Parallelomania and the Study of Latter-day Scripture: Confirmation, Coincidence, or the Collective Unconscious?

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What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already, in the ages before us.

—Ecclesiastes 1:8–9

THERE HAS BEEN AN EXEGETICAL TREND during the last several decades to draw endless parallels to texts from the ancient Near East and beyond in an attempt to validate the writings in the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price. The pioneer and leader in this effort has been the great LDS scholar Hugh Nibley. In recent years, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) has continued this legacy. The number of parallels that Nibley has been able to uncover from amazingly disparate and arcane sources is truly staggering.[1] Unfortunately, there seems to be a neglect of any methodological reflection or articulation in this endeavor. This article looks at some of the ways parallels have been used by Nibley in the exposition of latter-day scripture, the types of parallels employed, and some of the problems that arise from this comparative exercise.

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1. One of Nibley's editors has remarked, "Hugh Nibley has probably quoted from apocryphal writings more than anyone else in the world" (Gary P. Gillum, "Apocryphal Literature—Those 'Hidden' Books in the Stacks: A Selected Bibliography," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs [Provo, UT: Religious Study Center, BYU, 1986], 127).

For the purposes of this discussion, a "parallel" is the occurrence in a separate text of a key phrase, idea, or term that closely matches the same one found in the text under consideration. That parallels exist in a wide variety of texts—separated temporally, geographically, and culturally— is an undeniable fact. The challenge is to adequately explain what the existence of the parallel means. Does it mean that there is some type of relationship between the two texts? Did one of the authors know the work of the other, either directly or through some intermediary text? If no relationship between the texts can be established, how do we explain the similarities in thought? Is it simply coincidence, or is there some other theory that can adequately explain the similarities?

There are essentially four different things which parallels to latter-day scripture can tell us. First, the existence of a parallel in an ancient text can confirm the prophetic insight of Joseph Smith. The reasoning is usually that only through divine inspiration could Joseph produce the translation/revelation of an ancient text, the details of which are properly situated in their historical and theological milieu—that is, since Joseph was a somewhat uneducated lad and lacked access to these texts. Second, the existence of a parallel in a text contemporaneous with the prophet, but published before his own works, can demonstrate a literary borrowing on the prophet's part. The issue of Joseph's access to, and knowledge of, this parallel text then becomes of greatest importance. Third, the parallel is simply due to coincidence. There is a likelihood that two authors, when describing the same type of event or idea, will use similar language. Fourth, the parallel is due to the essential unity of all religious experience. The parallel is either evidence of some psychic unity, such as the "collective unconscious," or some religious/spiritual unity possibly akin to the LDS notion of the "light of Christ."

Nibley has usually employed parallels for the first use, castigated the second use, and ignored the third and fourth uses. He first began employing parallels from the ancient Near East for the exposition of latter-day scripture in the course of his studies on the Book of Mormon. "Does the author or translator of the book [the Book of Mormon] display any knowledge concerning that part of the world in which it claims to have its origin?" writes Nibley in a 1948 article in the *Improvement Era*. He then outlines his method for testing the authenticity of the author/translator: "We shall match the story step by step with a number of Old World parallels, and after a few general observations let the reader decide for himself just what significance should be attributed to these parallels."[2] He has continued this technique, now for over fifty years, and extended it to

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2. Hugh Nibley, "The Book of Mormon as a Mirror of the East," *Improvement Era* 51 (April 1948): 202.

include the authentication of the writings of the prophet Enoch (Book of Moses), the patriarch Abraham (Book of Abraham), and even the temple endowment.

There are, however, some problems with the way in which Nibley, FARMS, and others have employed the use of parallels. In fact, a case could be made that Nibley is guilty of parallelomania. The term "parallelomania" has been used to describe the overuse or improper use of parallels in the exposition of a text. As the Jewish scholar of the New Testament Samuel Sandmel explains, parallelomania is "that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction."[3] Nibley himself has employed the term to criticize this type of excess: "It isn't merely that one sees parallels everywhere, but especially that one instantly concludes that there can be only one possible explanation for such. From the beginning the Book of Mormon has enjoyed the full treatment from *Parallelomaniacs.*"[4] In his 1946 review of Fawn Brodie's book *No Man Knows My History,*[5] Nibley was quite insistent that parallels do not "prove" anything.

> There are "outside" parallels for every event in the Old and New Testaments, yet that does not prove anything. Of recent years literary studies have shown parallels not to be the exception but the rule in the world of creative writing, and it is well known that great inventions and scientific discoveries have a way of appearing at about the same time in separate places. . . . The fact that two theories or books present parallelism, no matter how striking, may imply a common source, but it certainly does not in itself prove that the one is derived from the other.[6]

This is not to say that parallels are not useful in the exposition of a text, nor that they should be avoided. Furthermore, I agree with Todd Compton that "we need not pay any attention to those shallow critics of Nibley who merely shout 'Parallelomania,' as if it were a magical incan-

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3. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 31 (1962): 1; reprinted in idem, *Two Living Traditions: Essays on Religion and the Bible* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1972), 291–304.

4. "The Book of Mormon: True or False?" in Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon,* John W. Welch, ed., *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* [hereafter *CWHN*], vol. 8 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1989), 230.

5. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945; New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995).

6. "No Ma'am, That's Not History," in Hugh Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young,* David J. Whittaker, ed., *CWHN,* vol. 11 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1991), 8.

tation, and reject his whole methodology and corpus out of hand."[7] Nevertheless, there are several valid concerns that scholars have raised concerning the way in which the parallels are chosen and used. In addition, there often appears to be a lack of thought as to the implications that arise in accepting certain parallels as authentication of the prophetic status of Joseph Smith.

For purposes of illustration, let us consider Nibley's discussion of the writings of the prophet Enoch.[8] Latter-day Saints have in Moses 6:25–8:3 what are properly termed "Extracts from the Prophecy of Enoch" or what Nibley has referred to as the "Joseph Smith Enoch." Nibley has written a great deal on this work[9] and points out that it is an attractive document for study, in that it does not stem from an actual physical manuscript in the prophet's possession and consequently there are no issues of translation or manuscript authenticity to distract our attention. Nibley's most extensive treatment of the Enochic parallels is found in a series of articles that originally appeared in the *Ensign* from October 1975 to August 1977 under the title "A Strange Thing in the Land: The Return of the Book of Enoch."[10]

It should be clear at the outset that Nibley's aim is an apologetic one. For Nibley, the examination of the excerpts from the prophecy of Enoch "offers the nearest thing to a perfectly foolproof test—neat, clear-cut, and decisive—of Joseph Smith's claim to inspiration."[11] What Nibley sets out to do is the execution of just such a "test."

> The problem is perfectly simple and straightforward: There was once indeed an ancient book of Enoch, but it became lost and was not discovered until our own time, when it can be reliably reconstructed from some hundreds of manuscripts in a dozen different languages. How does this Enoch redivivus compare with Joseph Smith's highly condensed but astonishingly specific and detailed version?. . .[W]e have only to place the Joseph Smith version of the book of Enoch—Moses 6:25 through 8:3 with the associated texts—side

7. Todd Compton, review of *Lehi in the Desert. . .*, by Hugh Nibley, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 115.

8. Although the Old Testament account of Enoch is a scant 7 verses (Gen. 5: 18–24), he "holds a prominent place in Latter-day Saint scripture and tradition as a prophet, seer, and builder of Zion" (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. "Enoch"). Indeed, the great literary critic at Yale Harold Bloom writes, "Smith was haunted by the figure of Enoch" (Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* [New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992], 99).

