The Prophet Elias Puzzle

Samuel Brown

Early Mormonism is notable for a proliferation of angels, scriptural luminaries who visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and his close associates.[1] These visitations not only established prophetic authority generally but were also often associated with specific innovations, rites, and doctrines. Thus, Moroni delivered the Book of Mormon, John the Baptist bestowed the lesser priesthood, and a triumvirate of Christian apostles granted the higher priesthood. Perhaps most important in this august pantheon is Elijah, the biblical patriarch who ascended living to heaven (was translated) as a reward for exemplary faithfulness. For early Mormons, Elijah shouldered a burdensome mission: to oversee LDS temple rites and integrate the human family into an organic whole, sealing up personal relationships against death.

This seemingly pluripotent Elijah is shadowed by a doppelganger in the angelic tumult of early Mormonism named Elias, the King James rendering of the Greek transliteration of the prophet's Hebrew name. This Elias, according to Joseph Smith, was present at Christ's transfiguration and its Kirtland Temple reenactment and plays an important if confusing role in Restoration events. Furthermore, Elias was distinct from Elijah, as Smith confirmed in his 1844 sermon: "[I] preached on the subject of the spirit of /Elias/ Elijah, and Mesiah clearly defining the offices of the 3 personages."[2]

This paper explores the significance of this Elijah-Elias bifurcation, seen by critics as emblematic of Smith's imaginative if inaccurate appropriation of the biblical lexicon. Writers from within Mormonism have historically focused, with precedent in the Prophet's teachings, on a "Spirit of Elias" borne by various angelic ministrants while positing the existence of a minor but essentially unknown prophet actually named Elias who stays away from center stage.[3] Later writers, exemplified by Bruce R. McConkie, have described these several instances of Elias in impressive

detail.[4] These creative solutions have been a response to incredulous critics who see only a glaring error of transliteration made corporeal, a chink in the armor of Joseph Smith's seerhood.

To my eye the debate about whether Elias is a separate individual—indeterminate except by fiat or faith—misses a crucial point. Whatever their genesis, there can be little doubt that Joseph Smith saw Elijah and Elias as distinct entities. I believe that they both arise from Elijah, that Elias assumed the traits of the standard Christian Elijah, and that understanding the bifurcation sheds light on early Mormonism's approach to the conquest of death.

To this end, I will contextualize the prophet Elijah and attempt to solve the puzzle of Elias, investigating the linguistic evidence, exploring Joseph Smith's discussions of Elias, and providing a theoretical framework for the significance of the Elijah/Elias bifurcation.

I would like first to visit the linguistic argument in hopes of setting it aside. Joseph Smith has a long and intriguing history of inspired translation coupled with a fascination with ancient languages, ranging from his "Egyptian Alphabet" to his limited training in Hebrew, Greek, and German.[5] There is also evidence of considerable philological creativity, along with a certain animated fastidiousness about getting biblical names just right.[6]

The problem in this instance is that the divine Hebrew suffix *-jah* is transliterated *-as* in Greek, a distinction fixed by the standard biblical translation of Joseph Smith's America. Whether Joseph Smith realized this is not entirely clear, but evidence suggests that he probably did. Textually, the clearest evidence is his approving quotation of a selection from Benjamin Winchester's *Gospel Reflector*, published in Philadelphia, in the *Times and Seasons*, the Church's official paper in Nauvoo, then being edited by Joseph Smith's brother, William. The article, a plug for the apocryphal books of Esdras, attempts to validate these extracanonical accounts by reminding readers that Esdras is, in fact, the familiar prophet Ezra. Winchester adduces further examples of the identity of name variants between "translations" from Greek and Hebrew texts: "The difference in the name, no doubt, arose from the different languages from which it was translated. . . . For instance, Isaiah, and Jeremiah in the Old Testament, are Esaias and Jeremias in the New."[7]

While this explanation suggests a self-taught linguist, it is basically correct. While it is possible that Joseph did not consider the linguistic

point carefully, such a view is by no means required. His failure to split Jeremias from Jeremiah—the tempting phrase in Matthew 16:14 notwithstanding—may argue for such awareness.[8] In at least one instance, Joseph Smith clearly intends Elias as Elijah's name, when he recounts the New Testament report (James 5:17–18) of 1 Kings 17:1 and 18:1.[9] Oliver Cowdery agreed in an essay published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1840.[10] In another New Testament reference, Joseph seems clear that Esaias was Isaiah.[11]

