

WILLIAM PHELPS'S PARACLETES, AN EARLY WITNESS TO JOSEPH SMITH'S DIVINE ANTHROPOLOGY

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In the summer of 1845, William Wines Phelps—Joseph Smith's political clerk, amanuensis, ghostwriter, and linguistic coach—published a piece of very short science fiction “to counterbalance the foolish novel reading of the present generation.”¹ His creative and heavily theological work, entitled “Paracletes” (his plural for *Parakletos*, the “Advocate” or “Comforter” of the King James New Testament) and published under a pseudonym—Joseph's Speckled Bird—drawn from his first patriarchal blessing, provides stunning vistas on the nature of Mormonism among Joseph Smith's inner circle around the time of his murder.²

¹ On Phelps's role in Nauvoo, see Samuel Brown, “The Translator and the Ghostwriter: Joseph Smith and W.W. Phelps,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008), 26–62. The story and Phelps's introductory remarks are published as Joseph's Speckled Bird, “Paracletes,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 8 (May 1, 1845), 891–2 and “The Paracletes, Continued,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 10 (June 1, 1845), 917–8.

² H. Michael Marquardt, comp. and ed. *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 43, August 27, 1835. Joseph Smith Sr. called Phelps “a ‘speckled Bird,’ and the Lord hath held thee up to be gazed at: Thou art a strange man,” thereby invoking Jeremiah 12:9. Phelps was very proud of his role as Smith's ghostwriter, and used the phrase “speckled bird” in his letter to William Smith of December 25, 1844, which also advances several of the themes presented in “Paracletes.” William Phelps, “The Answer,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 24 (January 1, 1845), 757–8. The use of “wordprints” to disprove Phelpsian authorship of the piece in Wayne Larsen and Alvin Rencher, “Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints,” in Noel Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1996 [1982]), 163, 166, 170 and 185 is more an indictment of “wordprints” than any reason to reject the historical evidence of Phelps as the author, particularly in a sample of fiction writing that is heavily laden with jargon and biblical catch-phrases.

This fascinating text, a detailed treatment of what I term Joseph Smith's divine anthropology³, has been largely ignored.⁴ Despite this neglect, "Paracletes" provides a crucial window on the complex network of beliefs undergirding the divine anthropology. This set of teachings, most famously expounded by Smith in two public sermons in the spring of 1844, has generated various echoes in later Mormonism, from the Adam-God of Brigham Young, to the Goddess-Eve of Eliza R. Snow, to Orson Pratt's exposition of the universal ether, panpsychism, and infinite regression of gods, to a distinctive belief in guardian angels popularized by Orson Hyde, to its most famous summary in Lorenzo Snow's pithy couplet, "As man now is, God once was; As God now is,

³ I propose this phrase as an inclusive title for Smith's teachings variably designated "apotheosis" or "divinization," combined with the heavily anthropomorphized or humanized God. Van Hale's "Plurality of Gods Concepts" is a cumbersome title for one aspect of this group of doctrines. ("Doctrinal Impact," 224). These teachings are often designated the King Follett doctrine, in reference to the April 1844 church general conference sermon dedicated to Elder King Follett, who had died the month earlier, and whose actual funeral sermon Smith also preached. See "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 15 (August 15, 1844), 614–20. The original funeral sermon is published in Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, comp. and ed., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The contemporary accounts of the Nauvoo discourses of the Prophet Joseph*. Provo, UT: Grandin Book Co, 1991., 327–336, 389–392. Follett died March 9. Eulogies and accounts of the funeral are printed as "Communicated," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, vol. 1, no. 47 (March 20, 1844), 2. On the April sermon, see the various papers in *BYU Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978).

⁴ "Paracletes" has not been entirely neglected. Van Hale mentions the story in passing as an early support for the divine anthropology and perhaps spirit birth, while James Custer, in a piece for his *LDSRemnant* website, has reprinted Phelps's story in a muddled treatment of "Subordinate Gods," while Corbin Volluz has mentioned the piece in a review of early Mormon writings on Jesus Christ as humanity's elder brother. Occasionally, and with their characteristic mixture of fervor, credulity, and antagonism, the LDS internet message boards have broached the subject. Van Hale, "Doctrinal Impact," 222; <http://ldsremnant.com/content/view/64/33/>; Corbin Volluz, "Jesus Christ as Elder Brother," *BYU Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2006), 141–158, esp. 143, 155–6; <http://www.mormonapologetics.org/lofiversion/index.php/t10201.html>, websites accessed February 24, 2008.

man may be.”⁵ Some later scholars have found reason to equivocate about Smith’s direct involvement in these ramifications of his divine anthropology. “Paracletes” provides a convenient summary, some clarification of core doctrines, as well as a missing link on the route to the later belief systems that derived from it. Essentially all of the critical beliefs are present in the story: a plurality of anthropomorphic Gods led by one called the “head” of the Gods, divinized humans, the equivalence of angels and humans, an interconnected Chain of Being comprising planets, epochs, and godly beings without beginning or end, and a supernatural Adam who took stewardship for earth’s creation and its inhabitants in collaboration with other Gods. The core meaning of Smith’s divine anthropology is also apparent in this treatment: the Prophet was attempting to reveal a cosmic family of genetically related beings, a familial scope for the vastness of existence.

