] A low point came after a botched attempt to escape the cramped jail where they awaited trial from a judge who had already pronounced them guilty. At this low point, Smith received a group of letters from friends and family that elicited Smith's "Liberty-Jail Letter," which included some of Smith's most important religious statements.[2]

This sixteen-page letter, which Smith dictated to a scribe, bounced between imploring God for help, to speaking God's voice, to giving practical advice. Most importantly, the letter would in many ways set the stage for Smith's theological innovations for the remainder of his life. Smith began the letter by saying that "our curcmstances [sic] are calculated to awaken our spirits to a sacred remembrance of ev[e]ry thing" that was truly important "and that nothing therefore can separate us form the love of God, and fellowship one with another

[1] Phelps returned shortly thereafter, Cowdery returned after Smith's death.
[2] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 222-29, 356-75.

and that ev[e]ry species of wickedness and cruelty practiced upon us will only tend to bind our h[e]arts together and seal them together in love."[3] The kingdom had come crashing down but the Mormons still had each other; their afflictions would seal their hearts together. In Nauvoo, Smith performed "sealing" rites, or special holy marriages that would bind loved ones together in the next life (Chapter Five). For the rest of his life, Smith's sought to prepare in this life to enjoy the loving association of his friends and family in the world to come.

Smith and his fellow inmates were allowed to escape in April 1839 and Smith was soon engaged in city building again in Nauvoo, Illinois. This time, however, Smith scaled backed his utopianism with no attempts at shared property.[4] Instead Smith sought to build a "nucleus of heaven" to bind his closest friends and loved ones to him, both the living and the dead—a kind of utopianism on a smaller scale. To aid the dead, Smith instituted baptism for the dead whereby the living could be baptized on the dead's behalf. Smith also implemented "sealing" rituals whereby couples (either both living or widows and their dead spouses) could be married in the next life. Furthermore, Smith's sealings radically reconstructed marriage as he engaged in what I call "composite marriage" where both men and women could be sealed to multiple spouses. Composite marriage was ultimately rejected by Smith's followers and he shifted to polygyny, where only men could have multiple spouses. Chapter Five, "A Nucleus of Heaven," explores these issues.

Smith's Liberty-jail letter also promised his followers that if they continued to follow God and worked to become better people, God "shall give unto you knowledge by his holy spirit … that has not been revealed since the world was until now…. [W]hither [sic] there be

[3] Smith, letter to the Church at Quincy, Illinois, 20 March 1839, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith,* 430.
[4] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 382, 414, 501-4.

one god or many gods they shall be manifest all thrones and dominions principalities and powers shall be revealed upon all who have indured valiently for the gospel of Jesus Christ."[5] Smith's revelations continued and with references to the possibility of multiple gods, Smith's doctrine was becoming increasingly radical. The Nauvoo period was a time of some of Mormonism's most distinct innovations: in addition to marital experimentation and ritual aid for the dead, Smith also expanded his temple rites and openly discussed of the possibility of human deification and the existence of multiple gods. With the continued goal of leading his followers to the presence of God, Smith's expanded temple rite, called the endowment, ritually enacted this journey. Smith's endowment ritual suggests a number of influences including Masonry, descriptions of ancient mystery rites, Catholicism, and ancient Judeo-Christian apocalyptic texts (Chapter Six).

Smith's designs came crashing down once more in the summer of 1842. Trouble started in the spring when Smith fell out with his close advisor John C. Bennett. Bennett had been a member of the Illinois legislature when the Mormons arrived in Nauvoo, and Bennett gave the Mormons considerable aid, helping them write the Nauvoo charter and directing how to drain the swamp there. Bennett soon joined the Mormons and quickly rose in their ranks; he was elected mayor of Nauvoo in February 1841 and became assistant president of the church by April of that year. Yet Smith and Bennett fell out in April 1842. The reasons for this are difficult to piece together since both Smith and Bennett were eager to denounce the other while trying to hide considerable information. Smith said the trouble started when two of Smith's counselors returned from a mission to the East where they came across

[5] Smith's reference to "thrones and dominions principalities and powers" suggests a reference to pseudo-Dionysius's nine orders of angels. As discussed in Chapter One, Dionysius's actual writings were not very influential in the early nineteenth century U.S., but references to "thrones and dominions principalities and powers" were often used when speaking of heavenly hierarchies.

Bennett's estranged wife who said that Bennett had been abusive and had abandoned her. More trouble occurred when Smith investigated individuals who were seducing women and claimed that Smith had sanctioned their behavior. Bennett was blamed for promoting and participating in the promiscuous behavior and in May he was disfellowshipped by the Mormons and resigned as mayor. Bennett left Nauvoo in June and the Mormons began publishing accusations against Bennett; Bennett's first accusations against Smith were published in July. Bennett said that he had only joined the Mormons to expose them and accused Smith of misconduct and of practicing polygamy, saying that Smith had proposed to Sidney Rigdon's daughter Nancy and Sarah Pratt, the wife of Mormon apostle, Orson Pratt.[6]

The Mormons countered in print, saying that it was Bennett who seduced Sarah Pratt. Orson, not knowing who to believe, became despondent and turned dissenter for a time.[7] Smith had a full-blown crisis on his hands with Bennett attempting to get Americans to attack the Mormons, with dissension from within, and with the Missourians sending agents to try to kidnap Smith to bring him back to trial.[8] In the summer of 1842, Smith went into hiding. For the remainder of 1842 Smith preformed no more endowment ceremonies and greatly reduced his new marriages.

Smith began his religious innovations again in the spring of 1843. By this point he had reconciled with Orson Pratt, the courts had ruled against Missourian extradition, and the Bennett scare had largely passed. Smith began the endowment ceremony again; this time he included women. He also preformed a new rite that he called "the second anointing"

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[6] Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 78-101.
[7] Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate," *Dialogue* 19, no. 2 (1986): 76-78.
[8] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 462-75.

whereby individuals could be sealed up to everlasting life.[9] Smith also began to marry again, but now he married only single women, who were generally much younger than his earlier wives. By 1843, Smith's first wife Emma was well aware of the practice, which caused considerable conflict amid moments of acquiescence. By the winter of 1844, Emma effectively shut down Smith's additional marriage relationships with threat of divorce. Smith's attempts at a nucleus of heaven had come to an end.[10]

Despite this setback, Smith continued his doctrinal innovation, which culminated in his King Follett discourse, a speech given at the funeral of one King Follett. Here Smith not only claimed that humans could become gods but that God was once human. Smith also turned to politics again with two bold moves. First, he established what he called the Council of Fifty, a secret organization that planned to set up a kingdom in the West. Second he ran for president of the United States. With his nucleus of heaven having collapsed, perhaps Smith felt he either needed to establish a kingdom outside the United States or that he needed to gain significant sufficient power within the United States to protect his religious designs. As had happened in Ohio and Missouri, Smith felt caught between Mormon dissenters and hostile outsiders, and when Mormon dissenters started a press in Nauvoo to publicize Smith's polygamous activities, Smith had the press destroyed. Smith was arrested shortly after and shot dead by a mob not long after that.[11] Like may who had hoped to build the kingdom of God on earth, Smith would have to wait until the next life, while his followers continued to try to implement Smith's goals as best they could. The dissertation's conclusion looks at Smith's final political attempts.

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[9] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 497-98.
[10] Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith,* 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 134-70.
[11] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 527-50.

Chapter Five: A Nucleus of Heaven

Introduction

On October 26, 1843, Joseph Smith "sealed" John Bernheisel to a series of dead female relatives and acquaintances: a sister, four aunts, two cousins, a sister-in-law, a "distant relative," and two "intimate friends."[1] Mormon sealings were usually performed between two living spouses so that the couple would be able to be married in the next life, though Smith also sealed people to dead spouses.[2] Berheisel's sealing were unusual for Mormons but they still fit the larger pattern of the desire to be linked to loved ones in the next life, both the living and the dead. Bernheisel's sealings also demonstrated the more complex pattern of marriage in early Mormonism that went beyond monogamy (though Bernheisel was the only person to be sealed to blood relatives.)[3] Just as Bernheisel was sealed to the wife of his dead brother, Joseph Smith was sealed to a number of women who were already married.

Smith, in effect, combined two Platonic marital themes: Smith's marital rites made it so Mormons could be married forever, as suggested in the *Symposium,* and to multiple people, as asserted in the *Republic*. Cathy Gutierrez argues that the Spiritualist of the mid- to late-nineteenth century did just this: they enjoyed free love in heaven, based on combining

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[1] Joseph Smith, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, ed. Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 424.

[2] By Lyndon Cook's count there were twenty-three sealings of the living to the dead during Joseph Smith's life time, starting with Joseph Kingsbury to his dead wife Caroline Whitney, March 23, 1843. Eleven of those sealings were Bernheisel's. Lyndon W. Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages, Proxy Sealings 1843-1846* (Provo, UT: Grandin, 2004), 2.

[3] There were no sealings between parents and children during Joseph Smith's lifetime (a common practice in current Mormonism). (Jonathan A. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual In Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 [2011]: 59.) Smith did talk about parents sealing their children to them, telling his followers to "go & seal on earth your sons & daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory" (10 March 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 331) but he told his followers earlier "when a Father & mother of a family have entered into [the sealing] their children who have not transgressed are secured by the seal wherewith the Parents have been sealed" (13 August 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 241.)

Plato's *Symposium* and *Republic.*[4] However, "free love" is not exactly the right term for Smith's marital practices: rather than everyone being married to each other, Smith engaged in a series of individual marriages to bind his closest loved ones to him for this life and the next. I call this marital system "composite marriage," or, interlocking relationships where both men and women could be sealed to multiple spouses.[5] "The Prophet taught us that Dominion & powr in the great future," Benjamin Johnson later recalled, "would be Comensurate with the no [number] of 'Wives Childin & Friends' that we inheret here and that our great mission to earth was to Organize a Neculi [nucleus] of Heaven to take with us."[6] Berheisel's many sealings to his dead female loved ones reflects this all-encompassing desire to be linked to loved ones regardless of how the relationship was defined. I argue that creating this "nucleus of heaven" was the goal behind Smith's marital practices.

Yet as Bernheisel's sealings demonstrate, the dead were also part of this desired union. Mormons taught from the beginning that the true priesthood was restored to them and that without it, sacraments were not valid. This situation led Mormons to worry about the state of their dead loved ones who had died before the founding of Mormonism. Smith taught that almost all would eventually be saved, but that the particularly righteous would inherit the highest, "Celestial," kingdom (Chapter Four). The early Mormons, therefore, worried that if they themselves made it to the Celestial Kingdom, their dead loved ones who died without Mormon baptism might be assigned to a lower kingdom and thus be separated from them. Smith instituted the rite of baptism for the dead to solve this problem: the living

[4] Cathy Gutierrez, "Deadly Dates: Bodies and Sex in Spiritualist Heavens," in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (2008, reprint; New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 309-32.
[5] Such actions were antagonizing to his followers, so Smith later switched to polygyny (one husband with multiple wives) as an alternative (discussed below).
[6] Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1976), 47.

could be baptized on behalf of dead loved ones that the Mormons believed would have joined the Mormons if they had had the chance. Thus rather than dividing the Mormons from the dead, the restored Mormon priesthood, through the rite of baptism of the dead, became the means by which the Mormons could be united with their dead *in the same heavenly kingdom*. Smith's "nucleus of heaven," therefore, encompassed both the living and the dead.

Baptism for the Dead[7]

Christians had wrestled with the issue of the state of their unbaptized ancestors from the beginning.[8] The story of Radbod, king of the Frisians, illustrates the dilemma that Christian converts could face. In 692 the Christian Franks conquered the non-Christian Frisians and induced Radbod to be baptized. As J. L. Motely tells the story,

> The pagan Radbod had already immersed one of his royal legs in the baptismal font, when a thought struck him. "Where are my dead forefathers at present?" he said, turning suddenly to Bishop Wolfran. "In Hell, with all other unbelievers," was the imprudent answer. "Mighty well," replied Radbod, removing his leg, "then I will rather feast with my ancestors in the halls of Woden, than dwell with your little

[7] Scholarship on Mormon baptism for the dead include M. Guy Bishop, "'What Has Become of Our Father?' Baptism for the Dead at Nauvoo," *Dialogue* 23 no. 2 (1990): 86-101; Alexander L. Baugh, "'For this Ordinance Belongeth to My House': The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple," *Mormon Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2002): 47-58; and *Ryan G. Tobler, " 'Saviors on Mount Zion': Mormon Sacramentalism, Mortality, and the Baptism for the Dead," Journal of Mormon History* 39, no. 4 (2013): 182-238. Such works give a development of the practice within Mormon theological developments. John Brooke noted that baptism for the dead was practiced at Ephrata. As mentioned, Brooke's thesis was generally unpopular with Mormon intellectuals including his insinuating Ephrata's influence on Mormon baptism for the dead. Terryl Given accused Brooke of disregarding Occam's razor by connecting the practice to Ephrata because "baptism for the dead is explicitly reference in 1 Corinthians 15." Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 170. As discussed below, Smith himself said that he drew on sources in addition to the Bible and I argue that Ephrata, along with a number of other sources, might have been an influence.

[8] Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: In Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

> starvling band of Christians in Heaven." Entreaties and threats were unavailing. The Frisian declined positively a rite which was to cause eternal separation from his buried kindred, and he died as he had lived, a heathen.[9]

The early Mormons felt this concern. Though almost all people would make it to one of the heavens (Chapter Four), Mormons hoped to make it to highest "Celestial" kingdom and worried that their dead loved ones who died before Mormonism might have missed their chance to make it to that kingdom. "When speaking about the blessings pertaining to the gospel, and the consequences connected with disobedience to its requirements," Smith wrote in 1842, "we are frequently asked the question, what has become of our Fathers? will they all be damned for not obeying the gospel, when they never heard it? certainly not."[10] Rather than dividing people from their kindred dead, Smith sought to use baptism to bind him and his followers to their ancestors. In August 1840, Smith instituted baptism for the dead so that the living could be baptized on behalf of dead friends and relatives. In so doing so, Smith paralleled a particular medieval strain of thought that saw baptism for the dead as resolution to the universalism of Christian Platonism on one hand and the importance of sacraments on the other. Just as Smith drew upon very old debates surrounding Christian Platonism in order to situate Mormon doctrine with regards to universalism (Chapter Four), Smith drew upon texts long used by Christian Platonists to institute proxy baptism by the living on behalf of the dead.

Rescuing the Dead in Christian History. The doctrine of Christ's descent into hell shaped the thought of those who argued for post-mortal salvation and universalism, but, as discussed in Chapter Four, it left open the question of who was saved at the descent: was

[9] John Lothrop Motely, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic: A History,* 3 vols. (New York: Harper, 1856), 1:20-21.
[10] "Baptism for the Dead," *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 15, 1842): 759.

everyone saved or only a certain group and what the about those who went to hell after Christ? Furthermore, Christians wondered if anyone in addition to Christ could help the dead. Clement of Alexandria not only believed that Christ had preached to the dead, but that the apostles did as well. "For it was requisite, in my opinion, that as here, so also there, the best of the disciples should be imitators of the Master; so that He should bring to repentance those belonging to the Hebrews, and they the Gentiles; that is, those who had lived in righteousness according to the Law and Philosophy, who had ended life not perfectly, but sinfully."[11]

Clement cited the *Shepherd of Hermas*, an early Christian text that he and many of his contemporaries considered scripture, in making this assertion.[12] The *Shepherd of Hermas* contains a series of vision of Hermas, including one where Hermas sees angelic beings building a tower with stones. The Shepherd (an angelic guide) tells Hermas that the stones are righteous people and that the tower is the church. Hermas also sees stones being pulled out of a body of water called "the deep" and asks the Shepherd what the stones represent. "Because these Apostles and teachers," explains the Shepherd, "who preached the name of the son of God, dying after they had received his faith and power preached to them who were dead before; and they gave this seal to them." "Now that seal is the water of baptism," the Shepherd explained earlier. The dead that the apostles and teachers taught and baptized were

[11] Clement, *Stromata* 6.6 and 2.9. Clement argued that Christ preached to the Gentiles as well as the patriarch at his descent. "One righteous man, then, differs not, as righteous, from another righteous man, whether he be of the Law or a Greek. For God is not only Lord of the Jews, but of all men, and more nearly the Father of those who know Him." Clement, *Stromata* 6.6.

[12] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 47. Though Clement considered the *Shepherd of Hermas* scripture, its importance declined shortly thereafter and it was not canonized. Nevertheless the *Shepherd of Hermas* remained influential throughout the Middle Ages, influencing visionary literature from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, to *Piers Plowman*, to *Pearl*. Like Clement's writings, these later works have strong Christian Platonic themes. Theodore Bogdanos, "'The Shepherd of Hermas' and the Development of Medieval Visionary Allegory," *Viator* 8 (1977): 33-46. Joseph Smith himself owned a copy of the *Shepherd of Hermas* and seems to have found it authoritative (discussed below).

those who "died in righteousness, and in great purity; only this seal was wanting to them." Thus the apostles and teachers that Christ sent into the deep went to the righteous who had died without baptism; they then gave them this "seal" and then added them to the tower.[13] These ideas and texts were in print in Joseph Smith's day and likely influenced his thinking on these issues (see below).

While Clement and Hermas argued that special people were sent to the dead, Clement asserted (and Hermas implied) that the apostles and teachers did so after they died. That the *living* could aid the dead, however, goes back to early Christianity and also had precedents in Hellenism and Judaism. The Greeks would leave grave goods for the dead, including coins in the dead person's mouth to pay Charon, and they also had myths of heroes and gods going into the Hades to rescue people.[14] The Apocrypha contains the story of Judas Maccabee making a sin offering for dead soldiers who had used idols. "Whereupon he made a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin" (2 Macc. 12: 40-45).[15]

Christian prayer for the dead started early. The *Acts of Paul and Thelca* tells the story of the prayer of Thelca for the pagan Falconilla and the *Passion of Perpetua and Felcitas* tells the story of the prayer of Perpetua for her dead seven-year old brother. The Marcionites baptized the living on behalf of the dead, a fact that Smith cited in defense of his own practice.[16] Augustine not only rejected the descent, but he also rejected the idea that anything could be done for the unbaptized dead. When in 419 Vicentius Victor argued that prayer for

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[13] *Shepherd of Hermas,* Similitude 9, in *The Apocryphal New Testament, Being All the Gospels, Epistles, and Other Pieces Now Extant, Attributed in the First Four Centuries to Jesus Christ, His Apostles, and The Companions, and Not Included in the New Testament by Its Compilers. Translated from the Original Tongues, and Now First Collected into One Volume* (London: Printed for William Hone, 1820), 254-55. This is the version that Joseph Smith owned. Christopher Jones, "The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009), 192.
[14] Trumbower, *Rescue the Dead,* 13, 92.
[15] *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testament Together with the Apocrypha* (Albany, NY: E. F. Backus, 1816), Apocrypha, 177.
[16] Trumbower, *Rescue the Dead*, 4, 36-37.

the unbaptized worked citing Maccabees, Perpetua, and the repentant thief, Augustine argued that Perpetua's brother and the repentant thief had actually been baptized and the Jewish soldiers that Judas Maccabee prayed for had been circumcised. For Augustine, there was no getting around John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom God." At the end of his life, Augustine wrote the *Enchiridion*, a small handbook of instruction, where he laid the groundwork for the medieval notion of purgatory. There were three types of dead, said Augustine, the very good who do not need prayers, the very bad who cannot be helped by prayers, and those in the middle for whom prayers were beneficial. Nothing could be done for the unbaptized.[17]

Prayers for the dead had increased in popularity by Augustine's time. Megan McLaughlin argues that the toleration granted to Christianity in the fourth century created "an age of anxiety" for Christians. Before Constantine, Christians had felt that with all the persecution they faced, being a faithful Christian meant one was going to heaven. After Constantine and the end of persecution, Christians began to worry if being a Christian was enough to make it to heaven. Prayer for the dead was an outgrowth of this shift, argues McLaughlin: "Confidence in the salvation of the faithful slowly began to give way to anxiety about the fate of individual Christians after death … it is no accident that visions in which the dead appear asking for prayers became increasingly common in late antiquity." The age of anxiety created a need for holy associations, argues McLaughlin, in which those who sought holiness separated themselves to a greater extent from the world by entering the monastery. This became the new holy community taking the place of the now lost persecuted church. Through the formation of these new associations, the righteous could separate themselves from the world and aid each other in their quest for heaven. "So intertwined … were prayer

[17] Trumbower, *Rescue the Dead,* 133-37.

for the dead and the praise of God and the saints, that the one served for the other. By praying for the dead … the members of the liturgical community would appear 'faithful in the sight of God'"[18]

Christian aid for the dead continued to develop throughout the early Middle Ages. With the rise in popularity of tariffed penance, or the ability to confess privately and be given penitential tasks to perform, people began to wonder what would happened to souls who died without preforming all the penitential acts. A series of popular visionary tales of the unshriven suffering for their sins in the next life finally culminated in the idea of purgatory as an actual place between heaven and hell in the twelfth century. Purgatory became an official doctrine of the church in 1215.[19] By the late Middle Ages, both purgatory and prayers for the dead were thoroughly integrated into religious life: requests for prayers dominated wills and the wealthy would hire the poor to pray for them at their funerals and would endow special buildings called chantries where a priest would pray for the rich person's soul.[20] The middling formed gilds or confraternities that would covenant to pray for each other's souls after death and pay dues for the burning of candles.[21]

All these acts were for baptized Christians who needed extra help, but some medieval people worried about the state of the unbaptized, whom Augustine had said had no hope at all. The complaint from William of Auvergne's (1228-1249) flock quoted in Chapter Four, references the question of damnation of the unbaptized:

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[18] Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with the Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 29, 78.
[19] Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), 186-90; McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints,* 18-19.
[20] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 301-3.
[21] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* 142-43.

> Why they ask did the mercy of God choose so few for salvation, but leave so many in perdition—especially since he is believed to be more ready to save than to condemn? … It can seem presumptuous for a few Christian to think they alone will be saved, and the whole rest of humankind left to perdition—that is, bad Christians (who far outnumber the good), as well as Jews, Saracens, and pagans…. Can the mercy of God, which is infinite and beyond measure, endure so painful a slaughter? Why, they ask did he create such a multitude of the damned.[22]

Furthermore, a number of legends were told of intercession being made on behalf of pagans, in the Middle Ages, the story of Pope Gregory the Great praying on behalf of the emperor Trajan being the most prominent. The legend was that Gregory had heard about Trajan's just ways and shed tears over Trajan's post-mortal damnation, which either released Trajan from hell or granted Trajan some relief. This legend grew and caused considerable concern for medieval theologians: great saints had the ability to intercede but were not supposed to do so for the unbaptized. The solution for many scholastic theologians was to assert that the Trajan had been brought back to life, was baptized, and then went to heaven. Miracles could occur but baptism was absolutely necessary to go to heaven.[23] Other stories of saints baptizing the dead were told in the Middle Ages. The tenth-century *Tripartite Life of Patrick* told of St. Patrick calling forth a dead man from the grave and baptizing him. The fourteenth-century poem *St. Erkenwald* told the story of builders of a cathedral in the ninth century uncovering the body of a righteous pagan who tells the builders of his just ways. The builders call for *St. Erkenwald* who cries on the man, thereby baptizing him, and the dead

[22] Quoted in Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 135.
[23] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 144-47.

pagan then ascends to heaven.[24] Medieval folklore also told stories of unbaptized infants that were revived long enough to be baptized.[25] Augustine himself told the story of a woman who, praying over the soul of dead infant, brought the baby back to life for baptism, allowing the child to ascend to heaven.[26]

The Protestant Reformation outlawed both Purgatory and aid for the dead: the Reformers seized chantries, closed non-craft gilds, and outlawed All Hallows.[27] Attempts to aid the dead persisted in Protestant lands despite Protestantism's outlawing of such acts; Ronald Hutton found ringing of bells and bonfires on All Hallows into the nineteenth century in England.[28] As discussed in Chapter Two, supernatural treasure digging was often seen as a means to aid the dead. Ghosts would guard treasures that represented unfinished business: when the treasure was found and put to good use, the soul would be freed. Such unfinished business went beyond treasure. Important unfinished business could cause a soul to remain, particularly those who had missed out on a sacrament, such as a proper burial or children who had not been baptized. "The Protestant Church had rejected all ghost beliefs, but folk culture seems to have remained largely Catholic in this respect," argues Johannes Dillinger.[29] "More than any other manifestation of popular religious culture," argues Peter Marshall, "belief in ghosts challenged the Protestant maxims that the dead had no interest in the affairs of the living, and the living no role to place in securing the happiness of the deceased."[30]

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[24] Vitto, *Virtuous Pagan,* 37, 52-57.
[25] Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society,* trans. Taresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1998),145.
[26] Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead,* 140.
[27] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93-95.
[28] Ronald Hutton, "The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore," *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 104–8.
[29] Jahannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Houndsmill, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 73.
[30] Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead,* 234.

Both treasure digging and contact with the dead by important early Mormons suggests connections to these beliefs.

Discussions over the state of virtuous pagans also continued. Agrippa said that righteous pagans,

> Although they departed this life without the justification of faith, and grace, as many divines think … may be indoctrinated concerning faith, and justification, as those spirits long since to whom Christ preached the Gospel in prison. For as it is certain that none can be saved without the faith of Christ, so it is probable that this faith is preached to many pagans and Saracens after this life, in those receptacles of souls unto salvation, and that they are kept in those receptacles, as in a common prison, until the time comes when the great Judge shall examine our actions. To which opinion *Lactantius, Ireneus, Clemens, Tertullian, Austin, Ambrose*, and many more Christian writers do assent.[31]

Here Agrippa referred to 1 Peter 3:19 and 1 Peter 4:6 in addition to the early fathers, but Agrippa's statement "it is probable that this faith is preach to many pagans and Saracens after this life" suggested that he was particularly following Clement's suggestion that the righteous continued to preach to the dead after Christ. The entry on the Dunkers (which was clearly about the Ephrata Cloister) in Buck's *Theological Dictionary* said they "believe that the dead have the Gospel preached to them by our Saviour, and that the souls of the just are employed to preach the Gospel to those who have had no revelation in this life."[32] Smith would teach this very same idea. Swedenborg said that he preached to the dead during his visits to the afterlife. Focusing particularly on the Protestant Reformers Martin Luther, Philip

[31] Agrippa, *Three Book of Occult Philosophy*, 595.
[32] Charles Buck, "Dunkers," *Theological Dictionary,* 159.

Melanchthon, and John Calvin, Swedenborg attempted to demonstrate to them that *sola fides* was a false and pernicious doctrine. Swedenborg was actually able to convert Luther, who then worked to convince his followers. Swedenborg also made some headway with Melanchthon, but he utterly failed with Calvin, who, rejecting all of Swedenborg's arguments, ended up in a brothel in hell.[33]

In addition to the belief "that the souls of the just" preach to the dead, Buck's *Theological Dictionary* said the Dunkers (Ephrata Cloister) "go so far as to admit of works of supererogation, and declare that a man may do much more than he is in justice or equity obliged to do, and that his superabundant works may therefore be applied to the salvation of others."[34] A statement from Oliver Cowdery on salvation for the dead also discussed supererogation (see below), but Buck may have been referring to the Ephrata Cloister's practice of proxy baptism for the dead since that was a righteous work that aided the salvation of others. In 1738 two leaders of the cloister became convinced that their deceased parents had not been baptized properly and thus desired to be baptized by proxy for their parents. As mentioned in Chapters One and Three, the Ephrata Cloister also made claims to a special priesthood and this claim may have been an impetus behind both the Ephratans' and the Mormons' practice. "The idea of thus securing immunity for deceased or absent kinsfolk struck the popular fancy," noted local historian Julius Friedrich Sachse, "and … the custom obtained a firm foothold and was practiced for many years."[35] Smith who claimed to restore the same priesthood and was likely influenced by the same source (Jane Lead) would come to the same conclusion: the dead needed ordinances of the restored priesthood. The evidence

[33] Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason,* trans. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), 480-83.
[34] Buck, "Dunkers," 159.
[35] Julius Friedrich Saehse, *German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742: A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1899) 1: 365-66.

suggests that the early Mormons may have been influenced by these (and other) passages in Buck's *Theological Dictionary* and may have even been influenced by the practices of the Ephrata Cloister itself.

What Has Become of Our Fathers? While early Mormons and the Ephrata Cloister were very concerned about the state of their father, Protestants dismissed the issue of what would become of their Catholic fathers who died before the Reformation. Hugh Latimer call it "a vain and unprofitable question … God knoweth his elect." Minimizing the question of the fate of ancestors also reduced the importance of post-mortal salvation. Nevertheless, "This was a question on the table almost from the moment that Henry VIII broke with Rome," notes Peter Marshall.[36] Mormon claims that no saving priesthood had been on the earth from the time of the early church until its restoration to Joseph Smith naturally brought up these same questions. As Smith wrote in 1842, "We are frequently asked the question, what has become of our Fathers?"[37]

The doctrine of baptism for the dead grew out of a concern over the state of the Mormons' dead loved ones. Though Smith's vision of the three heavens (Chapter Four) had said that almost everyone would eventually end up in a kingdom of glory, the vision also separated people into categories: the valiant (Celestial Kingdom), the not so valiant (Terrestrial Kingdom) and the wicked who needed to be purged first (Telestial Kingdom). Furthermore, of those who were to go to the Terrestrial Kingdom, Smith's vision stated, "Behold, these are they who died without law; and also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh,

[36] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 205-6.
[37] "Baptism for the Dead," *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 15, 1842): 759.

but afterwards received it."[38] This statement, which alluded to 1 Peter 4:6, suggested that the people that Jesus rescued, "who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it," were going to the Terrestrial Kingdom, not the Celestial.

As the Mormons were striving to make it to the Celestial Kingdom, they worried that any loved ones who died without Mormon baptism would be stuck in the Terrestrial Kingdom and would therefore be separated from them. The Mormons began expressing these concerns not long after. In 1835, Oliver Cowdery wondered aloud in a letter to William Phelps, "Do our fathers, who have waded through affliction and adversity, who have been cast out from the society of this world, whose tears have, times without number, watered their furrowed face, while mourning over the corruption of their fellowmen, an inheritance in those mansions?" Cowdery seemed to be wondering if the "fathers"[39] that were faithful before Mormonism deserved the same reward as the faithful Mormons: that is, the Celestial Kingdom.

But Cowdery's next line made it clear that he was alluding to Hebrews 11: "If so, can they without us be made perfect?" The end of Hebrews 11 described the faithfulness of Old Testament figures and then described various tortures and punishments the righteous had undergone before declaring, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." The passage is ambiguous but seemed to imply that despite these forefathers' faithfulness, they needed something from the Christians to be made perfect. Cowdery turned the passage on its head. He felt that his own forefathers merited full

[38] *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams, 1835), 229.
[39] What Cowdery meant by "fathers" is a little ambiguous here since he used it to mean both biblical figures and early Christians in the letter. He could have meant the Mormons' ancestors, who tended to be religious dissenters (Chapter One).

salvation but that the only thing they lacked was their descendants: "Will their joy be full till we rest with them?" Cowdery also asserted supererogation: "And is their efficacy and virtue sufficient, in the blood of a Savior, who groaned upon Calvary's summit, to expiate our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness?"[40] Rather than the virtuous dead needing the living's help (beyond their eventual company in heaven) the living needed the help of the virtuous dead. Smith did not adopt this notion of supererogation of the righteous dead, but Smith did later talk of a symbiotic relationship between the living and the dead and also cited the same passage (Hebrews 11:40) (see below). Cowdery's statement demonstrated the Mormon's concern for their dead loved ones, like those at Ephrata had felt, and referenced supererogation as cited in Buck's entry on the Dunkers (Ephrata).

Joseph Smith was also worried that his dead loved ones would be shut out of the Celestial Kingdom. While performing purification and anointing rites at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836 (Chapter Four), Smith had a vision of the Celestial Kingdom. Smith was perplexed when he saw his brother Alvin there. Smith "marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that Kingdom Seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had Set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins." Alvin, Smith assumed, had missed his chance of making it to the Celestial Kingdom by dying before the angels restored the true priesthood to Smith. In response to Smith's confusion, God declared, "All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it, with all their hearts, shall be heirs to that Kingdom,

[40] Oliver Cowdery, "Letter VII. To W. W. Phelps," *Later-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (July 1835): 156.

for I the Lord will Judge all men according to their works according to the desires of their hearts."[41]

Smith's followers were also concerned about their non-Mormon family and friends. These concerns and possible solutions to the problem emerged in the "patriarchal blessings" given by Joseph Smith's father (Joseph Sr.) to his son's followers. Smith ordained his father to the position of church patriarch, with the responsibility of giving prophetic blessings to the Mormons based on the blessings that the biblical patriarchs gave their sons in the book of Genesis. In these blessings, Joseph Sr. would declare the Mormons to be of the lineage of Abraham through Ephraim and would usually "seal" them up to eternal life, in addition to various additional blessings. Such blessings revealed the anxieties of the Mormons: Joseph Sr. often promised them wealth and long life, but a persistent theme was the state of the Mormons' non-Mormon friends and family. "Thou shalt be like Philip," Joseph Sr. promised Joseph Cooper, "yea thou shalt become mighty in the earth and have power to save thy friends and acquaintances." "Thou must pray for thy kindred and be diligent," Joseph Sr. instructed Lorenzo Snow, "and thou shall see All thy kindred shall be brought into the kingdom and have a Celestial Glory." Joseph Sr. promised Jacob Kimball Chapman, "Thou shalt save thy children and thy kindred and those that are dear to thee." To Tunis Rappleye, Joseph Sr. prophesied, "Thou shalt go to thy father's house and be received as a holy Messenger and shall preach repentance [unto thy] connexion, and the desires of thy heart shall be granted in their salvation."[42]

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[41] Smith, *American Prophet's Record*, 21 Jan 1836, 119. This revelation is DC 137: 6-7 in the current LDS edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

[42] *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. H. Michael Marquardt (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 72, 95, 108, 137.

Joseph Sr. also addressed the concerns of those with dead loved ones who had died before joining the Mormons. Joseph Sr. told William Corey, "Thy friends shall follow thee and many that are dead shall come forth in the first resurrection." Smith's vision of the three degrees of glory said that those who went to the Celestial Kingdom were "they who shall have part in the first resurrection."[43] Corey's blessing also suggested how Corey might help those who died before they had the chance to accept Mormonism: "for thou mayest go and preach to them the gospel in prison."[44] An allusion to 1 Peter 3:19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison," the notion of the righteous preaching to those "in prison" was also made by Agrippa (citing early church fathers) and Joseph Sr. was influenced by grimoires like Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Another possible influence is suggested by Joseph Sr.'s promise to James Braden that he would save people who travelled on ships: "they shall know that it is by the power of God and believe and thou shalt baptize them in the briny deep, seal them up to eternal life and send them to Zion."[45] Such language suggests an allusion to the *Shepherd of Hermas*: the forty apostles and teachers were sent into "the deep" to preach to and baptize the dead, and the text called baptism a "seal."[46]

Another promise that Joseph Sr. gave to a number of Mormon men suggested Swedenborgian influence. Those who were told they would preach to spirits in prison were frequently told they would visit other planets. The same Solomon Warner Jr. was promised, "Thou shalt be translated to preach in other worlds, even from planet to planet and to spirits in prison." Joseph Cooper was told, "thou shalt translate thyself from planet to planet and

[43] *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835), 228; DC 76:62.
[44] *Early Patriarchal Blessings,* 112.
[45] *Early Patriarchal Blessings,* 105. Joseph Sr. told George Dunn, "Thou must preach the gospel in foreign lands and shalt baptize many in the briny deep." (116).
[46] *Shepherd of Hermas,* Similitude 9, in *The Apocryphal New Testament,* 254-55.

preach to the spirits in prison and bring many of them to God." Joseph Sr. told Lorenzo Snow, "thou shalt have power to translate thyself from one plannet to annother—power to go to the moon if thou shalt desire it. Power to preach to the spirits in prison." Joseph Sr. promised Joseph Bucklin Bosworth, "Thou shalt go from place to place, from land to land, from sea to sea & visit other planets. Thou shalt preach to spirits in prison, gather thy thousand from worlds of which thou knowest not now." Daniel S. Jackson would "go from planet to planet & from world to world, minister to the spirits in prison, save thy thousands in this world and that which is to come."[47] Swedenborg not only claimed to preach in the spirit world but also claimed to visit other planets.[48]

Swedenborg preached to the dead while he was alive, while Clement said that apostles Harrowed Hell after they died. The *Shepherd of Hermas,* Agrippa, and Buck's entry on the Dunkers were ambiguous about the state of the preachers sent to the dead. Joseph Sr. usually did not specify when those whom he blessed would preach to the spirits in prison but he told Reuben McBride, "Thou must be a preacher to this generation, and hereafter to the spirits shut up in prison."[49] No Mormon claimed to preach to spirits in prison while they were alive; the statement to McBride became the official stance.[50] In November 1837, Aaron

[47] *Early Patriarchal Blessing,* 146, 72, 95, 105, 123. I do not know what the reference to "save thy thousands" refers to.
[48] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Concerning the Earths in Our Solar System, Which Are Called Planets: and Concerning the Earths in the Starry Heaven. Together with an Account of Their Inhabitants and Also of the Spirits and Angles There, from What Has Been Seen and Heard* (1756, reprint; Boston: Adonic Howard, 1828).
[49] *Early Patriarchal Blessings,* 130.
[50] In 1845, William Smith, Joseph Jr.'s brother who had become the patriarch of the church after the deaths of his father and older brothers, gave a vicarious patriarchal blessing to Ann B. Peterson, who was dead. In the blessing William said that Peterson, "is now ministering to those who shall be heirs of Salvation." *Early Patriarchal Blessings,* 328. In 1918, Joseph Smith's nephew, Joseph F. Smith, then president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had a grand vision of biblical figures and important early Mormons preaching to the dead. It asserted that at Christ's death, Christ organized the patriarchs to preach to the dead and that the work was ongoing. Joseph F.'s vision was canonized by the Mormons and Doctrine and Covenants 138.

Lyon, a local Mormon leader in Missouri, told one of his congregants that her "husband was dead and preaching to the spirits in prison."[51]

In July 1838, Smith offered something of a summary of these ideas when he asked his followers the rhetorical question, "If the Mormon doctrine is true, what has become of all those who have died since the days of the apostles?" Smith now expressed a more general concern for all those who had missed out on the Mormons' saving priesthood. Though in 1836, Smith had been assured that Alvin would be saved in the Celestial Kingdom because he would have accepted Mormonism if he had the chance, Smith now had an additional answer.[52] "All those who have not had an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and being administered to by an inspired man in the flesh, must have it hereafter before they can be judged."[53] Again alluding to 1 Peter 4:6, Smith asserted that those who had died before Mormonism needed the gospel in the next life.

Preaching to the dead would solve the problem, but Smith didn't say who would preach to the dead. The vision of one Ann Booth, an English convert from Methodism, demonstrated the ubiquitous concern for the state of the Mormons' kindred dead and how preaching to the dead helped solve the problem. In July 1840, Wilford Woodruff a vision that Booth had that previous April. Booth said she was "carried away in a vision to the place of departed souls," where she saw prisons "one above another vary large & builded of Solled Stone." She then saw David W. Patten, a Mormon apostle who had died in Missouri,

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[51] Michael S. Riggs and John E. Thompson, "Joseph Smith, Jr., and 'The Notorious Case of Aaron Lyon': Evidence of Earlier Doctrinal Development of Salvation for the Dead and a Trigger for the Practice of Polyandry?" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 104.

[52] Whereas in Smith's vision of his brother Alvin, God told Smith that Alvin would make it to the Celestial Kingdom because he would have embraced Mormonism if given the chance, Smith now said that the dead needed more. In the same vision Smith also saw his mother and father in the Celestial Kingdom even though they were still alive, suggesting to Smith that this was a vision was of the future. Smith, *American Prophet's Record*, 21 Jan 1836, 119. If the vision was of the future, then perhaps Alvin needed additional help before the blessing promised in the vision would be realized.

[53] *Elder's Journal of the Church of the Latter Day Saints,* 1 (July 1838): 43.

approaching the prison, which he unlocked with a key. As Patten entered the prison "he seemed to stand about 3 feet from the floor (which was Marble) as if the place was not worthy for him to stand upon." A light shown around Patten but "did not reflect upon others who were in the Prison who were surrounded with a gloom of darkness." Closest to the door was John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who, upon seeing Patten, "shouted Glory, honor, Praise, & Power be ascribed unto God & the Lamb forever & forever. Deliverance has Come." Patten then preached to those in prison, who shouted praise to God.

"The marble floor was then removed & a river of water Clear as Cristle [sic] seemed to flow in its place." Patten then called forth Wesley and baptized him in the water, laid hands on him for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and then ordained him to the Mormon priesthood. Wesley then baptized a number of Booth's deceased Methodist family and friends. "After this," said Booth, "he Baptized all the prisoners amounting to many hundreds." Patten then laid hands on all of them to give them the gift of the Holy Ghost. "Then instantly the darkness dispersed & they were all Surrounded & enveloped in a Brilliant light such as surrounded the Apostle at the first & they all lifted their voices with on accord giving glory to God for deliverance." Booth's relatives then hugged and kissed her and expressed their joy.[54]

Wilford Woodruff, who recorded Booth's vision, had himself been blessed that he "should visit COLUB[55] & Preach to the spirits in Prison & that I should bring all my friends or relatives forth from the Terrestrial Kingdom (who had died) by the power of the gospel" in

[54] Booth said that upon awakening she consulted her Bible "Providentially" opened to a number of scriptural passages that she felt affirmed the vision she had seen, principally the passages that had been used in reference to the Harrowing of Hell. "Being before ignorant of these texts & opening upon each Providentially I was astonished beyond measure." Wilford Woodruff, "A Remarkable Vision," in *Diary of Wilford Woodruff*, July 2, 1840, 475-77.