The evidence is not uniform, however. In another setting Joseph Smith refers to Isaiah and Esaias separately in a list of Christian factions. This superfluous name may have been included to make a point: The use of various prophetic names as sectarian banners represents sinful disunity. Esaias in this interpretation would simply be a name among many others with no specific person standing behind it.[12] B. H. Roberts apparently tried to eliminate the duplication in his redaction of the revelation, though it has survived to the modern version of Doctrine and Covenants 76:100.[13] Joseph Smith's contention that Esaias was a contemporary of Abraham strongly suggests that his 1835 reference was more personal than rhetorical (D&C 84:13), making it difficult to adopt Roberts's position. Finally, an abortive attempt on Joseph's part to fit Alpha and Omega into male declensions suggests minor but inconsistent familiarity with New Testament Greek.[14]

Ultimately Joseph Smith was not governed by the rules that constrained philologists. A folk etymological response to detractors, attributed to Joseph Smith but likely penned by W. W. Phelps in 1833, suggests a remarkable freedom to control languages for the good of the kingdom. Phelps combined the English "more" with a perceived variant of an Egyptian root "mon" which he took to mean "good," and from them generated the conclusion that "Mormon means more good."[15] Terryl Givens has discussed this etymology in terms of Bakhtin's "authoritative discourse," claiming that the idiosyncratic explication demonstrates that even the fabric of language could be modified by revelation.[16] In the final analysis, we are left with this understanding of the bifurcation's linguistic origins: Whatever Smith's familiarity with biblical languages (or lack thereof), he revealed Elias and Elijah to his followers as separate entities.

Elijah Traditions

In the biblical account, Elijah, like Enoch and perhaps Moses, es-

caped death. This unique form of immortality bestowed special status which, coupled with his reanimation of a child (1 Kgs. 17:17-24), tied Elijah closely to the conquest of death in a variety of traditions. In addition to possible translation, biblical and extra-biblical authors saw several other parallels between Elijah and Moses, yielding a view of Elijah as a second Moses. In later Jewish tradition, Elijah was primarily associated with the Wandering Jew—another intriguing immortal—while the New Testament generally sees him as the harbinger of the coming Messiah with a millennial interpretation of Malachi's prophecy of Elijah's return (Mal. 4: 5-6).[17]

Several of these elements are present in two pseudepigraphical works (one Hebrew, one Coptic) called the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, which also emphasize Elijah's capacity to raise the dead.[18] In later Christianity, we find a tradition that places Elijah in a recapitulation of the Garden of Eden, close to Adam.[19]

For the occult hermeticists whose worldview was informed by the alchemist Paracelsus and the archetypal, if possibly pseudepigraphical, Hermes Trismegistus, Elias was an important figure, referred to specifically by this Greek name, apparently as a distinct incarnation of Elijah.[20] According to Paracelsus, "The Prophet Elias foretold many things by his cabalistic numbers."[21] Indeed, [at] the coming of Elias the Artist, . . . there shall be nothing so occult that it shall not be revealed."[22]

Closer to the Protestant mainstream, Jonathan Edwards spoke of Elias/Elijah as the immortal prophet, favoring one name over another for rhetorical rather than doctrinal reasons.[23] Many standard reference texts, including two owned by Joseph Smith, conflated Elijah/Elias with John the Baptist, who had come in Elijah's "spirit and power."[24] They are consistent with the simple sense of the New Testament (explicitly in Matthew 3:1-6 with parallels in Mark 1:1-6 and Luke 3:1-6) with clear support in Jesus's preaching (Mark 9:11-13; Matt. 11:13-14; Matt. 17:10-13; Luke 1:17). The only exception to this identification is John 1:19-28 in which the Baptist rejects this association, an act that both Smith and contemporary Bible dictionaries saw as identifying Jesus with Elijah. These identifications were not seen as mutually exclusive.[25]

Elias's Visitations

Having established this context, we turn now to Joseph Smith's reported encounter with Elias and his reports of two biblical visitations. On

the first Sunday after the March 1836 dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery sought wisdom in the new House of the Lord. Standing behind the veil of the temple, they reported a vision strongly reminiscent of Christ's transfiguration.[26]

