



Is Restoration Scripture Compatible with the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother?

EXPLORING THIS IMPORTANT QUESTION FROM A
FAITHFUL LATTER-DAY SAINT PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction: *Abundant evidence suggests that the first Christians considered the Holy Spirit to be the Heavenly Mother, and that this was a continuation of a tradition in Israelite religion going back to the First Temple period. This fact can be challenging for modern Saints who typically hold a different view on the identity of the Holy Spirit. While it is possible that these early Christians and their Israelite forbears were either in error, or their records were preserved incorrectly, the evidence is sufficiently compelling that we should consider whether Restoration scripture, if perhaps not Latter-day Saint tradition, can be reconciled with the ancient view. In this paper, I first illustrate the ancient concept of the Holy Spirit as the Heavenly Mother with a broad sampling of texts taken from various early Christian groups. I then discuss ways in which the unique scriptures of the Restoration accord with or diverge from this ancient tradition. I outline some important subsequent developments in Latter-day Saint discourse on the topic. And finally, I examine several objections to the potential identification of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother, with specific attention to Doctrine and Covenants 130:22, in light of recent documentary evidence.*

Heavenly Mother in Ancient Israelite Religion.

Over twenty-five years ago, Daniel C. Peterson brought to Latter-day Saints' attention a remarkable connection between the Book of Mormon and an element of ancient Israelite religion that was ultimately suppressed and then nearly expunged from the Bible record. He showed that the Tree of Life in the visions of Nephi and Lehi had originally symbolized the Israelite Mother Goddess. "Asherah, consort of the chief Hebrew deity, was the mother of the divine

children of God.”¹ “At the creation of the earth, ‘when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy’ (Job 38:7), Asherah appears to have been there too, among her children.”² Peterson argued that “Belief in Asherah seems to have been a conservative position in ancient Israel; criticism of it was innovative.”³ After several centuries of conflict, however, the innovating reformers won out and the Divine Mother all but disappeared. Yet, Peterson connects her to “Lady Wisdom”, and it was in this guise that the mother goddess Asherah survived in the text of the Hebrew Bible, though she was seemingly relegated to the status of a personalized divine quality.⁴

Over several decades of work and drawing together now abundant biblical scholarship on the subject, Methodist biblical scholar Margaret Barker has filled out the story of Heavenly Mother in ancient Israel and early Christianity in significant detail. In her most recent book, she proposes how and where ancient Israelite reverence for the Great Lady⁵ (whose name she renders as *Ashratah*, instead of *Asherah*, on epigraphic grounds) survived the reforming purges of Josiah and others to re-emerge in Christianity. Dr Barker's scholarship has had an outsized influence on Latter-day Saints, emblematic of which is her appearance in the 2020 video “Temples Through Time” produced by the Church itself. ⁶ Kevin Christensen recently catalogued this deep and sustained influence, summarizing, “She and her work have become more relevant and more significant, not less, compared to the scene 20 years ago during the initial wave of excitement over a noted non-Latter-day Saint scholar seeing connections between her discoveries and the claims of the Restoration.”⁷ Her respect for and collaboration with Latter-day Saint scholars has been controversial in other Christian

circles. But when challenged, she points unabashedly to the persuasiveness of identical conclusions arising from separate lines of inquiry.⁸

No aspect of Margaret Barker's work has captivated the attention of Church members more than her efforts to recover the Great Lady of ancient Israel and early Christianity. The idea that there is a legitimate precedent for our own belief in Heavenly Mother among *ancient* Saints has been electric.⁹ And yet, many members of the Church understandably have reservations about Barker's specific identification of the Divine Mother as the Holy Spirit. Put succinctly, she affirms, "the Great Lady... was widely known in the Church as the Holy Spirit"¹⁰, and "Jesus regarded the Holy Spirit/ Wisdom as his heavenly Mother."¹¹ In contrast, a common Latter-day Saint identification of the Holy Spirit has been as a *spirit son* of Heavenly Father.¹² This tradition is one significant barrier to Latter-day Saints accepting Dr Barker's conclusion, and there are others. The purpose of this paper is to examine this striking conclusion of Dr Barker's scholarship that is *not* generally shared by Latter-day Saints, and to explore whether is it at least possible to square the view of ancient Saints with Restoration *scripture*, if perhaps not Latter-day Saint *tradition*.

I. The Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother at the Dawn of Christianity

To begin to answer this question, I must first demonstrate that the earliest Christians did indeed consider the Holy Spirit to be Heavenly Mother, as Dr. Barker asserts. For the purpose of this paper, I assume from the start the assertion that the ancient Israelite religion did know a Mother Goddess.¹³ She was called Shaddai, Ashratah, Wisdom, and others names. Our investigation will begin in the Second Temple Period because this is where the most obvious confluence of the names Wisdom and Holy Spirit is visible. The books of the Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirah were revered long before the advent of Christianity. They were preserved by the first Christians but were rejected by the Jewish authorities. Both these books bear clear marks of the idea of the Holy Spirit both as Wisdom and as the divine Mother.¹⁴

Wisdom of Solomon. This association is evident from the Wisdom of Solomon's opening chapter: "Into a malicious soul Wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in. For Wisdom is a loving spirit; and will not acquit a blasphemer of his words: for God is witness of his reins, and a true beholder of his heart, and a hearer of his tongue. For the Spirit of the Lord filleth the world: and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice." (Wisdom 1:4-7). Here, the behavior of Wisdom is just what we would expect from the Holy Spirit, and the two names are used alternately and interchangeably. Elsewhere, the author prays, "O God of my ancestors

and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your Word, and by your Wisdom have formed humankind... give me the Wisdom that sits by your throne... With you is Wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world... Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory... Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit from on high? And thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved by Wisdom” (Wisdom 9:1-18). Again, Wisdom is portrayed unmistakably as the Holy Spirit. Note especially that just as in Proverbs 8, Wisdom has a key role in the creation of the world and especially of humanity. In another passage, the writer says, “In all ages entering into holy souls, she [Wisdom] maketh them friends of God, and prophets.” (Wisdom 7:27). That is, Wisdom inspires holy men and causes them to prophesy, exactly as we expect the Holy Spirit to do. The book then goes on to describe the way Wisdom interacted with humankind throughout scriptural history. She protected and strengthened Adam, preserved Noah through the flood, saved Abraham from the destruction of the cities of the plain, prospered Jacob, descended with Joseph into the Egyptian dungeon and brought him out in honor. She entered into the soul of Moses so that he could withstand Pharaoh, and then, appearing as a pillar of fire, she guided Israel through the wilderness. The story goes on at length, but the pattern is clear: the actions and interventions of Wisdom throughout Israelite history make little sense if Wisdom is not

understood as the motivating, guiding, and protecting Holy Spirit.

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirah. In Sirah, the identity of Wisdom as the Holy Spirit is also evident, as is her motherhood. After urging his hearers to defend widows and orphans, ben Sirah promised, "You will then be like a son of the Most High... Wisdom exalts her children and gives help to those who seek her... Whoever holds her fast inherits glory." (Sirah 4:10-13). This idea of mortals becoming the children of Wisdom and thereby obtaining heavenly glory has clear reverberations in Christianity.¹⁵

Philo. Lest we conclude such passages as these (there are many, many more) are being misread, let us briefly examine a few statements of the Jewish philosopher and mystic Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus. Philo spoke of "Wisdom, who is the first-born mother of all things and most of all of those who are greatly purified in soul." (Questions on Genesis, IV:97). He described God as "the Father of all things, inasmuch as it is he who has created them; and the husband of Wisdom, sowing for the race of mankind the seed of happiness in good and virgin soil" (De Cherubim XIV 49). Furthermore, when Philo spoke of the way the Jewish high priest represented the Son of God, he included the following discussion of the divine parentage the high priest acquired at his ordination: "The high priest is not a man, but is the Word of God.... he has received imperishable and wholly pure parents, God being his father, who is also the father of all things, and Wisdom being his mother, by means of whom (*feminine pronoun*) the universe arrived at creation" (*De Fuga et Inventione* XX: 108-110). Philo was an ardent student of Greek philosophy as much as of the

Hebrew scriptures, and he may have taken many of these ideas allegorically. Nevertheless, the fact that he could even speak in terms of priests and purified souls being children of Wisdom, who was in turn the wife of God the Father, shows how broadly accepted this type of language was. But his contemporaries, the Christians did not take this language figuratively — at least not at first. When they spoke of the righteous being born of the Holy Spirit they were in earnest. Much more could be drawn from this time period around the beginning of Christianity to show the equivalence of Wisdom and the Holy Spirit, including from rabbinic Judaism. But let this suffice for the present purpose as we turn to the first Christians themselves.

II. The First Christians thought of the Holy Spirit as the Heavenly Mother

Syriac scholar Sebastian Brock notes, “among early Christian writers, Greek and Latin as well as Syriac, one can find scattered pieces of evidence which may suggest that there was once a fairly widespread tradition which associated the Holy Spirit with the image of mother.”¹⁶ Brock recognizes that this tradition of the Holy Spirit as Mother was both early and diffuse. But other scholars have concluded this tradition was in fact *primary*. Van Oort says, “The very first Christians, all of whom were Jews by birth, used to speak of the Holy Spirit as feminine”, adding that “It would be completely wrong to state that the image of the Holy Spirit as a woman and mother is simply caused by the fact that the Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac words for ‘spirit’ are (nearly) always feminine.”¹⁷ Though it is a common scholarly view that it is the grammar that drives the imagery and not the other way round, Brock says, “The roots of such a tradition are to be found, not only in the grammatical feature of the Semitic languages where ‘Spirit’ is feminine, but also in the links which the concept of Holy Spirit will have had with the personalised figure of Wisdom and with the Jewish concept of the Divine Presence or Shekhina. As is well known, both these features are often connected with mother imagery.”¹⁸

Irenaeus. The most direct early statement of the identity of the Holy Spirit as Wisdom is that of St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, who died about 202 AD. He says, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and by his Spirit all their power... Rightly and fittingly is the Word called the Son, and the Spirit, the Wisdom of God.” (Demonstration of the Apostolic

Preaching 5). It must be recognized from the start that for Irenaeus and other early Christians, far from being a mere personified trait, Wisdom was a divine *person*.¹⁹ Later in the same work, Irenaeus says more succinctly: “Now this God is glorified by his Word who is his Son continually, and by the Holy Spirit who is the Wisdom of the Father of all.” (Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching 10). Elsewhere, when Irenaeus describes the creation, he casts Genesis 1:26, “Let us go down and make man in our own image, after our likeness” as being spoken by God the Father in conversation with two other persons, the Word and Wisdom. “For with him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, he made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, ‘Let us make man after our image and likeness’” (Adversus Heresaes IV, 20.1). Here, again, the bishop equates the Holy Spirit and Wisdom. And this is a scene much like our own Abraham 4:26, “And the **Gods** took counsel **among** themselves and said: Let **us** go down and form man in **our image**, after **our likeness**”. The next verse clarifies that this likeness and image is “male and female”. Elsewhere, Irenaeus paints the same vignette of creation, saying of the Father, “For his offspring and his similitude do minister to him in every respect; that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Word and Wisdom; whom all the angels serve, and to whom they are subject.” (Adversus Heresaes IV, 7.4) In this passage, Christ is the “offspring” of the Father, but Wisdom, the Holy Spirit, is his “similitude”, Latin, *figurato*. The Holy Spirit as the mirror image of the Father was known in the sacred writings used by the first Christians. The Wisdom of Solomon calls Wisdom “the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness” (Wisdom of Solomon 7:26).

Irenaeus also points to the motherhood of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:35 the young virgin Mary had been informed, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee", and this would result in the birth of the Son of God. Irenaeus compared this birth to the birth of the "first-formed man", Adam. Adam's birth was "from the Will and the Wisdom of God, and from the virgin earth", i.e. from Father, Holy Spirit, and "dust of the earth". Since "it was necessary that Adam should be summed up in Christ, that mortality might be swallowed up and overwhelmed by immortality", Jesus's birth had to similarly be "by the Will and the Wisdom of God", though in this case, not from the virgin earth, but "through the Virgin who was obedient" (Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 32-24).

Theophilus. Theophilus, who became bishop of Antioch in 169 AD, also equated Wisdom and the Holy Spirit. Like Irenaeus, he cast Genesis 1:26 as a conversation between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "God is found... to say, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' But to no one else than to his own Word and Wisdom did he say, 'Let us make.'" (Ad Autolycus, II:18). Notably, Theophilus gives us the earliest formulation of the Trinity in any Christian writing. But instead of using the accustomed form, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", he says the Godhead consists of God, his Word, and his Wisdom: "In like manner also the three days which were before the [lights of the firmament], are types of the Trinity: of God, and his Word, and his Wisdom." (Ad Autolycus 2:15)

The Pearl. I have first cited two thoroughly orthodox Church Fathers to emphasize that this understanding

was entirely mainstream. The identification of the Holy Spirit with Wisdom and the divine Mother was also widespread. The next example is already familiar to some Latter-day Saints since John W. Welch, Hugh Nibley, and others have brought attention to it.²⁰ The *Hymn of the Pearl*, written in the 1st or 2nd Century,²¹ is a poem that was preserved as part of the later and non-canonical Acts of Thomas. It was widely revered by the early Church and represents allegorically a Saint's journey from heaven, down to earth, and back again to the presence of his Heavenly Father and Mother, and that of his older brother, their "second in command". The allegory opens, "When I was a little child, and dwelling in my kingdom, in my father's house... **My parents** equipped me and sent me forth." His assignment is to fetch a priceless pearl, for which he is sent down into Egypt, that is to say, among fallen humanity on earth. There, he says, "I forgot that I was a son of kings, and I served their king; and I forgot the pearl, for which **my parents** had sent me, and because of the burden of their oppressions I lay in a deep sleep. But all these things that befell me **my parents** perceived and were grieved for me". At this point, the Heavenly Parents gather the nobles of their kingdom and write him a letter that says, "From thy Father, the King of Kings, and **thy Mother, the Mistress of the East**, and from **thy Brother**, our second in authority, to thee **our** son, who art in Egypt, greeting! Call to mind that thou art a son of kings! See the slavery, whom thou servest! Remember the pearl, for which thou wast sent to Egypt!" As he reads the letter, the protagonist says, "I remembered that I was a son of royal **parents**". He then defeats the serpent that guards the precious pearl by speaking the divine names: "**For my Father's name** I named over him, and the **name of our Second** in power, and that of

my Mother, the Queen of the East.” After this he turns toward home. Along the way, he puts on heavenly garments that “**my parents** had sent thither by the hand of their treasurers.” He arrives at the gate and is received back into the heavenly kingdom. The three divine names which the protagonist speaks over the dragon, “Father”, “Second in power”, and “Mother” are an obvious match to the baptismal formula “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19, NRSVUE). As such, the Holy Spirit is the Heavenly Mother of this allegory. Concerning this identification, Nibley said, “Scholars naturally interpret this as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thereby running into serious complications which cannot be treated here.”²² Latter-day Saint reticence to publicly consider early Christianity’s belief in the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother has run deep. Endowed Latter-day Saints will recognize many distinctive temple themes in this poem: pre-mortal life, elements of the fall, a deep sleep, sacred garments, etc. These can reasonably be construed as marks that the Hymn of the Pearl is an authentic early Christian document from a time when such temple themes were still understood. Its association of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother can also reasonably be inferred to be a legitimately early Christian idea, like the temple themes that surround it.

Odes of Solomon. Let us next take the very early and widely accepted Odes of Solomon. Charlesworth assigns them a date of about 100 AD and indicates “the possibility that Ignatius of Antioch may have known and even quoted from them”²³ Furthermore, “the Odes are a window through which we can occasionally glimpse the earliest Christians at worship.”²⁴ The enduring importance of the Odes in orthodox circles is

attested by Lactantius, religious advisor to Emperor Constantine, who quoted a verse from Ode 19 as if it were scripture. As late as the 6th Century, Pseudo-Athanasius mentioned the Odes as one of the “other books of the Old Testament not regarded as canonical but read to the catechumens.”²⁵ Five of the Odes are quoted as scripture in the 2nd Century Gnostic work *Pistis Sophia*, suggesting that they were broadly accepted across the early Christian movement. The Odes address the Holy Spirit not just as female, but as a mother. “As the **wings of doves** over their nestlings, and the mouths of their nestlings towards their mouths, so also are the **wings of the Spirit** over my heart. My heart continually refreshes itself and leaps for joy like the babe who leaps for joy in **his mother’s womb**” (Odes of Solomon 28:1-2). In several of the passages already considered, we have seen the Holy Spirit portrayed as a participant in the creation of the world. This passage is also an oblique reference to the creation, since at the commencement of God's creative activity, “God’s Spirit was hovering (מרחפ) over the surface of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2, NET) This is the “fluttering” of the mother bird portrayed in Ode 28. The Holy Spirit flutters over the Christian disciple because she is his Mother. At the same moment, mixing metaphors, the disciple leaps within her womb. Another of these songs of praise deserves special mention here. Ode 36, given in the voice of Jesus, describes the Holy Spirit lifting Jesus up into the presence of the Father. “The spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and she raised me on high and made me stand on my feet in the height of the Lord, before his fullness and his glory. While I was praising him by the composition of his odes, she gave birth to me before the face of the Lord, even while being the *bar nasha* [Son of Man]. I was named the enlightened son of God while

I was glorious among the glorious ones, and great among the great ones. For like the greatness of the Most High, so she made me, and according to his renewing he renewed me” (Ode 36:1-5).²⁶ In this scene, the Holy Spirit not only transfigures Jesus in the image of his Father, the Most High, but Jesus is reborn as the son of both the Holy Spirit and the Most High. Ode 36 is at least reminiscent of Jesus’s Transfiguration on the unnamed mount where a divine voice from the “bright cloud” declared Jesus “my beloved Son” (Matthew 17:5). But Robert Murray saw in Ode 36 a “reminiscence” of an event recorded in the Gospel of the Hebrews.²⁷

Gospel of the Hebrews. Little of the original 2,200 lines of the Gospel of the Hebrews remains,²⁸ but quotations and references from two dozen Church Fathers, the Babylonian Talmud, and even an Islamic Hadith attest to its early credibility and influence. That influence was geographically wide as well; the work was known from Lyons to India. In one passage, reported by Origen, and clearly credited by him as authentic, Jesus says, “Just now My Mother, the Holy Spirit, took me and bore me to the great Mount Tabor” (*Homily on Jeremiah* 15.4). Origen was not alone among early Christians in valuing the Hebrew Gospel. James Edwards says the work was “cited more frequently and positively alongside canonical texts than is any other non-canonical document of which I am aware”,²⁹ adding, “No non-canonical text appears in patristic prooftexts as often and as favorably.”³⁰ Furthermore, Edwards makes a detailed case that the Gospel of the Hebrews was the *first* gospel written. He asserts that the apostle Matthew was its author (which no ancient source disputes), and that it was “most plausibly a source of the Gospel of Luke, and

specifically either the primary or sole source of Special Luke”³¹ (that portion of Luke that does not feature in Matthew and/or Mark). In the 4th Century, Jerome valued the Gospel of the Hebrews so highly that he translated it into Latin, cited it often, and even offered corrections to the canonical gospels based on it.³² If Edwards’s assertion is correct, the idea of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother goes back to the pen of the apostle Matthew reporting the words of Jesus himself. But consider how Jesus’s own words in the canonical gospels already bear this out in passages that would be plain enough if not for centuries of interpretive tradition that allegorized away the personhood of Wisdom.³³

Jesus Christ. Consider Jesus’s answer to the Pharisees and lawyers who first rejected the rough and austere John the Baptist and then rejected Jesus’s own more lighthearted and sociable manner. “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.’ For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Nevertheless, **Wisdom is vindicated by all her children**” (Luke 7:33-35, NRSV). Jesus affirms that even though the Jewish leadership would reject them on any superficial pretext, he and John were in fact both sons of Wisdom. And he is not invoking a personified trait or principle here. Rather, when we understand the way early Christians equated the Holy Spirit and Wisdom, we see that this is a plain declaration that the Holy Spirit was their Mother. By way of contrast, the Pharisees claimed to be the true children of God (John 8: 41), to which Jesus countered, “If God were your Father, ye would

love me.... Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:42,44). Jesus and John the Baptist as children of Wisdom/the Holy Spirit in turn casts crucial light on the phrase in John 3, “born of the Spirit”. “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he **enter the second time into his mother's womb**, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born of water and of the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is **born of the Spirit is spirit**. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **born again**” (John 3:3-7). The symbolism of baptism is overtly female in nature and this graphic analogy goes back to the earliest times. In Enoch’s preaching, the symbolic relationship between physical birth and spiritual birth was well developed: “Inasmuch as ye were **born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit**, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be **born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood**” (Moses 6:59-60). This description recaps the events of mortal birth: 1) water – the rupture of the amniotic sac and its accompanying gush of watery fluid, 2) blood – the baby is born smeared with blood, and 3) spirit – the baby takes its first breath. The passage then ties each to the spiritual *re*-birth.