[55] In Smith's Book of Abraham (Chapter Six), God tells Abraham that Kolob is the name of the star nearest the throne of God.

a blessing from Zebedee Coltrin in 1837.[56] Woodruff played a role in interpreting Booth's vision (Woodruff declared that the preacher in Booth's vision was David Patten, whom Booth had never met) though such concerns were ubiquitous among the early Mormons. Booth's vision as mediated through Woodruff was a kind of culmination of the Mormons' concerns over their dead non-Mormon loved ones: it was a Mormon Harrowing of Hell (Chapter Four). The dead Mormon apostle, David Patten, preached to the dead in prison, similar to claims asserted in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Clement of Alexandria, Agrippa, and Buck's entry on the Dunkers. Wesley played a similar role to the Old Testament prophets in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* by being the first to shout hallelujah when Patten entered. As with Swedenborg's preaching to Martin Luther, who attempted to convince his followers after being converted by Swedenborg, Wesley baptized his followers after being baptized by Patten. Swedenborg did not baptize when he visited the spirit world, but those sent to "the deep" in the *Shepherd of Hermas* did.

Booth's vision was a good summary of the various motifs of salvation for the dead in Western Christianity and seemingly could have resolved the Mormons' concerns. After death, Mormons could preach to the righteous who had died before Mormonism allowing them to make it to the Celestial Kingdom. Smith, however, would make one adjustment to this pattern: while the dead would be preached to by dead Mormons in the next life, it was the living Mormons that would preform baptisms on the dead's behalf.

Baptism for the Dead. In December 1840, Smith wrote to the Mormon apostles who were preaching in England, Smith's first written statement on baptism for the dead. "I presume the doctrine of 'Baptism for the dead' has ere this reached your ears, and may have raised some inquiries in your mind respecting the same. I cannot in this letter give you all

[56] Woodruff, *Journal,* 1:118.

the information you may desire on the subject, but aside from my knowledge independent of the Bible, I would say that is was certainly practiced by the ancient churches and St Paul endeavors to prove the doctrine from the same, and says, 'else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead.'"[57] "Epiphanius assures us," said Dobson's encyclopedia, that baptisms for the dead "was also practiced among the Corinthians. This practice they pretended to found on the apostle's authority; alleging that text of St Paul for it, *If the dead rise not at all, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead?*" The entry was ambivalent about what the text meant, but then added "St. Ambrose and Walafred Strabo seem clearly of opinion, that the apostle had respect to such a custom then in being; and several moderns have given into the same opinion, as Baronius, Jos. Scaliger, Justellus, and Grotius."[58]

While the entry would have given Smith the confidence to say that baptisms for the dead was practiced by the early Christians, the entry didn't say exactly what the practice was. Just before the citation of Epiphanius, the encyclopedia referred to the Marcionite practice of being baptized for catechumens who died before baptism. In his letter, Smith went on to describe a somewhat different practice. "The saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, who they feel to believe would have embraced the gospel, if they had been privileged with hearing it, and who have received the gospel in the spirit through the instrumentality of those who may have been commissioned to preach to

[57] Joseph Smith, letter to "the Travelling High Council and Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS in Great Britain," Dec 15 1840, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jesse (1984, reprint; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 521.

[58] "Baptism of the Dead," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 2:793. Buck's *Theological Dictionary* also had an entry on baptism for the dead which borrowed heavily form the encyclopedia. Buck, however, not only didn't cite the references to the ancient and modern thinkers who argued that the early Christians practiced baptisms for the dead, but he also cited one Dr. Doddrige who argued against that meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29. Charles Buck, "Baptism of the Dead," *Theological Dictionary,* 43-44. Thus the encyclopedia would have been a better source for Smith's statement, "I would say that is was certainly practiced by the ancient churches."

them while in prison."[59] Smith now referred to the idea of people being sent to preach to the dead that his father and other early Mormons had been teaching. The fact that the Ephrata Cloister was the one group that actually engaged in the practice that Smith described is interesting because Buck said the Dunkers (Ephrata Cloister) believed that particular souls were sent to preach to the dead (just like Smith said), Cowdery made a reference to supererogation in reference to the dead (just like Buck's entry on the Dunkers did), and Smith travelled near Ephrata, Pennsylvania, the winter before he first taught the doctrine of baptism for the dead to his followers.

In late October 1839, not long after his escape from Missouri and reunion with his followers, Smith travelled with a small contingency to Washington D.C. to seek redress for the Mormons' expulsion from Missouri. Smith met with President Martin Van Buren and presented a petition to the Senate. In late December, Smith traveled to Philadelphia while he awaited the hearing on his petition.[60] The Mormons had recently been very successful in the Philadelphia area and Smith visited branches in New Jersey and organized branches in Philadelphia and Chester County, Pennsylvania.[61] It was during the visit to the area that Edward Hunter, who would join the Mormons later that fall, asked Smith about Swedenborg. Smith's answer, "Emanuel Sweadenburg had a view of the world to come but for daily food he perished," could have applied to saving the dead: Swedenborg preached to the dead ("a

[59] Smith, letter to "the Travelling High Council," 521. Smith later said of the Marcionite practice described in Dobson's encyclopedia and Buck's *Theological Dictionary* "the particular form might be incorrect." [Joseph Smith], "Baptism for the Dead," *Times and Seasons*3 (April 15, 1842): 761.
[60] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 391-94.
[61] Stephen J. Fleming "'Congenial to Almost Every Shade of Radicalism': The Delaware Valley and the Success of Early Mormonism," *Religion and American Culture,* 17, no. 2 (2007): 129-64.

view of the world to come") but did no ordinances for the dead ("for daily bread he perished.")[62]

The Ephrata Cloister, in neighboring Lancaster County, was roughly twenty-five miles from Hunter's home and had begun practicing baptism for the dead in the early eighteenth century for reasons very similar to the Mormons' reasoning one hundred years later.[63] "An attempt was made to justify this questionable proceeding by the supposition, deduced from the words of Paul, that the first Christians did the same," noted local historian Julius Friedrich Sachse. Those at Ephrata pointed to the same scripture as Smith. Furthermore, said Sachse, "there were many cases where even members of other faiths had themselves baptized by proxy for relatives and friends. Indeed, this peculiar custom actually outlived the Community, and there are traditions of children having been substitutes in baptism for parents, or *vice versa*, as late as the fourth decade of the present [nineteenth] century."[64] Thus when Smith wrote the Mormon apostles in December 1840 about "knowledge independent of the Bible" that supported the doctrine of baptism for the dead, he could have been referring to a number of sources.

Ten months after Smith visited southeastern Pennsylvania and three months after Woodruff recorded Booth's vision, Joseph Smith first taught his followers in Nauvoo that the living could be baptized on the behalf of the unbaptized dead. Like the medieval

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[62] Edward Hunter, Autobiography, in William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter, Faithful Steward* (Salt Lake City: Publishers, 1970), 316. Though one of Mormonism's wealthiest converts, Hunter didn't write very well. "My father intended to make a schollar [sic] of me," Hunter admitted, "but for some caus I cannot tell, I got a great dislike for going to school. I said I would rather work on the farm." Hunter, Autobiography, 312. For Hunter's wealth, see Fleming, "'Congenial to Almost Every Shade of Radicalism,'" 133.

[63] The Mormons began preaching in Lancaster County before Smith arrived, but had been to the south of Ephrata at Strasburg. "From the Elders Abroad," *Times and Seasons,* 1 (1839): 25; Lorenzo D. Barnes, Letter to D. C. Smith, Sept. 8, 1839, *Times and Seasons* 1 (1839): 28.

[64] Sachse, *German Sectarians of Pennsylvania,* 1: 365-66. The Cloister was in decline by 1800 with few celibates left, though the non-celibate members remained a few decades after. Chas. S. Yeager and Arthur M. Yeager, *Brief Story of Historic Ephrata: An Important Link in the Chain of Early American Development* (Ephrata, Penn., 1940), 27.

theologians, Smith insisted on following John 3:5 that said that baptism was absolutely necessary, but he also wanted to extend mercy as had the Christian Platonists. The answer was baptism for the dead, which Smith announced August 15, 1840, at the funeral of Seymore Brunson. One Simon Baker left his reminiscence of the meeting, saying that Smith "saw a widow in that congregation that had a son who died without being baptized, and this widow in reading the sayings of Jesus 'except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,' and that not one jot nor tittle of the Savior's words should pass away, but all should be fulfilled." Smith then announced "that this widow should have glad tidings in that thing," because the early Christians had practiced baptism for the dead, a reference to 1 Corinthians 15:29. "He went on to say," explained Baker, "that people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and that the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God."[65] Doing so resolved several issues: Christ said that baptism was necessary to go to heaven, but Christ's mercy said that those without the opportunity needed a fair chance. But the dead needed more than just the truth; just as medieval theologians had seen a resolution in the story of Gregory's prayer for Trajan in having Trajan come back to life to be baptized, Mormons found similar resolution to the paradox of God's justice and mercy in the doctrine of baptism for the dead.

The doctrine of baptism for the dead was very popular among Smith's followers, and many quickly headed to the Mississippi river to be baptized on behalf of dead friends and relatives (a revelation later instructed Smith that the baptisms had to be performed in the temple). This activity quickly invited ridicule and the Mormons set about defending the practice. In doing so they showed their familiarity with the debates of Christ's descent into

[65] *Words of Joseph Smith*, 49.

hell. The first defense appeared in the *Times and Season* written by G.H. in May 1841.[66] G.H. attacked the "general supposition for ages past" that those who had never heard the gospel were "irrevocably lost and sealed up to misery indescribable and irremovable." He noted that "some have had charity to suspend so heavy a judgment, and to recommend them to mercy; while others have endeavored to conjure up some means to bribe justice." The true answer, argued G.H., was baptism for the dead, which suggested, in his words, that "the departed spirit is in a probationary state and capable of being affected by the proclamation of the gospel." G.H. railed against the "partial bigot" who could imagine enjoying heavenly bliss while family members were in "eternal burnings, writhing in hopeless anguish and despair." He also attacked "the motley association of the impartial liberalist, who fancies heaven composed of characters as various as those of earth, the pious and the profane … commingling in one eternal association." Thus neither Protestant exclusion nor Universalist inclusion was adequate, argued G.H. Baptism for the dead allowed for post-mortal salvation, while still adhering to the demands of the gospel.

"We are not surprised" G.H concluded his article, "that this doctrine should meet with the bitterest opposition from the sectarian world. It aims a heavy blow at their malevolent and dictating spirit." G.H. then made a direct allusion to the Harrowing of Hell: the devil, said G.H, also opposed baptism for the dead, "Because it enters his dark dominions, bursts the prison doors, proclaims liberty to the captive spirits, and sets them free."[67]

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[66] This as probably Gustavus Hills, a former Methodist preacher, assistant editor at the *Times and Seasons*, and music professor at the University of Nauvoo. Donald Q. Cannon, "Joseph Smith and the University of Nauvoo," in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 285–300. My thanks to Ryan Tobler for this information.

[67] G. H. "Baptism for the Dead," *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 May 1841): 397-99.

In 1842 the editor of the *Times and Seasons* (who was Joseph Smith, but the article may have been written by an assistant) wrote another defense of baptism for the dead. The editor attacked the "generally received" opinion "that the destiny of man is irretrievably fixed at his death." Instead he noted that Jesus said that all sins could be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. The editor then the editor explicitly attacked the standard Protestant interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19-20 (Chapter Four): "And what did he preach to them? that they were to stay there? certainly not; let his own declaration testify; 'he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,'" a reference to Luke 4:18. "It is very evident from this that he not only went to preach to them, but to deliver, or bring them out of the prison house." The editor concluded the article by saying that through baptism for the dead, the Mormons had the ability to become "saviors on mount Zion."[68] Smith clarified what this meant by this in a speech given in January 1844: "How are they to become Saviors on Mount Zion[?] by building thair [sic] temples erecting their Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances."[69] Smith elaborated further on the theme a few months later, "A friend who has got a friend in the [spirit] world can save him unless he has com[mitte]d the unpa[r]d[onable] sin & so you can see how far you can be Savior."[70] Just as Gregory saved Trajan through posthumous baptism, so could the Mormons save their dead loved ones. Such was also in accord with the power of Christian theurgy: pseudo-Dionysius said that through the priesthood, "We shall become luminous and theurgic,

[68] Ed. "Baptism for the Dead," *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 15, 1842): 759-60.
[69] Smith, 21 January 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 318.
[70] Smith, 7 April 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 353.

perfected and able to bestow perfection."[71] Said Clement of Alexandria, "He who is made like the Saviour is also devoted to saving."[72]

In a letter to his followers later that year, Smith referenced Hebrews 11:40 as Oliver Cowdery had in 1835: "For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers, 'that they without us cannot be made perfect;' neither can we without our dead, be made perfect." But while Cowdery had said that the righteous dead not only had merited salvation but that their excessive righteousness might also aid the salvation of their living descendants (supererogation), Smith read the passage more like it was presented in the King James Version: the righteous dead, despite their righteousness, needed something from the righteous living. Smith interpreted that need to be authorized baptism that only the Mormons could to preform. At the same time, just as Cowdery asked, "Will [the righteous forefathers'] joy be full till we rest with them?" Smith also said that the living and dead needed to be bound together. For this assertion, Smith quoted Malachi 4:5-6 about the Lord sending Elijah before "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Smith explained, "Unless there is a welding link of some kind or other, between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other, and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead." The generations needed to be welded together, said Smith, "For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect."[73]

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[71] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 372B, trans. Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 4 (1999): 573. Cold Luibheid uses the phrase "God's work" instead of theurgy for this and other passages in his translation of *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 196. Shaw discusses scholars' hesitancy to use the work theurgy in the above article 573-99.
[72] Clement, *Stromata,* 6.9.
[73] Doctrine and Covenants (1844), 426-27; current DC 128: 15-18.

Whereas, "before the Reformation," argues Peter Marshall, "the living and the dead comprised a single 'community,'" the English Reformation redrew the boundaries of the human community.[74] With the outlawing of prayers for the dead in the 1552 prayer book, the relationship between the living and the dead was severed, writes Eamon Duffy. "The dead were no longer with us. They could neither be spoken to nor even about, in any way that affected their well-being."[75] With baptism for the dead, Smith sought to restore this community. English Protestants at the time of the Reformation had argued that Catholic prayers for the dead were the result of "a kind of excessive love and reverence of them that lived, towards their friends that were dead."[76] Smith and the early Mormons would likely have taken such a charge as a compliment.

Celestial Marriage

As John Berhiesel's sealings to his dead female friends and family suggest, there were other ways to be linked to the dead in addition to baptism. When Smith said the Mormons became "saviors on Mount Zion" by "erecting their Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances," he included in "all the ordinances" "Baptisms, Confirmations, washings anointings ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors … here in is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the Children, & the Children to the Fathers which fulfills the mission of Elijah."[77] Baptism for the dead established the principle that the living could perform ordinances on behalf of the

[74] Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England,* 33.
[75] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-1580,* 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 475.
[76] Quoted in Marshall, *Beliefs of the Dead in Reformation England,* 146.
[77] A reference to Malachi 4:5-6, an important scripture for Smith's doctrines of salvation for the dead and eternal families.

dead, but baptism was not the only binding rite. Bernheisel's ordinance was called a "sealing," a rite that was also used to bind spouses together so they could remain married in the next life. Binding the living and dead together to prepare for eternity was the ultimate goal of Smith's sacerdotal blueprint. "I would advise all the Saints," Smith urged his followers in 1844, "to go to with their might & gather together all their living relatives to this place that they may be sealed & saved," the ultimate goal being "to save their dead[,] seal their posterity & gather their living friends."[78]

Platonic Marriage. Plato used language similar to Smith's in his *Symposium* where Aristophanes tells the myth of the androgyne: human beings were once joined androgynous pairs but had been split in two because of rebellion against the gods. "Now, since their natural form had been cut in two," explains Aristophanes, "each one longed for its own half, and so they would throw their arms about each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to grow together." Aristophanes explains that the two will "finish out their lives together and still cannot say what it is they want from one another." If Hephestus were to see to the lovers and ask, "'Is this your hearts desire, then—for the two of you to become parts of the same whole, as near as can be, and never to separate, day or night? Because if that's your desire, I'd like to weld you together and join you into something that is naturally whole, so that the two of you are made into one … when you died, you would be one and not two in Hades, having died a single death.'" "Why should this be?" Aristophanes continues, "It's because, as I said, we used to be complete wholes in our original nature, and now 'Love' is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete."[79]

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[78] 8 February 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 318-19.
[79] Plato, *Symposium,* 190-193, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

Not only did Plato suggest that lovers would desire to be bound together in the next life, but he also said that true lovers had a pre-mortal link. Smith used similar language in his 1842 proposal to Mary Rollins Lightner, who was the only one of Smith's married wives (discussed below) to record his proposal. According to Lightner, "Joseph Said I was his, before I came here. He said all the Devils in Hell should never get me from him."[80] In another statement, Lightner said that Smith told her that he had been commanded to marry her, 'or Suffer condemnation—for I was created for him before the foundation of the Earth was laid."[81] In 1852, William Hall, a Mormon dissident, said that Smith taught that "all real marriages were made in heaven before the birth of the parties." Hall also said that Smith taught that only "kindred spirits" should marry on earth and that only kindred spirits would be married in heaven.[82] Years later John D. Lee said that Smith taught "that it was a sin for people to live together, and raise or beget children in alienation from each other. There should be an affinity between each other, not a lustful one, as that can never cement that love and affection that should exist between a man and his wife."[83] "Affinity" was also the term used by Perfectionists who taught similar ideas (see below).

Jesus said of the woman with seven husbands, "In heaven they are neither married nor given in marriage but are as the angels of God," a verse that Smith would address in explicating his own heavenly marriage doctrine (see below). Though the early church fathers insisted there would be no marriage in heaven, the motif of Christ as the bridegroom was dominant with many early Christians claiming to be his bride: a theme that would continue

[80] Mary Lightner, affidavit, 1902, in Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945), 444.
[81] Quoted in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 19.
[82] William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed; Containing many Facts and Doctrines Concerning That Singular People during Seven Years Membership with Them from 1840 to 1847* (Cincinnati: L. Hart, 1852), 12-13.
[83] Quoted in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 17.

throughout the history of Christianity.[84] Certain fathers did speak of marriage in heaven, particularly when consoling widows. Jerome wrote a widow to tell her that her husband was "victorious now and free from care he looks down upon you from on high and supports you in your struggle, nay more, he prepares for you a place near to himself; for his love and affection towards you are still the same." But Jerome was quick to assert that there would be no marriage in heaven.[85] John Chrysostom promised a widow that if she transferred her treasures to heaven, she would have "perpetual intercourse with your good husband."[86] The idea that man and woman had been divided at the Fall, and thus lost their true oneness that could only be restored through pure matrimony is found in the extracanonical *Gospel of Philip*. "When Eve was in still in Adam death did not exist. When she was separated from him death came into being. When he enters [Paradise] again and attains his former self, death will be no more."[87] Yet no sex or marriage in heaven became the dominant position by late antiquity: Augustine asserted that resurrected bodies would retain their gender but the sin of vice would be "extinct."[88] Whereas Jerome felt that the living "are upheld by this consolation, that we shall shortly see again those whose absence we now mourn," Augustine asserted that in the next life, God would be all the solace one could desire.[89]

Christianity in the Middle Ages essentially followed Augustine's assertions,[90] but widows maintained a bond with their dead husbands since they retained the obligation to pray for their husbands' souls. "This approach tacitly construed the marriage bond as

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[84] Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis," *Church History*, 77, no. 1 (2007): 1-25.
[85] Jerome Letter 75.2.
[86] John Chrysostom, *Letter to a Young Widow*, 7.
[87] Quoted in Roelf van den Broek, "Sexuality and Sexual Symbolism in Hermetic and Gnostic Thought and Practice," in *Hidden Intercourse,* 7.
[88] Augustine, *City of God,* 12.17.
[89] Jerome, Letter 75.1; Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 58.
[90] McDannell and Lang, *Heaven,* 92.

persisting beyond the grave," argues Katherine Clark.[91] The idea of marriage in heaven continued in other ways as well: the faithful still saw themselves as brides of Christ, the idea that Mary married Jesus at her assent became standard in the Middle Ages, and the idea of wooing holy mother wisdom was a popular late medieval devotional practice.[92] The Reformers strongly rejected any notion of marriage in heaven: Calvin went so far as to declare that married couples "will be torn apart from each other" at death. Colleen McDannell and Bernard Lang argue that the Reformation brought what they called "theocentrism," with those in heaven focused entirely on God and not each other.[93] Yet early modern Christian Platonists challenged this notion. Henry More spoke of a higher love in heaven among angelic beings, and John Milton wrote of a pure sexual love in the Garden of Eden and a kind of sexual unity between angels.[94]

In Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus,* Zoroaster, after telling Cyrus about the death of his beloved Selima, declares,

> My only comfort is the hope of seeing Selima again in the sphere of fire, the pure element of love. Souls make acquaintance only here below; it is above that their union is consummated. O Selima! Selima! We shall one day meet again, and our flame will be eternal; I know, that in these superior regions your happiness will not be complete till I shall share it with you; those who have loved each other purely, will love so forever; true love is immortal.[95]

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[91] Katherine Clark, "Purgatory, Punishment, and the Discourse of Holy Widowhood in the High and Later Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (2007): 175.
[92] The Middle English poem, *Pearl*, declares, "We all in bliss are Brides of the Lamb." *Pearl: An English Poem of the XIV Century*, trans. Israel Gollancz (London: Chatto and Windus, 1921), chapter 66, pp. 61. Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddess: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), chapts. 5 and 6.
[93] McDannell and Lang, *Heaven,* 155, 177.
[94] McDannell and Lang, *Heaven,* 211-12, 231-34.
[95] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 72-73.

With ideas similar to Plato, Swedenborg declared, "Love considered in itself is nothing else but a desire and consequent tendency to conjunction, and conjugial love to conjunction into one." Conjugial love, Swedenborg explained, was a higher form a love, which differed from "the love of the sex" "and bodily pleasures thence derived" that have "place with the natural man." Conjugial love on the other hand seeks "satisfactions of the spirit" with "ones wife with whom he can perpetually be more and more joined together into one, and the more he enters into such conjunction, he perceives his satisfaction ascending in a like degree, and enduring to eternity." Swedenborg asserted that Christ's statement that the woman with seven husbands would not be married in heaven did not mean there were no marriages in heaven. Instead Christ's statement related to the parable of the ten virgins and was a metaphor of unity with God. Considerable shuffling would occur among partners in the next life because many were wrongly matched, reported Swedenborg. True partners needed to be matched according to internal affinity rather than external factors. Only suitable partners will be married in heaven, said Swedenborg "for all who are in the heavens, are associated together according to affinities and relationships of love, and have habitations accordingly."[96] Like Smith and Plato, Swedenborg taught that true partners had a preexistent connection.[97]

Smith's revelation on marriage likewise asserted there would be marriage in heaven and that Matthew 22 needed to be understood properly. The revelation said that only rites performed by proper priesthood authority would be in effect in the next life: "For all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead." The revelation continued, "Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me

[96] Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugial Love, After Which Follow the Pleasures of Insanity Concerning Scoratory Love*, (1768; London: Old Baily, 1798), 43-59. Sections 37-50.
[97] Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason,* trans. by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), 407-8.

nor by my word … when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven."[98] Smith's revelation declared that those who would not be married in heaven were those lacking the proper marital rite. As with Smith's notions of salvation for the dead, Smith would likely have seen Swedenborg as lacking in "daily food" on the issue of eternal marriage.

John Allen quoted Menasseh ben Israel saying that it was "the doctrine of the Cabbalists … that at the beginning of the world souls were created by God in pairs, consisting each of a male and female," like Aristophanes says in Plato's *Symposium.* "If a man be deserving, and accounted worthy," Menasseh continued, "he obtains his original consort; the person with whom he was created is bestowed upon him as a reward. But, if otherwise, he is punished by being united to a person of uncongenial dispositions and manners; with whom he is doomed to live in almost continual strifes, contentions, and other similar miseries."[99] In 1832 a group of "Perfectionists" in New York and New England "began to debate whether the old marriage vows would or would not be binding in the new heaven and the new earth." Hiram Sheldon argued that all prior legal bonds would be dissolved in the coming kingdom of heaven. At the same time, "All the arrangements for a life in heaven may be made on earth; that spiritual friendships may be formed, and spiritual bonds contracted, valid for all eternity," noted William Hepworth Dixon. To do so, one needed to find his or her true soul mate. "Sheldon adopted this idea of a spiritual affinity between the converted man and woman," asserted Dixon, "declaring that this spiritual kinship might be found by delicate tests in this nether world, and that this pure and holy

[98] "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* (New York), Jan. 1853, 8. This revelation was written down by Smith in 1843 but not published until later. It is now Doctrine and Covenants section 132. The quotations are verses 7, 15, and 16 in the current edition. Quotations to this section below refer to the current verses.
[99] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 198-99.

relation of the sexes to each other extends into the heavenly kingdom." Dixon thought that these Perfectionists had been reading Plato and Swedenborg.[100] Smith not only claimed familiarity with Swedenborg's visions but the husband of one of Smith's additional wives (Sarah Kingsley Cleveland) was also a Swedenborgian.[101]

Utopianism and Shared Marriage. Smith's marriages in this period, however, had a puzzling feature that makes sense in the context of Christian Platonism. The marriages of Smith to both Sarah Kingsley Cleveland and Mary Rollins Lightner occurred while they were both married to other men, and both wives stayed married to their previous husbands after the marriage.[102] Smith's marriages to these married women were part of a larger pattern: between October 1841 and June 1842 all of the women Smith married were previously married, two were widowed. Smith married no single women during this time period (with the widowed women still having a potential eternal spouse in their deceased husbands).[103] Smith's practice of marrying married women has generated considerable debate among historians;[104] I argue here that Smith's marriages fit Platonic marital notions and that Smith tapped into contemporary utopian marital experimentation that drew upon Plato's ideas.

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[100] William Hepworth Dixon, *Spiritual Wives*, 2 vols, 2d ed. (London: Hurst and Blackett 1868). 2:12-20.
[101] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 275.
[102] In this Smith differed from Swedenborg who insisted that heavenly marriage was strictly monogamous.
[103] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 4.
[104] The anti-Mormon editor of Salt Lake Tribune, Wilhelm Wyl's *Joseph the Prophet: His Family and Friends* (1886), was an early book that highlighted Smith's marriages to married women. Wyl conducted a number of interviews on this and other subjects. One "Mr. Jo." cited Doctrine and Covenants 132:41, "if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed," (discussed below) and said "the prophet always carried a small bottle with holy oil about his person, so that he might 'anoint' at a moment's notice any woman to be a queen in Heaven" (55). Wyl did an extensive interview with Sarah Pratt who said that Smith proposed to her while she was married (see below) and Wyl went so far as to claim that Smith asked to marry all of his apostle's wives, and cited a statement from Jedediah Grant (see below) as proof (70).

Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* (first published in 1945, revised version in 1978, lots of reprintings), wrote extensively on Smith's plural marriages including his polyandrous ones. Brodie saw Smith's motivations as having "grown weary of connubial exclusiveness," (279) and Brodie wondered if the women agreed because so many husbands were away on missions. Yet Bordie was perplexed by the practice, "And what of the married women who gladly signed themselves and their children over to the prophet's keeping and glory for eternity, leaving their unwitting husbands to be wifeless and childless in the celestial kingdom? Was

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates says that in the ideal city wives and children are shared, an idea that Plato repeats in his *Timaeus* and *Laws*.[105] Proclus interpreted Plato's notion of shared marriage as a heavenly goal. In commenting on Plato's dictum that in the ideal city wives would be shared, Proclus argued that such sharing was the nature of heaven. "Why ever should it be, then," asserted Proclus,

> that this same principle is observed in the universe, but seems paradoxical when applied to human lives? Because, I shall claim, all human soul has been sliced off from the whole and become separate, and it is on this account that it finds doctrines

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this a melancholy commentary on their own marriage state or a tribute to Joseph's charm? Or was it perhaps a smothered yearning for new experiences, released now by opportunity masquerading as a religious duty?" Brodie noted the shift in Smith marital practices from married to single that I note below: "Up to this time Joseph had taken care that almost all of his own plural wives were married women, but his leading elders could not easily follow his example" (304-5).

Lawrence Foster's *Religion and Sexuality* (1981), which compared Mormon polygamy Oneida and the Shakers, offered three possible rationales for Smith marrying married women: that Smith said that all marriages prior to Mormon sealings were invalid, that Brigham Young said that women could marry a higher-ranking married man if they wished and that no divorce from the prior husband was necessary, and that there was a rumor of "proxy husbands," that other men could "fill in" while husbands were away on missions to help the missionary continue to have children (164-66).

Richard Van Wagoner's *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (1986) had a short chapter on Smith's polyandry, which gave added context for the practice and also asserted the notion of pre-existent connections. Van Wagoner ultimately argued that the ability to marry higher-ranking men was the reason. Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness,* the most thorough study of Smith's marriages, offered no new explanations for Smith marrying married women. Instead Compton essentially repeated Foster's and Van Wagoner's assertions: preexistent relationships, old marriages being void, and women's ability to move up the chain (Compton left out "proxy marriages). Richard Bushman was perplexed by the practice in his biography of Smith, *Rough Stone Rolling* (2005): "The practice seems inexplicable today. Why would a husband consent?" Bushman wondered if the desire to be connected to Smith's family was the motivation (239).

Brian Hales has recently argued that Smith did not have sex with his married wives and that Smith divided his wives into two categories, those whom he married for this life and the next (his single wives) and those whom he married in only for eternity (his married wives) with whom he did not have sex. Brian C. Hales, "Joseph Smith and the Puzzlement of 'Polyandry,'" in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy*, ed. Newell G. Brighurst and Craig L. Foster (Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer, 2010): 99-151. Hales has a three volume series of books coming out on Smith's polygamy, which will make the same assertions.

The problem with scholarship to date is the failure to account for the shift in Smith's marriage patterns from married to single and the assumption that women could not be married to more than one man. That women could not be married to more than one man was the policy under Brigham Young, but the assumption that Young and Smith had the same policy is problematic. In fact, one has to go all the way back to Wyl to find a historian who accounts for DC 132:41 (discussed below) and Wyl came to the conclusion that I argue for: the revelation says that women could be married to more than one if "appointed… by the holy anointing." Wyl saw the evidence as damning and scholars have done little to move beyond that initial assertion.

[105] *Republic,* 457-462; *Laws*, 739c; *Timaeus,* 18c-d, in Plato, *Complete Works.*

> that cling to the principle of sharing to be very hard to accept. But if one were to eliminate this lower standing and raise oneself back to the whole, then one would accept such a sharing, ignoring the divided communal feeling among the multitude. Insofar as each of us is drawn down towards the part and becomes isolated and deserts the unified whole, to that extent he is confined to the corresponding life, a life of ungoverned conditions.[106]

Clement of Alexandria said that the Gnostic Carpocratians had property and wives in common and the Valentinians also taught the idea of a big heavenly marriage.[107] There was a long history of radical utopians and antinomians teaching or engaging in this shared marriages including the Hersey of the Free Spirit in the late Middle Ages, the Illuminati in early modern Spain, and Tommaso Campanella's seventeenth-century *City of the Sun*.[108] Lead's circle also mentioned such ideas: Jane Lead described heaven as one big marriage and the Philadelphians were accused of practicing free love (which they denied). Ramsay said that in Sparta, "Wives look upon themselves as belonging to the State, more than to their husbands. The children are educated in common, and often without knowing any other mother than the republic, or any other fathers than the senators." Cyrus "felt an abhorrence of these odious maxims" but his travelling companion noted, "Children were no where better educated than at Sparta."[109]

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[106] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, trans. and ed. Harold Tarrant (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007)1:143.
[107] Clement, *Stromata,* 3.2; April D. De Conick, "Conceiving Spirits: The Mystery of Valentinian Sex," in *Hidden Intercourse,* 45-46.
[108] Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 128; Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 273.
[109] Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out by a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694), 13-14, 31; Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage

In 1587, while in Eastern Europe, an angel commanded John Dee and Edward Kelley to share each other's wives. All four were shocked and appalled and continued to resist even after the angels threatened them and took away their shew stone, until Christ himself commanded them to do it (in a different seer stone). The language that the angels, Christ, Kelley, and Dee used to describe the commandment had a number of similarities to Smith's descriptions of his own marital system. Dee called the commandment "this New Covenant" and Smith called his "the new and everlasting covenant."[110] Both Smith and Dee said they were threatened by angels to comply and both described the command as an Abrahamic test (see below). Christ and Dee used a number of biblical utopian phrasings when describing the arrangement. "Your unity and knitting together is the end and consummation of the beginning of my harvest," Christ told Dee and Kelley. In the Book of Mormon, Alma tells his followers, "that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."[111] Dee wrote up a covenant when the four agreed to the arrangement saying they agreed to "indissoluble and inviolable unities between us four, and all things between us to be common." Both Acts 2 and Fourth Nephi in Book of Mormon spoke of the faithful having "all things in common."[112] After Dee and the others made the agreement, Christ told them, "see that all things be one amongst you." Christ told the Mormons in one of Smith's revelations, "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine."[113]

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and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 143; Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 146-47.

[110] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, pt. 2, 21; "Celestial Marriage," 7, current DC 132: 6, 19, 26-27, 41-42.

[111] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, pt. 2, 20; Mosiah 18:21.

[112] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, pt. 2, 21; Acts 2:44, 4th Nephi 1:3.

[113] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, pt. 2, 22; Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 119; current DC 38:27.

Ideas of communalism and shared marriages made their way to colonial America; religious radicals of colonial New England were accused of such behavior.[114] In the mid-eighteenth century, Shadrack Ireland apparently told his small following at Harvard, Massachusetts that they were not to have sex (regardless if they were married) until they were perfected (ideas reminiscent of the early Christian Valentinians and the late medieval heresy of the Free Spirit).[115] Early Mormons likely had contact with and shared a number of tenants with the Cochranites of southern Maine. Jacob Cochran began preaching in 1816 that the established churches were corrupt and practiced spiritual gifts, miracles, and enthusiastic worship. The "Society of Free Brethren and Sisters," as they called themselves, were accused of "secret late night meetings for the select few at which there was free exchange of sexual partners." The local court charged Cochran with "open gross lewdness and lascivious behavior" in 1821 and Cochran was sentenced to four years hard labor. Cochran spent time in western New York after his release before dying in Stratham, New Hampshire, in 1836.[116] Early Mormon missionaries were successful in southern Maine as early as 1832 and ran into the Cochranites there.[117] A local historian in the late nineteenth century argued that the Mormons were successful in the same areas where Cochran was, that "Jake Cochran was a John the Baptist for the Mormon apostles" and that "a full-blooded Cochranite made a first-class Mormon."[118]

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[114] Brooke, *Refiner's Fire,* 46.
[115] Francis G. Walett, "Shadrack Ireland and the 'Immortals' of Colonial New England," *Sibley's Heir: A Volume in Memory of Kenyon Shipton,* ed. Frederick S. Allis, Jr. (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1982), 548.
[116] Joyce Butler, 'Cochranism Delineated: A Twentieth Century Study," in *Maine in the Early Republic: From Revolution to Statehood*, ed Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden (Hanover, N.H. University of New England Press, 1988), 146-64.
[117] Stewart Holbrook, *The Yankee Exodus: An Account of Migration from New England* (1950, reprint, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968) 52-53.
[118] Gideon T. Ridlon, *Saco Valley Settlements and Families* (Portland, Maine: The Author, 1895), 281.

Robert Owen taught such ideas and had followers in Ohio, who may have influenced early Mormon utopianism at Kirtland.[119] Some of the early Mormons claimed that free love was proposed among the earliest Mormons in Kirtland before Smith arrived there in 1831.[120] Such ideas also inspired John Humphrey Noyes who not only put these ideas into practice starting in 1846 but also wrote a letter that was published in 1837 that declared, "The marriage supper of the Lamb, is a feast at which *every dish is free to every guest*…. I call a certain woman my wife—she is yours, she is Christ's, and in him she is the bride of all the saints."[121] Cathy Gutierrez argues for Platonic influence on Noyes.[122]

Mary Lightner's recollection of a meeting at Joseph Smith's home in 1831 sheds light on what may have been some of Smith's earliest thoughts about binding his closest followers to him. Mary and her mother paid Smith a visit and, since he had other visitors in his home, Smith decided to have a meeting. "After prayer and singing," recalled Lightner, "Joseph began talking. Suddenly he stopped and seemed almost transfixed. He was looking ahead and his face outshone the candle which was on a shelf behind him." Smith then asked the group, "'Brothers and Sisters do you know who has been in your midst this night?'" One person said an angel, but Martin Harris proclaimed, "'I know, it was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,'" which Smith said was correct. "'Brothers and Sisters,'" explained Smith, "'the Saviour has been in our midst, I want you to remember this as if it were the last thing that escapes my lips. He has given you all to me and commanded me to seal you up to

[119] J. F. C. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral Order: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), 59-62, 86; Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People,* 37-41.
[120] Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People,* 105. After Smith, the nineteenth-century Spiritualists said that those who made it to the highest heaven would all be married to each other (combining the *Symposium* and the *Republic*, argues Cathy Gutierrez). Gutierrez, "Deadly Dates," 327.
[121] Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 81, 88. Emphasis in original.
[122] Gutierrez, "Deadly Dates," 326-27.

everlasting life, that where He is there you may also be.'"[123] Later in life, Lightner asserted that she had been "sealed" to Smith at that meeting.[124]

Smith used similar language to Lightner when he proposed to her in 1842: "I know I shall be saved in the Kingdom of God," Lightner recalled, "I have the oath of God upon it and God cannot lie. All that he gives me I shall take with me for I have that authority and that power conferred upon me."[125] As the only account of Smith's proposal among his married wives, Mary Lightner's statement is important for understanding Smith's theological views of this practice. This theological evidence, along with the closer analysis of the marital status of Smith's wives over time, suggests that the practice of marrying married women was not an anomaly but a deliberate practice, best characterized as a form of "composite marriage."[126]

Smith's Marital Pattern. If we analyze the marital status of Smith's wives, the marriages followed a distinct pattern (Chart 5.1). Smith married Fanny Alger around 1833 (a young single woman)[127] and then stopped for a time. When Smith started marrying again,

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[123] Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Autobiography, typescript, 2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Lee Library, BYU. Though a later memory, sealing language was used in 1831. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 687.

[124] Lightner, affidavit, 444.

[125] Mary Lightner, *The Testimony of Mary Lightner, BYU Devotional 1905,* pamphlet compiled and edited by David Dye (Hindsight Publications, n.d.), 26.

[126] I chose the term "composite marriage" so as to distinguish slightly from John Humphrey Noyes's "complex marriage." Though similar, Smith engaged in a series of individual marriages, rather than being married to the whole group. While Noyes's Perfectionists were all married to each other, Smith had a much larger following (over 30,000 compared to 250) and only attempted composite marriage with a select few of them.

[127] The information on Smith's marriage to Fanny Alger comes from later second-hand reminiscences. She apparently was a teen-age servant in the Smith's home and when Smith's first wife, Emma, found out about the marriage, Emma sent Fanny back to Fanny's parents. (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 25-42). These actions suggest that this additional marriage caused considerable conflict between Smith and Emma, which was likely the cause of Smith not resuming the practice for a number of years. Smith told Mary Lightner and Zina Huntington Jacobs that he resumed the practice because an "angel with a drawn sword" threatened to kill him if he did not. (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 80-81, 212). Smith worked to keep the practice secret, telling the brother-in-law of his that "In revealing this to you, I have placed my life in your hands, therefore do not in an evil hour betray me to my enemies." (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 59). Smith likely did not tell Emma that he had resumed the practice until mid-1842, but it is unclear what Emma knew and when she knew it. By 1843, Emma was well aware of the practice, which caused considerable conflict amid moments of acquiescence. By

his wives were almost all married until the summer of 1842. Smith's first wife after Alger was probably Lucinda Morgan Harris who was married to George Harris (though the date of her marriage to Smith is unclear.)[128] Smith's first wife at Nauvoo was probably Louisa Beaman, a twenty-six year old single woman that he married in 1840. Then starting with Zina Huntington, he married only married and widowed women from October 1841 to summer 1842.[129] Yet from the spring of 1843, Smith's wives were almost all single, just one was married (and Elvira Cowles Holmes [the one red dot in 1843] may have married Joseph previously).[130] Thus Smith followed a general pattern of married to single.[131] The median age of Smith's wives from Lucinda Harris to the summer of summer 1842 was 32; the median age of Smith's wives from spring to summer of 1843 was 19 (Chart 5.2).[132]

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the winter of 1844, Emma effectively shut down Smith's additional marriage relationships with threat of divorce. (Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith,* 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 108-14, 134-70).

[128] Early Mormon historian Andrew Jenson said that Harris was Smith's first wife (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 43-44.) Sarah Pratt claimed that when she went to Harris for consolation after Smith proposed to her, Harris responded, "How foolish you are! I don't see anything so horrible in it. Why, I AM HIS MISTRESS SINCE FOUR YEARS!'" Pratt gave a rather jaded presentation of her time in Nauvoo; it is unlikely that Harris would have used the term "mistress" for her relationship with Smith. Wyl, *Joseph the Prophet,* 60. Smith had stayed with the Harrises when the first moved to Missouri in 1838. (See Michael S. Riggs and John E. Thompson, "Joseph Smith, Jr., and 'The Notorious Case of Aaron Lyon': Evidence of Earlier Doctrinal Development of Salvation for the Dead and a Trigger for the Practice of Polyandry?" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006):107-8, particularly n. 18.) I find it unlikely that Smith got the idea for marrying married women from Aaron Lyon, however.

[129] This information comes from Todd Compton's helpful list of Smith wives, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 4.

[130] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 756.

[131] Fawn Brodie noted a similar pattern but did not explore the implications. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 337.

[132] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 4.