So too are some of the sources of the divine anthropology clear—fragments of pure religion extracted from phrases in the Old and New Testaments, the prevalent construct of the Chain of Being, and an obsession with language and the power of words that borders on the kabbalistic.⁶ By consolidating, situating, and summarizing Smith’s divine anthropology, “Paracletes” also points the way to later versions, particularly the one now termed “Adam-God” that Brigham Young advocated a decade or so later. Importantly for later threads, “Paracletes” demonstrates the fluidity of identification of participants and locations in the cosmic saga. In something like the metaphysical rule of correspondence,⁷ the Genesis creation was every creation, Adam and

⁵ Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News, 1884), 10, 46.

⁶ See Samuel Brown, “Joseph Smith’s Death Conquest: Sacerdotal Genealogy and the Great Chain of Being,” *American Academy of Religion*, November 18, 2006, Washington DC, Brown, “The Translator and the Ghostwriter,” and Brown, “Joseph (Smith) in Egypt: Babel, Hieroglyphs, and the Pure Language of Eden,” *Church History* 78:1 (March 2009), 26-65.

⁷ On correspondence in American metaphysical religion, see Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 6, 13-6, 26-7, 141, 164.

Eve were every godly being, the “head” was the parent of every creation. The Mormon identification with Christ, a special kind of *imitatio Christi*, is a robust example of this correspondence—attributes of salvation, creation, embodiment and pre-existence familiar from mainstream Christianity extended in the divine anthropology from Christ, to the angelic paracletes, to human beings. The fluidity of identity that correspondence enabled provided the flexibility that underlay the variety of later interpretations at once consistent and inconsistent.

The most significant debate over the divine anthropology centers on innovations proposed by Brigham Young in the 1850s. Young’s precise theology termed “Adam-God” and later discountenanced as speculative fodder for sectarians, is notoriously difficult to define in reproducible terms. One standard version maintains that Adam was a pre-resurrected being (an embodied god) populating his own worlds the way faithful Mormons would one day do themselves, and as such Adam was “the only god with whom we have to do” in Young’s famous phrase of April 1852.⁸ By extension this Adam was the father of Jesus in some important sense. Young often complained that his listeners did not understand what he was saying about Adam, and confusion persists to the present day. Despite the controversy, the early witness of “Paracletes” to this debate has not been appreciated in a watershed 1982 review or a variety of less formal treatments.⁹

In Phelps’s hands, Adam, one of many paracletes (humanized angels or divinized humans) chose to settle earth as a maturing but not yet embodied immortal. He did so with his wife and then fell, “that man might be.” Simultaneously, though, Phelps lacks the crux of Young’s innovation: Adam clearly retains a father who is relevant to the inhabitants of Adam’s world, a world which he calls Idumia. Further-

⁸ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, (Liverpool: LDS Book Depot, 1856), 50–1.

⁹ David John Buerger, “The Adam-God Doctrine,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982), 14–58, esp. 27. See also http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam-God_theory, <http://fairmormon.org/Adam-God>, <http://irr.org/mit/WDIST/adam-god.html>, all accessed February 24, 2008.

more, where Young strongly elevated his Adam-Michael figure to perfection, Phelps's Adam-Michael remained an entity in training. The other essential elements of Smith's expanded divine anthropology are all present both in "Paracletes" and in Young's extension. Divinized, highly evolved beings organized the earth before peopling it, then assumed a body and lost their memory, while before and after their incarnation they were integrated with prior genealogical iterations of creation.¹⁰

Beyond presenting a link between Joseph Smith and Young's Adam-God, Phelps's short story provides windows on several other aspects of early Mormon belief. Contrary to the "infinite regress" view, and in support of Blake Ostler's "kingship monotheism,"¹¹ Phelps reports a "head" God, one intermittently identified with the Lord-God of the Old Testament. (He would later equivocate on this point, following uncertain cues in Joseph Smith's June 1844 Sermon in the Grove.¹²) Contrary to some versions of Brigham Young's Adam-God formulation, Adam was an immature immortal, and the "head" remained involved in earthly affairs. In support of Eliza R. Snow and others, the divine anthropology clearly included God's wife, the entity later dubbed Mother in Heaven (though more likely denominated the Queen of Heaven at the time).¹³

¹⁰ Strictly speaking, Young appears to have believed that Adam's body became mortal at the time of the fall rather than Adam assuming a new body, though the notion of Adam becoming mortal as a stage in his development is shared between Young and Phelps.

¹¹ The most current exposition of this view is Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: Of God and Gods* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2008), Ch. 1.

¹² Teaching Greek in Winter Quarters, Phelps retranslated 2 Peter 1:17, converting "he received from God the Father honer Glory" into "he recived in presence of God's Father honer and Glory," misunderstanding apposed Greek genitive nouns. This later belief in God having a Father of his own is not clearly endorsed in Paracletes. Maurine Carr Ward, ed., *Winter Quarters: The 1846-1848 Life Writings of Mary Haskin Parker Richards* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), February 21, 1847, 191.

¹³ John Heeren, Donald Lindsey, Marylee Mason, "The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven: A Sociological Account of Its Origins and Development,"

Central to the divine anthropology is Smith's taxonomy of supernatural beings. In "Paracletes," the Mormon angelology is expounded and clarified. The very title of the story, the plural for the term antebellum Christians understood to describe the Holy Ghost (John 14:26) and a reference to Smith's Sermon in the Grove, invokes an identity of human and angels that runs deep in early Mormonism.¹⁴ Phelps also affirms the existence of guardian angels, a doctrine usually associated with Orson Hyde, who was preaching their existence aggressively in the 1840s.¹⁵ In the supernatural family of early Mormonism, these angels, necessary to communication between the earth and heaven, would never leave the faithful without protection.