Baptism as birth. That the waters of baptism are symbolically amniotic fluid is made even clearer by a change Joseph Smith made to 1 Nephi 20:1 for the 1840 version of the Book of Mormon. This passage is an admonition from the prophet Isaiah to those who had “come forth out of the **waters of Judah**”, that is,

from the amniotic waters of a Jewish mother. Joseph Smith added the phrase, “or out of the waters of baptism” to clarify that Isaiah’s message to the Jews applied equally to those who had emerged from the symbolic birth of baptism.³⁴ If the amniotic fluid of physical birth is represented as baptismal waters, then the blood that smears the newborn infant represents the atoning blood of Jesus. In the analogy of Moses 6, “Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by... blood... even so ye must... be cleansed by blood” (Moses 6:59-60). The first breath of the newborn infant must therefore correspond to the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Breath and spirit are related both linguistically and ritually. In English, “Inspiration” signifies both a breath inward as well as an individual being filled with the Holy Spirit, and this association is the same in the languages of scripture as well. In the modern Church, that initial breath defines live birth for the purpose of ritual requirements: if a baby does not take a breath, it does not require or receive ordinances.³⁵ The symbolism of baptism is graphic and specific. It is a spiritual rebirth intensely analogous to physical birth. But to whom would Nicodemus have understood this symbolic birth to be? As Margaret Barker says, “Nicodemus asked if he could enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and Jesus, in effect, said that he could. This was birth from the Spirit, one name for the Great Lady, the Mother.”³⁶ To the people of that day, all this childbirth imagery would have been strange symbolism indeed were the Holy Spirit not acknowledged to be to female and the Heavenly Mother of the sanctified. To be clear, “born of the Spirit” here is not referring to the *pre-mortal* spirit birth; rather, it is the re-birth John referred to in the opening of his gospel: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to

them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

Wisdom said. As Jesus again chastised the Pharisees in Luke 11, he alluded to a now lost prophetic utterance as having been spoken through some prophet by Wisdom: “Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute’” (Luke 11:49).³⁷ Today, we would normally say that the Holy Spirit inspired or spoke through the prophet. But to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Wisdom were equivalent, as the scripture of the day indicated: “In all ages entering into holy souls, [Wisdom] maketh them friends of God, and prophets” (Wisdom 7:27).

III. Later Christian Groups Preserved the Memory of the Holy Spirit as the Heavenly Mother

Understanding that the identity of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother was primary in Christianity makes the expressions of this idea in later Christian groups more intelligible. The following survey is necessarily brief but shows how widespread this identification was.

The Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Thomas may have been written as early as 60 AD, though most scholars accept a later date. It seems to represent one of the many variations of early Christianity. Meyer renders logion 101 thus: "Whoever does not hate father and mother as I do cannot be a disciple of me, and whoever does not love father and mother as I do cannot be a disciple of me", and he offers as one possible translation of the next line, "For my mother gave birth to me, but my true mother gave me life."³⁸ Mary gave birth to Jesus, but the "true Mother", the Holy Spirit, gave him life.

Silvanus. I next turn to a work attributed to Paul's missionary companion Silvanus (or Silas). Dennis Newton recently considered this text from a Latter-day Saint perspective, suggesting that original portions of the work could go back to the 1st Century.³⁹ After calling upon foolish humanity to repent and come unto her, in the manner of Proverbs 1, Wisdom promises her faithful children a high priestly robe, a crown, and a throne. She then says, "From now on, then, my son, return to your divine nature... Accept Christ, this true friend, as a good teacher... But return, my son, to your first father, God, and **Wisdom, your Mother**, from whom you **came into being from the very first** in

order that you might fight against all of your enemies, the Powers of the Adversary" (Teaching of Silvanus 14-16). The implication of the phrase "from whom you came into being from the very first" is that the spiritual rebirth on earth is preceded by a *pre-mortal* spirit birth.

Acts of Thomas. Elliott gives a Third Century origin for the pseudepigraphal Acts of Thomas.⁴⁰ This work treats the Holy Spirit as the divine Mother. For example, we read the following prayer to the Savior: "We glorify and praise thee and thine invisible Father and thine Holy Spirit, the Mother of all creation" (Acts of Thomas 39). In a blessing over the sacramental bread, Thomas says, "We invoke upon thee the name of the Mother, of the unspeakable mystery of the hidden powers and authorities: we invoke upon thee the name of thy Jesus." (Acts of Thomas 133). This prayer is another variation on the formulaic invocation "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", where the Holy Spirit appears as "Mother", the Son as "Jesus", and the Father as the "Power". "The Power" is a frequently occurring name for the Father, as when Jesus testifies before the assembled Jewish authorities, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of [P]ower, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:64) Elsewhere in Acts of Thomas, the Holy Spirit is called, "Hidden Mother" (50), and "the Silence" (50). This latter appellation was well-known among a prominent group of early Christians called the Valentinians, as well as so-called Gnostic groups.

Clement. In a book attributed to Clement of Rome, Simon Magus contends with the apostle Peter and disputes the monotheism of Christianity on the basis of Genesis 1:26, "Let Us make man in Our image." Peter's

response is similar to several passages we have already considered: he says the Father speaks these words in conversation with Wisdom. “One is he who said to his Wisdom, ‘Let us make a man.’ But his Wisdom was that with which he himself always rejoiced as with his own spirit. It is united as soul to God, but it is extended by him, as hand, fashioning the universe. On this account, also, one man was made, and from him went forth also the female. And being a unity generically, it is yet a duality” (Clementine Homilies 16:11-12). This passage echoes Proverbs 8 and multiple apocryphal texts that portray Wisdom fashioning the world. But the most striking feature of this passage is the comparison of the Father and Wisdom to Adam and Eve. God and Wisdom are united as one soul in the same way that Adam and Eve are represented as having been fashioned as one, and only subsequently divided. God and Wisdom “always rejoice” together (also as in Proverbs 8), a further indication of a connubial relationship.

Melito of Sardis. Melito of Sardis was a Jewish convert to Christianity and a prominent bishop in Asia Minor. In 160 AD, he wrote an Easter liturgy called *On the Passover*, which refers to the divine Trinity as Father, Mother, and Christ: “You Saints, sing hymns to the Father, you maidens **sing to the Mother**. We hymn them, we Saints lift them high. You have been exalted to be brides and bridegrooms, for you have found your bridegroom, Christ.”⁴¹

Didascalia. The Didascalia is an early Christian handbook of instructions written in Syriac before 250 AD. This text compares the earthly leadership of a congregation to the divine leadership of heaven: the bishop as God, the deacon as Christ, and the deaconess

as the Holy Spirit. “The bishop sits for you in the place of God Almighty. But the deacon stands in the place of Christ; and do you love him. And the deaconess shall be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Spirit” (Didascalia Apostolorum IX). In making this comparison, the text preserves the memory of the Trinity as the Heavenly Family.

Methodius. A similar comparison was attributed to Methodius, Bishop of Olympus, who died in 311 AD. He spoke of Adam, Seth, and Eve as “types of the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity, the innocent and unbegotten Adam being the type and resemblance of God the Father Almighty, who is uncaused, and the cause of all; his begotten son shadowing forth the image of the begotten Son and Word of God; whilst Eve, that proceedeth forth from Adam, signifies the person and procession of the Holy Spirit” (Fragment II, in Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol VI). Seeing an analogy between God and Adam was natural enough since Adam was made expressly in God’s image (Genesis 9:6). Abel was a foreshadowing of Jesus since each was slain because of his righteousness (Hebrews 11:4), and Seth took Abel’s place when the latter was murdered. Since Eve was the mother of Seth and the wife of Adam, Methodius’s comparison implies that even at that late date in Christian history, there were echoes of the Holy Spirit as the Mother of Christ, and the Wife of the Father.

The Syriac Authors. Among orthodox writers, the notion of the Holy Spirit as a Mother lasted longest with those that wrote in Syriac.

Aphrahat. Aphrahat, the “Persian Sage”, writing in about 340 AD, commented on Genesis 2:24, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother

and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". While Aphrahat's commentary was intended to justify his belief in celibacy as the best course for the Christian disciple, it also illustrates that some Christians still considered the Holy Spirit to be the Mother, not just of Jesus, but of all humankind, just as God was considered the Father of all. "Who is it that leaves father and mother to take a wife? The meaning is this. As long as a man has not taken a wife he loves and reveres God his Father and the Holy Spirit his Mother, and he has no other love" (Demonstration 18).

Ephrem. Ephrem the Syrian (d. AD 373) left us another example of this comparison between Adam and Eve and Heavenly Father and Holy Spirit: "It is not said of Eve that she was Adam's sister or his daughter, but that she came from him; likewise, it is not to be said that the Spirit is a daughter or sister, but that she is from God and consubstantial with him" (Commentary on the Concordant Gospel or Diatessaron 19,15). The word "consubstantial" describes things that have the same substance or essence.

Pseudo-Macarius. About the same time as Ephrem, another Syrian Christian composed a series of homilies initially attributed to the Egyptian monk, Macarius. He says of those who seek to be free of worldly passions, "If they... with tears and pleas call on their Heavenly Mother, the Holy Spirit; if they seek no solace in the world and abide only in union with the Spirit and in their longing for the nourishment she gives, that excellent Heavenly Mother will draw near to these souls that seek her. She will lift them up in her life-giving arms, warm them with the spiritual and heavenly food of delicious, desirable, holy, pure milk, so that they will recognize the Heavenly Father, and grow each day into spiritual maturity until they arrive at the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of

God” (Collection III, 27:4). This passage not only identifies the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother, but it also *portrays* her in a motherly role: her spiritual nurture is represented as lactation. And her work is to lead the disciple to the Father and the Son. This type of imagery is typical for this author. Amplifying Jesus’s words in John 3, he writes, “Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And so, on the other hand, as many as believe the Lord, and come and receive the privilege of this birth, cause joy and great gladness in heaven to the Parents that begat them; and all angels and holy powers rejoice over the soul that is born of the Spirit and has become spirit itself” (Collection II, 30:3). In the same sermon, he refers even more explicitly to the spiritual rebirth as being “born of the womb of the Spirit of the Godhead” (II, 30:2). Elsewhere, Pseudo-Macarius describes the “veil of darkness” that fell over the soul of Adam and his posterity at the fall, such that they could no longer commune with “the true Father in Heaven, or the good, kind Mother, the grace of the Spirit, or the sweet and desired Brother, the Lord, or the friends and kindred, the holy angels” (Homilies. 28, 4). This author still understood that mankind was part of a heavenly family, and he counted the Holy Spirit as its Mother: “Christians then are of another world, sons of the Heavenly Adam, a new race, children of the Holy Ghost, shining brethren of Christ, like their Father, the heavenly shining Adam” (Collection II, 16:8). “Adam” of course means “man”, so that in portraying Heavenly Father as the “Heavenly Adam”, Pseudo-Macarius agrees with Moses 7:35, “Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name”.

The Valentinians. Valentinian Christianity began with the teachings of Valentinus, who was said to have

been the disciple of Theudas, a disciple of the apostle Paul. Valentinus was also said to have been considered for the office of Bishop of Rome. His followers worshipped alongside other orthodox Christians for centuries and were not originally a separate sect. They did hold additional meetings centering on what they considered deeper teachings, and in later centuries diverged enough doctrinally that they were expelled from orthodox congregations.

Gospel of Truth. A text that may have been written by Valentinus himself portrays “the Word of the Father” going forth into the world and “purifying them, bringing them back into the Father, into the Mother, Jesus of the infinite sweetness” (Gospel of Truth 16). Like other early texts, this passage casts the Trinity as Father, Mother, and Son.

Gospel of Phillip. Another important Valentinian text is the Gospel of Phillip, which preserves very early Christian material.⁴² This text says that “When we were Hebrews, we were orphans and had only our Mother, but when we became Christians, we had both Father and Mother” (Gospel of Philip 6). Like Pseudo-Macarius, this passage suggests the role of the Holy Spirit/Mother in showing the way to the Father and the Son. In another passage, Phillip contradicts what it considers to be a false notion and shows that these early Christians thought of the Holy Spirit as female: “Some said Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. They are wrong and do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever get pregnant by a woman?” (Phillip 23). Philip considers the Holy Spirit the Mother of the Saints: “Evil forces serve the saints, for they have been blinded by the Holy Spirit into thinking they are helping their own people when they really are helping the saints. So a disciple once asked the master for something from the world and he

said, 'Ask your mother, and she will give you something from another realm'" (Phillip 18-27).

Gnosticism. The ideas and writings of early Christian groups classed as "Gnostic" by modern scholars are extremely complex and varied. Suffice it to say, that one of the most distinctive and consistent of Gnostic doctrines was that God consisted of a divine pair, male and female, and that other heavenly beings also appeared as male-female pairs. The primal Father and Mother, were often called the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo respectively.⁴³

Barbelo. The origin of the latter name is debated, but Barker maintains that it is Hebrew, and "a garbled form in Coptic of be'arba 'elôah",⁴⁴ meaning the "four-fold Goddess". This in turn was "another name for Ezekiel's fourfold Living One"⁴⁵ (Ezekiel 1:5, etc.) which has traditionally been construed as four animals or creatures, but which Barker takes to signify the Great Lady.

Secret John. One of the only straightforward theological illustrations on our present subject in Gnostic writings is in the Secret Book of John. There, the heavens open to the eponymous disciple and a divine instructor announces, "I am the Father, I am the Mother, I am the Child... I have come to teach you what is, what was, and what is to come" (Secret Book of John 2). Even though all of what follows is an abstruse Gnostic cosmogony, we can still recognize the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this opening declaration. This in turn illustrates that "Sometimes genuine Christian traditions and concepts, which became forgotten in mainstream Christendom, were kept alive in 'heretical' Christian circles."⁴⁶

Summary of II and III: From this brief but diverse sampling of early Christian texts we see that the notion of the Holy Spirit as the Divine Mother of both Jesus Christ and of all the Saints was early, specific, and widespread.

IV. Loss and Restoration of the Doctrine of Heavenly Mother.

Judaism. The Christian belief in a divine Mother had originated within an Israelite heritage that first revered but later rejected her. By a process of textual emendation and deletion, “the Great Lady and anything associated with her were deliberately obscured in what became mainstream Jewish texts.”⁴⁷ In the end, barely any overt indication of her once revered status remained in the Old Testament.

Christianity. Analogous forces in Christianity caused the loss of the association between Heavenly Mother and the Holy Spirit. Brock summarized the conversion of the Holy Spirit from feminine to masculine in Syriac Christianity, where the association lasted the longest: “In the earliest literature up to about AD 400 the Holy Spirit is virtually always treated grammatically as feminine.... From the early fifth century onwards it is evident that some people began to disapprove of treating the Holy Spirit as grammatically feminine; accordingly, in defiance of the grammatical rules of the language, they treated the word *ruha* as masculine wherever it referred to the Holy Spirit.... From the sixth century onwards what had been only sporadic practice in the fifth century now becomes the norm, *ruha*, referring to the Holy Spirit, is regularly treated as masculine.”⁴⁸

In Latin, *spiritus* is masculine, and early Latin-speaking Christians apparently struggled to reconcile their grammar with the traditional understanding of a feminine Holy Spirit. Very early Roman inscriptions refer to the Holy Spirit in the technically incorrect feminine gender, “*Spirita Sancta*” instead of the masculine “*Spiritus Sanctus*”.⁴⁹

Wisdom equated with Jesus. One important mechanism for the loss of the idea of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother was the establishment of a new identity for Wisdom: namely, Jesus. By the time of Origen, “the Son is primarily God’s Wisdom, his Firstborn.”⁵⁰ A good illustration is the recent study on the Teaching of Silvanus mentioned earlier. In it, Newton highlighted significant doctrinal changes between an early and a late author of that composite work. In the early section, Wisdom is the disciple’s Mother, and a member of the Trinity: “Christ, this true friend”, “Your first father, God, and Wisdom, your Mother”. But in the later part of Silvanus, “The Tree of Life is Christ. He is Wisdom” (63). This shift is clearly intentional and meant to correct what the later author considers an error in the earlier part. As another example, the late Silvanus author incorporated a reworked passage from the Wisdom of Solomon into his text to shift the identity of Wisdom to Christ. The original passage in Wisdom of Solomon 7:26 is, “For she [Wisdom] is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” In late Silvanus it reads instead, “He [Christ] is the spotless mirror of the working of God, and he is the image of his goodness.”⁵¹

Transfer to Mary. Speaking of the faction of Jews that preserved the religion of the First Temple, the knowledge of Heavenly Mother, and such books as ben Sirah, Barker says, “When the old believers recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the anointed Son of the Great Lady, they honored his mother Mary of Nazareth with the roles, titles, and images of the Great Lady.”⁵² Thus, in one hymn from the 600’s, still sung in the Eastern Orthodox Church, Mary is called by almost every ancient title and symbol of Heavenly Mother. A few include: “Wisdom”, “Bride of God”,

"Rock that gives drink to all who thirst", "Orchard of pure fruit", "Pillar of Fire", "Queen and Mother", "Lamp of living light", "Fragrant Incense", "Mother of God", "Spring of the Living Water", "Unconsumed Bush, Cloud of Light", "Cloud in the wilderness", "Tree of glorious fruit", and many more. Many mortal women have emulated Heavenly Mother, of course. But Mary did so in an especially fundamental and conspicuous manner. Even the Book of Mormon compares her, point by point, to Heavenly Mother's great symbol, the Tree of Life. So, applying such titles and symbols to Mary would have seemed natural to early Christians. But when knowledge of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother faded, the memory of Mother Mary not only retained but expropriated that symbolism and those titles.

