

# A Mormon Midrash? LDS Creation Narratives Reconsidered

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LATTER-DAY SAINTS, with other groups in the Judeo-Christian tradition, accept as scripture the stories of creation found in Genesis 1–3 but are unique in accepting as scripture three other parallel versions of the same stories. These include chapters in the books of Moses and Abraham brought forth by Joseph Smith, Jr. Both of these works are currently published as separate parts of the Pearl of Great Price, the fourth of the Latter-day Saints' canonical works. Yet the book of Moses itself is only an edition of one part of a larger separate work, the Joseph Smith revision of the King James Version of the Bible (JST), which is accepted as quasi-canonical in the LDS Church but as scripture in the RLDS Church. The book of Abraham was produced between 1835 and 1840 as a separate effort and was published by Smith in 1842.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the LDS Church accepts a fourth version of this material in its temple ceremony, which is not officially published or publicly recognized. Traditional Mormon belief sees these three texts — Moses/JST, Abraham, and the temple ceremony —

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<sup>1</sup> These books are normally referred to in LDS writings as "The Book of Moses," "The Book of Abraham," and "The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST)." Though I follow here standard LDS usage in identifying the first two of these by "Moses" and "Abraham," I do so without intending thereby to suggest any connection between these books and various ancient texts similarly named. A more precise terminology would be "Joseph Smith Abraham" and "Joseph Smith Moses." I will also use "JST" here, although this usage has only recently been popularized by R. J. Matthews (1975, 12–13). I am reluctant to use this designation since Matthews' primary reason for using it is somewhat problematic: he identifies Smith's reworking of the King James Version (hereafter KJV) as a "translation" only because Joseph himself thus identified it. I feel this is misleading, since Smith himself used the term "translation" in ways very distinct from its normal modern usage (see Hutchinson 1985). A more precise terminology would be "JSR," i.e., Joseph Smith Revision (of the KJV).

as direct revelation to Joseph Smith, inspired restorations of ancient writings that had become corrupted or lost by the time the standard Genesis accounts were written.

Joseph Smith's contributions to scripture antedate the last century's wealth of biblical and archaeological research. Such research has deeply influenced the way in which scholars, academic theologians, and many educated non-specialist laypersons now read the Bible. Newly uncovered documents and newly deciphered languages have shed further light on biblical languages and provided extensive historical and literary context for the Bible's stories. New critical tools and methods for dealing with these materials have further aided and fostered this process of developing greater and clearer biblical context (R. Brown 1968, 21–35; Albright 1957). The impact of such methods and data upon the personal faith of Christian and Jewish scholars, as well as that of people in the pews of differing denominations, has varied. For Latter-day Saints, most of whom have not yet become familiar with either the riches or challenges of these critical contributions, most of the last century's work is yet to be assimilated.

It can be both exciting and daunting to learn with these other believers and scholars this greater context. This is particularly so because the context suggests that biblical literature did not fall from heaven perfect, complete, and inerrant, but rather grew gradually, conditioned by historical factors such as literary tradition and convention. Indeed, the context suggests that biblical literature in large part arose from the imaginative appropriation of earlier traditions — usually from creative adaptation of previously formulated oral or written texts.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have tried to trace the origin and growth of the gospel stories in the New Testament, for example, by seeking out the various sources of John, as well as by identifying the relationship between the earlier synoptic gospels, Mark, Matthew, and Luke (Bultmann 1968; Dibelius 1935; Taylor 1953). Even the central resurrection narratives are now understood to be richly embellished and theologized retellings of earlier stories about Easter morning, which in turn are at least in part drawn from the earliest apostolic assertions of the reality of Jesus' resurrection, followed by listed appearances of the risen Lord (Dodd 1951; Taylor 1953; Fuller 1980; R. Brown 1973; Fitzmyer 1982). Similar insights abound in Old Testament studies, as I will show later.

#### INSIGHTS OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

Many parts of the Bible are now seen to be made up of reworked earlier texts or traditions. Whole critical disciplines within biblical studies relate to this fact: source, redaction, and composition criticism all attempt to under-

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<sup>2</sup> For fuller discussion, see any of the standard critical commentaries or introductions to the Bible, including: Kaiser 1975; Eissfeldt 1976; Bright 1976; Kummel 1972; Wickenhauser and Schmid 1973. Good introductions for the non-specialist are: Anderson 1973; Perrin 1974; Brown *et al.* 1968. For general treatments of how the newer approaches have affected mainstream Christian understandings of revelation and inspiration, see: Dulles 1983; Brown 1982; Rahner 1964; Dodd 1960.

stand in different ways how the Bible uses and adapts pre-existing documents and traditions, some right within the Bible itself. We find in the Bible today discontinuity of beliefs, disharmonious doctrinal or historical formulations, narrative inconsistencies, and outright contradictions. But this is quite natural. An example of a Bible writer adapting an earlier section of the Bible for his own purposes — purposes at odds with those of the author of the adapted section — is found in the book of Chronicles. The chronicler uses and adapts his source in the books of Kings and Samuel. For example, 2 Kings 15:1–5 is adapted by 2 Chronicles 26:16–23. Here the chronicler has inserted his own rigid theology of retribution into a text previously reflecting a less rigid theology. Where 2 Kings describes King Azariah (Uzziah) as a righteous man struck down inexplicably by leprosy, 2 Chronicles explains that the righteous Azariah was not the king who took the throne name Uzziah, but rather a priest who saw the headstrong king punished by a well-deserved case of the disease. A simple case of narrative inconsistency is found within the book of Samuel itself: 1 Samuel 17:23, 50 says that David killed the giant Goliath of Gath, while 2 Samuel 21:19 says it was Elhanan who killed the giant by that name. This, of course, is corrected by the chronicler, whose insertion of “the brother of” before the name Goliath in 1 Chronicles 20:5 is taken up by the King James translators in 2 Samuel 21:19 (note the KJV italics on the words “the brother of”) as a means of harmonizing the two Samuel passages.

The theology about God assumed by the three major traditions now identified in the Pentateuch is another case in point. The Yahwist tradition (J) portrays an extremely personal deity named Yahweh, whose actions and concerns appear in largely human terms (Kaiser 1975, 85–90; Ellis 1968). Another tradition, the Elohist (E), elevates this God, restricts the use of his name, and places angels and dreams as buffers between God and the world (Kaiser 1975, 91–96). The Priestly tradition (P), on the other hand, portrays a God who is wholly other, removed from the phenomenal universe of time and space (for examples of all of these, see Kaiser 1975, 109–13 and McEvenue 1971; for a fuller description of J and P, see below). All these traditions and texts are accepted as inspired. Yet when we understand them as mere sources of doctrine or collections of true propositions, instead of as literature which affects both our intellect *and* emotions, they appear to be contradictory. Examples can be multiplied in the New Testament, especially in the way the various gospels handle parallel texts and scenes in the life of Jesus: often the passages are close enough to be clearly describing the same scene, but the differences in the telling can be great.

Significantly, such discontinuity of the beliefs expressed in scripture has arisen from a historical tradition of faith striving for continuity: people tend to preserve the stories and texts they hold as sacred but often adapt them in light of the new circumstances they experience. Often a particular text sets up a specific problem of faith or point of religious reflection for the believers of the tradition, which they solve by adapting the problematic text. The later text that now seems to contradict an earlier one results simply from efforts at understanding it or making sense of the scenery of thought it produced.

This imaginative reworking of earlier tradition in the Bible can take many forms, such as when Old Testament passages are accommodated and applied to new, updated situations in the New Testament about which the original texts knew nothing (Fitzmyer 1974). A simple example is found in Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1, "when Israel was a child I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt." What for Hosea is simply a poetic description of the exodus becomes in Matthew 2:15 a prediction of Jesus' return from the flight into Egypt. In this case, an older passage has been applied to a new situation in an effort to shed light on both.

An important example of this process at work is the literary form called "midrash." Named for the Hebrew word for "interpretation," this literary form was used in Jewish rabbinical sources from the late Old Testament right through the Middle Ages. Its primary concern is to understand and shed light on an original scriptural text by translating, embellishing, and adding to it (Bloch 1957; Wright 1967; R. Brown 1979b, 557–63; Vermes 1970, 1973). Midrashes are found in the Old Testament deuterocanonical or apocryphal book of Wisdom (chapters 11–19, based upon Exodus 7–12), as well as in the New Testament (Hebrews 7, based upon Genesis 14:17–20; 2 Corinthians 3, based upon Exodus 32; and Galatians 3–4, based upon the Abraham story in Genesis). Its fullest examples are found in the Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament known as the targumin. To show how these writings characteristically expand upon the scripture they paraphrase, explaining difficult sayings and harmonizing the scriptural text with accepted orthodoxy, I give here a short parallel example from the targum Pseudo-Jonathan, usually held to be a late reworking of the rabbinically-approved targum Onkelos and incorporating ostensibly Palestinian midrashic traditions.

*Genesis 3:22*

Then Yahweh God said,  
"Look! the man has become like one  
of us,

knowing good and evil;

*Pseudo-Jonathan*

And the Lord God said to the angels  
who ministered before Him, "Look!  
Adam is alone on the earth, as I am  
alone in the heavens above; and it will  
happen that there will arise from him  
those who will know to distinguish good  
and evil.

The author of this targum has given a paraphrase that expands the doctrinal and imaginative possibilities of the biblical text. The potential difficulties posed to orthodox Jewish conceptions about the one-ness of God by the phrase "has become like one of us" are resolved by introducing into the text the explicit reference to angels (thus the Lord is still one of a kind in heaven), as well as inserting the idea that the point of comparison between the man and God is not knowledge of good and evil, but rather their uniqueness (God is alone in heaven as Adam is alone on earth). The text even becomes an occasion for a back-dated "prophecy" foretelling the rise of the Jews, "those who will know to distinguish good and evil" because of the Torah. Note that the embellishment of the biblical text here is imaginative and linked to the dynamics of the problems and words of the text itself.



Another clear example is found in the New Testament, in the Hebrews 7 reworking of the story of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18–20. The chapter begins with an implicit quotation of Genesis, then proceeds to give interpretations of such names as “Melchizedek,” “Salem,” etc., even explaining the payment of tithes in the Genesis passage. But it does all this in an effort to apply the text to a new situation, the question of the origin of Christ’s priesthood. Here, even the silence of the Genesis text about Melchizedek’s biographical information becomes a point of departure for Hebrews, which characterizes Melchizedek as “without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life” (v. 3).

To be sure, the Hebrews example here is not clearly as text-oriented as the Pseudo-Jonathan passage: while Pseudo-Jonathan attempts to give a paraphrase of Genesis, Hebrews attempts to prove the superiority of Christ to the ancient Jewish temple ritual. Such different purposes in using antecedent scripture have been discussed recently by Eugene Boring (1982). In discussing the sayings attributed to Christ in the synoptic gospels, he argues on form-critical grounds that many of them originated not from the historical Jesus but from the work of early Christian prophets claiming to speak the words of the resurrected Christ. Boring notes that these prophets employed two modes of scriptural interpretation and usage: (1) a scribal or rabbinic mode aimed primarily at preceding scriptural texts quoted as such, interpreted, and expanded in a midrashic or targumic fashion; and (2) a pneumatic or apocalyptic mode that overrides the interpreter/text, subject/object division of the scribal mode and recombines texts, images, and phrases into a new framework and textuality. For Boring, this later mode lies behind works such as Joel, Daniel, The Revelation of John, and Mark 13. But even this later technique tends to play upon the inherent imaginative possibilities of the scriptural snippets thus used.

Since the imaginative character of large sections of the Bible can now be demonstrated, most academic theologians today recognize that the Bible contains *inspired fiction*. Such material is based upon (possibly historical) antecedent oral or written traditions, such as traditional cycles of stories and sayings, in epic, mythological, or wisdom traditions. Jonah, an excellent example of the parable form, is a good instance of fiction which is recognized by believers as inspired by God. Similarly, one might add the parables placed onto the lips of Jesus by the gospel writers — they have only rarely been thought to represent historical events.

Likewise, the infancy narratives in Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2 are thus characterized by Raymond Brown, their foremost modern commentator (R. Brown 1979b, 32–38; 1979a). This is because the details of the stories are so different from one another as to suggest that both cannot tell what actually happened unless we forcibly harmonize the reading given to each.

Matthew’s story tells of the star, the magi, and the flight into Egypt. It seems to assume that Mary and Joseph’s home was in Bethlehem, for it mentions no pre-birth move of the family, and when the wise men arrive, they come to Mary and Joseph’s *house*. Likewise, when Joseph is told in a dream

in Egypt to return to his home, he heads for Bethlehem but decides because of a further dream about the political situation there to bypass Judea and set up a new home in Nazareth (the town that Jesus was publicly known to have come from).

Luke tells a very different story, in which Joseph and Mary leave their home in Nazareth and travel to Bethlehem to be enrolled (KJV "taxed") in a census that Luke appears to have dated incorrectly: Luke relates Jesus' subsequent birth while Mary and Joseph stay in a stable outside an inn filled to capacity: the shepherds visit, and after an apparently leisurely trip to Jerusalem for the baby's blessing in the temple, Mary and Joseph return directly to Nazareth.

Luke's story seems to preclude Matthew's references to Herod and the plot to kill the baby Jesus and the subsequent flight into Egypt; Matthew's story seems to preclude the immediate return to Nazareth from Jerusalem which Luke recounts. Of course, there are ways of forcing the two stories into harmony. One way is to follow Luke's story to the presentation in the temple, then assume an otherwise unmentioned return to a house in Bethlehem, where within two years (the age given by Herod in the baby's death warrant) the wise men show up. Similarly, it is sometimes suggested that Matthew is telling the story based on Joseph's reminiscences, while Luke is telling it based on Mary's. But it is hard to imagine how one original story could be fragmented to produce two so divergent ones. Such conscious harmonizing of the stories makes one wonder how serious an effort is being made to understand the stories rather than use them for theological or devotional purposes. When read as imaginative literature, however, their deep faith becomes apparent in their use of such images as the "star" of Balaam's oracle and the "shepherd" of Israel.

Such obviously conscious literary and theologized imagination in the infancy narratives is paralleled by clear usage of archaic mythological material in the Old Testament. Sea monsters and divine battles appear in Job 41:1, Psalm 74:14, and Isaiah 27:1; giants, desert demons, and sphinxes (cherubs) appear elsewhere.

But why should Latter-day Saints care what scholars say, especially when it sounds as if they are stripping the text of its claims to be "true"? For one thing, the question "What *really* happened?" is a concern of modern readers and reflects more a post-enlightenment understanding of the world than an ancient one. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rationalist attacks on the historical authenticity of biblical narrative share something with nineteenth- and twentieth-century fundamentalist arguments for the inerrant historical validity of the Bible in its original form: both approaches underestimate the interplay between imagination and history in biblical narrative.

Modern critical approaches, which stress the concept of "myth," now seem far closer to the mark. "Myth" in this usage has no perjorative overtones (as in "That's not *true*! It's only a *myth*!"). Rather, the term refers to the fundamental expression of an idea or a complex of ideas through narrative, or the casting of theology in story form — in effect, the mediation of meaning, truth,

and value through storytelling (Perrin 1974, 17–37). It is a positive, helpful term, and biblical theologians use it to better understand how stories mold our hearts and move us in ways not possible by mere propositional teaching. Such use also tries to explicate the role of imagination in shaping our values, heart-felt emotions, and individual and community experience into stories and story-cycles.<sup>3</sup>

It is also now clear that several books of the Bible were actually written by authors other than those to whom they are ascribed in the works themselves. For example, the pastoral epistles (1–2 Timothy, Titus) and perhaps two of the captivity letters (Colossians and Ephesians), though presenting themselves as having been written by Paul, were most likely written by disciples of Paul a generation later claiming Paul's authority and inspiration by using his name as a literary device. Similarly, the book of Daniel, though not explicitly claiming the sixth-century B.C. Daniel as its author, seems to follow the standard tendency of books of the apocalyptic genre to present themselves under the name and authority of various great religious leaders of the past (Koch 1972). In its present form it comes largely from the period immediately preceding the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids (Kaiser 1975; Eissfeldt 1976). Such use of pseudonyms in the Bible ought not trouble us, since the ancients held a much more diffuse concept of authorship than do we.<sup>4</sup>

The general issue of falsely attributed authorship (pseudonymity) does extend to the possibility, at least, of pious fraud in one or two biblical writings. Parts of Deuteronomy originally may have been written as an effort by King

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<sup>3</sup> These new approaches present, of course, certain theoretical problems to many of the traditional ways of understanding religious truth. Many systematic theologians of various denominations are currently addressing these issues. (For examples, see the titles at the end of note 2.) The two major problems here concern myth and history on the one hand, and, on the other, the relative character of religious truth claims. While quite complex, these questions do not present insurmountable difficulties to those desiring to both understand a critical study of the Bible and preserve the essential content of their specific traditional faith. Regarding myth and history, one need not lapse into a sort of existentialist docetism or a fideist anti-rationality to recognize the mythopoetic and imaginative qualities of early Christian scriptural narrative. Rather, one may freely agree that a myth's power in part depends upon the historical reality of the events or persons within it, but only when this historical reality is somehow directly related to the reality the myth seeks to mediate. Thus, the "Fall of Man" myth does not seem to depend on a historical Adam for its validity, since we only need to look in a mirror for the best evidence of a Fall. The power of a myth about redemption through Christ crucified and resurrected, however, seems directly dependent on whether Jesus in fact died and then bodily reappeared to his disciples. Similarly, one may recognize non- or supra-propositional truth in religious claims and discourse without lapsing into an irreligious positivism or some kind of sentimental theological liberalism emptied of all propositional content. This can be done, for instance, by positing a secondary, or analogical, connection between religious truth claims and the ostensible object of their discourse.

<sup>4</sup> On ancient concepts of authorship and their effects upon pseudonymity, see Brown *et al.* 1968, sec. 78. It is important to note here that even apart from the question of pseudonymity, in which the document at issue presents itself as having been written by someone other than its actual author, modern biblical research has shown that many authors to whom works have been traditionally ascribed, but who were not specifically claimed as authors in the works themselves, did not actually write the works in question. Examples include Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the supposed eyewitness authors of the four gospels, and the KJV ascription of Hebrews to Paul (indeed, more than a few early church fathers had serious doubts about Pauline authorship of Hebrews).