9. Nibley mentions on one occasion: "I've written over a thousand pages on it, and I haven't even scratched the surface" (Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, Stephen D. Ricks, ed., *CWHN*, vol. 2 [Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1986], 1).

10. Reprinted in Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 91–301.

11. Ibid., 94.

by side with the Enoch texts, which have come forth since 1830, to see what they have in common and to judge of its significance.[12]

Unfortunately, the problem is not really all that "simple" or "straightforward." There are a lot of issues that are not discussed anywhere in the investigation. For instance, what is the methodology for selecting the parallels? Are the parallels examples of verbal agreement, or are they simply examples of similar thought patterns? Is the dual occurrence of a single word enough to establish a parallel, or is an entire phrase required? Does the phrase or the single word have to occur in a similar context in the text? What are the criteria for selecting the texts that are to be mined for parallels? Is the religious community from whence the text comes important? Is it enough that the figure Enoch is mentioned in the text, or does it have to contain the actual words/writings of Enoch? Does the age of the manuscript of the selected text matter at all? Does the age of the tradition contained in the manuscript matter? Does the provenance of the manuscript matter? Is the original language of the manuscript and/or tradition important? None of these questions are addressed.

METHODOLOGY

The most methodological statements on the use of parallels in comparative studies that I have been able to discover in Nibley's vast corpus are found in his 1939 unpublished dissertation.[13] In this study he used comparative materials from many different countries and cultures to illuminate the remnants of an ancient year-festival/drama in the Roman games. Nibley informs us that "the practice of resorting to foreign materials when local sources fail is neither new nor unproven; Mommsen, Roscher, Usener, Wissowa, etc., did not hesitate to bring distant evidence under contribution in dealing with ancient institutions, not only for illustration but as proof. The only question is how far such a practice may be carried: at what point does a parallel cease to be significant?"[14] Unfortunately, Nibley does not answer this most significant rhetorical question though he does say more about the endeavor. " 'Parallels' must be more than superficial resemblances which have caught the eye of the investigator in a hasty survey. . . .If the student confines himself to consideration only of very conspicuous and well-established objects, things thoroughly treated and universally agreed upon, the evidence for which is

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12. Ibid.

13. Hugh Nibley, "The Roman Games as a Survival of an Archaic Year-Cult" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1939).

14. Ibid., ii.

easily available to all, and if his whole concern is not with symbols or interpretations but with the tangible and objective aspects of every case cited, he may be justified in drawing upon widely-scattered sources."[15] These guidelines raise a fairly high bar for the admissible evidence to clear. There are very few "thoroughly treated" sources, the nature and meaning of which may be described as "universally agreed upon." Furthermore, how can one be sure that s/he has hold of the "tangible and objective aspects of every case"? How, for instance, can it be determined that an "aspect" that appears in a polemical work or in a work with a hidden or not-so-hidden agenda is truly an "objective" aspect and not merely a rhetorical device or hyperbole employed to make the author's case?

As an example of this difficulty, consider one of the works that Nibley uses to obtain traditions about Adam, the so-called *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*.[16] This work is universally agreed by scholars to be a Christian production, usually dated to the 7th century of our era;[17] yet Nibley feels confident that "[p]erhaps the oldest Adam traditions" are to be found in this work.[18] There is cause for caution, however, when we read in one of Nibley's citations from the *Conflict*: "And the Lord said to Adam and Eve: As you have made this sacrifice to me, so I will make an offering of my flesh when I come to earth, and so save you."[19] Though it is certainly possible to find ancient traditions in later manuscripts, this particular saying serves a demonstrably Christian agenda and would at least require some justification as to why we should consider it as anything other than a Christian production. The same problem is once again evident in Nibley's last parallel from this work: "Adam, offering sacrifice as was his custom, Satan appeared in the form of a man and smote him in the side with a sharp stone even as Adam raised his arms in prayer. Eve tried to help him as blood and water flowed on the altar."[20] This passage sounds amazingly close to John 19:34—"But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water." The author of this tradition was obviously aware of this, for he has God tell Adam, at the conclusion of Nibley's citation: "Finish thy sacrifice, which is most pleasing to me. For even so will I be wounded and

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15. Ibid., ii–iii.

16. The work exists in an Ethiopic and Arabic version. An English translation is available in S. C. Malan, *The Book of Adam and Eve, also called the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1882). Nibley's citations are his English renderings of a French translation of the work available in *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes*, 2 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1856–1858).

17. Some scholars date it as late as the eleventh century; see Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 98.

18. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 167–68.

19. Ibid., 171.

20. Ibid., 171–72.

blood and water will come from my side." Thus, a reasonable case could be made that this narrative is nothing more than a reworking of John's account of Jesus' sacrifice.[21]

EXTREME SELECTIVITY

The next type of problem that exists with Nibley's comparative method is the extreme selectivity with which the texts are chosen. Only texts that support his position are chosen and are excerpted without any regard as to their representation of the original text *in toto*. This type of exercise is referred to as "proof-texting" and is one of the objections that are often raised against Nibley.[22] Kent P. Jackson has well-stated the problem:

> Nibley shows a tendency to gather sources from a variety of cultures all over the ancient world, lump them all together, and then pick and choose the bits and pieces he wants. By selectively including what suits his presuppositions and ignoring what does not, he is able to manufacture an ancient system of religion that is remarkably similar in many ways to our own—precisely what he sets out to demonstrate in the first place. There are serious problems involved in this kind of methodology. The various religious communities from whose documents Nibley draws his material had mutually exclusive beliefs in many areas. By removing their ideas from their own context (thus rendering them invalid) and joining them with ideas from other communities—similarly removed from their own context—Nibley creates an artificial synthesis that never in reality existed. The result would be unacceptable and no doubt unrecognizable to any of the original groups.[23]

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21. The Christian origin of this pericope is bolstered by the fact that Adam is not a messianic figure in Jewish traditions. On the other hand, the apostle Paul clearly taught that Adam "is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:14); "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45); cf. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 36–57; John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988).

22. For example, in a review of the first volume of *CWHN*, *Old Testament and Related Studies*, Keith E. Norman writes: "Missionaries and seminary students are trained to proof-text, gathering only those scriptural verses that appear to support a particular doctrine, without regard to the context of the quotes. But although he possesses more than enough sophistication and analytical ability to rise above such techniques, it seems that Nibley's standard methodology with virtually all his sources, scriptural or not, is proof-texting. His glib freedom in wrenching hitherto unimagined insights and novel connections from ancient documents makes more methodical scholars cringe, including many who are equally devoted to Mormonism" (*Sunstone* 11, no. 2 [March 1987]: 34).

23. Kent P. Jackson, review of *Old Testament and Related Studies*, by Hugh Nibley, *BYU Studies* 28, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 115–16.