A genderless God. By the Fourth Century, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa had enunciated what is effectively the modern orthodox Christian view. "The divine is neither male nor female (for how could such a thing be contemplated in the divinity, when it does not remain intact permanently for us human beings either? But when all shall become one in Christ, we will be divested of the signs of this distinction.... The meaning of the undefiled nature is contaminated by neither female nor male."⁵³ Gregory even concluded that because of this, the reference to mankind being created "in the image of God", "male and female" must refer to a "two-fold" creation. The divine element of mankind, made in the image of God, "does not admit the distinction of male and female", "a thing which is alien from our conceptions of God." But the scripture then "adds the peculiar attributes of human nature, male and female" as an "irrational" "provision for reproduction" (*De Opficio Hominis* XVI). That was the Fourth Century, and the orthodox position has not

changed since then. Consider the most recent Catholic Catechism: “God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood.”⁵⁴ “In no way is God in man's image. He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes.”⁵⁵ This position makes any discussion of the Holy Spirit as a divine Mother unintelligible from the standpoint of traditional Christianity.

The Latter-day Saint View of God and Gender.

But Latter-day Saints have a different view. *The Family: A Proclamation* states that “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.” Revelation given to Joseph Smith sheds further light on one crucial aspect of the eternal purpose of human gender. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20 explains that a man and a woman, sealed and exalted together, have “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever”, which is also equated with godhood: “Then shall they be gods, because they have no end.” Joseph's associates understood this teaching to mean that a sacred marriage on earth mirrors that of our Heavenly Parents, and like theirs, can be productive of spirit offspring in the eternities. Franklin Richards recorded Joseph saying, “The earthly is the image of the heavenly shows that it is by the multiplication of lives that the eternal worlds are created and occupied. That which is born of the flesh is flesh that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” (16 July 1843, Franklin D

Richards). For Latter-day Saints, therefore, God is not just a symbolic and metaphorical parent. We teach our children to sing “I am a child of God”. And we agree with Paul that “We are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16-17).

The Doctrine of Heavenly Mother. The cherished doctrine that humanity has a Mother in Heaven⁵⁶ was first alluded to publicly by Joseph Smith in a sermon in the Grove in Nauvoo on 16 July 1843. Shortly thereafter, his closest associates were making overt references to her.⁵⁷ There is no indication that any of these early confidants specifically identified Heavenly Mother with the Holy Spirit the way that ancient Jews and Christians had. But many did explore the question of how Heavenly Mother might *relate* to the Latter-day Saint conception of Godhead. In 1856, Brigham Young touched on the same verses in Genesis that we have referred to several times already when he said, “We were created upright, pure, and holy, in the image of our father and our mother, in the image of our God” (*Journal of Discourses*, June 22, 1856). But while Brigham Young designated Heavenly Father and Mother, together, as “our God”, he did not specifically name the latter as the Holy Spirit. However, Elder Charles Penrose did, though his 1902 statement is unique. As editor of the *Deseret News*, Elder Penrose addressed a Bible scholar's objection to the existence of Heavenly Mother by identifying her with the Holy Spirit and citing the Spirit's feminine gender in the original language of the Bible.⁵⁸

V. The Identity of the Holy Spirit in uniquely Latter-day Saint scripture

Elder Penrose's opinion notwithstanding, in general, Latter-day Saint leaders have not embraced the early Christian identification of Heavenly Mother with the Holy Spirit. But here, we may take to heart the words of Joseph Fielding Smith, "It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside.... if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine.... If Joseph Fielding Smith writes something which is out of harmony with the revelations, then every member of the Church is duty bound to reject it."⁵⁹ This being accepted, (and simultaneously recognizing the potential for self-referential negation here), let us turn to the question of the gender of the Holy Spirit in uniquely Latter-day Saint scripture.

The Identity of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon does not specify the gender of the Holy Spirit, but uniformly uses the neuter pronoun "it", perhaps in conformity to King James usage. Thus, Alma 30:42 reads, "ye have put off the Spirit of God that **it** may have no place in you". Similar readings are found in 1 Nephi 13:12, 13, and 15; 1 Nephi 17:52; Jacob 4:13; and Mosiah 2:36.

Nephi's vision. Nephi's conversation with the "spirit of the Lord" in 1 Nephi 11 might be raised as a counterexample here.⁶⁰ However, close examination makes it clear that the "spirit" with whom Nephi converses is Yahweh, the pre-mortal Jesus Christ.⁶¹

Nephi says, “For I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another” (1 Nephi 11:11). The double emphasis on speaking “as a man speaketh” and “as a man speaketh with another” is a clear reference to Exodus 33:11 which describes Moses speaking with Yahweh “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”. Moroni even more closely quotes Exodus 33:11 when he describes conversing with Jesus, saying, “And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things” (Ether 12:39). Similar language is found in Moses 1:2 and 31. Each of these citations specifically refers to speaking with the pre-mortal Lord Jesus Christ.⁶² These citations may in turn, ultimately harken back to the prophet Enoch who “saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face” (Moses 7:4). By using these phrases from the account of Moses (and quite possibly Enoch), Nephi is indicating to his readers that despite the evidently unavoidable imprecision of the phrase “spirit of the Lord”, it is in fact the pre-mortal spirit of Jesus Christ with whom he converses. Indeed, there is no record in scripture of any individual conversing with the Holy Spirit whether described in the language of Exodus 33 or otherwise. Sidney B. Sperry's most compelling objection to this identification is that when the phrase “Spirit of the Lord” is used elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, it clearly refers to the Holy Spirit.⁶³ But I posit that 1) the notion that the Lord had a pre-mortal spirit was completely new to Nephi, and 2) possessing no clearly superior description for this new

understanding of the divine being whom he saw, 3) Nephi used what he predicted would be an ambiguous term, intending to clarify it for his readers in what he believed would be a perfectly unambiguous manner, i.e. the reference to Exodus and the subsequent choreography (discussed next). Today we have a robust vocabulary for various heavenly beings and messengers: "pre-mortal", "mortal", "post-mortal", a "spirit body", a "physical body", or a "resurrected body". Armed with such terminology, we can specify unambiguously that it was the spirit body of the pre-mortal Jesus Christ that appeared to Nephi. But Nephi either lacked that vocabulary entirely or suspected that such words as he possessed would be more confusing than to simply illustrate. So, he illustrated.

The most telling aspect of 1 Nephi 11 regarding the identity of Nephi's divine interlocutor is the choreography of the vision. At the very moment when Nephi is about to be shown Mary and the infant Jesus, the "spirit" he has been conversing with suddenly and dramatically departs from him. An angel must immediately come to take this spirit's place and conduct the rest of the instruction. Why? If the "spirit" is the Holy Spirit, this sudden exit serves no intelligible purpose. But if Nephi's spirit guide is the pre-mortal Jesus Christ, the precise timing of his disappearance and reappearance in the visionary scene as the babe in Mary's arms, becomes a forceful illustration of the "condescension of God" — the very thing the vision was intended to teach Nephi about. Condescension means "voluntary descent from rank, dignity or just claims" (Webster 1828). There could be no more perfect illustration of God's descent from rank and dignity than for the Lord to leave Nephi's side and assume his role in the vision as a mortal infant, and thence to "go forth among the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:24) to

minister (v.28), and be "lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world" (v.32).

Nephi had used phraseology from Exodus 33:11 to clarify the identity of the spirit with whom he spoke. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord himself applied this verse to yet another pre-mortal conversation he had, referring to "the brother of Jared upon the mount, when he talked with the Lord face to face" (Doctrine and Covenants 17:1). The thrust of that vision, like Nephi's, was the condescension — the mortal incarnation of God. The Brother of Jared had previously conversed with the Lord as he "stood in a cloud" (Ether 2:14). He had even asked the Lord to touch the stones he had prepared "with [his] finger" (Ether 3:4). Yet when he saw that "the finger of the Lord... was as the finger of a man" he was so astonished that he "fell down... struck with fear" (Ether 3:6). He was then instructed that the spirit body of Jesus appeared as he would later "appear unto [his] people in the flesh" (Ether 3:16). The Brother of Jared could see that the Lord was in the form of a man but could not immediately discern that the Lord was not at that moment physically embodied — the Lord had to tell him so. Nephi had the same experience of surprise on seeing the spirit of the Lord: "I beheld that he was in the form of a man; **yet nevertheless**, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord". Since the central focus of both visions was that the Lord would take human form, the most logical conclusion is that both prophets' surprised reaction related to that central idea. Namely, neither Nephi nor the Brother of Jared had expected that the spirit of the Lord would already appear as a human being long before his actual incarnation, and they both reacted with amazement. In summary, there is overwhelming evidence for the conclusion that the divine being Nephi speaks with in 1 Nephi 11 is the pre-

mortal spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, not the Holy Spirit. Thus, this encounter has no bearing on either the gender or the individual identity of the Holy Spirit.

The impersonal relative pronoun and personhood. Besides only using the neuter pronoun "it" for the Holy Spirit, the Book of Mormon also never uses the personal relative pronoun "who" to refer to the Holy Spirit. Rather, the text employs the relative pronoun "which". In more modern writing, "which" is reserved for things or animals, while "who" refers to people. And in general, the Book of Mormon text greatly prefers "who" to "which" for the other members of the Godhead.⁶⁴ Many, but not all the exceptions to this usage involve quotations of or strong allusions to the King James Bible which does use "which" as a personal relative pronoun. If the text of the Book of Mormon unfailingly refers to the Holy Spirit by the neuter pronoun "it" and the impersonal pronoun "which", we are left to wonder whether the authors even knew that the Holy Spirit is a person. My view is that they did, because Alma at least, knew the Holy spirit as Lady Wisdom (see below). There must therefore be an alternate explanation for the impersonal grammar. It might simply be that the translation was intended to conform to the King James Bible, which, as we have said, refers to the Holy Spirit as "it".⁶⁵ But I think it more likely that this usage was given to Joseph Smith as he received the divine translation "by the gift and power of God" (Book of Mormon, Title Page) deliberately to deflect and defer debate on at least one potentially fraught subject, among so many others that were surely unavoidable. To refer to the Holy Spirit using feminine grammatical gender would have added one more potent source of contention for the already dangerously controversial new book of scripture, even though this was the usage

in the Hebrew Bible the Nephites would have used. Furthermore, to default to "he" for the Holy Spirit would have been utterly uncontroversial among the first readers of the Book of Mormon. The fact that it does not is surely significant.

Names and Symbols of Heavenly Mother in the Book of Mormon. Fortunately, we do not depend on grammar alone to explore the identity of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Mormon. Rather, we can now recognize in that text many of the very same biblical names, symbols, and events which recent scholarship has connected with the divine Mother.

Wisdom. The most striking example is that of Lady Wisdom. I showed that Jesus and the first Christians, like the Jews before them, knew the Holy Spirit as Wisdom. Like the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Mormon refers to Wisdom as female: "They will not seek Wisdom, neither do they desire that **she** should rule over them" (Mosiah 29:13). This might be excused as a merely poetic expression, except for the preaching of the prophet Alma₂ in Zarahemla and Gideon immediately after he relinquished the judgement seat. Direct quotations from the Holy Spirit are quite rare in scripture — and in these two sermons we have the only unambiguous quotations from the Holy Spirit in the entire Book of Mormon. Upon close inspection, they are quite telling. Alma says, "Also the Spirit saith unto me, yea, **crieth** unto me with a **mighty voice** saying: Go forth and say unto this people: **Repent!** For except ye **repent**, ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of heaven" (Alma 5:51). Alma responds to this call, declaring to the people of Zarahemla: "Yea, thus saith the Spirit, Repent, all ye ends of the earth" (Alma 5:50). This is a clear allusion to the words of Lady Wisdom who, in Proverbs 1:20-21 "**crieth** without; she uttereth

her voice in the streets: She **crieth** in the chief place of concourse." And what is her message? "Turn you (*shuv*, "repent") at my reproof" (Proverbs 1:23). Wisdom cries with a loud voice in the public spaces of the city for her children⁶⁶ to repent, and the Holy Spirit cries to Alma with a mighty voice and sends him out into the public spaces of the "cities and villages throughout the land" (Alma 5: heading) with the self-same message. Alma continues to report the Holy Spirit's words, warning against bringing forth evil fruit: "The Spirit saith: Behold, the ax is laid at the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth **not forth good fruit** shall be hewn down and cast into the fire" (Alma 5:52). Likewise in Proverbs 1, Wisdom warns against the evil fruit: "They despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way (*derek*, "path")" (Proverbs 1:31). In the next verse, we see that this evil path and its fruit will be the demise of those that follow it: "The wrong path that childish people take will kill them" (Proverbs 1:32 NIRV). Not only is the theme of good versus evil fruit paramount in these two sermons, but so is the theme of good versus evil paths. At Gideon, Alma again reports firsthand words of the Holy Spirit: "But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord and walk in his paths, which are straight" (Alma 7:9). Alma is gratified that the people of Gideon "were not in the state of dilemma like your brethren" (Alma 7:18) at Zarahemla. A dilemma is a choice specifically between two options — in this case, two paths. Alma goes on to exult that many "are in the paths of righteousness" and "in the path that leads to the kingdom of God". They are "making his paths straight" (Alma 7:19). In the next verse, he explains that God's paths are straight because "he cannot walk in crooked paths... neither hath he a

shadow of turning from the right to the left" (Alma 7:20). He had warned the proud in Zarahemla, "Ye that have professed to have known the ways (paths) of righteousness nevertheless have gone astray" (Alma 5:37). He had spoken of *walking* blamelessly before God (v.27) and *walking* after the holy order of God (v.54). All of this "path" imagery that flows from the Holy Spirit's command to cry to the people to walk in the straight paths of the Lord is perfectly typical of the incessant counsel of Lady Wisdom. In Proverbs 4, the "way (or path) of Wisdom", the "right paths" (v.11) is to "Ponder the path of thy feet, and... Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" (vv.26-27). Numerous similar examples could be given. But crucially, the symbol that unites the imagery of the straight path with the imagery of the good fruit is the Tree of Life. And that theme is the climax of Alma's Zarahemla address: "Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life" (Alma 5:34). And "Unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life" (Alma 5:62). Of course, the Tree of Life is the quintessential symbol of Lady Wisdom: "She [Wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her" (Proverbs 3:18).

In summary, the only unambiguous first-hand words of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Mormon, and some of the very few such words in all of scripture, paraphrase the firsthand words of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs, especially chapter one. They were spoken to Alma in a loud voice, crying out, exactly as Lady Wisdom does in Proverbs 1, and they call Alma to preach in like manner — to cry out in the public places as Wisdom does. The relentless Wisdom themes of good fruit versus evil fruit and good paths versus evil

ones (as well as other themes not treated here) are fundamental to Alma's message. But the capstone of his Zarahemla sermon is Lady Wisdom's ultimate symbol, the Tree of Life. The Nephite prophets knew their scriptures. It therefore seems improbable that Alma would not have recognized these words of the Holy Spirit as those of Lady Wisdom. This in turn suggests either that Alma, like the early Christians, understood the Holy Spirit as Wisdom—or that the divine translation of Alma's words was divinely shaped to invite modern readers to see that connection. But this association did not start with Alma₂. King Benjamin had warned his people not to "withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in [W]isdom's paths" (Mosiah 2:36). Benjamin recognized that the Holy Spirit would lead the people in Wisdom's paths because they are *her* paths.

The cloud of glory. Two further Book of Mormon examples of the symbolism of the Great Lady as the Holy Spirit will perhaps suffice. The Hebrew Bible is punctuated by the dramatic appearance of the divine cloud of glory: covering Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:15-18), filling the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35) and Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11) at their dedications, departing the Temple when it was defiled (Ezekiel 9-10), and returning again in the vision of the future renewed Temple (Ezekiel 43). The pillar of fire in the Exodus story is another appearance of this divine cloud of glory. Patai identified the cloud of glory as the "visible manifestation" of Yahweh, that the rabbis called Shekhina, a name "used synonymously" with the Holy Spirit".⁶⁷ Barker explains further, "The theophanic cloud was sometimes described as a pillar of cloud that led the people through the desert (e.g. Exod.13.21; 14.19); sometimes as a pillar of cloud that

stood at the door of the tent of meeting when Moses was speaking with the Lord (Exod.33.9-10; Num.12.5); and sometimes just as a cloud (Exod.34.5; Num.10.34). When Sira wrote of Wisdom, he said that her throne was in a pillar of cloud (Ben Sira 24.4), and when 'Solomon' told the story of the Exodus, he said that Wisdom: 'Guided them along a marvelous way, and became a shelter to them by day, and a starry flame through the night. She brought them over the Red Sea, and led them through deep water" (Wis.10.17-18) These two writers... understood that the cloud meant the presence of the Lady."⁶⁸ The divine cloud of glory also appears in the New Testament: on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5, etc.), at Jesus's ascension (Acts 1:9), and prophetically at Jesus's return (Luke 21:27).