Josiah (640–609 B.C.) at religious reform, then consciously ascribed to the great lawgiver of the past — Moses — to overcome opposition to the reforms at issue. Most scholars believe that Deuteronomy is in some way connected with the “book of the law” ostensibly discovered accidentally in the temple after being lost for a long time (2 Kings 22:8–23:30; cf. Deut. 12:1–14) and used as the charter and authority for Josiah’s reform. While the ground document behind Deuteronomy may well have originated during an earlier effort at reform under Hezekiah (715–687 B.C.), both de Wette and Wellhausen, two early but highly esteemed modern Old Testament scholars, believed that pious fraud lay behind the “discovery” of the book of the law in the temple (Kaiser 1975; Eissfeldt 1976).

A larger question raised by modern scholarship involves the nature of the religious experience lying behind the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament. It is clear that a type of intense religious experience lies at the heart of the mission and self-perceptions of the prophets of ancient Israel, and that this core experience is linked to an awareness or consciousness not normally experienced. Just as in the other biblical writings, the prophets’ own accounts of their experiences and message show evidence of conscious reliance upon a variety of literary conventions and religious traditions and images, such as stereotyped inaugural vision narratives, rhetorical patterns borrowed from Hebrew law, and Canaanite mythological imagery. It is also clear that the word of the Lord, overpowering and devastating as it is, often did little to change the prophets’ habitual behavior or objective knowledge: they were often just as ignorant (or brilliant) or irascible as before. Their religious experiences themselves did not fall from heaven without prior historical conditioning: they were colored by their own appropriation of antecedent religious tradition. This is particularly the case in Isaiah’s inaugural vision (Isa. 6) or in much of the abstruse imagery of Ezekiel’s visions. Indeed, one can see that literary imagination, symbolism, and embellishment, sometimes borrowed from unrelated contexts, all have played a part in the prophets’ accounts of their intense experience of God.<sup>5</sup>

### THREE CREATION NARRATIVES: GENESIS, MOSES AND ABRAHAM

With these perspectives as a background suggesting possible parallels to Joseph Smith’s experience, let us now look at the creation narratives he produced between 1830 and 1842: Moses (which is duplicated in JST Genesis) and Abraham. Clearly, a major task in analyzing the LDS creation scriptures, which include the classic narratives in Genesis, is to determine how these vari-

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<sup>5</sup> On the literary conventions and imaginative components of the prophets’ accounts of inaugural visions, see von Rad 1965, 53–69. On the question of the states of consciousness at issue in Old Testament prophetic experience, see especially pp. 62–63. Note that von Rad takes issue with the idea that the prophets’ experience was identical to certain forms of medieval mysticism on the grounds that “even in their most sublime experiences, the mystics always remained within the limits of the accepted dogmas of their own day, whereas the prophets precisely in their inaugural visions were led out to new vistas of belief.” Von Rad does not distinguish between the supposed differences in the states of consciousness of the prophets and the mystics. See also MacKenzie 1956, 29–40.

ous texts are interrelated and which direction, if any, of development exists between the texts. Traditional LDS and RLDS formulations regarding Smith's role as a translator and restorer of ancient truth generally have encouraged suggestions that Moses and Abraham (for the Utah Church, at least) represent in English pure, ancient forms of the creation narratives (see, e.g., Matthews 1975, 236). In this view, the text in the Joseph Smith documents existed in an ancient manuscript form which was then corrupted or substantially edited, resulting in the traditional Hebrew text lying behind the King James Version (KJV) of Genesis. Critics of this view who argue that the Joseph Smith texts were merely uninspired reworkings and corruptions of the KJV Genesis text are naively unaware that reworking and creative adaptation of text are hallmarks of the Bible itself.

Whatever the preconceptions one brings to these texts, however, the question of the *direction* in which the texts developed remains — which text is earlier and which is later? The question can be analyzed and seemingly answered through relatively probative means: the techniques of source and redaction criticism developed in biblical research itself. Careful comparison of parallel texts is coupled with the question, "Which direction of development best accounts for the detailed differences and similarities between these texts?" In addition, the particular theological tendencies of each text in and of itself are noted, and an effort is made to set them within a context of the historical background of the text's known origins. In order to apply this methodology, it is first necessary to examine closely the Genesis creation narratives themselves and then compare them with the Joseph Smith texts.

### *Genesis*

Modern scholars agree that there are two separate creation narratives in the first chapters of the Bible, the first found in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and the second in Genesis 2:4b–3:24.<sup>6</sup> The first account is generally held to be part of the "Priestly" tradition (usually denoted by the letter P), a very ancient tradition stretching into the pre-exilic period, but edited and put into its principal form as we know it probably during the exilic period. The second story is attributed to the "Yahwist" tradition, perhaps dating in its principal form-

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<sup>6</sup> For summaries of the many reasons for the consensus about the more recent forms of the documentary hypothesis of the origins of the Pentateuch, see Kaiser 1975, 66–115, and Eissfeldt 1976, 158–210 (note that Eissfeldt's "L" source is by no means part of the current consensus). Recent attacks on the documentary hypothesis based upon statistical analysis of the texts have generally been discounted for two reasons. First, they employ a particular statistical method held to be highly suspect, or at least not probative. Second, these analyses actually address a form of the documentary hypothesis generally understood to be deficient in light of the mid-twentieth century work of the Scandinavian School. The newer forms of the hypothesis stress the separate texts of the Pentateuch as traditional narrative strands, or tradents, rather than insisting upon separately written documents. Similarly, most Old Testament scholars today would see some hand of the Priestly circle at work in the overall redaction of the entire Pentateuch. On this, see Wenham 1978.

Regardless of scholarly contention regarding Pentateuchal sources, all critics agree that Gen. 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–3:24 are separate narrative units. For an example of a major scholar who rejects the documentary hypothesis and yet still splits these two particular texts into separate narratives, see Cassuto 1964.

lation to the tenth century B.C., in the southern part of the united kingdom of Israel under Solomon, though its collation might be dated as late as that of the P.

The Yahwist is usually denoted by the letter J. Since the specifics of these accounts are very relevant to our analysis, I will summarize briefly the scholarly consensus on these stories.

*The "Priestly" Account.* The P creation account (Gen. 1:1-2:4a) depicts the creation of the universe as understood by an ancient Hebrew author in a schematized seven-day pattern. Though scholars disagree hotly about whether "day" here means twenty-four hours, the author apparently intends to speak of seven days as we would understand them. This is suggested by the connection he sees between this story of creation and the Israelite weekly Sabbath — indeed, the story is the charter for Sabbatarian worship and rest. The works of creation are clearly demarcated in the text by repeated formulae such as "and God said," "and it was so," "and the evening was and the morning was, day number one." Such repetition is a favorite technique of the Priestly tradent, which is also believed responsible for many of the more stereotyped Old Testament genealogies. These formulary brackets lend a certain redundancy to the story. But it is important to understand that the text is not merely repetitive. It has enough alteration to make it interesting. When P's works and days are represented schematically, they appear quite varied in form (Pasinya 1976; see Figure 1). The repetition and alteration mark the work as a carefully wrought piece of literary art akin to the panel story found in folk tales such as the story of the Little Red Hen (McEvenue 1971).

Many details suggest that Genesis 1 is indeed part of a distinct tradition in the Old Testament. It uses a vocabulary very similar to the P version's account of building the tabernacle (Gen. 2:3/Exod. 39:43; Gen. 2:1/Exod. 39:32; Gen. 2:2/Exod. 40:33; Gen. 2:3/Exod. 34:43; Gen. 2:3/Exod. 40:9; Weinfeld n.d., 503). Similarly, many words in Genesis 1 elsewhere are

## FIGURE 1

### LITERARY PATTERNS IN THE P NARRATIVE

A = Command; B = Fulfilment; C = Seeing; D = Narrative Expansion;  
E = Naming; F = Close of Day Formula

Day 1: A B C D E F

Day 2: A A' D (B in LXX, absent in MT) E F

Day 3: A A' B E C  
A B D C F

Day 4: A (large expansion) B D (expansion) C F

Day 5: A D C D (blessing) F

Day 6: A B D C

A (expansion) D D (blessing) D (food) B C F

only attested in P or reflect concerns of P (*lēmīnēhā*, vv. 12, 21, etc.; *mē'ōrōt*, v. 14; *lēhabdīl bēn*, vv. 7, 14; *sēreš*, v. 20; *mō'ādīm*, v. 14; *pērā ūrēbā*, vv. 22, 28). The narrative itself presumes a cosmology and view of the universe quite foreign to our modern understanding. Following standard Semitic perceptions about the world, the P tradition assumes that the world is basically the central object of the universe and that it is basically a flat or slightly domed disk surmounted by an immense vault of the heavens.<sup>7</sup> This vault is a solid, though transparent, object, and it keeps the waters above it from rushing down and inundating the world, much as the solid ground keeps the Deep — or waters beneath the earth — from rushing up. Small “windows” or sluice-gates in the over-arching vault do allow some of the waters to fall as rain. A similar world view is evident in many Old Testament passages, such as those listed with Figure 2.

The actual work of creation, as described in this chapter, is placed in a highly contrived narrative framework, designed to support major theological concerns which are evident throughout the Priestly tradent. The structure, basically a diptych with two mirrored sections reflecting each other in the text (see Figure 3), points out an absolute disjunction between Creator and creature. God not only creates here the objects of the universe but also the very fabric and framework of the universe itself. Part one of the diptych involves establishing frameworks and structures by distinction and division: light from darkness, upper from lower waters, dry land from seas, and the plants (viewed as inanimate parts of the scenery) from the land.

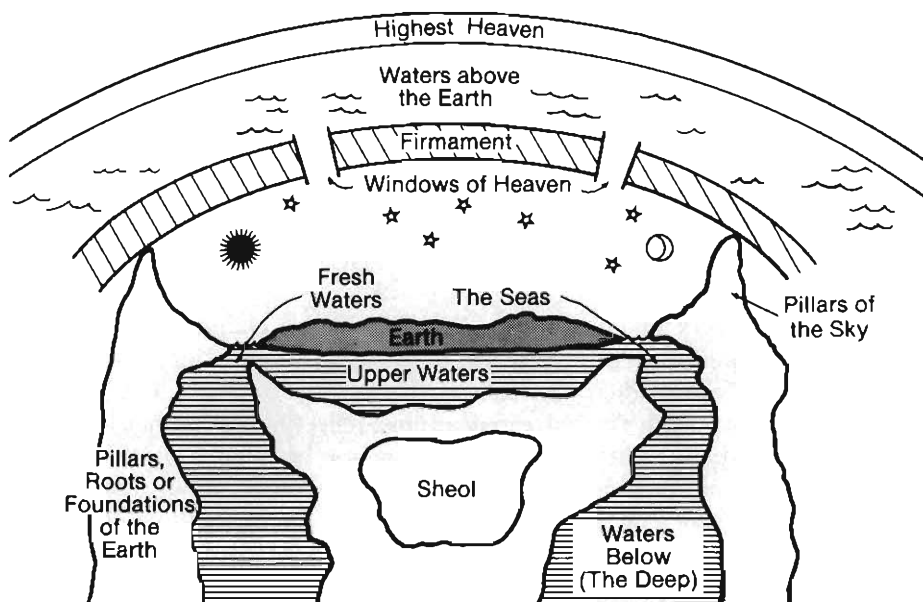
Part two involves the ornamentation of this framework, with each decorative object sequentially matched to its particular counterpart in the first part of the diptych. Elemental Light and Darkness in day one is mirrored by the placement of the luminaries of the heaven on day four; the upper waters of the heavens and the lower waters on day two are mirrored by the creation of the air and water creatures (considered as one work of creation bracketed by the literary formulae described above) on day five; the dry land which is raised up out of the seas on day three is mirrored by the creation of land creatures on day six; and finally, the creation of vegetation, also on day three, is mirrored by the advent of primeval humankind on day six (in the P tradent, primeval humankind is described as vegetarian — cf. Gen. 1:29 and 9:3). A probable

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<sup>7</sup> The earlier Latin Vulgate translation of *rāqīa'* as *firmamentum*, suggesting a hard physical object as the vault of heaven, has been shown by recent research and textual discoveries to be more adequate than any association of the Hebrew word with the idea of an atmosphere, relying upon the basic meaning of the root *rq'* “to stretch,” and understanding *rāqīa'* as “expanse.” As shown by the Phoenician use of the root in *mrq'* “tin dish,” the root means to hollow out a piece of metal by beating it (the root is onomatopoeic), to stretch it into a bowl. It is thus that *rāqīa'* must be understood: a great inverted celestial bowl, the vault or dome of heaven. In any case, it is obviously viewed in the Old Testament as a solid object, as hard as a polished bronze mirror (as in Job 37:18). Note that in Genesis 1:20, the birds fly “in front of the *rāqīa'*” in the Hebrew text, making “expanse” an unlikely meaning here for *rāqīa'*. Efforts by various LDS authors, e.g., McConkie 1966, 260–61, to understand *rāqīa'* as an atmospheric expanse are simply efforts to interpolate the book of Abraham understanding of the word back into the text of Genesis and the thinking of the ancient Semites.



FIGURE 2  
THE HEBREW COSMOS



Firmament: Job 37:18 (cf. 2 Sam. 22:8)

Windows of Heaven (sluice-gates): Gen. 7:11; 2 Sam. 7:2, 19; Mal. 3:10

Pillars of Earth: Ps. 75:4 (KJV 75:3); Isa. 48:13; Job 38:4–7, 16

Fresh Waters as part of the Deep: Deut. 8:7 (MT)

Seas: Gen. 1:9; Job 38:8–11

Upper Waters: Ps. 148:4; Dan. 3:60 (in the Greek additions to Daniel)

Subterranean Waters: Exod. 20:4; Gen. 7:11; Ps. 24:2; 33:7; Deut. 4:18

theological concern becomes evident when we note that the mirrored pair of days three and six each contains two works rather than the usual one work found in the other four days of creation. This occurs possibly because the Priestly author here is forcing eight works of creation (perhaps from antecedent tradition) into a framework of six days, in order to allow a seventh of day rest. This suggests a desire to make the creation narrative a vehicle for teaching Sabbath observance: a charter, as it were, for the Israelite day of rest.

P's theologizing tendency is apparent throughout the narrative. The interplay within the literary patterns of the narrative set forth in Figure 1 above shows a concern to demonstrate that God's word is fulfilled. The anti-Canaanite polemic implied in Genesis 1:14–19, where the author refuses even to name the sun, moon, and stars (these being viewed in the local religions as deities), is paralleled in other passages in P. The portrayals of humankind as created

FIGURE 3  
GENESIS 1:1–2:4a  
PRIESTLY CREATION NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Part One: Division and Framework	Part Two: Ornamentation
Day 1: I Light/Darkness	Day 4: V Heavenly Bodies
Day 2: II Upper/Lower Waters by the <i>rāqîa'</i> (a solid vault)	Day 5: VI Air and Water Creatures
Day 3: III Dry Land/Seas IV Vegetation (from land)	Day 6: VII Land Creatures VIII Humankind (cf. Gen. 1:29, 9:2–4)
Day 7: God rests from God's labors	

in the image of God, and as the crown of creation to whom all creatures are subject, are again in seemingly deliberate contrast to contemporary pagan religious views in which the other creatures themselves were on occasion worshipped as divine.

The narrative itself, nevertheless, appears to draw upon and radically adapt general ancient Near Eastern mythology to its own ends. For example, the myth of a primeval battle between the creator and a monster personifying chaos has survived in legends of Marduk and Tiamat in Mesopotamia, and Baal and Yamm in Ugarit. In the Genesis P account, chaos simply becomes "the Deep" with no resistance to the creative act (Pritchard 1969, 66–67, 130–31; Heidel 1951; for more dramatic and less demythologized remnants of the earlier stories, see Psalms 24:2; 74:13–14; 89:10–11; Job 9:13, 26:12; and Isaiah 51:9). The plural usage of "Let us make man [humankind] in our own likeness and image" (Gen. 1:26), referring in Genesis to the divine council assisting God, may be a remnant of a Mesopotamian creation myth in which the creator god addressed his consort before engendering the first human couple.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> On Yahweh and the council of the gods in the Old Testament, see Cross 1973, 186–90; and Robinson 1944. Old Testament texts include: Jer. 23:18; 1 Kgs. 22:19–28; Isa. 6:1–12; Ps. 82; Ps. 89:6–8; Zech. 3:1–10; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6. For examples of the prophetic forms where the divine council is addressed, see Judges 5:2; Isa. 35:3–4; 40:1–8 (reading 40:6a with ms 1QIs<sup>a</sup>). For examples of the form of the covenantal lawsuit (*rîb*) before the divine council, see Isa. 3:13–15 (cf. Ps. 82); Mic. 6:2; Isa. 6:2; and Jer. 3:2. The use of the plural in Genesis 1:26 (P) and 3:22 (J) has been explained by Gerhard von Rad as an

This incident becomes, in the hands of the Priestly tradition, part of the profound teaching that every human being bears "some almost intangible resemblance to God, whereby he is distinguished from all other creatures" (Sawyer 1974, 426; cf. Westermann 1984, 145–58).

*The "Yahwist" Account.* In contrast to P's version, the J account in Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is about the creation and defection of man and woman from Yahweh rather than about the creation of the universe. Where the P narrative may be characterized as formal and theological, the author of the J story is a master narrator who incorporates most of the theology directly into the story. Where the author of P states didactically that humanity is in the image of the divine, J portrays Yahweh in human terms as a potter working a lump of clay and then breathing into the earthen nostrils to animate man. Where the P tradent joyously but directly proclaims "How good it was!" after the works of creation, J simply lets his narrative style reveal the joy and love of Yahweh's works.

A comparison of the stories in J and P, however, reveals far more than mere differences in style. In P, the action takes place during seven days; in J, only one day is mentioned. In P, the work of creation moves from wet to dry, starting with a primeval chaos of water and ending on the land; in J, the first scene is dry, and only after it is moistened a bit can the work of creation begin. In P, God's creative speech alone accomplishes creation; in J, a divine potter works the moistened earth. In P, both genders are created simultaneously ('*ādām* in Gen. 1:27 means both male and female, cf. Gen. 5:1–2, also a P text); in J, Yahweh creates the male first, after which he creates the other animals and organizes an animal parade in order to provide the man with "a help fitting him" (Gen. 2:18 — note, KJV "an help meet for him," though often misconstrued, means simply this). Finding none among the animals fit as a helper, Yahweh becomes a carver rather than a potter and makes out of the man's side a woman.

The J story itself has quite separate theological concerns from those of P. Where P is concerned with the Sabbath, the oneness and otherness of God, the reliability of God's word, and the goodness of God's creation, J is concerned with etiologies — stories which explain how things got to be the way they are — as well as with the tender weaknesses of humanity, the love of Yahweh for his creatures, his forgiving mitigation of punishment, and the problem of human alienation from Yahweh. A somewhat detailed summary of the J story is an effective way of gaining perspective into its meaning, since the Yahwist clothes his theology so integrally in the narrative itself. It will also provide important context to the development of the creation story evident in the LDS variants of the text.

