The Struggle for Female Authority in Biblical and Mormon Theology

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> Because for a very long time the office of high priestess had been forgotten and her characteristic features were nowhere indicated, I bethought myself day after day. The appointed time arrived, the doors were opened for me. Indeed I set my eyes on the ancient stele of Nebuchadnezzar . . . on which was depicted an image of the high priestess. . . . I carefully looked into the old clay and wooden tablets and did exactly as in the olden days.
>
> —Nabonidus, King of Babylon[1]

> In every century including our own, history records women exercising leadership in Christian communities, and in every century that leadership has been contested, beginning in the early church and continuing through contemporary battles over the ordination and ministry of women. —Karen King[2]

The introductory heading to the canonized 1978 First Presidency letter announcing the end of the racial ban on black males' priesthood ordination cites Second Nephi to frame the revelatory text that follows: "The Book of Mormon teaches that 'all are alike unto God,' including 'black and white, bond and free, male and female' (2 Nephi 26:33)."[3] It goes on to note that "during Joseph Smith's lifetime, a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent." Although "Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice," this and other recent public statements on the topic of the racial priesthood ban bear the traces of the careful historical inquiry of the past fifty years.[4] This work, like the scriptural citation,

demonstrates a "native" textual and historical LDS solution to a social problem that had been building for decades in the Church.

Although race and gender are connected in 2 Nephi 26:33, the historical origins of the gender ban have not yet been addressed with the same degree of attention in Church discourse.[5] The recent statements made by the Church on the racial priesthood ban strongly emphasize the impact nineteenth-century US racial politics had on the development of the priesthood ban for members of African descent,[6] but no such discussion of culture and gender politics has yet been addressed in Church publications on gender and priesthood. The most one can say is that recent statements have emphasized the unknown reasons for, but clear evidence of, the prohibition on women holding the priesthood. In a recent interview with the BBC, for instance, managing director of LDS Public Affairs Michael Otterson cited the absence of precedent as the reason women are not ordained in the Church: "Holding offices such as Bishop and Apostle—there is no scriptural precedent for that, *and so we don't ordain women to those positions*."[7] What is striking about the recent official LDS appeal to scriptural silence is that it appears to ignore the most polemic passages, such as 1 Tim 2:8–15 ("no woman . . . [has] authority over a man") and Gen 3:16 ("[Adam] shall rule over [Eve]") as precedents for a gendered priesthood ban. Thus it may signal the emergence of a parallel with LDS discourse about race, in which appeals to scripture and tradition were replaced with similar expressions of agnosis.[8] Continued attention to scriptural precedent and discourses of gender, as well as to the best recent scholarship on this issue, seem warranted, especially in the absence of detailed official commentary on the matter.[9] Scholarly investigation of the cultural context of racial concepts of priesthood has done much to shed light on the origin and development of the racial priesthood ban, and it is toward the understanding of the same for the gender ban that I direct my efforts in this study.

Interrogating the Bible, however, is not simply a matter of one-to-one mapping from biblical norms to modern practice, even when one accounts for the differences between biblical and LDS priesthoods. Any study of the textual legacy of LDS canon (including the Bible) necessarily begins with the observation of the exclusively male perspective represented in its content, production, selection,

and transmission. Indeed, as scholars have shown repeatedly, the Bible is thoroughly and perhaps inescapably androcentric, and in this respect the expanded Mormon canon is not different.[10] If we had nothing further from the scriptures to discuss on the subject of women, this fact alone would be sufficient to ask whether we can be sure not only whether women *were* ordained in Old or New Testament times, but whether we should even *expect* a record of such. There is indeed much positive evidence to discuss, but every text is thoroughly affected by this one overarching observation, since it limits our ability not only to make a scriptural claim about any single woman, but also to reconstruct accurately a spectrum of gender relations in the world of the Bible.