> Elias appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying, that in them and their seed all generations after them should be blessed. After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon them, for Elijah the Prophet, who was taken to Heaven without tasting death, also stood before them, and said, "Behold the time has fully come which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying, that he should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse."[27]

Joseph Smith had previously reported the presence of John the Baptist as Elias at the New Testament transfiguration in his inspired Bible revisions, though later authors have backtracked some.[28] His 1836 vision did not require the same identity.[29] During revisions of *Book of Commandments* 28, Joseph reported that Elias, as Gabriel-Noah, visited Zacharias and prophesied that his son John "should be filled with the spirit of Elias," a scene with parallels in the angelic announcement to Mary that she would conceive Jesus.[30]

Though these are the chief recorded visitations of Elias, Joseph Smith and his followers identified Elias or his spirit with multiple individuals. The oldest and most persistent identification of Elias is the contemporary Christian one: John the Baptist. Joseph himself made clear associations between John the Baptist and Elias, his failure to mention Elias by name in the 1839 history draft notwithstanding.[31] Regarding his receipt of the Aaronic Priesthood, Joseph reported: "An angel came down from heaven and laid his hands upon me and ordained me to the power of Elias and that authorized me to babtise [sic] with water unto repentance."[32] In Joseph's gloss of Mark 9:3, the Elias present at Christ's transfiguration was identified as John the Baptist. This association with John dated to his birth, as evidenced by the visit of Gabriel-Noah.

The lesser-known Philip is said to have played a similar role.[33] Others who are identified as Elias at some point in Joseph Smith's writings include Jesus Christ,[34] Sidney Rigdon,[35] various unnamed prophets,[36] and John the Beloved (D&C 77:14). Parley P. Pratt saw Joseph Smith as an Elias with some precedent in the Prophet's own writings.[37] Later Orson F.

Whitney, in his epic poem *Elias*, adopted the term for Christianity as a religion (preparing the way for the restored gospel) and as Moroni (preparing the way for the Book of Mormon dispensation)—and even as the founding fathers in general.[38] B. H. Roberts proposed Shem and Melchizedek as candidates for Elias.[39] Though later writers have tended not to add additional candidates, the identities of Elias assume an impressive array of possibilities, and one current scholar has identified Elias as a spirit not unlike the Holy Ghost rather than simply a prophetic aegis.[40]

The Spirit of Elias and the Gospel of Abraham

Though Joseph Smith's Elias assumes various identities, certain associations do predominate, including the Aaronic Priesthood, restoration and preparation generally, and the "gospel of Abraham." Elias had a clear and persistent role in early Mormonism: Marquardt's comment that the inclusion of Elias is a "scribal error" is clearly wrong.[41]

The primary source of information regarding the significance of Elias comes from a sermon Smith delivered shortly before his death, during a period of frenetic doctrinal and ritual developments.[42] Delivered on the day of King Follett's burial but four weeks before the astounding sermon Smith gave as his funeral oration for Follett, the Elias/Elijah sermon was, according to Wilford Woodruff, "one of the most important & interesting subjects ever presented to the saints."[43] According to the newspaper report of the March 10, 1844, gathering, the audience "listened with an almost breathless silence; their minds apparently being completely absorbed with the subject, while with a rapturous delight they heard so exquisite a dissertation upon these important principles."[44] This sermon superseded a prior speculative editorial published in the *Times and Seasons*.[45]

Joseph Smith very clearly states that anyone who has a preparatory mission (particularly that limited to the Christian rite of baptism) partakes of the spirit of Elias. For the Latter-day Saints, "Elias is a fore runner to prepare the way," and the "doctrin of Elias" was sending a man to "prepare for a greater work."[46] Elias was "a going before to prepare the way for the greater."[47] Indeed as we noted, an Elias was his own harbinger, thus connecting a Mormon Elias (Gabriel-Noah) with his Christian counterpart (John).

It is not surprising that Elias is also identified with a preparatory priesthood. This overlap of Elias and the Aaronic Priesthood seems to be more than just an identification with John the Baptist, the messenger who

delivered that priesthood to Joseph Smith. Joseph specified that "the Priesthood of Elias [is] the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto."[48] This introductory priesthood, invoked as Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery explored the contours of the Christian church and the basic rites of believing, included baptism, the act of Christian salvation so important to Joseph that he wept uncontrollably when his father finally received it.[49] This priesthood, like the very idea of Elias as harbinger, would have been familiar to many Christians.