To begin with, Yahweh creates man out of the clay, molding him as a potter would (2:4b–7). According to standard Hebrew theological anthro-

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effort to soften the comparisons being drawn here between human beings and God by placing God in the company of the lesser members of the divine council. This is possible, in light of the rarity of the plural pronoun for God in these two stories (1973, 58–59). For a more complete view of the matter, however, see Sawyer 1974 and Westermann 1984, 145–58.

pology, the Yahwist sees man as a unity, not as a soul/body dichotomy. He is simply dust animated by the breath of Yahweh; a later verse states that to be made of dust implies that one will return to dust someday (3:19). There is no explicit thought here of man being created deathless or immortal, nor is there any hint of a fall from grace or from immortality. The Yahwist gives no clue to any acquaintance with these theological elaborations, later imposed upon the story. There is simply the reference to the Tree of Life — but this is in passing and is not developed.

A garden is planted for the man, in the middle of which are placed two trees — that of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life (2:8–9). (At this point the narrator, or an insertion by an editor, makes a short digression to give us a tour of the waters of paradise [2:10–14].) The man is then placed in the garden, to tend and cultivate it (2:15), and is informed that of every tree of the garden he may eat (including, presumably, the tree of life) — but he is commanded to refrain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for, Yahweh God says, “the moment you eat from it you will most certainly die” (2:16–17). Note that this is *not* a threat that the man will become *mortal*, for his mortality is already implied by his composition. (See 3:19, where Yahweh punishes the man for eating the forbidden fruit by condemning him to work hard *until* his return to the dust, which itself occurs simply “because dust you are and to dust you shall return.”) There may be an overtone of mortality implied in the threat, but the story makes perfect sense without recourse to such an idea. Rather, the threat is that the man would die directly as a result of eating the fruit.<sup>9</sup>

The J story is not about the man partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Life, and as the climax of the story shows, this possibility is precluded by subsequent events. Later Jewish and Christian readings of the story make much of the idea of a fall implied in the threat, but this idea must be understood as just that — a *later* understanding imposed upon the story, primarily by St. Augustine’s reading of it.

After the command, Yahweh decides the man ought not be alone, and creates the animals to find a helper fit for the man. None of the animals *are* fit, however, so Yahweh causes the man to fall asleep and forms from his side the woman, who indeed is fitting (2:18–24). (Note that the woman is seen here as neither inferior nor subordinate, for the Hebrew word for “helper” does not normally mean an ancillary aid coming from below, but rather, an essential and necessary succor coming from above. The KJV rendering “an help meet for him” is accurate.) This scene closes by the Yahwist observing dryly that “the man and his wife were both naked [*‘ārūmmīm*], yet felt no shame” (2:25; Wambacq 1970), thus anticipating what is to occur in the next scene.

A new departure in the story is marked in Genesis 3:1 by the use of a non-

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<sup>9</sup> This is shown by the use of the infinitive absolute *môt* in Genesis 2:17, as well as the fact that there is little if any hint in the story that the man’s life in the garden was to be deathless. If such was intended by the use of the “tree of life” image, it is simply not developed in the narrative.

consecutive Hebrew verb form (Hebrew narrative normally uses consecutive verb forms in connected narrative). Up to this point, a very strictly observed sequence of verbs in consecution has tied the narrative together, but 3:1 breaks the sequence. The new departure involves the presence of the snake. The Yahwist's role as master narrator is illustrated in the paronomasia, or play on words, which begins to appear in his introduction of the snake and is further developed in the verses to follow. While the man and woman are described as naked, *'ārūmmîm*, the snake is crafty or subtle, *'ārūm* (3:1). (This word play is further drawn in 3:10, where the man explains his fear at Yahweh's approach because of his being naked, *'ērôm*, and in 3:21, where Yahweh makes clothes out of leather, *'ôr*, for the man and the woman.)

The snake itself is not presented as demonic, nor even as some sort of metaphor for a human-shaped temptor. It is merely a snake, one of the creatures which Yahweh had made (3:1), and as such is not seen, in the context of J's story, as an evil intrusion upon paradise. The snake's only problem here is its craftiness. There may well be a little of the lampoon in J's use of a snake as the creature to introduce the temptation of the knowledge of good and evil to the man and woman, then still in innocent nakedness, for the snake as an obvious phallic image had long been used as part of the iconography and ritual of the Canaanite fertility cult, with all of its obscene and licentious practices. Contrary to later speculations based upon the saying pronounced upon the snake in 3:14–15, commanding it to crawl upon its belly, the snake does not seem to be explicitly envisioned as going about on legs before the curse. A likelier view is that the snake is hanging from the tree or bouncing about erect on its tail (like a pogo-stick) as in some Canaanite representations. The later pronouncement withers this symbol of Canaanite phallic cultism, and reduces it to slithering about in the dirt.

Whatever its reasons and mode of entry as the agent of temptation, the snake asks the woman whether God indeed has forbidden all the garden's fruit. The woman replies to the snake that it is only the tree in the middle of the garden which is forbidden (3:3). (Modern Western readers of the story sometimes note an anomaly in the story here, in that the commandment forbidding the fruit of this tree had been given to the man alone, before the creation of woman, and yet the woman answers the snake's question as though she had been present when the commandment was given. Though this may be a problem for modern readers, it seems not to have been for the Yahwist, who perhaps here was combining earlier separate stories, or relying on some idea that proto-man somehow included both man and woman.) The woman exaggerates her restatement of the original command, however. While Yahweh had forbidden only the eating of the fruit, she states that even to touch the fruit is death (3:3). This lack of harmony between the command and the woman's report of it probably does not stem from a rough-edged redaction by J of previously separate narrative strands. Rather, J here may be deliberately characterizing human nature. The human tendency toward exaggeration seems to be a special concern for J, since it also turns up in J's story of Cain, where Cain overstates almost to the point of melodrama the punishment meted out by

Yahweh (4:14). The snake replies that death will not result, and, enticed by the chance to become as God (or, the gods), the woman partakes and gives some to her husband (3:6–7). Again, it is worth noting that in Canaanite ritual, one became as the gods through sexual rituals, imitating them and consorting with them. This is not to say that the sin of Eden in this story is the sexual act or the concupiscence which later Jewish and Christian tradition understood. Rather, while disobedience to the command is the basic issue, the illustration is clearly fraught with various allusions to sexuality and the fertility cult.

After partaking, the man and the woman, rather than dying from a poisoned fruit as Yahweh had suggested, become aware of their nakedness and sew themselves little fig leaf loincloths. J implicitly contrasts the pitiful human sartorial effort here, *hagōrōt* (which would just cover the bare essentials, so to speak), with the beautiful leather clothes Yahweh himself sews at the end of the story. The loincloths, or “aprons,” as the King James Version elegantly but misleadingly puts it, are donned directly out of the shame of nakedness, not out of fear of confronting Yahweh: before their sin, they are under Yahweh’s close love and care and so are not conscious of their nakedness. The ancient Hebrews saw the state of undress as a sign of weakness and pitiable-ness, and here J implicitly associates such pitiable-ness with all humankind. Upon sinning against Yahweh’s command — not upon his return — they become acutely aware of their condition and make efforts to remedy their circumstance: their fig leaf loincloths. Though they had previously felt under the care of Yahweh and had felt no shame, upon his return they now feel dread and fear — for indeed they recognize their nakedness and know shame.

As in another of J’s primeval history stories, the Cain narrative, here we find a reckoning or accounting. Yahweh returns, taking an evening walk in the garden to cool off, so anthropomorphic is J’s portrayal of him (3:8). The man and woman hear the sound Yahweh makes as he walks through the bushes and trees of Eden. (Note that the KJV “they heard the voice of the LORD god walking” is simply a mistaken translation of the Hebrew, where the word *qôl*, which can mean “voice” or “sound,” would rightly refer to the sound Yahweh makes as he walks, and not to his voice.) They hide out of fear; Yahweh calls out to the man, “Where are you?” Note that J is not trying to show Yahweh peeping underneath bushes and behind trees to find out where man is. Rather, he poses a simple question, “Where are you?” — a question made the more profound by its echo in the Cain narrative, with Yahweh calling Cain to account by saying, “Where is your brother?”

Moreover, the nakedness of the man and woman is not merely a lack of adequate covering of the body; their hiding in the bushes from Yahweh is not a game of hide-and-seek. Now they are truly naked before Yahweh in their disobedience, and this is more the issue than their location. The man answers, then, not the question of where he is hiding in the bushes, but why he felt a need to hide from Yahweh: “I heard the sound you were making in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself” (3:10). The reckoning continues, progressing from point to point almost as a judicial in-

quiry. "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!" At this, the man again in an entirely human way tries to blame someone else for his fault. "The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate some" (3:12). Yahweh turns to the woman: "Why did you do such a thing?" She, in turn, tries to lay the blame upon Yahweh's crafty creature the snake, just as the man tried to lay the blame on the woman that Yahweh had made: "The snake tricked me, so I ate some" (3:13).

At this point, we might expect Yahweh to question the talking snake, but he does not. Only the human beings are animated with Yahweh's breath, or, as the Priestly author put it, are created in the image of God. Only the human beings stand responsible for their acts and are liable to be questioned in the docket by Yahweh. Only they had received a commandment that could be broken. The snake, "the craftiest of all the creatures Yahweh God had made" (3:1), was merely fulfilling the measure of its creation. By declining to have Yahweh interrogate the snake, J appears to suggest that the origin of evil is mysterious and hard to identify. Whatever its origin, J makes clear that evil did not come from Yahweh.

This story, reflecting J's concern in the primeval history with origins and firsts, provides a large number of short etiologies, summed up in the verdicts meted out at the end of this little judicial scene. Like Kipling's *Just So Stories*, or P's explanation of the rainbow as God's bow set in the cloud (Gen. 9:13–17), the verdicts here explain how things got to be the way they are. The snake is cursed with a humble form of locomotion, and there is hatred placed between human beings and snakes. The story thus answers the question, "Why do snakes move in such a peculiar way, and why are they so detested by people?" The etiology is not simply an irrelevant myth, however. Since temptation arises from the snake in the story, and since Genesis 3:15 talks of strife between snakes and men, it might be that J is giving us a subtle image for the internal strife that arises in a person when tempted, a strife whose etiology appears here as well.

When seen in light of the etiologies at the end of this story, the verdict against the snake has little in it that warrants it being read as a proto-evangelium, or early prediction about the bruising of the head of the devil by Jesus. Though this reading of Genesis 3:15 has been traditional in Christianity, it is based on a poor understanding of the concord of pronominal gender in the verse's Hebrew by several of the early versional translations of the verse.<sup>10</sup>

Additional etiologies follow. The woman is to be punished by intensified

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<sup>10</sup> Genesis 3:15 is probably best translated: "I will place enmity between you and the woman, / And between your posterity and hers; / It will strike at your head, / While you strike at its heel." The word for posterity, *zera'*, is masculine, and so is referred to by the masculine pronoun *hu'*, rightly translated by a neuter pronoun "it" in English, since the English word "posterity" is neuter. The Septuagint (LXX), Peshitta, Old Latin, and Vulgate versions translate the noun variously with neuter, masculine, or feminine nouns, and the pronoun with pronouns having concord with the gender of the translated word or with the masculine pronoun in Hebrew. It is probably on this account that the proto-evangelium reading of the verse developed. See below, p. 60.



pains of childbirth and subordination to her husband — both etiological descriptions rather than theological prescriptions. In similar fashion, the question, “Why do men have to work so hard for a little food, and why are we so tormented by weeds?” is answered by the curse or ban placed on the ground on the man’s account.

The woman’s subordination begins immediately, as the man then gives the woman her name, Eve (3:20). To modern readers this verse might seem misplaced, since the animals were named immediately before the creation of woman (2:18–24). But recall that J uses narrative to express theology where P tends to use propositionally phrased theological statements. While P states that the animals were placed under the domination of humankind, J allows the man to name the animals, since in the ancient Semitic mindset to own something included the power to name it. Since in the J story the woman was *not* the man’s subordinate, but a help or partner suitable for him, until *after* the later pronouncement of Yahweh, the man does not have the right to name the woman until after he has been established as her master. And this he does, immediately after Yahweh renders his judgment. The name given the woman, *hawwā* “Eve,” suggests a fertility theme: only now in the story is the woman sexually mature, though subordinate to the man. J’s etymology of the word, “the mother of all that live,” again suggests an “Everyman” or “Everywoman” reading of the story.

The climax of the story, in which Yahweh makes leather clothes for the man and the woman, then drives them from Eden and sets a guard of cherubim to prevent their return, is understandable only in the context of J’s storytelling concern with Yahweh’s mercy and kindness toward his creature, the human being. The difficulty is that Yahweh implied that the man would die on the spot upon eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and yet, this threat was not carried out. We should recall in this context that the man and the woman, coming from the dust, were implicitly doomed to die eventually and return to dust (3:19), *unless*, it seems, they ate the fruit of the tree of life. (It is clear from the last verses in the story that they had not done this before they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil.) The story, then, does not deal with a fall from grace or a fall from immortality, but rather with a disobedience, a defection from Yahweh’s word. It is but one of several early rebellions in J’s primeval history.

Thus the J storyteller portrays Yahweh looking at the man and the woman, pathetic in their fig leaves and trying unsuccessfully to cover their nakedness, and pictures a Yahweh moved to compassion. He therefore punishes them with a hard life and expulsion from the garden of delight but does not follow through on his threat to kill them for eating the fruit. Just as he later mitigates the punishment of Cain by placing a mark upon him,<sup>11</sup> Yahweh here mitigates the punishment of the man and the woman. But he does prevent them from eating any of the fruit of the tree of life, as he says, “The man has become like

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the mark was the tribal tattoo of the ancient Kenites, who were nomads and had some kind of non-Israelite worship of Yahweh. This also, it appears, is a J etiology. See von Rad 1973, 107.

one of us, knowing what good and evil are. Therefore, he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever" (3:22). Likewise, he further takes pity on the reprobates — probably best described as "lovable wretches," a good modern English translation of J's concept of the *yēšer hāra'* at work in human beings (cf. Gen. 6:5 and 8:21) — by sitting down and sewing (as a seamstress would) nice leather clothes for them (the KJV "coats of skin") to replace the fig leaf loincloths. Yahweh then sends them out into the harsh world and places cherubs — the sphinx-like mythological protectors of royal thrones, the ark of the covenant, and pomegranate trees — to guard the way of the tree of life, with a flaming sword, to prevent them from returning.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly the purpose of both of these exquisite Genesis stories is to present religious faith and theology, not the historical or biological origins of species on the planet. Indeed, the J narrative itself speaks always of the man and the woman, rather than a historical Adam and his wife, Eve. J is thinking more in terms of Everyman and Everywoman, and his myth of creation and defecation is a powerful statement on human alienation from God and God's loving kindness. The P narrative is highly theological and does not speak of any individual human beings, but rather of humankind (*'ādām*). The J account does not use *'ādām* as a personal name, "Adam," but only as "the man." The Greek Old Testament translates this as a personal name, however, after Genesis 2:20, as does the KJV. But this is merely an artifact of translation — the Hebrew text uses the same word throughout the stories. The fact that Moses 3:19–20 and Abraham 5:19–20 seem to follow the KJV here suggests that they stem at least in part from the Old Testament tradition only after it left its native Hebrew tongue.

The historicizing of the universal and mythological figures of these stories, at any rate, actually started with the redaction of the stories by P into their present setting in the Pentateuch, where they preface genealogies and an epic narrative leading from the creation to Abraham and his family in Genesis 12. The tendency to understand these stories as historical, as referring to a historical Adam and Eve, the first of their race, came more and more with time and is particularly noticeable in the Old Testament Deutero-canonical or Apocryphal Book of Wisdom 2:23–24, Romans 5:12–19, and I Corinthians 15:21. It is important to remember that they were originally unconcerned with the type of historical questions that are reflected in these later theological expansions upon the stories.

### *The Books of Moses and Abraham: Comparisons with Genesis*

As we turn from the Genesis texts to their parallels in the writings brought forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith, it is important to recall that the King James Version translators knew next to nothing about the literary units in-

<sup>12</sup> For more about cherubs, see Gen. 3:22–24; 1 Kgs. 8:5–9; Ezek. 11:22–25; 41:15–20; 2 Sam. 6:2. For photographs of ancient Near Eastern graphic representations of cherubs, see Westermann and Lessing 1977.

volved, and thus failed to discern that there were two separate stories of creation (P and J) juxtaposed in the first three chapters of Genesis. As a result, the KJV contains several important mistranslations of Hebrew Genesis. Such textual "artifacts" introduced by the KJV translators provide important opportunities for analysis, both of the priority of various creation accounts and of the reason for variations in the more recently composed versions.

Regardless of their attitudes toward the relationship between the traditional Genesis text and the Joseph Smith creation texts, all Latter-day Saints agree that the Hebrew Genesis came before and lies behind the King James Version. If, as will be seen, variants in the Joseph Smith texts are patterned after and connected with problems existing only in the mistaken English of the KJV (rather than in the earlier Hebrew), then the Joseph Smith texts may well be better understood as more recent midrash-like reworkings of the KJV. If this is the case, are there apparent rationales for the specific form taken by these reworkings?

Below is a schematized commentary on the relationship of the Joseph Smith texts to Genesis. In each section, I present a comparison between a KJV text and its parallels in the books of Moses and Abraham, followed by textual notes to illuminate any relevant variant readings of the manuscripts and early editions of the Joseph Smith texts. In the case of the Joseph Smith Revision of the Bible (JST, of which Moses is part), especially, the variant manuscript readings are important in establishing possible intent in some of the more subtle variants (e.g., when the change from a plural to a singular occurs regularly in the final manuscript, it is deliberate). Then I will describe the alterations of Moses and Abraham, in each section of text, and propose an explanation of the significance of the differences.<sup>13</sup>

### *The P-J Seam*

In Example 1 the KJV translators have mistranslated an important seam between the P and J accounts and thereby generated a number of problems. Modern understanding of Hebrew verbal syntax and the literary devices which set off each story allows us to make a much more intelligible translation, as illustrated here by the New American Bible (NAB) rendering of these verses.