There are also metatextual lessons to be learned from "Paracletes," including the fascinating use of language, the marvellous complexity of Mormon Biblical literalism, and the role of temple allusions in post-Martyrdom Nauvoo. In Phelps's expansive restatements of Smith's King Follett sermon and Sermon in the Grove, short scriptural phrases—what critics would call proof-texts and friends would call "fragments" of truth—provided the anchors for distinctive and innovative doctrines. In a heavily bibliocentric society, early Latter-day Saints developed a sophisticated if fragmentary witness for their new doctrines.¹⁶ A reference to "many mansions" affirmed celestial pluralism, a denunciation of pagan goddesses confirmed mothers in heaven, a refer-

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 23, no. 4 (December 1984), 396–411, Linda Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 64–77.

¹⁴ Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 382.

¹⁵ "All Things Move in Order in the City': the Nauvoo Diary of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs," ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *BYU Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Spring 1979), 298, 307; "Dedication of the Seventies Hall," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 2 (February 1, 1845), 796.

¹⁶ On American bibliocentrism, see the essays published in Mark Noll and Nathan Hatch, ed., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

ence to “lords many” undergirded the plurality of gods.¹⁷ Joseph Smith explained his use of proof-texts in his sermon devoted to defending the plurality of Gods, “I will still go on & shew you proof on proof. all the Bible is as equal one part as another.”¹⁸ Phelps’s story includes snippets of Biblical language in almost every paragraph. This proof-texting borders on bibliomancy, a popular practice of divining the will of God from isolated words and phrases.¹⁹ Interspersed among the litany of Biblical proof texts came quiet allusions to Smith’s temple endowment rites, an almost undetectable shibboleth for the initiated. Where those out of favor, most notoriously Sidney Rigdon, were excluded from power by their ignorance of the temple,²⁰ Phelps made frequent subtle allusions to temple rites. Simultaneously he established a society of temple-aware Saints and emphasized the centrality of temple mysteries to the evolving divine anthropology.

This story also provides us a window to the soul of its author. Deeply ashamed by his act of betrayal during the 1838 Missouri Mormon War and known as a somewhat bombastic autodidact, Phelps worked hard in the last years of Smith’s life to prove his worth, broadcasting and enhancing his prophet’s skill and power. In his public and private writings he adored the prophet he served and saw himself as critical to ensuring Smith’s reputation as a translator.²¹ Despite his history as an anti-Masonic campaigner, Phelps clearly loved mysteries

¹⁷ Phelps, “The Answer,” 758.

¹⁸ Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 382.

¹⁹ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 47–9.

²⁰ Phelps publicly accused Rigdon of lacking power by token of his lack of endowment in “Special Meeting,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 16 (September 2, 1844), 638. See also “Continuation of Elder Rigdon’s Trial,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 17 (September 15, 1844), 664. Andrew Ehat’s master’s thesis (“Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question,” Brigham Young University, 1982) makes this point in great detail.

²¹ Walter D. Bowen, “The Versatile W.W. Phelps – Mormon Writer, Educator, and Pioneer,” (Master’s Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958) and Brown, “Ghostwriter.”

and believed in the power of ancient letters and languages, views he shared with broader hermetic culture. He used the Greek term for “advocate” to designate humanized angels, while he preferred Hebrew names mixed with a Latin prefix to denominate the most important of the angels, familiar behavior since at least his 1835–1836 work on the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. That these papers and the associated Book of Abraham figure prominently in “Paracletes” is a reminder of the centrality of the Abraham project for both Phelps and Smith.²² Though, for complex reasons, Phelps never became an apostle and slowly faded (beyond his popular hymns) from historical notice after his death, this sometime newspaper editor and surprisingly agile linguist played an important if under-appreciated role in the transfer of ecclesiastical power from Smith to the Quorum of the Twelve in the main church. He served as “assistant” editor to John Taylor for *Times and Seasons*, responsible for a variety of official editorials over Taylor’s implied signature and prepared the Hebrew of the King Follett discourse for official publication.²³ Working in Nauvoo at the time of the Smith brothers’ murder, he helped receive their bodies, preached the Smith brothers’ funeral sermon, and figured prominently in the meetings in the Fall of 1844 when matters of church leadership were settled.²⁴ Phelps published his story from a position of prominence and power.

Ultimately, though, the importance of this short story lies in its capacity to introduce readers to the idea-world of the early Latter-day Saints, to imagine with them what came before and would come after. The ebb and flow of the divine anthropology should not distract ob-

²² Brown, “Ghostwriter,” 33–7, 59–61, Brown, “Joseph (Smith) in Egypt,” and Samuel Brown, “Joseph Smith’s Kirtland Egyptian Papers: Hieroglyphs, the Sacerdotal Genealogy, and the Antidote to Babel,” Sunstone Symposium, August 9, 2007, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²³ Kevin Barney, “Joseph Smith’s Emendation of Genesis 1:1,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 30, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 116–18.