This same divine cloud of glory appears in the Book of Mormon as well, and the text makes it clear that this is the Holy Spirit. When the missionary brothers Lehi₄ and Nephi₂ were imprisoned in the Land of Nephi, "they were encircled about with a pillar of fire" (Helaman 5:23). Simultaneously, the Lamanites "were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness, and an awful solemn fear came upon them" (Helaman 5:28). This dark cloud gave the missionary brothers "courage, for they saw that the Lamanites durst not lay their hands upon them, neither durst they come near unto them" (Helaman 5:24-25). The pillar of God's glory that led Israel through the wilderness behaved in exactly this way. "It came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to [the Egyptians], but it gave light by night to [the Israelites]: so that the one came not near the other all the night" (Exodus 14:20). The Israelites' protecting cloud of darkness and comforting pillar of fire were one and the same. Just so, the pillar

of fire encircling Nephi and Lehi and the cloud of darkness overshadowing and terrifying the Lamanites were one and the same. Mormon clearly intends us to see the pillar of fire that rescued the missionaries as the cloud of God's glory that saved Israel in the wilderness. That "cloud was the sign of the presence of the Great Lady."⁶⁹

Next, the prison and the earth began to quake and immediately a voice came from "above the cloud of darkness" (v.29). It is described in detail: "it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul" (v. 29). Compare this to the "still small voice" that came to Elijah in the midst of a similar tumult of earthquake, fire, and wind (1 Kings 19:12). This still small voice is that of the Holy Spirit. After calling on the Lamanites to repent, the voice of the Spirit went on to "speak unto them marvelous words which cannot be uttered by man" (v. 33). This too, is what we expect from the Holy Spirit, since "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). The Lamanites then saw the faces of Nephi and Lehi, that "they did shine exceedingly, even as the face of angels" (v. 36), or as Moses descending from the Mount where the divine glory rested upon him (Exodus 34:29-33). And when the Lamanites cried out in repentance, "the cloud of darkness was dispersed" and "they were encircled about — yea, every soul — by a pillar of fire" (v. 43). This parallels the New Testament Pentecost where the glory of the Lord, unmistakably the Holy Spirit, descended on the disciples, causing them to appear as if a flame rested upon each of them, and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them

utterance" (Acts 2:4). To positively confirm this connection to the Pentecost, Mormon next says of the Lamanites, "And they were filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of **glory**. And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven and did enter into their hearts. And they were filled as if with **fire**, and they could speak forth **marvelous words**" (Helaman 5:44-45). This was the "new tongue — yea even the tongue of angels" that Nephi promised would follow the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost (2 Nephi 31:14). Thereupon the "pleasant voice", the "whisper" (Helaman 5:46) from the Holy Spirit spoke again, saying, "peace be unto you because of your faith in my Well Beloved" (v.47). Now, while these words may certainly be interpreted as the Holy Spirit speaking by divine investiture on behalf of the Father, according to the Gospel of the Hebrews, cited previously, early Christians would just as likely have construed this as the pronouncement of Jesus's divine Mother, the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰

Another very similar episode of a voice from heaven announcing the divine Son occurs in 3 Nephi 11. Faithful Saints had gathered at the temple, and they heard the voice, which once again, was not named in the record. But once again, its description is unmistakably that of the Holy Spirit. "And it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice. Nevertheless — and notwithstanding it being a small voice— it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there were no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake. Yea, it did pierce them to the very soul and did cause their hearts to burn" (3 Nephi 11:3). This is the same still small voice that was heard in Helaman 5, the same piercing, the same burning, and even the quaking of the earth is mirrored in the physical frames of the people. And what did the voice say? "Behold my

Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name. Hear ye him!" (3 Nephi 11:7). And immediately, Jesus descended. Concerning the corresponding events in the Bible, Dr. Barker says, "[The Great Lady's] cloud was the glory that brought the Lord"⁷¹ We do not know to whom the Nephites attributed these words from heaven. Modern Saints may think of the speaker as the Father because of his words to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. But the first Christians would likely have interpreted this as the divine Mother speaking. Interestingly, the Apostle Peter may provide a nuanced third option for such heavenly introductions. In his account of the corresponding words spoken on the Mount of Transfiguration, he says, "[Jesus] received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him *from the excellent glory*, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17). In this formulation, the two divine beings speak together: the words *of* the Father come *from* the glory.

Names and symbols of Heavenly Mother in the Book of Mormon, summary: Alma attributes the words of Lady Wisdom to the Holy Spirit, along with her crying out to her children, her intense concern for fruit and paths and her association with the Tree of Life. King Benjamin knows Wisdom as a female and knows her paths are those of the Holy Spirit. Mormon equates the cloud that protected Nephi and Lehi with the pillar of fire that Jewish scripture said was Wisdom. That cloud brought gifts of the Spirit and visibly transformed individuals into lighted branches of the menorah or Tree of Life, the great symbol of Lady Wisdom. Out of that cloud also came the still, small voice, declaring Jesus as its divine Son. Other examples could be furnished, but the above should suffice to demonstrate that Nephite authors understood the

symbols of the Great Lady as belonging to the Holy Spirit.

The Identity of the Holy Spirit in the Doctrine and Covenants. Like the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants never specifies the gender of the Holy Spirit, making use instead of the neuter pronoun "it": "the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when **it** is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37). Interestingly, the neuter pronoun "it" is also employed to refer to the Holy Spirit in the role of Comforter, even though the KJV uses the masculine pronoun in this setting. Doctrine and Covenants 88:3 reads, "I now send upon you another Comforter... that **it** may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise", whereas John 14:26 reads, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, **he** shall teach you all things". Grammatically speaking then, the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants appear to go out of their way to be non-specific about the gender of the Holy Spirit.

As in the Book of Mormon, the revelations also exclusively employ the impersonal relative pronoun "which": "the Holy Ghost, **which** manifesteth all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:18).⁷² Taken together, the neuter pronoun "it" and the impersonal pronoun "which" fostered the impression that the Holy Spirit is not a person. And indeed, as I will explore later, this is the conclusion many influential early Latter-day Saints reached.

Names and Symbols of Heavenly Mother in the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. If the grammar of the Doctrine and Covenants seems deliberately obscure, the imagery and

symbolism of the revelations are not. Rather, the ancient imagery of Heavenly Mother reappears in the Doctrine and Covenants, but is attributed to the Holy Spirit.

The divine cloud of glory. Mormon had described the divine glory that comforted and protected Nephi and Lehi in Helaman 5 so as to identify it with the pillar of fire that protected and comforted the Israelites in the wilderness. The Wisdom of Solomon said that it was Wisdom that “guided them along a marvelous way and became a shelter to them by day and a starry flame through the night. She brought them over the Red Sea and led them through deep waters, but she drowned their enemies” (Wisdom of Solomon 10:17-19). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord attributes this guiding action to the Holy Spirit: “Behold, this is the [S]pirit of revelation; behold, this is the [S]pirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:3).⁷³

Kirtland and Pentecost. When the divine glory appeared among the Christian disciples at Pentecost, “suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4). Barker maintains that the first Christians understood this as the Great Lady returning to pour out her spirit in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2.⁷⁴ The specific imagery of tongues of flame resting on each disciple identified them as lighted branches on the menorah, symbol of the Tree of Life. “The Lord... was the central stem of the menorah. The side branches... were the other angel-beings/other

sons of the Great Lady, and all of them together formed her great vine/tree.”⁷⁵ The Kirtland Temple dedication is well known for the occurrence of spiritual manifestations similar to Pentecost, as well as the visible appearance of God's glory, the same as in Exodus 40 and 1 Kings 8. This glory was identified by participants at Kirtland as the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit was poured out — I saw the glory of God, like a great cloud, come down and rest upon the house, and fill the same like a mighty rushing wind. I also saw cloven tongues, like as of fire rest upon many... while they spake with other tongues and prophesied.”⁷⁶ More importantly, the revealed dedicatory prayer, recorded as Doctrine and Covenants 109, also identified the divine glory with the Holy Spirit. Joseph had prayed, “that thy **glory** may rest down upon thy people, and upon this house... that thy **holy presence** may be continually in this house” (v.12). The “presence” of God is the KJV rendering of Hebrew *panim*, literally the “face” of God. Barker explains how the Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible (the Targums) preserved the original significance of this idea: “Sometimes ‘splendour’ was used instead of ‘face’... sometimes ‘glory’... but most often, the ‘face’ was replaced by the Shekhinah, which means, literally, ‘the dwelling’... and even though this name is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, it was remembered as a description of the throne, the cloud and the glory, which dwelt, *šākan*, on Sinai (Exod.24.16), and which Ezekiel saw leaving the Holy of Holies. The Shekhinah, a feminine noun, was the Great Lady with her throne and her Son.”⁷⁷ Barker further shows how this understanding goes back well before the Christian era to the composition of 1 Enoch.⁷⁸ Thus, the first Christians and many of their Israelite ancestors understood the divine Presence as the Great Lady, and

the appearance of the glory as her sign.⁷⁹ The plea for this glory and divine Presence to appear in Kirtland was specifically so that “all those who shall worship in this house may be taught **words of wisdom**” (v.14), and “that they may grow up in thee, and receive a **fulness of the Holy Ghost**” (v.15). This latter phrase occurs nowhere else in scripture but does suggest the phrase “fulness of his glory” mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 84:23-24. This fulness is what the children of Israel forfeited because they refused to “sanctify [themselves] that they might behold the face of God”, and therefore, “could not endure his presence.” Thus, in the dedicatory prayer and the subsequent events at Kirtland, the ancient symbolism of Heavenly Mother as the cloud of glory, the divine Presence, or Shekhinah, and the tongues of flame that made her children appear as the branches of her symbol the menorah, are either explicitly identified as manifestations of the Holy Spirit or implicitly linked to “words of [W]isdom” and the “fulness of the Holy Ghost”.

Glory, Presence, and Spirit in the Book of Moses. The overlap of the Holy Spirit, the cloud of glory, and the divine Presence is nowhere more evident than in the book of Moses. In Moses 1, “The glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his Presence” (v.1). But when the Presence withdrew from Moses, the glory was no longer upon him (v.9). And yet, the glory did not leave altogether: “Blessed be the name of my God, for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me” (v.15). When Moses again beheld the glory (v.25), he was filled with the Holy Ghost. Moses discerned the difference between Satan and God by the glory that was upon him (v.18). He similarly discerned in vision all the inhabitants of the world “by the Spirit of God” (v.27). All of this indicates that the glory, Presence, and Holy Spirit fluidly overlap. One

relevant aspect of this vision for our present purpose is the principle that it was the glory that enabled Moses to endure God's Presence. So important was this notion, that it was portrayed ritually as part of the ancient temple service. Aaron was to take coals and sacred incense and "bring it inside the curtain and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the covenant, or he will die" (Leviticus 16:12-14). Thus, a physical cloud of incense smoke represented the divine cloud of glory that allowed a mortal to stand in the presence of God and live. That this cloud of glory belongs to the Holy Spirit is made plain by Doctrine and Covenants 67: "For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God. Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 67:11-2).

Wisdom and creation. I previously cited several early Christian texts describing God, the Word, and Wisdom acting together to create the world. In some of those passages, the name "Wisdom" was used interchangeably with "Holy Spirit." We see the same equivalence in Restoration scripture. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord refers to, "all things whatsoever I have created by the **word** of my **power**, which is the power of my **Spirit**" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:30). As in the early Christian texts, the "Word" here is Christ. "Power" too, denotes a member of the Godhead, namely, the Father (I previously cited Matthew 26:64 to this effect).⁸⁰ The same Trinity appears in the book of Moses, only the Holy Spirit goes by the name of Wisdom. Moses asks the Lord "why" and "by what" he created the world. He is answered, "For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is **wisdom** and it remaineth in me. And by the **word** of my **power**, have I created them." (Moses 1:30-32)

The answer to the question “why” God created the world is “for mine own purpose”. The answer to the question “by what?” includes his Word, his Wisdom, and his Power, the same as in Doctrine and Covenants 29 except that the name “Wisdom” is used in place of “Spirit”. In a similar manner, the Lord tells Abraham that he has “come down unto thee to declare unto thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my [W]isdom excelleth them all” (Abraham 3:21).

The Ten Virgins. Many other passages link Wisdom with the Holy Spirit in Restoration scripture, but one more must suffice. In pointing to “the parable... which I spake concerning the ten virgins”, the Lord identifies those “that are **wise**” with those who “have taken the **Holy Spirit** for their guide”, adding appropriately that “The Lord’s **glory** shall be upon them” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:56, 57, 59).

Summary. I have thus far demonstrated that from a strictly grammatical standpoint, modern scripture is completely ambiguous about the identity of the Holy Spirit. But I have given salient examples suggesting the continuity and consistency of these scriptures with the symbolism of the Great Lady in the Old and New Testaments. Let us next turn to the way Latter-day Saint thinking about the Holy Spirit has unfolded over the history of the Restoration.

VI. The Development of Latter-day Saint Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

From the vantage point of the 21st Century Church, it may be difficult for Latter-day Saints to appreciate how significantly teachings about the nature and identity of the Holy Spirit have changed since the beginning of the Restoration and how much contention has sometimes surrounded this issue.

Divinely Caused Imprecision. I have already suggested that a lack of clarity was deliberate on God's part. It began with a divinely given English translation of the Book of Mormon which strictly used the neuter pronoun "it" and the impersonal pronoun "which".⁸¹ This fostered the impression that the Holy Spirit was not a person at all. As Harrell observes, "early Latter-day Saints understood the Holy Ghost to be a spiritual power or influence, not a personage".⁸² Further obscuring the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures often portray it as a liquid or substance. It may fill an individual, as when "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them..." (Acts 4:8). It may fill a group, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). It is frequently poured, "God poured in his Spirit into my soul" (Jacob 7:8), and "that I may pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Doctrine and Covenants 95:4). Conversely, a person may be said to be immersed "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10, Doctrine and Covenants 76:11). The Holy Spirit is sometimes portrayed as a substance which can be divided: "the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them" (Alma 17:9); "according to that portion of Spirit and power which shall be given unto you" (Doctrine and Covenants 71:1).

At other times, scripture presents us with a personal being, an individual with a will, possessing feelings, and even acting distinctly from the other members of the Godhead. When Agabus prophesied, he did not speak in the words of the Father or the Son, but rather in the words of the Holy Spirit: "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt'" (Acts 21:11, NRSV). We saw this previously in Restoration scripture: "The Spirit crieth with a mighty voice" (Alma 5:51). The Spirit "led" Nephi, "constrained" him to kill Laban, and spoke firsthand words to him: "Behold, the Lord hath delivered him into your hands" (1 Nephi 4:11). According to Nephi, the Holy Spirit desires us to choose eternal life. "Look to the great Mediator... and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit" (2 Nephi 2:28). In 1831, the Lord told Joseph Smith, "Sidney Rigdon... received not counsel, but grieved the Spirit" (Doctrine and Covenants 63:55), prompting the reflection that while a person can be "grieved", an impersonal power or substance cannot. Thus, like the Lord weeping before Enoch (Moses 7:28-31), the Holy Spirit is here portrayed as responding to Sidney's choices and showing a personal emotional concern for him. With both kinds of imagery plentiful, the scriptures give us no effortless answer even as to *what* the Holy Spirit is, much less *who*.

Lectures on Faith. The most powerful factor promoting the concept of an impersonal Holy Spirit in the early Church was the Lectures on Faith. When the Doctrine and Covenants was first published in 1835, this instruction constituted the "doctrine" portion of the book. At that time, the term "covenants" carried the meaning of "revelations" or "commandments" and referred to the revelations given through Joseph Smith

that were published in the same volume. Noel B Reynolds has shown convincingly that the Lectures were produced by Sidney Rigdon, not Joseph Smith.⁸³ Nevertheless, being printed ahead of the revelations, and carrying the weight of canon,⁸⁴ they exerted a powerful effect on the Saints' view of the Holy Spirit for generations, until they were finally dropped from the scriptures in 1920. Lecture 5 put forth the view that the Godhead consists of two personages, the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is the shared mind between them: "There are two personages who constitute the... supreme power over all things... They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit... The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, ... [who] having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father—possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one... The Father and the Son possessing the same mind... the Son being filled with the fullness of the Mind, glory and power, or, in other words, the Spirit, glory and power of the Father." The catechetical question and answer that followed underscored the binitarian view of the Lectures: "How many personages are there in the Godhead? Two: the Father and the Son." According to the Lectures on Faith, the Holy Spirit is not a person. Note too that the Father appears to be presented as an incorporeal "personage of spirit" contrasted with Jesus who is an embodied "personage of tabernacle". Joseph Smith was not present for the approval of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and Reynolds reads an 1844 statement by Joseph as a refutation of this aspect of the Lectures' theology ⁸⁵: "I have allways— & in all congregatns. when I have preached it has been the plurality of Gods it has been preachd 15 years— I have

always decl[are]d. God to be a distinct personage— J. C. [Jesus Christ] a sep[arate]: & distinct pers from God the Far., the H. G [Holy Ghost] was a distinct personage & or Sp[irit] & these 3 constit[ute] 3 distinct personages & 3 Gods"⁸⁶ But if Joseph disagreed with the theology of the Lectures, why did he continue to have them printed alongside his revelations in later editions of the Doctrine and Covenants? He certainly had ample opportunity to delete or modify them if he had wanted to. Either he truly was comfortable with this doctrine, or he felt it was less important to correct any possible errors than to allow Sidney Rigdon the freedom to act in his assigned stewardship in the First Presidency. But for the moment, let us bypass the question of whether Joseph agreed or disagreed on these points. We do not insist that his views, even on theological matters, were inerrant, and neither did he — as will be discussed later in this section. Rather, consider what this circumstance implies about God's intent. I suggest that in the context of the evasive language of the Book of Mormon and the other revelations, the continued publication of the Lectures, despite content that later Church leaders would reject, indicates that the question of the nature and identity of the Holy Spirit did not at that time rise to a sufficient level of importance *to God* to inspire the Prophet to intervene.

The Idea of Non-personhood Persists. Either way, the Lectures' notion that the Holy Spirit was not a person remained a prevalent and persistent view. The most visible proponents of this view were Apostles Orson and Parley Pratt. In his 1855 book *Key to the Science of Theology*, Parley wrote that "Jesus Christ... was filled with a divine substance or fluid, called the Holy Spirit."⁸⁷ He further explained that this "divine

substance, fluid or essence, called Spirit” is “widely diffused among [the] eternal elements” and that “angels and all holy men simply... by being in 'communication' with this divine substance... all possess one mind. The mind of the one is the mind of the other”. “And the holy fluid, or Spirit, being in communication with them all, goes forth to control the elements.”⁸⁸

Joseph's Statements: Intriguing but Inconclusive. The Prophet himself expressed a variety of opinions that touched on the nature and identity of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, these ideas were often mutually contradictory. Again, Joseph was emphatic that he was not inerrant.

Personhood. As cited above, Joseph Smith endorsed the individual personhood of the Holy Spirit, “separate and distinct” from the Father and Jesus Christ. But it is evident in the writings of other leaders that his thoughts were not widely known during his lifetime.