<sup>13</sup> I shall limit textual notes to major variants which bear upon an understanding of the interrelatedness of Genesis, Moses, and Abraham. In my comments on Moses, I shall assume that the draft manuscripts of the JST Old Testament, JST OT mss 1, 2, and 3, located in the RLDS archives, are related to one another in the following manner: The prefatory revelation (Moses 1; RLDS D&C 22) and JST Genesis 1:1–31 (Moses 2) were originally drafted in OT ms 1. OT ms 2 copies this material from OT ms 1. From Genesis 2:1 on, however, OT ms 2 was used as the original draft, and OT ms 1 was copied from it. OT ms 3, it is generally recognized, is the final draft relying upon one or both of these earlier composite draft/copies. See Howard 1969, as well as Matthews 1975, 60–81, for descriptions of the manuscripts, their contents, and two differing opinions regarding the interrelatedness of OT mss 1 and 2. I propose here this hypothesis of the composite character of OT mss 1 and 2 on the grounds that analysis of variants in the manuscripts reveals prior readings in OT ms 1 only before the marks in the manuscript separating Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Beyond that point, readings reflecting priority occur only in OT ms 2. This hypothesis has the advantage of being in harmony with Howard's intrinsic considerations as well as with Matthews' extrinsic considerations.

## EXAMPLE 1 — THE P-J SEAM

NAB Genesis 2:1-9

<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.

<sup>2</sup> Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.

<sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.

KJV Genesis 2:1-9

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

<sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

<sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Moses 3:1-9

Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

<sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day I, God, ended my work, and all things which I had made; and I rested on the seventh day from all my work, and all things which I had made were finished, and I, God, saw that they were good;

<sup>3</sup> And I, God, blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it I had rested from all my work which I, God, had created and made.

Abraham 5:1-9

And thus we will finish the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of them.

<sup>2</sup> And the Gods said among themselves: On the seventh time we will end our work, which we have counseled; and we will rest on the seventh time from all our work which we have counseled.

<sup>3</sup> And the Gods concluded upon the seventh time, because that on the seventh time they would rest from all their works which they (the Gods) counseled among themselves to form; and sanctified it. And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth.

<sup>4</sup> Such is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation.

*Second Story of Creation*

At the time when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—

<sup>4</sup> And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the LORD God, made the heaven and the earth;

<sup>4</sup> And the Gods came down and formed these the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were formed in the day that the Gods formed the earth and the heavens,

<sup>5</sup> while as yet there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the Lord God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil,

<sup>5</sup> And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground.

<sup>5</sup> According to all that which they had said concerning every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for the Gods had not caused it to rain upon the earth when they counseled to do them, and had not formed a man to till the ground.

<sup>6</sup> but a stream was welling up out of the earth and was watering all the surface of the ground—

<sup>6</sup> But I, the Lord God, spake, and there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

<sup>6</sup> But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

<sup>7</sup> the Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

<sup>7</sup> And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

<sup>7</sup> And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

nevertheless, all things were before created; but spiritually were they created and made according to my word.

EXAMPLE 1 — THE P-J SEAM (continued)

*NAB Genesis 2:1-9*

<sup>8</sup> Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed.

<sup>9</sup> Out of the ground the Lord God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at

and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.

*KJV Genesis 2:1-9*

<sup>8</sup> And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight,

and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

*Moses 3:1-9*

<sup>8</sup> And I, the Lord God, planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there I put the man whom I had formed.

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground made I, the Lord God, to grow every tree, naturally, that is pleasant to the sight of man; and man could behold it. And it became also a living soul. For it was spiritual in the day that I created it; for it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it, yea, even all things which I prepared for the use of man; and man saw that it was good for food. And I, the Lord God, planted the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and also the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

*Abraham 5:1-9*

<sup>8</sup> And the Gods planted a garden, eastward in Eden, and there they put the man, whose spirit they had put into the body which they had formed.

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground made the Gods to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight

and good for food; the tree of life, also, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Thus KJV owned by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery used in JST preparation (Coopers-town, N.Y.: H. & E. Phinney, 1828; including Apocrypha and marginal notes) in RLDS Archives (hereafter JSKJV).

v. 3: "created and made" JSKJV marginal note: Heb. created to make

v. 7: "life" JSKJV marginal note: Heb. lives

(Textual variants refer to JST Old Testament manuscripts in RLDS Archives, numbered as in Howard 1969; see note 13.)

Several minor variants between OT mss; most are insignificant.

v. 4: "when they . . . and the earth"; OT ms 1: (omits)

v. 9: "and it became" OT mss 1 & 2: and they became OT ms 3: and ~~they~~-it became

v. 9: "planted the tree" OT mss 1 & 2: placed the tree OT ms 3: ~~placed~~ planted the tree

Thus *Times and Seasons* (hereafter T&S), except for minor spelling and punctuation variants.

(The Book of Abraham was first published in *Times and Seasons* 3:9-10 [1 and 15 March 1842]: 703-06, 719-22. All extant book of Abraham manuscripts in LDS Church Archives end before parallel texts from Genesis 1-3 begin.)



The KJV so badly garbled the meaning of the Hebrew at the seam between the accounts that the clearly subordinate clause structure of the beginning of the J story has been lost in translation. Thus the subordinate structure also found at the beginning of the P story in Hebrew, as well as in the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, is not seen in KJV Genesis 1, and as a result 2:5 becomes confused. The KJV translators had no real idea about the consecution of the Hebrew verb, nor a clear sense of the semantic range of the word *terem* (translated as “before” in the KJV and, more correctly, as “as yet . . . no” by the NAB). As a result, verse 5 in the KJV ends up seeming to make some reference to a creation *before* creation that simply does not exist in the original Hebrew: the KJV reads, “in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, And every plant of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground.” Note the phrase “and every plant of the field before it grew” is read here as simply a third object of the verb “made.” The implication in the KJV is that God “made . . . every plant of the field before it grew,” i.e., created it in some form before creation itself.

*Moses.* Significantly, this highly misleading translation in the KJV is textually paralleled by major variants in the two Joseph Smith texts, almost certainly efforts at harmonizing chapter 1 of Genesis with chapters 2 and 3. In Moses 3:5 the hint of a creation before creation in the KJV is made explicit by adding the words, “For I, the Lord God, created all things of which I have spoken [i.e., the things outlined in the preceding matter, Genesis 1], spiritually before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. . . . And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men [here the book of Moses is very near an understanding that “man” in Genesis 1 refers to all humankind] . . . for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air.” The book of Moses thus clearly states that the land, water, and air creatures whose creation is described in Genesis 1 are not yet upon the earth at the beginning of Genesis 2. And this includes the man, who is thereafter created after the model of the Yahwist tradition in Moses 3:6–7.

Probably the single most significant expansion in any of these verses in Moses is found immediately after the moist-clay creation of man, for here Moses not only follows the J story, but explicitly states that this modeling of man produced the “first flesh upon the earth, the first man also” (v. 7). Given the apparent textual expansions throughout this passage, this statement can only mean that any creation of living creatures in Genesis 1 must be part of the spiritual creation which the book of Moses has just said preceded the physical constitution of the earth’s inhabitants. Otherwise, there would be no sense in stating that the man created was both “the first flesh” *and* “the first man.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Various LDS opponents of Darwinism, anxious to prove that Genesis 1 recounts the history of the physical origins of life on the planet, have argued that “the first flesh” in Moses 3:7 refers merely to becoming mortal through the fall and insist that Moses does not intend to represent the material parallel to Genesis 1 as an account of spiritual creation. But this position, while harmonizing Genesis 1–2 with the temple account and Abraham 3–5,

The book of Moses expansions seem to represent an attempted reconciliation of the two conflicting biblical accounts of creation. Since they play upon the way the KJV had rendered the P-J seam — a rendering that is wholly inaccurate and simply a continuation of a linguistic artifact introduced into the biblical tradition — they would appear to be a reconciliation attempted in 1830 by Joseph Smith. The book of Moses attempts to reconcile the two stories by suggesting that the creation of the plants, animals, and human beings in Genesis 2 is indeed a physical creation starting with “the first flesh on the face of the earth,” while creation of life in Genesis 1 consists merely of a spiritual creation, a creation “in heaven” while there was yet no “flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air.”

This understanding of Genesis 1–2 had already found expression in the Book of Mormon, published shortly before Joseph worked on this section of Moses. There, the premortal existence of Jesus (a concept originally expressed in the Gospel of John) had been paralleled by statements that “all men were created in the beginning after mine own image” (Ether 3:15–16; cf. 2 Ne. 2:17–18; Mosiah 18:13; Alma 18:32; 22:12; 13:3; 3 Ne. 9:15; 26:5). These Book of Mormon passages are somewhat ambiguous — do they refer merely to God’s foreknowledge of his creatures’ existence (so-called “ideal” preexistence) or to a real existence before physical creation? Parallels with the book of Moses expansions suggest that the verses intend real and not merely ideal premortal existence. For instance, Moses 3:5 rounds out the Ether 3:15–16 formulation just cited by stating, “and I, the Lord God, had created *all* the children of men . . . for in heaven created I them” (*italics added*).<sup>15</sup> To put it simply: Joseph’s reflection on the two accounts of creation and the curious KJV seam bridging them triggered an insight or speculation about human premortal existence. As a result, the book of Moses teaches that as far as life is concerned, Genesis 1 concerns a spiritual creation and Genesis 2 a physical one.

*Abraham.* When we look at the book of Abraham reworking of the same material, we find a wholly different set of problems. These are understandable in light of Joseph’s developing thought and abilities between the time he worked on Moses (1830) and on Abraham (1835–40). In this interim, the Prophet had acquired a rudimentary, if artistic, acquaintance with the Hebrew language and the Hebrew Bible, under the tutelage of Rabbi Joshua Seixas, who taught briefly at the Kirtland School of the Prophets (see Zucker 1968; Walton 1981). In the book of Abraham version of these verses, no longer is there an apparent effort to resolve the conflict between the P and J stories by making one preexistent and the other physical. Rather, the text merely assumes

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chooses to overlook Joseph’s use of the term “flesh” in the JST expansion of Genesis just two verses before, in Moses 3:5. There the whole point of talking about “flesh” is to say that it did not exist yet because creation had been spiritual up to that point in the narrative. See Smith 1:75–78; and Andrus 1967, 140–43.

<sup>15</sup> If this is a correct understanding of these chapters in Moses, the hypothesis recently advanced that Joseph did not teach real (as opposed to ideal) premortal existence of spirits before 1833 must be modified. Cf. Ostler 1982a and 1982b.

preexistence (see Abraham 3 and the discussion of example 3 below) and then elaborates extensively upon the doctrine. This process of elaboration forces another solution to the conflict of P and J.

Having joined Genesis 1–2 together as a spiritual-then-physical creation story, Joseph was faced with the question of how to fit the Genesis 2 material into the Genesis 1 day-by-day scheme: on what day was man physically created? The book of Moses appears to lie behind Joseph's March 1832 interpretation of the Revelation of John. He stated that the (physical) creation of man (in Genesis 2) occurred on the seventh day in the (spiritual) creation week sequence (of Genesis 1): "as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth" (D&C 77:12).

Within three years, Joseph had started work on the book of Abraham, and we find W. W. Phelps alluding to the doctrine of premortal human existence in an editorial in the *Messenger and Advocate* (1 [June 1835]: 130). Phelps not only refers to our having lived with God in another world but also states that "we shall learn by and bye" of this because of "new light . . . bursting in to our minds, of the sacred scriptures," a reference probably not only to the book of Moses passage, but to treatments of the preexistence theme later to be published in Abraham. (Note that this same editorial makes oblique reference to the book of Abraham's curious racial ideology and possibly to later Mormon plurality of marriage theology — well before either of these ideas had been publicly promulgated.)

A major problem had been intrinsic in the way the book of Moses handled the seam in Genesis. If to harmonize the awkward seam in the KJV, we take the entirety of Genesis 1 to be an account of preexistent creation, other anomalies rear their heads almost immediately. Many of the biblical texts, which at the time were becoming or shortly to become early standards in LDS apologetics (through the work of such men as Parley Pratt, Orson Pratt, and Benjamin Winchester), are not easily reconciled with a preexistent understanding of Genesis 1. If, for instance, Jesus is the first-born of all creatures (Col. 1:15), and this is interpreted *literally*, then why was not the first thing created in Genesis 1 — which the book of Moses speaks of as a spirit creation — *Jesus* rather than the *earth* or *light*? Why was Jesus himself seemingly at work with the Father in the creation from the very start of the text (note Jesus' apparent involvement in Moses 2:26–27 and 4:28)? As Joseph's theology of God evolved, abandoning a fuzzy trinitarianism (as in the Book of Mormon, the early revelations, and the Lectures on Faith; see Alexander 1980; Hale 1983) and thus requiring more and more accounting for the persons of the divinity, such problems must have multiplied. As prooftexts from Isaiah 14 and Revelation 12 developed into a full-fledged narrative about a war in a premortal heaven (already in the book of Moses this tradition exists in rudimentary form—see Moses 4:1–4), one might have wondered why Genesis 1 did not tell any of that story if indeed it told of the premortal creation and life of human spirits. Similarly, the problem of chronology — on which day was man created? — needed to be addressed more fully than it had been in 1832.

Some modification was therefore necessary in the earlier book of Moses understanding of the relationship of Genesis 1 and 2–3. It is perhaps because Joseph himself recognized this that the text at issue in Moses was never published during his lifetime, even in extract, as were many of the other pericopes surrounding it in Joseph's revision of the KJV Old Testament.<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that the book of Moses' solution to the P-J seam problem was fruitless. On the contrary, it was at the very least the means by which the myth (in the non-pejorative sense) of premortal existence was arrived at in the first place. And that, at least for those of us who hear the voice of God in our hearts when the idea of preexistence plays upon our minds, makes the Moses text the means by which God revealed an ennobling truth of the gospel.

The harmonizing tack taken in the book of Abraham is clear when the variants in this text are looked at carefully and compared to stereotyped variants throughout Abraham. There, all creation of life is deferred and replaced by planning and preparing. Note the effect of the phrases in Abraham I have italicized below, when compared to the KJV:

## KJV GENESIS 1

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was good*.

22 And God blessed them, saying Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

...

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that *it was good*.

## ABRAHAM 4

20 And the Gods said: *Let us prepare* the waters *to* bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life; and the fowl, *that they may* fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven.

21 And the Gods *prepared the waters that they might bring forth* great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters *were to bring forth* abundantly after their kind; and every winged fowl after their kind. And the Gods saw *that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good*.

22 And the Gods said: *We will* bless them, *and cause them* to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas or great waters; *and cause* the fowl to multiply in the earth.

...

24 And the Gods *prepared the earth to bring forth* the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind; and it was so, *as they had said*.

25 And the Gods *organized the earth to bring forth* the beasts after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind; and the Gods saw *they would obey*.

<sup>16</sup> The first publication of these verses was in the *Millennial Star* (Liverpool, England) 15 March 1851, pp. 90–93. See Matthews 1975, 52.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is life*, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was very good*.

26 And the Gods *took counsel among themselves* and said: *Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

27 So the Gods *went down to organize* man in their own image, in the image of the Gods *to form* they him, male and female *to form* they them.

28 And the Gods *said: We will bless them. And the Gods said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

29 And the Gods said: Behold, *we will give them* every herb bearing seed *that shall come upon* the face of all the earth, and every tree which *shall* have fruit upon it; yea, the fruit of the tree yielding seed to them *we will give it; it shall be for their meat.*

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, behold, *we will give them life*, and also *we will give to them* every green herb for meat, and *all these things shall be thus organized.*

31 And the Gods *said: We will do everything that we have said, and organize them; and behold, they shall be very obedient.*

The creation of life in the P account in Genesis becomes planning and preparation in Abraham. At the seam between J and P (Gen. 2:4/Abr. 5:4) the gods decide to end their preparatory work on the seventh time: "On the seventh time we *will* end our work, which we have counseled, and we *will* rest on the seventh time from all our work which we have counseled" (Abr. 5:2; italics added). The work of the council has ended; all life will be brought forth upon the earth during the seventh period of creation, followed by rest (v. 3). The gods then put their counsels into action: "And the Gods came down and formed these the generations of the heavens and the earth" (v. 4).

The difficult KJV verse, 2:5 ("and every plant of the field before it was in the earth," etc.), now no longer refers to a creation of spirits before the earth's creation, for in the book of Abraham it is the premortally existent spirits them-

selves ("the gods" — see Abr. 3:22–4:1) doing the creating. The verse now refers to "all that which they [the gods] had said concerning every plant of the field before it was in the earth" (Abr. 5:5), namely, the plans for the actual creation of plant, animal, and human life. While man is formed as the first living thing on earth, he is not the first thing prepared or planned for.

Abraham 5:7 further expands upon the Genesis and the book of Moses conceptions of man's creation: where Genesis has Yahweh put breath into the man to animate him, and the book of Moses (following KJV Genesis) has the Lord God animate man by placing a "spirit" into him, the book of Abraham now understands this "spirit" essentially as a preexisting "noble and great" spirit-god, who had been busy preparing a place for the second estate of fellow spirits (Abr. 3:25–26): "And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul" (Abr. 5:7). This addition is paralleled by that in verse 8, where KJV "the man whom he had formed," unchanged in Moses except for the change to first person narration, becomes in Abraham, "the man, whose spirit they had put into the body which they had formed."

In both verses 7 and 8, Joseph's study of Hebrew between his work on Moses and Abraham may have been helpful, for he appears to understand that "spirit" and "breath" are the same word in Hebrew, *rûah*, which allows the striking transformation here, not found in the book of Moses. This embellishment heralds much of Joseph's later theology, which in many ways democratized divinity. No longer is the human being a clay mannequin animated by Yahweh's breath, or, in philosophical terms, no longer is the human person contingent. Rather, the gods take the spirit, presumably uncreated, of the person-to-be and clothe it in flesh. As with the Johannine Jesus, God is made flesh and dwells among us.<sup>17</sup>

There are other minor variants in these Joseph Smith texts; most are stereotyped and will be discussed below. But this first example is clearly significant in that, whatever the motivation, most of its variants are patterned and connected with a problem existing only in the English of the KJV, and not in any ancient form of the text.

## EXAMPLE 2

### THE THIRD DAY

#### *KJV Genesis 1:9–13*

<sup>9</sup> And God said, let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so.

#### *Moses 2:9–13*

<sup>9</sup> And I, God, said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so; and I, God, said: Let there be dry land; and it was so.

#### *Abraham 4:9–13*

<sup>9</sup> And the Gods ordered, saying: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the earth come up dry; and it was so as they ordered;

<sup>17</sup> Such a theology, clothed in narrative and claims to antiquity, is sufficiently centrifugal and imaginative that it can offend hearts that long for a strong theological center and a traditionally orthodox Christian image of an omnipotent and omniscient God quite different

<sup>10</sup> And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good.