The gospel of Abraham, represented by Elias in the Kirtland visitation, is less certain of definition. George Q. Cannon taught that it referred to "the promises that were made to Abraham."[50] D. Michael Quinn maintains that it represents the authorization of the office of patriarch, following Roberts's discussion and with some precedent in Church organization. While there is some overlap between the two, such a view is unnecessarily limited in scope.[51] I believe that Bruce R. McConkie has, on the other hand, overstated Abraham's significance by attempting to include in his purview the act of temple marriage, of which the major significance is more closely associated with Elijah.[52] While Joseph Smith was translating the Abraham papyri at the time, thereby disclosing a mystical cosmogony, the Kirtland reference to the gospel of Abraham does not appear to be specifically tied to the papyri.

Abraham's promise was that his offspring would be numberless and that his name would be used as a blessing, presumably by token of the righteous progeny who would immortalize his name.[53] Joseph Smith's report of the 1836 vision supports this view in its contemporary Christian interpretation: "In them [Smith and Cowdery] and their seed all generations after them should be blessed."[54] Smith also later included the hope that Abraham's blessing could save his offspring.[55]

As the archetypal patriarch, Abraham promised to his charges a reproductive immortality.[56] Joseph Jr.'s choice of his own father as the first Church patriarch confirms the understanding of Abraham as *pater familias*. Joseph Sr. was the "father" to the multitudes of Latter-day Saints who accepted his son as their prophet. In this sense, the office of patriarch was in fact subsumed within a gospel of Abraham.

Ultimately, though, this promise of blessed offspring is unidirectional, descending rather than ascending the family tree. Abraham's promise applied to his children; his gospel did not look back to his own

progenitors.[57] As we shall see, Elijah would outdo Abraham by promising and enabling continuity with both progeny and progenitor.

Joseph Smith's Elias, even with these Abramic overtones, was a familiar figure to antebellum Americans. His basic priesthood, his anticipation of the millennium, and his association with baptism are all consistent with the contemporary Christian view of Elijah. Abraham's promise was fundamentally the blessing of a righteous kindred, a common hope and idiom. In an important sense Elias (with Abraham in this particular setting) represents, to a rough approximation, the Protestant Elijah, and this identity made possible Joseph Smith's revelation of a new and startling vision of Elijah.

The Spirit of Elijah and the Priesthood of Melchizedek

Where Elias fit well in the Christian mainstream, Elijah betokened a grander theology. Where Elias was Aaronic, Elijah was Melchizedek; where Elias baptized, Elijah sealed. Where Elias was preparatory, Elijah was definitive. According to the Prophet's 1844 sermon, the "office & work of Elijah . . . is one of the greatest & most important subjects that God has revealed."[58]

The association with Melchizedek and his priesthood is a natural counterpoint to Elias's identity with the Aaronic Priesthood.[59] Just as the baptizing authority defers to the higher priesthood (with its gift of the Holy Ghost), believers ascend the priesthood scale as Elias gives way to Elijah. In Joseph Smith's words this "shows the distinction between the two powers" of Elias and Elijah.[60] While the Aaronic is a priesthood of "outward ordinances," the Melchizedek represents "the privilege of receiving of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."[61] According to Joseph, "the spirit power & Calling of Elijah is that ye have power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oricles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood."[62]

While the Aaronic Priesthood filled the Church, the Melchizedek filled the temple, Elijah's sacred venue. In Joseph's words, "the spirit & power of Elijah is to come after [Elias] holding the keys of power building the Temple to the cap stone placing the seals of the Melchezedeck priesthood up on the house of Israel." Elijah's association with the temple is explicitly to unite the generations of the human family. "This is the spirit of Elijah," Wilford Woodruff recorded Joseph as saying, "that we redeem our dead & connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven & seal

up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection & here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven."[63]