Chart 5.1: Marital Status of Joseph Smith's Wives[133]

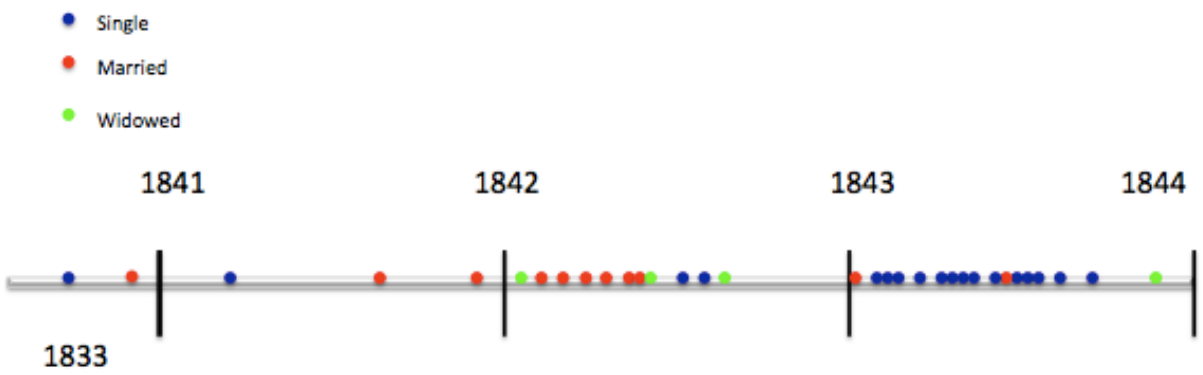
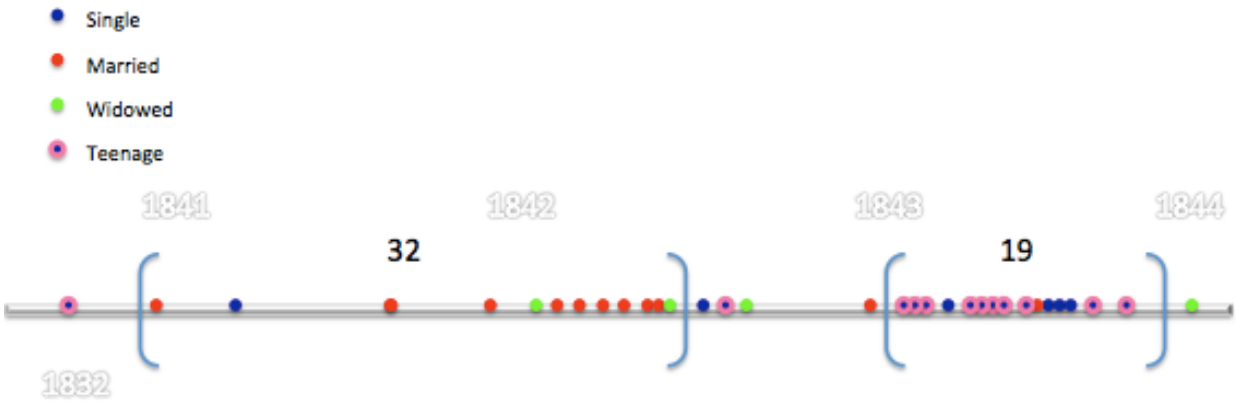


Chart 5.2: The Ages of Smith's Wives



None of the married women that Smith married left their original husbands during Smith's lifetime and Smith may have had the consent of some of the husbands.[134] Marinda Hyde was sealed to both Smith and Orson Hyde.[135] Louisa Beaman was therefore an outlier for this period as Smith's one single wife. John C. Bennett said that when Smith proposed to Nancy Rigdon in the spring of 1842, Smith told Nancy that his proposed marriage "would

[133] These charts are based on the information on Smith's wives found in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 4-6. My thanks to Lee Fleming for helping we with these charts.
[134] Todd Compton thinks that, in particular, Henry Jacobs and Windsor Lyon may have known. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 81, 179.
[135] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 238, 243.

not prevent her from marrying any other person."[136] Both Benjamin Johnson and John Hyde claimed that Smith married Hannah Dubois Dibble who lived in Smith's home until she married Philo Dibble (as performed by Smith) in February 1841.[137] Smith married a number of women that lived in his house so Smith may have married Hannah before she married Dibble.[138] Elvira Cowles also lived in the Smith home before she married Jonathan Holmes in 1843 and nineteenth-century Mormon historian Andrew Jenson said that Smith married Cowles before she married Holmes.[139] Thus single women that Smith married before 1843 may have been free to marry other men as Smith reportedly told Nancy Rigdon; Smith's first wife, Fanny Alger married another man (a non-Mormon) not long after her marriage to Smith, though Benjamin Johnson reported, "She did not turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while she lived."[140] Such an attitude would suggest that her second marriage was not a rejection of Smith. Louisa Beaman may have remained single despite this possible allowance.[141] In 1880, Mary Rollins Lightner wrote to Emmeline Wells, "I could tell you why I stayed with Mr. Lightner. Things the leaders of the Church does not know anything about. I did just as Joseph told me to do, as he knew what troubles I would have to contend with."[142]

Smith may have conceived of the idea of composite marriage early on: Dee's spirit diary discusses shared marriage in detail and Smith's father's dreams and the Book of

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[136] "The Mormons," *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, Ill.), July 15, 1842.
[137] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 631.
[138] Compton rejects Hannah Dubois Dibble as a wife of Smith's because Smith performed the marriage to Dibble. Compton assumed that Smith did not share wives, but I argue that this is a problematic assumption.
[139] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 546, 756.
[140] Dean R. Zimmerman ed. *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon 1976), 39.
[141] This pattern is complicated by Smith's marriage to Sarah Ann Whitney, a young single woman, in July 1842. Smith later married Sarah to Joseph Kingsbury in April 1843 and Kingsbury later called his marriage to Sarah a "pretended marriage." Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 348-351. Kingsbury is the only early Mormon to claim to have had a "pretended marriage" and his claim may have been due either to the shift in Smith policy in 1843 or to possible attempts to forget Smith's earlier practice of shared wives later in the Utah period.
[142] Quoted in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 213.

Mormon show signs of Dee's influence. A passage in the Book of Mormon also hints at shared wives. In Jacob 2, the prophet Jacob condemns polygamy but adds the caveat, "For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things."[143] Such indicated that God might command polygamy to raise up seed unto himself in certain situations but that polygamy was generally condemned. The King James Version of the Old Testament uses the phrase "raise up seed" twice, and the New Testament made allusions to these verses. In 1 Chronicles 17, God tells Nathan the prophet that David cannot built the temple, but that one of his sons will: "I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom." The New Testament emphasizes that Christ came through David's lineage.[144] Yet, in the Book-of-Mormon passage, Jacob specifically condemns David's and Solomon's polygamy.

The other Old-Testament passage that used the phrase was Genesis 38:8, where Judah instructs his son Onan to marry his brother's widow, "and raise up seed to thy brother," which became the practice described in Deuteronomy 25. It was this practice that the Saducees asked Jesus about when they asked him about the woman with seven husbands; the passage also uses the phrase, "raise up seed unto his brother." What is interesting about this passage is that this reference to "raise up seed" refers to a *woman* having several husbands. Indeed, if marriage existed in heaven, as Smith insisted, then the Sadducees' question was still relevant: what about a woman who married several men? Furthermore, though the biblical passages says "unto his brother" suggesting that the wife and children technically belonged to the dead brother, the Book-of-Mormon passage says, "unto himself," or God, negating the reference to the dead brother's ownership of the wife and children. If the "seed"

[143] Jacob 2:30
[144] Acts 13:22-23.

were to be raised up to God (and not to the brother), then such would be a shared effort between the parties. Again, Bernheisel married his dead brother's dead wife (in addition to a number of other dead women), and I doubt Smith viewed Bernheisel as eternally stealing his dead brother's wife. Within Smith's system, the wife was probably shared.

Thus, this Book-of-Mormon passage that says that God may allow polygamy to be practiced in certain situations uses a phrase that the Bible used when speaking of a woman with multiple husbands. Since John Dee's spirit diary described the process of sharing wives, since the Book of Mormon likely had a handful of other passages that drew on Dee's spirit diary (Chapter Three), and since Dee's spirit diary likely influenced Smith's marital practice (see below for more examples), then Dee's spirit diary may have also influenced this passage (in conjunction with biblical passages, like the tree visions) as well. The phrase "raise up seed" does not appear in Dee's spirit diary, but there were promises of "seed" similar to promises in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.[145] Either way, as Jacob 2:30 foreshadowed some kind of plural marriage among the Mormons, it may have specifically foreshadowed composite marriage.

Lightner's claim in 1880 that remaining with her first husband constituted "things the leaders of the Church does not know about" suggests that Smith's practice of marrying married women was one that made the leaders of the Church uncomfortable at that time, and one they tried to forget (it is likely that the LDS President at that time, John Taylor, did know of the practice, since Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon said that Smith had asked to marry Taylor's wife).[146] As Brian Hales notes, many Mormons in Utah did condemn

[145] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 222, 419. Genesis, 16:10, 1 Nephi 7:1; Ether 1:43. Interestingly, while the Bible uses the phrase for a brother's widow or for David, the Book of Mormon says that seed will be raised up to God.
[146] John M. Whitaker, "Daily Journal of John M. Whitaker," typescript, 251, Perry Special Collections.

polyandry, but these condemnations do not constitute proof that Smith did not practice it. Hales rightly notes that polyandry would have been contrary to Smith's followers' traditional beliefs,[147] but as Smith taught in 1843, "To becom[e] a joint heir of the heirship of the son [a believer] must put away all his traditions."[148]

Smith's marital pattern shifted sometime between the summer of 1842 and the spring of 1843 to only polygyny (discussed below). The revelation explaining this new system, now known as Doctrine and Covenants section 132, made reference to the former system (composite marriage). Verse 41 states, "And as ye have asked concerning adultery, verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed."[149] Thus a wife received in the new and everlasting covenant *may* be with another man *if* the Lord appoints her to the union "by the holy anointing." In 1842, John C. Bennett described the Mormon sealing ordinance as follows: "I now anoint you with holy, consecrated oil, in the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of the holy priesthood, that you may be fully and unreservedly consecrated to each other and to the service of God, and that with affection and fidelity you may nourish and cherish each other, as long as you shall continue faithful and true in the fellowship of the

[147] Brian C. Hales, "Joseph Smith and the Puzzlement of 'Polyandry,'" in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy,* ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer, 2010), 119-20. Hales and a number of later Utah commenters noted that the biblical precedent for polygyny was lacking for polyandry. But biblical precedence was also lacking for eternal marriage, a practice that many Mormons readily accepted nonetheless.
[148] 27 August 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 244. Rumors emerged in Utah of a practice of proxy husbands, such that women could have children with proxy husbands while their husband were away on lengthy missions. But as Lawrence Foster points out, there is no evidence of such things actually occurring in Smith's day. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 163-66.
[149] "Celestial Marriage," 10.

Saints."[150] As Lawrence Foster notes, the language of the ordinance is very similar to the revelation that Smith gave at the time of his marriage to Sarah Ann Whitney.[151] What is important in Bennett's description is the mention of anointing with consecrated oil, which suggests that the phrase "appointed unto her by the holy anointing" is a reference to marital sealing. Thus the revelation states that a man could receive "a wife in the new and everlasting covenant" and that wife could have another husband "appointed unto her by the holy anointing": that is, by the sealing ordinance.

The sexuality of Smith's marriages has been much debated, but boiling Smith's marital relationships down to sex misses the point.[152] The point of the marriages, again, was best described by Mary Lightner, both in her description of the 1831 "sealing" and in the proposal to her by Smith: to be united with Smith so as to go with him into the Father's kingdom. This was something that many early Mormons wanted. Oliver Huntington said that "soon after Dimick had given our sisters Zina & Prescinda to Joseph as wives for eternity," Smith offered Dimick any reward he wanted. Dimick requested "that where you and your fathers family are, there I and my fathers family may also be."[153] Todd Compton argues that a number of polyandrous husbands may have known about the sealing, particularly Henry Jacobs and Windsor Lyon.[154]

In 1890, at an anniversary party for John Taylor (a Mormon apostle in Nauvoo and church president from 1880 to 1887), Wilford Woodruff (Taylor's successor) and George Q. Cannon (Taylor's nephew and assistant) said that Smith had asked to marry John Taylor's

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[150] John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints, or, an Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), 224.
[151] Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 172.
[152] There is evidence for some sexuality in Joseph's marriages and I do not find the claims that he did not have sex with his married wives compelling. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 12-15.
[153] Quoted in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 122-23.
[154] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 81, 179.

wife, that it was a sore trial for Taylor but he consented, and that Smith then told him it was just a test (this is similar to the story Orson F. Whitney told about his grandfather Heber C. Kimball, discussed below). Woodruff and Cannon then described Taylor's relationship with the prophet, shedding light on why Taylor might have consented. "President Taylor was one of the most devout, loyal, and Trustworthy persons the Prophet ever had save his Brother Hyrum," asserted Woodruff and Cannon, "he loved him and offered his life for him at Carthage.[155]… At the Family Reunions he often told his family How he loved the Prophet, and also said there is no love in the world equal to the Love I had to Joseph Smith, how I loved that man, it was a different kind of love, surpassing any love for a woman."[156]

As all the sealings during Smith's life were between men and women (none were between persons of the same gender), being sealed to a common spouse may have been the means by which men were sealed to each other in Smith's system. Such is suggested in Bernheisel's sealings: he was sealed to the wife of his brother, which may have sealed him to his brother in Smith's system. When Smith changed from marrying married to single women (discussed below), Heber C. Kimball felt that having his daughter sealed to Smith allowed him to be sealed to Smith as well. The popular ancient Jewish writer, Flavius Josephus, expressed a similar idea in his telling of the story of Pharaoh taking Abraham's wife that Smith likely read (see Chapter Six). "And when he had found out the truth," Josephus explained, "he excused himself to Abram, that supposing the woman to be his sister, and not his wife, he set his affections on her, and desiring an affinity with him by marrying her, but

[155] Carthage jail was where Smith was shot dead by a mob (Chapter Seven). Taylor was keeping Smith and his brother Hyrum company when the mob attacked. Taylor was shot also but survived.
[156] John M. Whitaker, "Daily Journal of John M. Whitaker," typescript, 1:251, November 1, 1890, Perry Special Collections.

not as incited by lust to abuse her."[157] "Affinity" was the term used by Perfectionists to explain the special relationship between soul mates (Smith might also have used this term). Perhaps men who felt this kind of spiritual connection for each other, felt like Josephus's Pharaoh that marrying a close relative or even the wife of the special friend was a means by which men could be linked to each other.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to think that Smith's wives were simply connectors between Smith and their husbands; Smith told Mary Lightner that they had a pre-mortal bond. After Lightner was sealed to Smith, her husband moved her fifteen-miles up the river from Nauvoo: "The Prophet felt very sad when he knew we were going to leave," said Lightner, "and with tears running down his cheeks he prophesied that if we left the Church we would have plenty of sorrow."[158] This statement suggests that Smith felt a deep attachment to Lightner, and that he wanted her nearby. Again the purpose of the sealings was to be bound together in the Father's kingdom for eternity. Sealing marriage seems to have been the means to create this great union, this "nucleus of heaven." In 1843, John C. Bennett asserted that Smith taught that because individuals could not marry in heaven, "It has been revealed to him that there will be no harmony in heaven unless the Saints select their companions and marry IN TIME, FOR ETERNITY!!! They must marry in time so as to begin to form the sincere attachment and unsophisticated affection which is so necessary to consummate in eternity in order to the peace of Heaven."[159] This statement from Bennett is similar to Benjamin Johnson's assertion: "That our great mission to earth was to Organize a

[157] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews,* 7.2 in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. by William Whiston, 6 vols. (Worcester Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), 104.
[158] Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Autobiography, typescript, 9, Perry Special Collections.
[159] "Letter from Gen. Bennett," in *Hawk Eye* (Burlington, Iowa: December 7, 1843) in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 636.

Neculi [nucleus] of Heaven to take with us."[160] Bennett's statement also sheds light on Smith's reaction to Lightner moving up the river: the goal of the sealing unions was to form earthly attachments that would persist in the next life. Having those attachments broken, even by fifteen miles, was painful for Smith.

Therefore, the sealing marriages were the means of enacting what Mary Lightner had recalled from the meeting at Smith's house in 1831: they were ordinances that would bind Smith's special loved ones to him for time and all eternity. The importance of being connected to loved ones was essential according to Smith. In language similar to his revelation on marriage, Smith declared, "Those who keep no eternal Law in this life or make no eternal contract are single & alone in the eternal world and are only made Angels to minister to those who shall be heirs of Salvation never becoming Sons of God having never kept the Law of God."[161] As Smith's brother William said in a blessing to Ann B. Peterson, "But the fullness of her Salvation cannot be made perfect until her companion is with her & those who are of his kingdom for until the kindred Spirits are gathered up: and are united in the celestial kingdom as one."[162]

Christian-Platonic notions of marriage provide an intellectual context for Smith's marital ideas and practices. For Smith, holy marriage not only could endure in the next life but it was also essential for post-mortal exaltation (see Chapter Six). Like Plato and many radical utopians, Smith's marital practices went beyond monogamy; Smith composite marriage of interlocking relationships served to bind him and his followers together to form "a nucleus of heaven" to prepare for the next life. However, such practices were radical and

[160] Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets,* 47.
[161] Smith, sermon, July 16, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 232.
[162] *Early Mormon Blessings,* 328.

antagonizing, and Smith quickly found he had to make adjustments to his marital practices if he wanted his movement to survive.

Tried as Abraham. While all of the known instances of shared wives involved Smith, there were rumors that Smith suggested that his first wife, Emma, should take a second husband.[163] In July 1843, Smith wrote down a lengthy revelation on polygamy; which stated toward the end, "Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice."[164] What Emma had been offered by Smith that she was now not to partake of is not specified, but this revelation is about plural marriage and thus it would be odd for the revelation to suddenly change the subject in regard to this verse. Most likely the thing offered was another husband. But now the Lord says that Emma is not to have a union with another husband and that the Lord did this "to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice." The wording suggests that the Lord had commanded Smith to give Emma another husband but the Lord had now revoked the command. The task would not simply have been for Emma to accept Smith's plural wives since the revelation does not revoke that command.

Dee also referred to his command to share wives as an Abrahamic trial: "being not accepted, done or performed of us upon carnal lust, or wanton concupiscence," Dee wrote, "but by the way of Abraham-like faith and obedience unto our God." Dee and Kelley recorded being shocked an appalled when the angels first told them to share wives.

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[163] Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith,* 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 176-78.
[164] "Celestial Marriage," 11; current DC 132:51.

"Hereupon we were in great amazement and grief of minde, that so hard, and (as it, yet seemed unto me) so unpure a Doctrine, was p[r]opounded and enjoyned unto us of them, whom I always (from the beginning hitherto) did *Judge and esteem, undoubtedly, to be good Angels.*" Dee later prayed for "his Divine Majesty to be merciful unto us, and give us wisdom and faith that we may herein please him; and that we cannot finde how we may do the thing required, *being contrary* to the Laws of *Moses,* Christ, his Church, and of all Nations. There seeing God is *not contrary* to himself, we desire that we might not be contrary to him or his Laws."[165] Mary Lightner said that Smith "talked to [the angel] soberly about [the command to practice plural marriage] and told him it was an abomination and quoted scripture to him."[166]

In response to Dee's and Kelley's resistance, one angel told them, "*If you forsake the way taught from above, behold evil shall enter into your senses, and* abomination shall dwel before your eyes, and a recompence, *unto such as you have done wrong unto: And your wives and children, shall be carried away before your face.*" Another told them, "*that if* [God] *finde you obstinate, the plagues of haynous sinners, and contemners of the gifts of God shall fall upon you, to your great overthrow.*"[167] Smith's polygamy revelation declared, "I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant, and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant, and be permitted to enter into my glory."[168] Mary Lightner and Zina Huntington both said that Smith told them than an "angel with a drawn sword" told him that if he did not practice polygamy he would be killed.[169] Dee did

[165] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, pt. 2, 20, 12, 19.
[166] Lightner, *Testimony of Mary Lightner,* 25.
[167] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* 10, 16.
[168] "Celestial Marriage," 7; current DC 132:4.
[169] Lightner, *Testimony of Mary Lightner,* 25, Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 80-81.

not mention an angel doing so during this episode but did mention angels with swords earlier in his journal.[170]

Dee and Smith both finally agreed to engage in the practice but the revelation's statement to Emma said that it was an Abrahamic test that was rescinded like Abraham's command to kill Isaac. The story of Smith asking John Taylor fits this pattern, as does the story of Smith making the same request to Heber C. Kimball (another Mormon apostle). According to Kimball's grandson, Orson F. Whitney, before Smith taught Kimball about plural marriage, "He put him to a test which few men would have been able to bear. It was no less than a requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in marriage." "Three days he fasted and wept and prayed," said Whitney, "Then, with a broken and bleeding heart, but with a soul self-mastered for the sacrifice, he led his darling wife to the Prophet's house and presented her to Joseph." Whitney said that the act proved his faithfulness, "The will for the deed was taken, and 'accounted unto him for righteousness.'" Kimball held "back nothing," but laid "all upon the altar for God's glory." Thus Whitney presented Kimball as passing the Abrahamic test, and Kimball was rewarded by being sealed to Vilate.[171] Todd Compton dates this event as having occurred in early 1842, when Smith was marrying married women.[172] While the proposal fits the pattern, Smith telling his married wives that his proposal was just a test does not; Smith married a number of married women.

There was an addendum to the story that Whitney mentioned almost as a side note: "Soon after the revelation was given a gold link was forged whereby the houses of Heber and

[170] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation*, 49-57, 81, 245, 380.
[171] Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball An Apostle: The Father and Founder of the British Mission* (1888, reprint; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 323-24.
[172] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 495.

Joseph were indissolubly and forever joined. Helen Mar, the eldest daughter of Heber Chase and Vilate Murray Kimball was given to the Prophet in the holy bonds of celestial marriage."[173] Helen's account of her marriage to Smith suggests that her story was linked to that of her father's. In her 1881 autobiography, Helen stated, "Just previous to my father's starting upon his last mission but one, to the Eastern States, he taught me the principle of Celestial marrage [sic], & and having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet's own mouth."[174] According to Helen, who was fourteen at the time, it was Heber who offered her to Smith because he wanted to be connected to the prophet.

This brings up the question: if Heber wanted to be connected with Smith, why didn't Smith simply marry Vilate? Again, Smith married a number of married women. Helen's language also invokes that of the Abrahamic trial: "My father had but one Ewe lamb, but willingly laid her upon the alter."[175] Might Helen have been a replacement for Vilate? Wilhelm Wyl, the anti-Mormon editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, in 1886 asserted that Helen was a replacement for Vilate.[176] When asked about Wyl's assertion, Helen responded that "the falsehoods furnished by Sarah M. Pratt[177] about my father, mother, & myself are enough to damn her without any thing more."[178] Wyl put the matter in very negative terms, but Helen had used similar language in her autobiography five years earlier. Again, Orson Whitney

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[173] Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball,* 328.
[174] Hellen Mar Kimball Whitney, Autobiography, 1881, in Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History*, ed. Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University 1997), 482.
[175] Whitney, Autobiography, 482.
[176] Wilhelm Wyl, *Joseph the Prophet: His Family and Friends* (Salt Lake City: Tribune, 1886), 71-72.
[177] Sarah Pratt, to whom Smith also may have proposed (discussed below), had become disaffected by this time and made a number of charges against Smith in Wyl's book (Wyl, *Joseph the Prophet,* 56, 60-62.) Wyl did not cite Pratt for the accusation that Helen was a replacement for her mother, but Helen apparently assumed the Pratt was the source of the accusation.
[178] Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *A Widow's Tale: the 1884-1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney,* ed. Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003), 183, Aug. 26, 1886.

said Smith asked for Vilate and we know that Smith was marrying married women at that time. Helen said that Smith told her that Heber had promised Helen to Smith. The two incidents could have been linked.

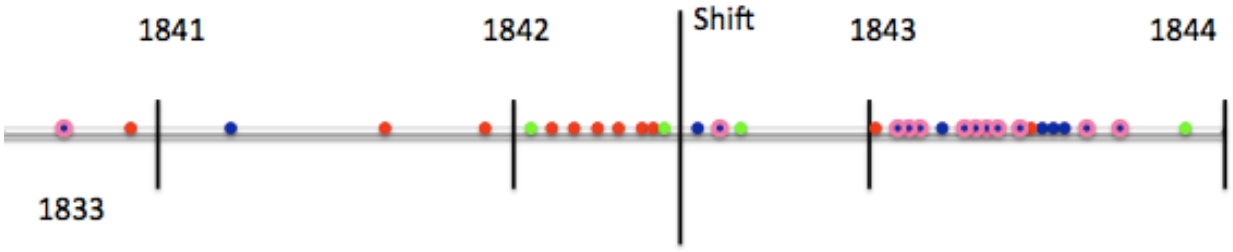
The story of Heber and Helen Mar Kimball may provide a window into the shift of Smith's marital practices from married to single women: upset at the prospect of sharing wives, Smith's inner circle may have preferred that he marry their daughters instead. In 1854, Jedediah Grant (Brigham Young's assistant at the time) recalled what the early days of polygamy were like for Smith's followers in Nauvoo: "When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking their was in Israel. Says one brother to another … 'now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?' 'I would tell him to go to hell.' This was the spirit of many in the early days of the Church."[179] Grant asserted that Smith was asking for the wives of his followers and that telling Smith "to go to hell… was the spirit of many in the early days." Grant used the phrase "what a quaking there was in Israel" to describe the attitude. The despondency of Orson Pratt (another apostle) over the claims that Smith had proposed to his wife Sarah, best demonstrates the "quaking in Israel" that Grant described. While the incident is controversial, Smith proposing to Sarah Pratt fits the pattern of him proposing to many married women at that time.[180]

The controversy surrounding Smith's fallout with John C. Bennett, who placed the claims of Sarah Pratt at the center of his attack on Smith, was likely the catalyst behind Smith's shift from marrying married to single women. Orson Pratt was despondent at the

[179] Jedediah Grant, February 19, 1854, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:13.
[180] Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate," *Dialogue* 19, no. 2 (1986): 69-99.

claim that Smith had proposed to his wife, "My sorrows are greater than I can bear!" he wrote his wife, "Where I am henceforth it matters not." Pratt turned dissenter for a time and Bennett's disclosures were very bad press. In addition, Smith was forced to hide from Missouri extradition attempts that summer.[181] On June 29, 1842, Smith married his first single wife since Louisa Beaman, Eliza R. Snow, indicating a change in Smith's marital practices (Chart 5.3). Furthermore, Smith's new marriages slowed considerably that summer; he only married four women between the summer of 1842 and the spring of 1843. After Eliza, Smith's next wife was Sarah Ann Whitney, his first teenage bride since Fanny Alger. After Sarah, Smith's next wife was Martha McBride Knight who was widowed and the next was Ruth Vose Sayers who was married.[182] The median age for these women was 34, the mean was 29.

Chart 5.3: The Change in Smith's Marital Policy, Summer 1842



The major change in Smith's marital pattern came in the spring of 1843 when he began marrying again in earnest (Chart 5.4). Smith had reconciled with Orson Pratt and seemed to have regained his confidence.[183] But now he was marrying almost all single

[181] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 466-72.
[182] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 4-6.
[183] Van Wagoner, "Sarah M. Pratt," 81.

women, who were, on the whole, considerably younger than his previous wives. Smith married 14 women between spring and summer of 1843, all but one of whom were single and most of whom were young. The median age of these single women was 19.[184] This was a very different pattern than the one of 1841-42, where the median age was 32. If Smith could not marry married women, then he needed to marry women before they were married, which meant he needed to marry them at a younger age.

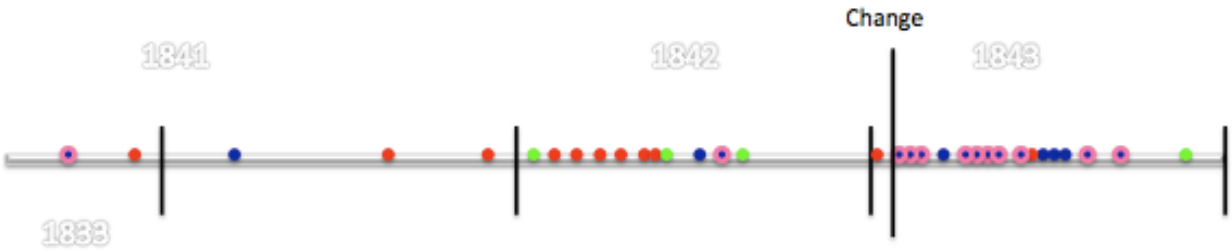
Interestingly, Smith's polygamy revelation began by saying, "You have enquired of my hand, to know and understand wherein I the Lord justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; as also Moses, David, and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives, and concubines."[185] The revelation was dated July 1843 (though it may have been given earlier) but since Smith had begun marrying other women as early as 1833, Smith asking about the polygyny of the biblical prophets at this much later date is further evidence that polygyny was not the original program. Again the Book of Mormon condemned David and Solomon's polygyny: Jacob says of the Nephites, "They seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord…. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none."[186] Therefore switching to polygyny would be in defiance of the Book-of-Mormon

[184] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 6.
[185] "Celestial Marriage," 7.
[186] Jacob 2:23, 24, 27. Richard Bushman notes that Jacob only condemns David and Solomon's polygyny and notes that Deuteronomy 17:17 condemns excessive polygyny like David and Solomon's, perhaps leaving Abraham, Jacob, and Moses uncondemn for their more moderate polygyny, and that those three figures may have fallen under the exemption. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 646 n. 27. But again, the passage's exemption used the phrase "raise up seed," suggesting that the exemption may have related to sharing wives.

commandment. Again, Jacob does say that there is an exception ("raise up seed") but, as I argue above, that was likely a reference to shared wives, or even composite marriage. But now Smith was asking a new question: despite what the Book of Mormon said, God seemed to have allowed a number of Old Testament figures to have multiple wives. In response, the revelation explains that there is a higher antinomian law: the law is to do what God says, and if God said to practice polygyny, then the saints were to practice polygyny despite what other prophets (Jacob) had said. The evidence suggests that such was a shift in practice.

If a central purpose of polygamy was to bring people into Smith's sacerdotal family,[187] then composite marriage, in which women could also marry multiple men, would work better for that purpose than would polygyny, because it allowed for more people to be connected to each other. The Bennett and Orson Pratt disasters of the summer of 1842 caused a change in the program, which resulted in a switch to younger, single women. Yet Heber C. Kimball still sought to be bound to Smith by having Smith marry his daughter. Polygynous linking was more limited, however, since it was only possible with those who had unmarried daughters and it also led Smith to marry younger wives, very young in the case of Helen Mar Kimball.

Chart 5.4: The Resumption of Smith's Marriages, Spring 1843



[187] Brown, "Early Mormon Adoption Theology," 38-39.

There did seem to have been an attempt to forget the polyandrous marriages. As noted, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor likely knew about the polyandrous marriages. After seeing the disaster of the summer of 1842, Smith and his inner circle realized that composite marriage simply was not going to work and they therefore opted for a more pragmatic practice: polygyny.[188] Smith's attempt to implement communal goods and its failure seems an apt comparison here.

Conclusion

"I will tell you what I want," Smith told his followers in 1843,

> if to morrow I shall be called to lay in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection, let me strike hands with my father, & cry, my father, & he will say my son, my son,—as soon as the rock rends. & before we come out of our graves.
>
> & may we contemplate these things so? Yes, if we learn how to live & how we die when we lie down we contemplate how we may rise up in the morning and it is pleasing for friends to lie down together locked in the arms of love, to sleep, & locked in each others embrace & renew their conversation….
>
> If I had no expectation of seeing my mother Brother & Sisters & friends again my heart would burst in a moment & I should go down to my grave. The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of the resurrection cheers my soul, and make be

[188] Polygyny would still allow for attempts at shared households in one way or another as the husband and his wives attempted various arrangements.

bear up against the evils of life, it is like their taking a long journey. & on their return we meet them with increased joy.[189]

Such was Smith's fundamental motivation—to be bound together with his loved ones—and he used baptism for the dead and composite marriage for these bindings. Baptism for the dead was likely a solution to the theological problem created by Smith's notion of a restored priesthood. If ordinances performed by that priesthood were necessary to reach the highest heaven, then what became of all those who died before it was restored? Those who had joined Mormonism would be separated from any loved ones in that condition. The members of the Ephrata Cloister, who also claimed to have the restored Melchizedek priesthood, also seemed to have hade these concerns and turned to 1 Corinthians 15:29 as an answer: proxy baptism on behalf of the living for the dead. Clues in Buck's *Theological Dictionary's* entry on the Dunkers may have pointed Smith to that group for an answer to his conundrum and Smith visited near Ephrata in the winter of 1839-40. If Smith did hear of baptism for the dead while he was in the area, it would have brought Smith's influence by Jane Lead full circle since the Ephrata Cloister had also been followers of Lead, and their practice of baptism for the dead was likely a result of their having the Melchizedek priesthood that Lead sought. Smith's baptism-for-the-dead theology also suggested a number of other pieces—the Harrowing of Hell, *The Shepherd of Hermas,* Swedenborg, and perhaps even Ann Booth's vision—but the impetus behind it was likely driven by an engagement with Jane Lead's visions and those whom they influenced.

In terms of composite marriage, Dee's spirit diary likely pointed Smith to the practice, but Smith was slow to begin the practice in earnest. The Book of Mormon's reference to "raise up seed," was the same wording found in the Sadducees' question about

[189] 16 April 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 195-96.

the wife with seven husbands. But just as Dee declared the command to share wives an "Abrahamic trial," Smith told his wives that he had hesitated to engage in the practice until an angel threatened to kill him. Composite marriage created its own crisis: Bennett's exposure and Pratt's dissent likely motivated Smith to change the practice to polygyny. Polygyny would still allow Smith's followers to bind themselves together, though with wives now being off limits, Smith needed to marry daughters.

> When Christ instructed Kelley and Dee to share wives he told them,
>
> *As I humbled my self to death, wherein the unity between my Congregation and me, was before my Father perpetually sealed, whereby I am always* present with such as put their trust in me. *Even so as the East and the West, the North, and the South,* Easu *and* Jacob, *shall be gathered together through* the power I will give you, and united for ever in the Kingdome of my Father which is to come, in one holy and eternal fellowship, so be you contented also *to be the figures of the things that are to come by you, that it may be perpetual testimony before the heavens, and before men, of your perfect and sound faith.*[190]

Just as Christ desired to be "sealed" to his "Congregation," perhaps the faithful who Dee was supposed to "gather" could also be bound to each other. Smith who also wanted to use shared marriage to bind together his followers on earth and in heaven may have seen himself as fulfilling the work that Dee had begun.

[190] Dee, *True and Faithful Relation,* pt. 2, 22.

Chapter Six: The Plan of Salvation

Introduction

In his Liberty-jail letter, Smith said that additional revelation was forthcoming. William Phelps made a similar claim in a letter to Oliver Cowdery in 1835:

> New light is occasionally bursting in to our minds, of the sacred scriptures, for which I am truly thankful. We shall by and bye learn that we were with God in another world, before the foundation of the world, and had our agency: that we came into this world and have our agency, in order that we may prepare ourselves for a kingdom of glory; become archangels, even the sons of God where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord: A consummation of glory, and happiness, and perfection so greatly to be wished, that I would not miss of it for the fame of ten worlds.[1]

Like Smith's Liberty-jail letter, Phelps gave clues as to what the additional information would be, making references to pre-existence, deification, and eternal marriage. Smith would elaborate on these themes in his Nauvoo speeches and revelations, formulating them into a description of a divine plan that Smith called "the plan of salvation"[2] where pre-mortal beings were sent to earth by God to learn how to progress to become like God (eternal marriage being one of the necessary steps for that progression.)

Phelps said that the Mormons would learn about these things "by and bye" but as I discussed in previous chapters, Smith had been hinting at these themes from the beginning:

[1] W. W. Phelps "Letter No. 8," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, 1 (June 1835): 130.
[2] The Book of Mormon used the phrase "plan of salvation" to mean the plan by which humans were redeemed by Christ from the Fall. Smith expanded the meaning later.

cryptic references to pre-existence and deification can be found in the Book of Mormon, which also hinted at unorthodox marital practices. But Smith only began to emphasize these themes in Nauvoo. As late as May 1843, Smith declared, "[The] design of the great God in sending us into this world and organizing us to prepare us for the Eternal world.—I shall keep in my own bosom."[3] Smith generally downplayed esoteric ideas that he knew would be controversial. The major texts that taught these themes were Allen's *Modern Judaism* and Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus*. Allen had many of the major components of the plan: the references to pre-existence that Allen said derived from Plato, as well as the story that was derived from the *Timaeus* about souls being sent to earth by God to get a body (Chapter Three). Though the story didn't say why God wanted souls to have bodies, the body became a major theme in Smith's divine plan. Deification was suggested in Allen's references to stories about Enoch becoming Metatron (Chapter Four), whom Allen said was similar to Jesus, and Allen cited Mennasseh Ben Israel saying that souls could find their soul mates, similar to Plato's *Symposium* (Chapter Five). Ramsay in many ways completed these elements: he spoke more directly of deification in his reference to the deification of Hercules, and while Allen spoke about finding one's soul mate, Ramsay said that lovers will be united eternally. Such would have both pointed Smith to the *Timaeus* (Ramsay quoted it and Allen had a story about the pre-existence based on it) and both would have prepared Smith to embrace the ideas that he likely found there.

The next month Smith bought a set of Egyptian papyri that Smith would translate into the Book of Abraham that would discuss the divine plan.[4] The process of translation involved study about Abraham and ancient cosmogony, which likely led to the *Timaeus*

[3] May 21, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 205.
[4] This was likely not a direct scholarly translation of one language to another, but was likely an attempt to do so.

itself. Smith discussed these themes in his Nauvoo speeches, but as the note taking for those speeches was often sporadic and Smith's speech were somewhat desultory, the Book of Abraham, though not very long, helps to focus these themes. The *Timaeus* said that pre-mortal beings were sent to earth for a purpose, causing many later Platonists to wonder what that purpose was (Chapter Three). Smith had his own answers to this question, leading to many of his most radical statements. God sent pre-mortal beings to earth to become embodied because those with bodies had power over those without. God himself had followed the same path so that not only was God embodied but he had also lived on a prior planet. God had progressed to become God and was still progressing. Such a path had been followed by multiple beings and therefore there were multiple Gods. Though radical, placing Smith's statements in the context of an evolving Christian Platonism suggests a certain logic to his assertions. I therefore, divide the chapter into two: the Book of Abraham and "the designs of God," or additional topics related to the plan that the Book of Abraham does not address.

In addition to the themes mentioned by Allen and Ramsay that appear in Phelps's letter, Jane Lead's visions had numerous similarities to Smith's plan. Furthermore, young Benjamin Franklin's statement of belief, "First Principles," had a number of similarities to Smith teachings about divine beings and was likely influenced by Isaac Newton. The end of the chapter focuses on another short mythic text entitled "Paracletes." A work written by William Phelps a year after Smith's death, "Paracletes" also addressed the plan and suggested additional influences.[5] Like the Book of Abraham, "Paracletes" had several

[5] [W. W. Phelps] "Paracletes," *Times and Season* 6 (May 1, 1845): 891-92 and "The Paracletes Continued," *Times and Season* 6 (June 1, 1845): 917-18. The author is listed as "Joseph's Speckled Bird." Phelps was called a "speckled bird" in his patriarchal blessing and refers to himself as such in other writings. Samuel Brown, "William Phelps's Paracletes, An Early Witness to Joseph Smith's Divine Anthropology," *International*

parallels to Plato's *Timaeus* as well as Ramsay's Adonis/Uriana myth in *The Travels of Cyrus.* Thus "Paracletes" fleshed out the details of Smith's plan, suggested possible sources for that plan, and indicated Phelps's role in articulating the plan.

The Book of Abraham[6]

Just prior to Phelps's statement about the divine plan in his letter to Cowdery, Phelps declared that during the troubling times of the last days "some will turn to the words of

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Journal of Mormon Studies 2 (2009): 62. Although Smith laid out this plan in a number of speeches as well as in the Book of Abraham, the most complete explanation of the plan comes from "Paracletes," a sort of parable.

[6] Scholarship on the Book of Abraham has tended to focus on debates over its authenticity. Critics pointed out problems with Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles early on, but issues of its authenticity came to the fore with the rediscovery of the papyri in 1966; the translations were published in 1968. This raised the issue that the papyri said nothing about Abraham or the story in the Book of Abraham but instead were a funeral text to aid the deceased in the afterlife. (Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri* 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992], 24-52.)

Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley asserted a few years later that the papyri from which Smith translated the Book of Abraham were missing, that the details of Abraham's life matched Abrahamic legends from antiquity, and that the description of the ritual progression of the afterlife in the extant papyri was similar to Mormon temple theology. (Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975], 1-3, 13-14, 246-47.) Critics continued to note the lack of similarity between the papyri and Smith's translations and argued against the notion that Smith used a missing text to translate (all agreed that some was missing but critics argued that Smith used the extant portion for his translation) (Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus,* 129; Andrew W. Cook and Christopher C. Smith, "The Original Length of the Scroll of Hôr," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 [2010]: 1–42; Christopher C. Smith, "'That Which Is Lost': Assessing the State of Preservation of the Joseph Smith Papyri," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 31 [2011]: 69–83.)

Mormon apologists continued to assert Nibley's arguments and published an extensive collection of Abrahamic legends that had similarities to the Book of Abraham (John A. Tvedtnes, Brian Hauglid, and John Gee, eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001].) The apologists also argued for other similarities to the ancient world such as the fact that the Book of Abraham's cosmology presents a geocentric (therefore pre-modern) view of the cosmos (John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "'And I Saw the Stars': The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian Hauglid [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2005], 1-16). Kevin Barney noted that Smith's interpretation of the facsimiles was similar to how Jews of the second-temple era interpreted Egyptian art (Kevin L. Barney, "The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources" in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant,* 107-130).

Here I focus on how the Book of Abraham fit the Christian-Platonic worldview that I argue influenced Smith. I argue that considerable knowledge of antiquity was available to people like Smith in the early nineteenth century, including legends about Abraham and geocentric worldviews (as in Plato's *Timaeus*). In making this claim, it is not my intent either to defend or call into question the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. I should note the many of the elements that I argue are found in the Book of Abraham—stories about Abraham, the *Timaeus*, the book of Genesis—are ancient. The similarities to Smith's endowment are also worth noting (Chapter Seven). Yet such texts were also available in Smith's day. Again, much of Mormon theology had roots in the ancient world and the Book of Abraham suggests similar influences.

eternal life … whether they are found in the old bible, book of Mormon, lost book of Jasher,[7] or the book of Enoch, mentioned by Jude." This statement coupled with Phelps saying "we shall by and bye learn," suggested that Phelps anticipated new scriptures coming forth. Just one month later, the Mormons purchased a set of mummies and papyri from one Michael Chandler who had sought out Smith because he had heard that Smith had the ability to translate languages.[8] The translation was later published as "The Book of Abraham," which not only addressed the plan of salvation, but also gave clues as to what sources Smith used to translate the text. The part of the text that discusses the plan had a number of striking parallels to passages from Plato's *Timaeus*.