<sup>11</sup> And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

<sup>12</sup> And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

<sup>13</sup> And the evening and the morning were the third day.

<sup>10</sup> And I, God, called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, called I the Sea; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good.

<sup>11</sup> And I, God, said: Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself upon the earth, and it was so even as I spake.

<sup>12</sup> And the earth brought forth grass, every herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself, after his kind; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good;

<sup>13</sup> And the evening and the morning were the third day.

<sup>10</sup> And the Gods pronounced the dry land, Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, pronounced they, Great Waters; and the Gods saw that they were obeyed.

<sup>11</sup> And the Gods said: Let us prepare the earth to bring forth grass; the herb yielding seed; the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, whose seed in itself yieldeth its own likeness upon the earth; and it was so, even as they ordered.

<sup>12</sup> And the Gods organized the earth to bring forth grass from its own seed, and the herb to bring forth herb from its own seed, yielding seed after his kind; and the earth to bring forth the tree from its own seed, yielding fruit, whose seed could only bring forth the same in itself, after his kind; and the Gods saw that they were obeyed.

<sup>13</sup> And it came to pass that they numbered the days; from the evening until the morning they called night; and it came to pass, from the morning until the evening they called day; and it was the third time.

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JSKJV thus, with minor punctuation and capitalization variants.

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2:9 "heaven":  
 OT ms 1: Heavens  
 OT ms 2: Heavens (?)  
 OT ms 3: Heaven  
 2:10 "the Sea":  
 OT ms 1: the Seas  
 OT ms 2: <sup>the</sup> Seas  
 OT ms 3: the Sea (? — if a final "s" is there, it has been blackened out)  
 2:12 "which":  
 OT ms 3: ~~that~~ which

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4:10 "the dry land, Earth":  
 T&S: the earth dry

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from human beings. Such a sentiment, I think, lies behind most RLDS rejection of Smith's later theological innovations. But the book of Abraham view ought not be rejected out of hand simply because of its idiosyncratic tendencies. If one follows the speculative and



*KJV Italics and the Joseph Smith Texts*

A problem faced by those studying the KJV in 1830 or today is its italicized words. This expedient was taken by the KJV translators supposedly to indicate English words interpolated to make a smooth translation. Contrary to popular impression, however, the italic typeface in the KJV text does not necessarily reflect a difficulty in the underlying Hebrew. Indeed, the placement of italics in the KJV is inconsistent. A simple survey of alterations between Genesis and the book of Moses reveals immediately that many of the differences between the texts occur where the KJV owned by Joseph and used by him in his work on the JST marked the text in italic typeface. The Moses and Abraham variants in the preceding example were connected with an internal English language problem caused by a KJV mistranslation of the P-J seam found in Genesis 2:4. Such a connection seriously undermines a hypothesis of the priority of the Joseph Smith texts to the text of Hebrew Genesis.

In the present example, the association of many changes in Moses with the KJV italic problem also weakens the credibility of the book of Moses' priority. One could argue, of course, that God had a hand in helping the KJV translators to miraculously save some underlying form of the Hebrew text not otherwise preserved. Indeed, an unsigned editorial in the *Church News* (6 March 1983, p. 16) made just such a claim in trying to defend as ancient Book of Mormon readings parallel to the KJV but not supported by ancient biblical manuscripts. Such an argument convinces only those unaware of the KJV's many errors in rendering the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic of the Bible — readings which themselves turn up in the Book of Mormon and the JST. Claims that God inspired KJV italics despite the KJV's patterned usages and errors do little to solve this problem in a convincing fashion (Barney 1986; Larson 1985; Hutchinson 1985). At any rate, in this example, the Moses variants often parallel KJV italics.

*Moses.* This text, of the entire third day, is somewhat typical of what is seen throughout the book of Moses. There is in general a flattening of P's artful, varied repetition in Genesis by such insertions as "and it was so" in verse 9, and "even as I spake" in verse 11. Words italicized in the KJV have generated some of these changes. In verse 10, "saw that *it was* good" becomes "saw that all things which I had made were good." Modern scholarly consensus suggests that the Hebrew *kî tób* lying behind KJV "that *it was* good" ought to be translated "how good it was." The book of Moses typically replaces KJV "and God saw that *it was* good" by "and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good," or something similar (Moses 1:4, 9, 18, 21, 25, 31). But, as elsewhere, the change itself reflects an English solution to the English problem of the italics and has nothing to do with the clearly intelligible Hebrew Genesis. Similarly, in verse 11, the italicized "*and*" is simply deleted, and the italicized "*is*" becomes "should be," though the KJV correctly trans-

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imaginative trajectory of the Johannine community itself in the New Testament, one sees similar centrifugal forces at work. Yet by such forces came important, if not universally accepted, developments of biblical doctrine. See R. Brown 1979c, 1.

lates the nominal clause in Hebrew with the simple verb “to be” and need not have placed the word in italics at all.

Moses 2:10 changes KJV “Seas” to “the Sea.” This change occurs only in the last of the three manuscripts of the JST Old Testament (OT ms 3); the earlier JST manuscripts retain the KJV plural. The change may have been an effort to harmonize this text (as well as Gen. 1:2, 6, 22) with a common speculation that before the days of Peleg, there was but a single primeval ocean and continent (Gen. 10:25; D&C 133:24; RLDS D&C 108:5f).

A problem with the logic of the action as described in KJV English may have provoked interpolations at the end of verse 9. As the KJV reads (“let the dry *land* appear”), we may well ask, “Well, if the waters are gathering together in one place, what is going to come up out of them is certainly not going to be *dry* land, at least for a while!” This is not a problem in the Hebrew text, since the word translated by “place” in the KJV perhaps ought to be translated “basin,” thus stressing the *process* of the waters running downhill into a newly created hollow, leaving the land exposed to view and drying. A literal rendering would be, “let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one gathering place (basin), so that dryness be seen, and thus it was.”<sup>18</sup> Also, the use of the words *yabbāšā* “dryness” and *wētēraʿeh* “so that it be seen” stresses the fact that the waters are gathered precisely to *bring about* dryness, rather than to expose something already dry.

The book of Moses remedies the problem in the KJV, despite its minor and somewhat fanciful character, in two ways. First, it separates the gathering together of waters from the creation of dry land, by inserting the words “and it was so” after the gathering. Next, it makes the dry land a separate work of creation by imitating the KJV at the creation of light, and adding “and I, God, said: Let there be dry land.” What is probably most interesting here is that the book of Moses does not change the italicized word right in the affected text: KJV “let the dry *land* appear” becomes “Let there be dry land” — the italicized “*land*” remains while the unitalicized “appear” departs. This results from the effort at tidying up the passage’s logic, and because concrete “land” is less easily deleted from the text understood in a literalist tradition than is the somewhat abstract “appear.”

Similar changes occur in verse 11, where the KJV has this garbled rendering: “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth.” The Moses version tidies this up by inserting words perhaps intended to distinguish between fruit and nut trees (“the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself”). The Hebrew syntax

<sup>18</sup> The problem is that the Massoretic text of the Old Testament has pointed the consonants *mqwm* as *māqôm*, “place.” The LXX, however, translates it as *συναγωγή* “a gathering-together,” related to the verb *συνάγω* at the beginning of the verse in the LXX. Now that the use of the enclitic *mem* has been demonstrated clearly in Ugaritic, and has shown up at numerous previously difficult passages of the Psalter, some scholars today posit *mqwm* here as *miqwē(h)-m*, using the same word that appears in verse 10. They translate this as “gathering” of waters, or, simply, “basin.” To be sure, others dispute such a reading (see Westermann 1984, 78–79). But however solved, this problem in Hebrew was outside of the ken of Joseph Smith and his contemporaries.

here is not particularly difficult, and the New American Bible correctly renders the phrase, “Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.”

The book of Moses deletes the italicized “and,” which was erroneously interpolated into the passage in the first place by the KJV translators. They had not understood the ancient Hebrew idea that seeding plants (“herb yielding seed”) as well as fruit trees are both subgroups of *deśe’*, vegetation in general (KJV “grass”). In short, the Hebrew text describes vegetation with two subgroups, the KJV makes this into three types of created plants, and the book of Moses adds a fourth group of plants to the KJV’s three. Rather than repair the KJV error, the Moses version elaborates upon it in a way that is more compatible with arboriculture as Joseph Smith would have known it.

*Abraham.* Where the book of Moses tried to solve the problem of the dry land appearing from under the waters by having dry land created separately, the book of Abraham reflects more sensitivity to the images involved in the Hebrew text and makes explicit the idea of a gradual recession of waters and drying out of the exposed land. The earliest published text of Abraham in the *Times & Seasons* is all the more explicit here: “the gods pronounced the earth dry” (v. 10).

Though the use of “pronounced” here instead of KJV “called” is odd (particularly in the light of the fact that Joseph left “called” for the same KJV and Hebrew words in verse 8), its explanation reveals much about the imaginative processes underlying Joseph’s revisions of the Bible. The substitution in Abraham 4:10 of “Great Waters” for KJV “Seas” (cf. Moses “the Sea”) in the same verse where “pronounced” is substituted for “called” gives us the clue to what Joseph Smith had in mind.

As every beginning student of Hebrew learns, the verbal roots can be inflected into various *binyanim* or conjugations, which alter their meaning. The simple root, when its middle letter is doubled by means of a small dot called a dagesh, becomes intensive. *Qātal*, for instance, means “he killed.” *Qittēl* (the vocalic changes are patterned as well), on the other hand, means “he slaughtered or massacred.” The Hebrew word in verse 10 translated by the KJV as “Seas” is *yammim*, which is the plural because the original Semitic root underlying the word is *ymm* (the second “m” regularly drops out of this class of noun in the singular in Hebrew). The expression *miqueh hammayim*, “gathering together of the waters,” precedes this word in the Hebrew text, separated from it only by the verb translated in the KJV as “called.” Graphically, the two words, one for “the waters” and the other for “Seas,” are very close:

הַיָּמִים “the waters”	יַמִּים “seas”
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A major visual difference, in fact, is that the *mem* ( מ = “m”) in *yammim* has a dagesh in the middle of the word, while the *mem* in *hammayim*,

also doubled with a dagesh, is immediately after the attached definite article *ha-* ( **ה** = "the"), which normally causes the letter immediately following it to double. In short, the proximity of the words encourages an inexperienced reader (or a highly imaginative one) to see a connection between the two words, so graphically similar, and to understand the dagesh in the middle of *yammîm* as somehow related to the intensive verbal conjugations. Thus, one could understand the word *yammîm* as some kind of intensive form of *mayim* "waters." It is perhaps thus that the book of Abraham speaks of "Great Waters," albeit erroneous in terms of Hebrew and Semitic philology.<sup>19</sup>

Thus we can explain the occurrence of the book of Abraham's "pronounced" for KJV "called" in the second half of verse 10, since the Hebrew word here, *qārā*, simply means to say out loud and can range in sense from "call" to "read" to "pronounce." It appears at the end of verse 10, where the play between the graphic morphology and the pronunciation of the two words *yammîm* and *hammayim* lies behind the use of "Great Waters." By analogy, the first usage of *qārā* in the verse (KJV "God called the dry land Earth") is altered in Abraham to conform to the language of the latter part of the verse. Thus, since the gods "pronounced" the "gathering together of the waters . . . Great Waters" at the end of the verse, they also (following the *Times and Seasons* edition) "pronounced the earth dry," or (in modern editions) "pronounced the dry land, Earth." To be sure, this balances the Abraham verse nicely, but it does so in spite of the fact that the particular semantic overtone of "pronounced" in the first half of the verse is somewhat beyond the range of the word *qārā* in Hebrew.

As noted above in our discussion of example 1, there seems to be a systematic effort in Abraham to harmonize the conflicting details of what we now recognize as the separate P and J stories of creation, by explaining Genesis 1 as preparation for life and Genesis 2 as the execution of the prepared plans. Verses 11 and 12 in our present example manifest several textual variants from the KJV Genesis that may be part of this effort: "Let us prepare the earth," "the Gods organized the earth to bring forth grass," as well as the more subtle change at the end of verse 11, where the KJV "and it was so" (already expanded to "and it was so even as I spake" in Moses) becomes "and it was so, even as they ordered."

This last variant, with its introduction of "ordered," deserves some comment, since it is linked to another pattern in Abraham — a concern for order and a stress on obedience to the gods' commands. Thus Abraham 4:7, 9, and 11 all introduce the verb "to order" and answer this order of the gods with a fulfillment formula also using the verb "to order." (Note that in Abraham 4:9, the original KJV Genesis 1:7 word "said" that has been replaced by "ordered" is followed immediately by a redundant "saying." This is probably a remnant of the KJV "said" and lends to the reworked Abraham passage a

<sup>19</sup> Yet this is not the only time that Joseph, using his Hebrew as an artist and not a philologist, ran rough-shod over the basics of the Hebrew language. See Zucker 1968 for examples. For the classic example of Joseph's abuse of Hebrew syntax in pursuit of a separate theological good, see his 7 April 1844 sermon in Ehat and Cook 1980, 340–62.

Hebraizing style similar to that found in the Book of Mormon and some of the Joseph Smith revelations.)

Yet another stereotyped variant in these verses is also best understood in light of the book of Abraham's patterned stress upon order. Note that in Abraham 4:10 and 12, the KJV Genesis formula, "God saw that *it was* good," becomes "the Gods saw that they were obeyed." Where the book of Moses resolves the KJV italic problem in this phrase fairly simply, the book of Abraham regularly makes reference to the idea of obedience wherever the KJV Genesis formula occurs. The reference takes various forms throughout Abraham chapter 4:

*KJV Genesis 1*

18 . . . and God saw that *it was* good.

21 . . . and God saw that *it was* good.

25 . . . and God saw that *it was* good.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. . . .

*Abraham 4*

18 And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.

21 . . . And the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good.

25 . . . and the Gods saw they would obey.

31 And the Gods said: We will do everything that we have said, and organize them; and behold, they shall be very obedient. . . .

One exception to this pattern is found in Abraham 4:4, where "And they (the Gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright," parallels KJV Genesis 4:4, "And God saw the light, that *it was* good." But here, "comprehended" replaces the usual Abraham "saw," and "bright" replaces the usual "obeyed," suggesting KJV John 1:5, "the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

These stereotyped Abraham variants reflect general theological concerns of order and obedience as part of the work of the gods, and they help establish as well the book of Abraham's programmatic deferring of the creation of life to the second account of creation. Since plans, orders, and preparations are made in the first account of creation, fulfillment and obedience to plans must follow in the second.

The Abraham variants in the discussion of the various plants (Abr. 4:11–12) no longer reflect the resolution of the garbled KJV text adopted in Moses 2:11–12. Where the book of Moses introduced a fourth category of plants to understand the KJV text, Abraham makes sense of the KJV and Hebrew text here by deferring the creation of life to the next chapter.

Where Genesis uses the formula "and the evening and the morning were the X day," the book of Abraham inverts the evening-morning sequence of the Hebrew day and gives a more modern morning-evening sequence: "From the evening until the morning they called night, and . . . from the morning until the evening they called day; and it was the third time" (4:13).

The same pattern appears in Abraham 4:5, 8, 19, 23, and 31, including the shift from KJV “day” to Abraham “time.” Both of these changes may reflect Joseph Smith’s new acquaintance with Hebrew: *yôm*, normally translated as “day,” can indeed mean a period of time, much as our phrase “in those days” does not really mean 24-hour days *per se*, but rather an unspecified period. As with “pronounced” in Abraham 4:10, the Hebrew lexicon’s equivalent English word has been used in place of the Hebrew word itself and pushed in its English usage far beyond the semantic range possible for the original Hebrew word. *Yôm* means an unspecified period of time only in stereotyped locutions, and in this context there is very little room semantically for such a meaning. Although eliminating twenty-four-hour days from the creation narrative is helpful in harmonizing the story with the general implications of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century geology about the age of the earth, this reading would be highly unlikely in light of P’s concern in the story with the weekly Sabbath.

### EXAMPLE 3

#### THE OPENING VERSES

##### *KJV Genesis 1:1–2*

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

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JSKJV thus.

##### *Moses 2:1–2*

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest.

<sup>2</sup> And the earth was without form, and void; and I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and my Spirit moved upon the face of the water; for I am God.

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2:2 “water”:  
OT mss 1 & 2: waters  
OT ms 3: water

##### *Abraham 4:1–2*

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> And the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate, because they had not formed anything but the earth; and darkness reigned upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters.

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4:1 “that is the gods”:  
T&S (these words in parentheses after “formed”)

#### *The Opening Verses*

Changes in the opening verses of the Joseph Smith creation texts reflect the way the meaning and sense of the KJV have been altered by prefatory

material to KJV Genesis 1 in Moses and Abraham. Some instructive points emerge from these changes.

*Moses.* What now constitutes the text of chapter 1 of Moses and RLDS D&C 22 appears in both JST OT mss 1 and 2 as "A Revelation given to Joseph the Revelator June 1830." Starting with the phrase, "The words of God, which he spake unto Moses at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain," this revelation is highly Christological in orientation and apocalyptic in tone. Through its narrative about the visions of Moses, it deals with the greatness of God and God's works, the implications of intense visionary experiences, the discrimination of good from evil in such manifestations (Moses 1:20), the plurality of worlds (Moses 1:4-5, 28-35), and the relative authority of the biblical record (Moses 1:4-5, 25-42). The last two of these themes offer important insights into how Joseph Smith may have understood the Genesis creation accounts during his work on the JST.

Both the Renaissance and Enlightenment had done much to undercut the traditional Christian understanding of Genesis 1-3 as historical records. Ethan Allen's *Reason: The Only Oracle of Man* (1784, 357-84) and Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* (1794, 22-29, 76-77, 90-91, 105-15) give a good indication of what American deists at the end of the eighteenth century were saying about literal readings of the Old Testament. Such concerns did not fade in the nineteenth century (see, e.g., Ingersoll 1902, 46-129; Clemens 1938, letters III and IV). The Smith family was exposed to such influences: Joseph Smith, Sr.'s father, Asael, threw *Age of Reason* at him upon learning, to his disgust, that his son was interested in Methodism (R. Anderson 1971, 207).

Deists questioned the ability of human language to communicate God's word, the reliability of the Genesis account, and its specific details. How could Moses, for instance, the traditional author of Genesis, really *know* about the earth's origins? Did he really write it in the first place? Since the Bible gives no direct attribution of the Pentateuch to Moses, how could it be called the books of Moses (as in the superscription of the KJV)? How could the stars, millions of miles away, have been created for the sole purpose of illuminating one small solitary planet? Why should God create the plants on day three, while there is apparently not even any sunlight until day four?