²⁴ “Special Meeting,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 16 (September 2, 1844), 638. See Richard van Wagoner and Steven Walker, “The Joseph/Hyrum Smith Funeral Sermon,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1 (Winter 1983), 3–18, [John Taylor], “Patriarchal,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 10 (June 1, 1845), 920.

servers from appreciating the imaginative scope and power of what early Latter-day Saints understood their founding prophet to be preaching. Distant galaxies not only had names, they had humanized histories, could be understood, even tamed by those who wielded the power of Smith's priesthood. Adam and Eve, our prototypical parents and selves, held the secrets to human origins and destiny. However whimsical and strange it sounds to a modern audience, Phelps meant "Paracletes" in dead earnest. To the readers of his speculative fiction, Phelps hoped that "perhaps this subject may excite the curiosity of some as it will lead the mind back among the worlds that have been organized and passed away, and among the Gods and angels that have attended to execute the laws and decrees of one universe after another, from eternity to eternity, from the beginning till now." Phelps almost certainly achieved his goal

Annotated Text of "Paracletes"

Once upon a time, the most honorable men of the creations or universes, met together to promote the best interest of the great whole. The "head"²⁵ said to his oldest son²⁶, you are the rightful heir²⁷ to all, but you know I have many kingdoms and many mansions,²⁸ and of course it will need many kings and many priests²⁹, to govern them, come you with me in solemn council, and let us and some of the "best" men we have had born in the regions of light³⁰, to rule in those kingdoms and set them in order by exhibiting good that evil may be manifest.

²⁵ Smith, in exegesis of Genesis 1: 1, apparently designated God the Father as the "head" of the Gods, reasoning from the plural *Eloheim* and his reanalysis of *reshit* as referring to the "head." See Barney, "Joseph Smith's Emendation," 103–135. Smith had also, in exegesis of Revelation 7:3, proposed that the "head" referred to a patriarchal ancestor, the location of the "seal" provided by Christ. See Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 238–242, 13 August 1843—see especially the Franklin Richards account of the sermon.

²⁶ This appears to refer to Jesus, later denominated as Jehovah. See Abraham 3:24.

²⁷ George Laub's transcription of the King Follett sermon reports Smith as saying that Jesus had claim on the earth as "his right by inheritance." Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 362.

²⁸ Smith used the reference to "many mansions" in John 14:2 to situate his plural afterlife in his King Follett sermon. See "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 15 (August 15, 1844), 616–7.

²⁹ Alluding to Revelation (1:6, 5:10), "kings and priests" became a templempathic reference to heavenly government.

³⁰ This rough paraphrase of Matt 4: 16 was popular in Anglo-American religious writing as a trope for the realm where God lived. See James Hervey, *Meditations and Contemplations* (New York: Richard Scott, 1824), 176, a book Joseph Smith owned in Nauvoo. An editorialist, probably Phelps, used "region of light" to refer to America's Zionist future in 1835., "Lo, The Days Come," *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, no. 11 (August 1835), 166. This may be an early witness to the contested doctrine of spirit birth, though being "born in the regions of light" could easily be understood metaphorically.

It was said and done, for everything there, was adopted from the “head” by common consent.³¹ As free agency³² gave the sons of the “head” a fair chance to choose for themselves, the most noble of the hosts, came forward and selected a world or kingdom, and a time or a season, when he would take his chance, at winning the hearts of the multitude, a kingdom, crown, and never ending glory.³³

The innumerable multiplicity of kingdoms, or spheres for action, with beings and animals in proportion, and time, times, eternity and eternities, for a full development of the qualities and powers of each, would so far exceed the common comprehension of mortals, that I can only say eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath a natural heart yet been able to calculate either.³⁴ I then shall content myself, for this time to sketch but one. Idumia³⁵ is the one as interesting as any,

³¹ This phrase referred to early Latter-day Saint church governance. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 26:2, 28: 13. Early Mormons saw their church organization as reflecting a heavenly system.

³² In the early American Republic this catch phrase of Latter-day Saints was a repudiation of orthodox Calvinist constructions of human will. It figured in much of Smith’s scripture, from Book of Mormon to his Bible translations to his book of Abraham. See Kathleen Flake, “Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith’s Narrative Canon,” *Journal of Religion* 87 (October 2007), 515–9 for a religious studies perspective on the centrality of agency to early Mormon cosmogony.

³³ Phelps uses Christological images to describe each of the “noble” beings responsible for a given creation. These figures are the “noble and great ones” of the Abraham revelation (Chapter 3). His reference to “winning the hearts of the multitude” refers to the cosmic scope of Mormon evangelism, as in his 1836 letter to his wife Sally, which advertised that all his converts would be “a crown of many stars” in the afterlife. Bruce A. Van Orden, ed. “Writing to Zion: the William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836),” *BYU Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3 (1993), 559.

³⁴ This idea of an “innumerable multiplicity” of “beings and animals in proportion” drew on Thomas Dick, the Great Chain of Being, and a variety of folk beliefs about the significance of the stars. See Brown, “Great Chain of Being.”