Another problem in Nibley's work is the occasional lack of precision in the handling of sources. This lapse may be observed in his handling of other scholars' comparative studies on Enoch.[24] R. H. Charles, in his English translation of 1 Enoch, asserts that "[n]early all the writers of the New Testament were familiar with it, and were more or less influenced by it in thought and diction."[25] To bolster this claim, Charles includes a section with two types of parallel passages: those "which either in phraseology or idea directly depend on or are illustrative of passages of 1 Enoch" and "[d]octrines in 1 Enoch which had an undoubted share in moulding the corresponding New Testament doctrines."[26] When Nibley first cites this evidence, he says that the "influence" of 1 Enoch "is apparent in no less than 128 places in the New Testament."[27] Later, this information is changed to "R. H. Charles lists no fewer than 128 *citations* from Enoch in the New Testament."[28] Finally, he says that Charles "discovered there were no less than 128 *quotations* in the New Testament from the Book of Enoch."[29] These statements are an inflation of what Charles actually uncovered—he did not list "citations" nor "quotations" from 1 Enoch, but rather passages that "directly depend on" or are "illustrative of" the book. These "parallels" are often quite a stretch. For example, how close in dependence is Revelation 3:12, "The New Jerusalem" to 1 Enoch 90:29, "A new house"?[30] As James C. VanderKam points out, "Charles may have been correct in claiming that some New Testament wording was influenced by 1 Enoch, but only in a few cases may we say with confidence that something in the New Testament

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24. As another example, see the detailed analysis of Nibley's use of the *Book of Jasher* by Edward J. Brandt, "The History, Content, and Latter-day Saint Use of the Book of Jasher" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1976), 141–159, esp. 142, 144. Though Brandt concludes that Nibley's citations are "very accurate as he has used them," a review of his evidence points to a contrary conclusion.

25. R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1912), ix, n1.

26. Ibid., xcv.

27. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 95.

28. Ibid., 116, emphasis mine.

29. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Pearl of Great Price Class at Brigham Young University Winter Semester 1986* (Provo, UT: FARMS, n.d.), Lecture 1, p. 10, emphasis mine.

30. Charles, *Book of Enoch*, xcvii. Charles only lists the phrases quoted; the full text of the two passages reads: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is *new Jerusalem*" (Rev. 3:12) and "I saw till the Lord of the sheep brought a *new house* greater and loftier than the first, and set it up in the place of the first which had been folded up" (1 Enoch 90:29), emphasis mine.

shows influence from an item or theme in 1 Enoch. Enoch himself is mentioned rarely in the New Testament, and themes specifically associated with him are found in only a few passages."[31]

<div align="center">MISREPRESENTATION OF SOURCES</div>

As an example of simply misrepresenting what an ancient author wrote, consider Nibley's use of the *Apocalypse of Adam*.[32] According to him, this work "claims to be taken from a book handed down from Adam himself, containing an exposition of the gospel of salvation but dwelling with particular emphasis on the baptism of Adam." Nibley points out that "this is particularly intriguing since the wonderfully condensed and powerful presentation of the gospel plan in the Joseph Smith book of Enoch devotes a whole page to the baptism of Adam."[33] Unfortunately, the *Apocalypse of Adam* never speaks of Adam being baptized. The reference that Nibley cites is the closing paragraph of the *Apocalypse* which reads: "These are the revelations which Adam made known to Seth his son. . . . This is the hidden knowledge of Adam which he gave to Seth, which is the holy baptism of those who know the eternal knowledge through those born of the word and the imperishable illuminators, who came from the holy seed."[34] It should be clear that the subject here is the apocalypse itself, the "revelations" and the "knowledge" contained therein—*these* are the baptism. The term "baptism" is used metaphorically here—it does not refer to an actual physical baptism in water of a believer. One of the world's leading experts on Gnosticism, Kurt Rudolf, has called attention to this interpretation, noting that "cultic acts were 'spiritualized,' i.e., reduced to spiritual models or interpreted symbolically." In particular, he notes that there "are numerous examples. . .where the act of 'knowledge' (*gnosis*) is understood as baptism as at the close of the 'Apocalypse of Adam.'"[35] Thus, far from finding a parallel work that dwells "with particular emphasis on the baptism of Adam," we find a work that only in its closing lines speaks of the knowledge contained therein as a symbolic baptism for all those who accept its teaching.

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31. James C. VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man For All Generations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 169.

32. The *Apocalypse of Adam* is a Gnostic work that was part of the Coptic papyri found in Egypt in 1945 and known as the Nag Hammadi library.

33. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 144.

34. *Apocalypse of Adam*, 19–29, 85, English trans. in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd rev. ed., James M. Robinson, ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 286 [hereafter *NHLE*].

35. Kurt Rudolf, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987), 220.

On other occasions there are questions as to the accuracy of Nibley's translations of primary sources. For instance, Nibley renders a parallel from the *Apocryphon of John* as "The heavens, they cannot be numbered to man."[36] At first glance this passage seems to be a very close parallel to Moses 1:37—"The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man." However, the key phrase that establishes this parallel, "they cannot be numbered to man," never occurs in the original text. It only says, "And he provided all aeons and worlds."[37] As it stands, the original text contains little textually that would justify it as a parallel, to say nothing of the fact that Moses or Enoch are nowhere mentioned in the section.[38]

CLOSENESS OF PARALLELS

There are usually questions that arise as to how close the two "parallels" are to one another. For example, Nibley tells us that of "the many striking figures of speech which definitely link the peculiar language of the Joseph Smith Enoch with that of the ancient sources, none is more interesting than that dealing with the preservation of the Ark, a passage which obviously puzzles the Ethiopian scribes, but which stands out clearly in the Joseph Smith text."[39]

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36. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 238. The *Apocryphon of John* is another Gnostic work from the Nag Hammadi library. Nibley's citation is "p. 27" [=BG 27.1] which refers to the shorter version of the work, codex BG 8502,2.

37. Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1, II,1, and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 30. Unfortunately, *NHLE* does not translate BG 8502,2.

38. In addition to these frustrations, Nibley invariably neglects to inform his readers of the availability of English translations of his primary sources; nor, with a few exceptions, have the editors of the Collected Works addressed this issue. Thus, for the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Nibley never mentions G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* (London: S.P.C.K., 1918) or even the translation that appeared in the LDS periodical *Improvement Era* ([August 1898]: 705–14, 793–806) but instead translates a German translation of the Slavonic text (*Enoch the Prophet*, 159–167). Nor does he mention for the Hebrew Enoch, H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1928) which, in addition to an English translation, contains a superior Hebrew text. As a final frustration, Nibley does not even properly identify the later source as 3 Enoch (which since the time of Odeberg's edition has been the standard designation) but rather designates the Greek fragments of 1Enoch with this title (*Enoch the Prophet*, 116ff). Today's reader will benefit from consulting the collection edited by James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85) for the aforementioned texts and related literature.

39. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 272. The "puzzlement" is partly due to the fact that the Ethiopic text simply has the term for "wood." Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch: A New English Translation with Commentary and Textual Notes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), renders this as "wooden (vessel)."

And now the angels are making a wooden (building) and when they have completed that task I will place My hand upon it and preserve it (1 Enoch 67:2). Wherefore Enoch saw that Noah built an ark; and that the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand (Moses 7:43).