There are two senses in which Elijah could seal, one personal, the other familial. The promise of one's own salvation was an elusive and paradoxical goal in American Protestantism. A Puritan legacy left the dying believer uncertain of salvation even on his deathbed—to know heaven before the judgment was to commit the sin of pride. Smith rejected the uncertainty of Puritan salvation in explicit terms during his 1844 sermon: "Here is the doctrin of Election that the world have quarreled so much about but they do not know any thing about it." His solution to the uncertainty was the prophet of the Mormon temple: "Elijah is sufficient to make our Calling & Election sure." After this pronouncement, Joseph devotes some energy to fleshing out the details of this salvational surety: the nature of sin after sealing; the temporary hell for Elijah's sealed; and the problem of David, Jesus's fallen ancestor.[64] The message is clear: Joseph's Elijah had the power to promise heaven to the faithful Saint.[65]

But sealing the righteous individual to an isolated salvation was insufficient for a prophet who pled, "Let me be resurrected with the Saints, whether to heaven or hell or any other good place. . . . What do we care if the society is good."[66] We must not forget that the Puritan heaven, hard enough for a believer to achieve individually, could never reliably accommodate a family whole. The doctrine of election required that parents admit their uncertainty about whether their children would be saved at all.[67] Even if they were exalted, their bonds would be attenuated at best in the presence of the all-encompassing God.[68] Attachments to family and friends were subsumed by an overall disavowal of so-called *avaritia* (ultimately the deadly sin of avarice, but initially simply a significant attachment to possessions and companions in the present world) since at least medieval Christianity, transmitted through Puritanism.[69] Though occasionally tempted by the pain of bereavement, Joseph would ultimately reject the traditional fear of attachment: The faithful could not be saved without their loved ones.[70] In playful language, modulated in the official report, Joseph emphasized the capacity of Elijah to seal earthly attachments against the erosive force of mortality and the Protestant afterlife:

> If you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be crafty. The first thing you do go & seal on earth your sons & daughters

unto yourself & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory & go ahead and not go back but use a little Craftiness & seal all you can & when you get to heaven tell your father that what you seal on earth should be sealed in heaven. I will walk through the gate of heaven and Claim what I seal & those that follow me & my Council.[71]

Not only did Elijah promise believers salvation as intact families, but the immortal prophet also promised to place those nuclear families in an endless, organic network of eternal beings. Where Elias's gospel of Abraham moved forward in time, prophesying righteous progeny, the gospel of Elijah reified relationships connecting the faithful to their first parents. In analogy with the King Follett sermon that would shortly follow, Elias could reveal that there was no end to the family, while Elijah could promise no beginning, the true mark of eternity according to the Prophet.[72] In George Laub's paraphrase of Joseph's preaching, the Saints would perform Elijah's ordinances "till they are connected to the ones in the dispensation before us" with implicit extension through Adam to Jesus.[73] We thus see Elijah's influence in the vicarious rites for the dead, celestial marriage, and the resultant connection of every righteous soul with every other in an eternal and miraculous network.[74]

While the subject is larger than this article, the Elijah of the afterlife differed radically from the horizontal community of the blessed in traditional Christianity.[75] Elijah was the steward of a hierarchical schema capable of uniting the vast concourses of the righteous dead into a simultaneous genealogical coherence, perhaps a muffled echo of the sentiment underlying the great chain of being.[76] The Mormon Elijah, far more than his Christian counterpart, had the capacity to defang the Puritan doctrine of mortality, thereby vanquishing death. While Elias could prepare a people for the coming of the Lord, Elijah could deliver to them a glorious and integrated afterlife.

Conclusion

In his receipt of wisdom at the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith demonstrated to the world that he meant to take the religion he was founding from the realm of American Christianity to the luminous and frightening world of the Old Testament patriarchs, and in so doing he sought to distill from the figure of Elijah two separate missions, both of which were hinted at in Malachi's prophecy. Joseph was no simple millenarian primitivist; the Christian Elijah would have sufficed for those needs. A second figure was required to distinguish the simple wait for the return of the Lord, held

in common with much of Christendom, from the dramatic new world vision that Smith was unfolding—generations of godlike humans eternally integrated into a single hierarchical family.

What to others was an issue of minor rhetorical significance was to Joseph Smith the clue to the retrieval of Elijah's miraculous and mystical role. Even if the name Elias had been rejected for its philological ambivalence, another would have been chosen to serve as the prefatory prophet, a way to preserve and highlight Elijah as the guiding angel of the Mormon conquest of death.[77]

In a sense this dichotomy between Elias and Elijah speaks to the fault line of early Mormonism, racked by dissension and schism in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. Elias was the familiar figure who animated millenarian Christians to prepare for Christ's return. This was the prophet of David Whitmer and William Law, of Emma Hale and Lucy Mack Smith. But Elias was just the beginning. Elijah drew the Church of the Latter-day Saints from antebellum Protestantism beyond the second coming into the creation of a new world beyond death.