Embodiment. In 1841, Joseph described the three members of the Godhead as being (or having) “three separate bodies.”⁸⁹ And there is nothing in the notes from that sermon to specifically indicate any differentiation between a spirit body and a physical one. Joseph's now canonized remark describing spirit as consisting of “fine” or “pure” matter (Doctrine and Covenants 131:7) was not made until 1843.⁹⁰ Further remarks that suggest a physically embodied Holy Spirit were given on 5 January 1841: “That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones.”⁹¹ Then, speaking of the pre-mortal council, Joseph said, “they had flesh & bones & that was the agreement in eter[n]ity to come here & take on them tabernacles.”⁹²

It is not immediately clear who the first "they" would be in this scenario, but "they" manifestly already possessed physical bodies. Jesus had yet to enter his mortal phase of existence, so "they" would presumably not include him. Who else besides Heavenly Father then possessed flesh and bones? From our current vantage point, we can only definitively count Heavenly Mother in that regard. But might Joseph have had the Holy Spirit in mind? In 1843, Joseph taught that neither the Father, nor the Son, nor yet the Holy Spirit could dwell inside a person.⁹³ Yet on August 8, 1839, he had taught the opposite idea, "It is a privilege to view the Son of Man himself, he dwelleth with you & shall be in you, his spirit shall be in you" (Willard Richards).

Spirit birth to the Holy Spirit? On 16 July 1843, Joseph taught a sermon at the Grove in Nauvoo, and Franklin Richards recorded the following: "Those who keep no eternal law in this life or make no eternal contract are single & alone in the eternal world (Luke 20-35) and are only made angels to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, never becoming Sons of God, having never kept the law of God i.e. eternal law. 'The earthly is the image of the heavenly' shows that [it] is by the multiplication of lives that the eternal worlds are created and occupied. That which is born of the flesh is flesh that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. From the above I deduce that we may make an eternal covenant with our wives and in the resurrection claim that which is our own and enjoy blessing & glories peculiar to those in that condition, even the multiplication of spirits in the eternal world." Thus, Joseph taught that those who make an eternal marriage covenant on earth will be blessed with spirit offspring. His use of the phrase "The earthly is the image of the heavenly" in this context shows his belief that such an earthly marriage made according to God's

law mirrors the divine marriage in heaven and can be eternally fruitful in the same manner.⁹⁴ This remarkable statement may be Joseph's first public allusion to Heavenly Mother. It also strikingly resembles a passage in the Gospel of Philip. The Valentinian sect of Christians who preserved that book spoke of a "mirrored bridal chamber" because they believed their own earthly ordinance of marriage "mirrored" the celestial marriage of God. They said this ordinance had been given by the Lord in order "to make the things below like the things above" and to "unite them in this place" (Gospel of Philip 68). They further taught that "those who are united in the bridal chamber will no longer be divided" (Gospel of Philip 79).⁹⁵

In this context, the marriage of our divine Parents and the pre-mortal spirit births that flow from it, Joseph invoked John 3. Jesus's original words to Nicodemus had referred to the *rebirth* of the disciple to the Holy Spirit by baptism. But here, Joseph repurposed Jesus's remarks to refer to the original pre-mortal birth of spirits "in the eternal worlds". The phrase "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" therefore casts the Holy Spirit as the divine Mother of pre-mortal souls. And this statement aligns with the belief of ancient Saints.⁹⁶

A spirit son. Nevertheless, at other times, Joseph offered opinions that conflicted with his July 1843 instruction. In 1844, Joseph is reported as saying that "God was a distinct in of himself & the Son also was a distinct perso[n]age But in the image of the Father— and that the Holly Ghost was a personge of spirit without a Tabernicle".⁹⁷ In George Laub's notes of the same sermon, he records Joseph saying, "the holy ghost is yet a spiritual Body. and waiting to take to himself a body as the saviour did or as god did or the gods before them took bodies." ⁹⁸ Joseph again

expressed this latter idea in 1843, “the Holy Ghost is now in a state of Probation which if he should perform in righteousness he may pass through the same on a similar course of things that the son has”.⁹⁹ This idea apparently gained enough traction, in some circles at least, that Saints began to speculate as to which notable person or persons the Holy Spirit might be. Among such speculations, “The most widespread [was] the belief that Smith was the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰⁰ In August 1845 Orson Pratt wrote to the members of the Church under his jurisdiction in the East specifically to counteract such notions: “Let no false doctrine proceed out of your mouth, such, for instance, as... that the tabernacle of our martyred prophet and seer, **or of any other person**, was, or is the especial tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, in a different sense from that considered in relation to his residence in other tabernacles. These are doctrines not revealed, and are neither believed nor sanctioned by the Twelve, and should be rejected by every Saint.”¹⁰¹ Elder Pratt rejected the idea of the Holy Spirit as a spirit child of the Father as “false doctrine”. Nevertheless, it has become the dominant, though unofficial, view today. The theological contradictions and complications arising from this view, versus the ancient view, do not bear directly on the purpose of this paper, since the idea was never enshrined in scripture. But given its prominence, it deserves special treatment. I assert that any scriptural passage which demonstrates a unique characteristic or function of the Holy Spirit, as distinct from the Father and the Son, should also uniquely fit any proposed identity for the Holy Spirit in discernable contrast to the Father and Son. Examined in light of this proposition at least, the scriptures are *never* consistent with the Holy Spirit as a pre-mortal spirit

son of the Father. Some representative scriptural illustrations of this are given in Appendix 1.

Joseph not infallible. How then should we approach these and other statements by Joseph Smith about the Holy Spirit? They are sometimes mutually contradictory, and they sometimes do not accord with the scriptures of other dispensations. Whatever we may think of the validity of such assertions individually, none of these non-scriptural statements can be considered doctrinally binding on the Church. On this point, we agree with Elder Bruce R. McConkie who said, “In this dispensation, at least, nothing has been **revealed** as to [the Holy Ghost’s] origin or destiny.”¹⁰² The phrase “*in this dispensation at least*” is particularly arresting, since we are comparing Restoration scripture with the beliefs of Saints of *former* dispensations. At the same time, I would never disagree casually with the great prophet of the Restoration. Rather, I suggest that we should take Joseph Smith at his word when he himself denied being infallible. In his own mind, there was a great difference between his personal ideas and what he published as revelation. “I never told you I was perfect— but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”¹⁰³ Nevertheless, when Joseph knew he did not have a revelation on a particular topic, he still exercised his best judgement, meaning his personal opinion. But he did try to be careful not to portray his opinions as revelations. “He stated that when he was in a ‘quandary,’ he asked the Lord for revelation, and when he could not get it, he followed the dictates of his own judgement... but he never gave anything to his people as revelation, unless it was revelation.”¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, we as his followers have not always been so careful about this distinction. Even in his own lifetime, he was dismayed by this. The following

anecdote will illustrate: On one occasion, some brethren “went to the Prophet and asked him to give them his opinion on a certain public question. Their request was refused. He told them he did not enjoy the right vouchsafed to every American citizen; that of free speech. He said to them that when he ventured to give his private opinion on any subject of importance his words were often garbled, and their meaning twisted and then given out as the word of the Lord because they came from him.”¹⁰⁵ Like all mortals, Joseph was subject to misconceptions. Some of these errors were corrected during his lifetime, such as his belief in Phrenology.¹⁰⁶ Joseph held other mistaken ideas that were only corrected *after* his lifetime. He believed, for example, that the practice of slavery was divinely approved, and he cited the biblical cursing of Ham in defense of the enslavement of Africans.¹⁰⁷ While his views on slavery changed a great deal, and he even ran for President on a platform that included emancipation, Joseph opposed mixed racial marriages.¹⁰⁸ Each of these ideas has been unequivocally repudiated by the modern Church.¹⁰⁹ Another example is literal blood purging, the idea that the gentile blood of a convert is physically expunged at baptism, to be replaced miraculously and often dramatically, with the blood of Abraham.¹¹⁰ In the Church today, this idea has been superseded by the notion of adoption into the lineage of Abraham.

Joseph also understood the sealing power very differently than the Church does today. He instituted what some scholars have called “dynastic sealings”, whereby the families and posterity of other faithful Church members could be connected to his.¹¹¹ Likewise, Joseph sealed adults together in non-marital relationships,¹¹² in one case, offering to seal an adult woman to him and Emma as their child.¹¹³ Sealings of

this type, linking adult lay members to prominent leaders, became widespread under Joseph's successors, but were ultimately abandoned under Wilford Woodruff. Those "adoption" sealings, as they came to be called, were either cancelled outright, or were considered superseded in blanket fashion by subsequent sealings to biological relatives that were performed in their place.¹¹⁴ In further contrast to current Church practice, Joseph never had any of his own children sealed to him.¹¹⁵ It would be difficult to think of a doctrine of greater importance to Latter-day Saints than that of the sealing of families. Nevertheless, "Although Joseph Smith recorded many revelations and visitations by heavenly messengers, he reasoned through the process of how to implement doctrines pertaining to the eternal family, particularly the sealing ordinances. As with other parts of the Restoration, Joseph Smith continued to develop deeper understandings".¹¹⁶ This admonishes us to remember that divine revelation, even on subjects of preeminent, and even eternal significance, did not automatically confer on Joseph a comprehensive understanding.¹¹⁷ Revelation is not omniscience. By Joseph's own counsel to us, we should accept his revelations as true and his opinions for what they were – opinion. But make no mistake: I honor and revere Joseph as the great revelator of the last age. I hope to honor him in a manner consistent with his own counsel to us.

Ideas About the Holy Spirit Continued to Unfold. We have intentionally deferred any detailed discussion of Joseph Smith's 2 April 1843 remark to Orson Hyde (which was eventually transformed into Doctrine and Covenants 130:22) since this item of instruction was all but unknown until the 1850's when

material for *The History of Joseph Smith* was being compiled. And even then, it did not significantly enter Latter-day Saint discourse until after the publication of the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. In the meantime, confusion about the identity of the Holy Spirit continued to compound rather than resolve.

Michael as the Holy Spirit. In the same General Conference sermon where Brigham Young first propounded his idea that “[Adam] is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do”, he also stated, “The earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael, these three forming a quorum, as in all heavenly bodies, and in organizing element, perfectly represented in the Deity, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”¹¹⁸ This statement thus has Michael “represent[ing]” the Holy Spirit, though whether this is intended to mean identity is unclear.

A diffused substance. At the same time, Orson Pratt continued to assert that the Holy Spirit was not a person, but a “substance ... that is diffused throughout space, the same as oxygen is in pure water”.¹¹⁹ Later, Orson began to contemplate a *dual* nature for the Holy Spirit. In an 1856 pamphlet published in England, he described the Holy Spirit as “a living, all-pervading, and most wonderful fluid, full of wisdom and knowledge”¹²⁰ which was responsible for the operation of all the laws of nature and indeed, for all the actions of the Father and the Son. But he simultaneously posited a personal being, “also called the Holy Spirit” that exists “in the likeness and form of the personal spirits of the Father and Son, or in the image of the spirits of men”¹²¹ His speculations on the subject, however, were publicly disavowed by Brigham Young and the Twelve in an official proclamation in 1865 – a condemnation to which Pratt publicly

submitted. They stated that Pratt's teachings about the Holy Spirit, had been "extensively published and widely received as the standard and authoritative doctrines of the Church" but were "unsound" and did not emanate from "the man who holds the keys."¹²²

No consensus. Interestingly, while he rejected Pratt's ideas, President Young offered no clear statement of what the orthodox position should be. So, it is unsurprising that confusion persisted. In 1883, for example, long after the publication of Doctrine and Covenants 130:22, Elder George Q. Cannon taught that before Joseph's First Vision, "densest ignorance prevailed" on "what is called the Trinity". But the vision in the grove "dissipated all misconceptions and all false ideas... thus showing that there were **two** personages of the Godhead, **two** presiding personages whom we worship and to whom we look, the one the Father, and the other the Son."¹²³ This was the binitarian language of the Lectures on Faith with its impersonal Holy Spirit as simply the "shared mind" between Father and Son.¹²⁴ The next year, in an address entitled "Things That Should and Things That Should Not Be Taught In Our Sunday Schools", Elder Cannon said, "The Lord has said through his Prophet that there are two personages in the Godhead. That ought to be sufficient for us at the present time. I have heard during my life a great many speculations concerning the personage of the Holy Ghost — whether he was a personage or not. But it has always seemed to me that we had better not endeavor to puzzle ourselves or allow our minds to be drawn out upon questions of this kind, concerning which the Lord has not revealed perhaps all that we desire. When men give themselves license to do this, they are very apt to be led along into error."¹²⁵

The shift toward a personal Holy Spirit. The turn of the Century marks the shift toward the

present view of a personal Holy Spirit. In 1894, Elder James Talmage wrote, "In the light of revelation, there can be **no doubt** as to the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost. He is... not a mere thing, force, or essence."¹²⁶ This demonstrates Talmage's appreciation for Doctrine and Covenants 130:22, which refers to the Holy Spirit as a "personage". Yet, there *was* significant doubt on that point. This can be illustrated by a comparison of the 1888 and 1901 editions of Elder B.H. Roberts's book, "The Gospel: An Exposition of First Principles". In the former edition, Roberts contrasted the Father and Son, each of whom has "a tabernacle of flesh and bones", with "the Holy Ghost, whose tabernacle is in the elements of the universe".¹²⁷ In the later edition, Roberts somewhat awkwardly attempts to harmonize the impersonal view of the Lectures on Faith with the emerging understanding of the personhood of the Spirit: "It should be held as a most positive dogma of revelation that the Holy Ghost is a spiritual personage... He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is the mind of each — of both." Roberts also refers to the Holy Spirit as "the grand medium of communication between God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and their vast creations."¹²⁸ It was Talmage, picking up where Orson Hyde had left off, that distinguished the "person" of the Holy Spirit, which "cannot be in more than one place at a time", from the "powers" of that being, which may "operate simultaneously upon many persons, even though they be widely separated."¹²⁹ Thus, Talmage first articulated what has persisted as the dominant concept of the Holy Spirit to the present: a physically localized spirit personage with a diffuse spiritual influence.¹³⁰

But overlapping this shift in understanding toward the personhood of the Holy Spirit was the outstanding question of its identity, complicated by the

lingering repercussions of Brigham Young's teachings about the identity of Adam. President Wilford Woodruff had counseled in 1895: "Cease troubling yourselves about who God is; who Adam is, who Christ is, who Jehovah is. For heaven's sake, let these things alone. Why trouble yourselves with these things?... God is God. Christ is Christ. The Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost. That should be enough for you and me to know. If we want to know any more, wait till we get where God is in person."¹³¹

Exposition on the Father and Son. But this counsel proved insufficient to quell the controversy, necessitating the 1916 publication of "The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve."¹³² The purpose of the Exposition was to definitively resolve the controversy over the identity of the Father and his relationship to Jesus Christ. Therefore, the message focused little on the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, since the status of Adam's physical body and the question of him begetting spirit children was central to President Young's original idea, the First Presidency weighed in on the subject of spirit birth. Their statement was guarded: "So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring."¹³³ Though the statement was deliberately tentative, and did not specifically address the identity of the Holy Spirit, it does highlight that the eternal Mother of human spirits would be a poor fit with a non-embodied, non-resurrected Holy Spirit.

De-canonization of the Lectures on Faith. Five years after the Exposition, a committee of Church authorities including James Talmage, recommended dropping the Lectures on Faith for the 1921 edition of

the Doctrine and Covenants. This signaled the final resolution to the question of the personhood of the Holy Spirit, and the crystallization of the current concept taught in the Church.

Identity – an unresolved question. Still open, however, has been the question of the *identity* of the Holy Spirit. We quoted Elder McConkie previously: "In this dispensation, at least, nothing has been revealed as to his origin or destiny; expressions on these matters are both speculative and fruitless."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, such expressions are commonplace and often implicit. For example, Church leaders and lay members alike comfortably refer to the Holy Spirit with the pronoun "he"¹³⁵ even though Restoration scripture never does so. Most members appear to understand the Holy Spirit to be a pre-mortal spirit son of Heavenly Father, even though this too is not scriptural.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 130. We now turn to Doctrine and Covenants 130:22. We deferred this discussion until now because recent textual evidence shows that the original statement by Joseph Smith has precisely the opposite meaning of the statement currently published in the Doctrine and Covenants. Specifically, Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 gives the opposite picture of the embodiment of the Holy Spirit from the original statement by Joseph Smith, and for this reason makes a strong case against the idea of Heavenly Mother as the Holy Spirit. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 reads: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us." This passage contrasts the physically embodied state of the Father and the Son with an unembodied Holy Spirit. And it

indicates that because the Holy Spirit lacks a physical body, it can dwell inside us.