Smith and Phelps worked to translate the papyri, which proceeded more slowly than the Book of Mormon translation had. I argue that during this time, Smith consulted sources to aid in the translation, in particular Dobson's encyclopedia's and Thomas Taylor's translation of Plato's *Timaeus.* Not only did the encyclopedia have information on Abraham, but the entry under mysteries also had a number of parallels to Smith's endowment ritual (Chapter Seven). That entry also said the mysteries contained a description of the creation similar to Plato's *Timaeus* and that the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* "was that of the most ancient Egyptians."[9] The Book of Abraham contained a description of the cosmos that God reveals to Abraham and that Abraham explains to the Egyptians. If the *Timaeus* was the cosmogony "of the most ancient Egyptians," and if Abraham explained his vision of the cosmos to the Egyptians, then it made sense to use the *Timaeus* for clues as to what God had

[7] Interestingly, a text called the *Book of Jasher* (New York: M. M. Noah and A. S. Gould, 1840) was the first English translation of an early modern Hebrew text. The text's discussion of Abraham bears some resemblance to Smith's Book of Abraham, but it seems to be derivative of earlier traditions, many of which were mentioned in the encyclopedia article mentioned below.
[8] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 286.
[9] "Mysteries," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 12:593.

originally told Abraham. Similarities between the *Timaeus* and the cosmogony of the Book of Abraham suggest that Smith did just that. Christian Platonists had long argued that the account of the creation in the *Timaeus* was derived from Genesis and that the two texts harmonized, while Christian anti-Platonists argued that the two texts could not be harmonized because of the *Timaeus's* mention of multiple gods and because the *Timaeus* said that God created the world out of existing material rather than out of nothing. Smith emphatically embraced both of these ideas: not only does the Book of Abraham say that God created out of existing material and that multiple gods were involved in the creation, but Smith also made both of these points in his Nauvoo speeches. The encyclopedia entry under "Platonism" gives a full explanation of Plato's notion of creating out of existing materials and even uses a phrase "eternally co-existing with God" to describe Plato's notion of matter; Smith said that God and matter "coexist eternally" in his King Follett Discourse.[10] Thus the tools Smith may have used to translate the Book of Abraham gave a Platonic context to Smith's plan of salvation.

Egypt. This desire to obtain primal wisdom of the patriarchs transmitted by the Egyptians was central to the Christian-Platonic idea of *prisca theologica*: Plato got his wisdom from the Egyptians who got their wisdom from the patriarchs.[11] Smith's claim to be able to translate the Egyptian papyri invoked many of the same issues that his translation of the Book of Mormon had: the clash between the older claims to Egyptian translation through supernatural means versus the new scholarly methods begun by Champollion (Chapter Three). The grammar that Smith and William Phelps produced suggests that Smith and

[10] "Platonism," in *Encyclopaedia; or, a Dictionary or Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798), 15:41; Smith, sermon, April, 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 351.
[11] D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 1, 20; Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 5-28.

Phelps drew upon Clement of Alexandria's assertion that Egyptian hieroglyphs had several levels of meaning: literal, figurative, and allegorical.[12] "These distinctions were preserved throughout medieval and Renaissance discussions," says George Boas, "and in fact sometimes a fourth meaning was added, the anagogical."[13] Smith and Phelps seem to have gone one step further: in their Egyptian grammar, they gave the various hieroglyphs five different definitions.[14] As Smith's revelation on the translation of Book of Mormon said that one had to "study it out in your mind" in order to translate, it would make sense that the translators would look up information on their subject as part of the process. The translation of the Book of Abraham suggests that Smith made use of available ideas.

Plato admired Egypt, which contributed to the idea that Plato got his wisdom from the Egyptians.[15] Iamblichus in his major work on theurgy, *De Mysteriis*, claimed to be an Egyptian priest and claimed that theurgy was Egyptian religion. "Since the Egyptians were the first to be granted participation with the gods," explained Iamblichus, one should use Egyptian words in rites even if one did not understand them.[16] Such attitudes continued in the Middle Ages: an important medieval theurgical text called the *Sworn Book* claimed to be written by one Honorius, an Egyptian, and works attributed to Hermes Trismegistus continued to circulate.[17] Early modern Christian Platonists continued to see Egypt as a

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[12] Clement, *Stomata,* 5.4.
[13] *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, trans. George Boas (New York: Pantheon, 1950), 35. John Fellows discusses Clement's assertion in light of Champollion's discovery in *An Exposition of the Mysteries; or, Religious Dogmas and Customs of the Egyptians, Pythagoreans, and Druids. Also: An Inquiry into the Origin, History, and Purport of Freemasonry* (New York: Gould, Banks, 1835), 90-91.
[14] Brown, "Joseph (Smith) in Egypt," 28.
[15] Plato, *Laws*, 2. 656c-657b; *Timaeus*, 21c-25e.
[16] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature , 2003), 301.
[17] Robert Mathiesen, "A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the Sworn Book of Honorius of Thebes," Clair Fanger ed. *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 143-162.

source of ancient wisdom.[18] Andrew Michael Ramsay argued in the *Travels of Cyrus* that "the earliest opinions of the most knowing and civilized nations come nearer the truth than those of later ages; that the theology of the Orientals is more pure than that of the Egyptians, that of the Egyptians less corrupted than that of the Greeks."[19] Mosheim said that Ammonius Saccas saw Platonism and Egyptian religion

> as constituting one great WHOLE.… For it is more evident, that the Egyptian philosophy, which was said to be derived from Hermes, was the basis of Ammonius; or, as it is otherwise called, of *modern platonism;* and the book of Jamblichus, concerning the *mysteries of the Egyptians,* puts the matter beyond dispute. Ammonius, therefore, associated the sentiments of the Egyptians with the doctrines of Plato, which was easily done by adulterating some of the opinions of the latter, and forcing his expressions from their obvious and natural sense.[20]

Alexander Campbell, cited Mosheim for proof that early Christianity was "buried in the rubbish of Egyptian philosophy by the first Doctors of Divinity."[21]

Americans were fascinated with Egypt in Smith's day: Michael Chandler, who sold Smith the artifacts, displayed them in a number of cities before selling them to Smith.[22] The ability to read Egyptian had not reached the United States at that time and many were eager to know what the papyri said. Chandler said he specifically sought out Smith as a buyer for the artifacts because he had heard of Smith ability to translate languages.[23] Not only were

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[18] Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), 45-113.
[19] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* xiv-xv.
[20] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:141-42.
[21] Alexander Campbell, "Essays on Ecclesiastical Characters, Councils, Creeds, and Sects" no. II, *Christian Baptist* 1 (May 3, 1824): 235.
[22] John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 3-4.
[23] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 286.

there no Egyptian linguists in the United States at that time, but the older notion that hieroglyphics could be read by those with higher spiritual insights also persisted.[24] In an advertisement for Chandler's exhibition in Philadelphia, a group of scholars declared, "History records the fact, that the higher class concealed their knowledge from the lower, in figures and hieroglyphic characters—A few of those, upon papyrus, used by the Egyptians for writing, will be exhibited with the Mummies."[25]

Abraham. Smith initially said the papyri were the writings of Abraham and Joseph, and the finished product has a number of similarities to the encyclopedia entry on Abraham.[26] The entry gave justification for finding a lost book of Abraham: "Abraham is said to have been well skilled in many sciences, and to have wrote several books."[27] Smith's Book of Abraham seemingly starts in Genesis 12:1, where the Lord commands Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." The Book of Abraham repeats this verse but not before giving considerable context.[28] The text refers to the first facsimile, an Egyptian drawing of a man lying on a couch or table with another man standing over him. Smith interpreted this to be a portrayal of an Egyptian priest attempting to sacrifice Abraham and the first part of the Book of Abraham centers around that interpretation.[29]

Dobson's encyclopedia entry on Abraham told the antique story of Abraham being involved in idolatry and his father being an idol maker. Convinced by a customer of the

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[24] Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics*, 5-10.
[25] The Mormons later printed the advertisement in their newspaper. "Egyptian Antiquities," *Times and Season* (May 2, 1842): 774.
[26] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 286. The Book of Abraham does not mention Joseph.
[27] "Abraham," 1:23.
[28] "The Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 1, 1842): 704. John Allen declared, "With equal disregard for the truth, and with superior effrontery, the Jews have attributed on Cabbalistic book to the patriarch Abraham," *Modern Judaism,* 67.
[29] "Facsimile from the Book of Abraham. No. 1," *Times and Season* 3 (March 1, 1842): 703.

errors of idolatry Abraham destroys all the statues. His father then turns Abraham in to the authorities who demand that he worship the fire and upon Abraham's refusal, throw him in. "But (adds the tradition), Abraham came safe and sound out the flames."[30] As in the encyclopedia entry, the Book of Abraham says that his father hands over Abraham to hostile authorities. Instead of being thrown in the fire, in the Book of Abraham, Abraham is given to the idolatrous priest to be sacrificed in accordance with Smith's interpretation of the facsimile. In both the Book of Abraham and the encyclopedia entry, Abraham is put in peril by the false religion at the behest of his father, and like the encyclopedia story, Abraham is saved by God.[31] The chief difference between the Book of Abraham and the encyclopedia account is that in the Book of Abraham, Abraham was given by his father to be sacrificed by an Egyptian priest to Egyptian idols. William Whiston discussed Egyptian human sacrifice in his introduction to his translation of the works of Flavius Josephus. Whiston said the Egyptians engaged in the practice, "particularly that of the offerer's own children," up until the time that God stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. Abraham then spread the word to the Egyptians, who, like Abraham, engaged in animal sacrifice instead.[32] The encyclopedia entry cited Josephus, Josephus's account of Abraham's life had some similarities to the Book of Abraham's (see below), and Josephus's works were in the Nauvoo library.[33]

Other aspects of the Book of Abraham differ from the story in the encyclopedia. Instead of originally being an idolater, in the Book of Abraham, Abraham decides on his own to reject his fathers' idolatry. Abraham explains, "Having been myself a follower of

[30] "Abraham," 1:23.
[31] "Book of Abraham," 704.
[32] William Whiston, "Dissertation II: Concerning God's Command to Abraham to Offer up Isaac his Son for a Sacrifice," in Flavius Josephus, *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. by William Whiston, 6 vols. (Worcester Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), 1:33-44.
[33] "Abraham," 1:23; Jones, "Complete Record," 192.

righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge … and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a high priest."[34] The encyclopedia entry also cited Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, which said that Abraham "began to have higher notions of virtue than others" and "was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but One God."[35] That Abraham in his righteousness sought the priesthood is similar to George Oliver's *Antiquities of Free-Masonry* (1823). Finding the religion of the Chaldeans inadequate, said Oliver, Abraham sought out Shem/Melchizedek and was initiated into the true Masonry.[36] Smith and the Mormons referred to the endowment ritual, which was similar to Masonry, as the priesthood (Chapter Seven). Abraham seeking out the priesthood in the Book of Abraham paralleled Abraham seeking out the true Masonry in Oliver's *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*.

After his rescue, Abraham explains the origin of the false Egyptian priesthood, which suggests additional similarities to Oliver. The Book of Abraham explains the fall of Egypt into idolatry as follows:

> Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham.… Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but

[34] "Abraham," 1:23.
[35] Flavius Josephus, *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. by William Whiston, 6 vols. (Worcester Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), 1:102-3.
[36] George Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry; Comprising Illustrations of the Five Grand Periods of Masonry, From the Creation of the World to the Dedication of King Solomon's Temple* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823), 156-57.

> cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. Now Pharaoh being of that lineage, by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaoh's [sic] would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry.[37]

Oliver said that true Masonry was perverted by the Cabiri, whom in 1803 George Stanley Faber said were the originators of the pagan mysteries.[38] Oliver said that the Cabiri spread the false religion throughout the known world shortly after the flood, including into Egypt and Chaldea. Oliver also noted the biblical idea that "Egypt was the land of Ham" and the curse pronounced upon Ham's son Canaan. Citing Deuteronomy 12:31, Oliver declared, "In after ages the descendants of Canaan became addicted to the very worst species of Idolatry; and even sacrificed their sons and their daughters on the impious altars of false and impure deities." Further, said Oliver, "The immediate posterity of Ham partook largely of their progenitor's inherent perversity; stimulated probably by the curse pronounced by Noah."[39] Like Whiston, Oliver made connections between Egypt and child sacrifice.

At the same time, the Book of Abraham suggested that Egyptian religion had good intentions in its origin. Pharaoh was a righteous man but could not have the priesthood because of his descent from Ham, his grandfather.[40] Nevertheless, Pharaoh was blessed with wisdom and with that wisdom he sought "earnestly to imitate" the true priesthood. However,

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[37] "Book of Abraham," 705.
[38] George Stanley Faber, *The Cabiri; Or the Great Gods of Phenicia, Samothrace, Egypt, Troas, Greece, Italy, and Crete; Being an Attempt to Deduce Several Orgies of Isis, Ceres, Mithras, Bacchus, Rhea, Adonis, and Hecate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1803).
[39] Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry,* 100, 133-34, 149-50.
[40] Such a statement suggests that the descendants of Ham could not have the priesthood and in the nineteenth century, Africans were frequently referred to as the "seed of Ham." Mormons would later ban those of African descent from the priesthood but this occurred after Smith's death. Lester E. Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Spring 1973): 11-68; Armand Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 212-230.

the statement "therefore my father was led away by their idolatry" suggests that imitating the priesthood without proper authority eventually led to polytheistic false gods and human sacrifice. Thus the Book of Abraham placed Egyptian priesthood in an ambivalent position: it imitated the true priesthood but contained idolatrous elements. At the same time, one could glean truth from Egypt if one removed the idolatrous aspects. This positive view of Egypt likely influenced Smith's views of the ancient mystery cults, which scholars at that time said came from Egypt (Chapter Seven).

The *Timaeus*. Abraham then travels to Egypt as in Genesis, but the text then abruptly switches to a vision of the cosmos, with distinct similarities to Plato's *Timaeus*. This part of the Book of Abraham, verses 16 to 23, (the current chapter three) corresponds to the second facsimile from the papyri, a circular diagram called a hypocephalus that Smith interpreted to be an explanation of the cosmos. In the text, God explains that the universe is arranged hierarchically with the star Kolob as the greatest because it is nearest to the throne of God. "And the Lord said unto me, by the Urim and Thummim, that Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof; that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord's time, according to the reckoning of Kolob." With 2 Peter 3:8 saying that one day for God is a thousand human years, this passage seemingly gives an explanation for this idea. God then explains that "the lesser light," or moon, "is above or greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow." Because of this slower movement, "the set time of the lesser light is a longer time as to its reckoning than the reckoning of the time of the earth upon which thou standest." God then explains that the

whole cosmos is arranged this way: "There shall be the reckoning of the time of one planet above another, until thou come nigh unto Kolob, which Kolob is after the reckoning of the Lord's time."[41]

This passage has some similarities to the *Timaeus,* where Timaeus explains that the Demiurge (or creator) created Time by creating the planets.[42] Timaeus then explains that the Demiurge placed the seven planets in different revolutions, with the moon being closest to the earth, followed by the other planets. As in the Book of Abraham, the planets in different orbits rotated differently: "That the orb which formed a lesser circle should revolve swifter; but that which produced a greater more slow:—but that in consequence of the motion of the circle of sameness, the orbs which circulate most swiftly." Furthermore, Timaeus suggests a kind of hierarchy of time, noting that the moon's orbit created a month and the sun's orbit created a year. "But as to the periods of the other stars, they are not understood except by a very few of mankind; nor do the multitude distinguish them by any peculiar appellation…. Hence it may be said, they are ignorant that the wanderings of these bodies are in reality time; as these wandering are endued with an infinite multitude, and an admirable variety of motions."[43]

While the *Timaeus* only speaks of different time in relation to the sun and the moon, it suggests that the rest of the heavenly bodies also have a hierarchy of time but that "the periods of the other stars … are not understood except by a very few of mankind." In the Book of Abraham, God tells Abraham, "It is given unto *thee* to know the set time of all the

[41] "Book of Abraham," *Times and Season,* 3 (March 15, 1842), 719.
[42] Here I quote from Thomas Taylor's 1793 translation, Plato, *The Cratylus, Phædo, Parmenides and Timæus of Plato,* trans. Thomas Taylor (London, 1793). I will also make references to the universal numbering system for Plato's works. This passage is found on pages 37c-39e in that system.
[43] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 469-70.

stars that are set to give light, until thou come near unto the throne of God."[44] Origen said that when the pure in heart ascend through the heavens to the highest heaven "they will clearly see the nature of the stars one by one … For He will show to them, as to children, the causes of things and the power of His creation." Such beings are perfected by this a vision: "Ever gazing purely, and, so to speak, face to face, on the causes of things, it attains perfection."[45] Right after God explains to Abraham about the hierarchy of the stars, Abraham says, "Thus I, Abraham, talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made."[46]

The Book of Abraham continues with Platonic and Origenist themes in the next passages. The Lord explains that there is also a hierarchy of beings: "If there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other …. I am the Lord thy God. I am amore intelligent than they all."[47] Clement had a hierarchy of beings from God down to humans and Origen argued that Paul's reference to "thrones, principalities, and powers" suggested a similar hierarchy of beings.[48] Origen argued that the heavenly hierarchy was a result of the heavenly fall of pre-mortal beings, that "intelligences" fell from the presence of God by an act of free will and that some fell further than others. The angelic hierarchy only fell a small degree, while humans fell further and the devil and his angels fell the furthest: "Each according to the diversity of his conduct, among the different orders, in accordance with their desert."[49] The Book of Abraham does not say the hierarchy was created because of this fall,

[44] "Book of Abraham," 719. Emphasis mine.
[45] Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.11.7.
[46] "Book of Abraham," 719.
[47] "Book of Abraham," 720.
[48] Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 254; Origen, *De Principiis,* 1.5.1.
[49] Origen, *De Principiis,* 1.6.2.

but it does talk of pre-mortal intelligences and the fall of Satan and his angels, discussed below.

Iamblichus said that the "superior classes of being" between humans and gods were "daemons and heroes and pure souls."[50] Pseudo-Dionysius reified the celestial hierarchy with his nine orders of angels—Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels—which became standard in the Middle Ages.[51] Smith himself declared that "all thrones and dominions principalities and powers shall be revealed" to the faithful in his 1839 letter from Liberty Jail.[52] Early modern theurgists like Agrippa, drawing on Neo- and Christian Platonic sources, described an extensive hierarchy of beings.[53] With the Copernian revolution, scholars speculated extensively about what sorts of beings there were in the universe. In 1623, French Friar Marin Mersenne, wondered if there were "many species between God and the angels that are not represented in this world, but might exist in others."[54] Young Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1728, "I believe that man is not the most perfect being but one, but rather as there are many degrees of beings superior to him."[55]

In *The Travels of Cyrus,* various ancient sages describe their different nations' cosmogonies to Cyrus, almost all of which describe pre-mortal beings falling to earth. In the Persian cosmogony, the "endless number of genii of all different orders" fall, but only those that were "least criminal" were sent to earth; the rest stayed on other planets. In the Phoenician cosmogony, the goddess Uriana falls and brings her children (the gods who

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[50] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature , 2003.), 13.
[51] Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*.
[52] Jean Leclerq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1987): 25-32; Smith, "To the Church at Quincy, Illinois 20 March 1839," in Jesse, *Personal Writings*, 437.
[53] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, 530-74.
[54] Steven J. Dick, *Plurality of Worlds: The Origins of Extraterrestrial Life Debate from Democritus to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 93.
[55] Franklin, "First Principles," 2.

inhabited the planets) with her, who "became demi-gods." Uriana then fell again, this time to earth, but was only able to "seduce but a small number of" the demi-gods to come with her "and those demi-gods became men." Pythagoras, says Cyrus, "represented to us the divine immensity, as containing innumerable worlds inhabited by spirits of different orders."[56] In 1750, astronomer Thomas Write wrote of "an inconceivable Variety of Beings and States" that "fill the endless Orb of Immensity."[57]

After seeing the hierarchy of the cosmos, Abraham is shown a vision of pre-mortal beings. "Now the Lord had shewn 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."[58] This passage is similar to the passage in the *Timaeus* where the Demiurge creates other gods and tells them to create humans. The Demiurge says that the gods need to create humans to make the universe perfect but that he (the Demiurge) cannot create them directly or they would be gods. The Demiurge then adds, "And whatever among these is of such a nature as to deserve the same appellation with immortals, which obtains sovereignty in these, and willingly pursues justice, and reverence you—of this I myself will deliver the seed and beginning: it is your business to accomplish the rest."[59] There would be certain among the mortals that were special and that would "obtain sovereignty," or be made

[56] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 84-85, 257-58, 337.
[57] Dick, *Plurality of Worlds*, 171.
[58] "Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 16, 1842): 720. In Phelps' "Paracletes" the head God tells "his oldest son, you are the rightful heir to all, but you know I have many kingdoms and many mansions, and of course it will need many kings and many priests, to govern them, come you with me in solemn council, and let us and some of the "best" men we have had born in the regions of light, to rule in those kingdoms." [Phelps,] "Paracletes," 891.
[59] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Taylor, 473; 41a-d.

"rulers" like in the Book of Abraham. After these instructions, the Demiurge then creates pre-mortal human souls in the "crater" or mixing bowl. Such an act could be termed organizing "the intelligences … before the world was" as in the Book of Abraham. The notion of a precreation where beings were chosen before they were born is found in Origen and the Book of Mormon (Chapter Three). But whereas Origen and the Book of Mormon say that the beings were chosen because of their righteous choices, the *Timaeus* and the Book of Abraham do not say why the beings are "noble and great" or "deserve the same appellation with immortals." Thus while the Book of Mormon follows Origen, the Book of Abraham follows *Timaeus*.

The Nous. Using the term "intelligence" to describe pre-mortal beings was similar to the Platonic concept of the nous; indeed, intelligence is one way to translate nous in to English, mind is another. Smith used both terms to describe a similar concept. In Plato's *Alcibiades*, Socrates says the part of the soul "in which knowing and thinking take place" is the "part of it that resembles the divine" and in the *Phaedo*, "our souls also existed apart from the body before they took on human form, and they had intelligence."[60] The nous was the uncreated part of the soul, a divine spark that emanated from God. The nous was akin to the divine, and by listening to it, one could discover the divinity within and ultimately become divine oneself. "Nous, then, is more like an organ or mystical union than anything suggested by our words 'mind' or 'intellect," explains Andrew Louth, "And yet nous does mean mind."[61]

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[60] Plato, *Alcibiades,* 133c. Scholars debate whether the Alcibiades is an authentic Platonic dialogue, but it was a favorite of the Neoplatonists. *Phaedo,* 76c.

[61] Andrew Louth. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1981, xiii, xvi.

For Philo, "Foundational to assimilation is the underlying kinship between human beings and God's Logos via the mind," explains Charles Anderson.[62] Christian Platonists also spoke of a divine part of the soul. "In the Christian Platonism of Clement," explains Robert Pierce Casey, "man shared in the divine life by his possession of a mind akin and allied to the divine Logos. The way to this union was through intellectual and moral discipline confirmed and strengthened by the sacraments."[63] Jean Danielou explains, "A certain light of its own carries the man through the various mystic stages until he is restored to the highest pace of rest having taught the pure in heart to contemplate God face to face with knowledge and comprehension."[64] Origen refers to pre-mortal beings as "intellects" or noi, "all created equal after the pattern of the only true image, the Logos," explains Bernard McGinn.[65]

That a part of the soul was uncreated was controversial, however. Justin Martyr's conversion from Platonism to Christianity illustrates this point. As a Platonist, Justin "expected immediately to look upon God, for this is the end of Plato's philosophy." While contemplating these things, Justin met an old man who questioned the soul's ability to see God and explained that contrary to what the Platonists taught, the soul was not eternal because souls were created. "For God alone is unbegotten and incorruptible," the old man explained "and therefore He is God, but all other things after Him are created and corruptible…. For that which is unbegotten is similar to, equal to, and the same with that

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[62] Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 157.
[63] Robert Pierce Casey, "Introduction," Clement of Alexandria, *The Exceprta Ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, trans. and ed. by Robert Pierce Casey (London: Christophers, 1934), 36.
[64] Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 450.
[65] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 113.

which is unbegotten."[66] The old man then told Justin of the Hebrew Prophets and Jesus, and having now rejected the eternity of the soul, Justin converted to Christianity. Explains Andrew Louth,

> But, for [orthodox] Christianity, man is a creature; he is not ultimately God's kin, but created out of nothing by God and only sustained in being by dependence on His will. There is an ontological gulf between God as his creation, a real difference of being. Only in Christ, in whom divine and human natures are united, do we find One who is of one substance with the Father. At this point Christianity and Platonism are irreconcilable.[67]

Clement and Origen, of course, felt differently, as did many Christian Platonists that came after. But the idea of the uncreated nous remained controversial.

Neoplatonists promoted the idea of the nous as well. Iamblichus taught the doctrine of henads, or the spark of divinity in the soul and throughout the creation generally.[68] Explains Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, "Echoing Plato, [the emperor] Julian describes the Promethean fire as a particle of the sun sent by the gods to the world to become the logos and the nous, through which humanity shares in divinity. The incorporeal reason that is in man pushes him towards philosophy, 'the art of arts and science of sciences' which consists of nothing less than knowledge of oneself and assimilation to the divine."[69] For Proclus, explains Lucas Siorvances, "For souls to elevate, they must have a spark of divinity, their respective 'one."[70]

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[66] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho,* chapters 2 and 5.
[67] Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition,* xiii.
[68] Lucas Siorvances, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 168-69.
[69] Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 136.
[70] Siorvances, *Proclus,* 168.

In the Middle Ages, intelligences, or *mens*, were unembodied spirits associated with the stars and planets.[71] Medieval thinkers also spoke of a particular part of the soul. Albertus Magnus spoke of an "intellectual soul" that if purified led one back to God. Meister Eckhart talked a lot about the "uncreated something" in the soul, which got him in trouble with the authorities. Eckhart was accused of teaching that "there is something in the soul that is uncreated and not capable of creation; if the whole soul were such, it would be uncreated and not capable of creation; and this in intellect." Eckhart denied this charge, but Bernard McGinn notes that Eckhart had taught this on several occasions.[72] Kabbalah also taught that "spirits were made of the same divine essence as God."[73]

Agrippa said an intelligence was "an intelligible substance, free from all gross and putrefying mass of a body, immortal, insensible, assisting all, having influence over all; and the nature of all intelligences, spirits and angels is the same." Agrippa also said that the soul of man "is a certain divine substance, flowing from a divine fountain."[74] Early modern mystics were heavily influenced by Eckhart and repeated his teachings. Valentine Weigel declared, "Our soul is spirit and God is spirit; hence the soul is in God and God in the souls, for they are of the same nature." Like Neo- and Christian Platonists before him, Weigel taught that it was through the divine part of the soul that we receive revelation from God: "The object is already present within us, in the inner ground of the soul and heart, i.e. God,

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[71] David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450.* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 260.
[72] Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300-1500),* vol. IV of the *Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 19-20, 150.
[73] Paul Kleber Monad, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 109.
[74] Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* trans. James Freake, ed. Donald Tyson (Woodbury, Minn.: Llewellyn, 1993), 499, 585. Other references to Intelligences are on pages 6, 37, 39, 110. 208, 216, 250, 330, 345, 365, 415, 430, 499. Agrippa said the intelligences were the nine orders of angels on 250 and references the *Timaeus* in regards to intelligences on 39.

the Word, finds there his dwelling place." Thus Christians needed to heed this inner light. Lutheran authorities condemned personal revelation as "enthusiasm," leading Weigel to declare, "Woe to you teachers on that [last] day, because you did not teach your poor, simple congregation to listen inwardly and guide them to the inner word. Woe to you in eternity because you condemned such talk from your pulpit as fanaticism and enthusiasm."[75]

Many other early modern mystics spoke of heeding the inner word or light, particularly the Quakers. Not only were such ideas condemned (Chapter One), but a number of early modern thinkers also specifically called such beliefs a Platonic corruption. These critics argued that belief in personal revelation was based on the Platonic notion of an uncreated part of the soul through which humans could receive revelation that would lead them back to God. As German Protestant Johann Christoph Adelung declared, "The inner light, or as the Quaker and mystic calls it, the Christ in us, is then nothing else but the imagination, which according to such enthusiasts is the true divine soul."[76] Many early modern Christian Platonists did teach this idea including Jacob Boehme, John Pordage, Jane Lead, and Emmanuel Swedenborg.[77]

In a list of items that the reader was to learn from her revelations, Jane Lead declared, "Thirdly, we are excited to consider, what we Mortals are, from whom our Descent is, and what manner of Spirit we consist of, and exist by. For until we understand our own Eternal being, we cannot know God, the Being of all Being. For as we are the inbreathed Soul from

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[75] Steven D. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 212, 216, 224.
[76] Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 106, 137.
[77] Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 21, 39, 78, 183; Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: UK: Ashgate, 2005), 118; Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason,* trans. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), 136.

God, we live in his Essence."[78] Smith said something similar in the King Follett Discourse, as recorded by William Clayton, "Few beings in the world who understand the character of God and do not comprehend their own character." In Willard Richard's notes, "If men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves."[79]

"Know thyself" or *gnothi seauton* was an old saying inscribed at Delphi that Plato quoted a number of times in his dialogues.[80] It is this saying that Socrates uses to focus on the divine part of the soul "in which knowing and thinking take place." Socrates says that to know ourselves we must look at the soul with a mirror and adds, "The way we can best know ourselves is to use the finest mirror available and look at God."[81] Thus, as with Smith and Lead, knowing ourselves and knowing God were linked. Clement proposed several meanings to "know thyself." "It may be an injunction to the pursuit of knowledge. For it is not possible to know the parts without the essence of the whole; and one must study the genesis of the universe, that thereby we may be able to learn the nature of man." In another place, Clement says to know yourself is to "know for what you were born, and whose image you are; and what is your essence, and what your creation, and what your relation to God, and the like."[82] Though ambiguous, the statement suggests to know oneself has to do with ones relation to God. Ralph Waldo Emerson explicitly argued that to know thyself was to know ones own divine nature in his poem by that name: *Gnothi Seauton* (1831). In it, Emerson asserts the idea of the nous: "God dwells in thee./ It is no metaphor nor parable,/ It is unknown to thousands, and to thee; Yet there is God." Emerson continues, "But if thou

[78] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation*, 61.
[79] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 356, 340.
[80] *Charmides* 164d, *Laws* 923a, *Phaedrus* 230a, *Philebus* 48c, and *Protagoras* 343b in addition to the references in the *Alcibiades*.
[81] Plato, *Alcibiades,* 133b-c. D. S. Hutchinson thinks the part about seeing God "seems to have been added by a later neo-Platonist scholar." Plato, *Complete Works of Plato,* ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1997), 592 n. 30.
[82] Clement, *Stromata,* 1.14, 5.4.

listen to his voice,/ If thou obey the royal thought,/ It will grow clearer to thine ear,/ More glorious to thine eye./ The clouds will burst that veil him now/ And thou shalt see the Lord."[83] Like Lead's sparks, if one listened to his or her God within, it would become ones own eyes and ears. To know thyself was to understand this nature. Smith took this idea a step further: if humans could become deified, then God was a deified man (see below).

Lead spoke of the sparks being "generated" from the "Tri-Un Deity" (Chapter Three) while Smith said that intelligences were uncreated. Yet Lead said the sparks were generated out of the "Trine-Un deity" similar to Kabbalah. Furthermore, Lead added, "These Spirits do proceed immediately from the Fountain Source of all Spirits."[84] Using the word "proceed" was similar to John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." In standard Trinitarianism, the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father while being coeternal with him.[85] Lead's use of "proceeds" to describe these spirits suggests that they had the same relationship with the Father as the Holy Ghost. William Phelps used the Greek word for the Comforter, *parakletos,* for the title of his work "Parakletes," suggesting similarly to Lead that pre-mortal beings "proceeded" from the Father like the Holy Ghost did. Lead's statements about these sparks lacked cohesion, but may have still had essentials in common with Smith's intelligences.

Andrew Michael Ramsay used "intelligences" frequently in *The Travels of Cyrus* to mean spiritual beings generally. "Mankind are all but one family of that immense republic of intelligences, of which God is the common Father," Ramsay stated in his introduction. Later

[83] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Gnothi Seauton* (1831), http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/authors/emerson/poems/gnothi.html
[84] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation*, 46.
[85] That the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father was part of the Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed.

Ramsay declared, "The notion of a spirit constituted by the supreme God to be the head and guide of all spirits, is very ancient. The Hebrew doctors believed that the soul of the Messias was created from the beginning of the world, and appointed to preside over all the orders of intelligences." In terms of intelligences as pre-mortal humans, Ramsay has different sages recount their myths of the pre-mortal world to Cyrus. For the Persians, the intelligences were divided between Jyngas and a lower order called genii, genii being of the order that became humans. For the Hebrews, intelligences were divided between cherubim and ishim; again, the lower ishim became humans.[86] The Book of Abraham does mention the noble and great ones among the intelligences but suggests that the distinction is only important for who will become rulers on earth like Abraham. Thus this passage in the Book of Abraham most closely resembles the *Timaeus*.

Smith first used the term "intelligence" in section 82 (now 93) of the Doctrine and Covenants, the section that made cryptic references to the plan of salvation. In highly abstract language, the revelation declared, "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence."[87] The revelation referred to humans' pre-existent state, used "intelligence" in that context, and even said that "intelligence" like the nous, could not be created or destroyed. Yet "intelligence" is not explicitly equated with pre-mortal beings in this passage, but instead is said to be "light and truth." In 1836 Oliver Cowdery published a section from Thomas Dick's *The Philosophy of a Future State*, under the title "On the Absurdity of Supposing that the Thinking Principle in Man Will Ever Be Annihilated." The

[86] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus*, xxi, 330, 85-87, 291-92.
[87] Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, 211-12. Current 93:29-30.

term "thinking principle in man" is essentially the concept of the nous. Dick also referred to this part of man as "mind," "rational nature," and "the spark of intelligence" all terms that had been used for the nous. Dick also seemed to refer to this as a pre-mortal aspect of man—"God is every day creating thousands of minds" and "innumerable intelligences that are incessantly emerging into existence"—but he seemed to suggest that such were created at some point.[88] Smith would assert that this aspect was uncreated, but Dick may have provided Smith additional vocabulary for this concept.

Smith first used the term intelligence to explicitly mean pre-mortal beings in a speech in 1841. As recorded in the McIntire minute book on March 28, 1841, "[T]he spirit or the inteligence of men are self Existant principles … before the foundation this Earth—& quotes the Lords question to Job 'where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the Earth' Evidence that Job was in Existing somewhere at that time."[89] Before this statement, Smith explicitly referred to pre-mortal beings, but used the term "spirit."[90] In the quote from March 1841, Smith equated spirit and intelligence. When speaking of pre-mortal beings, Smith was explicit that, as with the nous, they were uncreated. "The Sprit of Man is not a created being; it existed from Eternity & will exist to eternity."[91] In the King Follett Discourse, Thomas Bullock recorded Smith saying, "[T]he soul the in[ne]r Spirit—of God[,] man says [was] created in the begin[in]g. the very idea lessens man in my idea—I don't bel[ieve] the doct[rine]."[92] Just as Justin's old man declared that teaching that man was uncreated lessened God, Smith said teaching that "the soul the inner spirit" was created lessened man. In the King Follett discourse, both Wilford Woodruff and William Clayton recorded Smith

[88] "Extracts from Dick's Philosophy," Messenger and Advocate 3, no. 3 (December 1836): 423-25
[89] March 28, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 67.
[90] Before August 8, 1839, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 9.
[91] Before August 8, 1839, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 8.
[92] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 351.

saying "the soul the mind of man," instead of "inner Spirit," but both of these terms relate to this idea of the nous.[93] Again, Dick had used the term "mind" to refer to this concept. Another statement in the discourse is also similar to the concept of the nous. "The mind of man—the intelligent part is coequal with God himself."[94] Here Smith said the "mind" was a particular part of man. Neo and Christian Platonists held that the nous was a particular part of the soul: the intellect. Smith's statement suggests a similar idea: mind is "the intelligent part."[95]

The Council of the Gods. The linking of Abraham to the pre-mortal elect is similar to a statement from Adam Clarke: "The whole scheme of the Gospel in Christ, and as it stands in relation to his blood, or obedience unto death, was formed in the council of God before the calling of Abraham, and even before the beginning of the world."[96] The notion of a council of the gods is found throughout the ancient world.[97] The *Timaeus* says the Demiurge called a council before he created humans: "When therefore all such gods as visibly revolve, and all such as become apparent when they please, were generated, the Artificer of the universe addressed them: 'Gods of gods, of whom I am the demiurgus and father.'" The Demiurge then gives them their assignment to create human bodies.[98] Clement of Alexanderia quoted Psalms 81:1 when speaking of deification in his *Stromata*: "God stood

[93] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 345, 359. Hannah Adams wrote "The moral doctrine of the Alexandrian school was as follows:--The mind of man originally a portion of the divine Being, having fallen." "Eclectics," *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathan, Mahomoten, and Christian, Ancient and Modern*, 4th ed (Boston: James Eastburn), 1817), 72-73.
[94] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 359.
[95] As discussed in Chapter Three, the Book of Mormon refers to Christ having a spirit body prior to his incarnation; thus humans may have also received spirit bodies prior to earth life.
[96] Adam Clark, "A Key to the Apostolical Writings," in *New Testament*, 2:24.
[97] Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford, 1993), 13-14.
[98] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 472; 41a.

in the congregation of the gods, He judges in the midst of the gods."[99] Early modern scholars referenced heavenly councils in biblical and classical sources.[100] Genesis 1:27, "let us make man in our own image," brought considerable comment from biblical scholars. Both Bishop Symon Patrick's 1738 commentary and Adam Clark's 1811 commentary argue that "let us" refers to the Trinity and not to the "Jewish" belief (citing Maimonides), "Who fancy a kind of Senate of Council of Angels, without whom God doth nothing."[101] "High rabbinical authority affirms," said John Allen, "that angels were consulted respecting the creation of man," and Allen referred to the angels as "the angelic council."[102]

Smith elaborated on this point two years later in the King Follett discourse. Smith creatively read the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 to argue for a reading in line with the *Timaeus*. Alexander Neibaur, a Jew turned Christian turned Mormon, was Smith's Hebrew tutor in Nauvoo and demonstrated knowledge and interest in Kabbalah.[103] Yet rather than referring to a council of "angels," Smith referred to a council of "gods." In the speech, Smith argued that the Hebrew word *Bereshith*, in the Genesis 1:1 had been tampered with by "an old Jew" who added *Be* at the beginning of *Roshith.* By removing *Be*, the scripture should read, "The Head one of the Gods brought forth the Gods.'"[104] As noted by Lance Owens, this reading of Genesis 1:1 was in line with the Kabbalah text the *Zohar*.[105] Smith mentioned the council of

[99] Clement, *Stromata*, 2.20.
[100] "Letter from Voltaire to the Duke of Valiere; from Voltaire's Letters lately translated by Dr. Franklin" in *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1770* (London 1771), 145.
[101] Symon Patrick, Bishop of Ely, *A Commentary upon the Historical Books of the Old Testament,* 2 vols (London, 1738) 1:7; Clarke, *Holy Bible,* Gen. 1:28.
[102] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 151.
[103] Lance S. Owens, "Joseph Smith and the Kabbalah: The Occult Connection," *Dialogue* 27, no. 3 (1994): 117-94.
[104] Smith, sermon, April 7, 1844, Words of Joseph Smith, 350-51.
[105] Owens, "Smith and the Kabbalah," 179-81; *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition*, trans. and comm. by Daniel C. Matt, 6 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 1:110.

the Gods in his 1839 letter from Liberty Jail where he said that among the knowledge that God would reveal was

> if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the dry land or to the sun moon or stars all the times of their revolutions all their appointed days month[s] and years and all the Days of their days, months and years, and all their glories laws and set times shall be reveal[e]d in the days of the dispensation of the fullness of times according to that which was ordained in the midst of the council of the eternal God of all other Gods before the world was.[106]

This statement followed both the *Timaeus* and the Book of Abraham in first stating the relationship between the revolutions of the sun, moon, and stars and periods of time and then mentioning the council of the gods. Neibaur arrived from England in 1841 and thus was not the source of these ideas.[107] However, neither in the statement from the Liberty-jail letter nor in the two other references to the council of the gods prior to Smith's 1844 King Follett discourse does Smith mention the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 as justification for his claims about the Head God calling forth the other gods.[108] While Neibaur was not the source of Smith's claims about the council of the gods, he likely helped point Smith to a biblical justification for the belief.[109] In the King Follett discourse, just before his discussion of the council of the Gods, Smith declared, "I sup[pose] I am not all[owe]d to go into investing[atio]n but what is cont[aine]d in the Bible & I think is so many wise men who wo[ul]d put me to death for

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[106] Smith, To the Church at Quincy, 20 March 1839, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 437.
[107] Owens, "Smith and the Kabbalah," 173.
[108] The other statements include a speech given circa August 8, 1839, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9 and the Book of Abraham.
[109] In the King Follett discourse, Smith said, "I have been read[in]g the Germ[an]: I find it to be the most correct that I have found & it corresponds the nearest to the rev[elation]ns that I have given the last 16 y[ea]rs." (April 7 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 351). Neibaur was Smith's German tutor suggesting that Smith saw lots of similarities between his revelations and Neibaur's interpretation of the Bible.

treason."[110] This statement suggests that Smith wanted to reference sources outside the Bible but felt that doing so would create backlash.