For all their similarities there are important differences here. First of all, in 1 Enoch the Lord is talking to Noah—"the word of the Lord came to me, and he said to me: 'Noah'" (v. 1)—there is no mention of Enoch. Most importantly, the 1 Enoch account has the angels constructing the ark—Noah plays no part in its construction. On the other hand, both accounts agree that the Lord's "hand" contacts the ark. The conclusion of Moses 7:43—"But upon the residue of the wicked the floods came and swallowed them up"—makes it clear that there is a preservation connotation in the phrase "held it in his own hand," which is explicitly stated in the 1 Enoch version. This example illustrates the quandary that the parallels often present—Which is most important, the agreement or the divergence? Which is more important: that both passages mention God's "hand" in preserving the ark or that 1 Enoch says that angels, rather than Noah, constructed the ark?[40]

NEGLECT OF BIBLE FOR VERIFICATION

There are times when Nibley turns to the Apocrypha for insight when common sense and the traditional biblical account would seem to adequately answer the quandaries he puts forth. For instance, Nibley expresses amazement at Enoch's protest to the Lord, that he was "but a lad" (Moses 6:31) although he was sixty-five at the time. "How is that strange anomaly to be explained? Joseph Smith could have known of none of the writings below which also deal with it. Where did he get the idea? Certainly not from apocryphal sources, although it appears not uncommonly in them."[41] Nibley then quotes from a Jewish folklore compendium, the apocryphal *Book of Adam*, two different Jewish midrashim, and the *Zohar* to illustrate parallels for this usage. However, common sense would argue that there is nothing at all anomalous in that lan-

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40. William J. Hamblin has pointed out this methodological problem in Nibley's work on the Book of Mormon: "In attempting to draw parallels between ancient Near Eastern cultures and the Book of Mormon, Nibley often ignores equally significant differences. What is important here is not that the differences between the Book of Mormon and ancient Near Eastern cultures somehow threaten to undermine the historicity of the Book of Mormon, but rather that the differences are often just as important evidence as parallels in obtaining a more complete understanding of the ancient historical setting" (William J. Hamblin, review of *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Hugh Nibley, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 [1990]: 124).

41. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 208.

guage. It is quite likely that Enoch (whose father Jared was then 227) would have looked at father Adam (then in his 687th year) and naturally have felt that he was "but a lad" at the tender age of sixty-five. In fact, as far as we are told, no one in the Adamic family had yet died of natural causes!

On another occasion, Nibley comments that "Enoch is dumbfounded to learn that God himself weeps!" For in Moses 7:28–29 we read: "And . . .the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying, How is it. . .that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?" Nibley informs us that this "bold concept (quite inadmissible to the Fathers of the fourth century) is attested to in the other Enoch texts,"[42] and then cites from *Lamentations Rabbah* a parallel: "When God wept over the destruction of the Temple, Metatron [Enoch] fell on his face and said: I will weep, but weep not thou! God answered and said: If thou wilt not suffer me to weep, I will go whither thou canst not come and there will I lament."[43] Though God does weep in both texts, the latter text's setting of the destruction of the temple is entirely different; furthermore, it is not an excerpt from any writing or vision of Enoch, he simply appears in the narrative. Once again, we need look no further than the canonical Old Testament for a parallel of God weeping: "Pay heed; be not too proud to listen, for it is the Lord who speaks. . . .If in those depths you will not listen, then for very anguish I can only weep bitterly; my eyes must stream with tears, for the Lord's flock is carried off into captivity" (Jer. 13:15, 17 [REB]).[44]

LACK OF A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE EVIDENCE

There are a number of difficulties that arise in Nibley's discussion of the concept of a plurality of worlds, and these illustrate his tendency to tell only the portion of the story that suites his purposes. Nibley first cites the Joseph Smith Enoch: "And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations" (Moses 7:30). He also lists a couple of verses from the vision of Moses: "And worlds without num-

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42. Ibid., 189.

43. Nibley cites this source as *Jewish Encyclopedia*; the source cited there is *Lamentations Rabbah* 24. An English translation is available in *Midrash Rabbah*, 13 vols. in 10 (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 8:41.

44. Though some commentators maintain that it is Jeremiah who is speaking in verse 17, the rabbinic tradition has consistently held that it is indeed the Lord speaking here. See for example: *Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah* 5b; *Pesikta Rabbati* (trans. W. Braude) 33.11; *Tanna Debe Eliyahu* (trans. W. Braude) pp. 115, 154. Furthermore, the very wording of the *Lamentations Rabbah* parallel is a paraphrase of Jeremiah 13:17.

ber have I created. . . .The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man" (Moses 1:33, 37). Nibley then tells us that this notion of a plurality of worlds was offensive to "the d ·tors" of the church, "countering, as it did, a basic teaching of Aristotle and the evidence of common sense that this world, being heaviest, must necessarily be in the center of everything. . . .Quite the opposite with Enoch."[45]

However, not all "the doctors" were equally offended by such a notion. The great third-century church father Origen, for instance, though he did not believe in other worlds existing at the same time, did believe in a succession of worlds: "God did not begin to work for the first time when he made this visible world, but. . .just as after the dissolution of this world there will be another one, so also we believe that there were others before this one existed."[46]

More importantly, there were other ancient philosophers who like Enoch believed in a plurality of worlds that did exist concurrently. The first whom we know with certainty held the notion of a plurality of worlds was Democritus in the 5th century BC. According to the church father Hippolytus, he said that "there are innumerable worlds of different sizes. In some there is neither sun nor moon, in others they are larger than in ours and others have more than one. These worlds are at irregular distances, more in one direction and less in another, and some are flourishing, others declining. . . .Some of the worlds have no animal or vegetable life nor any water."[47] The much younger contemporary of Aristotle, Epicurus, also held that "there are infinite worlds both like and unlike this world of ours. For the atoms being infinite in number. . .are borne on far out into space. For those atoms, which are of such nature that a world could be created out of them or made by them, have not been used up either on one world or on a limited number of worlds. . . . So that there nowhere exists an obstacle to the infinite number of the worlds."[48] Roughly two hundred years later, the great Roman poet, Lucretius, would once again articulate the same notion of a plurality of worlds: "There are other worlds in other regions, and diverse races of men and tribes of wild beasts. This there is too that in the universe there

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45. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 238.

46. Origen, *On First Principles* (trans. G. W. Butterworth) 3:5:3.

47. Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies* 1.13.2, trans. W. K. C. Guthrie in *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1962–81), 2:405. Guthrie comments (p. 405): "One cannot but admire a man whose scientific imagination reached so far beyond the limited experience of his time as to paint this picture of an infinite variety of cosmic systems, in some ways so suggestive of modern cosmological knowledge."

48. Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 45, trans. Cyril Bailey in *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*, Whitney J. Oates, ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 1940), 5.

is nothing single, nothing born unique and growing unique and alone. . . .Wherefore you must confess in the same way that sky and earth and sun, moon, sea, and all else that exists, are not unique, but rather of number numberless."[49]

Furthermore, when one considers literature contemporary with Joseph Smith, there are quite a few parallels that discuss the notion of a plurality of worlds. Nibley cites Jonathan Edwards as an example of the dismissal of the notion. However, one of the most widely read and discussed works at the turn of the nineteenth century, Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794), discussed the notion at some length.[50]

> Though the belief of a plurality of worlds was familiar to the ancients, it is only within the last three centuries that the extent and dimensions of this globe that we inhabit have been ascertained. . . .[T]he Creator, instead of making one immense world, extending over an immense quantity of space, has preferred dividing that quantity of matter into several distinct and separate worlds, which we call planets, of which our earth is one. . . . Beyond this, at a vast distance into space, far beyond all power of calculation, are the stars called the fixed stars. . . .The probability therefore is that each of those fixed stars is also a sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions, as our system of worlds does round our central sun. By this easy progression of ideas, the immensity of space will appear to us to be filled with systems of worlds; and that no part of space lies at waste, any more than any part of our globe of earth and water is left unoccupied.[51]

Erich Robert Paul has discussed several other authors who similarly held the notion of a plurality of worlds: Thomas Chalmers, Timothy Dwight, and Thomas Dick.[52] The work by Dick, *Philosophy of a Future State* (1829), is particularly interesting since we know that the prophet actually owned a copy.[53] Nevertheless, Paul concludes that while "it may

49. Titus Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of Things* (trans. Cyril Bailey) 2:1075–78, 1084–86.

50. We know that at one time Paine's book was in the Smith family home. Joseph Smith, Sr., was given a copy by his father when he started attending Methodist meetings with his wife Lucy, and told to "read that until he believed it" (Lucy Smith, "Preliminary Manuscript," in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. I [Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1996], 250). There is further evidence that he did just that (ibid., 597).

51. Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, Part I, in *Collected Writings*, Eric Foner, ed. (New York, NY: The Library of America, 1995), 704, 706, 708.

52. Erich Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Plurality of Worlds Idea," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Summer 1986): 13–36. This article was revised as Chapter 4 in his *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

53. It is one of the thirty-four non-Mormon titles that the prophet donated to the library in Nauvoo in January 1844 (see Kenneth W. Godfrey, "A Note on the Nauvoo Library

be doubtful that Joseph Smith consulted any of these works, it is proba-ble that he heard them discussed in formal or casual conversation. In-deed, we can posit with reasonable confidence that Joseph first heard of the plurality idea during the revivalistic meetings of his youth."[54] Thus, it should be clear that in the case of the notion of a plurality of worlds, Enochic literature is by no means unique in providing parallels; and in this particular case, there were many sources from which Joseph might have encountered the notion.

INCONSEQUENTIAL PARALLELS

Perhaps most importantly, the majority of parallels to latter-day scripture that can be established is of an inconsequential nature. The re-ally big and important ideas, such as Jesus Christ being the savior of mankind, are not found in any of the Enochic materials. Even though in "the Joseph Smith Enoch, all the writings from Adam on down have one central perennial theme—the atoning mission of Jesus Christ, which emerges full-blown in a succession of dispensations,"[55] there are no such passages in 1, 2, or 3 Enoch.

The usual trend in manuscript transmission, particularly in a text that is to be used for religious purposes, is to perfect the text, to remove awk-ward readings, to correct any omissions, and to add any extra material that fleshes out the narrative and enables the text to better serve its devo-tional purpose. As a result of these scribal modifications, the majority of New Testament manuscripts is of the same text-type (the Byzantine) which is characterized by

> "the desire for elegance, ease of comprehension and completeness. It tends to put most of its effort into attaining literary correctness: better balanced sen-tences, better chosen words: a text, in short, for people of letters. It further displays a studious preoccupation with clarity, for it tries in every way possi-ble to explain difficult passages. Finally, it aims to lose nothing of the sacred text, by freely amalgamating the different readings of a passage. The result is a kind of 'plenior' [i.e. full] text, one which is longer but also full of major faults."[56]

The great historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, has noticed this

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and Literary Institute," *BYU Studies* 14 [Spring 1974]: 387). It was also one of the titles avail-able in the Manchester Library (see Paul, *Science*, 83).

54. Paul, *Science*, 82.

55. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 153.

56. Léon Vaganay, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed., rev. by Christian-Bernard Amphoux (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 109. For this reason one of the so-called canons of textual criticism is *lectio brevior lectio potior* ("the shorter reading is the more probable reading").

tendency to perfect and ennoble a tradition as being characteristic of all religions. In discussing the most elemental of religious phenomena—the manifestation of the sacred, or *hierophany*[57]—Eliade remarks that, "whether or not a hierophany comes into contact with another religious form, like or unlike itself, it will tend, in the religious consciousness of those who perceive it as such, to be expressed *as totally, as fully as possible. This fact explains a phenomenon which we find everywhere from end to end of the history of religion: the ability of every religious form *to rise, to be purified, to become nobler*."[58] Thus, the fact that we have here texts which do not show the elevated theology of the Joseph Smith Enoch does not fit well with the observed tendency in transmission history.

It is true that in the Similitudes (or Parables) of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71) there are some moving passages concerning the "Son of Man." However, Matthew Black has pointed out that

> "there is nothing specifically Christian in these chapters; the terms 'son of man' and 'elect one' are well attested in Jewish sources, if not as messianic titles, nevertheless of symbolic or historic figures, the substantive basis for messianism. It is truly remarkable, if the Parables are a Christian composition, that there should be no reference anywhere to the Founder of Christianity. On the contrary, the Son of Man who is to come as the Judge of all mankind is identified, not with Jesus of Nazareth, *but with Enoch himself.*"[59]

The new project under the auspices of FARMS on the Book of Abraham as ancient scripture seems to be a victim of this same sort of problem. Recently, John A. Tvedtnes presented a summary of research for a forthcoming FARMS book, tentatively entitled, *Early Traditions about Abraham Relevant to a Study of the Book of Abraham.* He told listeners that he and other researchers had uncovered "over seventy ancient and medieval texts relating to Abraham that cover topics mentioned in the Book of Abraham, but that are missing from the Genesis account in the Bible."[60] If the thirty or so examples given in the lecture are representative of the entire collection, they are somewhat unremarkable: Abraham's father worshipped idols (cf. Josh. 24:2); the idols were Egyptian;

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57. "Hierophany" is a key term for Eliade: "It is a fitting term, because it does not imply anything further; it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e., that *something sacred shows itself to us*" (Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* [San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959], 11).

58. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York, NY: Meridian, 1974), 463, emphasis mine.

59. Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch*, 188.

60. John A. Tvedtnes, "Abrahamic Lore in Support of the Book of Abraham" (transcript of a lecture presented 10 March 1999 as part of the FARMS Book of Abraham Lecture Series), 1.

children were sacrificed (*cf.* Deut. 12:31); Abraham was actually fastened when he was placed on the altar; Abraham prayed while he was being sacrificed; Abraham made converts while he lived in Haran (*cf.* Gen. 12:5); there was a famine in the land of Chaldea (*cf.* Gen. 12:10); Abraham possessed written records; Abraham wrote a record of his own, and so on. What is missing here, and would indeed be quite remarkable if found, is an ancient source that mentions the star named "Kolob" which is nearest to the throne of God, and its unique time-reckoning (Abraham 3:3–16); or an account of the creation of the earth by a council of Gods who "organize" pre-existing matter (Abraham 4);[61] or the use of the term "intelligences" to signify the pre-existent spirits (Abraham 3:22); or the notion that the intelligences "have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal" (Abraham 3:18). In short, it is interesting that narrative details concerning Abraham's life are similar in a wide variety of ancient texts, yet those details are not all that different from those concerning Abraham and other figures in the Old Testament. The great lacuna in all these parallel traditions is the absence of any confirmation of the real "pearl of great price" of the Book of Abraham—its unique theology.

So far, we have been discussing problems that have been attendant in the way Nibley has used parallels to serve an essentially apologetic function. This is not to say that there are no legitimate parallels between documents from the ancient Near East and latter-day scripture. The problem lies in the explanations given for the observed similarity. Other scholars—most of whom Nibley respects—have noticed similarities between different religions and offered viable, alternate theories for the parallelisms.

MYTH AND RITUAL SCHOOL

In the first half of this century, there was an important school of interpretation known as the "Myth and Ritual" school. The British version of this school that focused on the ancient Near East developed around the work of S. H. Hooke.[62] Their primary thesis was that "in early Egypt,

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61. It is not enough to simply note parallels that do not contain the standard *creatio ex nihilo* account; what needs to be located is the unique use of the verb "to organize" (used 10 times) and the interesting corollary notion that matter is an independent agent which actually obeys the order to organize given by the Gods: "And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed" (Abraham 4:18).