The introduction to and expansions found in Moses answer many of these questions, especially that of Mosaic authorship and biblical authority. If the texts of the Bible as received are viewed as corrupt and deformed, that would account for the anomalies attacked by the deists. The preface affirms the authority of Genesis by saying Moses wrote Genesis, and knew whereof he spoke, since his account was revealed directly. Since it is in the very "words of God, which he spake to Moses" (Moses 1:1), throughout the book of Moses the text is in the first person, not the third person, when it speaks of God. The preface to Moses follows the Book of Mormon in explaining the anomalies in the Bible *as received* as opposed to the perfect words of God *as revealed*: They stem from a "day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou [Moses] shalt write" (Moses 1:41, cf. 1 Ne. 13:34).

These deleted words presumably would include the Moses variants, since the preface also contains a none-too-veiled reference to Joseph Smith, Jr.'s making the words available again (Moses 1:41). The book of Moses preface's beginning words remove from biblical authority any shadow cast by Tom Paine's irreverent claim that Genesis 1 was mere hearsay or otherwise Moses would have introduced it "with the formality that he uses on other occasions, . . . by saying 'the Lord spake to Moses, saying'" (Paine 1794, 23).

Among these precious truths portrayed as lost and now restored in Moses are the additions to Genesis 1:1, in which God tells Moses specifically that the account about to begin is only about "*this* heaven and *this* earth . . . upon which thou standest" (Moses 2:1, emphasis added) as opposed to all the worlds seen in the overwhelming vision in the prefatory revelation (see especially Moses 1:4–5, 8, 27, 33–35).

The claims made by the book of Moses that its variants are a restoration of the original form of a perfect Bible text make sense in the context of nineteenth-century theology and disputes between believers and sceptics. As noted at the beginning of this article, however, such a portrayal of the ancient forms of the Bible is inadequate in light of current knowledge. As to the claim that the traditional Hebrew (and dependent KJV) text has eliminated the book of Moses readings, we need to go no further than these first verses of Moses that parallel the Bible, which appear to expand upon KJV. The changes fall into the same patterns already described. The italicized "was" in the KJV Genesis 2:2 becomes "I caused . . . to come up," probably due to the general shift to the first person and, perhaps, the phrasing of KJV Genesis 3:6, "there went up a mist." Similarly, singular "water" replaces the KJV plural "waters," which, like the change from "Seas" to "the Sea" in Genesis 1:10 discussed above, occurs only at the level of JST OT ms 3 and harmonizes the text with the common speculation about Peleg. The words "for I am God" are added, also part of the movement to the first person (as is the change to "my Spirit"), and as an explanatory expansion upon "I caused . . . to come up." None of these detailed changes make much sense if we posit an ancient scribe who deletes these details, either because he esteems God's words "as naught" (Moses 1:41) or "because of wickedness" (Moses 1:23). There seems, in contrast, to be a much better explanation if we posit Joseph Smith attempting to solve genuinely troubling problems in KJV Genesis.

*Abraham.* The variants in the Book of Abraham reflect a much richer textual background than do those of Moses. The book of Abraham breaks off abruptly at its parallel to the end of Genesis 2, apparently unfinished. The lengthy preface to the Genesis 1–2 parallels, like the Moses preface, changes the meaning of the text boldly by altering its context. Abraham 1–3 itself seems to be a creative expansion on Genesis 12, interlaced with themes potentially inspired by Josephus (*Antiquities* 1:155, 158–59, 167–68) and the vignettes from the Joseph Smith papyri (now known to be Book of the Dead scenes rather than illustrations from an ancient book by Abraham [Ashment 1979; cf. Nibley 1979]). The narrative brings up such authority-related issues as the priesthood, succession, apostasy and restoration, and Abraham's role as father of the faithful.



The lengthy passage on sacred cosmology in 3:1–16 uses such Hebrew loan words as “Kokaubeam” (*kōkābīm*, “stars”), and probably stems from the tradition of Abraham as astronomer based on the passing reference to Abraham and the stars in Genesis 15:5 (“Look now toward the sky, and count the stars, if you can”). Its chief importance seems to be as a narrative technique for introducing the premortal council of gods.

The changed context for the Genesis passages seems to address the issue of biblical authority, as did the JST. For here the account of creation is seen as a revelation to Abraham, as it was seen as a revelation to Moses in the JST.

Another element of the changed context in the book of Abraham account lies in the reference to premortal existence in the three chapters of preface. Where the book of Moses claims creation had as its purpose to bring to pass “the immortality and eternal life” of the human family (Moses 1:39), the book of Abraham sees creation as the preparation, for and by the preexistent spirits of the “noble and great ones” (Abr. 3:22), or the “Gods” (Abr. 4:1), of a place for moral testing and growth. This is so that those who would “keep their second estate”<sup>20</sup> might “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abr. 3:26). Where the passing reference to pre-existent creation in Moses stems from problems in the KJV rendering of the seam between the P and J stories, the book of Abraham abandons this earlier understanding of the seam, while keeping the insight about premortal existence, and expands this into a full-blown narrative (Abr. 3:22–28).<sup>21</sup> Thus it is that the book of Abraham introduces a stereotyped use of the plural “Gods” instead of the singular “God” found in KJV Genesis and “I, God” found in Moses. This reasonably could stem from Joseph’s study of Hebrew and his literalistic treatment of the grammatical plural ending *-īm* in the word *’ēlōhīm*, “God.” The plurality of worlds idea in Moses and the sacred cosmology section of Abraham logically extend to a plurality of gods, itself associated with Joseph’s Nauvoo period theology of exaltation to godhood and with the development of the secret rituals of the Nauvoo Holy Order.<sup>22</sup> The book of Abraham gives a new

<sup>20</sup> This expression is seemingly borrowed from KJV Jude 1:6, itself another example of a misleading translation by the KJV. The Greek *τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχήν*, KJV “their first estate,” simply means “their own position.”

<sup>21</sup> Several converging theological developments allowed this. Several biblical texts understood by the early saints as referring to a “war in heaven” and the origin of the “fallen angels” (in Isaiah 14, a description of the fall of the king of Babylon; in Revelation 12, a description of the dragon’s fall from heaven with a third of the stars; in Jude 1:6, a reference to the fallen angels) were conflated and interpreted in light of (1) Joseph’s developing conceptions of premortal existence of human spirits, and (2) Joseph’s association of the category “angels” (which in classical biblical, Jewish, and Christian formulations constitutes a class of spiritual beings separate from humankind) with either premortally existent human spirits or postmortally vivified human spirits or resurrected beings.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding Joseph’s plurality of gods concept, see Ehat and Cook 1980, 378–83, 393n2, 408n4. On his theology of divinization, see pp. 84n9, 341, 344, 350, 357, 399n99. It is not clear whether the idea of a plurality of gods in Abraham, a text “translated” circa 1835 but only published in 1842, reflects an intermediary stage between Joseph’s monotheism and somewhat limping trinitarianism, found in the Book of Mormon and the “Lectures on Faith,” and this ostensibly later pluralist theology. In Abraham, there is no question about a person’s becoming a god only after long years of mortal faithfulness and after the properly authorized

context to the creation narratives which radically alters their theological context.

The shift from KJV “created” to the book of Abraham’s “organized and formed” seems compatible with Joseph Smith’s belief in the eternal nature of matter, a view also held by a nineteenth-century theologian Joseph was familiar with, Thomas Dick (1830, 101–2). Joseph’s Hebrew study may have helped him realize that words in any foreign language do not have the precise range of meaning as their English counterparts.<sup>23</sup> He freely used alternative English words in Abraham and apparently was no longer as concerned with the KJV italicized words. Thus the Hebrew *bārā* “created” becomes “organized and formed,” stressing the idea that the creative act was not *ex nihilo* (see Ehat and Cook 1980, 61, 341, 359).

But the book of Abraham has not fully, even here, escaped the bounds of thought imposed upon it by English, since in Hebrew, *bārā* applies only to the creative act of God, never to the creative acts of human beings. In addition, the P author of Genesis definitely sees God as creating not merely the objects in the universe, but the framework of the universe itself. Had ancient Hebrew been less bound to the concrete expression of thought (abstraction being very difficult in the language itself),<sup>24</sup> it is not wholly unlikely that P would have phrased its belief in terms of the *ex nihilo* doctrine of later Judaism and Christianity. Yet, while capturing the basic religious drift of the Genesis 1 description of God’s creative act, the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation itself relied heavily upon Greek philosophical abstraction quite foreign to ancient Hebrew culture. But the book of Abraham goes far in the other direction—while keeping Hebrew cultural concreteness by denying *ex nihilo* creation, it reduces the majesty of P’s God to mere premortal human spirit-gods. By having to consider even the earth as a work of creation in order to assert its creation from material already existing, the book of Abraham ignores the deep symbolism of P’s having God create light before all else.

The book of Abraham replaces KJV “created” with “formed” to avoid *ex nihilo* overtones. With the earth being one of the works of creation, the book of Abraham must give an alternative rendering of *tôhû wābôhû*, KJV “without form and void” (Gen. 1:2, emphasis added). For how could the gods have *formed* the earth without *form* and void? The book of Abraham remedies the problem by using the words “empty and desolate” and adds the qualification “because they had not formed anything but the earth.” Abraham

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ordinances of the gospel. Rather, the “noble and great ones” are seen as premortally existent gods, who later will come to earth for mortal life and moral trial, to determine their worthiness for being “added upon” (Abr. 3:26). Yet this concept of being “added upon” certainly is connected with Joseph’s explicit theology of divinization put forth in discourses at Nauvoo, and so the ideas seem to be linked at least secondarily.

On the relationship of these ideas to LDS temple rituals, see Quinn 1978; L. Brown 1979; and Buerger 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Note, e.g., Joseph’s giving a variety of English terms to give the range of one Hebrew word, the preposition *be-*, in Ehat and Cook 1980, 358.

<sup>24</sup> For an excellent discussion of this problem, see MacKenzie 1956, 12–13; and von Rad 1962, 384–85.

is getting its choice of words for *tôhû wābôhû* from the Hebrew grammar Joseph studied in Kirtland (Seixas 1834, 78). The italicized KJV “was” in Genesis 1:2, which had been rendered “I caused . . . to come up” in Moses, becomes a simple “reigned” in Abraham — less full than Moses, but a richer rendering of the Hebrew nominal clause than the KJV.

In another change, “moved,” the KJV translation of *mēraḥepet* (Gen. 1:2), which had been untouched in Moses, becomes “was brooding” in Abraham. Again Joseph here has borrowed his terminology from his Hebrew grammar (Seixas 1834, 77). However, the grammar erroneously derives this meaning of the intensive inflection of the root *rḥp* from its use in describing an eagle hovering over its brood in Deuteronomy 32:11. Today it is clear that the word in this form means to sweep through the air or something similar. Most dictionaries before this century, however, agree with Seixas in defining the word as “to brood.” The metaphorical possibilities of this word in English (as in “to brood over a problem,” “to think over”), not really present in the Hebrew, appear to lie behind Joseph’s choice of it to render *mēraḥepet*.

The last alteration in this textual example involves “waters” (Abr. 4:3). Joseph’s Hebrew study seems to have disabused him of the idea that the KJV “waters” is incorrect. His grammar tells him that *mayim* means “waters” and is dual in form but plural in meaning (Seixas 1834, 23), and it is thus that he renders it, despite his earlier understanding in JST OT ms 3 that the word should be construed as singular. Where he changed it to the singular in Moses, he leaves it plural in Abraham.

### *Other Examples of Development Between the Three Texts*

Those variants examined in the Joseph Smith texts are more readily explained by seeing the KJV as their underlying text rather than by seeing them as reflecting a hypothetical uncorrupted Hebrew text. With this direction of textual development in mind, let us look briefly at several other textual examples to see whether their theology and doctrine is consistent with such a hypothesis of priority. All of these texts show some of the stereotyped variants described above; however, I shall limit my remarks here to general observations on how the variants affect the doctrinal content of these works.

*The Creation of Humankind.* In example 4, the Joseph Smith texts expand upon the Genesis text in two differing ways, much as each handled the seam between the P and J stories. The Genesis use of “let *us* make man in our own image” (italics added) leads to two different interpretations. The book of Moses explains the plural by adding “And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning.” This expansion referring to Christ is similar to other Christological embellishments in Moses (2:1, 27; 3:18; 4:1–4, 28). The book of Abraham, in contrast, interprets “us” to mean “the Gods,” consistent with its own doctrines of the plurality of gods and premortally existent spirits.

It is possible to argue that the reference to Christ in Moses *had been* excised from an underlying and no longer extant form of Hebrew Genesis by some ignorant, corrupt, or designing scribe anxious to purge the text of any

## EXAMPLE 4

## THE CREATION OF HUMANKIND

*KJV Genesis 1:26-27*

<sup>26</sup> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

*Moses 2:26-27*

<sup>26</sup> And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so. And I, God, said: Let them have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

<sup>27</sup> And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.

*Abraham 4:26-27*

<sup>26</sup> And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

<sup>27</sup> So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.

idea contrary to orthodox Jewish conceptions about the one-ness of God. But this argument would have to overlook the fact that Hebrew Genesis does in fact have the plural pronoun, and that the differences between the texts in Moses and Abraham are most easily explained by positing this simple, unelaborated plural as the bridge between the two widely variant Joseph Smith texts.

*The Rivers of Eden.* In example 5, the book of Moses preserves the KJV text virtually intact, except for minor variants where the KJV italics occur. The book of Abraham, in contrast, eliminates the four verses giving the names of the waters of paradise. The difference between the dates of the books of Moses and Abraham gives us our most likely explanation. Between Moses in 1830 and Abraham in 1835, Joseph had begun developing his theology of a sacred geography of America, locating the garden of Eden in Missouri (D&C 78:15; 107:53-57; 116:1; cf. RLDS D&C 77:3e; 104:28a-29b; and RLDS *Church History* 2:153-54). Since the names of Eden's rivers were known as ancient Near Eastern sites, they could have worked against Joseph's emerging understanding of Zion's geography, and their absence from the text in Abraham may thus be explained.

*Yahweh's Threat of Death.* Example 6 also shows a Genesis text adapted in two different ways by the Joseph Smith texts. The problem presented by the Genesis text was alluded to above in my discussion of the J story of humankind's defection from Yahweh. Yahweh here forbids the fruit of the tree of knowledge and threatens death as a punishment for disobeying this command. Yet later in the story, the commandment is broken, and sudden death does not

follow. In terms of J's story, this is to be accounted for in Yahweh's loving mitigation of punishment. Yet in a literalist reading of the KJV, the disharmony between the Lord's threat and the suite of events is troubling.

Similarly, the idea that somehow the fall of Adam and Eve was a necessary and good thing (a *felix culpa*, as St. Augustine put it) makes the command of Yahweh itself seem somewhat incongruous. The Book of Mormon teaches that the fall of Adam and Eve was a necessary and good thing (2 Nephi 2:11–27; 1830 edition pp. 63–65), as does Moses 5:10–11. The book of Moses resolves this dilemma by adding a mitigating clause, “nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given to thee; but remember that I forbid it” (3:17). This expansion softens Yahweh's command and tends to harmonize the verse with a theology of a blessed fall. But the book of Abraham is not so concerned with this question as with the disharmony between Yahweh's threat of death and the subsequent expelling of the man, alive, from the garden. The book of Abraham adds after the threat, “Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning” (5:13). This

## EXAMPLE 5

### THE RIVERS OF EDEN

#### KJV Genesis 2:10–14

<sup>10</sup> And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

<sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

<sup>12</sup> And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

<sup>13</sup> And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

<sup>14</sup> And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

#### Moses 3:10–14

<sup>10</sup> And I, the Lord God, caused a river to go out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

<sup>11</sup> And I, the Lord God, called the name of the first Pison, and it compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where I, the Lord God, created much gold;

<sup>12</sup> And the gold of that land was good, and there was bdellium and the onyx stone.

<sup>13</sup> And the name of the second river was called Gihon; the same that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

<sup>14</sup> And the name of the third river was Hiddekel; that which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river was the Euphrates.

#### Abraham 5:10

<sup>10</sup> There was a river running out of Eden, to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became into four heads.

## EXAMPLE 6

### YAHWEH'S THREAT OF DEATH

*KJV Genesis 2:15-17*

<sup>15</sup> And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

*Moses 3:15-17*

<sup>15</sup> And I, the Lord God, took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.

<sup>16</sup> And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

*Abraham 5:11-13*

<sup>11</sup> And the Gods took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

<sup>12</sup> And the Gods commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

<sup>13</sup> But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning.

addition relies upon the cosmological ideas of Abraham 3 and Facsimile No. 2, figure 1, which notes that "One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of the earth."

This concept derives from a literalistic reading of biblical metaphors such as "for a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday" and "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (Ps. 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; cf. Ps. 84:10; D&C 77:6). It is related to the contemporary and later Utah speculations concerning the placement of the earth before the Fall (see, e.g., *Times & Seasons* 3 [1 February 1842]: 672; JD 17:143), which themselves seem designed to harmonize the problem in Genesis of a first-day creation of light versus a fourth-day creation of the luminaries. The expansion in Abraham makes the Lord's threat not one of quick *death* (as in J), but rather, one of *mortality*, i.e., death sometime within a thousand year period. As in the other examples cited above which involve two differing variants in Moses and Abraham, this difference between the two creation narratives is difficult to understand in any way other than as two separate reactions to the same text in Genesis. This, in turn, suggests the priority of KJV Genesis to the texts.

Apart from these examples of divergence between the way Moses and Abraham handle Genesis, there are many specific cases within each of these texts where it seems that theological and stylistic elaboration is occurring. I will discuss each text separately in this regard.

*Other Examples in Moses*

As noted above, the KJV italic/book of Moses variant problem occurs regularly. Here are some of the occurrences not already noted.