Gods. Smith's claim about the council of the gods implied the radical idea that there were multiple gods. In his 1839 letter, he asserted that "whither there be one god or many gods they shall be manifest" but then went on speak of "the eternal God of all other Gods."[111] When the Book of Abraham covers the creation, it goes through the various stages in the creation as in Genesis, but says that "the gods" perform the creative acts. In his "Paracletes," Phelps said the creation was performed by the "organizing power of the Gods, or sons of the 'head,'" and Phelps named seven gods who were of particular importance. Both Clement of Alexandria and Jane Lead spoke of a group of seven gods just below the Trinity.[112] In the *Timaeus,* the creator acts alone until he gets to the creation of human bodies, similar to Genesis where in verse 26, "let us make man in our own image." Again, most commentators interpreted this to mean the Trinity.

The issue of the Trinity and monotheism had always been a tricky one for Christian theologians.[113] When Smith defended his claim that there were multiple gods in his very last sermon, he began with the Trinity. Smith started by noting that dissenters were now claiming that he was teaching that there were multiple gods, to which Smith readily admitted and said he had been teaching for fifteen years: "I have always decl[are]d God to be a distinct personage—J[esus] C[hrist] a sep[arate] & distinct pers[on] from God the Fa[the]r the H[oly] G[host] was a distinct personage & or Sp[irit] & these 3 constit[ute] 3 distinct personages &

[110] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 350.
[111] Smith, "Letter to the Church," March 20, 1839, 437.
[112] Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria," 256, 262; Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 8, 25-26, 28, Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 6, 40.
[113] Michael Frede, "Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity," in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, ed. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 41-68.

3 Gods." Smith did not stop there, "[T]he doctrine of a plurality of Gods is as prominent in the Bible as any doctrine—it is all over the face of the Bible, it stands beyond the power of controversy—a wayfaring man tho a fool need not fail—Paul says there are gods many & Lords many."[114] This reference to 1 Corinthians 8:5 brought some discussion in the early modern period, with most commentators asserting that the gods of the heathens were not real. The encyclopedia entry on "Mysteries" made reference to the phrase when discussing the theology of the mysteries. The entry agreed with Bishop Warburton (Chapter Seven) that the mysteries taught the unity of the Supreme God but also noted that the mysteries taught that the lesser gods were real.[115]

The concept of a hierarchy of gods was common in antiquity: Neoplatonists asserted a hierarchy of gods proceeding from the One. As noted above, Clement, Origen, and Dionysius proposed a hierarchy of beings, and Clement referred to the seven angels just below the Trinity, the *protactists*, as gods.[116] "You will notice," Dionysius explained further, "how God's word gives the title of 'gods' not only to those heavenly beings who are our superiors, but also to those sacred men among us who are distinguished for their love of God."[117] Agrippa made numerous references to gods, saying the creator "is the producer of the second causes, which therefore we call secondary gods."[118] In his "On Our Religion to God, to Christ, and the Church," Newton declared, "To give the name of God to angels or kings, is not against the First Commandment. To give the worship of the God of the Jews to angels or kings, is against it." Newton then followed up this statement by asserting, "To us

[114] June 18, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 378.
[115] "Mysteries," 12:594.
[116] Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria," 256, 262
[117] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*, 12.3.
[118] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 448.

there is but one God."[119] Ramsay quoted Plato's *Apology* in the *Travels of Cyrus*, saying, "Socrates acknowledges certain subordinate deities, and teaches, that the stars and the sun are animated by intelligences who ought to be worshipped with divine honors."[120]

Smith went even further in his last sermon: "[I]t is a great subject I am dwelling on—the word Eloiheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro— Gods—the heads of the Gods appointed one God for us."[121] Here Smith seemed to be clarifying his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8:5-6: "to us there is but one God," because the "the heads of the Gods appointed one God for us." The idea that God appointed lower gods to rule over different nations was common in antiquity. Josephus said that Abraham "was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but One God, the Creator of the Universe; and that as to other [gods] if they contributed any thing to the happiness of men, that each of them afforded it only according to his appointment, and not by their own power."[122] Iamblichus asserted, "To each race upon the earth he has allotted a general supervisor."[123] Dionysius said that God appointed angels to oversee the various nations and that these angels were often called gods.[124] Agrippa said that the gods that ruled the gentiles nations were the heavenly bodies: "The other gods, to which the other nations were given, were the Sun, Moon, twelve signs, and other celestial bodies … the whole militia of Heaven." "Therefore," Agrippa continued, "all people worshiped their gods with their proper ceremonies."[125] Isaac Newton's editor, John Conduitt, reported that Newton wondered toward the end of his life "whether there were

[119] A Remarkable and Curious Conversation," 322; quoted in Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Context, Sources, and Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 163.
[120] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 343; Plato, *Apology,* 27-28.
[121] Smith, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 379.
[122] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 7.1 in *Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus,* 102.
[123] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis,* V.25.
[124] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*, 9. 4.
[125] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 491.

not intelligent beings superior to us who superintended these revolutions of heavenly bodies by the direction of the Superior Being."[126]

Scholars argue that Newton's beliefs may have prompted an even more radical statement from the young Benjamin Franklin.[127] As mentioned in Chapter Four, Franklin thought of "that space that is every way infinite, and conceive[d] it filled with suns like ours, each with a chorus of worlds for ever moving round him; this little ball on which we move, seems, even in my narrow imagination, to be almost nothing, and myself less than nothing, and of no sort of consequence." Franklin, therefore, felt that "*the infinite Father* expects or requires no worship or praise from us, but that he is even INFINITELY ABOVE IT." Instead Franklin argued, "I conceive then that the INFINITE has created many beings or gods, vastly superior to man, who can better conceive his perfections than we, and return him a more rational and glorious praise." "Howbeit," Franklin continued, "I conceive that each of these [gods] is exceeding wise and good, and very powerful; and that each has made for himself one glorious sun, attended with a beautiful and admirable system of planets. It is that particular wise and good God, who is the author and owner of our system, that I propose for the object of my praise and adoration." Thus our solar system had its own God, whom Franklin described as "a *good Being*" who "delights in the happiness of those he has created." "Let me not fail, then, to praise my God continually," Franklin concluded, "for it is his due, and it is all I can return for his many favors and great goodness to me; and let me

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[126] "A Remarkable and Curious Conversation between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Conduitt" in David Brewster, *The Life of Sir Isaac Newton* (New York: J. and J. Harper, 1832), 322.

[127] While Franklin never met Newton, he did meet Newton's editor, John Conduitt, during Franklin's visit to London in 1725. James Parton, *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1867), 1:174; I. Bernard Cohen, *Franklin and Newton: An Inquiry into Speculative Newtonian Experimental Science and Franklin's Work in Electricity as an Example Thereof* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956); 208-9; Michael J. Crowe, *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, 1750-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 107.

resolve to be virtuous, that I may be happy, that I may please him, who is delighted to see me happy. Amen!"[128]

The notion of a head God over lesser Gods who participate in the creation is similar to the *Timaeus*; Franklin's statement therefore suggests an adaptation of the *Timaeus* to the post-Newtonian world.[129] Smith's ideas suggest a similar approach, and Franklin's statement, which was in print at the time, may have had some influence.

Creation out of Matter. The Book of Abraham's similarities with the *Timaeus* continued. "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell."[130] This statement is an explicit reference to creating out of existing material, or the rejection of creation *ex nihilo*. The *Timaeus* also said the Demiurge created out of existing materials. When the Demiurge "composed the body of the universe," he did so from "fire, water, air, and earth."[131] The Demiurge did not create these elements, but used them to create the universe. In the same speech where Smith explicitly said, "The Spirit of Man is not a created being," Smith added, "Anything created cannot be Eternal. & earth, water &c—all these had their existence in an elementary State from Eternity." A year and a half later, Smith added, "[T]he Earth was made out of sumthing for it was impossible for a sumthing to be made out of Nothing[.] fire, air, & watter are Eternal Existant principles which are the Composition of which the Earth-has been Composed."[132] Not only did Smith say that the earth was created out of the same

[128] Franklin, "Frist Principles," 2-3.
[129] Riley, *American Philosophy,* 50.
[130] "Book of Abraham," 720.
[131] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 459-60; 31b-32d.
[132] January 5, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 61.

elements that the *Timaeus* said it was—fire, water, air, and earth—but he also used the same word for creation as Taylor's translation: "composed."

In this same speech, Smith added another interesting detail: "This earth was organized or formed out of other planets which were broke up and remodelled and made into the one on which we live. The elements are eternal."[133] Smith's statement that the world was made up of prior planets was suggested by contemporary scientists and was an idea promoted by the ancient atomists. The atomists argued that our world happened by chance out of a universe filled with atoms that came together in various formations, including the earth. The atomists, therefore, argued that there were an infinite number of worlds, or *kosmoi*, and that the various worlds were in a continual process or formation and disintegration. Aristotle rejected the idea, saying not only that there was only one *kosmos* but also there could not be any other bodies like the earth in the *kosmos* because heavy, earthy material would flow to the center of the universe, or where the earth is. Aristotle's ideas were highly influential throughout the Middle Ages; Copernicus's claim that the earth rotated around the sun, however, was a major rejection of Aristotle's assertions. Not long after, scholars began to translate the works of the atomists into Latin and began to speculate about the possibilities of multiple or infinite worlds. The term "world" came to mean earths like ours, rather than *kosmoi,* and people began to assert that the stars and planets were earths, eventually asserting that the stars were suns with planets moving around them. Atomism remained influential; Henry More attempted to combine atomism and Platonism in his *Democritus Platonissans,*

[133] January 5, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 60.

or, an Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds (1648) and Newton was also influenced by atomism.[134] Unlike the ancient atomists, however, God played an active role in their systems.

Atomism was still influential among the scientists in Smith's day. In the section of Thomas Dick's work that the Mormons printed, Dick declared, "There is no reason to believe, that, throughout all the worlds which are dispersed through the immensity of space, a single atom has ever yet been, or ever will be annihilated. From a variety of observations, it appears highly probable, that the work of creation is still going forward in the distant regions of the universe, and that the Creator is replenishing the voids of space with new worlds and new orders of intelligent beings."[135] Saying that the earth was made up of prior planets was an atomist claim; Smith therefore drew on atomism in his rejection of creation ex nihilo. Like Henry More, Smith combined atomism and Platonism. Dick himself accepted creation ex nihilo: in another work, Dick declared, "how great, beyond all human or angelic conception, must be the power and intelligence of that glorious Being, who called this system from nothing into existence, and continually superintends all its movements!"[136]

Dick may have been trying to maintain a degree of religious orthodoxy with his assertion of creation ex nihilo. Orthodox Protestants viewed the claim that God created out of existing materials to be a Platonic heresy. In fact, Protestant scholars declared the two chief Platonic heresies to be that God created out of existing matter and that there was an

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[134] Steven J. Dick, *Plurality of Worlds: The Origins of Extraterrestrial Life Debate from Democritus to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 8-16, 44-49. Some medieval thinkers did propose multiple worlds/*kosmoi* in opposition to Aristotle. Edward Grant, "Cosmology," in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David D. Lindberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.

[135] "Extracts from Dick's Philosophy," 423. 425. Dick was more explicit in another work, in which he refuted "the modern infidel" who rejected "the idea of the dissolution of the world, and the restitution of the universe." "No substances or world which God has created," Dick continued, "will ever be suffered to fall into annihilation—at least, that the original atoms of matter will never be destroyed, whatever new forms they may assume, and however varied the combinations into which they may enter." Thomas Dick, *The Christian Philosopher* in *The Works of Thomas Dick* (Hartford Conn.: H. F. Sumner, 1836), 133

[136] Dick, *Christian Philosopher*, 92.

uncreated part of the soul (the nous).[137] The entry under "Platonism" in Dobson's encyclopedia said that in Plato's *Timaeus*, "Matter is so manifestly spoken of as *eternally co-existing* with God that this part of his doctrine could not have been mistaken by so many learned and able writers, had they not been seduced by the desire of establishing a coincidence of doctrine between the writings of Plato and Moses."[138] Smith used a very similar phrase in the King Follett discourse. Smith said that the Hebrew word for create, *bara,* ("Boro" in Thomas Bullock's notes) "means to organize same as you wo[ul]d organize a Ship.—God himself had materials to org[anise] the world out of chaos which is Element & in which dwells all the glory—that nothing can destroy[,] they never can have an ending they *coexist eternally*."[139] Adam Clarke's commentary on Genesis 1:1 specifically argued against the points Smith asserted.

> The Rabbins, who are legitimate judges in a case of verbal criticism on their own language, are unanimous in asserting that the word *bara* expressed the commencement of the existence of a thing: or its egression from nonentity to entity…. The supposition that God formed all things our of pre-existing eternal nature is certainly absurd: for, if there was an eternal nature beside an eternal God, there must have been two self-existing, independent, and eternal beings, which is a most palpable contradiction.[140]

[137] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* 102-19, 137.
[138] "Platonism," in *Encyclopaedia; or, a Dictionary or Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798), 15:41. Emphasis mine.
[139] Smith, sermon, April, 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 351. Emphasis mine.
[140] Clarke, *Holy Bible*, Genesis 1:1.

Smith specifically argued the exact opposite, and John Allen listed as the first principle of Kabbalah, "From nothing, nothing can be produced.—This is the foundation or a principal point of the whole Cabbalistic philosophy, and of all the emanative system."[141]

Andrew Louth argues that certain early fathers adopted the idea of creation ex nihilo specifically to attack Christian Platonism: "The doctrine was unknown to pagan philosophy, and emerged only slowly and uncertainly in early Christian theology."[142] Anthony Meredith and Henry Chadwick argue that creation ex nihilo developed at least partially as a response to Gnosticism.[143] Justin Martyr accepted creation out of matter while Irenaeus promoted ex nihilo creation; Clement of Alexandria was unclear on the issue and was later accused of asserting pre-created material.[144] Creation ex nihilo, argues Louth, did more than deny the eternity of matter, it also denied the eternity of the soul. "The soul's kinship with the divine was destroyed by the doctrine of creation ex nihilo," argues Louth, because the soul was now a "creature" of the divine, a created thing and not coeternal. "Neither for Plato nor for Origen were souls created: they were pre-existent and immortal."[145] Justin Martyr said the old man made the same argument to him, "If the world [or matter] is begotten, souls also are necessarily begotten."[146] Smith also linked these two ideas in his King Follett discourse.

In the *Travels of Cyrus*, Pythagoras explains to Cyrus, "When the great Jupiter, said I, creates, he does not draw of being out of nothing." Later in the book, Ramsay quotes a hymn of Agronautica and Ovid asserting that God created out of chaos. Ramsay, however, argues

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[141] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 78.
[142] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 75.
[143] Anthony Meredith S.J., *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (London: T and T Clark, 2012), 81-82; Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 47.
[144] Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, 12, 47.
[145] Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition,* 75-76.
[146] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho,* ch. 5. In antiquity, "world" meant the cosmos. Thus those who argued for the eternity of matter called this the eternity of the world.

that the Orientals and Egyptians say that chaos came as a result of rebellious beings: "It was the imagination of the Greek poets that first brought forth the monstrous Manichean doctrine of two co-eternal principle[s]; a supreme intelligence and a blind matter; light and darkness; and undigested chaos, and a Deity to reduce it to order." Smith argued that God and matter *were* two co-eternal principals in the King Follett discourse. Ultimately, Ramsay made clear that in Plato's theology, "When God creates, he does not draw a being out of nothing as out of a subject upon which he works; but he makes something exist which did not exist before."[147] Thus the sources available to Smith that spoke of creation out of matter attributed the idea to Plato.

Sent to Earth. The parallels between the *Timaeus* and the Book of Abraham continue. After the "one like unto God" (Jesus) proposes creating the earth, he says, "and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and they, who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they, who keep not their first estate, shall not have glory in the same kingdom, with those who keep their first estate; and they, who keep their second estate, shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever."[148] In the *Timaeus*, after the Demiurge creates the souls of men, he gives them instructions: "He pointed out to them the nature of the universe, and announced to them the laws of fate," says Timaeus. Because "souls are from necessity engrafted in bodies," the Demiurge explains, humans would have passions that could lead them astray. He tells them "that such souls as subdue these would live justly, but such as are vanquished by them unjustly. And again, that he who lived well during the proper time of his life, should, again

[147] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus*, 224, 332-33, 345-46.
[148] "Book of Abraham," 720.

returning to the habitation of his kindred star, enjoy a blessed life."[149] As in the Book of Abraham, those who go to earth and do as they are instructed will be blessed. Clement made a similar statement: "The maxim Know yourself means here to know for what we are born. And we are born to obey the commandments, if we choose to be willing to be saved."[150] As discussed in Chapter Three, John Allen cited rabbis describing souls being sent to earth in ways similar to the *Timaeus*. These rabbis also said that the pre-mortal soul was "instructed in the whole law" before birth, but then an angel "causes him to forget the whole law. And while he grows up, he is like one that has lost something and endeavors to find it. He looks for it with the lantern of his understanding; and by that means finds all the wisdom and knowledge which he had lost."[151]

The reference to the first estate, is likely a reference to Jude 1:6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." This connection is suggested by the fall of Satan just a few lines later. God chooses to send Jesus instead of Satan, "the second," "And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him," a pre-mortal fall like the ones described in *The Travels of Cyrus.*[152] Theologians of the time often used the term "First Estate" to mean the Garden of Eden.[153] Jane Lead referred to the "First Estate" in universalist terms: "All must be redeemed and restored, to their First Estate; at the winding up of all the various Scenes."[154] The Book of Abraham, however, distinguished between the righteous and the wicked in the first estate: the

[149] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Taylor, 474; 42 b-c.
[150] Clement, *Stromata,* 7.3.
[151] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 197. Allen also cites rabbis who say that angels show the souls those who end up in heaven and hell as part of this pre-mortal instruction (196-97). On the issue of remembering, Allen again cites Plato (197).
[152] "Book of Abraham," 720.
[153] Zenas Campbell, *Man's First Estate and High Revolt: A Poem in Two Parts* (Norway, Maine, 1829).
[154] Jane Lead, *Enochian Walks with God* (London, 1694), 17.

wicked one "kept not his first estate," suggesting that the righteous kept their first estate. This suggests that only the devil and his angels fell in the pre-existence (as opposed to all humans falling in *The Travels of Cyrus*), while the righteous, as with all beings in the *Timaeus*, were sent to earth by design.

In his "Paracletes," William Phelps said that righteous beings would enter "triumphantly into their *third* estates: the eternal life" where they would be deified.[155] Taylor's translation of the *Timaeus* said souls that were made out of the left over substance of the World Soul were "in a certain respect indeed after the same manner, yet not similarly incorruptible according to the same, and deficient from the first in the second and third degree," suggesting that degrees separated souls from the World Soul and that these degrees needed to be transcended in order for souls to be like the World Soul.[156] Jane Lead used very similar language when speaking of the process by which mortals became deified: "There were three distinct Changes, which we were to pass into, before the highest Degree could be attained," and further, "ye may enter in by the same three-fold Degree with your Jesus into every several Region, till lodged for Eternity into the one fixed Element with the blessed Trinity." Like the *Timaeus*, Lead used the word "degree"; she also referred to "the several states" along the way.[157] Smith would later say that deification was the primary reason why God sent beings to earth (see below).

The text then moves to the creation. The encyclopedia entry said, "A work which treats of the creation has long been ascribed to [Abraham]; it is mentioned in the Talmud, and

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[155] [Phelps], "The Paracletes Continued," 917. Emphasis mine. Phelps also spoke of the time "when the judgment comes for just men to enter into the joys of a 'third existence' which is spiritual," and "the 'third' entrance" (892, 918.)
[156] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor, 473; 41d.
[157] Jane Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens Watered by the Rivers of Divine Pleasure ad Springing up in All the Variety of Spiritual Plants; Blown up by the Pure Breath into a Paradise Sending Forth Their Sweet Savours and Strong Odours, for Soul-Refreshing* (London J. Bradford 1696), 1:480.

the Rabbis Chania, and Hoschia used to read it on the eve before the Sabbath."[158] After the gods plan the creation of humans, the *Timaeus* goes into a technical discussion of the mathematical makeup the universe. In the Book of Abraham, the "Gods" begin to create the world and follow the pattern in Genesis. The Book of Abraham, however, adds two important elements from the *Timaeus* to the Genesis account: it is always "the Gods" who create, not just "God," and the Gods create out of preexisting material.[159] Thus the Book of Abraham combined Genesis and *Timaeus* in ways that many of Smith's contemporaries said were impossible or impious.

Using the *Timaeus*. In addition to the similarities between elements, the Book of Abraham places the elements in the same order as the *Timaeus* (see chart 6.1). This leads me to conclude that Smith used the *Timaeus* to translate this portion of the Book of Abraham. Smith saw the second facsimile as an explanation of the cosmos and seemed to have turned to Plato's creation narrative for clues to God's ancient wisdom about the cosmos; again, the encyclopedia entry on mysteries said that the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* "was that of the most ancient Egyptians."[160] Furthermore, aspects of the *Timaeus's* pre-existent plan were repeated in Allen's *Modern Judaism* (above) and Ramsay's *Travels of* Cyrus (below), which would have suggested that the *Timaeus* was ancient wisdom found among Jews and other ancient civilizations. Andrew Michael Ramsay declared, "We must accept the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton and other theologians, that several books on the creation by pre-Mosaic Patriarchs have been lost, and that Genesis is only a very brief summary of these."[161] In the

[158] "Abraham," 1:23.
[159] "Book of Abraham," 720-22.
[160] "Mysteries," 12:593.
[161] D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 243. Newton's *Chronology of Ancient Kingdom's Amended,* (1728) sought to understand the religion of Noah "partly maintained by the Jews, but debased elsewhere into

Travels of Cyrus, Ramsay asserted, "To have a more perfect knowledge of the theology of the Orientals and Egyptians, it may not be improper to examine that of the Greeks and Romans, which is derived originally from it. The philosophers of Greece went to study wisdom in Asia and Egypt.—Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, drew the best of their knowledge from thence."[162] Thus to understand these pre-Mosaic creation narratives, it made sense to study the wisdom of the Greeks, which ultimately led back to the patriarchs.

Chart 6.1 Corresponding Themes in the *Timaeus* and the Book of Abraham

Planets and Time	Noble and Great Ones as Rulers	"Prove Them"
Timaeus 37c-39e; Taylor, 469-70	Timaeus 41a-d; Taylor, 473	Timaeus 42b-c; Taylor, 474
Book of Abraham *Times and Season* 719, v. 16-17 (current 3:2-5, 10)	Book of Abraham *Times and Seasons* 720, v. 21 (current 3:22-23)	Book of Abraham *Times and Season* 720, v. 22 (current 3:25-26)

The Book of Abraham made this same assertion. The last portion of the Book of Abraham that Smith published was the third facsimile, which Smith interpreted as pharaoh's throne room with Abraham sitting on the throne explaining astronomy to the Egyptians.[163] In the Book of Abraham, after explaining astronomy to Abraham, God says, "I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words."[164] That Abraham taught astronomy to the Egyptians is a very old idea. Josephus said that while in

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paganism." Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 165.

[162] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus*, 330. Ramsay argued that wisdom did not originate with Moses or Abraham. "The Jews and their books were too long concealed in a corner of the earth to be reasonably thought the primitive light of the Gentiles. We must go farther back, even to the deluge." *Travels of Cyrus,* 391. Thus wisdom began to spread to the gentiles before the time of Abraham. The Book of Abraham asserts a similar position. The text begins with Abraham searching after the seeking "the blessings of the fathers" which "came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time." "Book of Abraham," 704.

[163] "A Fac-Simile from the Book of Abraham. No. 3." *Times and Season* (May 16, 1842): 783.

[164] "Book of Abraham," 719.

Egypt, Abraham "communicated to them Arithmatick and delivered to them the science of Astronomy; for before Abram came into Egypt they were unacquainted with those parts of learning, for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also."[165] The idea remained popular throughout Western history, and was mentioned in the encyclopedia article on Abraham: "Josephus tells us that he taught the Egyptians arithmetic and geometry; and, according to Eupolemus and Ariapan, he influenced the Phoenecians, as well as the Egyptians in astronomy."[166] The entry on Abraham cites the Josephus passage quoted above and the Nauvoo Library had Josephus's works.[167] Again, if the Greeks got the knowledge of astronomy from Abraham via the Egyptians, then it made sense to use the *Timaeus* to reconstruct what God originally told Abraham, especially if the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* "was that of the most ancient Egyptians."

The translation of the Book of Abraham was a process of "study and also by faith" in line with the commandments of Smith's revelations.[168] Similarities between Smith's statements and practices and those found in the encyclopedia suggest that Smith used that source; those entries would have also pointed Smith to the *Timaeus*. Ultimately, Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham fit the tradition of Christian Platonism: using Plato and Egyptian hieroglyphics to discover the ancient wisdom of the patriarchs.

The Designs of God

[165] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8.2 in Flavius Josephus, *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. by William Whiston, 6 vols. (Worcester Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), 1: 104-5.
[166] "Abraham," 1: 23; Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 37-38.
[167] Jones, "Complete Record," 192.
[168] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 107; DC 88:118.

The Book of Abraham like the *Timaeus* said beings were sent to earth as a kind of test: to "prove" if they would be faithful to what they were commanded, said the Book of Abraham, or to see if they would master their passions, said the *Timaeus*. What neither text made clear was why God wanted souls to undergo this test. Platonists and Plato himself had long wondered why we were here on earth and Plato gave different answers. As discussed in Chapter Three, Plato's *Phaedo* described mortality as a kind of fall, yet the *Timaeus* suggested that God sent souls to earth by design to see if they would be virtuous. Smith argued that mortality was part of the divine plan and the reasons Smith gave for why God sent souls to earth—embodiment and deification—prompted some of his most radical assertions. Such claims included that God had a body of flesh and bone and that God lived on a prior planet where he, like Jesus on our planet, had undergone a process by which he became God. None of Smith's recorded speeches gives a full account of this plan; instead the plan can be pieced together from Smith's Nauvoo speeches collectively. William Phelps's "Paracletes," however, does give a thorough overview of the plan, and therefore gives additional insights into Smith's thought.

The Body. In the speech where Smith first said that God created out of existing matter, Smith declared, "At the first organization in heaven we were all present and saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made and we sanctioned it. We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the Celestial Kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body." Many Christian thinkers had said that the body was necessary for the soul's happiness in the next life and as mentioned in Chapter Three, Allen cited a rabbi describing souls resisting embodiment and God telling them "The world into which I am going to send thee, is better than the world

where thou now art: besides, when I formed thee, I did not form thee but for this very matter."[169] Yet the rabbi didn't say why this world and embodiment were better. Smith, however, applied what the Book of Mormon said about the resurrection to embodiment. The Book of Mormon declared that humans would need their bodies in the next life in order to overcome the devil, and Smith also applied that logic to the needs of pre-mortal beings. "The Devil has no body," Smith explained in the same speech, "and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man…. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him; the moment we revolt at anything which comes from God the Devil takes power."[170]

A few months later, Smith elaborated on this theme. Smith said of the pre-existence, "God is Good & all his acts is for the benifit of infereir inteligences— God saw that those intelegences had Not power to Defend themselves against those that had a tabernicle therefore the Lord Calls them togather in Counsel & agrees to form them tabernicles so that he might Gender the Spirit & the tabernicle togather."[171] Such beings with "tabernacles" would not have been demons because Smith made it clear that "the Devil has no body." Not only did humans need bodies to overcome the devil, but also there apparently were other kinds of beings that humans were competing with, likely the various beings asserted by different thinkers as described earlier in this chapter. In May 1843, Smith declared,

> [S]pirits of the eternal world are diverse from each other as here in their dispositions Aspiring Ambitious &c[.] As man is liable to enemies there as well as here it is necessary for him to be placed beyond their power in order to be saved. This is done by our taking bodies (keeping our first estate) and having the Power of the

[169] Allen, *Modern Judaism,* 195.
[170] January 5, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 60.
[171] March 28, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 68.

Resurrection pass upon us whereby we are enabled to gain the ascendancy over the disembodied spirits.[172]

As discussed in Chapter Three, embodiment was a fraught issue in both Neoplatonism and Christianity though many Neo and Christian Platonists saw embodiment as important. The idea that we needed a body because we were vulnerable to the devil and other beings in our pre-mortal state is an idea I have not found elsewhere. The idea does seem to draw on Neo and Christian Platonic themes, however. Pre-existence was a Platonic notion, and the *Timaeus* suggested that embodiment was part of the divine plan. That bodies were needed to overcome the devil seemed to be Smith's answer for why embodiment was part of that plan. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, evil spirits were a major concern of theurgists and the body was one of the most important objects of theurgy; the body's purification was essential in the quest for ascent. In addition, early Mormons practiced exorcism, which seemed to inform Smith's teachings. Why did evil spirits want to possess our bodies unless embodiment was a desirable and empowering state?

Deification. Embodiment was only one piece in God's divine plan, according to Smith. Smith had hinted at deification—the primary purpose of mortality, according to Smith—from the beginning, but he was hesitant to declare the doctrine explicitly. In Smith's May 1843 speech where he discussed the importance of embodiment in the divine plan, he added, "[The] design of the great God in sending us into this world and organizing us to prepare us for the Eternal world.—I shall keep in my own bosom."[173] A few months later, Smith declared, "What was the design of the Almighty in making man, it was to exalt him to be as God, the scripture says ye are Gods and it cannot be broken, heirs of God and joint

[172] May 21 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 208.
[173] May 21, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 205.

heirs … with Jesus Christ equal with him possesing [sic] all power &c."[174] By referencing John 10:34-35 and Romans 8:17, Smith made his case that human deification was the purpose of mortality. Neoplatonists Iamblichus and Proclus both said that humans were sent to earth for a purpose and that theurgists would be deified in the next life.[175]

Smith's first explicit statement on the topic came in his polygamy revelation in July 1843. Those who married within Smith's sacramental system and lived worthily, the revelation said,

> shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths … and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads…. Then shall they be Gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be Gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.[176]

Holy marriage would allow the faithful to pass by the various beings in the celestial hierarchy. In addition to holy marriage, much of Smith's teachings and ritual practice pointed toward the goal of human deification. Chapter Seven discusses the development of Smith's rituals toward that end.

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[174] August 27, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 246.

[175] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 115, 124-25; Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. I, Book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis,* trans. with an introduction and notes by Harold Tarrant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 95, n. 22; Robbert Van Den Berg, "'Becoming Like God' According to Proclus' Interpretations of the *Timaeus*, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the *Chaldean Oracles*" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2003): 192. Clement of Alexandria spoke of human pre-existence and deification for the righteous, but he did not present these themes as a distinct divine plan (Clement was often cryptic).

[176] "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1 (January 1853): 8; current Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20.

The divine plan, therefore, was a process that made it so that lesser pre-mortal beings could become like God. Smith summarized this aspect of the plan in the King Follett discourse. Thomas Bullock recorded, "God himself finds himself in the midst of Sp[irits] & bec[ause] he saw proper to institute laws for those who were in less intelligence that they mi[gh]t have one glory upon another in all that knowledge power & glory & so took in hand to save the world of Sp[irits]." In William Clayton's notes, "That God himself—find himself in the midst of spirit and glory because he was greater saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."[177] Smith also gave clues as to what being like God in the next life might entail. In May 1843, Smith reiterated the importance of embodiment and resurrection and then added, "in this wise [the righteous] obtain glory honor power and dominion for this thing is needful, inasmuch as the Spirits in the Eternal world, glory in bringing other Spirits in Subjection unto them, Striving continually for the mastery, He who rules in the heavens when he has a certain work to do calls the Spirits before him to organize them, they present themselves and offer their Services."[178] Here Smith seemed to suggest that resurrected, deified beings would have power over other beings in the next world. Not only that, but such a being would "organize" these subjected beings. This statement suggests that deified beings would do what God the Father had: organize other pre-mortal beings. For Iamblichus, explains Gregory Shaw, "The perfect theurgist became an embodied Demiurge." "Like theurgists," Shaw explains further, "divinized souls after death share in the creation and preservation of the cosmos."[179] For Smith, the deified being would do what the Demiurge had done.

[177] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 352, 360.
[178] May 21, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 207.
[179] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 57, 115.

God a Deified Man. Smith began the King Follett discourse with the declaration, "There are very few who understand rightly the char[acter] of God" and since John 17:3 said that life eternal was to know God and Christ, the question of God's nature was fundamentally important. Smith proposed a radical claim for what that nature was. "God himself who sits enthroned in yonder Heavens is a man like unto one of yourselves who holds this world in its orbit & upholds all things by his power if you were to see him today you wo[ul]d see him a man for Adam was a man like in fashion & image like unto him." Wilford Woodruff recorded, "We suppose that God was God from eternity. I will refute that Idea, or I will do away or take away the veil so you may see."[180]

The claim that God was a man who had become God made sense if one believed that humans could become gods. Book Ten of the *Corpus Hermeticum* describes human deification: "The human rises up to heaven and takes its measure and knows what is in its heights and its depths, and he understands all else and—greater than all of this—he comes to be on high without leaving earth behind, so enormous is his range. Therefore, we must dare to say that the human on earth is a mortal god but that god in heaven is an immortal human."[181] "For it is in knowledge only that the gods surpass ourselves," the emperor Julian explained, because "we all carry within us a spark of divinity."[182]

Isaac Newton's *Chronology of Ancient Kingdom's Amended* (1728) asserted that the Egyptian and Greek gods had been humans.[183] William Warburton's popular *Divine Legation*

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[180] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 349, 344.
[181] Brian P. Copenhaver, ed., *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chapt. 10. This concluding sentence is similar to late nineteenth-century Mormon President Lorenzo Snow's famous summation of Smith's teachings on this issue, "As man now is, God once was / As God now is, man may become." Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 46.
[182] Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 138.
[183] Monad, *Solomon's Secret Arts,* 165.

of Moses (1737-41) asserted that in the ancient mysteries cults, the initiates were told that the pagan gods were really only men. Of this claim, the encyclopedia entry on the mysteries, which Smith likely read (Chapter Seven) admitted that this was so, "But the prelate has not informed us so precisely, whether the mystagogues represented them as nothing more than dead men, in their present state, or as beings who were actually existing in a deified state, and executing the functions assigned them in the rubric of paganism." Warburton had tried to argue that the mysteries asserted that these heroes were in fact not gods at all, but that there was only one God. The entry retorted, "If, then those deified mortals were become the objects of worship and prayers, there can be no doubt of the belief of their deified existence."[184] Thus the gods had been men but were now gods, similar to what Smith taught. Emmanuel Swedenborg recorded hearing voices from heaven that declared, "There is One God, who is a Man, and whose habitation is the Sun."[185] In another place, Swedenborg declared, "On the basis of the fact that God is man, all angels and spirits are men in perfect form."[186] Charles Buck's entry on daemons said, "Those daemons who were the more immediate objects of the established worship among the ancient nations were human spirits, such as were believed to become daemons, or deities, after their departure from their bodies."[187]

Smith pushed this idea even further in the King Follett discourse: God the Father "was once as one of us and was on a planet as Jesus was in the flesh." "I will shew it from the Bible," Smith asserted and then referenced John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Smith used the word "power"

[184] "Mysteries," 12:593-94.
[185] Emmanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion; Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church, Which Was Foretold by the Lord*, 3d ed. (Manchester: R. Hindmarsh, 1795), sect. 135, p. 161.
[186] Benz, *Swedenborg,* 374.
[187] Charles Buck, "Daemons," in *Theological Dictionary,* 133.

instead of "life" and asked, "even so hath the son power to do what[?] why what the father did, to lay down his body and took it up again." Smith then referenced John 5:19: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Most commentators saw this passage as proof of the unity of the Trinity, while Origen interpreted it to mean that Jesus created the world according to the Father's plan.[188] Smith pushed Origen's interpretation several steps further: "What did Jesus do[?]" asked Smith. "Why I do the things that I saw the father do when worlds came into existence. I saw the father work out a kingdom with fear & trembling & I can do the same." Thus God the Father had been on another planet and did what Jesus did on this one. This was the divine pattern that mortals were to follow. Said Smith, "You have got to learn how to be a god yourself in order to save yourself—to be priests & kings as all Gods has done—by going from a small degree to another—from exaltation to ex[altation]—till they are able to sit in glory as with those who sit enthroned."[189] Not only had the Father gone through this process but so had other Gods. William Phelps's "Paracletes" spoke of Milauleph's (Adam's) "elder brethren who had wrought out their salvation, upon worlds or realms, or kingdoms, ages, yea even eternities before."[190]

No other thinker that I have studied spoke of God being a human on a previous planet, but Smith was nevertheless drawing on Christian-Platonic themes for the claim. Claims of human deification suggested that God himself might have gone through the same process, Origen and atomists spoke of prior worlds, and Swedenborg who said that he travelled to other planets (Chapter Five) also said that God had been human. As with many

[188] Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Context, Sources, and Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 116-17; Adam Clarke, *New Testament*, John 5:19; Origen, *De Principiis,* 1.2.12. Phelps made the same assertion as Origen in his "Paracletes," (917).
[189] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 357-58.
[190] [Phelps,] "Paracletes," 892.

of these radical Christian-Platonic assertions, Smith pushed them in even more radical directions.

God Has a Body. In the same speech where Smith declared that God created the world out of existing materials and that souls were sent to earth to get an empowering body, Smith also made this radical pronouncement: "That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones."[191] Smith later summarized his views on the Godhead by asserting, "The Father has a body of flesh & bones as tangible as mans the Son also, but the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit."[192] To this point, I have not found any other thinker who explicitly claimed that God the Father had a body of flesh and bone.

Within the logic of Smith's plan of salvation, however, if God had followed the same path that humans should, and if getting a body was essential for human progression, then it made sense that God would have a body of flesh and bone. Most Christians did not teach that God was embodied, nor, generally speaking, did the Platonists, though some Hellenized Jews took a statement from *Parmenides* 130c as a reference to the heavenly human archetype.[193] Clement of Alexandria argued that the Father had a body in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto*.

> But not even the world of spirit and of intellect, nor the archangels and the First Created, no, nor even he himself is shapeless and formless and without figure, and incorporeal; but he also has his own shape and body corresponding to his

[191] January 5, 1841, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 60.
[192] April 2, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 173.
[193] After Socrates explained the forms of the beautiful and the good, Parmenides asks, "'What about the form of human being, separate from us and all those like us? Is there a form itself of human being, or fire or water?' Socrates said, 'Parmenides, I've often found myself in doubt whether I should talk about those in the same way as others or differently.'" Socrates adds no further clarification, leaving the point ambiguous, but suggesting the possibility of a human archetype. *Parmenides* 130c. Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1990), 42, 45.

> preeminence over all spiritual beings, as also those who were first created have bodies corresponding to their preeminence over the beings subordinate to them. For, in general, that which has come into being is not unsubstantial, but they have form and body, though unlike the bodies in this world.

Clement then quoted Matthew 18:10 about angels beholding the face of the Father and asks "And how could there be a face of a shapeless being? Indeed the Apostle knows heavenly, beautiful and intellectual bodies. How could different names be given to them, if they were not determined by their shapes, form, and body?"[194]

Clement, however, did not say that God's body was flesh and even said that God had no body in other writings.[195] According to Robert Pierce Casey, "We may therefore conclude, provisionally, that although the materialism of Excerpta is in real contradiction to the Platonism of the Stromateis, it is not impossible that Clement played with Stoic ideas when confronted by the necessity of reconciling philosophy and the Bible."[196] The Stoics argued that nothing was immaterial and that spiritual beings were made up of spiritual material.[197] Smith himself adopted the Stoic view.[198] In 1843 Smith declared, "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter but is more fine or pure and can only be discerned by purer eyes. We cant see it but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it

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[194] Clement, *Exceprta Ex Theodoto*, 47-48, 50-51.
[195] In the *Stromata*, Clement criticized the Stoics for teaching "that the Deity, being a body, pervades the vilest matter." *Stromata* 1.11.
[196] Casey, "Introduction," 15.
[197] John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), 83-84.
[198] John Allen described a similar idea in his summation of Kabbalah. After describing how matter could not come out of nothing, Allen then said the Kabbalists believed, "4. Matter is too mean in its nature to have been self-originated, or self-existent. 5. Hence it follows, that there is no such essence as matter, properly so called, in the universe. 6. The conclusion deducible from these premises is,--that all that exists is *spirit*." Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 78. Such a statement was somewhat in reverse from the Stoic notion that all spirit was matter, but still could have been a catalyst for Smith's claim.

is all matter."[199] A spirit body made up of refined matter was essentially the same of the Neo- and Christian-Platonic notion of the astral body or soul vehicle (Chapter Three). Tertullian, who also liked the Stoics, made a similar argument: "For who will deny that God is a body, although God is a Spirit? For Spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form."[200] Yet to both the Neo and Christian Platonists and to Smith, such was different than flesh.

Furthermore, Origen argued explicitly that God had no body.[201] A controversy erupted over Origen's views of God's body when Egyptian monks rejected Origen's views of God's body, arguing that they ought to be able to see an embodied God in vision.[202] As Paul Patterson points out, the monks sought the vision of the Son whom they equated with archetypal man of Hellenized Judaism.[203] The claim that God the Father had no body persisted throughout the Middle Ages.[204] As discussed in Chapter Three, however, the Platonism of the late Middle Ages became more material; depictions of deity did as well. "In late Gothic art," says Barbara Newman, "any lingering resistance to anthropomorphism was overcome as the Trinity icon developed into a family portrait, accentuating not likeness but difference. The Father came to be portrayed as an old man, the Son as a younger man."[205]

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[199] May 17, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 203. Both Lead and Swedenborg, who also talked about spirits have astral bodies, said that the human eye was too "gross" to see spirits. Lead, *Enochian Walks with God*, 28; Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell,* (1758, reprint; London, 1817) sec 76, p. 54.
[200] Tertullian, *Against Praxeas,* 7.
[201] Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.1
[202] Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), chapt. 2.
[203] Paul A. Patterson, *Visions of Christ: The Anthropomorphite Controversy of 399 CE* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck: 2012), 146.
[204] On orthodox views of God's body in the Middle Ages, see Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapt. 7.
[205] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 247.