Notes

1. The most convenient list of the major visitors is in H. Donl Peterson, "Moroni: Joseph Smith's Teacher," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: New York*, edited by Larry C. Porter, Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Susan Easton Black (Provo, Utah: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1992), 65. For a longer treatment, see Alexander Baugh, "Parting the Veil: Joseph Smith's Seventy-six Documented Visionary Experiences," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, edited by John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2005), 265–306.

2. Scott Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 458. "Elias" was written above the line in the holograph record.

3. It is not clear what is meant by maintaining a distinction that does not actually exist in Hebrew in reference to an ostensibly Hebrew name. If this prophet did exist as a distinct human individual, his name would likely also be Elijah rather than its Greek transliteration. There are certainly other known Elijahs in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 8:27; Ezra 10:21, 26; Judith 8:1), though none of them is an obvious candidate. See Siegfried Johnson, "Elijah, 2–4," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:466.

4. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 219–22. See also George Horton, "Elias," and James Hudson, "Elias, Spirit of," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York, Macmillan, 1992),

2:449. Orson Whitney seems to offer the most straightforward discussion: "Elias and Jeremias are Greek forms of the Hebrew names Elijah and Jeremiah. Joseph Smith, however, drew a distinction between the spirit of Elias and the spirit of Elijah." Whitney, *Elias: An Epic of the Ages* (Salt Lake City, n.d.) in *LDS Collectors Library 2005*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Infobase Media Corporation, 2004), 36, note to Canto 4, line 973.

5. Louis Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 41–55. See also Richard Lyman Bushman with Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 484.

6. This explains Smith's rejection of "James" instead of "Jacob" in the King James translation or "Shalom" over "Salem." See Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 202; Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, 409.

7. "From the Gospel Reflector. The Beauty of the Writings of the Prophet Esdras," *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 17 (July 1, 1841): 464.

8. I've been unable to find any examples of Jeremias being proposed as a distinct personage in my research or in searches of the publications on the CD-ROMs *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resources Library* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998) and the *LDS Collectors Library, 2005* (Salt Lake City: Infobase Media Corporation, 2004).

9. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, 48, entry for November 6, 1835.

10. Oliver Cowdery, "Rise of the Church, Letter II," *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 2 (November 15, 1840): 212.

11. Dean Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 381. Smith is quoting Matthew 13:14 which is a paraphrase of Isaiah 6:9.

12. D&C 1835 edition, Section 91:7.

13. B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 1:385–86, *LDS Collectors Library*, CD-ROM, 2005.

14. H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 240.

15. Joseph Smith, "To the Editor of the Times and Seasons," *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 13 (May 15, 1843): 194. For Roberts's discussion of authorship, see Truman Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 291–92.

16. Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 81.

17. Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Opera: The Art of Dying* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 164–65; and Jerome Walsh, "Elijah," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:463–66.

18. Orval Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Elijah," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:466–69.

19. C. H. Grandgent, "Cato and Elijah: A Study in Dante," *PMLA* 17, no. 1 (1902): 78.

20. John Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15, 19. I see nothing in Smith's Elijah bifurcation to support a hermetic reading of this specific aspect of Smith's worldview except in the general sense in which both were concerned with death. As I argue below, Elias's main role was to liberate Elijah for his mystical roles, not as a gnostic/perfectionist borrowing. Brooke (221) has misapprehended Elias/Elijah in Mormonism.

21. *Paracelsus His Aurora, & Treasure of the Philosophers . . .* (London: J. H. Oxon, 1659), chap. 1, http://www.levity.com/alchemy/paracel3.html (accessed March 24, 2004).

22. *Paracelsus His Archidoxis: Comprised in Ten Books, Disclosing the Genuine Way of making Quintessences, Arcanums, Magisteries, Elixirs . . .* (London: J. H. Oxon, 1660), chap. 4, http://www.levity.com/alchemy/paracel2.html (accessed March 24, 2004).