Related to this is the fact that although women arguably are never explicitly declared inferior as a sex in the Bible or in the extended LDS canon, both are replete with texts that declare women's subordinate status through violence, political and legal structures, access to worship, control over fate and property, and general assumptions and outlook. Most scholarly commentators on the subject casually label the Bible and its underlying society as patriarchal.[11] Women's agency is not everywhere restricted in these texts, but is often severely limited, especially in public spheres. Although it is important not to let the overarching androcentrism of scripture strip the texts of nuance and complexity, these observations are important for establishing a backdrop against which to contrast the texts that do show female ecclesiastical agency, even over men, since they swim against the current, so to speak, of the bulk of scriptural tradition. In such a thoroughly androcentric text, the women who occupy roles apparently reserved only for men demand greater hermeneutical attention rather than casual dismissal. Awareness of the elite androcentric authorship cautions against mapping biblical texts directly and uncritically onto our picture of the world of the Hebrew Bible and enhances the texts in which women do exercise authority in roles Latter-day Saints understand to require priesthood ordination.

Biblical scholarship will never yield Bibles full of women. Nonetheless, closer scrutiny and improved methods in this expanding field have shown a remarkable and often overlooked tradition of female authority. Further, critical attention to the

history of Biblical interpretation has revealed two and a half *millennia* of repeated efforts to suppress traditions of female authority and to present misogynistic readings as normative. Most modern appeals to biblical precedent on this subject fail to account and adjust for the cultural medium and biases by which that precedent was established. Reconstructing a world based on a thoroughly androcentric text produces a thoroughly androcentric world.[12] Recognizing this, biblical scholars like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have largely abandoned the attempt to recover a robustly egalitarian ministry between the pages of the text partly because it results in the misguided search for pristine origins that conform to the observer's desired view of the future.[13] Instead Schüssler Fiorenza focuses, as I will here, on possibilities opened by historical accounts in which the *struggle* between egalitarianism and hierarchy is visible, thereby revealing a past not so dissonant with the present.[14] Attention to the implicit and explicit evidence of struggle within the text has the potential to inform current discourses.[15]

This stance also allows one to maintain a commitment to scripture while mitigating or neutralizing its more pernicious passages and interpretations. In any case, Michael Otterson's assertion of no female ordination in the Bible and the professed agnosis about the reasons for such invite a deeper exploration of the scriptural evidence within its social and textual environment. Furthermore, the Mormon destabilization of biblical inerrancy opens unique space for the incorporation of alternative readings and for the integration of the voluminous body of research on the role gender and power played in ancient Israel and in early Christianity.[16] The LDS tradition provides robust resources for telling new stories, for going, as did Nabonidus, back to the texts, for (re)new(ed) understandings of old ways.

Thus disclosing instances of women occupying authoritative religious roles is not the end of the investigation. Discussions about priesthood also must consider the way in which narratives are assembled, shaped, and revised, and to what ends. Not only does the biblical evidence demonstrate clear precedent for female authority (understood as priesthood in the LDS tradition), it also shows how priesthood traditions were created, repackaged, contested,

and combined to come to new understandings or to make sense of social dissonance. It is this process of constructing tradition that is my ultimate focus here. To use Schüssler Fiorenza's metaphor, the role of this inquiry is not so much to uncover an objective reality, but rather to take the patches and fragments and assemble therefrom a quilt or a mosaic image of the past.[17] Given the clear existence of multiple and contradictory precedents in the Bible, to appeal to any text as precedent is to engage in a process of selection and suppression, to highlight one and neutralize another. As we shall see, coming to new understandings through careful readings and retellings of even fragmentary old texts is itself not just a hallmark of ancient ways of thinking about priesthood but is also inscribed within the earliest strata of LDS tradition and practice. Coming to new views of dimly lit texts—especially about priesthood—is a quintessentially Mormon practice.

In the following, I investigate what the Bible has to say to Latter-day Saints about gendered priesthood and, equally important, how it says it. I update the discussion of scriptural evidence on the basis of new scholarly work and also attend to evidence from LDS scripture not discussed in prior analyses.[18] I pay attention to the way the Bible shapes and configures priesthood through the formation, revision, and interpretation of narratives. I also look in greater detail at what is meant by ordination, including ritual practices, in an LDS context. I conclude by asking whether the dissonance that emerges between recent discussions and scriptural tradition can be resolved within the parameters of LDS theology.