Agrippa described God as having body parts and the seventeenth–century English sect, the Muggletonians, insisted that God had a material body and was about five feet tall.[206] The Muggletonians however argued that God and Jesus were the same person, which differed from Smith's notion of a separate, embodied Father and Son.[207] Swedenborg not only insisted that God had a body, but also that God was man-like, calling God the "Divine Human." "Because God is man," wrote Swedenborg, "he therefore has a body and everything pertaining to a body. He therefore has a face, chest, abdomen, loins, feet, for without these he would not be man."[208] Swedenborg wrote elsewhere, "It is accordingly implanted in every man who receives any influx from heaven, to think of God under a human shape…. But this implanted thought is extinguished by all those who have removed heavenly influx by their own proper intelligence, and by a life of evil: they who have extinguished it by their own proper intelligence, are not willing to acknowledge any but an invisible God."[209]

Yet Swedenborg was unclear on God's materiality. Swedenborg compared God's body to angels' bodies and said that angels' bodies "are not minds without form, nor aetherial spectres, but that they are in figure men, and that they see, hear, and feel, equally as man in the world." In another passage, however, Swedenborg said that angels have human body parts and that they "want nothing at all which is proper to man, except that they are not clothed with a material body."[210] Furthermore, like the Muggletonians, Swedenborg did not differentiate between the Father and the Son.[211] A footnote in the 1817 edition of *Heaven and its Wonders* warned the reader that heresy "did not consist in ascribing a human form to the

[206] Agrippa used the term "members," *Three Books of Occult Philosophy,* 487.
[207] William Lamont, *Last Witnesses: The Muggletonian History, 1652-1979* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 129, 206-7.
[208] Quoted in Benz, *Swedenborg,* 374.
[209] Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders,* sect. 82, p. 58.
[210] Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders,* sects. 75, 77, p. 53, 55.
[211] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, "Introduction," in Benz, *Swedenborg,* xix-xx.

Deity" but in "assigning to the Godhead THREE distinct personal forms, and so plunging themselves into polytheism, or the belief of a plurality of Gods."[212] Smith not only embraced separate forms for the Father and the Son but also said that the Trinity proved there was a plurality of Gods. Jane Lead gave vivid descriptions of the Trinity as separate beings in her heavenly visions but Lead suggested that such beings had non-fleshy bodies.[213] "They represent the Deity," John Allen said of the Jews, "as existing in a human form." Allen also said the Jews described God "as weeping daily … whenever he remembers the dispersion and distress of his children," another anthropomorphic description that was similar to Smith's biblical revision that said that Enoch saw God weeping.[214]

This issue of God's materiality is complicated by Smith's evolving views. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Smith said that the pre-mortal Jesus had a spirit body. As discussed in Chapter Two, the relationship between the Father and the Son is ambiguous in the Book of Mormon. The Lectures on Faith, given in Kirtland in the winter of 1834 to 1835 said, "The Father being personage of spirit, glory and power… The Son who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle."[215] Thus the statement differentiates between the nature of the bodies of the Father and the Son. In 1836 Warren Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery's brother and the editor of the Mormon's periodical, accused other religions of "worshiping a God of imagination without body or parts, or any substance."[216] Also in 1836, Truman Coe said the Mormons "believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him

[212] Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell,* 56.
[213] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 26-29.
[214] Allen, *Modern Judaism*, 140-41; Smith, Old Testament Revision, [16], josephsmithpapers.org; Moses 7:28.
[215] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 53. Much of the wording of the Lectures on Faith was likely that of Sidney Rigdon. Noel Reynolds, "The Case for Sidney Rigdon as Author of the Lectures on Faith," *Journal of Mormon History* 31, no. 2 (2005), 1–41.
[216] *Messenger and Advocate* 2, (February 1836): 265.

about the size and shape of God himself."[217] Whether Coe meant "flesh" by "material being" is unclear; Neo and Christian Platonists said that spirit bodies were material.

In 1840 Mormons Parley Pratt and Erastus Snow both said that God had a spirit body and not a body of flesh and bone. In his *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt's Tract against the Latter-day Saints*, Pratt denied that Mormons said that God had a flesh and bone body. Pratt asserted "that the Son has flesh and bones, and that the Father is a spirit. But we would inform Mr. H. that a personage of spirit has its organized formation, its body and parts, its individual identity, its eyes, mouth, ears, &c., and that it is in the image or likeness of the temporal body, although not composed of such gross materials as flesh and bones; hence it is said that Jesus is 'the express image of his (the father's) person."[218] That same year, Erastus Snow also rejected the claim of a critic who said the Mormons taught that God had a body of flesh and bones, citing the above statement from the Lectures on Faith.[219] Although Neo and Christian Platonist argued that spirit bodies were material (Chapter Three), Smith made the above statement about God having a body of flesh and bone just a year after both Pratt and Snow had denied it. This contradiction suggests either that Smith's notion of a God with a body of flesh was one that took time for him to embrace or was one that he had not clearly articulated to his followers.

Smith's statement about God having a body of flesh and bone came in the same speech where he said that humans came to earth because they needed bodies. Perhaps it was then that Smith linked these two ideas. As the body and deification were seemingly Smith's

[217] Milton V. Backman Jr., "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (1977): 353.
[218] Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt's Tract against the Latter-day Saints* (Manchester: W. B. Thomas, 1840), 9.
[219] *E. Snow's Reply to the Self-Styled Philanthropist, of Chester County*, (1840), 6.

answer to the question the *Timaeus* left unanswered—why did God send us here?—Smith took this Platonic question to places no one had before.

God Has a Wife. In his "Paracletes," William Phelps referred to pre-mortal spirits living with their "father and mother in heaven"; a few months earlier Phelps declared, "O Mormonism! Thy father is God, thy mother is the Queen of heaven," in a letter to Smith's brother William.[220] This was the first printed reference to what would become one of Mormonism's distinctive doctrines: Mother in Heaven. There is no recorded statement from Smith on the subject, but many of his followers later said that he taught the idea.[221] Such a claim would be in accord with Smith's teachings: if God underwent the same process as humans and if eternal marriage was necessary for deification, then it would make sense within Smith's system for God to have a wife. Jane Lead used Plato's metaphor from the *Symposium* of men and women being split apart and then seeking to come back together for both Adam and God.

> God Created Adam … who was to represent God himself, the High and Divine Masculine, Male and Female; so that Adam had his Virgin in himself in imitation of his Creator, which in Time was brought forth in a distinct Figure. And this was a Type of the Eternal Virgin Mother that lay hid in God, the Centre and Heart of Flaming Love; from whence the production of a Glorious Female Figure was brought

[220] [William Phelps], "Paracletes," *Times and Seasons* 6 (May 1, 1845): 892; William W. Phelps, "The Answer," *Times and Season* 5 (January 1, 1844): 758.
[221] David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "'A Mother There': A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies* 50 no. 1 (2011): 70–97. Later that year, Smith's plural wife Eliza R. Snow published her poem, "My Father in Heaven," which contained what is considered the founding statement of the doctrine: "In the heav'ns are parents single?/ No, the thought makes reason stare;/ Truth is reason—truth eternal/ Tells me I've a mother there." Eliza R. Snow, "My Father in Heaven," *Times and Seasons* 6 (November 15, 1845), 1037. Snow's poem became a popular Mormon hymn and the Heavenly Mother doctrine also became popular.

forth; that was so commixed and mingled with Deity, as she became God's Spouse and Bride, being Spirit of his Spirit.[222]

Again, Smith used the *Symposium* concept in his proposal to Mary Lightner (Chapter Five) and if God was to go through the same process of being united to his female half, then he needed a wife as well.

The Queen of Heaven was a reference to Jeremiah chapters 7 and 44 that said that Jews in Jerusalem and Egypt would make offerings to her and "unto other gods." Phelps made this connection explicit in his letter to William Smith: when referring to a pre-mortal coronation of Christ, Phelps declared, "In fact the Jews thought so much of his coronation among Gods and Goddesses; Kings and Queens of heaven, that they broke over all restraints and actually began to worship the 'Queen of heaven,' according to Jeremiah."[223] Jeremiah condemned such practices and Phelps suggested that such worship was overreach, but the fact that Phelps believed that such beings really did exist and that they were good and holy demonstrates the Mormon tendency to read the Bible in unorthodox ways. In Agrippa's discussion of multiple gods in the universe (see above) he referred to "the whole militia of Heaven, which Jeremy calls the Queen of Heaven, that is the power by which the heaven is governed, viz. the Soul of the World."[224] Agrippa not only read the passages in similarly unorthodox ways but also situated the passage within Plato's *Timaeus* with his reference to the World Soul. Andrew Michael Ramsay was also explicit in linking the Queen of Heaven with the *Timaeus* in *The Travels of Cyrus*. In Ramsay's description of the Phoenician's cosmogony, he listed the trinity of Belus (the high god), Adonis (the son) and Urania (the mother). In this myth, the World Soul and human souls come out of Urania and are sent to

[222] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 31-32.
[223] Phelps, "Answer," 758.
[224] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, 491.

planets just like they come out of the mixing bowl and are similarly sent in the *Timaeus* (see below). Yet Ramsay then had Urania fall (a notion found in the *Phaedrus* not the *Timaeus*) and become Astarte, the Queen of Heaven, before falling further and needing redemption.[225] Other Christian Platonists would also locate discussions of Heavenly Mother within the *Timaeus,* particularly Jane Lead; Phelps did the same in his "Paracletes" (below).

Phelps's reference to the Queen of Heaven in addition to Agrippa's, Ramsay's, and Lead's (and Phelps's, see below) linking these themes to the *Timaeus* drew on a long heritage of Christian Platonists drawing links between biblical goddess references, Plato's World Soul or mixing bowl, and the Holy Ghost. Christian Platonists had long equated the Holy Ghost and the World Spirit.[226] In *The Travels of Cyrus*, Ramsay listed a number of father-mother-son trinities in addition to Belus, Urania, and Adonis and the idea that the Holy Ghost was Christ's mother was popular in early Christianity: in the lost Gospel of the Hebrews, the Holy Ghost called Jesus her son at Jesus's baptism.[227] Augustine referred to the belief that the Trinity was "completed in the marriage of male and female and in their offspring" and that "the third person as of the Spirit, is, they say, the woman," and that "by her conception that the offspring was born."[228] Augustine, however, rejected the idea; in doing so, argues Barbara Newman, "Augustine sealed the doom of the [divine] familial metaphor for nearly a thousand years."[229]

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[225] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 255-65. Urania was the muse of astronomy. John Hill, *Urania: Or, a Compleat View of the Heavens; Containing the Antient and Modern Astronomy* (London, 1754).
[226] Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 138; M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West.* ed. and trans. by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 69.
[227] J. K. Eliot, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on Mr. R. James* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 10.
[228] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 12.5-6.
[229] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 248.

Yet the notion of the divine mother survived in the West, largely in the person of Wisdom. The goddess Wisdom appeared in a number of Jewish Wisdom texts including Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon that spoke of Wisdom as a female companion to God.[230] In Ecclesiasticus 24, Wisdom declares, "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth as a cloud. I dwelt on the high places, and my throne is in a cloudy pillar." Wisdom goes on to say that the "Creator of all things … created me from the beginning before the world, and I shall never fail."[231] Clement referred to Wisdom as mother when he commented on the Fifth Commandment, which he read allegorically.

> And it clearly announces God as Father and Lord. Wherefore also it calls those who know Him sons and gods. The Creator of the universe is their Lord and Father; and the mother is not, as some say, the essence from which we sprang, nor, as others teach, the Church, but the divine knowledge and wisdom, as Solomon says, when he terms wisdom 'the mother of the just,' and says that it is desirable for its own sake.[232]

"The medieval goddess theologies cannot be understood apart from their roots in Christian Platonism," argues Barbara Newman.[233] Medieval Christian Platonists spoke of other goddesses such of Natura or Dame Amour; Mary also had a divine status. Wisdom as a goddess remained important in the Middle Ages and Christians continued to use Wisdom literature. Wisdom texts became part of the liturgy devoted to Mary, in which the officiator read sections of Ecclesiasticus 24. "By the later Middle Ages," notes Barbara Newman, "every priest or religious community celebrating daily Mass could be expected to affirm once a week that Sophia/Maria was 'created before the ages.' The long-term theological impact of

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[230] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 190-92.
[231] Ecclesiasticus 24: 3-4, 8-9.
[232] Clement, *Stromata,* 6:16.
[233] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 61, 291.

this proclamation cannot be overemphasized." Soon devotions were written to Wisdom, the most popular of which was Henry Suso's *Horolgium Sapientiae* or *Clock of Wisdom* (1334), which was the second most popular devotional text in the Middle Ages (second only to the *Imitation of Christ*).[234]

Mother Wisdom remained the most popular form of the divine feminine in the early modern period. Jacob Boehme spoke of Sophia, which then influenced John Pordage and Jane Lead.[235] Most of Lead's visions were of Mother Wisdom. Lead described her first visionary experience as follows:

> there came upon me an overshadowing bright Cloud, and in the midst of it the Figure of a Woman, most richly adorned with transparent Gold, her hair hanging down and her Face as the terrible Crystal for brightness, but her Countenance was sweet and mild. At which sight I was somewhat amazed, but immediately this Voice came, saying, Behold, I am God's Eternal Virgin-Wisdom, whom thou hast been enquiring after; I am to unseal the Treasures of God's deep Wisdom unto thee, and will be as Rebecca was unto Jacob, a true Natural Mother; for out of my Womb thou shalt be brought forth after the manner of a Spirit, Conceived and Born again.[236]

Lead was explicit in stating that Wisdom gave to birth to Christ. Christ, said Lead, "was after the way and manner of Human Nature conceived in the Womb of that Virgin Mary, that was but a Type of the Eternal Virgin, who brought forth the Son of God before all Time."[237]

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[234] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 197, 207-11.
[235] Harris, "Theosophy of Jacob Boehme," 72-73 99-101, 194-97.
[236] Jane Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens Watered by the Rivers of Divine Pleasure ad Springing up in All the Variety of Spiritual Plants; Blown up by the Pure Breath into a Paradise Sending Forth Their Sweet Savours and Strong Odours, for Soul-Refreshing* (London J. Bradford 1696), 1:18.
[237] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 32-33.

Lead influenced both Ann Lee of the Shakers and Conrad Beisel of the Ephrata cloister, both of whom believed in Mother Wisdom.[238]

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three, the Book-of-Mormon tree visions, particularly the tree-of-life vision, allude to tree visions in Ezekiel 18 and Revelation 12 that represent the tree as a mother. Asherah was the divine mother tree in ancient Israel, along with Wisdom and the Queen of Heaven.[239] Phelps's earliest statement on the Queen of Heaven spoke of her as the pre-mortal mother of Christ. In reference to Christ's coronation, Phelps said, "therefore he was anointed with holy oil in heaven, and crowned in the midst of brothers and sisters, while his mother stood with approving virtue, and smiled upon a Son that kept the faith as the heir of all things!"[240] One way or another, Smith seemed to pull goddess notions from the Bible in addition to possible influence from Agrippa, Lead, and Ramsay.

Spirit Birth. Jane Lead not only said that Wisdom was the pre-mortal mother of Christ but she also said "that from this Eternal Virgin Wisdom a new Generation of Virgin Spirits shall be Born to make up the Glory of the New Jerusalem, JESUS CHRIST being the Head." Lead later asked, "*Whence their Birth was?*" and "It was Answered, From God the Father, in Conjunction with the Eternal Virgin Wisdom who brought them forth."[241] In her *Enochian Walks with God*, Lead said the first rule of Divine Wisdom was for souls to "learn to know themselves as to their original pre-existence in God the Father, and brought forth

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[238] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 317; Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: UK: Ashgate, 2005), 141.
[239] William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005). The book focuses on Asherah, but Dever discusses the Queen of Heaven (230-35) and Wisdom (301). See Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 16-25.
[240] Phelps, "Answer," 758.
[241] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation*, 32, 42.

through the Womb of the Eternal Virgin, a pure simplified Spirit."[242] Neoplatonists like Proclus said the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* was the Father and the mixing bowl (or crater) in which the Demiurge placed the substance of the World Soul to bring forth individual souls was the Mother.[243] Similar to Proclus, in the twelfth century, Bernard Silvestris wrote *Comographia* based on the *Timaeus* in which Urania, the queen of heaven, fashions celestial souls.[244]

Ramsay seemed to have drawn on Proclus, Silvestris, Lead, and Origen for his telling of Adonis and Urania. Ramsay's combined elements not only from *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus* but also from the biblical notion of the fall as Adonis and Urania play the roles of Adam and Eve, but do so as pre-mortal gods. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Origen said that Adam and Eve's fall in Genesis was an allegory of the pre-mortal fall of humans.[245] Just as Lead said that Eve come out of Adam like Wisdom came out of God, Ramsay said that Urania "sprang from" the head of Belus.[246] Then "Belus being more and more charmed with the beauty of his son, desired that there might be several miniatures and living images of him." Adonis, "animated by the power of Belus," acts as the *Timaeus's* Demiurge and creates the physical universe. "But as yet there were no inhabitants for them." Then the World Soul comes out of Urania and Adonis tells her, "'I intend to make you my spouse, bless you with a happy race that shall people the heavens, and conduct you at last, with all your children, into the sublime place above the stars where my father dwells." Then "he looked upon her with complacency, and by this look made her pregnant; she became the mother of all the

[242] Lead, *Enochian Walks with God,* 26.
[243] Van Den Berg, "Becoming Like God," 191-94.
[244] Newman, *God and the Goddesses,* 55, 61.
[245] Origen, *De Principiis*, 4.16.
[246] In the footnote to this passages, Ramsay wrote "Urania, Minerva, and Isis are the same." Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 254.

divinities, without ceasing to be the immortal virgin; she quickly peopled the stars with gods and goddesses."[247] Here Adonis and Urania wed, and, as Urania plays the role of Eve by falling from heaven, Adonis plays the role of Adam by going after her.[248] Thus Ramsay combined *Timaeus* and Genesis in this creative way with Adonis also playing the role of the Demiurge and Urania playing the mixing bowl (following Proclus and Silvestris).

Phelps seemingly drew on Ramsay's Adonis/Urania myth and the *Timaeus* in his "Paracletes," an attempt at a full account of the Mormon cosmogony. Phelps, however, qualified Paracletes's importance by saying that it was "not revelation" but that he wrote it "to counterbalance the foolish novel reading of the present generation." Phelps even started the myth with the line "Once upon a time." At the same time, Phelps said, "The innuendoes relate to holy transactions, which may lead good people to search after truth and find it."[249]

Like the *Timaeus* and the Book of Abraham, Paracletes starts with a council where the "best" are chosen, and are then told of the divine plan of being sent to earth. The leader of those to be sent to earth is Milauleph (Adam) who selects an unnamed "queen of heaven" as his wife (Eve), similar to how Adonis and Urania acted as the pre-mortal Adam and Even in *The Travels of Cyrus.* When the head God refers to the "best" souls that he wants to be rulers, he refers to them as "the 'best' men we have had born in the regions of light."[250] Thus before these best men were born on earth they had been born in heaven. In the *Timaeus*, right after the Demiurge tells the gods to pick the best to rule, he places the leftover material from the World Soul in the mixing bowl or crater and brings forth souls and in Ramsay's Urania myth, both the World Soul and gods (some who become humans) are born from

[247] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus*, 254-56
[248] Adonis marrying Urania, who seems to be his mother in the text is strange, but the belief that Christ married Mary was standard in the Middle Ages. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, chapt. 6.
[249] [Phelps,] "Paracletes," 891-92.
[250] [Phelps,] "Paracletes," 891.

Urania.[251] This idea of spirit birth was reiterated in a later passage in the "Paracletes": these spirits "agreed 'to go' and be born of the flesh as they had been of the spirit."[252] The *Timaeus* said that just before the souls were distributed throughout the cosmos, the Demiurge caused "them to ascend as into a vehicle, [and] he pointed out to them the nature of the universe, and announced to them the laws of fate."[253] Phelps said that prior to their incarnation, the pre-mortal Adam (or Milauleph) and Eve were "clothed in heavenly garments, and learned in eternal wisdom, witnessed the creation."[254] Adam and Eve were placed in "heavenly garments" just as souls in the *Timaeus* were placed in vehicles (Chapter Three) and both were given instruction.

Later Mormon thinkers wondered if Heavenly Father and Mother gave birth to pre-mortal beings by clothing intelligences in spirit bodies just as mortal birth clothed spirits in mortal bodies. That way, intelligences could be uncreated, as Smith said, but spirit bodies *could* be created.[255] Though Phelps was not this precise, "Paracletes" did mention heavenly parents, spirit birth, souls being placed in "heavenly garments," and "spiritual bodies."[256] Smith, who talked about spirit bodies and uncreated intelligences/minds/spirits, may have had this notion of spirit birth in mind as well.

Eternal Progression. Finally, Smith may have declared the idea of eternal progression in the King Follett discourse, or that souls and even God progress for eternity.

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[251] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Taylor 473; 41d.
[252] [Phelps,] "Paracletes," 892.
[253] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Taylor, 473-74; 41e.
[254] [Phelps,] "Paracletes Continued," 917.
[255] Philip Barlow, "To Mend a Fractured Reality: Joseph Smith's Project," in *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (2012): 46 and J. Stapley, "Tripartite Existentialism," http://bycommonconsent.com/2009/04/15/tripartite-existentialism/. Later Mormon thinkers also wondered if the word "organized" from the line in the Book of Abraham "Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was" was a reference to spirit birth, or intelligences being placed in spirit bodies. Charles Harrell, *This Is My Doctrine: The Development of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2011), 225 n. 53. The Book of Abraham talks about the best spirits being chosen to rule right after this, and, again, in the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge places spirit matter in the mixing bowl and souls in vehicles immediately after.
[256] Phelps mentioned "spiritual bodies" on page 892 of "Paracletes."

Right after Smith declared that Jesus had seen the Father progress to become God on another planet, Wilford Woodruff recorded, "see the father do what[?] work out a kingdom, when I do so to[o] I will give to the father which will add to his glory, he will take a Higher exhaltation & I will take his place and am also exhalted." Thomas Bullock recorded, "I saw my Fa[the]r work out his K[ingdom] with fear & trembling & I must do the same when I shall give my K[ingdom] to the Fa[the]r so that he obt[ai]ns K[ingdom] roll[in]g upon K[ingdom] so that J[esus] treads in his tracks as he had gone before."[257] Taken together, Smith seemed to be saying that when Jesus delivers his kingdom to God the Father, God the Father will then move up the divine hierarchy and Jesus will take his place. This suggests a God who continues to progress, which also implies that other beings (humans included) will also progress eternally as they seek exaltation.

Christian Platonists suggested similar ideas. In Clement of Alexandria's model of human progression toward divinity, he spoke of a long process by which the various beings in the divine hierarchy (protactists, archangels, angels, and humans) helped the beings immediately beneath them move up the ladder and take their place. That is, archangels would work for a thousand years to help angels become archangels, while the protactists helped the archangels become protactists.[258] Clement's assertion, therefore, was similar to Smith's: lower beings moved up to take the place of higher beings who also moved up. Clement, however, did not go so far as to talk about God the Father and Christ moving up the chain. Clement's system faced contradictions, argues Bogdan Bucur: "If the *protactists* are

[257] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph,* 345, 350. Smith here uses the first person voice for Christ.
[258] Clement, *Elogae Propheticae,* 57; Bucur, "Other Clement of Alexandria," 260.

'the highest level of disposition' (Eclogae 57:1), to what 'higher' level can they be translated?"[259]

Other Neo and Christian Platonist spoke of eternal progression including Gregory of Nyssa.[260] For Proclus, becoming like God prepared one to contemplate the forms. Explains Robbert Van Den Berg, "To become godlike, then, is not the end of the story, it is just the beginning."[261] "The progress of the sage from man to daemon, then to god and father of gods, is plotted in Porphyry's *Sententiae*, a textbook for later moralists of the school," explains Mark Edwards.[262] Dionysius suggested a similar idea: "All fatherhood and all sonship are gifts bestowed by that supreme source of Fatherhood and Sonship on us and on the celestial powers. This is why Godlike minds come to be and to be named 'Gods' or 'Sons of Gods' or 'Father of Gods.'"[263] Dionysius hinted at the problems that this model could cause. Like Clement, Dionysius said that higher beings helped their subordinates progress. In his *Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius declared, "In their goodness [beings higher on the scale] raise their inferiors to become, so far as possible, their rivals." Like Smith, Dionysius saw ascending the divine hierarchy as inherently competitive (though holy beings would not begrudge their inferiors, said Dionysius). In the *Divine Names,* Dionysius declared, "Since there are many who are by gift raised, so far as they can be, to divinization, it would seem that here there is not only differentiation but actual replication of the one God."[264] Both of these statements suggest the problem with lots of deified beings: it could create a kind of logjam of gods at the top of the hierarchy.

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[259] Bucur, "Other Clement of Alexandria," 261.
[260] Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 121.
[261]Van Den Berg, "Becoming Like God," 202.
[262] Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 100.
[263] Dionysius, *Divine Names,* 2.8.
[264] Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 13.3; *Divine Names,* 2.11.

In the early modern period, the speculation about lots of beings in the universe also brought speculation about the progression of those beings. Jane Lead spoke of eight worlds through which post-mortal souls could progress. As discussed in Chapter Four, souls were purged of their sins in the four lower worlds before they progressed to the four higher. Few of the righteous would arrive any higher than the lowest of the four higher heavens after death and they would therefore continue to progress through the higher heavens. The third of the higher heavens, the New Jerusalem State, was "the Royal and Principal Seat of God the Father" but was not the highest heaven. The highest was "Still Eternity" or the state from which the creation began. Lead's model suggested that souls could progress to a state higher than the throne of God, though the Trinity also dwells in "Still Eternity" only in a different form.[265] Clement of Alexandria also said there were eight heavens, and his eighth heaven was also a return to the beginning.[266] Lead said that God was "an Eternal Circle, which can never end."[267] In the King Follett discourse, Smith said that humans' eternal nature made them like God and used the same metaphor for the nous that Lead used for God: "I take ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man, the im[or]t[al] Sp[irit] bec[ause] it has no begin[in]g."[268] Yet for Smith, rather than going back to the beginning, deified humans would instead repeat the acts the Father had done: organize "intelligences" and create a pathway by which the intelligences could go through the mortal experience and also become gods. As Porphyry wrote and Dionysius suggested, one could become a "father of gods."

[265] Jane Lead, *The Wonders of God's Creation Manifested, In the Variety of Eight Worlds* (London, 1695), 19-25, 40-41, quotes at 6 and 20.
[266] Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, 451.
[267] Lead, *Wonders of God's Creation,* 51.
[268] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 352.

In Benjamin Franklin's "First Principles," he referred to the "one supreme being" as the "father of the gods themselves."[269] Of these lower gods, Franklin said, "It may be these created gods are immortal; or it may be that after many ages, they are changed, and others supply their places."[270] Like Smith suggested, these gods would "change," presumably to move to a higher state, "and others supply their places." Isaac Newton, who likely influenced Franklin, at times referred to the term "God" as a kind of office. "God is a relative term," Newton wrote in the General Scholium to his *Principia*, "it is the dominion of a spiritual being which constitutes a God." In another work, Newton asserted that the name God is not to be understood "in a metaphysical sense, as if it signified God's metaphysical perfections of infinite eternal omniscient omnipotent: whereas it relates only to God's dominion over us to teach us obedience. The word God is relative and signifies the same thing with Lord and King but in a higher degree…. When therefore the Father or the Son are called God, we are to understand it not metaphysically but in a moral monarchical sense."[271] Thus the term "God" is defined by a role or office that a particular being performs. With "God" being "a relative term," perhaps different beings could assume different divine offices in Newton's system. In *The Travels of Cyrus,* the angel tells Hermes that in the Egyptian golden age, "When they had lived a certain time upon the earth, men changed their form without dying, and flew to the stars, where with new faculties and new light they discovered new truths, and enjoyed new pleasures; from thence they were raised to another world, thence to a third, and so travelled through the immense spaces by endless metamorphoses."[272]

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[269] I. Woodbridge Riley notes the similarity to the *Timaeus*. *American Philosophy: The Early Schools* (New York: Dodd, Mean, 1907), 250.
[270]Franklin, "First Principles," 1:3.
[271] Quoted in Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88-89.
[272] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus,* 131.

Astronomer James Ferguson in *Astronomy Explained upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles* (1756) spoke of other solar systems as "worlds peopled with myriads of intelligent beings, formed for endless progression in perfection and felicity."[273]

Thomas Dick, who hinted at human deification in the section the Mormons printed in their periodical, wrote elsewhere that the vast, complex universe "will, perhaps, form a part of the studies and investigations of superior intelligences, in a higher sphere of existence, during an indefinite lapse of ages."[274] Thus advanced beings, which could include the post-mortal righteous, would continue to learn, or progress, indefinitely. If God also progressed as Smith and Franklin suggested, that would allow him to maintain his supremacy while also allowing lower beings to progress eternally.

Conclusion

Smith's plan of salvation demonstrates his engagement with fundamental questions of human existence: who are we, where did we come from, why are we here, where are we going? The evidence suggests that Smith engaged with other thinkers who had similar concerns, with statements similar to those found in Allen's *Modern Judaism* and Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus* appearing in the Book of Mormon, section 82 of the Doctrine and Covenants and William Phelps's 1835 letter. Two statements from Phelps, one in 1835 letter and one in his "Paracletes," suggest both the nature of aspects of Smith's revelatory process and Phelps's possible role in that process. In his 1835 letter, Phelps declared, "New light is

[273] Dick, *Plurality of Worlds,* 174.
[274] Dick, *Christian Philosopher,* 92. In the section printed in the Mormon periodical, Dick said the human death was like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. "And, is it not reasonable, from analogy, to believe, that man, in his present state, is only the rudiments of what he shall be hereafter in a more expansive sphere of existence? and that, when the body is dissolved in death, the soul takes its ethereal flight into a celestial region, puts on immortality, and becomes 'all eye, all ear, all ethereal and divine feeling?'" Dick, "Extracts from Dick's Philosophy," 424.

occasionally bursting in to our minds, of the sacred scriptures, for which I am truly thankful." By using the pronoun "our," Phelps suggested that he was part of the revelatory process. Phelps's role in the labored translation of the Book of Abraham suggests that study was vital to this revelatory process, just as a number of Smith's revelations declared. Again, in order to translate, Oliver Cowdery was told he "must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right, I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right."[275] At the end of the first installment of Phelps's "Paracletes," Phelps declared, "My story is not revelation, but the innuendoes relate to holy transactions, which may lead good people to search after truth and find it." "Holy transactions" may have been how Phelps viewed the "New light [that] occasionally bust in to [their] minds" while he and Smith poured over texts that likely included encyclopedia entries, Plato's *Timaeus*, and perhaps the works of Jane Lead, in addition to the Egyptian papyri.

While teaching these concepts to his followers was essential, the saints needed more than just doctrinal knowledge; they needed the proper rituals. The Book of Abraham, which was central to articulating Smith's plan of salvation, was also closely linked conceptually to the new rites that Smith performed in Nauvoo: rites that would restore the ancient holy ritual that, like the *prisca theologica*, had been passed down by and through the ancient Egyptians. The creation of Smith's endowment suggests a process of study and revelation similar to what we have seen in the translation of the Book of Abraham had.

[275] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 162; DC 9:7-8.

Chapter Seven: The Mysteries of Egypt

Introduction

The Egyptian papyri that Smith used to translate the Book of Abraham also contained diagrams (that Smith called facsimiles) that Smith also translated. For a number of the illustrations within the facsimiles, Smith said he could not reveal their meaning and in one case he said the meaning "is to be had in the Holy Temple of God."[1] Shortly after Smith published the Book of Abraham, he began initiating his closest followers into an elaborate ceremony he called the endowment, which was meant to be performed in the Nauvoo temple upon completion.[2] I argue here that Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham and the creation of his endowment were linked. Freemasonry was another connection between the endowment and Book of Abraham. Smith had made allusions to Masonic ideas prior to the endowment, but with the endowment, the links to Masonry became explicit. "Thare is a similarity of preast Hood in masonry," Mormon apostle Heber C. Kimball wrote in 1842. "Bro Joseph Ses Masonry was taken from preasthood but has become degenrated. but menny things are perfect."[3] Christian Platonists argued that Egypt got their wisdom from the patriarchs and Masons argued that Masonry followed the same path: the Egyptians imitated ancient Masonry, and the ancient mysteries cults—ancient rites of initiation—imitated the Egyptians. Similarly, the Book of Abraham said the Egyptians imitated the priesthood, and as Kimball's quote demonstrates, the Mormons often referred to the endowment ritual simply

[1] "Fac-simile from the Book of Abraham, no. 2," *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 15, 1842): 720.
[2] Smith performed the endowmen above the red brick store in anticipation of the Nauvoo temple's completion but was killed before that happened.
[3] Heber C. Kimball, letter to Parley P. Pratt, June 17 1842, LDS archives.

as the "priesthood." Smith apparently wanted to draw on these ancient rituals as the encyclopedia entry under "Mysteries" contained numerous parallels to Smith's endowment.

In his Nauvoo speeches, Smith taught that God sent souls to earth to learn how to become gods. The proper rituals were central to this process of deification. As Smith's 1832 revelation declared, "Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest; and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live."[4] The proper rites were needed to see God, a deifying act (Chapter Four), and Smith continually worked to develop (or, as he would say, "restore") the rites that would allow this. To do so, Smith drew on rituals that he believed were remnants of a divine ancient rite. The Book of Mormon said that ancient Christian rites were missing, and as I argue in Chapter Four, the rites associated with Smith's Kirtland temple were attempts to restore those lost rites, particularly theurgy. Now Smith expanded those rites even further.

Smith turned to new sources for the rites associated with the Nauvoo temple, particularly Freemasonry, but Smith also looked to descriptions of rites that the Masons used to correct and amplify their own rituals, including ancient mystery cults, the early Christian liturgy, temple rituals described in both the Bible and Judeo-Christian apocalypses, and certain Catholic rites. Smith's endowment had a format highly similar to a description of the Eleusinian mysteries described in Dobson's encyclopedia. Masons believed that their rites traced back to Adam and some felt that the ancient mysteries were a corrupt form of that rite. Furthermore, scholars had been debating whether there was a connection between the mysteries and Christianity for two-hundred years, and the same encyclopedia entry on the

[4] Doctrine and Covenants (1835), 90; current 84:20-22.

mysteries noted these similarities. In addition, Masons at Smith's time had begun to argue that the *disciplia arcani*, or secret rites that early Christians practiced were Masonic. Smith, who had a number of close associates who were Masons, argued that Jesus had gone through the same temple rites that Smith was performing. Both the endowment and Smith's final rite called the second anointing, also had similarities to Catholic rites, Catholic mystery plays on the one hand and extreme unction on the other. Smith declared that the "old Catholic church is worth more than all" relative to Protestantism and thus he may have believed that Catholicism also have remnants of earlier rites that could be brought back in the restoration of the true ancient rite.

In what follows, I make comparisons between Smith's endowment and these various rites. Such can be difficult because like Freemasonry and the mystery rites, Smith performed his endowment under the utmost secrecy. Exposés do exist but the only exposé of the endowment written during Smith's life was John C. Bennett's, which relied on third-hand information and embellished things considerably. Many of Bennett's descriptions are not substantiated by the later, more reliable exposés.[5] A few dissenters wrote exposés of the endowment ceremony that was performed in the Nauvoo temple after Smith's death: Increase Van Deusen, Catherine Lewis, and William Hall.[6] The evidence suggests that Brigham Young expanded the endowment, claiming that Smith planned to adapt the rites when the temple was finished; the overall structure and intent were likely similar, however.[7] Coupled

[5] Michael W. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue* 27 (fall 1994): 47-50.
[6] Mr. and Mrs. McGee [Increase Van Deusen], *The Mormon Endowment; A Secret Drama, or Conspiracy, in the Nauvoo Temple, in 1846* (Syracuse: N. M. D. Lathrop, 1847); Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of Their Iniquities* (Lynn Mass.: The Author, 1848); William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed; Containing many Facts and Doctrines Concerning That Singular People during Seven Years Membership with Them from 1840 to 1847* (Cincinnati: L. Hart, 1852).
[7] David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (1994, reprint; San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 2002), 39, 69-95.

with William Clayton's temple journal, which described the overall structure of the ritual but in less detail than the exposés, these provide more reliable information than Bennett.[8]

Higher-Degree Masonry. People have long noted the similarities between Smith's endowment ceremony and Freemasonry, but in 1987, D. Michael Quinn argued that descriptions of mystery cults and Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature found in Joseph Smith's environment were the real sources behind the endowment.[9] In 1994, both Michael Homer and David John Buerger reasserted the importance of Masonry, with Buerger arguing that mystery rites had nothing to do with the endowment.[10] Quinn reasserted his position in 1998 and I argue here that Quinn was right about the influence of the descriptions of ancient mysteries and apocalypses.[11] But as Michael Homer asserted, Freemasonry itself drew on descriptions of mystery rites (and apocalypses, I argue), and demonstrated that contrary to Quinn's claims, some Masons did describe their ritual as a kind of ascent to heaven. Such notions were found particularly in the more esoteric branches of Freemasonry (discussed

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[8] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 199-258. This raises the issue of discussing rites that Smith found sacrosanct and relying on exposés for information that Smith and his followers would have considered betrayals. Such is compounded by the fact that I am Mormon myself and have been initiated into the current form of the endowment. Yet a discussion of Smith's religious vision and intents is incomplete without a discussion of these rites and in my quest to understand Smith and my own religion better these rites play a fundamental role. The endowment in many ways is the crown jewel that manifests ways in which Smith drew upon ancient wisdom. I also find a certain sanctity in religious scholarship done well that is respectful of the tradition being explored while giving greater context to the religion. This is my intent. Thus I will be specific when discussing parallels between the endowment and other rites. At the same time I will not cite my own experience because this would be historically problematic since the endowment has evolved over the years. I do make free use of the exposés with the intent of discovering the great puzzle of lost wisdom that Smith hoped to bring together.

[9] D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1987), 184-90. All other citations are to the 1998 edition. The Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature refers to heaven visionary literature written between 300 BCE and 200 CE. See Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity,* trans. and ed. John A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1964). Discussed below. For an overview of claims to links between Mormonism and Masonry, see Michael W. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue* 27 (fall 1994): 53-85.

[10] Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry," 106 and David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (1994, reprint; San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 2002). Bueger declared, "It does not appear that Smith had any working knowledge of mystery cultures and apocalyptic/mystery cults from which to have drawn temple ideas" (42). Quinn convincingly rebutted this assertion.

[11] Quinn, *Magic World View,* 227-234.

below).[12] At the same time, Quinn is right about the importance of the mysteries and apocalypses: there are some rites described in the mysteries and apocalyptic literature that are in the endowment but not Freemasonry.

Smith had a number of connections with Freemasonry: his brother Hyrum joined the Masons as did a number of his early followers; his father also had connections.[13] Smith did not join the Masons until 1842, however, and Smith's Kirtland temple rites were not Masonic.[14] What specifically led Smith to embrace Freemasonry is hard to say, but higher-degree Masonry and the elements on which it drew offered justifications that Smith would have found appealing (discussed below).

Freemasonry's origins trace back to medieval craft guilds. While the non-craft guilds were shut down at the Reformation, Freemasonry survived and became regulated in Scotland at the end of the sixteenth century. From there it spread into England in the seventeenth century, and in 1717 the first Grand lodge was established in London.[15] A number of Isaac Newton's protégés became Masons soon after, and according to Paul Kleber Monod they "added layers of mythic significance to the rites and history…. In particular, they were captivated by the notion that Masonry was descended from the mystery cults of ancient Greece and Egypt." Newton was particularly interested in Solomon's temple, which also became a focus of Freemasonry. A rift soon developed in Masonry between the "Antients" who wanted to "return" to a focus on Solomon's temple and the "Moderns" who wanted to retain the original Masonic rites. This led to "competing Masonic groups" says Monad, which "offered new mysteries and even new degrees that promised higher levels of secret

[12] Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry," 107-8.
[13] Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry," 15-16.
[14] Buerger, *Mysteries of Godliness,* 48.
[15]David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13-51, 213-33.

knowledge."[16] The most important figure in what would become Masonry's higher degrees was Andrew Michael Ramsay. Like the Newtonians (Ramsay himself was a fan of Newton's and a members of the Royal Society) Ramsay was interested in Solomon's temple and ancient mystery cults. Ramsay told an associate that he "had been anxious to clear away from Masonic ceremonial a great deal that had become meaningless, and had discussed the possibility of an international conference with a view to restoring the primitive ceremonial."[17]

The liberation of the Jews by Cyrus was a climatic point in Ramsay's *Travels of Cyrus* and it also became a major theme in Royal Arch Masonry, one of the most important higher-degree Masonic orders.[18] *The Travels of Cyrus* does not mention Freemasonry but does assert Ramsay's attitude toward ancient wisdom that underlay Ramsay's views of Freemasonry. Smith's attraction to concepts in *The Travels of Cyrus* likely would have made Smith open to the more esoteric form of Freemasonry that Ramsay influenced. That Ramsay had been a Philadelphian is important because there are striking similarities between the visions of John Pordage and Jane Lead, Freemasonry, and the Mormon endowment. Craft Masonry, the first three degrees, also had similarities with the visions of Pordage and Lead; early English Mason Elias Ashmole was an associate of Pordage's. The similarities between Pordage's visions (also found in Lead) and Craft Masonry include the focus on the temple and the symbol of the all-seeing eye.[19] The similarities between Lead's visions and the

[16] Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 187.
[17] Quoted in G. D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1952), 171.
[18] Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 159, 218, 187, 256-57.
[19] Brian Harris, "The Theosophy of Jacob Boehme, German Protestant Mystic, and the Development of His Ideas in the Works of His English Disciples, Dr. John Pordage and Mrs. Jane Lead" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Queensland, Australia, 2006), 120-27, 172-73, 184; David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica: William Williams, 1829), 82.

higher-grade Masonry include greater imitation of Solomon's temple, priestly vestments, and the Melchizedek priesthood.[20]

These higher degrees continued to develop and some of the degrees were codified in the Royal Arch system that had four additional degrees to the three degrees of Craft Masonry. Craft "lodges" were more numerous than Royal Arch "chapters" and if one had advanced through the degrees of the Craft, he could apply to be initiated in a Royal Arch chapter. Smith's followers got approval to establish a lodge in 1841, which Smith joined in March 1842. The next step, if Smith and his followers wanted to advance further in Freemasonry, was to be initiated into Royal Arch Masonry.[21] In May of that year, instead of applying for membership in a Royal Arch chapter, Smith initiated nine of his followers into his endowment ritual that had a number of similarities to the Royal Arch initiations as well as other advanced Masonic degrees. The Royal Arch consisted of four additional degrees but also contained a special fifth degree, the "Anointed Order of the High Priesthood," that was never exposed but details suggest it had some similarities to Smith's endowment.[22] Those initiated into the Smith's endowment referred to themselves by various titles including the "Holy Order, Quorum of the Priesthood, Quorum of the Holy Order, Quorum of the

[20] Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out by a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London 1694); David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica, William Williams, 1829), 124-41, 168-69.
[21] Michael W. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue* 27 (fall 1994): 28-35.
[22] Homer, "Similarity of the Priesthood in Masonry," 38, 36 n. 243. There was a Royal Arch chapter in Springfield, Illinois, and one of the nine, James Adams was the Deputy Grand Master for the state of Illinois and lived in Springfield, where he was also the leader of the local Mormon branch (36).