23. Edward Hickman, ed., *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, Sermon III, http://www.ccel.org/ (accessed March 24, 2004).

24. John Wesley, *Notes on the New Testament*, Commentary on Matt. 3:4, and Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Commentary on Malachi 4:5, and Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2 Kings 1:7-8, http://www.ccel.org/ (accessed September 8, 2005). See also John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, 2d American ed., 2 vols. (Pittsburg [no state designated]: Zadok Cramer, 1807), 1:448–49, and James Wood, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (New York: Griffin and Rudd, 1813), 401–2; both on microfilm, Widener Library, Harvard University. These British sources were American staples at the time. See also Thomas Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, 4th ed., 4 vols. (Philadelphia: E. Littell, 1825), 1:627, which clearly identifies John the Baptist as "appear[ing] in the spirit and power of Elijah." Smith owned a copy of Brown's *Dictionary*, according to Kenneth W. Godfrey, "A Note on the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute," *BYU Studies* 14 (Spring 1974): 386–89; and Horne's *Introduction*. Smith's signed copy of Horne's *Introduction* is in the Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri.

25. Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, 449; Wood, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, 402, both describe Jesus as the "antitype" of Elijah.

26. Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 319–21. I suspect that the timing was more associated with the anniversary of the Church's founding and the dedication of the Kirtland Temple than the overlap with the Passover season specifically, despite the tantalizing association with Elijah's role in the seder. For the opposite view,

see Stephen D. Ricks, "The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover," *BYU Studies* 23, no. 4 (1983): 483–86.

27. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record,* 158. See D&C 110:12–16.

28. Thus, the "Bible Dictionary" of the LDS edition (1979) of the King James Bible (p. 663), reports, "The curious wording of JST Mark 9:3 does not imply that the Elias at the Transfiguration was John the Baptist, but that in addition to Elijah the prophet, John the Baptist was present."

29. Indeed, Joseph Fielding Smith has claimed that it was Noah. *Answers to Gospel Questions,* 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 3:138–41.

30. Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations,* 72; D&C 27:6–7.

31. "Joseph Smith History, 1839," in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents,* 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996-2003), 1:75.

32. "James Burgess Notebook, March 10, 1844," in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents,* 1:188. See James Burgess Notebook, Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items," stated that the angel reportedly said, "this . . . is the Spirit of Elias," emphasis his.

33. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols. 1902–12, Vol. 7 reprinted 1932, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971 printing), 6:250.

34. The Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of John 1:28 has John the Baptist clearly identify Elias as the Savior "whose shoe's latchet" he is "not worthy to unloose."

35. Rigdon was sent forth "as John before Elijah." Bruce N. Westergren, ed., *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 5; this revelation ultimately became D&C 35:3–4.

36. Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* 2d ed. rev. and first electronic version, *LDS Collector's Library 2005,* 9–10.

37. It seems possible that Smith was meant to be the "Elias to restore all things," clearly distinguished from both Jesus and John the Baptist in the JST (John 1:26; Matt 17:9–14). See also Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations,* 77. There is precedent for LDS scripture referring prophetically to its author. Pratt makes the association of Smith with Elias explicit in his *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: L.D. Saint Depot, 1855), 79–81, scanned PDF of the first edition available from the online collection, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, print-out in my possession.

38. Whitney, *Elias,* 36 (footnote to Canto 4, line 1,008) and 45, 115 ("Epilogue," line 6,067).

39. B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1994), 436–37.

40. Stevan Davies, "But I Say unto You, Who Is Elias?" paper presented at a seminar, "Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormonism," Summer 2005, Brigham Young University, electronic version in my possession.

41. Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations,* 280. The specific context is Elias's Kirtland visitation.

42. *History of the Church,* 6:250 is the official version, drawn from Woodruff's transcript. See Scott Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal,* typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 2:359–65.

43. *Woodruff Journal* 2:359.

44. "Our City, and the Present Aspect of Affairs," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 6 (March 15, 1844): 472.

45. "The Elias," *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 8 (March 1, 1843): 120–23. This unattributed article refers to Joseph Smith in the third person and was likely written by the editor, John Taylor. This article explores the relationship between John the Baptist and Elias but does little to clarify the relationship between Elijah and Elias, beyond a nod toward the contemporary Christian identity of the two.

46. *Woodruff Journal* 2:360, 365.