62. S. H. Hooke edited the key books in which the central notions were defined, and different religious traditions were analyzed: *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Culture Pattern of the Ancient East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); *The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation Between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (London: SPCK, 1935); *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

in the early city states of Sumer and Akkad, and in Canaanite cities before Hebrew settlement in that area, certain common factors in cult practices and their associated myths were observed to exist, and were characteristic of agricultural communities in the ancient Near East as early as the beginning of the third millennium BC, and probably earlier."[63] Because their thesis maintained that there was a common pattern in ancient Near Eastern ritual, it became known as "patternism." They held that the observed pattern did not spontaneously emerge, but was spread by the contacts of the cultures involved. As Hooke explains: "If it be recognized that a fragment of a myth or ritual may travel far from its original setting. . .it is also possible to conceive of the carrying of the larger ritual pattern with its associated myth from one country to another by one of the various ways of 'culture spread,' such as commerce, conquest, or colonization."[64]

Nibley may be considered to be part of this school, for his 1939 dissertation was a splendid uncovering of this common pattern in the Roman games. However, he moved considerably beyond the school in that he saw the ritual pattern being present in religions quite removed from the ancient Near East.[65] He continues to see patternism as a phenomenon of all religions. For instance, he writes in his article "What is a Temple?" that "the same comparative studies that discovered the common pattern in *all ancient religions*—a phenomenon now designated as 'patternism'—have also demonstrated the processes of *diffusion* by which that pattern was spread throughout the world—and in the process torn to shreds, of which recognizable remnants may be found in *almost any land and time.*"[66] This extension of the thesis is unfortunate, for the problem the scholarly community has had with the Myth and Ritual school is that it "claimed too much for the pervasiveness of the pattern of ritual observance in the societies studied." It "reconstructed patterns that turned out to be not nearly so widespread as its members thought,

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63. Hooke, *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, 10. According to Hooke, the common pattern contained a dramatic representation of the death and resurrection of the god; the recitation or symbolic representation of the creation myth; a ritual battle which depicted the victory of the god over his enemies; a *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage); and a triumphal procession in which the king played the role of the resurrected and victorious god (*Myth and Ritual*, 7–10).

64. Hooke, *Myth and Ritual*, 4.

65. Nibley states in his dissertation: "The regions chosen for comparison are the Scandinavian North and Germany, Celtic Gaul, Britain and Ireland, the Slavis [sic] and West Semitic countries (Palestine, Syria and Arabia), Babylonia, India, Persia, Africa and Greece" (Nibley, diss., iv).

66. Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, Todd M. Compton, ed., and Stephen D. Ricks, *CWHN*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1987), 366–67, emphasis mine.

such as ritual marriage and the death and resurrection motif."[67] Nibley does not present any evidence of the actual "process of diffusion" for the additional societies and cultures in his extended examination that would negate this criticism.

<div align="center">COMMON RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE</div>

Not all scholars who have noticed similarities in ancient Near Eastern literature have concluded that these parallels are due to some process of diffusion resulting from cultural contact. For example, the Oxford scholar, G. R. Driver, conducted an investigation of the Psalms of Israel in light of Babylonian research and concluded:

> Although, however, it is concluded that in general the Babylonian exerted but slight, if any, influence on the Hebrew Psalmists, what inferences are to be drawn from the detailed points of resemblance to which I have drawn attention? I am convinced that many, if not the majority, of them are the result of *independent reflection;* for it is possible to shew that not only a number of figures of speech but also certain definitely theological ideas recur in the religions and mythologies of other peoples who, as far as it is possible now to say, owe nothing to the Babylon. *Due allowance must therefore be made for the common instincts of mankind.*[68]

The late Morton Smith of Columbia University examined the literature of the ancient Near East and found a very different "common pattern" from that of the Myth and Ritual school.[69] For Smith, this common theology did not appear in the different cultures due to some process of diffusion: "That it did develop independently in each is strongly suggested, I think, by the uniformity of the results, which can be explained better by postulating relatively uniform causes, that is, social, psychological and rhetorical patterns, rather than accidents of historical transmission." He concluded that "parallels between theological material in the OT and in 'Ancient Near Eastern Texts' cannot be taken off hand as indicating any literary dependence, common source, or cultural borrowing." Rather, it is "only when the texts are parallel in some peculiar, accidental detail, something which *cannot* be explained as a probable product of

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67. Walter Harrelson, "Myth and Ritual School," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed., 16 vols. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1987), 10:284.

68. G. R. Driver, "The Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research," in *The Psalmists*, D. C. Simpson, ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 173, emphasis mine.

69. Smith's "one over-all pattern" was that "[p]rayer and praise are usually directed to one god at a time, and peoples and persons are often represented as, or appear to have been, particularly devoted to the worship of a single god" (Morton Smith, "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 [1952]: 137–38).

natural development, that parallelism can be taken as *proving* literary connection." [70]

Mircea Eliade, who is regarded by many as the premier historian of religion this century, held that there was a definite unity of religious experience for all people. This unity allowed him to identify certain patterns running throughout the known religions of the world. In the first pages of his monograph where he sets out these patterns he states: "The greatest [religious] experiences are not only alike in content, but often also alike in their expression."[71] According to Eliade, "almost all the religious attitudes man has, he has had from the most primitive times. From one point of view there has been no break in continuity from the 'primitives' to Christianity."[72]

Eliade used the technical term *homo religiosus* to refer to this religious mode of humanity. As John Cave explains, "Eliade uses the term *homo religiosus* to refer to all humans. It is not meant for only the charismatic individual, such as a mystic, as it does for Schleiermacher, Max Scheler, and also Joachim Wach. For Eliade, *homo religiosus* designates a quality of the human condition."[73] Part of being human is being religious. Even when an individual deliberately insists on being determined in no way by religion, the insistence itself is in essence religious. As Eliade explains, "[n]onreligious man *in the pure state* is a comparatively rare phenomenon, even in the most desacralized of societies. The majority of the 'irreligious' still behave religiously, even though they are not aware of the fact."[74] In one of his last published writings, Eliade once again stressed the continuity of the religious nature of man: "we discover that the latest activities and conclusions of scientists and technologists. . .reactualize, on different levels and perspectives, the same fears, hopes and convictions that have dominated *homo religiosus* from the very beginning."[75]

The common religious mode of humanity is the reason peoples of widely differing times, locations, and cultures express themselves similarly when they speak of the sacred. Every culture tends to draw from a common, collective set of symbols when they articulate their own individual myths concerning the origins of the cosmos and man's place

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70. Smith, "Common Theology," 146.

71. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1949; New York, NY: Meridian, 1974), 3.

72. Ibid., 463.

73. John David Cave, *Mircea Eliade's Vision for a New Humanism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 92.

74. Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 204.