Anointing."[23] Like Smith's first endowment ritual, nine men were needed to raise a Mason to the Masonic "Anointed Order."[24]

Again, Heber C. Kimball wrote, "Bro Joseph Ses Masonry was taken from preasthood but has become degenrated. but menny things are perfect."[25] Said nineteenth-century world-traveller Richard Burton, "The Saints were at one time good Masons; unhappily they wanted to be better."[26] The idea of improving Masonry was part of a general impulse of the higher-degree Masons. Explains Steven Bullock, "The founders of speculative Masonry had believed the ritual the fragmentary and imperfect remains of an ancient rite. Entranced by these claims, later-eighteenth-century English and American brothers had sought to renew this connection, but, unlike the earlier brothers, they refused to believe the original details irrecoverable."[27] Like the higher-degree Masons, Smith felt he could restore the true ancient ritual of which Masonry was a remnant. To do so, both Smith and the higher-degree Masons drew on similar sources including descriptions of mystery rites, Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature, and Catholic mystery plays. Smith adapted these sources and Freemasonry to his own purposes. There were important differences between the endowment and Freemasonry (Smith's endowment was much shorter) but as Kimball reported Smith saying, "menny things are perfect."[28]

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[23] Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 101.
[24] Homer, "Similarity of the Priesthood in Masonry," 38. All of the original nine were Masons, some prior to converting to Mormonism, others had recently joined like Smith had (34).
[25] Quoted in Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness,* 40.
[26] Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (New York: Harper, 1862), 350. Burton then goes on to compare the Mormons' attitude toward Masonry to those of the higher-degree Masons.
[27] Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood, Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 243.
[28] The longest description of the endowment was only 6 pages while David Bernard's description of higher-degree Masonry was over 300 pages. [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment*; David Bernard, *Light on Masonry: A Collection of All the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry* (Utica, N.Y.: William Williams, 1829). The exposé writers all participated in the endowment only once and said there were

The Secret Tradition. As I argue in Chapter Four, Smith sought to restore rites lost to Christianity and preformed these rites in preparation for the dedication of his Kirtland Temple. These rites aligned with contemporary descriptions of theurgy (ritual purification and prayer) and Mosheim said that Ammonius Saccas preformed theurgy and also said that Ammonius believed that Jesus did as well. Mosheim also said that the early Christians set up schools divided between the beginners and the advanced and that such led to a belief in a "secret doctrine." However, said Mosheim, "Those who consider the *secret doctrine* of this century in any other light, or give to it a greater extent than what we have here attributed to it, confound the superstitious practices of the following ages with the simplicity of the discipline which prevailed at the time of which we write."[29] People did make the claim that the secret doctrine was more than just advanced teachings, particularly Catholics, in what they called the *disciplina arcani*: the secret discipline, secret tradition, or secret teaching.

Many early church fathers made claims to secret teachings and rites that were handed down orally. Just as Protestants denounced the fathers' Platonism as a corruption, Protestants argued that the secret tradition was a corruption of Christianity by the mystery cults. At the same time, Catholics defended the legitimacy of the secret tradition, arguing that a number of their non-biblical rites and teachings came from that tradition.[30] In 1687, English Catholic Samuel Hill defended Catholic practice by citing Basil the Great's *De Spiritu Sancto*, chapter 27. Here Basil cited a number of practices that the church performed that are not found in the scriptures, such as the sign of the cross, praying facing East,

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many things they did not remember. Thus a word-for-word description of the endowment would have been longer. Another major differences between the endowment and Freemasonry is that the Hiram Abiff motif that is central to Freemasonry is absent from the endowment. Thus though Smith seemed to have chosen Masonic elements to include in his endowment, he left the majority out.

[29] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1:101,

[30] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 57-58.

consecrating baptismal water, baptizing three times, and renouncing Satan and his angels at baptism. "From what Scripture have we? Is it not from this Secret Tradition? Is it not from that Doctrine which our Fathers kept in silence from curious and idle persons?—They, who in the beginnings of the Church prescribed certain Rites, the Apostles and Fathers, preserved the dignity of their Mysteries with secresie and silence." Basil began this discussion by asserting, "For if the unwritten Customs be rejected by us, as not having much moment, we shall imprudently condemn those things, which in the Gospel are accounted necessary to Salvation." Hill added, "And as these vocal Methods in the Tradition of Faith were so diligently continued, so were the very Sacraments and Rituals of the Primitive Church, descending from the Practical Traditions of the Ages Apostolic."[31]

Many fathers did talk about a secret tradition, most notably Clement of Alexandria. Eusebius quoted from Clement's *Hyptotyposes*: "The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the apostles, and the rest of the apostles to the seventy, of whom Barnabas was one."[32] Clement frequently used the language of the mysteries when speaking of the higher truth. "The mysteries are not exhibited incontinently to all and sundry," explained Clement, "but only after certain purifications and previous instructions." Clement alluded to practicing "greater" and "lesser" mysteries, similar to Eleusis. Clement declared, we "shall address ourselves to the true gnostic science of nature, receiving initiation into the minor mysteries before the greater."[33] In the "Letter to Theodore," Clement spoke of a "more spiritual Gospel" of Mark "for the use of those who were being perfected. Nevertheless," continued Clement, Mark "did not divulge the things not to be uttered, nor did he write down the hierpahantic teaching

[31] Samuel Hill, *The Catholic Balance: Or, A Discourse Determining the Controversies* (London, 1687), 26-27.
[32] Eusebius, *Church History,* 2.1.4
[33] Clement, *Stromata,* 5.4; 5.11; 4.1.

of the Lord." Instead Mark "brought in certain sayings of which he knew the interpretation would, as a mystagogue, lead the hearers into the innermost sanctuary of the truth hidden by seven veils." Mark left the more spiritual gospel with the church in Alexandria, said Clement, "where it even yet is most carefully guarded, being read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries."[34] As Clement said in the *Stromata*, "The Saviour Himself, then, plainly initiates us into the mysteries."[35]

Other early fathers spoke of the secret tradition after Clement. To Celsus's charge that Christians did not teach certain things openly, Origen said Jesus, the apostles, and prophets, "saw better than Plato (by means of the intelligence which they received by the grace of God), what things were to be committed to writing, and how this was to be done, and what was by no means to be written to the multitude, and what was to be expressed in words, and what was not to be so conveyed."[36] Basil, quoted above, spoke of rites coming from the secret tradition in the fourth century and Pseudo-Dionysius made similar comments in the fifth or sixth century. Dionysius said, "The first leaders or our hierarchy … in their written and unwritten initiations … brought the transcendent down to our level." He also spoke of being "initiated in the sacraments of the sacred mystagogy by our hierarchy's

[34] Clement of Alexandria, "Letter to Theodore," in *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts,* ed. Marvin W. Meyer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 1987), 233. Clement's "Letter to Theodore," remains controversial, though Scott Brown's extensive research on the work declares it authentic and cites a number of scholars who agree. Scott G. Brown, *Mark's Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton Smith's Controversial Discovery* (Waterloo, Can.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005). Guy Stromousa asserts that Clement's letter to Theodore states "in no ambiguous terms the existence of esoteric doctrines, relating to the teaching of Jesus, in the Alexandrian church," and also notes that "in the *Eclogae Propheticae*, Clement refers to certain books kept secret by the Christian *gnostikoi* in Alexandria." Guy G. Stromousa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism,* 2d ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 71.
[35] Clement, *Stromata*, 4:25.
[36] Origen, *Against Celsus*, 6.6

mysteries and traditions" but warned, "see to it that you do not betray the holy of holies.… Keep these things of God unshared and undefiled by the uninitiated."[37]

The sectarian "Gnostics" also referred to the authority of a secret tradition. "Since Christian intellectuals, such as Irenaeus," argues Guy Stromousa, "were fighting Gnosticism with all available weapons, this predilection entailed the imperious necessity for them to deny the existence of esoteric traditions within 'orthodox' Christianity."[38] Bernard McGinn argues, "The most important effect that Gnosticism had on the subsequent history of Christian mysticism was to make esotericism of any sort suspect."[39] Certain aspects of the tradition survived such as those referenced by Basil, but ultimately, argues Stromousa, "The legal prohibition against any secret gathering, the violence of the gnostic challenge, and finally the tension between the very idea of esotericism and the catholic ethos inherent in the logic of Christianity—these three causes came together between the second and fifth centuries to drain Christian esotericism of its contents."[40]

Augustine, in particular, worked to eliminate any notions of an esoteric doctrine for particular Christians, argues Stromousa. In his *Sermons on the Gospel of John,* Augustine warned against *curiositas,* the desire to know more than God would have us know. One can learn God's higher truths, but one should not take short cuts by means of wicked teachers and their secret teachings. For Augustine, mystery meant sacrament. Argues Stromousa, "In its metaphorical use, then, musterion came to mean exactly the opposite of its original meaning: it is the outward expression of the divine depth, which remains unattainable."[41]

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[37] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 1.5; 1.1. Dionysius referred to these rites as "theurgy," 1.1.
[38] Stromousa, *Hidden Wisdom,* 6.
[39] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 99.
[40] Stromousa, *Hidden Wisdom,* 44, 93, 133.
[41] Stromousa, *Hidden Wisdom,* 134-43, 163.

The Protestants followed Augustine in this interpretation and vigorously denounced the validity of a secret tradition. Protestants argued that the secret discipline did not refer to any rites beyond baptism and the Eucharist and that any rites the early church developed in addition to these were in fact derived from pagan mysteries. In the same year that Samuel Hill appealed to the secret tradition, English Protestants C. Hutchinson and William Clagett declared, "It is clear beyond all reasonable doubt, that no Tradition for unwritten Points of Faith can be made out through the writings of the Primitive Fathers; since they all acknowledged the Scriptures to be the Rule of Faith." Only the heretics made such a claim, Hutshinson and Clagett argued.[42] In 1700 Matthieu Souverain admitted that there was a secret tradition, but argued that it was a corruption by the Platonizing fathers.[43]

Not surprisingly, members of an organization with secret rites that they claimed were ancient would find talk of secret tradition in early Christianity appealing. A Mason writing under the pseudonym Theodore Temple, compiled numerous statements from the early church fathers on the secret tradition in his *The Secret Discipline Mentioned in Ancient Ecclesiastical History, Explained* (1833). Temple wrote his book to show "that *there actually existed a class, or order of men, among the early Christians, who were initiated into its certain* MYSTERIES, *which they were bound by a solemn promise not to disclose, nor even to converse about, but with such as had received them under the same sanctions.*" "Whoever is conversant with the works of the fathers," Temple argued further, "must have seen the repeated references to the DISCIPLINE OF THE SECRET and perceived a difficulty in accounting for such a discrimination among professed Christians as it occasions." Temple mentioned the dispute between Catholics and Protestants over the issue

[42] C. Hutchinson, William Clagett, *Of the Authority of Councils, and the Rule of Faith* (London, 1687), 79.
[43] Matthieu Souverain, *Platonism Unveil'd: Or, An Essay Concerning the Notions and Opinions of Plato, and Some Antient and Modern Divines his Followers*, 2 vols (1700), 89.

and rejected the Catholics claim that the secret tradition was the mass: "it could not relate to the admission of the participants of the eucharist… for that ordinance, from the first, had been partaken by all believers,—men, women, and children…. Whereas, to the *mysteries* of which I am treating, women and children were not admitted at all."[44]

Temple's opinion, not surprisingly, was that the secret discipline was Masonic rites. Temple cited various statements of the fathers, beginning with Clement whom Temple said "frequently compares this SECRET DISCIPLINE with the Heathen mysteries." Temple listed quotes from Tertullian, Origen, Cyril, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Theoderet, and Dionysius to argue that the early Christians participated in secret practices and secret teachings. Temple admitted that exactly what the early Christians were doing in the secret discipline was unclear, but asked rhetorically if anyone who

> looks at the terms, '*promise of secrecy,'—'initiates,'—'night meetings,'—'symbolic lectures,'—'tokens of cognizance,*' found so frequently in the writings suppose that these are in reference to the *Lord's Supper* only, or at all? Is it not much more consistent to suppose that as they are not used in the celebration of that rite [Eucharist], and have no relation to its nature or design, but are peculiar to FREE MASONRY *now,* they indicate its existence *then*?[45]

Whether Smith read this work is uncertain, but such ideas would likely have been swirling among Masons, many of whom were Smith's closest associates. One way or another, Smith was convinced that early Christians performed his endowment rite and that Jesus himself had gone through the ritual. "If a man gets the fulness of God," Smith taught his followers in June 1843, "he has to get [it] in the same way that Jesus Christ obtain[ed] it

[44] Theodore Temple, *The Secret Discipline Mentioned in Ancient Ecclesiastical History, Explained* (New York: James Ormond, 1833), 23-25.
[45] Temple, *Secret Discipline,* 29-40.

& that was by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord."[46] Like Smith's earlier revelations that said that Jesus obtained the "fulness," or deification, in mortality one step at a time (Chapter Four), Smith here taught that the endowment ritual—which was to be performed in the "house of the Lord," or the temple—was a central part of Jesus's progression. Later, in the same speech where Smith first proclaimed that the purpose of life was to become deified, Smith declared that it was "on the Mount transfigured before Peter and John" that Jesus received "the fulness of preisthood or the law of God."[47] At this time, Smith was teaching that the "the fulness of the priesthood" was an additional rite called the second anointing, discussed below.

The Early Christian Liturgy. The beginning of Smith's Nauvoo Temple rite (now called the initiatory) had much in common with the Dobson's encyclopedia's descriptions of early Christian baptism. Increase Van Deusen said that when he and his wife went to the Nauvoo Temple in 1846, they were told "'you must here separate'" and Van Deusen went through a door on the right while his wife went through one on the left. Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on baptism said, "To prevent any indecency, men and women were baptized apart. To which end … the baptisteries were divided into two apartments, one for the men, the other for the women." Men were baptized by men and women by women: "There was anciently an order of deaconesses, one part of whose business was to assist at the baptism of women."[48] Catherine Lewis said that in the "wash-room," "the females were

[46] June 11, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 212.
[47] August 27, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 246.
[48] "Baptism," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadlephia, 1798), 2:791.

attended by females" and said that the woman who anointed her (see below) was "called a *Priestess*."[49]

The entry's reference to "an order of deaconesses" parallels developments in Mormon practice because not only did women assist in this rite in the temple, but Smith also began to talk about women and priesthood shortly before he performed the first endowment ritual. In March 1842, the women of Nauvoo began to work to form a women's organization that they would call the Relief Society that focused on helping the poor.[50] Smith attended one of the society's first meetings and told the women to model their organization after the all-male church hierarchy. "He propos'd that the Sisters elect a presiding officer to preside over them, and let that presiding officer choose two counsellors to assist in the duties of her office—that he would ordain them to preside over the Society." Smith seemed to be saying that the Relief Society was a kind of female mirror organization to the church's male priesthood hierarchy. Such an idea was suggested by the encyclopedia's statement: "There was anciently an order of deaconesses, one part of whose business was to assist at the baptism of women." The female "order" "assisted" at baptism, but baptism was just "one part" of their "business." Smith went on to tell the Relief Society, "If any Officers are wanted to carry out the designs of the Institution, let them be appointed and set apart, as Deacons, Teachers, &c. are among us."[51] There would be female counterparts to the male priesthood offices in the Relief Society; "an order of deaconesses," as it were.

Smith made the notion of the Relief Society as a mirror organization to the male priesthood even more explicit in his next speeches to the Relief Society. "The society should

[49] Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of Their Iniquities* (Lynn Mass.: The Author, 1848), 8.
[50] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 446.
[51] March 17, 1842, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 104.

move according to the ancient Priesthood," said Smith, "hence there should be a select society, separate from all the evils of the world, choice, virtuous and holy. Said he was going to make of this society a kingdom of priests as in Enoch's day—as in Paul's day."[52] The encyclopedia said there was an "order of deaconesses" (a priesthood office in Mormonism) in early Christianity and Smith apparently believed that such a program was very ancient. In his next speech, Smith made it even clearer that he now viewed his church as having two priesthood organizations, one male and one female. "He spoke of delivering the keys to this society and to the Church—that according to his prayers God had appointed him elsewhere." Smith, anticipating his own death (see the Conclusion), spoke of giving his angelic authority (or "keys," Chapter Three) "to this society and to the Church." Smith went so far as to address those who were complaining that women were engaged in ritual healing. Smith noted that healing was one of the signs that followed the believers and "ask'd the Society if they could not see by this sweeping stroke that werein they are ordained, it is the privilege of those set apart to administer in that authority which is conferr'd on them—and if the sisters should have faith to heal the sick, let all hold their tongues, and let every thing roll on."[53] Women who were ordained (apparently within the Relief Society) could heal just as those in the male priesthood could.

Yet, Smith added, "[T]he Church is not now organiz'd in its proper order, and cannot be until the Temple is completed."[54] Then encyclopedia entry said that in the early church, women assisted in baptizing, and Smith would have women aid in the introductory purification ritual that accompanied the longer endowment ritual. Though the Nauvoo temple was not completed in Smith's lifetime, he did begin to initiate women into the rituals

[52] March 30, 1842, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 110.
[53] April 28, 1842, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 116, 115.
[54] April 28, 1842, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 115.

in 1843.[55] Whereas women had been excluded from Smith's earlier temple rituals as well as from Freemasonry, Smith, likely based on the description of the "order of deaconesses," who preformed rites that he sought to restore, would incorporate women into his temple rites. Said Smith, "Females, if they are pure and innocent can come into the presence of God," the purpose of his endowment ritual (see below).[56] Women's priesthood and their role in the lost rites that Smith sought to bring back, was another aspect of the covenants lost to Christianity that Smith sought to restore.

"These precautions, however," then encyclopedia entry continued, "rather indicate a scrupulous attention to delicacy, than imply any indecency in the circumstances of immersion itself. From the candidates being immersed, there is at least no reason to infer that they were naked: the present Baptists never baptize naked, though they always immerse."[57] Despite this objection, Van Deusen said that he and his wife were told to take off all their clothes before being ritually washed in a "bath"; as he often did, Smith likely rejected the interpretation of this scholar while still using the entry's information.[58] This rite was therefore not baptism (Mormons preformed those in the open before they had temples) but was in accord with a rite in the descriptions of the mysteries (see below) and still fit within the overall structure of the encyclopedia's entry on early Christian baptism. "After immersion, followed the unction," the encyclopedia entry said; after the washing, Van Deusen said, "We are anointed all over—even to the souls of the feet."[59] After the anointing, said the entry, "He had a white garment given him, to denote his being washed from the defilement of sin, or in allusion to that of the apostle, 'as many as are baptized into Christ

[55] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 451.
[56] April 28, 1842, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 117.
[57] "Baptism," 2:791.
[58] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 3.
[59] "Baptism," 2:791.

have put on Christ.'" "I am presented with, and have put on, what they call an under garment," said Van Deusen.[60]

Smith's initiates now received the garment, which John Dee said was necessary to understand what was in the garden and what Smith's father apparently sought (Chapter Two). This was the Catholic alb, worn by priests during the mass and by the newly baptized in early Christianity.[61] Exodus refers to the high priests' vestments as garments, but the term is used to mean the full array of the priests clothing, not underclothing that is always worn.[62] In Christ's parable of the wedding feast, he tells of the guest "which had not on a wedding garment" that the king had bound and cast into outer darkness. "For many are called, but few are chosen."[63] The Book of Mormon makes numerous references to garments that metaphorically need to be kept white as a representation of personal purity, similar to how Revelations refers to robes.[64] *The Ascension of Isaiah* (discussed below) said that the saints wore a garment and that such was needed to get into the highest heaven. *The Shepherd of Hermas* said "no man can enter into the kingdom of God, except these [the virgins] clothe him with their garment."[65] In the early and medieval Christian liturgy, the person to be

[60] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 3-4.
[61] "Alb," *Catholic Encyclopedia,* newadvent.org.
[62] Exodus 29:5. 39:1-2.
[63] Matthew 22: 11-14. Smith gave something of a discourse on this passage in his Liberty-jail letter: "Behold there are many called but few are chosen. Any why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the thing of this world and aspire to the honors of men that they do not learn this one lesson. that the rights of the of the priesthood are inseperably [sic] connected with the powers of heaven and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principals of righteousness." Smith, "To the Church at Quincy," *Personal Writings,* 440. In the *Stromata*, Clement of Alexandria said that Plato's statement quoted above—"There are indeed, as those concerned with the mysteries, many who carry the thyrsus but the Bacchants are few"—meant, "many are called but few are chosen." *Stromata*, 1.19.
[64] 1 Nephi 12:10-11; 2 Nephi 9:44; Jacob 1:19, 2:2; Mosiah 2:28; Alma 5:21-27; 7:25; 13:11-12; 34:36; 3 Nephi 27:19; Ether 12:37-38; 13:10; Mormon 9:35; Revelations 7:14.
[65] *Shepherd of Hermas*, in *The Apocryphal New Testament* (London: Printed for William Hone, 1820), 252, similitude 9.

baptized would take off his or her old clothes and put on new white clothes after baptism.[66] Priests continued to wear the alb as part of their vestments and grimoires said to put on clothing imitating priests when preforming rituals (Chapter Two). The Masons performed a similar ritual for initiation into the degree "Knight of the Christian Mark, and Guard of the Conclave." Referring to Revelation 3:5, the instructor tells the initiate, "Take way his filthy garments from him, and clothe him with a change of raiment. For he that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in the white raiment, and his name shall be written in the book of life."[67] Robes, an outer dressing, were different than the alb (but robes also played an important role in the endowment, discussed below), thus while other sources may have also prompted the practice of wearing a special garment, Smith's ritual that bestowed the garment lined up best with the encyclopedia's description of early Christian baptism.

Mysteries. Yet Smith's bestowal of the garment was not part of a baptism ritual. Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on baptism, after giving several scholars' opinions on where the rite of baptism came from, cited one Spencer's argument that "Jews received the baptism of proselytes from the neighbouring nations, who were wont to prepare candidates for the more sacred functions of their religion." As with Smith's endowment ritual, such washings were done "to prepare candidates." "In confirmation of this opinion," the entry continued, "he observes, first, that there is no divine precept for the baptism of proselytes, God having enjoined only the rite of circumcision for the admission of strangers into Jewish religion. Secondly, that, among foreign nations, the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and others, it was customary that those who were to be initiated into their mysteries, or sacred rites,

[66] "Baptism," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Gerguson (New York: Garland, 1990), 132. Pseudo-Dionysius describes the ritual in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 2.7-8. The medieval rite was similar, Karl Tamburr, *The Harrowing of Hell in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 5.
[67] Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 168.

should be first purified by dipping their whole body in water." Spencer went on to argue that "Christ, in the institution of his sacraments, paid a peculiar regard to those rites which were borrowed from the Gentiles: for, rejecting circumcision and the paschal supper, he adopted into his religion baptism and the sacred cup; thus preparing the way for the conversion and reception of the Gentiles into his church."[68] This entry, therefore, asserted that there was a link between baptism and the mystery cults, a link that Jesus himself had endorsed and promoted. Smith had his followers preform a rite very similar to the encyclopedia's description of early Christian baptism, an entry that also said that such rites were performed at the beginning of mystery rites.

> Furthermore, Dobson's encyclopedia's entry on the mysteries declared,
>
> Whether the phrases of *washing away sin*, *putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*, *putting off the old man with his deeds*, *putting on a robe of righteousness*, *being buried in baptism*, the words *mystery*, *perfect*, *perfection* which occur so frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of the apostle St Paul, are borrowed from the pagan mysteries, or from usages current among the Jews, we leave to our more learned readers to determine.[69]

The entry suggested numerous similarities between Christianity and the mysteries, and the similarities between Smith's endowment and this entry's description of the Eleusinian mysteries suggest that Smith believed that the relationship between Christianity and the mysteries was legitimate.

The relationship between the mysteries and Christianity had been debated for over two hundred years by Smith's day. The ancient mystery cults were distinct groups of rites of

[68] "Baptism," 2:789.
[69] "Mysteries," 12:596.

initiation more selective than community rites. The principal mysteries in antiquity were the Eleusinian mysteries, Dionysus, Mithras, and Isis. Cicero described the purpose of the Eleusinian rites as "how to live in joy, and how to die with better hopes."[70] Plato made numerous allusions to the mysteries, and Anne Mary Farrell argues that Plato's description of the pre-existent heavenly chorus (Chapter Three) strongly alluded to Eleusis, as did his discussion of holy love in the *Symposium* (Chapter Five).[71] Plato described the purpose of the mysteries in the *Phaedo*: "It is likely that those who established the mystic rites for us were not inferior persons but were speaking in riddles long ago when they said that whoever arrives in the underworld uninitiated and unsanctified will wallow in the mire, whereas he who arrives there purified and initiated will dwell with the gods." The key to the mysteries, argues Socrates, came from the saying, "There are indeed, as those concerned with the mysteries, many who carry the thyrsus but the Bacchants are few." "That is, the true worshippers of Dionysus, as opposed to those who only carry the external symbols of his worship," explains John Cooper. Socrates continues, "These latter are, in my opinion, no other than those how have practiced philosophy in the right way."[72] Thus the philosophers were the true practitioners of the mysteries.

"Some ancient Christian writers were struck by certain similarities between Christian worship and mysteries," explains Walter Burkert, "and they denounced the latter as devilish counterfeits of the one true religion." At the same time, many early Christian writers used similar language as that of the mysteries, including St. Paul.[73] Renaissance Platonists were

[70] Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 4, 8, 21.
[71] Anne Mary Farrell, "Plato's Use of Eleusinian Mystery Motifs," (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas, 1999).
[72] *Phaedo,* 69c-d. Cooper's note to the text in *Plato's Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, 60.
[73] Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 3, 101; Guy G. Stromousa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* 2d ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1, 98.

fascinated by the mysteries, though they saw them more as a metaphor than as rites to try to enact.[74] The issue of the mysteries came to the forefront in the debate between Catholics and Protestants over the source of the Catholic liturgy. Catholics argued that the *disciplina arcani*, or secret discipline, was the foundation of the liturgy, while the Protestants argued that inasmuch as the fathers engaged in such rites they were a corrupt borrowing from pagan mystery cults.

Many of Newton's protégés who became Masons argued for links between Masonry and the mystery cults.[75] Andrew Michael Ramsay said of Masonry in 1737, "Yes, Gentlemen, the famous festivals of Ceres at Eleusis, of Isis in Egypt, of Minerva at Athens, of Urania among the Phoenicians, and of Diana in Scythia had a relationship to ours. They celebrated mysteries, in which were several vestiges of the ancient Religion of Noah and the Patriarchs."[76] Bishop William Warburton's very popular *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1737-41) argued that the mystery cults played an important civic role by instilling in the citizens the notion of an afterlife of rewards and punishments. Another chief function of the mysteries, Warburton argued, was to teach monotheism; that the pagan gods were really just humans that people revered. There was only one God in reality. To Warburton the mysteries were essentially a good thing, though they were later corrupted by theurgy. Warburton argued that "the wisest and best of the pagan world invariably hold, that the mysteries were

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[74] Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 17.
[75] Monad, *Solomon's Secret Rite,* 179-85.
[76] Quoted in D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 248. on descriptions of all these rites.
Not all Freemasons were comfortable with the claims that Masonry was linked to the mysteries. George Oliver asserted that the mysteries were a wicked imitation of Masonry: the mysteries worshiped false deities, allowed women to participate, and claimed to aid the initiate in the afterlife. "Their discrepancies already noticed," Oliver declared, "are too evident and irreconcilable to sanction the hypothesis, that these mysteries were the Masonry of ancient times." Oliver, *Antiquities of Freemasonry,* 99-101, 117. Smith both admitted women and said the endowment aided initiates in the afterlife.

instituted pure; and proposed the noblest end, by the worthiest means."[77] Warburton therefore linked theurgy and the mystery rites and as I argue in Chapter Four, Smith saw theurgy as part of the missing rites from early Christianity.

Paul Henri Thiry, in his *The System of Nature; Or, The Laws of the Moral and Physical World* (1795), said, "Whoever will take the trouble to read the works of PLATO and his disciples, such as PROCLUS, JAMBLICHUS, PLOTINUS, &c… will find the origin of the SYMBOLS, the RITES, the SACRAMENTS, in short of the THEURGY, employed in Christian worship."[78] A critic of Freemasonry declared in 1798, "*Theurgy, Cosmogony, Cabala,* and many whimsical and mystical doctrines which had been grafted on the distinguished tenets and the pure morality of the Jews and Christians, were subjects of frequent discussion in the Lodges. The celebrated Chevalier Ramsay was a zealous apostle in this mission."[79] Thus a number of contemporary thinkers argued that theurgy, mysteries, and Masonry were linked and Smith's endowment ritual drew on descriptions of all of these rites.

Dobson's encyclopedia entry on mysteries had a number of elements that closely resembled aspects of Smith's endowment. The entry not only said that the mysteries came from Egypt, but it also said that the Egyptians rites had changed over time: "Their subject was at first simple and easy to comprehend; in time it became complex, intricate, and unintelligible." At the end of the entry, the writer declared, "That this institution gradually degenerated, can hardly be questioned; but how much, and in what points, we have not been

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[77] William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated*, 4th ed. (London 1765), quote at 1:255-56. Section on the Mysteries, 1:188-390.
[78] [Paul Henri Thiry], *The System of Nature; Or, The Laws of the Moral and Physical World*, trans. William Hodgson (London 1795), 3:208. The book was a critique of Christianity and religion in general.
[79] John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*, 4th ed. (New York, 1798), 35.

able to investigate."[80] Again, Smith's endowment was much shorter than the numerous degrees of Freemasonry; perhaps he sought to bring the rite back to its original simplicity.

Increase Van Deusen said that after he and his wife entered the Nauvoo Temple to be initiated they were separated by gender and "examined with regard to our character."[81] The encyclopedia said, "All impious and profane persons, were expressly prohibited the benefit of this pagan sacrament."[82] Good character was also a prerequisite to joining the Masons.[83] After this examination the separated men and women were led into different washrooms. "They now put us in this bath and wash us all over, from head to foot," said Van Deusen. The Mormons had already engaged in ritual washing and anointing in the Kirtland ceremonies, which I argued were theurgical and biblical (Chapter Four). Regarding the mysteries, the encyclopedia says, "The candidate was then purified by bathing in the river Ilyssus, by aspersions with salt water or salt, with laurel barley, and passing through the fire: all which rites were attended with incantations and other usages equally insignificant and ridiculous." The Mormons did not wash with salt or barley, nor did they pass "through the fire," but they were blessed as they were washed. The washing according to Van Deusen, was

> accompanied with the following ceremony: 'I wash you that you may be clean to perform the work assigned to you; your eyes, that you may see the glory of God; your ears, that you may hear His voice: your mouth, that you may speak forth His praise; your arms and breast, that you may be strong to perform His work; and so down to

[80] "Mysteries," *Encyclopaedia;* (Philadelphia, 1798), 12:581, 597.
[81] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 3. That women were allowed in the rite was a departure from most forms of Masonry that only allowed men. There were some forms on Masonry that allowed women, particularly in France. Margaret C. Jacob, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts and Fictions* (Philadelphia: University Press, 2006), 92-129. Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 208-9, 246.
[82] "Mysteries," 12:592.
[83] Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry*, 116.

> our feet, that we may be swift to run the race.' &c. We are, all this time, rolled and tumbled about in the bath,—at last, the priest lays his hands on our heads and pronounces us clean, in the name of the Lord.[84]

Such blessings might be considered "incantations and other usages." Though washing accompanied the biblical priestly temple rites, no such blessings were recorded.[85] The encyclopedia entry on baptism not only placed the baptism where Smith put the ritual washing but it also cited Spencer saying that such rites were preparatory to higher ones.

While the encyclopedia entry on baptism said the baptized were given a garment that was kept in the church, Van Deusen said, "We are told, also, that we are always to wear this garment under our clothes, while we are in the world. God has ordered this; and we can receive no harm while we have it on."[86] Referring to Strabo, the encyclopedia entry on the mysteries declared, "They were at the same time, dressed with new garments, which they continued to wear till they were quite worn out." Toward the end of the entry, the author reiterated this point: "The candidates for initiation bathed themselves in holy water, and put on new cloaths [sic], all of linen, which they continued to wear till they were quite torn."[87] The continual wearing of a garment was not a Masonic practice.

After also receiving a new name (discussed below), the initiates were then led into another room where they heard an account of the creation. God the Father, Elohim, gave instructions to Jehovah and Michael to create the earth.[88] Increase Van Deuson and

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[84] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 3.
[85] Exodus 29:4, Leviticus 16:24.
[86] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 4.
[87] "Mysteries," 12:592, 596.
[88] Elohim was understood to be God the Father, and Jehovah came to be understood to be the pre-mortal Jesus Christ, and Michael, the pre-mortal Adam. Catherine Lewis describes one sending Jehovah and Michael to create the earth while William Hall describes one reporting to Jehovah after performing creation tasks. Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of Their Iniquities* (Lynn, Mass.: The Author, 1848), 8; William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed; Containing*

Catherine Lewis described listening to a dialogue, while William Hall suggests it was more of a performance.[89] The encyclopedia quoted Cicero saying, "The father of the universe, or the supreme demiurgus, was represented as forming the chaotic mass into the four elements, and producing animals, vegetables, and all kinds of beings, out of those materials." The entry explained further that the cosmogony of the Eleusinian mysteries "was that of the most ancient Egyptians, and of the orientals in general. This cosmogony is beautifully and energetically exhibited in Plato's Timaeus, and in the genuine spirit of poetry of Ovid in the beginning of his Metamorphoses."[90] Like the Book of Abraham, the *Timaeus* and the reference to Cicero have God creating out of chaos rather than nothing; this passage likely pointed Smith toward the *Timaeus.* Like the Book of Abraham, the endowment creation had the Gods create following the pattern in Genesis. Salem Town said that in Masonry, "The great outlines in the history of the creation are unfolded."[91]

Next the endowment turned to a dramatization of the Garden of Eden and the fall.[92] After the creation, the encyclopedia said, "The next scene exhibited upon the stage, on this solemn occasion, consisted of the exploits and adventures of the gods, demigods, and heroes, who had, from time to time, been advanced to divine honours. These were displayed as passing before the mystae in pageants fabricated for that important occasion. This was the

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many Facts and Doctrines Concerning That Singular People during Seven Years Membership with Them from 1840 to 1847 (Cincinnati: L. Hart, 1852), 47. William Clayton said that Elohim, Jehovah, Michael, and the serpent were the roles that were played, William Clayton, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City; Signature, 1995), 204.

[89] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 4; Lewis, *Narrative of Some Proceedings of the Mormons,* 8; Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed,* 47. Hall was initiated later than Van Deusen and Lewis, suggesting that the ritual may have became more elaborate. The creation did become a dramatization at some point. Buerger, *Mysteries of Godliness,* 166.

[90] "Mysteries," 12:593.

[91] Salem Town, *A System of Speculative Masonry,* 2d ed. (Salem, N.Y.: H. Dodd, 1822), 22.

[92] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 5-6; Lewis, *Narrative of Some Proceedings of the Mormons,* 8-9.

original mode of the Egyptians, and was no doubt followed by their Eleusian pupils."[93] Instead of pagan heroes, Smith's endowment dramatized the first ancestors according to Christians, Adam and Eve. In the endowment, a person playing the devil induced the initiates playing Adam and Eve to eat the fruit and fall, leading to them being cast out of the Garden. Salem Town said, "The primitive innocence of man, the fall and the consequence of natural and moral evil" were taught in Freemasonry.[94]

Before they were cast out, the initiates were given an apron to wear with fig leaves on it then they were brought to an altar where they were given signs and tokens.[95] William Hall said there was a first set of tokens given, which he called "the lesser priesthood, called Aaronic Priesthood."[96] In William Clayton's overview, he said the initiates were given the signs and tokens of the Aaronic priesthood first and then the signs and tokens of the Melchizedek, or higher priesthood, later in the ceremony.[97] The encyclopedia spoke of "greater" and "lesser" mysteries at Eleusis.[98]

The initiates were then led into another room representing the world into which Adam and Eve were cast. Here the accounts differ. Van Deusen said the devil enacted a kind of meeting with all the religions of the earth, glorying over the corruption of contemporary religion, and instructing these religions to fight against Mormonism. A heavenly messenger then came and cast Satan out. According to Lewis, the devil tried to tempt the participants and a person tried to get them to reveal their signs before the devil was cast out. "After hearing all this conversation," Van Deusen continued, "we are taken by the heavenly

[93] "Mysteries," 12:593.
[94] Town, *System of Speculative Masonry,* 22-23.
[95] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 6; Lewis, *Narrative of Some Proceedings of the Mormons,* 8-9.
[96] Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed,* 49.
[97] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 205.
[98] "Mysteries," 12:591, 593.

messenger and instructed in Mormon doctrine, exclusively, and supposed to be converted to that faith."[99] The encyclopedia said that the initiates at Eleusis themselves underwent "fiery trials."[100] In the Master Mason degree, the initiate goes on a ritual journey "to give us a specimen of your fortitude, perseverance, and fidelity, in the preservation of what you have already received—Fare you well and may the Lord be with you, and support you through your trials and difficulties."[101]

After being converted the candidates then put on white robes.[102] The encyclopedia did not mention robes, but robes were important in biblical descriptions of the temple, apocalyptic literature, and higher-degree Masonry discussed below. The candidates were taken to another altar, where Lewis said the initiates promised to "sustain the Bible and the Book of Mormon; the Book of doctrine and covenants" and promised not to have sex with anyone with whom they were not married. According to the encyclopedia, the mysteries "were indeed a kind of sacraments [sic], by which the initiated bound themselves by a solemn vow to practice piety towards the gods, justice and humanity towards their fellow-men, and gentleness and tenderness towards the inoffensive part of the brute creation."[103] The initiates then made an oath not to reveal the ceremony, similar to oaths in Freemasonry and the mysteries.[104]

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[99] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 8-9; Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons*, 9.
[100] "Mysteries," 12:596.
[101] Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 65.
[102] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 9; Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons*, 9; Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed,* 46-47.
[103] "Mysteries," 12:595.
[104] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 9; "Mysteries," 12:595; Bernard, *Light on Masonry,* vi.