Historical context. On April 2, 1843, Orson Hyde gave a discourse in which he discussed John 14:23, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”. Elder Hyde elaborated: “It is our privilege to have the Father and Son dwelling in our hearts”.¹³⁶ But after the discourse, the Prophet Joseph drew Orson aside and said that he had some corrections to offer him. Hyde responded, “they shall be thankfully received”. William Clayton was present and recorded the ensuing instruction: “In correcting two points in Elder Hyde’s discourse he observed as follows... When the Savior appears, we shall see that he is a man like unto ourselves... Also, the appearing of the Father and the Son in John chapter 14 verse 23 is a personal appearing, and the idea that they will dwell in a man’s heart is a sectarian doctrine and is false... The Holy Ghost is a personage, and a person cannot have the personage of the Holy Ghost in his heart.” To summarize points from the original statement pertinent to our present purpose: 1) The Holy Spirit is a person, not a substance, fluid, or impersonal mind. 2) The notion that either the Father or the Son can dwell within a man’s heart, called the “indwelling”, is incorrect according to Joseph. 3) We cannot have the actual person of the Holy Ghost inside of us any more than we can have the Father or Son inside of us. 4) No contrast is made between the bodies of the Father and Son and that of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁷

Preservation and alteration. The first of many alterations to this text was made by Willard Richards, who was not present with Joseph and Elder Hyde. He copied from Clayton’s notes into Joseph Smith’s journal several days later, and for unknown

reasons, he added the phrase "the Father has a body of flesh & bones as tangible as mans the Son also". He also changed "The Holy Ghost is a personage" to "the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit", also for unknown reasons. It is possible that this change was made in collaboration with Clayton. But it does introduce a contrast between the Father and Son versus the Holy Ghost, which was not originally present. In the 1850s, as Joseph Smith's history was being compiled, three final changes were made: 1) The phrase "but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones" was added, 2) The phrase "a person cannot have the personage of the Holy Ghost in his heart" was erased, and 3) In its place was added, "were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us." Ehat and Cook attribute these changes to "the Church historians",¹³⁸ but more recently, Ronald Bartholomew has reconstructed a timeline that shows that these changes were made in the presence of Brigham Young and Jedediah M. Grant, his second counselor.¹³⁹ We must conclude they were made at President Young's express direction. The reason for these changes seems plain: Brigham Young did not believe the statement as it was originally written. Rather, he taught that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost *could* all dwell in a person's heart. Bartholomew points to a sermon Brigham Young gave just eighteen months before he made the above changes, in which he preached: "We are the temples of God, but when we are overcome of evil... we deprive ourselves of the privilege of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, taking up their abode and dwelling with us... Let me ask, what is there to prevent any person in this congregation from being so blessed, and becoming a holy temple fit for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost?... I would to God that every soul who professes to be a Latter-day Saint was

of that character, a holy temple for the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but it is not so."¹⁴⁰

Implications. We demonstrated previously the possibility that a prophet of God could teach an erroneous idea, and since Brigham's and Joseph's ideas here are opposite and mutually exclusive, one of them must be incorrect: the personage of the Holy Ghost either *can* dwell within a person, or it *cannot*. Yet this instance is complicated by the fact that the altered statement was subsequently accepted by the Church as part of the doctrinally binding standard works. Should the uncanonized teaching of the preeminent and founding prophet be preferred, or the contradictory teaching that was issued by a legitimate successor, acting in his duly authorized role? Bartholomew concludes the latter must be preferred: "the final portion of the revision, 'Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us,' although enigmatic, actually improved upon the Clayton and Richards diary entries."¹⁴¹ He further states, "each stage of the formulation of the final text brought it into more complete conformity with other scriptural passages in the LDS canon."¹⁴² And Bartholomew does try to salvage Joseph's original statement that "a person cannot have the personage of the Holy Ghost in his heart" by an appeal to 1 Corinthians 3:16. In that passage, the "temple" in which the Spirit of God dwells is clearly the *plural* membership of the Church. His suggestion is that "the Holy Ghost dwells in 'us' as a body of believers, not in our individual temples, or bodies."¹⁴³ Unfortunately for this harmonization, instances of the Holy Spirit being within an *individual* are abundant in the scriptures, from Bezaleel in Exodus 35:31 to Oliver Cowdery in Doctrine and Covenants 8:2. Therefore, either the contradiction with Joseph's opinion remains, or we yet possess an inadequate

understanding of "other scriptural passages in the LDS canon".

The Church's 1981 Scripture Committee clearly agreed with Brigham's revisions rather than Joseph's original. Bartholomew learned from Andrew Ehat that Bruce R. McConkie and the other committee members "were aware of these discrepancies, but there had been a decision to leave the text as it had been canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants".¹⁴⁴ But Harrell takes a different approach: "In current doctrinal discourse, this change makes little difference as it is generally taught that the Holy Ghost can only be in one place at one time, and that his influence is felt in one's heart through the medium of the light of Christ. However, if the Holy Ghost cannot or does not dwell personally in a person's heart—but only exerts his influence on the heart—, it is unclear why the Holy Ghost would need to be a spirit at all."¹⁴⁵ This is an astute observation, and the question points toward a more meaningful way to reconcile Joseph's statement not only with the rest of scripture, but with the way ancient Saints interpreted those scriptures. We shall therefore consider it carefully.

VII. Resolution

Joseph Smith's 2 April 1843 statement to Orson Hyde disallowed the possibility that the personages of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could dwell inside a person. I assert that this original statement opens the way to fully reconcile Restoration scripture with the ancient belief in Heavenly Mother as the Holy Spirit. But why should we consider accepting *this* teaching of the Prophet Joseph over others of his statements that contradict it? Admittedly, Joseph never presented *any* of these statements as revelation and none were ever ratified as scripture. Nevertheless, the 2 April 1843 statement is the original form of a prophetic teaching that was *altered* and then ratified. And in this modified form, it stands out as the only scripture that can be marshalled against the ancient view. For these reasons, we believe the original statement deserves special consideration.

I therefore turn to the way Joseph's original statement leads to a fuller understanding of 1) the numerous scriptures that portray both Heavenly Father and the resurrected Christ functioning in a manner we typically associate with the reputedly incorporeal Holy Spirit; 2) the oneness of the Father and Son which Jesus stressed at such length in John chapters 14-17 but which has been downplayed historically by Latter-day Saints; 3) the way in which "God is a spirit" in John 4:24 and in which "the Father [is] a personage of spirit" in the Lectures on Faith; and finally, 4) the identity of the person of the Holy Spirit.

1. An Embodied Divine Person has a Diffuse Spiritual Influence. At the turn of the Century, as more Church leaders began to recognize the Holy Spirit as a person, Elder Talmage articulated the view, cited

above, that the Holy Ghost is a distinct divine personage “with the attributes and powers of Deity, and not a mere thing, force, or essence.” He also recognized that the Holy Spirit can “operate simultaneously upon many persons, even though they be widely separated; whereas the actual person of the Holy Ghost cannot be in more than one place at a time.” Talmage described “the means by which the mind, the heart, the soul of man may be affected” by the Holy Spirit by analogy to the power of electricity. He called this diffuse spiritual influence “the power of life, which is an emanation from the Spirit of God.”¹⁴⁶ He thus articulated a picture of the Holy Spirit located personally in one place but operating diffusely by a spiritual power that emanates from it, and this concept is still taught in the Church. If this idea is correct, the Holy Spirit would never have to “dwell in us” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22) to teach, direct, comfort, and otherwise influence us. Joseph’s teaching to Orson Hyde takes this one step further: not only does the Holy Spirit not *have* to dwell personally within us, it *cannot* do so, any more than the Father or the Son can. Talmage’s concept is still perfectly consistent with Joseph Smith’s original statement. But if the personage of the Holy Spirit does not dwell within a human being, and yet operates diffusely by some spiritual power, must the Holy Spirit be a disembodied being? The scriptures suggest not, because they demonstrate specifically that the Father and the resurrected Son each possess the same diffuse spiritual influence that the Holy Spirit has.

The spirit influence of the Son. Doctrine and Covenants 88 describes the diffuse spiritual power of the resurrected Jesus Christ. That it is specifically Jesus being described here is evident in verses 5-6: “Jesus Christ his son — He that ascended up on high,

as also he that descended below all things". In his resurrected state, Jesus "comprehended all things, that he might be **in** all things and **through** all things, the light of truth." We are perhaps not accustomed to thinking of the resurrected Savior as filling and pervading everything. But this is the very sense of Ephesians 4:10, from which the language of section 88 is drawn: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things", or as the NIV renders the last phrase, "in order to fill the whole universe." The succeeding verses of section 88 tell us that in this same way, Jesus Christ "is in the sun, and the light of the sun" (v.7), as well as the moon (v.8), stars (v.9), "and the earth also" (v.10). Jesus, as this diffuse "Light of Truth", enlightens our minds (v.11) and "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (v.12). He is said not only to be "**in** all things" and "**through** all things" but also "**round about** all things" (v.41). When humans come to understand God, it is because they are quickened not just "**by** him" but also "**in** him" (v. 49). We must bear in mind that in all these passages, the intense language of fluid and light refers to the person of Jesus without any redirection to an abstract principle or power. And this is just the way the Gospel of John treats the matter: Jesus is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Neither can these passages be merely figurative. If so, they would be needlessly and severely misleading. The Lord promised missionaries in 1832: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88). And though we might be inclined to interpret this verse metaphorically, since the physical body of the Savior could not be simultaneously in front of and on each side of even one missionary, much less also the other

missionaries to whom this revelation was addressed, the specificity, repetitiveness, and intensity of the fluid language of section 88 cautions us against such a dismissal. What then? Is Jesus's physical body everywhere at once? It is not. But some aspect of his person is. In all these instances, the Lord is speaking of his own boundless personal spirit influence, the same type of influence exerted by the Holy Spirit, and, as we shall see, by Heavenly Father as well.

Christ's mortal probation, requisite? But first, we note that to achieve the all-pervading state described in Doctrine and Covenants 88, Jesus specifically "descended below all things" and "ascended up on high". In other words, he triumphed in his mortal experience. The Holy Spirit already possessed and exercised these expansive attributes from at least the creation of the world. Was no mortal experience required for the Holy Spirit to obtain to that state?

The Light of Christ. Doctrine and Covenants 88:7 names this diffuse and all-pervading spiritual influence of Jesus, "the light of truth" and "the light of Christ", one function of which can be termed the conscience. In Mormon's writings, this conscience goes by the name "Spirit of Christ": "Behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16). It is the same in Doctrine and Covenants 84:45-46, where this influence is called "the Sprit of Jesus Christ". These additional names show that the Light of Christ is an influence emanating from Christ's personal spirit.

The spirit influence of the Father. Numerous statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John show that there is a diffuse, non-corporeal, fluid aspect to the nature of Heavenly Father as well: "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10),

“The Father is in me, and I in him” (John 10:38), etc. Traditionally, Latter-day Saints have downplayed this kind of statement as the figurative equivalent of the Father and Son being “one in purpose”.¹⁴⁷ But if so, we must discard more than 540 firsthand words of the Savior in John chapters 14 through 17 alone, as superfluous at best, and misleading at worst. These passages plainly assert that the Father and Son are “one” and dwell in each other, and that Jesus’s disciples should be “one” in like manner. But if we trust these words and trust Jesus’s wisdom in such unsparing emphasis on them, we will surely recognize how much he wanted to show himself immersed in and filled with the spiritual influence of the Father. Neither is this simply an oddity of John’s gospel. But Restoration scripture shows that this is an important principle: “And [Christ] received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:17). Indeed, a deeper understanding of this “light of Christ” aspect of the nature of both Jesus and the Father is said to be an important blessing for the obedient: “Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am; And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:1-3). The promise in Doctrine and Covenants 88 is similar: “The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened **in him** and by him. Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, and that I am the true light that is **in you**, and that **you are in me**” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:49-50).

Jesus Christ acting as the Holy Spirit. We have shown that despite having physical bodies that must necessarily be located in one specific place, the resurrected Savior and our Heavenly Father have the same capacity as the Holy Spirit to influence human souls in many places at once, fill the immensity of space, and so forth. But what most forcefully illustrates that the Holy Spirit can be a physically embodied being is the otherwise bewildering fact that Jesus can function as the Holy Ghost. In John 14, Jesus tells his disciples he is leaving them but will send “another Comforter” to be with them in his place (John 14:16). This Comforter, who Jesus says will dwell with them and “be in” them, he names “the Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17). He also says, “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth... he will shew you things to come... He shall glorify me” (John 16:13-14). Since Jesus will be gone when this Spirit arrives to replace him, the Comforter apparently must be someone *other* than Jesus. And Jesus identifies this person as the Holy Spirit: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (John 14:26).¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, long after his triumph and resurrection, Jesus calls *himself* the Spirit of Truth. “The Spirit of Truth is of God. I am the Spirit of Truth, and John bore record of me” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:26). Speaking to Oliver Cowdery in 1829, the Lord says the same thing indirectly: “*I* did enlighten thy mind... thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of Truth” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:15). So, John 14:26 designates the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Truth” and then the resurrected Jesus designates himself with the same title and performs a characteristic function of the Holy Spirit — that of enlightening the mind.¹⁴⁹

If there is no apparent difference in the diffuse spiritual influence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and if Jesus has no objection to a physically embodied being performing the functions of the Holy Spirit, and if we accept the original source of Doctrine and Covenants 130:22, we need not insist on a disembodied Holy Spirit.

The roles of Father and Mother.

Recognizing that Jesus can act as the Holy Spirit offers a further relevant insight. Latter-day Saints are conversant with the notion of Jesus fulfilling the roles of Heavenly Father: “Redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father” (Mosiah 15:16).¹⁵⁰ If the Holy Spirit is Heavenly Mother, it seems especially fitting that the divine Son ascends to and fulfills the roles of *both* his Heavenly Father and his Heavenly Mother.

2. The Unity and the Shared Mind of the Godhead. We can see from the foregoing that a Godhead with three physically embodied members, each with an all-pervading spiritual influence, also solves the issue of divine unity and rescues something of the Lectures of Faith’s concept of the shared mind of Father and Son. Jesus taught the Nephites, “the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am **in the Father**, and **the Father in me**, and the Father and I are one” (3 Nephi 11:27). This suggests that the divine oneness consists of each being “in” the other. The thorough and harmonious overlap of the all-pervading influence of each member of the Godhead with that of the others would not only seem to satisfy this description, but could reasonably be described as in the Lectures on Faith: “These three constitute the Godhead, and are one: The Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same [W]isdom, glory,

[P]ower and fulness: **Filling all in all**—the Son being filled with the fulness of the Mind, glory and power, or, in other words, the Spirit, glory and power of the Father” (Lectures on Faith, Lecture 5). I would only qualify this statement by adding that the Holy Spirit is not this mind but *participates* in it in the same manner as the Father and Son.

3. God is Spirit. Accepting the original source of Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 allows for a physically embodied but diffusely powerful Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it also works the other way round — we can apply this same understanding to the perennially vexing statement in John 4:24, "God is spirit" (NRSVUE). Paulsen helpfully cites Origen to the effect that earlier Christians believed the "spirit" referred to by John "[is] to be regarded as nothing else than a body."¹⁵¹ This reverse application might also rescue the Lectures on Faith's use of the phrase "personage of spirit" to refer to the Father. And although he does not describe any substantive difference between such a "personage of spirit" and a "personage of tabernacle", Elder McConkie suggests that this phrase referred to the Father's *spiritual nature* — that he is a resurrected and immortal being, not subject to death.¹⁵² Whether Joseph Smith at any time understood a "personage of spirit" in precisely this manner, I cannot tell. But describing the Holy Spirit as a "personage" that cannot dwell within a person certainly comes close.

4. The Identity of the Holy Spirit. Finally, if we accept the original version of Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 and allow that all three members of the Godhead can be physically embodied, then we have no obstacle to Mother in Heaven as the Holy Spirit. This in turn would have several further implications:

Full agreement. There would be full agreement of Restoration scripture with the rest of scripture, and specifically the early Christian and ancient Israelite view of the Holy Spirit. It would be a more complete fulfillment of Joseph's prophecy in 1841 that "The dispensation of the fullness of times will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations; also other things that have not been before revealed."¹⁵³

Theology. We would immediately gain a robust theology for Mother in Heaven. Our theology of the Holy Spirit still reverberates with unresolved controversies. Simultaneously, there is a profound and uncomfortable lack of knowledge about Heavenly Mother. Many Latter-day Saints rightly puzzle over the existence of a divine Mother with no known role in our progression since our spirit birth, eons ago. But if that Mother is the Holy Spirit, then most of these gaps and questions evaporate; we suddenly realize that we have known her all along. Perhaps, like the infant nourished at his mother's breast and preserved by her constant care, we could not see her for her very constancy.¹⁵⁴ But babies do grow up. They begin to recognize first that their mother is a person and not just a "thing, force, or essence." As children mature, they begin to know their mother's character and identity. If the Restoration is indeed ongoing¹⁵⁵ then might not our understanding of our Heavenly Mother continue to expand in this way?

The Trinity – a divine family. As normally expressed in Christianity, the Godhead makes rather awkward use of parent-child imagery: A stand-alone Father, his divine but apparently motherless Son, and... a Ghost? Does not a Godhead composed of a divine Family better fit not only the names of "Father" and "Son", but the intensely familial pattern of the Gospel¹⁵⁶ and the aspirations it instills in us? The

government of heaven is family government. That means there must not only be “a Mother there”¹⁵⁷ but that she be an “equal partner”¹⁵⁸ in a “full partnership” which, notwithstanding “special responsibilities [does] not imply hierarchy.”¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, in this conception, as we have seen, Jesus as the divine Son fulfills the roles and responsibilities of his two divine Parents.

New revelation not required. Another distinct advantage of this approach is that it would not require new revelation. It would simply be a recognition of and reclamation of prior revelation that has always been latent in our scriptures. I recognize, however, that some members will find any significant doctrinal adjustment jarring, no matter how scripturally well-founded it is. So, many will feel the need for a specific revelation on this matter. This was certainly the case with the restoration of priesthood and temple blessings to persons of black African descent. The restriction was never on solid ground scripturally and there was clear historical precedent against it. To reverse the restriction however, a faulty but ingrained traditional understanding of scriptural passages regarding the curse of Ham had to be rejected. Because of similar conditions concerning Heavenly Mother as the Holy Spirit, to adequately convince some members might indeed require a revelation. I hope not, however. In the case of the priesthood and temple restriction, the resultant delay provoked tremendous and unnecessary suffering. In our own day, the triumph of the expressive individualist worldview has made parenthood an increasingly unwelcome burden,¹⁶⁰ erased scriptural and past societal expectations of sexual responsibility and self-control, and confounded the very rudiments of biology such that the "distinction between gender and sex is now a

basic element of contemporary notions of identity."¹⁶¹ A resurgent faithful discussion of Heavenly Mother and Heavenly Father as real models for our mortal lives would powerfully insulate Latter-day Saints against this rising plague of confusion and satanic lies. In recent years, women have been disproportionately affected by these societal trends, and it is women that stand to benefit the most from recognizing their divine Mother more distinctly, and seeing in her, their own eternal worth and potential.

VIII. Conclusion

In this book, I have presented the early Christian belief in the Holy Spirit as our divine Mother. I reviewed the way the scriptures specific to the latter-day Restoration represent the Holy Spirit and explored whether this picture is compatible with the original Christian view. I showed that these scriptures invariably avoid declaring the gender of the Holy Spirit and I suggested that this is deliberate on God's part. Nevertheless, it was straightforward to show how the imagery of the Holy Spirit in these scriptures is identical to the imagery of the Divine Feminine in the Bible. I traced the development of Latter-day Saint thought on the identity of the Holy Spirit and acknowledged that these widely varied opinions are mostly not compatible with the ancient view. However, I could identify only one specific scriptural passage that appears to contradict that ancient view, namely Doctrine and Covenants 130:22. I suggested that if we prefer the original form of that statement from Joseph Smith over the altered form that was ultimately published, then there is no scriptural reason Latter-day Saints cannot embrace the ancient concept of Heavenly Mother as the Holy Spirit.

Openness to this *Former*-day Saint doctrine would have far-reaching consequences. It would amount to a recognition that our divine Mother has been with each of us all along, "hidden in plain view",¹⁶² teaching, comforting, and blessing us in seamless and loving partnership with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It establishes her role in the creation and displays her ongoing work of nurturing her children. This realization would be a most profound affirmation of the divine worth and potential of women, both intensifying the eternal significance of motherhood

and simultaneously expanding our vision of women as powerful leaders, instructors, counselors, and witnesses. And while doctrinal questions are never settled according to the benefits mortals predict to flow from acceptance of one idea versus another, surely the reclamation of an ancient and precious teaching could be part of the restoration of all things, the "dispensation of the fulness of times" which "will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations" (3 October 1841). In 1842, Joseph still felt like this "fullness of the dispensation of Dispensations" had only just begun¹⁶³. And if one of the "many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God"¹⁶⁴ which Joseph predicted would yet to come to light as part of this restoration, also answers the urgent need of so many good and faithful Saints, what could be more fitting?