47. Ibid., 2:359.

48. Ibid., 2:360.

49. Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 477.

50. George Q. Cannon, "Beware Lest Ye Fall," 1896, in Brian H. Stuy, comp. and ed., *Collected Discourses Delivered by Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others, 1886–1889,* 5 vols. (Burbank, Calif.: BHS Publishing, 1987–92), 5:82.

51. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 32; Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life,* 546.

52. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* 219.

53. James Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 38. While nineteenth-century Christians misinterpreted the Hebrew slightly, the distinction is of little significance. The key concept is a plenteous offspring that would vouchsafe genealogical immortality.

54. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record,* 158.

55. "This is why Abraham blessed his posterity: He wanted to bring them into the presence of God." Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 9–10. Smith preached this sermon sometime before August 8, 1839.

56. That the "bosom of Abraham" was a common trope for the blessed afterlife is not irrelevant. See Luke 16:22–3 and Fred Collier and William Harwell, eds., *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing Company, 2002), 126.

57. Though the patriarchal blessings given under his aegis ultimately did

look back by assigning an Israelite ancestor to essentially every supplicant, this practice came somewhat later and arguably partakes rather more of Elijah than Elias. Douglas Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2000), 205-7, has correctly associated the patriarchal blessings with death conquest.

58. *Woodruff Journal* 2:362.

59. Reuben Miller, however close to events, has misunderstood the relationship between Melchizedek Priesthood and Elijah. See his 1846 anti-Strang pamphlet reprinted in Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 255.

60. *Woodruff Journal* 2:360.

61. Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 268; D&C 107:14, 19.

62. Quoted in *Woodruff Journal* 2:361.

63. Ibid., 2:362, 365.

64. Ibid., 2:363-64. Joseph's mention of a sure election is likely a reference to the higher ordinances of the temple. See Devery S. Anderson, "The Anointed Quorum in Nauvoo, 1842-45," *Journal of Mormon History* 29 (Fall 2003): 137-57; and David John Buerger, "'The Fulness of the Priesthood': The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 10-44.

65. On the concept of individual sealing, see particularly Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 20-22.

66. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, 398. See also ibid., 366.

67. David Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study of Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 52, 60.

68. Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 2d ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 92, 258.

69. On *avaritia* in Christianity, see Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 130-31, 308-9. For the same concept in American Puritanism, see Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 30-31, 34.

70. See particularly his eulogy at Ephraim Marks's funeral, *Woodruff Journal* 2:168, printed in edited form in *History of the Church*, 4:587. M. Guy Bishop, "Celestial Family: Early Mormon Thought on Life and Death, 1830-1846" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 1981), 102, does not sufficiently appreciate the complex interplay of these variant visions of sealing.

71. *Woodruff Journal* 2:364. The official account in *History of the Church*, 6:253 substitutes "wise" for "crafty." While "crafty" had both positive and negative connotations then as now, I suspect that Smith intended that term for rhetorical effect. His emphasis in the sermon—a clear attack on traditional Christian

teachings—is to claim that Elijah could enable the persistence of mortal ties in the afterlife.

72. Larson, "The King Follett Discourse," 204. This notion is quite clearly present in Heber C. Kimball's anointing: "Thou shalt have Power to redeem thy progenitors & thou shalt have power over thy Posterity & shall Save all of them." Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 376.

73. Eugene England, ed., "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 174.

74. Don Carlos Smith, in a letter to his wife, Agnes, wrote of "Elijah's God" in connection with his eternal affection for her, although the July 25, 1839, letter was written before the formal revelation on celestial marriage. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 766.

75. McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 58, 155, 258.

76. The best summary of this idea is Elijah Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948). See also Herbert Leventhal, *In the Shadow of the Enlightenment* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 3, 62–63, 267–68. Orson Hyde's schematic "Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *Millennial Star* 9 (January 15, 1847): 23, is perhaps the simplest visualization of this non-horizontal celestial community of the Saints. In Joseph's view, exalted humans rather than supra-human celestial agents populated the upper reaches of the chain of being. I pursue this topic further in "Joseph Smith's Conquest of Death: Sacerdotal Genealogy and the Chain of Being," paper scheduled to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Academic of Religion, November 2006.

77. Douglas Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 145, has misapprehended the role of Elijah in his otherwise thoughtful and compelling study of "death transcendence" in Mormonism.