<i>KJV Genesis</i>	<i>Moses</i>
1:16, <i>he made</i> the stars also	2:16, the stars also were made, even according to my word
1:20, fowl <i>that</i> may fly	2:20, fowl which may fly
1:30, wherein <i>there is</i> life, <i>I have given every green herb</i>	2:30, wherein I grant life, there shall be given <sup>26</sup> every clean <sup>26</sup> herb
2:19, that <i>was</i> the name	3:19, that should be the name
2:23, this <i>is</i> now	3:23, this I know now
3:6, it <i>was</i> pleasant	4:12, it became pleasant
3:6, to make <i>one</i> wise	4:12, to make her wise
3:7, they <i>were</i> naked	4:13, they had been naked
3:9, where <i>art</i> thou	4:15, where goest thou <sup>27</sup>
3:10, I <i>was</i> naked	4:16, I beheld that I was naked
3:11, thee that thou <i>was</i> naked	4:17, thee thou was naked
3:12, gavest <i>to be</i> with me	4:18, thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me <sup>28</sup>
3:13, what <i>is</i> this <i>that</i> thou	4:19, what is this thing which thou
3:14, thou <i>art</i> cursed	4:20, thou shalt be cursed
3:17, cursed <i>is</i>	4:23, cursed shall be
3:19, dust thou <i>art</i>	4:25, dust thou wast

<sup>25</sup> This change is curious; the regular shift to the first person in Moses is seemingly reversed, with a first person in Genesis becoming an impersonal third person in Moses. This "noninterpolation" probably results from the cluster of italics here in the KJV and the fact that the immediately preceding words ("wherein *there is* life") resolved to the first person as expected ("wherein I grant life"), thus requiring a stylistic adjustment to avoid the somewhat clumsy "wherein I grant life, I have given."

<sup>26</sup> Abraham 4:30 reverts here to "green." Moses "clean" is perhaps influenced by KJV Genesis 7:2 "every clean beast."

<sup>27</sup> See discussion below on the programmatic shift in Moses 4:14–16 from a series of simple verbs to verbs of motion, pp. 59–60.

<sup>28</sup> The variant, though triggered by a KJV italicized phrase, seems to hint at an explanation of the Eden story apparently developed later in the Utah tradition. Where 2 Nephi 2:22–23 (RLDS 2 Nephi 1:111–13; 1830 ed. p. 65) states that had Adam and Eve not sinned "they would have remained in a state of innocence," this passage in Moses seems to speak of a need for Eve to remain with Adam in order to fulfill the commandment to multiply. While within the context of the book of Moses this idea is not developed at all, and while there are no parallel passages here from the book of Abraham, this book of Moses expansion of the Genesis story seems to have provided the core concept of the later LDS harmonization of the two apparently contrary commandments in the story. For, at least as interpreted in 2 Nephi 2:22–23, the story has the Lord giving a command to multiply on the one hand, and, on the other, a commandment not to partake of the fruit necessary for such a loss of "innocence."

In later accounts of the LDS temple ceremony, these two commandments are not seen as conflicting. Rather, both commands become impossible only *after* Eve's transgression, since

In addition to shifts in italicized words, the book of Moses also regularly flattens the artful, varied repetition of the P creation narrative, by adding phrases to some verses by borrowing from and adapting P formulae occurring elsewhere in the story (on this, cf. figure 1 above). Examples are found in Moses 2:5 (“and it was done as I spake”), 2:6 (“and it was so even as I spake”), 2:7 (“even as I spake”), 2:21 (“all things which I had created were” — an expansion also triggered by KJV italics). A major flattening of the subtleties of style and theology is found in Moses 2:18, where the names of the sun, moon, and stars are added to the P text that for theological reasons declined to name them.

Several expansions in Moses of J’s story of humankind’s defection from Yahweh reflect major theological developments of and departures from the J story. To begin with, Moses 4:1–4 provides an interpretive background for the story quite different from that of the J story in Genesis, just as Moses provided a new context for the P story. The expansion manifests the Christologizing tendencies of many book of Moses interpolations noted above, and provides answers to some of the more troubling questions raised by literalistic modern readers of the J narrative, including that of the origin of evil, the talking snake, and how temptation could have been introduced into paradise in the first place. The verses speak of Satan (identified by an internal reference back to the book of Moses introduction — cf. Moses 4:1 and 1:21), and describe a primeval rebellion of this fallen angel (Moses 4:1–4; cf. Rev. 12, Isa. 14, and John 8:44, which have all been accommodated in the development of this narrative).

Thus the book of Moses tries to account for the seemingly abrupt introduction of temptation in the garden; the interpolation of Moses 4:6 into KJV Genesis 3:1 further develops the idea: “And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him), and he sought also to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.” Indeed, the Moses 4:7 interpolation adds to same KJV verse the parenthetical remark, “(And he spake by the mouth of the serpent.)” Where in the original J story, the serpent is merely a crafty creature among the other creatures Yahweh had made, in the book of Moses the serpent is a representative of the Devil.

This development, encouraged by traditional Christian readings of the J story, is textually made possible by a slight misunderstanding in the KJV of the Hebrew of Genesis 3:1. What rightly ought to have been translated “Now the serpent was more subtle than any *other* wild creature that Yahweh God had made” has been rendered by the KJV “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” This loose KJV

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it will result in her expulsion from the garden, leaving Adam alone and unable to father children. See, e.g., Stenhouse 1873, 48–49; and “Mormon” 1905, 167. Of course, the two commands are *not* contrary in the context of the J story, which does not portray a Fall as such. But in light of later theological elaborations, such as the imposition upon the story of a concept of a historical Fall from grace (see, e.g., Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:21) or the development of a transgression of Eve theology (see, e.g., 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), this particular interpretive trajectory becomes wholly understandable.



rendering gives the impression that the serpent was not among the creatures created by the Lord, and could contribute to an understanding of the snake as demonic.

Similar lengthy expansions occurring in the book of Moses text suggest that these opening verses in Moses 4:1–4 are designed to help make sense of the rest of the story. Moses 5:1–15, for example, is a lengthy expansion dealing with the cultic and family life of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the garden. Highly Christianized in viewpoint, it provides background for the Cain narrative in Genesis 4:1 and helps answer questions caused by story's abrupt introduction into the narrative, such as: "Where did the brothers get their wives? Where did they get their instruction concerning sacrificial ritual? Why did murder turn up so soon in human history?" A second example, Moses 5:18, 21–31, provides a plausible dramatic background for the seemingly inexplicable rejection of Cain's sacrifice and his subsequent murder of Abel. A third example is found in Moses 5:49–6:1, which seems to flesh out the details of the cryptic reference in KJV Genesis 4:26, "then began men to call upon the name of the LORD." Similarly, Moses 6:2b–7 provides background for the reference to "the book of the generations of Adam" in KJV Genesis 5:1. Interestingly, the book in P is simply part of a stereotyped formula used to preface the Genesis 5 genealogy, and not an allusion to a historical book written by Adam, as portrayed in Moses 6:8.

Finally, the very long passage in the book of Moses on the prophecies of Enoch (Moses 6:26–7:67), inserted within verses verbally paralleling KJV Genesis 5:21–22 and 5:23–24, seems to serve the purpose of fleshing out the details of the life and preaching of that mysterious figure of the Old Testament, Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who "walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him" (KJV Gen. 5:24), just as the many ancient versions of the Enoch cycle attempted to provide more information on this cryptic and tantalizing reference in the Bible. Joseph did his JST work on this passage about the time that he was beginning to be concerned with the issue of communitarian economics as an expression of gospel values, issues raised in the Rigdon-Campbellite Ohio community that joined the Church en masse during this time. The Joseph Smith Enoch story seems to be rooted in Smith's concerns during the period; these concerns in turn probably found firmer direction and expression as a result of the Enoch text. Whatever parallels may be suggested between this lengthy story and various ancient Enoch legends, it is apparently unconnected to any parallel biblical prototype text. Yet the narrative function it serves fits into the book of Moses's general pattern of expansion and embellishment on KJV Genesis.

Several other variants in Moses 4 reveal theological tendencies. Moses 4:14–16 appears to alter KJV Genesis 3:8–10 in such a way as to remove from the scene any hint of the Lord searching through the bushes, trying to find the hiding place of Adam.

*KJV Genesis 3:8–10*

8 And they heard the voice of the  
LORD God walking in the garden in the

*Moses 4:14–16*

14 And they heard the voice of the  
Lord God, as they were walking in the

cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

garden, in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife went to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

15 And I, the Lord God, called unto Adam, and said unto him: Where goest thou?

16 And he said: I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I beheld that I was naked, and I hid myself.

Where the Genesis passage has the Lord God walking in the garden to cool off, the book of Moses has Adam and Eve doing this. KJV “hid themselves” becomes in Moses “went to hide themselves.” Where KJV has the Lord ask “Where *art* thou,” the book of Moses asks, “Where goest thou?” These changes add elements of motion to simple verbs and fit in with the transferral of the walking in the Genesis 3:8 from Yahweh to Adam and Eve — thus avoiding the apparent incongruity of the Lord searching through the bushes for Adam.

Moses 4:21 is another example of a theologically motivated elaboration. Here, the curse upon the serpent in KJV Genesis 3:15 is changed in a subtle yet significant way. The KJV reads, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” As I noted above in my discussion of this passage in Hebrew Genesis (see note 10), the verse serves as an etiology for snakes’ locomotion and human hatred for snakes.

But the book of Moses interprets it in the tradition of a long-lived yet accommodated Christian interpretation, which sees the verse as a *proto-evangelium* or early prophecy of Christ. Where KJV reads, “it shall bruise thy head,” Moses reads, “*he* shall bruise thy head” (emphasis mine). This is a highly improbable understanding of the original sense of Genesis, because the only possible antecedent of the pronoun at issue in Hebrew is the “seed” or “posterity” of the woman. In Hebrew this noun is masculine, and refers to “a seed,” “semen,” or “offspring.” It usually is collective and means “descendants” when referring to people. The pronoun following it is also masculine, because of concord of gender, not because of some prophetic intent to refer to Jesus by a masculine “he.”

Since Joseph had not studied Hebrew at the time of his JST work, some scholars have suggested special insight on Joseph’s part to have “restored” the masculine pronoun of the original Hebrew text. But such a view is not well-founded: the KJV that Joseph owned and used for his work on this very text of Genesis includes an editor’s marginal note on the word “it” in Genesis 3:15 specifying that the word was “he” in Hebrew. In addition, the change only occurs in OT ms 3.

Moses 4:26 makes a curious addition to the KJV verse explaining the name “Eve.” The KJV reads “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20). The book of Moses adds, “for

thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many." While this expansion has been cited by some as evidence of a teaching of polygamy in Moses, a far more likely understanding is proffered by the book of Moses' treatment of the name "Adam" in the introductory revelation. There we read "And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many" (1:34). In Hebrew the name *'ādām* is actually a common noun referring to humankind as opposed to beasts. *Hawwā*, "Eve," is explained in Hebrew Genesis 3:20 with the folk etymology associating it with the word *hāy* "living."

But the book of Moses interprets both of the names in light of its theology of a plurality of worlds and creations, a theology, as pointed out above, in part aimed at responding to deist attacks on biblical authority. Thus, "Adam" means "many," and "Eve" means "first of all women, which are many," because each of the numerous worlds and creations mentioned in Moses 1 are seen as having their own Adam and Eve. The context of the reference to Adam in Moses 1:34 occurs in the central text discussing the plurality of worlds.

A final example of theologically generated book of Moses variants involves the closing verses of the "Fall" narrative (compare verse 22 with the extract from the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on p. 14):

*KJV Genesis 3:22–24*

22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

*Moses 4:28–32*

28 And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten: Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand and partake also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever,

29 Therefore I, the Lord God, will send him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken;

30 For as I, the Lord God, liveth, even so my words cannot return void, for as they go forth out of my mouth they must be fulfilled.

31 So I drove out the man, and I placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

32 (And these are the words which I spake unto my servant Moses, and they are true even as I will; and I have spoken them unto you. See thou show them unto no man, until I command you, except to them that believe. Amen.)

Moses 4:28 adds a Christologizing expansion triggered by the plural pronoun in KJV Genesis 3:22. The addition of Moses 4:30 draws a parallel between the sending forth of Adam and Eve from the garden with the going

forth of the words of the Lord — a parallel aimed apparently at resolving the disharmony between Yahweh's threat of death and its non-fulfillment in the story. This disharmony was later resolved in the book of Abraham by speaking about the length of the Lord's days. Moses 4:31 accurately corrects the redundantly plural word "cherubims" in KJV Genesis 3:24 to the simple Hebrew plural "cherubim." This change occurs only in OT ms 3 and perhaps stems from a period following Joseph's study of Hebrew. Moses 4:32 is also completely an interpolation, echoing the themes in the introductory matter added by the book of Moses before Genesis 1:1, and reminding the reader that deist criticisms of the creation narratives are not valid.

### *Other Examples in Abraham*

Several specific variants in Abraham (published in 1842) can be explained by acquainting ourselves with the Hebrew grammar Joseph Smith studied under Rabbi Joshua Seixas during the winter of 1835–36 (Zucker 1968; Walton 1981; the text at issue is Seixas 1834).

Among these is a series of stereotyped variants in which the KJV and Moses "divide" parallels Abraham "cause to divide." The variant shows up in various active and passive forms in Abraham 4:4, 14, and 17 (paralleling KJV Gen. 1:4, 14, and 17). The probable explanation of this variant becomes clear when we understand that the Hebrew word underlying the KJV "divide" is *habdîl*, erroneously understood as a causative verbal form in the Seixas grammar (1834, 39). The word, meaning simply "to divide" or "to distinguish," in form mimicks the causative conjugation of Hebrew, the hiphil. But this occurs only through an accident in the history of the language and a collapsing of otherwise discrete verbal morphology (Jouön 1923, 54f). But this was not known to even the best-informed Semitic scholars a century and a half ago, and the resulting misunderstanding of the verbal form (as taught by Rabbi Seixas) underlies this pattern of textual change in Abraham.

Another group of variants which seem rooted in the Seixas grammar involves the use of the word "expanse" in the book of Abraham where KJV and Moses use "firmament." Though Abraham 4:4–8, 14–17 could be seen simply as an attempt to harmonize the creation text with nineteenth-century cosmology, it is important to note that the choice of the word "expanse" in Abraham was supported by the Seixas grammar. There, the Hebrew word lying behind KJV "firmament," *rāqîa'*, is rendered consistently by "expanse" (Seixas 1834, 21, 32, 78). That Joseph knew the Hebrew word well is shown by his use of it in the Seixas transliteration, *raukeyyang*, in the Abraham Facsimile No. 1, figure 12, and Facsimile No. 2, figure 4, where he equates it with the same meaning that Seixas ascribes to it, "expanse." But it is now clear that this understanding of the Hebrew word is misleading (see note 7 above).

A final variant in Abraham, apart from the influence of the Seixas grammar, is related to many of the other patterned variants which appear to make sense of the Hebrew Genesis, and yet ultimately departs from and obscures the sense of meaning imparted by the ancient author of the original text. In Abraham 5:14–21, the creation of the animals, the animal parade, and the naming

of the animals (vv. 20–21) all occur *after* the deep sleep of the man and the creation of the woman from the man's side (vv. 15–19). In KJV Genesis 2:18–25, the passage concerning the animals (v. 19) occurs first, as it does in Moses (3:19). As we saw above, the progression of the story in the Yahwist's ancient account has a definite dramatic logic and theological point: Yahweh creates the animals in an effort to provide the man with a help suitable for him; the animals are not suitable; so finally Yahweh creates the woman, "bone of" the man's bones, "flesh of" the man's flesh (Gen. 2:23). The union and solidarity of the couple is suggested by the narrative, and the uniqueness of the relationship results logically from the drama of the unsuccessful animal parade.

The inversion of the story sequence in Abraham seems to have resulted from the common Protestant usage of "helpmeet" to mean "wife." If the Bible says God is going to make a "helpmeet" (note that this is not what Genesis says when it speaks of "an help meet [i.e. suitable] for him"), why does God proceed to create animals? The book of Abraham solves the difficulty. Eve is not named at this point in the Abraham text. This suggests that the unfinished sections of Abraham would have retained the traditional place of naming Eve after the judgment of Yahweh. (In the later Utah tradition this sequence was to be reordered.) The rearranged order of the man's sleep and animal parade in Abraham has all the marks of a text dependent on Genesis, and not vice versa. Where Genesis makes perfect sense when it says "and for the man a suitable helper was not found" (2:20), this same phrase is superfluous in the book of Abraham, revealing its character as an inadvertent loose end resulting from Joseph's editing of the KJV.

#### UTAH DEVELOPMENTS

##### *The Temple Creation Narrative*

Developments of understandings of Genesis did not end with the books of Moses and Abraham. In 1842–44, the Nauvoo Holy Order, an elite later to become the workers in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846, was initiated by Joseph Smith into the secret and sacred rituals they were later to give there. The accompanying dramatic narrative in part included a dramatic version of the creation of the earth and the fall of Adam and Eve. Though it is difficult to establish conclusively the specific form of these stories in the earliest years of the endowment,<sup>29</sup> collation of published exposés and private accounts by be-

<sup>29</sup> This difficulty results not only from the attendant secrecy of these sacred ordinances, but also from the fact that the ceremonies themselves were not committed to a standard written form until 1877, when Wilford Woodruff, Brigham Young, Jr., John D. T. McAllister, and L. John Nuttall collaborated with Brigham Young in the effort (Buerger 1987, 50–51). It is clear that President Young, by his own account, played a major role in the organizing and systematizing of the ceremonies. According to Young the rituals had been given to the Nauvoo Holy Order by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1842, but in a simpler form due to the limitations of physical arrangements available to the Order (Buerger 1983, 17–18).

The crucial question here for those interested in the possibility of Joseph Smith's later reworkings of the creation narratives is, of course, just how much creativity Brigham Young manifested in the disposition of the endowment allegory itself, in addition to the obvious arrangements he made for the physical disposition of the rooms, altars, and curtains described

lievers may give a reasonable approximation of the ritual at various stages over the years. My own preliminary survey of these accounts suggests that the basic outline of the ritual was in place before Joseph's martyrdom. In particular there is evidence that the creation account, *in its basic outlines*, comes from a period no later than 1845, and possibly 1844 (Buerger 1987, 47).

If these temple-related narratives do derive ultimately from Joseph Smith, some interesting additional observations can be made. Where the reworkings in the book of Moses are very cautious, but more venturesome in Abraham, the temple rendition of the creation story seems to have rejected Genesis except for its repetitious use of formulae and division into works and days. Comparing the bare outline of published accounts of the ceremony's creation story (figure 4)<sup>80</sup> with that of P (figure 3) demonstrates just how innovative this rendition

#### FIGURE 4 WORKS OF CREATION IN LATER LDS TRADITION

- Day 1. Earth
- Day 2. Land/Waters
- Day 3. Appearance of Light and Luminaries
- Day 4. Plant Life
- Day 5. Animal Life
- Day 6. Man and Woman

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in the 11 December 1845 journal entry of Heber C. Kimball. Judging from the self-perception within the Holy Order as preservers and not innovators, as seen in such journals as Kimball's (one obviously not written with public posturing in mind), there is an *a priori* likelihood that the ritual as it existed in 1845–46 had not changed since Joseph Smith's death. For more on this, see L. Brown 1979; Buerger 1983 and 1987.