APPENDIX: Do the Scriptures Better Fit the Holy Spirit as a Pre-Mortal Spirit Son or as Heavenly Mother?

I suggest that any proposed identity for the Holy Spirit should uniquely fit those scriptures that present a unique trait or role for it, in discernable contrast to the Father and the Son. Likewise, when a passage portrays the Holy Spirit as sharing a trait or role with the Father and Son, a proposed identity should demonstrably fit that similarity as well. Examined in this light, the view of the Holy Spirit as a pre-mortal spirit son of Heavenly Father appears less fitting than the ancient view of the Holy Spirit as Heavenly Mother. A few illustrations are enumerated here.

Baptism. As we have shown, the ordinance of baptism is rich with childbearing imagery. Just as we are “born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit”, even so we must be “born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and... cleansed by blood” (Moses 6:59). Baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost recaps our mortal birth: the gush of amniotic fluid, the baby born smeared with blood, and the first breath, which defines live birth for ritual purposes in the Church. When Jesus insisted that true disciples must be “born of the Spirit”, the imagery of parturition was so plain that Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time, can he?” (John 3:4, NET). Is it more fitting to think of baptism as being reborn to a pre-mortal spirit brother, or reborn to the Heavenly Mother to whom we were *first* born in a *primaeval* age?

Celestial Marriage. We solemnize our temple marriage rite in the three divine names: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The specific promises pronounced in this ordinance feature first, the unique ancient symbols of Heavenly Mother and then, those of Heavenly Father. Our individual temple marriage is intended to emulate the heavenly union of our divine Parents. Is it more fitting to pronounce those blessings in the name of a pre-mortal spirit brother or in the name of the Heavenly Mother whose symbols are spoken and toward whose exalted state the rite points?

Source of Life. Job credits the Spirit of God as the source of his life: "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). The divine title incorrectly ¹⁶⁵ rendered "Almighty" here, is *shaddai*, an ancient name for Heavenly Mother, known from at least the time of the Patriarchs. Is it more fitting to consider a pre-mortal spirit brother as the source of human life, or Heavenly Mother, who we already know gave life to humankind in the eons past?

Sin Against the Holy Ghost 1. In the Doctrine and Covenants, murdering an innocent person is called "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:27). This phrase singles out the Holy Spirit as uniquely wounded by this specific sin, in evident contrast with the Father and Son. For one spirit child of God to deprive another spirit child of God of mortal life is obviously a sin against the Father of all mortal spirits. Likewise, it is a sin against Christ, the lawgiver whom the Father assigned to prohibit murder and impose its due penalty. But if murder of an innocent person is an even greater offense against the Holy Spirit, is it more fitting to think of the one

offended as a pre-mortal spirit child of God or the divine Mother who was the origin of the life that was unjustly cut short?

Sin Against the Holy Ghost 2. In the New Testament, the sin against the Holy Spirit is described differently. Jesus ranked blasphemy (Greek: βλασφημία, "defamation", "slander", "abuse", *LSJ*) against the Holy Spirit as being far worse than blasphemy against himself. The latter would be forgiven, but the former would not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come (Matt 12:31-32). The Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out devils by the prince of devils instead of the by the Holy Spirit. This false attribution was the blasphemy Jesus rebuked so exceptionally harshly. Is his rebuke more fittingly applied to slander against his pre-mortal spirit brother or against his cherished Heavenly Mother?

Grieve not the Spirit. Along the same lines is Ephesians 4:30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This passage from the Doctrine and Covenants is similar: "I, the Lord, am not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon; he exalted himself in his heart, and received not counsel, but grieved the Spirit" (Doctrine and Covenants 63:55). The first entry under "grieve" in Webster's 1828 dictionary is, "To give pain of mind to; to afflict; to wound the feelings. Nothing grieves a parent like the conduct of a profligate child." Whom would it be more lamentable to offend, and which would have greater right to feel aggrieved by our sins, a pre-mortal spirit brother or our divine Mother?

Creation 1. The creation of the world commenced when the Holy Spirit "moved" over the chaotic,

unorganized waters. The Hebrew word here is *raḥap*, which indicates the fluttering of a mother bird over its chicks. Abraham 4:2 confirms this mother-bird imagery when it says, "the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters".¹⁶⁶ Does this maternal imagery more fittingly represent the creative action of a pre-mortal spirit brother or the divine Mother of all life?

Creation 2. The Book of Abraham further specifies that "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" (Abraham 4:27). Early Christians understood these "Gods" to be the Father, the Word, and Wisdom. They compared the male and female Adam and Eve to God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Is it more fitting that the male and female bodies created for Adam and Eve would be patterned after the physical body of our divine Father and the spirit body of one of our pre-mortal brothers or after the physical bodies of both the divine Father and the divine Mother?

The Conception of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel announces to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Titles like "Highest" and "Most High God" refer to Heavenly Father (see for example, Mark 5:7 and 1Nephi 11:6). Thus, in Luke's account, both the Father and the Holy Spirit were involved in Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus. But in Matthew's account, the Holy Spirit was the *only* member of the Godhead involved, since Mary "was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit" and Joseph was told

not to "be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18,20, NET). Is it more fitting to think of the member of the Godhead most conspicuously involved in Jesus's conception as a pre-mortal spirit brother or the divine Mother, whom Mary herself would emulate so capably in fostering and then bearing the mortal tabernacle of the Savior?

Judgment. At the last day, "all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous... shall be brought and be raigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works" (Alma 11:44). Is it more fitting that this judgement be rendered by a spirit brother whose successful probation is not yet assured, or by the divine Mother, who long ago rose triumphantly to her exalted and perfected status?

Prayer to the Spirit. When Jesus appeared in his glorified resurrected body to the Nephites, he allowed them to pray to him but acknowledged that it was irregular (3 Nephi 19:22). We do not normally think of praying to the Holy Spirit, yet Hyrum Smith was directed by revelation to do just this (Doctrine and Covenants 11:18). Does it seem more fitting that this revealed instruction to pray should be directed toward a pre-mortal spirit brother who had yet to pass his mortal probation, or toward the exalted partner of the exalted Father?¹⁶⁷

Intercession. The Holy Spirit is said to "intercede", ἐντυγχάνω, for the saints, just as Christ does. "God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit *intercedes* for the saints

according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27, NRSVUE). This same verb is used later in this chapter, where it is applied to Jesus (v.34, see also Hebrews 7:25). Latter-day Saints sometimes think of the Holy Spirit as something like a relay station, transmitting the thoughts and words of the Father and the Son. Here, however, the picture is not that of mechanical transmission, but of dialogue between the Father and the Holy Spirit, each knowing the independent mind of the other as the Spirit groans with effort to show us what we should pray for (v.26). The Spirit not only possesses independent knowledge of the thoughts and spiritual state of the disciple as he prays, but formulates a *φρόνημα*, "mind", "thought", or "purpose" with regard to that person. The Spirit then intercedes with the Father accordingly and presumably performs this function simultaneously everywhere across the world where Saints may be praying. We may also assume the Holy Spirit does this with perfect justice and in perfect view of the individual disciple's future circumstances and needs. Which would seem a better fit in this unfathomably complex intercessory function – a yet to be exalted pre-mortal spirit, or our perfect and transcendent Heavenly Mother?

Infinite Influence and Exalted Status. The activity of intercession just discussed presupposes an intellectual ability far beyond anything humanly imaginable. Let us for simplicity consider all together some of the other staggering capabilities scripture attributes to the Holy Spirit. The Lord told the elders of the Church in 1831 that the Holy Spirit "knoweth all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:17). The Book of Mormon shows that the Holy Spirit has an influence so vast that disciples, wherever they might be found in the world, can always have it with them (Moroni 4:3).

Indeed, that influence fills all creation (Psalm 139:7-11) and sustains the world from moment to moment (Job 34:14-15).¹⁶⁸ Besides dispensing visions (1Nephi 10:17), true doctrines (2 Nephi 28:31), and revelations (Moroni 8:7), the Holy Spirit speaks through angels (2Nephi 32:3), and purifies us from sin (Moroni 6:4). Many other actions could be cited, but in short, as Doctrine and Covenants 20:28 affirms, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end". The Holy Spirit is the same kind of being as the Father and the exalted, perfected Son. It possesses the same unfathomable power as they do.¹⁶⁹ Divine traits like omniscience and eternality might in theory be imputed to a pre-mortal spirit anticipatorily by virtue of his membership in the Godhead.¹⁷⁰ Such investiture would account for a pre-mortal spirit possessing the *authority* to do all the things the scriptures credit to the Holy Spirit. Yet, nothing in scripture suggests that such beings as we were in our pre-mortal state would have possess the *power* to do those things. And this is not what Joseph Smith is reported as saying. Rather, the wording was that the Holy Ghost was in a "state of probation" and "*if* he should perform in righteousness". This suggests that passing successfully through the probationary state was not a foregone conclusion in Joseph's mind at that moment. Mormon, on the other hand, foretold the eternal state of the righteous more than 1,600 years ago, as being "to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end" (Mormon 7:7). This appears to assume either the Holy Spirit's ultimate successful completion of earthly "probation... in righteousness"

or, entirely more fittingly, the Holy Spirit's then factual exalted status, especially given that "the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever" (2Nephi 2:4).

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ENDNOTES:

¹ Daniel C Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8-23", in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, Davis Bitton, ed. (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 204, citing John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105/3 (1986) 387, 399-400.

² Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah", 204.

³ Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah", 201.

⁴ For example, Bernard Lang writes, "[Wisdom] is also a goddess who judges the rulers and dwells in the presence of the creator god." *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs, A Hebrew Goddess Redefined*, (New York: Pilgrim, 1986), 55. Mark S Smith concurs: "The description of Wisdom in Proverbs 3:13-18 illustrates another survival of language formerly associated with the asherah". *The Early History of God: Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1991), 139. See also Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (New York: Ktav, 1968) 138-9.

⁵ The title "Great Lady", favored by Dr Barker, reflects the Hebrew word *gebirah*, translated in the King James Version simply as "queen". The *gebirah*, however, was the mother of the king, and she bore the responsibility of representing the Divine Mother in the same manner as the king was intended to

represent Yahweh as “god with us” (1 Kings 15:13 and Isaiah 8:8), Margaret Barker, *The Great Lady: Restoring Her Story* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2023), 148.

⁶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Temples Through Time,” August 6, 2020.

⁷ Kevin Christensen, “Twenty Years After ‘Paradigms Regained,’ Part 1: The Ongoing, Plain, and Precious Significance of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship for Latter-day Saint Studies.” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*: 54 (2022), 63.

⁸ For example, in response to one such challenge in 2012, Dr Barker said “What they come up with and what I have come up with is just about identical. So, I work with Mormons because in terms of temple scholarship, they are the best available.” *29th Annual Father Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture*, St Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary, 29 January 2012.

⁹ For example, at a two day Zoom conference on “Some Qumran Texts of Deuteronomy and Isaiah” by my count, the greatest number of follow-up questions concerned Heavenly Mother, though that was not directly the theme of her remarks.

¹⁰ Barker, *Great Lady*, 271.

¹¹ Barker, *Great Lady*, 374.

¹² “The Holy Ghost is a man; he is one of the sons of our Father and our God; and he is that man that stood next to Jesus Christ, just as I stand by brother Brigham.” Heber C Kimball, *Journal of Discourses* 5:179 (23 August 1857).

¹³ This is the primary focus of Dr. Barker's first work on the topic, *The Mother of the Lord, Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

¹⁴ Latter-day Saints need have no discomfort in consulting the Apocrypha in this regard. These works were accepted by Jesus and his followers. The Lord told Joseph Smith that “there are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 91:2). Yet between the catastrophic loss of “plain and precious things” (1 Nephi 13:26) and the “many errors” of “ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests” (History of the Church 6:57), precisely the same may be said of the Bible. It is true of both the Apocrypha and the abbreviated Protestant version of the Bible that “whoso is

enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom; and whoso receiveth not by the spirit cannot obtain benefit therefrom" (Doctrine and Covenants 91:5-6). In this respect, they are on the same footing, the principal difference being that it was "not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated" as part of the New Translation project (Doctrine and Covenants 91:3).

¹⁵ Later, I will specifically take up John 3, where Jesus teaches the necessity of rebirth to the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ Sebastian Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 184.

¹⁷ Johannes van Oort, "The Holy Spirit as feminine: Early Christian Testimonies and Their Interpretation", *HTS: Theological Studies*: Vol 71, no.1, 2016.

¹⁸ Brock, *Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 185.

¹⁹ Many qualities are indeed personified in the Hebrew Bible, but Wisdom is categorically different. As Murphy says, "From a literary-theological point of view, personified Wisdom is simply unequalled in the entire Old Testament. Yes, one can be rhapsodic about *ruah*... *hesed*, *šem*, *'emet*, and a host of other important biblical concepts. But personified Wisdom outshines them all in her claims." Roland E. Murphy, "The Personification of Wisdom" in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, ed. John Day (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 232.

²⁰ John W. Welch and James V. Garrison, "The 'Hymn of the Pearl' An Ancient Counterpart to 'O My Father'", *BYU Studies*: Vol 36:1; and Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 487-501.

²¹ As early as A.D. 50-70, according to Alfred Adam, *Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Perlenlied als Zeugnisse Vorchristlicher Gnosis* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1959), 59.

²² Nibley, *Joseph Smith Papyri*, 495.

²³ James Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume Two* (Carol Stream, IL: Hendrickson, 1983) 727.

²⁴ Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha Vol 2*, 728.

²⁵ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol.1, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum, 1950), 162.

²⁶ Samuel Zinner, Mark Mattison, *The Odes of Solomon: The Nuhra Version*, (Aulla, Italy, 2020).

²⁷ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 314.

²⁸ “...and these are the writings of the New Testament that are disputed: 1. The Revelation of John, 1400 lines;... 4. The Gospel According to the Hebrews, 2200 lines.” (Stichometry of Nicephorus).

²⁹ James Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition*, Kindle Version (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), epilogue 7.

³⁰ Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, epilogue 8.

³¹ Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, epilogue 11.

³² Jerome lamented that, “as we have it in our language it is marked by discrepancies and now... the stream is distributed into different channels.” (Praefatio in Quattuor Evangeliorum). But the notion that in the centuries after its composition this Hebrew Gospel “underwent textual alterations in accordance with the tenets of the Jewish Christian sects that used and copied it” (Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, chapter 3.4, Kindle) will come as no surprise to Latter-day Saints who acknowledge that in the Apostasy, the Bible as a whole was subjected to the same treatment: “ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests” (History of the Church, 6:57) “have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord” (1 Nephi 13:26).

³³ Not all Christian traditions did this as thoroughly. For example, the Russian Orthodox tradition retains iconography for Holy Wisdom which Barker says goes back to earliest times and shows her to be a divine person: “She is depicted as a fiery angel, crowned and enthroned, surrounded by great rings of light, and with the foundation of the earth beneath her feet.” “Wisdom and the Stewardship of Knowledge”, Bishop's Lecture Lincoln, 2004.

³⁴ See Jeffrey Bradshaw and Matthew Bowen, “By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 24 (2017), 148-9.

³⁵ General Handbook 28.3.1.

³⁶ Barker, *Great Lady*, 323.

³⁷ Barker, *Great Lady*, 359

³⁸ Marvin Meyer, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), Ch 7 and n176.

³⁹ Dennis Newton, "The Teachings of Silvanus, A Little-Known Gem from Nag Hammadi", *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 56, (2023), 20.

⁴⁰ J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Kindle Edition, (Oxford University Press, 1993), 441.

⁴¹ Fragment 17 was appended to the liturgy and, while not universally accepted to have been penned by Melito himself, is considered to have been integral to that early Christian Easter ceremony. Allistair Stewart-Sykes, *On Pascha, Melito of Sardis* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 78.

⁴² Barker points to wordplay in the text which only works in a semitic language, suggesting a very early Jewish-Christian origin (Great Lady, 364-365). Latter-day Saints that recognize temple themes and practices in the text may conclude the same.

⁴³ See for example, David Brakke, *The Gnostics, Myth, Ritual and Diversity in Early Christianity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 54

⁴⁴ Barker, *Great Lady*, 277.

⁴⁵ Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 305

⁴⁶ Johannes van Oort, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine: Early Christian Testimonies and Their Interpretation", *HTS: Theological Studies*, Vol.72, no.1, 2016.

⁴⁷ Barker, *Great Lady*, 160.

⁴⁸ Sebastian Brock, *After Eve*, Janet Martin Soskice ed. (London: Collins, 1990), 74-75.

⁴⁹ For Illustrations, see (via archive.org): Oracio Marucchi, *I Monumenti del Museo Cristiano*, (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1910), p.200 of 296. Also, Ally Kateusz, "Holy Spirit Mother, the Baptismal Womb, and the Walesby Tank", *Feminist Theology* Vol.31(2) 145-146. An alternate interpretation is given in Graydon Snyder, *Ante Pacem* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2018), 222.

⁵⁰ Roelof Van Den Broek, *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 129.

⁵¹ Newton, "Teachings of Silvanus", 113.

⁵² Barker, *Great Lady*, 417.

⁵³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Homily 7, quoted in Verna E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1990, Vol.41, no.2.

⁵⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 63 (239).

⁵⁵ Catechism, 94 (370).

⁵⁶ See, Gospel Topics Essays: "Mother in Heaven".

⁵⁷ William W. Phelps *A Song of Zion*, January 1844, Orson Pratt, *Prophetic Almanac*, August 1844, Brigham Young at the dedication of the Seventies Hall in Nauvoo in December 1844, according to Joseph Grafton Hovey's *Journal*, John Taylor, also in December 1844 at the same meeting in the poem, *The Seer, Times and Season, Vol 6 1 January 1845*, as well as many others.

⁵⁸ "The Bible expressly states that God created man in his own image, and lest someone should misconstrue the word 'man' here to mean only Adam, the historian adds: 'Male and female created he them', thus including both our progenitors in the statement that man was created in the image of God.... The word [man] includes both male and female. But if the divine image, to be complete, had to reflect a female as well as a male element, it is self-evident that both must be contained in the Deity. And they are. For the divine Spirit that in the morning of the creation 'moved upon the face of the waters', bringing forth life and order, is in the original language of the sacred historian represented in the feminine gender, whatever modern theologians may think of it." ("Women in Heaven", *Millennial Star*, June 26, 1902).