³⁵ Phelps is appropriating Smith’s use of Idumea (Biblical Edom) in his preface to the 1833 *Book of Commandments* (now *Doctrine and Covenants* 1) to signify the “world.”

and being situated at an immense distance from the center or “head’s” residence³⁶, and many eternities from the birth of the “Son of the morning”³⁷ or even the great holy day when the “morning stars sang together,”³⁸ because so many worlds had been wrought out and left “empty and desolate,”³⁹ as places for “all the sons” of God to multiply and replenish the earth, I select that.⁴⁰ Time being divided into seven parts,⁴¹ the following men agreed to leave the mansions of bliss, and spiritually help organize every thing necessary to fill a kingdom for the space of many of the Lord’s days⁴², viz: Milauleph, Milbeth, Milgimal,

³⁶ Smith proposed that a celestial body named Kolob stood nearest God’s residence. In the KEP, Phelps and Smith proposed that temporospatial distances from Kolob determined cosmic significance, using an appropriation of the Old Testament measure the cubit to express these distances. See Brown, “Kirtland Egyptian Papers.”

³⁷ In Isaiah 14:12 this phrase refers to Lucifer. Phelps appears to be using the term more broadly to describe pre-earth divine beings as the “sons of morning,” probably as a synonym for the “sons of God” mentioned in Job 38:7.

³⁸ Early Latter-day Saints often used Job 38:7 as the biblical proof-text to confirm both human pre-existence and the nature of the Council in Heaven. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 128:23. This scripture is generally associated with stars and immortality in even ancient exegesis. Alan Segal, *Life After Death: The Afterlife in Western Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 265. Phelps appears to be situating the first creation in all universes within Old Testament narratives via this reference to Job, using a form of correspondence. Phelps’s Adam apparently lived many generations after these events. This phrase may also attribute a spirit birth to the Lucifer of Isaiah 14.

³⁹ Phelps is quoting Abraham 4:2, itself an exegesis of Genesis 1:2.

⁴⁰ This phrase emphasizes the extent to which Phelps universalized the Genesis creation account.

⁴¹ This is typical of Protestant eschatology, representing the “seven seals” of Revelation 5.

⁴² Phelps here is using “Lord” to refer to the “head” God, consistent with the early Mormon view that God the Father, the Lord of the Old Testament, was the ruling God of the universe, including the earth. These “days” refer to one-thousand years, an allusion to 2 Peter 3:8 that Phelps and Smith used in the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. Phelps actually used this equation to calculate the age of the earth as 2.5 billion years (7,000 years at 1,000 years per day) in “The Answer,” 758.

Mildauleth, Milhah, Milvah and Milzah.⁴³ Now after they had organized the kingdom of Idumia spiritually, then one at a time, was to come temporally and open the door of communication with the spiritual kingdom,⁴⁴ that all that would, might return to their former estate⁴⁵; for, for this reason, all the regions created and to be created, were filled with a variety of beings⁴⁶: agents to themselves but accountable to the “head” for promises, made, when they agreed “to go” and be born of the flesh as they had been of the spirit⁴⁷; that they might know the evil,

⁴³ Phelps is prefixing “mil” (probably from “millennium” or perhaps neologistic contraction of the Hebrew *melek* for “king”) to idiosyncratic spellings of the first seven letters of the Hebrew alphabet. While kabbalistic associations are reasonable here, there is no evidence Phelps invoked gematria (mystical arithmetic of letters). This construction more likely indicates Phelps’s avid use of Hebrew as a sign of his linguistic skill and specific mastery of ancient Hebrew. Several of his idiosyncratic translations of Bible texts, apparently from an eighteenth-century Hebrew text by Johann Michaelis, were printed in the *Times and Seasons*. “CX Psalm,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 14 (August 1, 1844), 600–1; “Keys,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 23 (December 15, 1844), 748; “Which is Right?” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 2 (February 1, 1845), 791. Phelps had mixed languages in the KEP, making the Latin-Hebrew combination not unexpected. Brown, “Joseph (Smith) in Egypt,” 54–56. The KEP contain another possible hint, defining a portion of the Hebrew *aleph* as “*Albeth*,” which means “Angels or disembodied spirits or saints.” GAEL (KEPE 1), 29. See also Phelps’s 1835 diary (MS 3450, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City), which contains various translations and linguistic speculations—see discussion in Brown, “Translator and Ghostwriter,” 55–8.

⁴⁴ Early Mormons apparently believed that angels were the means of mediating communication from heaven, not unlike Catholic hagiolatry, though both sides would have resented such a comparison. See “The Angels,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 4 (March 1, 1845), 823–4, written either by Phelps or John Taylor, who preached the same thing on July 6, 1845 as recorded in “Discourse of Elder John Taylor,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 21 (January 15, 1846), 1098–1102.

⁴⁵ Phelps is following Smith’s Abraham 3:26 in associating “estates” with stages of development through a Progressive Chain of Being. He is also punning on estate as a royal residence.

⁴⁶ This is another allusion to the Chain of Being.

⁴⁷ Phelps hints at LDS sacramental theology as he appears to affirm spirit birth which by correspondence mirrors spiritual rebirth on earth.

and choose the good: and then be born again of the spirit and the water,"⁴⁸ and enter into the mansions prepared for them before the foundations of the worlds.⁴⁹

Milauleph being the eldest and first chosen for Idumia,⁵⁰ came on when "there was not a man to till the ground,"⁵¹ that is, there was not a "man of flesh"⁵² to labor temporally; and his elder brethren⁵³ who had wrought out their salvation, upon worlds or realms, or kingdoms, ages, yea even eternities before⁵⁴, formed him a temporal body like unto their spiritual bodies, and put the life of his spiritual body into it, and gave him the power of endless lives.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ John 3. This emphasizes baptism as both a mystical rebirth and a necessary sacrament, addressing debates in antebellum Protestantism about the sacramental status of baptism.