75. Mircea Eliade, "*Homo Faber* and *Homo Religiosus*," in *The History of Religions: Retrospect and Prospect*, Joseph Kitagawa, ed., (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1985), 11.

within it. Eliade refers to these common symbols as "archetypal" symbols, or simply "archetypes," by which he means a type of "exemplary model" upon which subsequent manifestations of symbols are based. Eliade speaks of the

> tendency of every "historical form" to approximate as nearly as possible to its archetype, even when it has been realised at a secondary or insignificant level: this can be verified everywhere in the religious history of humanity. Any local goddess tends to become *the* Great Goddess; any village anywhere *is* the "Centre of the World," and any wizard whatever pretends, at the height of his ritual, to be the Universal Sovereign. It is this same tendency towards the archetype, towards the restoration of the *perfect form*—of which any myth or rite or divinity is only a variant, and often rather a pale one— that makes the history of religions possible. Without this, magico-religious experience would be continually creating transitory or evanescent forms of gods, myths, dogmas, etc.; and the student would be faced by a proliferation of ever new types impossible to set in order.[76]

Since the key religious symbols and myths are constructed of archetypes, they continually reappear throughout all time periods. This eternal repetition is the notion that the author of Ecclesiastes was trying to get at in the verses cited (1:9–10) in the epigraph to this article. In LDS scripture this notion is found in the phrase for the course of the Lord, which is "one eternal round" (1 Ne. 10:19; D&C 3:2, 35:1). There is no beginning, there is no end, there is simply one eternal now. As Eliade explains:

> [T]he very dialectic of the sacred tends indefinitely to repeat a series of archetypes, so that a hierophany realized at a certain "historical moment" is structurally equivalent to a hierophany a thousand years earlier or later. This tendency on the part of the hierophanic process to repeat the same paradoxical sacralization of reality ad infinitum is what, after all, enables us to understand something of a religious phenomenon and to write its "history." In other words, it is precisely because hierophanies repeat themselves that we can distinguish religious facts and succeed in understanding them.[77]

According to Eliade, the archetypal symbolism manifests itself "in a coherent and systematic manner on the plane of the 'unconscious' (of dream, hallucination or waking dream) as well as upon those of the 'trans-conscious' and the conscious (aesthetic vision, ritual, mythology and *philosophumena*)."[78] The term "transconsciousness" is one that Eliade

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76. Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols* (London: Harvill Press, 1961), 120–21.
77. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1964), xvii.
78. Eliade, *Images*, 119–20.

coined to represent the more mystical and religious aspect of the uncon-
scious.[79] "[A] certain zone of the subconscious is ruled by the archetypes
which also dominate and organise conscious and transconscious experi-
ence. Hence we are entitled to regard the multiple variants of the same
complexes of symbols (such as those of 'ascension' and of 'binding') as
endless successions of 'forms' which, on the different levels of dream,
myth, ritual, theology, mysticism, metaphysics, etc., are trying to 'realise'
the archetype."[80] Eliade also spoke of "a sub- or trans-conscious 'logic'"
which could be used to explicate the meanings of these symbols, since
"symbols, of every kind, and at whatever level, are always consistent
and systematic."[81]

COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Many of the notions of Eliade have confirmation from the realm of
clinical psychology. The great Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung put for-
ward the notion that we have both a "personal" and a "collective" un-
conscious: "While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of
contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disap-
peared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed,
the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in conscious-
ness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their
existence exclusively to heredity."[82] Jung explains that he chose "the
term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual
but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and
modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all
individuals."[83] The contents of the collective unconscious are known as
"archetypes."[84] These archetypes are what might be referred to as "pri-

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79. As Mac Linscott Ricketts explains: "The state of the activated *transconsciousness* is
that of the man who knows the supreme bliss of mystic oneness with the eternal One, an
experience in which the divisions and limitations of worldly existence are transcended. In
the transconscious state the archetypes find their truest expression and fulfill their ultimate
function: the revelation of absolute Being or pure spirit. . . .The transconscious, like the
High God, is from *above*: it is not given in nature, but constitutes a rupture of the human
plane" ("The Nature and Extent of Eliade's 'Jungianism,'" *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
25 [1960]: 228–29).

80. Eliade, *Images*, 120; cf. *Patterns*, 450, 453–54.

81. Ibid. and *Patterns*, 453.

82. C. G. Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," in *The Collected Works of
C. G. Jung*, 20 vols. (Bollingen Series XX; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977),
9.1:42 (hereafter *CWCGJ*). Jung comments: "Probably none of my empirical concepts has
met with so much misunderstanding as the idea of the collective unconscious" (Ibid.).

83. C. G. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Conscious," *CWCGJ* 9.1:3–4.

84. For Jung, the "archetypes" were an explanatory paraphrase of the Platonic
"forms" or "ideas." Just as the Platonic forms are never perceived directly, but rather their

mordial images." As Jung explains: "There are present in every individual, besides his personal memories, the great 'primordial' images, as Jacob Burckhardt once aptly called them, the inherited powers of human imagination as it was from time immemorial. The fact of this inheritance explains the truly amazing phenomenon that certain motifs from myths and legends repeat themselves the world over in identical forms."[85]

There are many points of similarity in the thought of Jung and of Eliade, and it may be fairly concluded that they were kindred spirits.[86] They both used the term "archetype," though it meant subtly different things to each man. As Jung explained in a letter to Eliade: "I identify the archetype with the 'pattern of behavior.' You have used the term 'archetype' too, but without mentioning that you mean by this term only the repetition and imitation of a conscious image or idea."[87] Eliade agreed with this analysis and explained that he

> "used the terms 'exemplary models,' 'paradigms,' and 'archetypes' in order to emphasize a particular fact—namely, that for the man of the traditional and archaic societies, the models for his institutions and the norms for his various categories of behavior are believed to have been 'revealed' at the beginning of time, that, consequently, they are regarded as having a superhuman and 'transcendental' origin."[88]

Eliade was also very close to Jung in his notions of the unconscious. In discussing "profane man," who as a descendant of *homo religiosus* cannot wipe out his own history, Eliade explains:

> a great part of his existence is fed by impulses that come to him from the depths of his being, from the zone that has been called the "unconscious." . . .Now, the contents and structure of the unconscious exhibit astonishing similarities to mythological images and figures. We do not mean to say that

representations (we do not see "Justice," but, rather, just people), so the archetypes are never presented directly to consciousness. "The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear" (*CWCGJ* 9.1:5).

85. C. G. Jung, *The Psychology of the Unconscious, CWCGJ* 7:64.

86. Eliade, on more than one occasion, acknowledged this similarity. In his conversations with Claude-Henri Rocquet, he remarked: "I don't know exactly what I owe to Jung. I have read a good many of his books, notably *The Psychology of the Transference.* I had long conversations with him at Eranos. He believed in a kind of fundamental unity of the collective unconscious, and I likewise consider that there is a fundamental unity underlying all religious experience" (Mircea Eliade, *Ordeal by Labyrinth: Conversations with Claude-Henri Rocquet* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982], 162–3).

87. C. G. Jung to Mircea Eliade, 19 January 1955, in *C. G. Jung Letters,* 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 2:212.

88. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), xiv.

mythologies are the "product" of the unconscious. . . . Yet the contents and structures of the unconscious are the result of immemorial existential situations, especially of critical situations, and this is why the unconscious has a religious aura. . . . In other words, in so far as the unconscious is the result of countless existential experiences it cannot but resemble the various religious universes. For religion is the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis.[89]

This notion that some aspect of the unconscious is the result of "countless existential experiences" which are "immemorial" is precisely the notion that Jung was trying to get at with his term "collective unconscious."

LIGHT OF CHRIST

Within traditional LDS belief there is a doctrine that in many regards is an analog to the notion of the collective unconscious—the "light of Christ." "The light of Christ refers to the spiritual power that emanates from God to fill the immensity of space and enlightens every man, woman, and child."[90] This light or spirit is ubiquitous and is no respecter of persons. It "giveth light to every man that cometh into the world" (D&C 84:46). It "is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed" (D&C 88:11–13). As Parley P. Pratt explains: "This is the true light that in some measure illuminates all men. It is. . . the intellectual light of our inward and spiritual organs, by which we reason, discern, judge, compare, comprehend, and remember the subjects within our reach. Its inspiration constitutes instinct in animal life, reason in man, and vision in the Prophets, and is continually flowing from the Godhead throughout his creations."[91]

All of humanity, by nature, is subject to the influence and inspiration of the light of Christ. On this view, the light of Christ would go far in explaining why there are so many similarities among the world's religions. They are similar because the same light of Christ has touched each of the various participants. From a recent statement of the First Presidency, we hear: "The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were

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89. Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 209–10.

90. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. "Light of Christ."

91. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (1855; rev. ed. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1979), 25.

given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals."[92] This notion has been articulated by many LDS leaders. For example, B. H. Roberts commented that "while it is held by the Church. . .that there is but one man at a time who is entitled to receive revelations for the government and guidance of the Church,. . .it is nowhere held that this man is the only instrumentality through which God may communicate his mind and will to the world. It is merely a law operative within the Church itself and does not at all concern the world outside the Church organization."[93] Orson F. Whitney told conference goers that apart from prophets and apostles, other good and great men "not bearing the Priesthood, but possessing profundity of thought, great wisdom, and a desire to uplift their fellows, have been sent by the Almighty into many nations to give them, not the fullness of the Gospel, but that portion of truth that they were able to receive and wisely use. Such men as Confucius, the Chinese philosopher; Zoroaster, the Persian sage; Gautama or Buddha, of the Hindus; Socrates and Plato of the Greeks; these all had some of the light that is universally diffused."[94]

The notion of the ubiquitous influence of the light of Christ goes hand in hand with the notion that Mormonism is not the sole possessor of truth. Many of the early sermons in the Salt Lake tabernacle were replete with acknowledgements that Latter-day Saints were not the only denomination that contained truths of an eternal nature. For example, Brigham Young told listeners:

> Some who call themselves Christians are very tenacious with regard to the Universalians, yet the latter possess many excellent ideas and good truths. Have the Catholics? Yes, a great many very excellent truths. Have the Protestants? Yes, from first to last. Has the infidel? Yes, he has a good deal of truth; and truth is all over the earth. The earth could not stand but for the light and truth it contains. The people could not abide were it not that truth holds them. It is the Fountain of truth that feeds, clothes, and gives light and intelligence to the inhabitants of the earth, no matter whether they are saints or sinners.[95]

Perhaps the most developed and far-reaching statement of this notion comes from President Joseph F. Smith:

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92. Statement of the First Presidency, February 15, 1978, quoted in, Spencer J. Palmer, *The Expanding Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1978), v.

93. B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1907), 1:514.

94. *Conference Report*, April 1921, 33.

95. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. & S. W. Richards, 1855–1886), 12:70 (hereafter *JD*); cf. *JD* 1:243–44, 7:283–84, 18:359.

The Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as one God, are the fountain of truth. From this fountain all the ancient learned philosophers have received their inspiration and wisdom—from it they have received all their knowledge. If we find truth in broken fragments through the ages, it may be set down as an incontrovertible fact that it originated at the fountain, and was given to philosophers, inventors, patriots, reformers, and prophets by the inspiration of God. It came from him through his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, in the first place, and from no other source. . . .He [Christ] was the inspirer of the ancient philosophers, Pagan or Israelite, as well as of the great characters of modern times. Columbus, in discovery; Washington, in the struggle for freedom; Lincoln, in emancipation and union; Bacon, in philosophy; Franklin, in statesmanship and diplomacy; Stephenson, in steam; Watts, in song; Edison, in electricity, and Joseph Smith, in theology and religion, found in Christ the source of their wisdom and the marvelous truths which they advocated.[96]

Thus described, the light of Christ seems a viable and more directly religious explanation for the similarities observed in different religious traditions. Religious thinkers, to the degree that they can discern the illumination of the light of Christ, can arrive independently at many important ideas, images, and illuminations. Why is it that various medieval Jewish authors, an eleventh-century Islamic historian, a fifteenth-century Ethiopic monk, a fourth-century archbishop of Alexandria, and an Essene from the Qumran community all agree on some aspect concerning Abraham, Adam, or Enoch? It is because they were all influenced/inspired by the light of Christ as they recorded that particular detail. The reasons that they did not get the entire story "straight" have to do with historical and cultural limitations and with personal idiosyncrasy. The time of the "restoration of all things" had not yet arrived.

CONCLUSION

Our investigation has sought to illustrate the wide variety of problems attendant in the parallel questing that is typified in the works of Hugh Nibley and his followers. The first and foremost problem in this endeavor is the lack of a clearly articulated methodology. It is imperative that readers are informed as to what the existence of parallels is supposed to prove. The details of the hypothesis that is supported by the existence of parallels must be spelled out, for the reader of this type of literature is usually left struggling to read between the lines in an attempt to piece together the real argument. Documents that are used should be

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96. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1939), 30–31; cf. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 1:178–83.

discussed as to their relevance in the supply of the parallel. The date, location, language, author, culture, and *Weltanschauung* (world-view) of the various texts must be considered, and obviously problematic details must be addressed.

The use of parallels from apocryphal literature to prove the prophetic status of Joseph Smith is a misguided endeavor. It is misguided because apocryphal parallels—at least the parallels that have been uncovered to date—are simply ill suited for the task. The vexing question that is begged in this endeavor is where did the author of the parallel text get the detail? How in the world did the ancient, non-LDS, and usually non-Christian author get it right? What was the source of this important detail? A physical manuscript or an oral tradition? Were there Books of Abraham, Prophesies of Enoch, Acts of Adam, etc., circulating continuously and extensively, or were there simply oral traditions that were derived from them? What is the evidentiary basis for making the determination between these possibilities?

The fallacy of this line of reasoning may be seen in the following consideration. If some common oral tradition or text was the source for the occasional agreements with latter-day scripture found in apocryphal literature, one should be able to construct from these different sources some version of the Prophesy of Enoch or Book of Abraham. For instance, in New Testament research the agreement of passages in Matthew and Luke has prompted scholars to postulate an early document (Q) which both Evangelists would have used in the construction of their respective gospels.[97] Likewise, in Old Testament research literary characteristics and the dual occurrence of narrative units have led scholars to postulate the existence of an early source (the Yahwist) which was used by later compilers of the Pentateuch.[98] The key point is not that these hypothetical documents actually existed, but that there is a preponderance of evidence that makes such hypothetical constructions plausible. It becomes quickly apparent that the task of constructing a similar hypothetical source from the apocryphal literature used by Nibley would be impossible. None of the necessary features for such an

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97. The designation "Q" is an abbreviation for the German word, *Quelle,* meaning "source," "spring," or "fountainhead." See John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987); Arland D. Jacobson, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1992).

98. The source known as the Yahwist is so named because of the consistent use of the Hebrew word *Yahweh* (KJV "Jehovah") for God. It is also known as "J" from the German spelling *Jahweh.* For an excellent discussion of the Yahwist and the other sources proposed, see Anthony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989).

exercise are discernible. There are no narrative units, no unique vocabulary or literary styles, in short, no identifying features whatsoever that reappear in the different sources and would make possible the construction of a hypothetical source.

Yet the parallels from apocryphal literature are indeed significant. The problem is that their significance has not been appropriately appreciated. They clearly demonstrate that humanity does share a great deal in common. There is something very special that makes the religious experience of mankind immediately recognizable to others separated by a huge gulf of time and geography. There may very well be a collective unconscious that we as humans inherit; it is essentially impossible to disprove such a notion. More importantly, from an LDS perspective the parallels offer confirmation of the workings of the light of Christ. They indicate the activity of good and honest persons striving to hear the whisperings of the still, small voice, struggling to glimpse the truth illuminated by the light of Christ.