<sup>80</sup> The outline is suggested by a variety of exposés, though the specific list as such can only be found in the more recent ones. That the outline as given probably existed in the ritual during its earliest years is suggested by several items: (1) There appears to be a remarkable stability in this section of the ceremony in regards to the list of *dramatis personae* involved, as suggested by the Heber C. Kimball journal references to ritual participants (see note 31 below), nearly all exposés throughout the years, and various LDS sermon references. (2) The basic arrangement of instructions and subsequent execution of plans, with daily relaying of instructions and reports of the creative labor, is reported clearly in an exposé as early as 1848, referring to the ceremony as performed in the Nauvoo Temple. See Lewis 1848, 6–24. (3) As early as 1879, an exposé explicitly describes the works and days of creation as beginning with the earth and continuing with the separation of land from water, of light from darkness, and then states obliquely that the creation progressed to a point where the world is described by the Gods as "fair and beautiful," upon which preparations are made for the creation of man. See "Lifting" 1879.

The matter passed over obliquely by this exposé was made explicit by a 1911 description of the order of creation, "earth, sea, vegetation, animals, etc." See Jewett 1911. (The passing over of light by Jewett is incidental, for nearly all earlier exposés make some reference to the creation of light, though most remain silent about the other elements in the order of creation.) Thus, the outline presented here was probably represented in the ceremony from Nauvoo on, despite the naive tendency of most nineteenth-century exposés to assert that the ceremonies followed the account of the creation in Genesis. More importantly, whenever these accounts say anything *explicit* about the order of creation, the details mentioned accord with the pattern reconstructed here in Figure 4 and are in distinct disharmony with Genesis.

was, and just how much it conformed its sacred cosmology to the standard scientific cosmology of the day.

The setting of the ritual also remythologizes the figures of Adam and Eve. In the mid-nineteenth-century forms of the ritual, each male actually acted out parts of the Adam role, and females acted out parts of the Eve role, thus experiencing the creation, fall, and mortal life. Ritual lampooning of non-LDS religious communities, part of the ceremonies from the very start (and apparently surprisingly raucous in the nineteenth century), together with a stylized representation of God's response to sectarian confusion by revelation and apostolic messengers, carried the ritual Adam and Eve into situations that could not be seen as historical. Clearly, the Adam and Eve of the endowment were intended as mythic personages in the strictest sense: in representing Everyman and Everywoman's search for religious truth and authority, they symbolically mediate the meaning and value — indeed, the truth — that Joseph's theology of revelation, priesthood order and authority, and exaltation to Godhood attempted to phrase propositionally.

A preliminary analysis I have conducted of the texts of the various exposés — subjecting them to a rigorous scrutiny designed to sort out obvious mis-remembrances, confusions, or outright lies — reveals that in large part the text of Moses 3–4 lies behind much of the dialogue found here, while the plurality of gods concept of the book of Abraham seems to inform much of the dramatic presentation of the creation proper.

Just as several alterations are made in Moses and Abraham to update and regularize the stories to nineteenth-century ways of thinking, so also specific textual dislocations, emendations, and variants in the temple allegory seem to remedy or resolve further difficulties. The serpent becomes a demonic temptor played by a man in the drama, who is questioned explicitly about this role; the naming of Eve now joins the animal parade of the book of Abraham, along with other relocated verses aimed at clarifying hard-to-understand texts; and Moses 4:21 and 28 receive slight textual emendations that heighten particular theological tendencies therein. While many changes may postdate Joseph Smith, their appearance implies that later LDS leaders have followed his footsteps in adapting and reworking sacred scripture into new sacred scripture.

### *The Adam-God Doctrine*

The final stage in the nineteenth-century development of these stories took place in the Utah period when some leading hierarchs taught the Adam-God doctrine. The Adam-God knot originally appears to have come from the book of Abraham creation narrative and the endowment creation drama. A basic problem implied by the description in Abraham of premortally existent “Gods” creating the earth, who were later to become mortal and live upon their handiwork the earth, was this: In what way precisely is it proper to call these “noble and great ones” (Abr. 3:22) “Gods”? The Abraham text provides a minimal response to this question: since these premortally existent intelligences or spirits *create* the world under the direction of “God” and “one . . . like unto God”

(Abr. 3:23–24), they can rightly be called creators or “Gods.” But despite this, the question is complicated by the fact that in the temple rituals, the “Gods” creating the world are in part personally identified. As L. John Nuttall recorded, Brigham Young summarized this part of the ritual, “this earth was organized by Elohim. Jehovah & Michael who is Adam our common Father.”<sup>31</sup>

This identification was a turning point in the development of LDS doctrines concerning the Godhead and later became a major point of reflection in various re-orderings of LDS doctrines in this regard. While earlier LDS views had generally associated Jehovah with God the Father, this occurred in the context of a non-systematic trinitarianism where even Jesus as the Son could be described as Jehovah, since Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were seen as “One God” (Alexander 1980; Kirkland 1984; Hale 1983; Buerger 1982). Later LDS formulations — starting apparently in the 1880s with George Q. Cannon and finding fruition and near-canonical authority in the 1916 Doctrinal Exposition of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve entitled “The Father and the Son” — were to make clear identification of Jehovah as Jesus (Clark 5:23–34; Kirkland 1984; Alexander 1980).

But the pluralist theology of God in Nauvoo made no such association. Joseph’s use of “Elohim” and “Jehovah” as name-titles referring to separate deities among the family of the Gods could easily have been interpreted in light of the contemporary theology of divinization. Thus, with the identification of the book of Abraham’s “Gods” as Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael/Adam in the temple ceremony at Nauvoo, it would have been possible to speculate that Michael/Adam was not merely a premortally existent spirit preparing an earth for his “second estate,” but rather a God in the same sense that the other two principal players in the endowment creation narrative were — exalted men who had gone through a mortal life elsewhere, been found worthy, and subsequently risen to glory as Gods.

This would have required an accommodation of the book of Abraham, to be sure. There, the “one . . . like unto God” (Abr. 3:24) most likely refers to the same person that the expression “one . . . like unto the Son of Man” (v. 27) does, i.e., Jesus. But as any of Seixas’ Hebrew students could not have failed to notice when confronted with the identification of Michael/Adam as one of three creator Gods in the temple ceremony, the Hebrew name *mīkā’ēl* means “who is like God.” On this account it would have been possible to link the “one . . . like unto God” of Abraham 3:24 with Michael/Adam, thus effectively separating this character from the other creator gods in Abraham, who are clearly portrayed as the not-yet-embodied spirits of those “noble and great ones” who were to come to the earth they were creating.

With this accommodation of Abraham, the idea that the temple’s Michael/

<sup>31</sup> L. John Nuttall Journal, 7 February 1877, cited by Buerger 1982, 32. We know from the 1848 Lewis exposé, and from numerous references in the Heber C. Kimball 1845–46 Journal (see especially 10, 11, 12, 13 Dec. 1845) that this was also the case in the ritual at Nauvoo. Apparently the association of Michael-Adam with the other creator gods (Jehovah and Elohim) in the ceremony results from (1) Joseph’s belief (found in Abraham) that premortally-existent human beings helped create the earth and (2) the fact that this figure in the ceremony symbolically represents all the initiates in the ceremony.



Adam was a God in the sense of already having undergone a mortality, and having been raised to exaltation, follows naturally. This is the idea that Brigham Young later entertained and taught as Adam-God, that, "Adam helped to make the Earth, that he had a Celestial body when he came to the Earth, and that he brought his wife or one of his wives with him, and that Eave was also a Celestial being, that they eat of the fruit of the ground untill they begat children from the Earth."<sup>32</sup>

To be sure, Adam-God was a much more complex theological matrix than simply a claim that Michael/Adam underwent de-celestialization upon partaking of earthly fruit — it expanded this inceptive idea to fuller claims "that Adam was the only God that we should have, and that Christ was not begotten of the Holy Ghost, but of Father Adam" (Buerger 1982, 15). But the central idea in the Adam-God mythology appears to be a de-literalized reading of the story of the partaking of the "forbidden" fruit in Genesis and its book of Moses parallel. Other ideas ultimately taken up and incorporated into the web of Adam-God thinking involved other implications of the more esoteric elements in Joseph's Nauvoo theology. Thus, the hierarchy of gods hinted at in Abraham becomes an active element in Brigham's thought on Adam-God (Buerger 1982, 18–19), and the closeness of God to the human family, hinted at by the tendencies of Joseph's later theology to democratize divinity, becomes for Young the real religious heart and insight of the Adam-God teaching.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Joseph's theology of exaltation, with its attendant ideas, practices, and rituals, presented a new set of questions rather than solving questions raised in Protestantism. Though the theology of divinization satisfied the need of many of the Saints' hearts for a close God and a reward on the other side truly worthy of sacrifice here, it also raised questions about mechanics — such as "When I become a God, who will my Jesus and Holy Ghost be?" or "How exactly will I fit into creations of new worlds for *my* eternal increase?" or "When I become a God, how will my earthly family that has been eternally sealed to me fit into the scheme of things?" Adam-God was in some aspects clearly an attempt to address these sorts of questions. The developed concept of a hierarchy of Gods, and Young's theology of a God who provided physical bodies through procreation for his eternal offspring — both of these reveal a paradigmatic use of Adam-God to explain the mechanics of divinization. As Brigham Young stated in a sermon on 28 August 1852,

After men have . . . become Gods, they have the power then of propogating their species in spirit . . . and then commence the organization of tabernacles. . . . How can they do it? Have they to go to that earth? Yes, an Adam will have to go there, and he cannot do without Eve; he must have Eve to commence the work of generation, and they will go into the garden, and continue to eat and drink of the fruits of the corporal world, until this grosser matter is diffused sufficiently through their celestial bodies to enable them, according to the established laws, to produce mortal tabernacles for their spirit children (JD 6:273–75).

<sup>32</sup> As found in the Samuel H. Rogers journal, 16 April 1852; cited in Buerger 1982, 15.

<sup>33</sup> See especially Young's remarks in February 1857 to the Deseret Theological Institute, cited at length in Buerger 1982, 23–24.

Adam-God answered many of these questions satisfactorily for some of the early Saints; they received the doctrine with joy and peace. When the teaching was presented in an 1870 meeting of the School of the Prophets, Joseph F. Smith stated that "the enunciation of that doctrine gave him great joy" (in Buerger 1982, 31).

On the other hand, the doctrine never was destined to become normative, since it wreaked far too much harm upon other important doctrines. But seeing the function it had and the types of concerns it addressed helps us to understand how Brigham Young came to teach it. The major objections to teaching it involved its innovative character (Brigham's memories notwithstanding, most Saints apparently did not remember any such teaching from Joseph Smith), the patent dislocations such a teaching had on the numerous biblical and early LDS scriptures which portrayed God as above Adam, and Jesus as above Adam, and, finally, the fact that Adam-God undermined a historical reading of the creation of man story in Genesis 2 and its LDS parallels (see Buerger 1982; Bergera 1980).

Curiously, it was probably this last matter that most exercised Young's most astute opponent, Orson Pratt. Yet, of all the Adam-God thinking Young set forth, it was this last item which most effectively survived to become part, however small, of the LDS orthodoxy of the twentieth century. Young replied to criticisms that his doctrine was contrary to the story of Genesis 2 by attacking the idea that man had been literally created from moist clay — he called it a "baby story." As he memorably put his case, "Supposing that Adam was formed actually out of clay, . . . he would have been an adobie to this day" (JD 2:6). Though this striking rejection of a literal and historical understanding of the Genesis 2 account of the creation of man and woman was originally part and parcel of Brigham's thinking on Adam-God, it has become part of modern LDS piety regarding the creation stories, a piety that sees the story of creation as simply figurative insofar as the man and woman are concerned.<sup>34</sup> Despite such a piety, however, many Saints, and the correlated curriculum itself, tend to limit such an anti-historical reading to the details of the story, while maintaining belief in a historical Adam and Eve.

Thus the heart issue of Adam-God was the idea of the continuity between God and the human family. Twentieth-century Mormon tradition has accepted this basic belief while rejecting all its peculiar mythological formulations. But where Adam-God had to be rejected, the mythos it offered of a God who is our father not merely in a metaphorical sense was powerful enough to undermine Mormon literal-mindedness about the claim of a creation of early man out of a mud pie.

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<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., McConkie 1966, 17. Another aspect of Adam-God to survive its demise and become a part of twentieth-century LDS orthodoxy was Brigham's rejection of the biblical attribution of Mary's pregnancy to the action of the Holy Ghost. While Brigham's attribution of paternity (Adam-God) has been rejected, his tempering of biblical literalism has here too been accepted. See, e.g., McConkie 1966, 822. Both of these accommodations were used by the progressive theology movement in the LDS hierarchy at the turn of the century; see esp. the 1909 and 1916 doctrinal expositions of the First Presidency.

The 1909 Doctrinal Exposition of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve on "The Origin of Man" laid the groundwork for the twentieth-century orthodox Mormon approach to these texts: while this supported the basic historical character of an Adam and Eve, it viewed specific details of the narratives as less than historically reliable. It borrowed details from all the texts but overlooked the texts' disharmonies (Clark 4:199–206). This approach still informs much of the standard LDS understanding of these texts. Currently, Church members implicitly understand the temple account to be the most reliable, and spend little effort sorting out the texts' differences. The temple ceremony's idea that its account is "figurative so far as the man and woman are concerned" is generally used to respond to rationalist or scientific criticisms of the various accounts; the idea itself is not used to undermine literalist or historical understandings of the figures of Adam and Eve themselves.

### CONCLUSION

This discussion of variants within the Joseph Smith creation texts suggests that few, if any, can be explained by the traditional claims that Joseph Smith restored a "pure" Genesis. On the contrary, they have readily understandable reasons and clear meaning if we see Joseph Smith creatively reworking KJV Genesis to resolve some of its problems. While others, perhaps, may wish to propose some relationship between these texts and various ancient apocalyptic documents, any effort to understand their actual wording and doctrine must deal directly with the specific variants of the text themselves.

The patterns and tendencies found in Joseph Smith's creation narratives are not unique. Midrashic technique is found in the Bible, a large part of which resulted from the same kind of appropriation, reworking, and adaptation we find in Joseph Smith's work on Genesis. Indeed, religious imagination and appropriation of antecedent tradition can be shown in almost all of the world's holy books; this tradition, however, does not correspond to "inspiration" in the same sense and degree that believing Latter-day Saints see in the Bible and Joseph Smith's writings. But inspiration, indeed revelation, can occur through such a process, for many of the texts we confess as inspired or revealed manifest these patterns and tendencies. Similarly, to see midrashic technique in the Joseph Smith scriptures does not imply that he knew anything of ancient targums or midrashim, but rather that like them his works tried to make sense of scripture by playing upon its inherent possibilities.

Others have identified this tendency in those writings of Joseph Smith which claim ancient, as well as divine, origins (e.g., Ashment 1979; Ostler 1983; Stendahl 1978; Charlesworth 1978; Walters 1981). Edward Ashment's excellent 1979 study of the book of Abraham facsimiles demonstrated clearly that Egyptian Book of the Dead vignettes were imaginatively (and, from a strict point of view of papyrology and Egyptology, erroneously) restored and interpreted by Joseph. Ashment wisely rejected the commonly proposed dichotomy between (1) a view of Joseph as responsible for the creative restorations of the facsimiles, and also a fraud, and (2) a view of Joseph as a

prophet whose insight into the original form and meaning of the vignettes was perfect. Rather, he supported a "third possibility, which is that Joseph Smith is ultimately responsible for the extensive restorations of Facsimiles 1 and 2 and can yet be a prophet" (Ashment 1979, 33). Indeed, it seems that if anything, the presence of imaginative midrashic technique, pseudonymous authorship, and the reworking of doctrines and texts in Joseph Smith tends to ally him more with the ancient prophets of Israel and authors of the Bible than it separates him from them.

Still, other implications may be less affirming to traditional Mormon beliefs. Given the differences among these texts concerning the order, timing, and details of creation, it seems unwise to use them as if they were infallible and harmonious guides to the ancient history of the race or the origin of the species on the planet. Clearly, it is the theology of each story that is most important. Also, we must ask about the implications raised here to the claim of many of Joseph Smith's works that they not only have a divine origin but also have an ancient origin. Such texts include not only Moses and Abraham, but the Book of Mormon, the whole JST, D&C 7 (RLDS D&C 7) and the "record of John" section of D&C 93 (RLDS D&C 90) as well. While such a sensitive and crucial subject is too complex and broad to be addressed here, perhaps our examination of Abraham and Moses will encourage us to take Ashment's warning against dichotomies seriously.

The issues raised here ultimately feed into greater religious and existential questions of the uncertainty of all human knowledge, even that affirmed to be revealed from heaven. This issue is the one potentially most disturbing to Latter-day Saints who feel that somehow revelation resolves the problem of human uncertainty. I personally feel that we must be honest, must try to see the world as it is. If that means living with uncertainty, so be it. Such a view sees scripture and revelation less as cures to the disease of human uncertainty, than as stopgap medicines that help us endure a sometimes painful condition — not a disease, really, but simply the way we are. The stories we hold sacred, and tell to one another, rather than ridding us of doubt and giving us certainty, serve to help us raise our sensitivity and desire to serve, help us to find moral courage within ourselves, and make some sense, however fleeting, of our lives.

When I first came to the conviction that Adam and Eve as described in Genesis were not historical figures, I suffered a sense of loss. When I realized that Joseph Smith's opinions of Genesis were more reflective of his own understanding as a nineteenth-century American than of the ancient biblical tradition, I again experienced a certain disappointment. But as I came to see that these awarenesses gave me new understanding of these creation stories I loved so, and as I further understood the meaning and significance of the various scriptural authors' contributions to the creation-story traditions outlined here, I saw that the stories still spoke deeply to me. Indeed, they in some ways gained new power because of their newly acquired clarity of meaning. Though my understanding of religious and scriptural authority changed, the stories' power endured.

However these issues will eventually be sorted out by others, it is important to remember that it is the sacred and canonized texts of the creation narratives themselves that furnish the evidences and patterns to encourage a reevaluation of our traditionally held views. Perhaps we should remember how Jews have traditionally seen the narrative midrashim of their own tradition: "The Haggadah, which is to bring heaven nearer to the congregation and then to lift man heavenward, approves itself in this profession on the one side as glorification of God and on the other as consolation to Israel" (Strack 1980, 202).

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