⁴⁹ Ephesians 1:4 and 1 Pet 1:20, both texts Mormons appropriated to confirm human pre-existence.

⁵⁰ This first of the millennial-sounding angels, named for *aleph*, stands in for Adam in this account. (Though there is no clear evidence Phelps had read them, the famed hermeticists Robert Fludd and Jacob Boehme used *Dark Aleph* and *Light Aleph* to represent the main spiritual forces in the universe; Albanese, *Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 46-7). Phelps had speculated, in attempted translations of Isaiah 2 in his 1835 diary, about the universalization of Adam in attempts to explain why the Hebrew *adam* means "man," or "a man." In "Paracletes," Phelps intends one divine figure to stand in for many others in much the same way.

⁵¹ Genesis 2:5.

⁵² Phelps appears to be using this term to distinguish embodied angels from the unembodied and may be modifying material from Genesis 2:23.

⁵³ The Council is standing in for the "head" in this retelling of Genesis. In Phelps, as in Smith, the boundaries between the head and the council are fluid.

⁵⁴ This suggests another class of being or stage of development, embodied and exalted. This position logically implies that Jesus would have been embodied before his earth life, a claim not clearly made in the divine anthropology.

⁵⁵ This importantly distinguishes Phelps from Young's Adam-God. This Adam did not have a physical body before the earth's creation. The Mormon doctrine of embodiment is complex. Whatever its details, Phelps echoed Smith's conviction that embodiment was a rate-limiting step in eternal progression. Phelps is playing with the image of God inspiring the breath of life into his offspring, a Mormon version of *ruakh*. Smith had been using "endless lives" to

Now the acts of his spiritual body, while he was a child with his father and mother in heaven⁵⁶; and his acts while he was in the spiritual councils of the Gods for millions of years; and his acts upon Idumia, while he named, arranged and prepared everything upon it to fulfil the end and aim of their creation⁵⁷, behold they are written in ‘the books’ of the ‘head,’⁵⁸ which are to be opened when the judgment comes for just men to enter into the joys of a ‘third existence’ which is spiritual.⁵⁹

refer to the ceaseless plurality of the afterlife since at least August 27, 1843 when he announced that his higher priesthood was for “administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.” Scott Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989) 409.

⁵⁶ There has been some controversy about how early a mother (or mothers) in heaven appears in the historical record. Phelps first emphasized this view in his December 25, 1844 “Answer” to William Smith (p. 758), and he here amplifies his belief. The phrase also likely supports the doctrine of spirit birth.

⁵⁷ This refers to the naming of animal creation in Genesis 2:19–20. This episode was important to Smith’s and Phelps’s views of language and the primordium. Brown, “Joseph (Smith) in Egypt,” 51–52.

⁵⁸ The belief in the power of sacred records in early Mormonism is familiar in Richard Bushman’s interpretation in “The Book of Mormon in Early Mormon History,” in Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, eds., *New Views of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 3–18. Phelps’s reference confirms a more mystical belief in the scriptures actually being written by Latter-day Saints, including what they called the Book of the Law of the Lord, the Patriarchal Blessing Book, the Relief Society Minutes, and the early church organs. See [Warren Cowdery], “Prospectus,” *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 3, no. 11 (August 1837), 546, Jill Derr, “Preserving the Record and Memory of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, 1842–1892,” paper presented at Mormon History Association conference, Salt Lake City, May 26, 2007, Alex Smith, “Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo Journals: Understanding the Documents,” paper presented at the Mormon History Association conference, Casper, Wyoming, May 27, 2006, Samuel Brown, “The ‘Beautiful Death’ in the Smith Family,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 45, no. 4 (2006), 137–8, Marquardt, ed., *Early Patriarchal Blessings*, esp. 39, 58, 71, 76, 87, 163 and 186–7. In many respects these various texts appear to be recapitulations of the Biblical Book of Life.

⁵⁹ This third existence is an early witness to a “third estate” in Mormon salvation and should be read as equivalent to “exaltation.”

Milauleph had one thousand years⁶⁰ to account for, as well as to be 'arch angel' of Idumia, after he laid down his temporal body.⁶¹ Behold here is wisdom, he that hath ears to hear let him hear, for Milauleph, as yet had not been tempted with evil that he might know the good.⁶² He had not exercised the power of endless lives that he might do the works that his father had done⁶³: and he had not 'fell that men might be.'⁶⁴ Although he had seen his eldest brother create worlds, and people them⁶⁵; and had witnessed the course and conduct of that world and people, as free agents, 'sinning and being sinned against,'⁶⁶ while 'death' who held a commission from the 'Son of the morning,' to end the first partnership between the spirit and the body⁶⁷, yet, with all this knowledge, and a liberal education in the great college of the nobles of heaven⁶⁸, wherein all perfection was taught, all science explained from

⁶⁰ This is consistent with typical Christian eschatology and also supports the belief that Phelps intended the "mil" prefix in these angels' names to refer to a millennium.

⁶¹ This reflects the early Mormon belief that angels were resurrected patriarchs and righteous humans became angels at the time of their death, dating at least to 1835. Phelps is also comparing Adam to Jesus in his capacity to "lay down" his life (John 10:15-7, 15:13; 1 John 3:16).