⁵⁹ Joseph Fielding Smith, "Doctrines of Salvation", comp. B.R. McConkie, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:203–204.

⁶⁰ As, for example, in James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), 165.

⁶¹ Bruce R. McConkie and others support this view: *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 752. Val Larsen recently made an argument similar to that presented here, along with much additional insight and detail, in "First Visions and Last Sermons: Affirming Divine Sociality, Rejecting the Greater Apostasy", *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36, 2002, 69–72.

⁶² Bradshaw explains that while the passages in Moses 1 "seem to imply that God the Father is speaking directly to Moses... it could be a case of divine investiture." *In God's Image and Likeness*, (Salt Lake City: Eborn, 2014), 44.

⁶³ Sidney B Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 116–18.

⁶⁴ The preference is three to one for "Lord"; thirteen to four for "Christ"; and seventeen to six for "God", based on Wordcruncher analysis of Skousen's *The Original Text of the Book of Mormon With Grammatical Tags*.

⁶⁵ When the Holy Spirit is called the "comforter", the pronoun is masculine, in conformity to the Greek gender of παράκλητος. See most clearly John 14:26.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Proverbs 8:32.

⁶⁷ Patai, Hebrew Goddess, 148.

⁶⁸ Barker, Mother of the Lord, 202-203.

⁶⁹ Barker, Great Lady, 135.

⁷⁰ According to Jerome's report of the Gospel of the Hebrews, "When the Lord came up out of the water, the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit descended on him, and rested on him, and said to him, 'My Son, in all the prophets I awaited you, that you might come and that I might rest in you. For you are my rest, you are my firstborn Son, who reigns eternally.'" (Commentary on Isaiah 11:1-2). Compare Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22, all of which resemble the heavenly declaration in Helaman 5:47.

⁷¹ Barker, Great Lady, 138.

⁷² The one verse in our current version that uses the impersonal relative pronoun "that" (Doctrine and Covenants 35:19) originally read "which".

⁷³ That the Spirit of Revelation is the Holy Spirit and not either some other spirit entity or the *generalized idea* of revelation is made clear by Alma, "the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the [S]pirit of revelation which is in me." (See also Alma 3:27, 6:8, and 45:10.) Indeed, in every instance of the title "Spirit of revelation", "Spirit of prophecy" or their combined forms, substituting "Holy Spirit" in their place leaves the sense of the verse intact. In no case does substituting an alternate Webster 1828 definition for "spirit", such as "temper" or "disposition of mind excited and directed to a particular object", make proper sense.

⁷⁴ Barker, Great Lady, 67.

⁷⁵ Barker, Great Lady, 260.

⁷⁶ Oliver Cowdery Diary, 27 March 1836, cited in Leonard Arrington, Oliver Cowdery's Kirtlan, Ohio, "Sketch Book", BYU Studies, Vol. 12:4, (Summer 1972), 426.

⁷⁷ Barker, Great Lady, 313.

⁷⁸ Barker, Great Lady, 34.

⁷⁹ Barker, Great Lady, 34.

⁸⁰ Matthew's word for "power" here is δύναμις, corresponding to the Hebrew לָח (el), "God", "power", "mighty".

⁸¹ I agree with Royal Skousen, Stanford Carmack, and others that the wording of the Book of Mormon was under close divine control. Since that wording does not reflect the presumably Hebrew-based grammar on the plates with regard to the gender of the Holy Spirit, this would seem intentional on God's part.

⁸² Charles Harrell, *This Is My Doctrine: The Development of Mormon Theology*, (Salt Lake City: Kofford, 2011), 268.

⁸³ "The Case for Sidney Rigdon as Author of the Lectures on Faith," *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 31:3 (Fall 2005), 1–41.

⁸⁴ On 17 August 1835, a "General Assembly of the Church of the Latter Day Saints" convened, and each quorum in turn testified of the truth of the book and accepted it as "the Doctrine and Covenants of their faith". No consistent or meaningful distinction was made between the "doctrine" and the "covenants", and only the treatises on marriage and government were voted on separately for inclusion with the volume. *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, (Kirtland, 1835), 255-257.

⁸⁵ Reynolds, "Case for Sidney Rigdon as Author", 31.

⁸⁶ 16 June 1844, following Ehat, (The Words of Joseph Smith (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1908), 382) and digital images at the Joseph Smith Papers, the last line clearly reads: "the H. G was a distinct personage & or Sp[irit]", not "& a spirit".

⁸⁷ Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, (Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1855), 29. This wording was not altered until the sixth edition of that influential work was published by the Church in 1904.

⁸⁸ Pratt, *Key*, 102-3.

⁸⁹ "Joseph said Concerning the God-head it was Not as many imagined— three Heads & but one body; he said the three were separate bodys, God the first & Jesus the Mediator the 2d & the Holy Ghost & these three agree in one & this is the man[n]er we should approach God in order to get his blessings." (circa 16 February 1841, reported by Wm P. McIntire)

⁹⁰ Though there is a similar reference in the Times and Seasons editorial of 1 April 1842, which Joseph presumably authored.

⁹¹ Reported by William Clayton.

⁹² Reported by William P. McIntyre.

⁹³ 2 April 1843, William Clayton Diary.

⁹⁴ Joseph's instruction to Benjamin Johnson, scribed by William Clayton on 16 May 1843, and Heber C. Kimball's diary for June 23, 1843, show that Joseph had already been teaching this idea privately.

⁹⁵ These Christians performed their sacred marriages in "the mirrored bridal chamber" (Gospel of Philip 61) not because of any interior design preference, but because the earthly should mirror the heavenly as Joseph said. Irenaeus described the ordinances this way: "[They] affirm that it is a spiritual marriage which is celebrated by them, after the likeness of the conjunctions above" (*Adversus Haereses* I, 21:3).

⁹⁶ Ehat and Cook interpret this differently, concluding: "The implication is that if your body is not resurrected, your children will be born flesh and bones, but that if your body is resurrected ... your children will be spirits." (Words, 270 n9.)

⁹⁷ 16 June 1844, William McIntire.

⁹⁸ 16 June 1844, George Laub. The complete citation from that sermon indicates that because they are "joint heirs with Christ", Jesus's disciples "also [take] Bodies to lay them down and take them up again" in the same manner as Jesus. This would seem to invalidate Swanson's claim that Joseph was "conjecturing that the Holy Ghost is a messiah or savior in training for another world", and that therefore, "Jesus Christ was a holy ghost for a previous system or generation." (Vern G. Swanson, "The Development of the Concept of a Holy Ghost in Mormon Theology," in *Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, Gary James Bergera, ed., (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 96.)

⁹⁹ 27 August 1843, Franklin Richards.

¹⁰⁰ Swanson, *Line Upon Line*, 97.

¹⁰¹ Orson Pratt, "Message", *Times and Seasons*, 15 August 1845, 809.

¹⁰² McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., 359.

¹⁰³ 12 May 1844, Thomas Bullock.

¹⁰⁴ David Nye White, Interview, 29 August 1843. Published in the *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette*, 15 September 1843.

¹⁰⁵ LaFayette C. Lee Notebook, Church Archives, MS 964.

¹⁰⁶ Phrenology was the pseudo-science of determining an individual's character by careful measurements of their cranium. "Joseph Smith said... to the congregation that he, for a length of time, thought on phrenology, and that he had a revelation, the Lord rebuking him sharply in crediting such a thing; and further said there was no reality in such a science but was the works of the Devil." (5 January 1841, William McIntire).

¹⁰⁷ Messenger and Advocate, Vol.II, no.7, April 1836, 289-91.

¹⁰⁸ "Had I anything to do with the negro— I would confine them by strict Laws to their own Species." (Journal, 2 January 1843).

¹⁰⁹ "The Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else." ("Race and the Priesthood" *Gospel Topics Essays*)

¹¹⁰ See, M. Steve Andersen, "The Practice and Meaning of Declaring Lineage in Patriarchal Blessings", *Interprete: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 46 (2021).

¹¹¹ As Helen Mar Kimball wrote, "Just previous to my father's starting upon his [mission]... he taught me the principle of Celestial marriage, & having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet's own mouth." (Jeni and Richard Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History*, (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1997), 482–87.)

¹¹² For example, Joseph sealed John Bernhisel to his sister, sister-in-law, four aunts, a "distant relative", two cousins, and two "intimate friends". (Journal, 26 October 1843)

¹¹³ Jane Manning James reported, "Sister Emma came to me & asked me how I would like to be adopted to them as a Child. I did not comprehend her & she came again. I was so green I did not give her a decided answer & Joseph died & [I] remain as I am." (Jane M. James, *Letter to John Taylor*, December 27, 1884)

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism", *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol.37:3, (2011), 112-113,116.

¹¹⁵ "Joseph and Emma had one child born in the covenant – David Hyrum Smith – who was born four months after Joseph

was killed. The rest of their children remained unsealed.” (Stapley, *The Power of Godliness: Mormon Liturgy and Cosmology*, Kindle Version, (Oxford University Press, 2018), 40.)

¹¹⁶ R. Devan Jensen, Michael A. Goodman, and Barbara Morgan Gardner, "'Line upon Line': Joseph Smith's Growing Understanding of the Eternal Family," *Religious Educator* 20:1 (2019).

¹¹⁷ The famous incident while Joseph was translating with Emma as his scribe illustrates this. “One time while he was translating, he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, ‘Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?’ When I answered, ‘Yes,’ he replied ‘Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.’ He had such a limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.” (Edmund Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856", *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (October 1916), 454.) In this instance, the revealed words Joseph was dictating clashed with his mistaken historical assumptions. And importantly, those revealed words did not correct those faulty assumptions in any supernatural way. But Emma was better educated than he and could satisfactorily resolve the issue. For further helpful perspective on the limitations of prophetic ability, see Matthew Roper, "The Treason of the Geographers: Mythical 'Mesoamerican' Conspiracy and the Book of Mormon", *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015), 161-205, to whom also I am indebted for pointing to several of the above references. Another useful illustration of prophetic non-omniscience is chiasmus, an important key to understanding many aspects of the Book of Mormon. If Joseph had recognized the masterfully complex and beautiful chiasmic poetic forms in the Book of Mormon, he would certainly have made it known. But he was unaware of their existence in the text he transmitted by revelation.

¹¹⁸ 9 April 1852, *Journal of Discourses* 1:51.

¹¹⁹ 18 February 1855, *Journal of Discourses* 2: 337-338.

¹²⁰ Orson Pratt, [Tract] "The Holy Spirit, (Liverpool, 1856), 50.

¹²¹ Pratt, "The Holy Spirit".

¹²² James R Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency Vol 2*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 231,233.

¹²³ 2 September 1883, *Journal of Discourses* 24:372, emphasis added.

¹²⁴ Of course, the pillar of fire/light that heralded the arrival of the Father and Son, and which enveloped Joseph, enabling him to endure their presence, would have been instantly recognizable to the first Christians as the Holy Spirit. So, from their perspective at least, contra Elder Cannon, all three members of the Trinity were indeed present with Joseph in that visionary experience.

¹²⁵ *Proceedings of the First Sunday School Convention* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1899), 87. Intriguingly, Cannon lumps into this same category of fruitless speculation the ideas of Theosophy and Brigham Young's teachings about the identity of Adam. (Ibid., 87-88.)

¹²⁶ "The Articles of Faith" (4), *The Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 29:7 (1 April 1894), 219-220 (emphasis added).

¹²⁷ B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel: An Exposition of its First Principles*, (Salt Lake City: Contributor, 1888), 214-215.

¹²⁸ B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel: An Exposition of its First Principles*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1901), 199.

¹²⁹ "The Articles of Faith" (4), *The Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 29:7 (1 April 1894), 219-220.

¹³⁰ See for example, the Gospel Principles manual, chapter 7: "The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead. He is a "personage of Spirit". He can be in only one place at a time, but His influence can be everywhere at the same time."

¹³¹ *Millennial Star*, No.23, Vol.57, (6 June 1895), 355-6.

¹³² Although never officially stated, both the context and the content of the Exposition make amply clear that it was intended to combat the persisting teachings of President Young. See James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency Vol.5*, Kindle Version, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 36-37. Four months prior to the Exposition, Elder Charles Penrose argued forcefully and at great length against President Young's ideas in General Conference. Brian Ricks notes that this "seemed to be the perfect preface to the document". (Brian W. Ricks, "James E. Talmage and the Doctrine of the Godhead", *Religious Educator* Vol 13:2, (2012))

¹³³ Clark, *Messages* Vol.5, 45.

¹³⁴ McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd edition, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 256.

¹³⁵ As for example in Dallin H. Oaks's April 2017 General Conference address, "The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation": "**He** can dwell in us and perform the essential role of communicator between the Father and the Son and the children of God on earth." Emphasis added.

¹³⁶ As recorded by Willard Richards.

¹³⁷ Incidentally, Joseph's statement that "when the Savior appears we shall see that he is a man like unto ourselves" mirrors the language of both Nephi and the Brother of Jared in their visionary encounters, potentially adding further weight to the assertion that both these ancient prophets had seen and conversed with the spirit of the pre-mortal Jesus Christ and not the Holy Spirit.

¹³⁸ Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 268-9.

¹³⁹ Ronald E. Bartholomew, "The Textual Development of Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 and the Embodiment of the Holy Ghost", *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol 52:3 (2013).

¹⁴⁰ January 16, 1853, Journal of Discourses 1, p.3.

¹⁴¹ Bartholomew, Textual Development, 23.

¹⁴² Bartholomew, Textual Development, 9.

¹⁴³ Bartholomew, Textual Development, 24.

¹⁴⁴ Bartholomew, Textual Development, 6. This is entirely understandable. To reverse what had been taught for over a hundred years might prove unsettling and controversial. Some might even feel such a change would require a discrete revelation.

¹⁴⁵ Harrell, This Is My Doctrine, 269.

¹⁴⁶ "The Articles of Faith" (4), *The Juvenile Instructor*, Vol.29 No.7 (1 April 1894), 219-221.

¹⁴⁷ Topics and Questions, "Godhead",

¹⁴⁸ Barker makes an intriguing argument that "Jesus himself was the Paraclete" spoken of in John 14 in King of the Jews (London: SPCK, 2014), 808. She suggests that the identification as the Holy Spirit in v. 26 might have resulted from an early insertion (738n64). Notably, this would agree with Wilford Woodruff's report of Joseph Smith's 26 June/2 July 1839 statement that "this other comforter... is no more or less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself". In this connection, Joseph specifically cited John 14, "the 12 to the 27 vers[e]", which includes the reference to the Holy Ghost. But regardless of the identity of the Comforter in

John 14, the resurrected Jesus clearly assumes this title and its associated spiritual function.

¹⁴⁹ See Hebrews 6:4, Alma 24:30, Doctrine and Covenants 11:13; 76:10,12; 91:5; 136,33, JSH 1:74.

¹⁵⁰ See also Ether 3:14, Isaiah 9:6, Doctrine and Covenants 29:1,42,46, and many others.

¹⁵¹ Paulsen elaborates, "This surprising statement is easily explained: (1) *pneuma* (translated 'spirit') literally meant air or breath- thus implying that spirit is composed of a material substance, one of the four basic elements, and (2) since Christian Stoics believed that existence was confined to material bodies, God (being spirit) was only the purest of all bodies." (David Paulsen "Part II: Early Christian Belief in an Embodied God," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: Vol.35:4 (1995), 55-56.) See also Doctrine and Covenants 131:7-8.

¹⁵² A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 72–73. This does not imply Elder McConkie accepted the physical embodiment of the Holy Spirit. He simply felt the phrase "personage of spirit" could legitimately be applied to the physically embodied Father.

¹⁵³ "Discourse", 3 October 1841, as published in Times and Seasons, 2, 577 (15 October 1841).

¹⁵⁴ As Elder Jeffrey R Holland taught, "the Holy Ghost is the member of the Godhead with whom [members] will have their most frequent and most intimate relationship." ("Knowing the Godhead", *Ensign*, January 2016)

¹⁵⁵ Russell M. Nelson, in "Latter-day Saint Prophet, Wife and Apostle Share Insights of Global Ministry," Newsroom, 30 October 2018.

¹⁵⁶ For example, imagery of rebirth as children of God at baptism, fellow members of the Church as "brother" and "sister", temple sealing of families, lineage declarations in patriarchal blessings, Adam standing at the head of the human family, (Joseph Smith, 8 August 1839, Willard Rochard's Pocket Companion) etc.

¹⁵⁷ Eliza R. Snow, "My Father in Heaven," Times and Seasons, Vol.6, No.17 (15 November 1845), 1039.

¹⁵⁸ "The Family, A Proclamation", *Ensign*, Vol.25, No.11, (November 1995),102.

¹⁵⁹ Ulisses Soares, "In Partnership with the Lord", October 2022 General Conference.

¹⁶⁰ "Only about one in four adults say having children (26%) or being married (23%) is extremely or very important in order to live a fulfilling life" versus 71% who say that a career they enjoy is important, according to the 2023 Pew Research Center: September 2023 "Public Has Mixed Views on the Modern American Family" at [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org).

¹⁶¹ Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Kindle Edition, (Crossway, 2020), 284.

¹⁶² Val Larsen, "Hidden in Plain View: Mother in Heaven in Scripture", *SquareTwo*, Vol.8 No.2 (2015).

¹⁶³ See Joseph Smith Journal, 6 January 1842, in the hand of Willard Richards.

¹⁶⁴ "Church History", *Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842.

¹⁶⁵ Barker, Mother of the Lord, 132-133.

¹⁶⁶ Again, the first definition from Webster's 1828 dictionary: "To sit on and cover, as a fowl on her eggs for the purpose of warming them and hatching chickens, or as a hen over her chickens, to warm and protect them."

¹⁶⁷ President Gordon B. Hinckley directed against praying to Heavenly Mother, saying that he had "looked in vain for any instance where any President of the Church, from Joseph Smith to Ezra Taft Benson, has offered a prayer to 'our Mother in Heaven'" ("Daughters of God", October General Conference 1991). But if the ancient identification of the Holy Spirit is correct, at least one Assistant President of the Church, the legal successor to the President, presumably did so. On the office of Assistant President, see McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, 40-41.

¹⁶⁸ "If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust."

¹⁶⁹ As Doctrine and Covenants 88 indicates, Christ achieved this infinite and all-pervading status *after* he "descended below all things" and then "ascended up on high".

¹⁷⁰ Though, in the case of Jesus Christ, Godfrey Ellis makes a reasonable case for a distinction between pre-mortal *factual* knowledge of all things, and the *experiential* knowledge that can be gained in no other way than mortal life. See "Experiential Knowledge and the Covenantal Relationship in Alma 7", *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51, (2022).