The initiates were then taken to an altar and taught to pray[105] and then were taken to the veil where they give the signs and names in order to enter the presence of God, similar to Royal Arch Masonry.[106] "We now pass through this door into a large room, representing the celestial kingdom of God," said Van Deusen.[107] The encyclopedia cited Pletho saying that the wonderful sight the initiates saw at Eleusis "was called the *Antopsia*, or 'the real presence:' hence those rites were sometimes called *Epoptica*. The *Epopta* were actually initiated, and were admitted into the *Sanctum Sanctorum.*"[108] Whether Smith understood these Greek and Latin words, *Epoptia*, or the pure vision, was central to Smith's practice (see Chapters Two and Four) and the initiate did symbolically enter God's presence at that end of the endowment. To do so, the initiate passed through the veil into the Celestial room that represented God's dwelling place. The *Sanctum Sanctorum,* or holy of holies, also represented God's dwelling place in apocalyptic literature, discussed below. In Masonry, when the initiate passed the test, he entered into "a place representing the *sanctum sanctorum*, or *holy of holies*, of King Solomon's temple."[109] In the Celestial Room, Van Desusen said they "have crowns put on our heads, and are really King and Queen, according to Mormon theory."[110] Initiates at Eleusis were crowned with laurel and Masons were crowned in the Royal Arch degree.[111]

Most importantly, the endowment and the mysteries led to a blessed afterlife. Mormon Amasa Lyman explained in 1845, "The scenery through which you have passed is

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[105] Georg Luck says, "The divine fire that theurgists hope to see at some point will help them understand all of theology in a flash. It will teach them to pray properly and give them knowledge of the classes of the gods." Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship," 192
[106] Bernard, *Light on Masonry,* 135, 141.
[107] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 9.
[108] "Mysteries," 12:595.
[109] Bernard, *Light on Masonry,* 65.
[110] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment,* 9.
[111] "Mysteries," 12:596; Bernard, *Light on Masonry,* 139.

actually laying before you a picture or map by which you are to travel through life, and obtain an entrance into the celestial kingdom hereafter."[112] In Brigham Young's words, "Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you had departed his life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell."[113] "After death," the encyclopedia explained, "in the Elysian fields, they were to enjoy superior degrees of felicity, and were to bask in eternal sunshine, to quaff nectar, and feast upon ambrosia." The encyclopedia then quoted the line from the *Phaedo* quoted above about the uninitiated wallowing in the mire and added a quote from Aristides: "The initiated shall not roll in mire and grope in darkness: a fate which awaits the unholy and uninitiated."[114] George Oliver explicitly rejected the idea that Masonry aided one's afterlife journey: "Masonry does not inculcate any such doctrine: a doctrine not less impious than the Roman indulgences."[115] Some Masons did, however, see a sacramental advantage in Masonry.[116]

Thus there was considerable overlap between the endowment, Freemasonry, and the descriptions of the mysteries. While Freemasonry drew upon descriptions of the mysteries and Smith drew upon Freemasonry, elements like the undergarment, ritual washing and blessing, and the similarity of the basic structure (wash, garment, creation, exploits of the

[112] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 225.
[113] Brigham Young, speech 1853 in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool, 1854), 2:31.
[114] "Mysteries," 12:596-97.
[115] Oliver, *Antiquities of Free-Masonry,* 99.
[116] Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,"107.

heroes, trials, *sanctum sanctorum*, crowns) suggests that Smith drew upon descriptions of the mysteries in addition to and independent of Freemasonry.[117]

Judeo-Christian Apocalyptic Literature. While the description of the mysteries likely formed the outline for Smith's endowment, the ceremony suggests other influences as well. Most of these aspects were found in higher-degree Masonry, but the elements Smith selected suggest certain themes, particularly Old Testament temple rites from both biblical and apocryphal sources.[118] Royal Arch Masons had a high priest dressed in the ritual clothing described in Exodus and the initiates in both higher-degree Masonry and the endowment put on robes and crowns as described in Exodus.[119]

The Book of Revelation, which described a heavenly temple liturgy, was also an important source for both Masonry and the endowment. The visionary in Revelation sees the righteous dressed in white robes with crowns on their heads before the throne of God.[120] In Royal Arch Masonry, the high priest dressed in a white robe, and in the higher "Knight of the Christian Mark" degree, the initiate puts on a white robe. In the endowment, the initiates were dressed in white robes after they overcome their trials. As discussed in Chapter Two, the genius ritual found in the third edition of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* said that the genius would be dressed as the invoker, and Smith said that Moroni was dressed in a white robe. Another important element from Revelation found in Masonry and the endowment was the new name: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he

[117] Descriptions of Freemasonry are much vaster and varied. Many elements in Freemasonry are found in the endowment but they are scattered over numerous degrees.
[118] Michael Quinn noted the similarities between the endowment and apocalypses but conflated them with the mysteries. Quinn, *Magic World View,* 231.
[119] Exodus 28-29; Bernard, *Light on Masonry,* 139-41. 168.
[120] Revelation 4:2-4.

that receiveth it."[121] In the first degree of Masonry, the initiate was given a new name, "Caution," and in the third degree, Mark Master, the initiate is given "a white stone, on which is written a new name."[122] In the endowment, the initiate was given a new name (not "Caution") after he or she was washed and received the garment. The initiate was told to only reveal the new name at the veil at the end of the ceremony.[123]

The heavenly temple themes of the Book of Revelation were central to the Judeo-Christian Apocalyptic texts of which genre Revelation was a part. These texts describe visionaries ascending to heaven, undergoing the temple liturgy, entering God's presence, and seeing Him seated on his throne. In the Second Temple period, certain Jews felt the temple had become corrupted and thus the true practitioners needed to undergo a heavenly liturgy rather than the rites performed at Jerusalem. Beginning with 1 Enoch (c. 300 BCE), apocryphal literature described heavenly ascents in which the visionary underwent a heavenly temple liturgy: washed, anointed, robed, seeing the creation, entering into the Holy of Holies, and seeing God on his throne surrounded by angels. The apocalypses were written during the Hellenistic period and show similarities and possible influence of Platonism.[124] In describing the nature of heavenly ascents in the apocalyptic literature, John Turner declares, "One can scarcely think of a more apt Jewish equivalent to Plato's description of the intense light of the ultimate Goodness and Beauty awaiting anyone who would risk the ascent out of the cave of illusion."[125] Furthermore, scholars argue that the apocalyptic literature heavily

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[121] Revelation 2:17.
[122] Bernard, *Light on Masonry,* 23, 99.
[123] [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment*, 4. The initiates said the new name was a biblical or Book of Mormon name.
[124] Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford, 1993). 1, 29-44, 47, 86.
[125] John D. Turner, "To See the Light: A Gnostic Appropriation of Jewish Priestly Practice and Sapiential and Apocalyptic Visionary Lore," in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams, and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 110.

influenced Clement of Alexandria: Jean Danielou and Bogdan Bucer go so far as to argue that the secret tradition was the continuation of Judeo-Christian apocalypticism.[126]

1 Enoch was translated in 1822, but its influence on early Mormonism was unclear.[127] Further, although Enoch ascended through a heavenly temple in 1 Enoch, he did not undergo rites of washing and clothing.[128] Later apocalypses did describe the visionary undergoing such rituals, but most of these were not available in Joseph Smith's lifetime. Two apocalyptic texts were extant and may have played a role in Smith's endowment. *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* had been extant the longest. Translated in 1242 by Robert Grosseteste, the work contained purported testaments of the sons of Israel including the *Testament of Levi.*[129] "I saw the holy temple and the highest sitting on the throne of glory," says Levi. Levi is given the priesthood, anointed, washed, "clothed me with a glorious robe down to the ground," given "a silken garment like to an ephod," and finally has "the mitre of priesthood [placed] upon my head." The text also mentions a new name.[130]

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs remained popular throughout the early modern period and may have influenced John Pordage and Jane Lead, both of whom also described heavenly liturgical temple visions similar to the apocalyptic literature. Both Pordage and Lead said they were taken into heaven and underwent temple rites before they entered the holy of holies and saw God sitting on his throne. The visions were similar to the ascents described in 1 and 2 Enoch, though 2 Enoch was not extant at that time, and only

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[126] Jean Danielou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1973), 445-63; Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 251-68.
[127] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 138.
[128] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven,* 14-29.
[129] Ariel Hessayon, "Of King of Bashan, Enoch and the Books of Enoch: Extra-Canonical Texts and Interpretations of Genesis 6:1-4," in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England,* edited by Ariel Hessayon, Nicholas Keene (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 35.
[130] *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Sons of Jacob* (Manchester, Ralph J. Bradshaw, 1843).

small portions of 1 Enoch were available (Chapter Four). Lead even called her vision *Enochian Walks with God.*[131] The *Testament of Levi* refers to the writings of Enoch; perhaps the *Testament of Levi* coupled with Revelations inspired Pordage's and Lead's revelations.[132] Again, Pordage and Lead likely influenced Freemasonry. The Mormons seem to have been interested in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*: Samuel Downes, an English Mormon, printed a translation of the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* in 1843. "Having shewn it to many of my Brethren," Downes explained, "and it having met with their approbation, they are wishful to possess themselves of it also. I now at their solicitation for the church, and for mankind in general, send it forth unto the world."[133]

The *Ascension of Isaiah*, another important apocalyptic text, had been translated in 1819 by the translator of 1 Enoch, Richard Lawrence. The *Ascension of Isaiah* included many elements found in Smith's endowment, particularly its emphasis on the garment. The text begins with a prophecy that Christians would "forsake the doctrine of the twelve Apostles," not long after Christ's death. Among the iniquitous acts these apostate Christians would commit: "Many likewise shall barter the honourable cloathing of the saints for the garment of him, who delights in gold." The text then described an ascent of Isaiah through the seven heavens. In order to enter the seventh heaven, Isaiah must put on the heavenly clothing, which all the saints in the seventh heaven wear. Isaiah is sent back to earth to finish his mission but the author of the text concludes by requesting that the Lord "grant therefore my wish, and render my heart happy with a present of venerable cloth, fine in its thread, and

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[131] John Pordage, *Theologia Mystica, or, The Mystic Divinitie of the Aeternal Invisibles* (London, 1683); Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God, Found out by a Spiritual-Traveller Whose Face towards Mount-Sion above Was Set* (London, 1694).
[132] *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* 28-29.
[133] *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* ii. On Downes, see Susan Easton Black, *Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1848* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989) 14:306.

good in its texture, of 12 measures long and 4 broad." Isaiah also sees crowns and thrones that the righteous will receive in the seventh heaven, suggesting a similar pattern to rites of the endowment: an earthly garment, special clothing to enter the highest heaven, then receiving crowns and thrones in the highest heaven.[134]

While the encyclopedia entry on mysteries likely provided the basic structure of the endowment, apocalyptic literature suggested its central purpose: a temple liturgy to enter God's presence. These elements overlapped: the Masons traced their rites back to Solomon's temple and Eleusis was called a temple. William Warburton drew links between the mysteries and the Jewish temple with a reference to Josephus. "He tells Appion," said Warburton, "that that high sublime knowledge, which the Gentiles with difficulty attained unto, in the rare and temporary celebration of the mysteries, was habitually taught to the Jews, at all times."[135] Smith's endowment indicates such overlapping elements.

Catholicism. Finally, Smith's endowment also suggests that he drew upon Catholic practices and ideas both in the form of crypto-Catholic folk rites and texts describing medieval mystery plays. Masonry had links to medieval rites: Freemasonry had its roots as a medieval guild and scholars argue that Masonry filled the void of the loss of Catholic rites after the Reformation.[136] Andrew Michael Ramsay converted to Catholicism and the Masonic higher-degrees are full of allusions to medieval rites.[137]

The endowment had a number of Catholic themes. In the showdown with the devil, when the initiates were to demonstrate their faithfulness, the righteous teacher went to a door to listen and then declared, "'Peter has given me the Keys of the Kingdom which is to be set

[134] Ricardo Laurence, *Ascensio Isaiae Vatis* (London, 1819). 106-7, 119-27, 139. Laurence translated the text into Latin, but also included an English translation at the end.
[135] Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, 222, 224.
[136] Stevenson, *Origins of Freemasonry,* 13-25, 120.
[137] Walker, *Ancient Theology,* 235; Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, 144-82.

up in the last days.' The Devil began to rage, and was cast out, and he left the room *hissing.*"[138] William Clayton said that after Adam and Eve are driven out of the Garden of Eden, "Then Peter assisted by James and John conducts them through the Telestial and Terrestrial kingdom administering the charges and tokens in each and conducts them the vail [sic] where they are received by the Eloheem and after talking with him by words and tokens are admitted by him into the Celestial kingdom."[139] Smith said he received the higher Melchizedek priesthood from these apostles as heavenly ministers and in Chapter Three, I argue that this and Smith's other descriptions of angelic interaction had theurgical overtones: exorcising evil spirits, and then calling on intermediary beings to gain heavenly powers and to be led back to the presence of God. This part of the endowment literally enacted that drama as Peter, James, and John led the initiates back to God.

Smith may have made a more explicit use of Catholicism as suggested by the similarities between certain portions of the endowment and medieval mystery plays. Ritual drama was central to the medieval Catholic liturgical cycle. Local communities and guilds would enact scenes from the Bible (including plays on the creation and the fall of Adam and Eve) as part of a general program of teaching biblical passages to a largely illiterate population. The English Protestants shut these plays down during Elizabeth's reign as they considered such enactments idolatrous.[140] Such plays continued for a time in Catholic lands, and the scripts of the medieval plays were housed at Oxford. Scholars began to publish these scripts in the 1820s. The first to do so was William Hone, the same person who had compiled *The Apocryphal New Testament* that Smith owned. Hone even referred to the mystery plays in his introduction to *The Apocryphal New Testament.* In describing the

[138] Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings,* 9.
[139] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 210.
[140] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* 66-68, 579-82.

contents of the book, Hone added, "Several of the papal pageants for the populace, and the monkish mysteries performed as dramas at Chester, Coventry, Newcastle, and in other parts of England, are almost verbatim representations of the stories."[141] Such a statement would likely have intrigued Smith; he had found value in *The Shepherd of Hermas* and likely *The Gospel of Nicodemus* and thus would likely have been curious about the "monkish mysteries" that Hone described.

Three years after he published *The Apocryphal New Testament,* Hone published *Ancient Mysteries Described*, which contained a series of scripts of medieval mystery plays including dramatizations of the creation and fall. Further, Hone said that Gregory Nazianzen wrote Christian drama based on Greek plays in the fourth century and that the source of both may have been dramatizations in the mystery rites. Hone also asserted that Gregory's plays might have been the source of the medieval mysteries.[142] That the plays were called mysteries and Hone called them ancient might have suggested to readers additional links to the ancient mystery cults.

Hone mentioned that such plays were performed in the Middle Ages but the principal description of creation plays came from people who had seen them performed in Catholic lands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One "Whitaker" described a creation play at Lisbon: "When the curtain drew up we saw the *eternal Father* descend in a cloud with a long white beard, with a great number of lights and angels around him: he then gave orders for the creation of the world." A description of a "Mystery" performed at Bamberg, German, in 1783 told of a monk dressed in a false beard as God the Father, who gave the commands of the creation as actors dressed as angels carried them out. The actors poured water on the

[141] *Apocryphal New Testament,* x.
[142] William Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described, Especially the English Miracle Plays* (London, 1823), 151-52, 168.

stage and even brought out animals.[143] Lewis and Van Deusen described the creation in the endowment as instructions given by God (Elohim) to Jehovah and Michael to create the earth.[144] William Hall, who was imitated after Lewis and Van Deusen, described the ritual as more elaborate: "A voice was heard from behind the canvas: 'Let us make two great lights.' The response was: 'It is done, Jehovah.' A window was throne open, and God saw the light that it was good, etc. In like manner the whole work of Creation was pretended to be performed, as laid down in the Scriptures, till it comes to the last created—which was man."[145]

"Soon afterwards Adam appeared," said the description of the play in Bamberg. "He stalked about wondering at every thing." Next "he reclined to sleep, preparatory to the production of Eve." They then enacted taking a rib from Adam's side, showed it to the audience, and then Eve was pulled up through a trap door.[146] While Lewis and Van Deusen said that the initiates acted as Adam and Even, Hall said actors played these roles. Jehovah caused Adam to sleep. "Then the woman came in. A rib was pretended to be taken from his side, and the flesh closed up. According to the words 'Let us make an help-meet for him,' the rib was presented to him in the shape of a handsome young woman…. He rises, views her all around, and seems struck with entire astonishment at her beauty and the symmetry of her form. He puts his hand upon her, and seems utterly transported with delight by the acquisition he has made."[147]

"The next scene," said Whittaker of the play at Lisbon, "presented us with the serpent tempting Eve to eat the apple, and his infernal majesty, (the prince of darkness) paid

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[143] Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described,* 181, 185-86.
[144] Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings,* 8; [Van Deusen], *Mormon Endowment*, 4.
[145] Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed,* 47.
[146] Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described*, 186.
[147] Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed,* 47-48.

the most exaggerated encomiums to her beauty, in order to engage her to eat, which as soon as he had done, and persuaded Adam to do the same."[148] Lewis, Van Deusen, and Hall all said that after the creation they were then taken into another room adorned to represent the Garden of Eden. They then said an actor portraying Satan went through an elaborate dialogue to convince Eve to eat the fruit. Eve finally yielded and then convinced Adam to eat the fruit.[149] The Lisbon description said that upon Adam eating the fruit, a terrible storm of lightning arose, the devils rejoiced until "a voice from behind the scenes" said "the word 'Jesus,' on which the devils immediately vanished in a cloud of smoke." The Bamberg description just said that Adam and Eve were driven out by an angel with a "fiery pasteboard sword."[150] In the exposés of the endowment, God returned and pronounces various curses on Adam, Eve, and the Devil, but then gave tokens and commandments to Adam and before sending them out of the garden. Then, said Hall, "Cherubims were stationed, and a flaming sword placed to guard the Garden, as mentioned in the Scriptures of truth."[151]

While the Bible was the source of these enactments, the descriptions of the mysteries and the medieval mystery plays presented the concept of religious drama, also found in Smith's endowment. As Hone argued that the pagan mysteries may have been an ultimate source of such practices, Smith may have been inclined use such enactments in his quest to restore what he believed to be a sacred ancient rite.

All these aspects were woven together and informed the creation of the endowment. The mysteries came from the Egyptians (who got their wisdom from the Patriarchs said Smith and Christian Platonists), who influenced the Greeks. Scholars noted similarities

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[148] Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described,* 181.
[149] [Van Deusen], Mormon Endowment, 5; Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings,* 8-9; Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed,* 48.
[150] Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described,* 181, 187.
[151] Hall, *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed*, 49.

between the mysteries and Christianity, and the fathers spoke of a secret discipline of secret rites often using the terminology of the mysteries. Catholics performed rites that Hone thought had their origins in the mysteries and the Masons argued that their rites were the continuation of all these traditions. Such ideas were common among Masons and other sources available to Smith; his endowment rite suggests he drew on these ideas.

Sealing and Second Anointing. The *Travels of Cyrus* not only spoke of marriage in heaven (Chapter Five), but it also linked marriage to mystery rites. In the marriage of Cyrus to Cassandana, as part of the wedding, the participants enacted the Persian creation myth, the revolt of the evil god, the fall of humans into bodies, and the redemption of humanity. These were the central themes that scholars said were found in the ancient mysteries; that is, Cyrus's marriage was part of a kind of mystery rite.[152] Masons made no connections between marriage and Masonic rites (women were generally excluded) nor did the descriptions of the mysteries. Yet when the Nauvoo Temple was finished, sealing rites were performed there. Initiates generally went through the endowment ritual as couples and would then go through the sealing ritual after.[153] Thus deifying sacraments merged, endowment and marriage.

Yet Smith said he was not done. In the same speech where Smith first declared openly that "the design of the Almighty in making man … was to exalt him to be as God" Smith said that there were three orders of the priesthood (Aaronic, Patriarchal, Melchizedek) instead of two (Aaronic, Melchizedek). Jane Lead, who also spoke of Melchizedek priesthood, also said that "these Priests are of three Ranks or Orders."[154] Smith cited Hebrews 7, which talked about the Melchizedek priesthood being higher than the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood. When praising Melchizedek, verse four says, "Now consider

[152] Ramsay, *Travels of Cyrus*, 58-59.
[153] Buerger, *Mysteries of Godliness,* 83, 86; Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings,* 8.
[154] Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations* (London: Jane Lead, 1683), 106.

how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." Smith took the phrase "the patriarch Abraham" to mean a level of priesthood like Levitical and Melchizedek and seemed to interpret Abraham's subordination to Melchizedek to mean that Abraham's priesthood (Patriarchal) was subordinate to Melchizedek's. The purpose of this distinction seemed to be Smith's statement, "Abrahams Patriarchal power which is the greatest yet experienced in this church"; that is, the Mormons had additional priesthood power they needed to acquire.[155]

Heber C. Kimball later explained to those who had gone through the endowment, "You have been anointed to be kings and priests, but you have not been ordained to it yet, and you have got to get it by being faithful."[156] The endowment was preparatory to being ordained "kings and priests" or gods (Chapter Four), and the second anointing was the fulfillment of that promise. In the same speech, Smith said that Abraham's Patriarchal priesthood was that "power or preisthood [sic] he could talk and walk with God" but

> That of Melchisedec who had still greater power even power of an endless life of which was our Lord Jesus Christ which also Abraham obtained by the offering of his son Isaac which was not the power of a Prophet nor apostle nor Patriarch only but of King & Priest to God to open the windows of Heaven and pour out the peace & Law of endless Life to man & No man can attain to the Joint heirship with Jesus Christ

[155] August 27, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 245. David John Buerger refers to Smith's "constant reshuffling and recombining of theological and scriptural images" as "'the fullness of that was never full.' At each step of the way, Joseph Smith proclaimed he had the 'completed organization of the Church,' and 'passed through all the necessary ceremonies,' or restored the 'highest order of the Melchisedeck Priesthood,' only to introduce more revelations and theological innovations creating yet new layers of ritual, deposited on or integrated with the old." David John Buerger, "'The Fulness of the Priesthood': The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," *Dialogue* 16, no. 1 (1983): 22-23.
[156] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 227.

with out being administered to by one having the same power & Authority of Melchisedec.[157]

After great sacrifice the Saints could receive this blessing to become kings and priest, that is, gods—gods with the power of the philosopher-king. In the last months of his life, Smith made his boldest political moves: he ran for president and attempted to establish the kingdom of God on earth (see the conclusion).

One month later, Smith and his first wife Emma were given the second anointing. Smith's journal recorded, "Beurach Ale [a code name for Smith] was by common consent, & unanimous voice chosen President of the quorum. & anointed & ord[ained] to the highest and holiest order of the priesthood (& companion)."[158] The ordinance was generally performed on couples and also seemed to have two parts: the first part was performed in the quorum, and the second part was performed later by the couple. Heber C. Kimball recorded the events in his journal.

> February the first 1844. My self and wife Vilate was announted Preast and Preastest unto our God under the Hands of B. Young and by the voys [voice] of the Holy Order.
>
> Apriel the first 4 day 1844. I Heber C. Kimball recieved the washing of my feet, and was anointed by my wife Vilate fore my burial, that is my feet, head, Stomach. Even as Mary did Jesus, that she might have a claim on Him in the Reserrection. In the City of Nauvoo.

[157] August 27, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 245.
[158] Joseph Smith, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith,* ed. Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 416.

Kimball's journal then has the writing of his wife Vilate: "I Vilate Kimball do hereby certify that on the first day of April 1844 I attended to washing and anointed the head, /Stomach/ and feet of my dear companion Heber C. Kimball, that I may have claim on him in the mourning of the first Reserrection."[159]

This second anointing rite seemed to be a combination of the sealing ceremony and the washing and anointing rite, but it also suggested the influence of Catholic sacrament of extreme unction; Smith donated two Catholic devotional manuals to the Nauvoo library.[160] Like extreme unction, parts of the body were anointed (though the body parts associated with senses were the focus of extreme unction, as well as the loins and feet) and like extreme unction, this rite was performed as preparatory for one's death. Unlike extreme unction, which was only to be administered to the dying, the second anointing was given to those who had advanced to a high state of holiness in this life. As extreme unction precipitated "an easier access to heaven," and as the ultimate afterlife state for Catholics was the beatific vision of God where they "shall assume a certain admirable and almost divine form, so as to seem gods rather than men," the purpose of the second anointing was to achieve that divine status, so far as possible, on earth.[161] When the rite was resumed in the Nauvoo Temple in early 1846, Brigham Young repeated the act for Heber C. Kimball, and blessed him with the power to bind on earth and heaven. Not long after, Kimball anointed Young and likewise blessed him with the sealing power and even went so far as to bless Young that after the resurrection he would "attain unto Eternal Godhead, and receive a fullness of joy, and glory,

[159] Heber C. Kimball, *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball,* ed. Stanley B. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1987), 56-57.
[160] Jones, "Complete Record," 192-93. The record lists the Catholic books that Smith donated at "Catholic Piety" and "Catholic Manuel" and it is unclear what exactly the texts were that he donated. I cite *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* for descriptions and explanations of Catholic sacraments.
[161] *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans J. Donovan (Dublin: W. Folds, 1829). 295. 131.

and power; and that thou mayest do all things whatsoever is wisdom that thou shouldest do, even if it be to create worlds and redeem them."[162] The encyclopedia defined theurgy as "the art of doing divine things or things which God alone can do."[163] Thus the fullness of the priesthood was the culmination of Smith's religious goals: binding husbands and wives in preparation for godhood in the next life.

Conclusion

The Book of Mormon said that covenants had been removed from Christianity, and Smith quickly set about to restore what was lost, beginning with the rites of purification associated with the Kirtland Temple. The Masons also claimed to practice an ancient rite that Theodore Temple argued was the secret tradition of early Christianity; Smith embraced Masonry before he first gave the endowment. The desire of the higher-degrees Masons to reform Masonry by studying the ancient mystery cults may have influenced Smith's own study of the topic: Smith's endowment was similar to the encyclopedia's description of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Smith said that Jesus himself had been initiated into the temple rite and thus likely saw elements of the early Christian liturgy and Catholic liturgy to have been echoes of what he believed to have been the original rite. Smith's Book of Abraham repeated the common Christian-Platonic notions that the Egyptians received wisdom from Abraham, and Smith said that a part of the facsimiles would be revealed in the temple.[164]

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[162] Buerger, *Mysteries of Godliness,* 87-89.
[163] "Theurgy," *Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia, 1798), 18:501.
[164] His Egyptian papyri even described an ancient rite that prepared the soul for the afterlife and its eventual deification. Robert K. Ritner, "The Breathing of Hor among the Joseph Smith Papyri" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52, no. 3 (2003): 161-180. The text also says "your flesh [is the flesh of the great god]," (172) which is the only reference I've found to the "great god" having flesh, as Joseph Smith taught. The Book of Abraham's facsimile 3 is the concluding seen of the text where, "Having attained justification, the deified Hor is brought by Maat and Anubis before the altar of the enthroned Osiris, behind whom stands Isis" (175). As Isis was the inspiration for Wisdom and Wisdom likely influenced Mormon notions of Heavenly Mother (Chapter Six),

Thus in claiming to restore ancient rites and wisdom, Smith made genuine attempts to do so by study.

Thus Michael Homer (and many others) are correct to have stressed the importance of Masonry, and Michael Quinn is correct that the endowment also contained other elements. Yet Quinn overlooked the ways in which Masonry pointed to these other elements: certain Masons, particularly Andrew Michael Ramsay, argued that their rites were the continuation of the ancient mystery religions, and wanted to reform Masonry to make it more in line with what they believed were its ancient roots. Smith apparently had the same desire. As Heber Kimball reported, "Bro Joseph Ses Masonry was taken from preasthood but has become degenrated. but menny things are perfect."

(Howard Clark Kee, *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective: Methods and Resources* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980, 35-36). A deified soul coming into the presence of the high God and the Mother parallels Mormon theology.

Conclusion: The Philosopher King, Part Two

Smith's quest to restore the fulness of the gospel led him to a wide variety of possible sources that generally drew on Christian-Platonic themes. Smith's father, whose dreams spoke of longing for things that could not be found in the established churches, likely instilled this desire in his son. Smith drew on his family religion (which likely included John Dee's spirit diary) as an impetus, and apparently turned to the secret wisdom of the Jews as described by Allen; some of the Christian-Platonic themes in Dee and Allen can be found in the Book of Mormon. Perhaps the cryptic references to pre-existence and deification, along with the more overt references to fortunate fall and esotericism were among the "plain and precious truths" that the Book of Mormon said it would restore to Christianity.

Such themes would become clearer in Smith's later revelations, and Allen's *Modern Judaism* would have pointed Smith to additional sources of lost truth, particularly the theology of the Alexandrians that Allen argued were the real source of the ideas associated with Kabbalah. Mosheim even argued that Ammonius Saccas claimed that truths had been removed from Christianity, similar to the Book-of-Mormon claim. The Book of Mormon also said that "many covenants" were missing from Christianity (covenants in the Book of Mormon were sacraments); and Mosheim claimed that Ammonius said that Jesus was a theurgist. Smith developed rites similar to descriptions of theurgy in contemporary sources (ritual washing), which culminated in the rites associated with the Kirtland Temple, and brought the results that theurgy was said to produce (communion with divine beings). Smith also engaged in ritual learning and diet similar to descriptions of the practices of the Alexandrians. Smith's early revelations also had similarities to descriptions of Origen as well as Universalism, which Origen inspired.

The revelations of Jane Lead loomed over most of these developments: a golden book, the Christian-Platonic themes in the Book of Mormon, the emphasis on Melchizedek priesthood and Enoch, the turn toward Universalism, all reached a culminating point in Smith's Vision of the afterlife that had particularly striking similarities to Lead's visions. The similarities continued as Smith's doctrines continued to develop, indicating Lead's continued importance. Perhaps Smith even saw himself as bringing Lead's visions to fruition: a gathered church with temples and a restored Melchizedek priesthood. Smith may have also seen himself as having a similar relation with John Dee: seer stones, tree visions, holy garments, and shared marriages to bind earth and heaven. Again, Smith's statement about Swedenborg (himself influenced by Lead) is suggestive: Swedenborg "had a view of the world to come but for daily bread he perished." Smith could bring the fulness—even all the "bread"—that other legitimate visionaries lacked.

Smith's program faced collapse in 1838 with a crisis in Kirtland and expulsion from Missouri, but Smith would renew his Zion project in Nauvoo. Here Smith began to elucidate doctrines that he had hinted at earlier, including deification and the notion of a divine plan and the practice of composite marriage. The Book of Mormon had hinted at deification as did some of Smith's early revelations, but Smith remained cryptic on the subject until near the end of his life. Smith married his first plural wife in the early 1830 and the Book of Mormon may have hinted at composite marriage, but the practice did not begin in earnest until Nauvoo.

Other practices seemed to come as theological solutions to the implications of Smith's doctrine. Baptism for the dead resolved the issue of what happened to the dead who had not received the Mormons' specially authorized baptism. The Ephrata Cloister, who

came to a similar solution to a similar problem, likely pointed Smith in this direction, both from the descriptions in Buck's *Theological Dictionary* and perhaps the practice that continued in the Ephrata, Pennsylvania, area. Smith developed other rites as well, particularly those associated with his temples. Smith's endowment ritual was much more complex than his Kirtland-Temple rites as Smith sought to restore lost Christian rites by piecing together rituals that he believed were remnants of that original lost rite: Masonry, mysteries, Catholic rites, and perhaps rites described in apocalyptic writings. Smith continued to develop his rites as he sought "the fulness of the priesthood": the culminating rite that would restore the highest powers of God to man.

Smith's quest also led him to study the ancient world to find the *prisca theologia* that Christian Platonists had long sought. The results of this engagement indicate the ways in which the study of the ancient world could influence even lesser educated people like Smith, and did so in ways that many others found compelling. With ten of thousands of followers in his lifetime and over ten million currently, Smith's was one of the most successful religions, perhaps even the most successful, in the Western esoteric tradition.

At the same time, many of the doctrines discussed were not used much in early Mormon proselytizing; that is, early Mormonism had something of an esoteric/exoteric divide within their doctrine. The esoteric doctrines that I discuss in this dissertation—deification, multiple gods, even degrees of heavenly glory—were generally not discussed by the missionaries. Smith tried to keep practices such as plural marriage and temple rites quiet. The exoteric teachings did align with aspects of Christian Platonism—miracles, revelation through the Holy Ghost, and angelic visitations—were all promoted by various Christian Platonists. But the Christian-Platonic notion that may have been the most appealing were the

aspects that aligned with those of the philosopher-king: or gathering to the holy city to follow the one enlightened by heaven. One of the reasons why this theme may have been particularly popular was because it had considerable biblical overlap: the prophet who spoke with heaven who would create the kingdom of God on earth. Many desired to forsake all to come live in the holy community as they awaited Christ's return.

Yet it was this aspect that was also the most antagonistic to the Mormons' neighbors since it created a group of rapidly growing, tightly knit outsiders with strange beliefs, many of which were secret. As much as anything else, the story of early Mormonism is the story of conflict with their neighbors and as I argue here, Smith's philosopher-king practices eventually led to his death. For the remainder of the conclusion, I give a brief sketch of Smith's political ambitions toward the end of his life that culminated in his assassination.

In the *Republic*, Socrates says that the role philosopher-king was a dangerous one: "Anyone who tried to free [those in bondage] and lead them upward, if they could somehow get their hands on him, wouldn't they kill him?"[1] Smith's utopianism had also been a dangerous undertaking: Smith had narrowly avoided death in Missouri. Smith, therefore, took a number of precautions in Nauvoo. With the help of John C. Bennett, an important member of the Illinois state legislature, Smith secured a generous charter for Nauvoo that gave local officials broad authority over local laws and a municipal court with habeas corpus powers that would allow Smith to frequently escape extradition from Missouri. Smith also established a militia.[2]

Smith continued to tell his followers that it was God's will that they gather together. The people of Illinois were at first sympathetic to the Mormons fleeing out of Missouri, but

[1] Plato, *Republic,* 517 a.
[2] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 412-13.

the mood changed fairly quickly. Smith's leading critic was Thomas Sharp, the editor of the newspaper for the nearby town of Warsaw. Sharp was heavily involved in the Whig party and in 1841, when Smith praised the Democrats, Sharp warned that if the Mormons "step beyond the proper sphere of a religious denomination, and become a political body, as many of our citizens are beginning to apprehend will be the case, then this press stands pledged to take a stand against them." Sharp felt he was "bound to oppose the concentration of a political power in a religious body, or in the hands of a few individuals."[3] Smith wrote Sharp a caustic reply and Sharp continued to be Smith's leading critic for the remainder of Smith's life. Sharp was one of the ringleaders in Smith's assassination.

Smith was deeply worried that disaster would strike if his marital practices became known. When he asked Joseph Bates Noble if he would officiate in Smith's plural marriage to Louisa Beaman, he told Noble, "In revealing this to you, I have placed my life in your hands, therefore do not in an evil hour betray me to my enemies."[4] When Bennett broke with Smith, Bennett attacked Smith polygamous practices in addition to making a number of other charges. Smith went into hiding in the midst of the Bennett uproar, but in August 1842 Smith felt that the Bennett trouble had passed. Smith happily told the Relief Society, Mormonism's women's organization, that "great exertions had been made on the part of our enemies, but they had not accomplished their purpose—God had enabled him to keep out of their hands—he had war'd a good warfare inasmuch as he had whip'd out all of Bennett's host."[5]

Smith returned to his Zion project that spring as he began initiating his followers into the endowment again and expanded the practice of plural marriage to other followers. Smith

[3] Quoted in Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 427-28.
[4] Quoted in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 59.
[5] August 31, 1842, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 129.

switched from composite marriage to polygyny in 1843 likely because it would be less antagonizing to his closest followers, but Smith's closest follower, his first wife Emma, found her husband's additional marriages majorly antagonizing. Emma's response to these marriages was complex. Though usually oppositional, Emma acquiesced at times and even arranged some of Smith's marriages: she agreed to at least four wives, young women that lived with them as servants. Smith expanded his home, the Mansion House, that summer to be used as an inn, perhaps also hoping to house an expanded family. Evidence suggests however that Emma was threatening divorce over the practice by the summer of 1843, and Smith's new marriages slowed considerably after that point. Yet some of the wives continued to live with them suggesting that Emma may have insisted only that Smith take no additional wives, not that he had to cut off relations with all of his existing wives. Eventually Emma insisted that the wives leave the house.[6] One of the wives, Emily Dow Partridge said that when Emma insisted that they leave the house, Smith told Partridge "you know my hands are tied. And he looked at if he would sink into the earth." A divorce from Emma potentially meant more than just the loss of an important relationship. Emma turning dissenter could have had disastrous consequences as she would have tremendous credibility if she chose to expose Smith's activities to the outside world. This realization may have been a major reason why Smith said his hands were tied.[7] On January 23, 1844, Smith leased the bulk of the Mansion House to Ebenezer Robinson and kept only three rooms for his monogamous family. Smith's nucleus of heaven, in any of its forms, was over.[8]

[6] Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma,*142-70.
[7] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness,* 410-11
[8] Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma,* 170.

On January 8, 1844 Smith removed William Law from the First Presidency and Law soon formed an opposition movement.[9] In the face of this opposition, Smith set out on his most audacious plan yet: on January 29 the Mormons nominated Smith for president of the United States. Says Richard Bushman,

> By the fall of 1843 he understood that Nauvoo was not a secure fortress. The militia could not stand up to the state, and the municipal courts were legally contested. The Saints needed broader support, and the Constitution of the United States seemed to hold the key—if interpreted properly. Joseph never lost hope that the federal government would come to the Saints' aid. He continued to believe that beyond the local enemies who encircled them there was widespread goodwill toward the Mormons, which, if mobilized and brought to bear on the federal government, would lead to the desired protection. The oncoming presidential election offered an opening.

Smith wrote to the various candidates asking what protections they would give the Mormons if the Mormons promised their support. When the various candidates refused to promise the Mormons any favors, Smith decided to run himself.[10]

Smith may have also been buoyed by his assertions of heavenly power. Smith said that the power of Melchizedek "was not the power of a Prophet nor apostle nor Patriarch only but of King & Priest to God to open the windows of Heaven and pour out the peace & Law of endless Life to man."[11] If Smith felt that he had received this power through the second anointing in September 1843, then the presidency of the United States would be an effective way to use that power. Smith used the rhetoric of the philosopher-king in his presidential

[9] Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling, 528.
[10] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 512-14.
[11] August 27, 1843, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 245.

platform and proposed numerous reforms. He would do away with prisons, capital punishment, would abolish slavery by buying slaves from money obtained through the sale of western land, and would massively cut the number and pay of Congress. "Yea, I would, as the universal friend of man, open the prisons, open the eyes, open the ears, and open the hearts of all people, to behold and enjoy freedom—unadulterated freedom." Smith also invoked the idea of the Patriot King, asserting that he would be above party:[12] "We have had Democratic Presidents, Whig Presidents, a pseudo-Whig President, and now it is time to have a President of the Unites States." Smith referred to his connection with heaven with an apocalyptic warning: "And God who once cleansed the violence of the earth with a flood… and who has promised that He will come and purify the world again with fire in the last days, should be supplicated by me for the good of all people."[13]

Tension with Law continued to mount, and in the midst of this escalation, Smith made an even more audacious political move. On March 11, 1844, Smith founded "The kingdom of God and his Law, with the keys and power thereof and judgments in the hands of his servants Ahman Christ," also known as the Council of Fifty.[14] This council was rather secretive but evidence suggests that it was the political organization of the kingdom of God on earth. With greater political power, perhaps he hoped that hostile outsiders would not be able to thwart his aspirations if and when dissidents exposed them. Smith could have avoided trouble by scaling back on his religious ambitions: gathering, polygamy, and political maneuvering. But to cease these activities was to abandon the Zion project, which

[12] Ralph Ketchem, *Presidents Above Party: The First American Presidency,* 1789-1829 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).
[13] Joseph Smith, "Gen. Smith's Views on the Government and Policies of the U. S.," *Times and Seasons* 5 (May 15, 1844): 528-533.
[14] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 521; Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 126.

for Smith was unacceptable. The way out of the bind was to push the Zion project to its fullest extent—the literal kingdom of God on earth.

Smith continued to seek reconciliation with Law. Smith's April 7, King Follett discourse was full of angst over his situation. Smith felt that the great truths he was teaching in the discourse should alleviate the opposition he faced. "I want you all to know God to be familiar with him & if I can bring you to him all persecute[ion] ag[ain]st me will cease." Later in the speech, Smith warned that apostates were the sons of perdition who would receive no forgiveness in the next life. "They go to[o] far the spirit leaves them hence they seek to kill me they thirst for my blood." "As they concoct scenes of bloodshed in this world so they shall rise to that resur[ectio]n which is as the lake of fire & brimstone." Smith ended on a pleading tone.

> I have no enmity ag[ain]st any man. I love you all—I am their best friend & if persons miss their mark it is their own fault—if I reprove a man & he hate me he is a fool—for I love all men especially these my brethren & sisters … You never knew my heart. No man knows my hist[ory] … if I had not experienced what I have I should not have known it myself—I never did harm any man since I have been born in the world—my voice is always for peace—I cannot lie down until my work is finished—I never think evil nor think any thing to the harm of my fellow man—& when I am called at the trump & weighed in the balance you will know me then—I add no more God bless you. Amen.[15]

Law was unimpressed, saying that the discourse contained "some of the most blasphemous doctrines … ever heard of."[16]

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[15] April 7, 1844, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 349, 355, 361.
[16] Quoted in Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 537.

On April 11, the Council of Fifty voted Smith prophet, priest, and king.[17] On April 13, Smith made his last attempt at reconciliation by meeting with Robert Foster, a dissenter and associate of Law's.[18] The attempt failed and five days later Smith excommunicated Robert Foster, William Law, Wilson Law, and Jane Law. That same evening, Smith added the final members to the Council of Fifty. "During that day," said William Clayton, "much precious instructions were given and it seemed like heaven began on earth and the power of God is with us."[19] On April 21, the dissenters organized their own church.[20] Smith sent out all the missionaries he could muster to campaign for his presidency. Eleven years later, George Miller wrote of the Council of Fifty's intent.

> It was further determined in council that all the elders should set out on missions to all the States to get up an electoral ticket, and do everything in our power to have Joseph elected president. If we succeeded in making a majority of the voters converts to our faith, and elected Joseph president, in such an event the dominion of the kingdom would be forever established in the United States; and if not successful, we could fall back on Texas, and be a kingdom notwithstanding.[21]

In reality, this was a desperate attempt by Smith to save his Zion project from an opposition group whose task was fairly simple. Both Smith and Law knew that all the opposition had to do was fan the growing antagonism that many of the Mormons' neighbors felt for the Mormons. Law, like Bennett, went after Smith on charges of polygamy. Law first charged Smith in the courts with bigamy, and when that charge was held up on a

[17] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 129.
[18] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 531.
[19] Clayton, *Intimate Chronicle,* 129, 131.
[20] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 531.
[21] George Miller, letter, June 28, 1855, in H. W. Mills, "De Tal Palo Tal Astilla," *Annual Publications, Historical Society of Sothern California* 10 (1917): 132.

technicality, Law purchased a press and published his accusations against Smith in Nauvoo. Fearing that this would bring in a mob, Smith destroyed the press and Law quickly took his complaint to the enraged citizens of Warsaw, the home of Thomas Sharp. The Illinois governor called out the militia to keep law and order and to get Smith to stand trial. During the next two weeks, Smith tried to negotiate and even flee, but finally agreed to go to Carthage to stand trial. He and his brother Hyrum were shot dead by a mob led by Sharp shortly thereafter.[22]

Smith had hoped to build the kingdom of God on earth, which he could then lead to heaven like the city of Enoch. Smith's followers would continue that hope, led by Brigham Young and his kingdom building aspirations in Utah. Such was a tribute to the power of Smith's religious imagination. Of the many tributes to Smith from his followers, perhaps the most fitting was William Phelps's recollection of what he said was Smith's last dream. In 1863 Phelps wrote that just before Smith surrendered himself to authorities, leading to his assassination, Smith relayed this last dream to Phelps. Smith said that he and Hyrum were in a boat in a bay beside a great ocean and that the boat caught fire. The brothers jumped overboard and "tried our faith at walking upon the water." They were able to do so and as they travelled "we forgot all the troubles of Mother Earth." "In a short time were blest with the first sight of a city, whose gold and silver steeples and towers were more beautiful than any I had ever seen of on earth. It stood, as it were, upon the western shore of the mighty deep we were walking on, and its order and glory seemed far beyond the wisdom of man." A boat then came to take them to shore. "In an instant they took us on board and saluted us with a welcome, and with music such as is not on earth. The next scene, on the landing was more than I can describe: the greeting of old friends, the music from a thousand towers, and

[22] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 537-50.

the light of God himself" made Smith feel "as if I was truly in heaven."[23] Smith, who had worked the majority of his adult life to build the kingdom of God on earth, said Phelps, had finally entered the heavenly city.

[23] W. W. Phelps, "Joseph Smith's Last Dream," in W. W. Phelps, *Almanac for the Year 1863* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1862), 27-28.