⁶² This is a crucial distinction from Young's later Adam-God. In this view, Adam-Michael was an immature being rather than a mature God. His taking over the world of Idumia was to be his test of mortality.

⁶³ This is a fairly direct quote from the June 1844 Sermon in the Grove and contextually suggests that the "head" had once been an Adam figure. Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379-81.

⁶⁴ Phelps is quoting 2 Nephi 2:25, confirming Milauleph as Adam.

⁶⁵ This does not appear to speak to the question of whether Jesus was to be Savior to multiple worlds but rather suggests that Jesus himself was a "paraclete" of sorts, creating several worlds separate from Adam's, a conflict with some descriptions of Young's Adam-God, in which Adam was Jesus's father.

⁶⁶ Phelps is mimicking the active and passive voices of Greek verbs without invoking a specific verse in the New Testament.

⁶⁷ John Taylor or William Phelps argued that death was actually personified in a hyper-literal exegesis of Isaiah 28:15 and Revelation 6:8. "Reflections," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 16 (September 2, 1844), 634.

⁶⁸ The early Saints were notoriously proud of their University of Nauvoo and their Kirtland seminary, which combined the School of the Prophets and the

first to last⁶⁹, and all that was, is, or will be, was exhibited on the great map of perpetual systems, and eternal lives, Milauleph had to take his wife or one of the ‘Queens of heaven,’⁷⁰ and come upon Idumia, and be tempted, overcome, and driven from the presence of his Father⁷¹, because it had been agreed by the Gods and grand council of heaven, that all the family of the ‘head’ that would do as he or his eldest son did, should be exalted to the same glory.⁷²

This was to be accomplished by the power of ‘perpetual succession’⁷³ in eternal lives, wherein there was no ‘remission of sin without

Hebrew School. The view of education and college as important was common in the early American republic and central to beliefs in the potential of the common man: Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 350.

⁶⁹ This strong combination of science and faith is quite typical of antebellum religion. See E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) and George M. Marsden, “Everyone One’s Own Interpreter? The Bible, Science, and Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,” in Noll and Hatch, eds., *The Bible in America*.

⁷⁰ In the “Answer” Phelps argued, from an exegesis of Jeremiah (7:18, 44:17-25), for female divinities, called the “queens of heaven.”

⁷¹ This model suggests the “head” as the Father of the Genesis creation account, contra the typical interpretation of Young’s Adam-God theology.

⁷² Milauleph, representing Michael-Adam, by this report had not previously achieved an exaltation, contrary to the figures that correspond apparently to Jesus and God the Father. Adam in this model remained a junior God rather than the Adam-God model.

⁷³ Phelps is emphasizing the image of heritability in the celestial power of the divine anthropology. Mormons were angry that the Nauvoo Charter was being revoked despite its being granted in “perpetual succession.” “An act to incorporate the City of Nauvoo,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, no. 6 (January 15, 1841), 281 and vol. 6, no. 8 (May 1, 1845), 894 and the *Wasp* editorial reprinted in *History of the Church*, vol. 5, 306. Smith had granted his heirs “perpetual succession” to a “suite of rooms” in the Nauvoo House hotel, something that angered critics and dissidents. “Charter for the Nauvoo House,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, no. 11 (April 1, 1841), 370. Either Phelps or Parley Pratt, in “Reflections,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 14 (August 1, 1844), 602 claimed that “fidelity and friendship and love and light, are only eternal by perpetual succession.” This use of legal terms in novel, religious

the shedding of blood;⁷⁴ no forgiveness without repentance; and no glory without perfect submission to the 'head.' The foundation was truth: and the continuation, perpetual succession by revelation. Milauleph, then, knew that he and his wife would sin, and be troubled; but as the eternal spirit in him was the candle of the Lord, he knew also that the light thereof upon the eyes of his understanding, would show some of the way marks to the original 'truth,'⁷⁵ whereby he might work out his salvation with fear and trembling.⁷⁶ That none of the work of the hands of the 'Son' might be lost or any souls which his father had given him, might be left in prison⁷⁷, angels were commissioned to watch over Idumia, and act as spiritual guides to every soul, 'lest they should fall and dash their feet against a stone.'⁷⁸ They were denominated 'the angels of our presence.'⁷⁹

[Phelps completed his story two numbers later.]

applications was not uncommon for Phelps, called Judge Phelps since the late 1830s considered himself a "lawyer in Israel." Brown, "Ghostwriter," 36, 56.

⁷⁴ Hebrews 9:22.

⁷⁵ Proverbs 20:27. The notion of an immanent light connecting humans to higher truth is both Mormon, where it is known as the "Light of Christ," and more broadly fits well within correspondence, neo-Platonism, and hermeticism. The similarity to Plato's unforgetting of truth is likely coincidental. Albanese, *Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 133-4, 139-42.

⁷⁶ Philippians 2:12. Toward the end of his life, Smith taught that his temple rites would allow his followers to simultaneously achieve enlightenment and receive efficacious sacraments. Phelps sandwiches a subtle allusion to this set of rites between two Biblical references, much as Smith biblicalized his innovations.

⁷⁷ This is an unusual application of Smith's exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-20, which propounded a purgatorial existence for the unrighteous in the world of spirits, in a place called "spirit prison" that Smith identified as hell according to George Laub's transcript of the King Follett Discourse. Ehat and Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 362.

⁷⁸ Phelps reused a phrase from the devil's "temptation" of Jesus as recorded in Matt 4:6 and Luke 4:11, which suggested Jesus's access to protective angels.

⁷⁹ This is a twist on Isaiah 63:9, the angel of Yahweh's presence, to support a doctrine of guardian angels. See also "The Angels," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 4 (March 1, 1845), 824.

To continue the history of the seven holy ones, who agreed to take upon them bodies of flesh, and work out a more exceeding and eternal crown of glory, upon Idumia, it will be necessary to premise, that Milauleph, and his first companion in the flesh, knew before they left their “first estate,” what their father’s will was; and that when they should begin to replenish the earth, Satan, who had been raised and educated with them in their father’s family⁸⁰, would descend from heaven like lightning to tempt them⁸¹, that they might know to choose good and reject evil. These two, who had engaged to people Idumia: to subdue it, and to return, having kept the faith once delivered to the chosen seed⁸², were informed, when they agreed to go and labor their hour, that besides the comforter, to bring all things to their remembrance⁸³, the angels which attended them on high should attend them below to preserve them from the secret of unfor[e]seen snares of those angels who kept not their first estates, but were left in their sins, to roam from region to region, and in chains of darkness, until the great day of judgment.⁸⁴

It was written in the law of the Lord on high⁸⁵, that they that overcome by obedience, should be made kings and queens, and priests

⁸⁰ This is an early witness to Satan as a child of God. Although later evangelical Protestants have found this view heretical, the tradition of Satan as a fallen star or angel is much older than and independent of Mormonism. John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is only the most famous of the framings of this notion.

⁸¹ Phelps is playing with the name “Lucifer” the fallen angel of Isaiah 14:12, whose name means “light.”

⁸² Jude 1:3. Early Latter-day Saints used this phrase to support their view that Adam was a Christian.

⁸³ This is a reference to the Comforter of John 14:26, for which Phelps named the story.

⁸⁴ This image of marauding dark angels was not uncommon in antebellum American folk religion. They were reasonable foes for the guardian angels. Ideas about angels fighting over the souls of the righteous were prominent in medieval Christianity, particularly at the deathbed.

⁸⁵ This appears to be a reference to Smith’s Book of the Law of the Lord. See Smith, “Nauvoo Journals.”

and priestesses to God and his Father, through the atonement of the eldest son⁸⁶, and that natural eyes should not see, nor natural ears hear, neither should the natural heart conceive⁸⁷ the great, glorious, and eternal things, honors and blessings, that were then, in the Father's dominions, and mansions, prepared in the beginning for them that kept the faith to the end, and entered triumphantly into their third estates:—the eternal life.⁸⁸ It was also written in the law of the Lord on high, that when the Lord punished men for their sins, he would “punish the hosts of the high ones on high,”⁸⁹ and the “kings of the earth upon earth,”—that spirit might judge spirit, and flesh judge flesh⁹⁰; for this honor have all the just, and this honor have all the saints.⁹¹

Having this understanding—Idumia was placed in its space, but was “desolate and empty.” and the life organizing power⁹² of the Gods, or sons of the “head,” moved over the matters and then the land and water separated. And the Gods called “light, and light came,” and they went on and organized a world, and created everything necessary to beautify and adorn it, with life and the power of lives to sustain it, until it should fill the measure of all designed, from a mite to a mammoth;

⁸⁶ This is clearly different from Young's Adam-God.

⁸⁷ 3 Ne 17:17.

⁸⁸ Phelps may be alluding to temple rites.

⁸⁹ Isaiah 24:21.

⁹⁰ The correspondence of flesh to flesh and spirit to spirit expands Smith's late teaching that different types of supernatural beings had different roles to play. See “The Angels,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 4 (March 1, 1845), 824–5—“the angels who minister to men in the flesh, are resurrected beings, so that flesh administers to flesh; and spirits to spirits” and “spirit ministers to spirit, and so we dream revelations, because the angels inform our spirits what to dream.” See also Orson Pratt's confirmatory preaching in “Funeral of Mrs. Caroline Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 10 (June 1, 1845), 919.

⁹¹ Samuel Bent, et al., “The High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ to the Saints of Nauvoo,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, no. 8 (February 15, 1842), 700 announced that the “Saints would judge angels,” a distinctive exegesis of 1 Corinthians 6:3.

⁹² Phelps has substituted this allusion to what Smith called priesthood for the Spirit of God (*ruakh*) in the Genesis account.

from a man to a God⁹³; and Milauleph's and his wife's spirits, clothed in heavenly garments⁹⁴, and learned in eternal wisdom, witnessed the creation, as the spirits of the Gods had witnessed their Father: for even the elder brother could do nothing but what he had seen his Father do in eternities before.⁹⁵

⁹³ This is another reference to the Great Chain of Being. Phelps had used a similar phrase in the same sense in "He that Will not Work, Is Not a Disciple of the Lord," *Evening and Morning Star*, vol. 1, no. 6 (November 1832), 47.

⁹⁴ This is a likely reference to the temple garments introduced in 1842.

⁹⁵ Contrary to Young's Adam-God, Jesus is clearly superior to Adam in this formulation, which may also suggest God was himself once an immature "paraclete."