Defining Priesthood in an LDS Context

Before moving to a discussion of evidence of women holding positions of priesthood authority in the biblical texts, it is necessary to have a sense of the expansive Latter-day Saint definition of priesthood, which extends well beyond the usual sense of a limited class of religious functionaries authorized to govern ecclesiastical communities and administer rituals thereof. A basic, current, Mormon definition of priesthood is "the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of mankind."[19] The term "priesthood" includes several related concepts: power, authority

to wield the power, and the right to preside.[20] Few aspects of LDS belief are described in more elevated language than priesthood. In D&C 84:20–22 Joseph Smith revealed that "in the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live." In a Nauvoo sermon, Smith called priesthood "the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven,"[21] and declared, "the Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years."[22] The LDS canon links priesthood to the foundation of the world: "the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order . . . to teach these things unto the people. And those priests were . . . called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God" (Alma 13:1–3; cf. Abraham 1:3). A priesthood bearer wielding authority serves *in persona Christi*, as Elder Boyd K. Packer said: "When priesthood authority is exercised properly, priesthood bearers do what [Christ] would do if He were present."[23] To "hold" the priesthood in Mormon parlance is to be ordained to a priesthood office, through which power to act in certain capacities at church and in private is granted. Unlike other Christian denominations, in which men and, increasingly, women take orders in what is comparable to a lifelong vocational decision, in the LDS tradition priesthood power is conferred on every male who meets the age and worthiness requirements as approved by local priesthood leadership. Thus priesthood reaches into every family structure, at least ideally, and has been described by some leaders as of greatest importance in the home. Elder Packer recited in the same 2010 talk the statement of President Joseph F. Smith: "In the home the presiding authority is always vested in the father, and in all home affairs and family matters there is no other authority paramount. . . . The father presides at the table, at prayer, and gives general directions relating to his family life."[24] Although LDS leaders have drawn some distinctions between priesthood rights and responsibilities in the home and in the Church, it is clear from this brief description that priesthood is understood as the

governing force of both. Elder Oaks expressed the situation in terms of an ordered structure: "the government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the government of the Church is hierarchical."[25]

Priesthood is the beating heart of Church ministry and governance. According to the publicly available *Handbook 2*, "through the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Church leaders guide the Church, direct the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, and administer all the spiritual work of the Church. The President of the Church is the presiding high priest over the Melchizedek Priesthood."[26] Not only is priesthood understood to be the authority by which the Church is governed, the Melchizedek priesthood is the centerpiece of the organization, being defined in opposition to its "auxiliaries": "The Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations are auxiliaries to the priesthood."[27] A key component of priesthood, then, is agency—the power to act: to govern, preside, direct, create, administer, and so on.[28] In the discussion of biblical texts below, I will therefore pay particular attention to those instances in which female cultic agency is manifest, since it is this type of agency that is at the heart of priesthood in Mormonism.[29] Finally, when it comes to the current official LDS discourse about priesthood, I will restrict my comments to the statements made about scriptural bases for gender restrictions, though it is important to note that LDS leaders use a variety of approaches, including scriptural appeals, to talk about the reason for the ban on female priesthood ordination.[30] I hope this essay will contribute to the vitality of the ongoing discussion by charting important moments in the struggle for authority manifest in scripture and, especially, by outlining some of the scriptural resources for new approaches to power and gender in Mormon theology.

The Struggle for Authority in the Old Testament

Eve, Adam, and Gender Hierarchies

The Bible makes no statement either on differences between genders or on the essence of female identity. One finds no labeling of specific activities as "women's work," no description of innate qualities bestowed upon the sexes, and certainly no direct appeal

to eternal gender roles. That is not to say, however, that divisions between sexes were not performed or *practically* understood or that women were not subordinated in Israelite or Greco-Roman text and society; for most intents and purposes, it suffices to note that ancient Israel inherited the ubiquitous patriarchal culture of its region.[31] But there is no explicit theological or theoretical paradigm describing female capacities as the result of divine forethought, much less a rationale given for women being shut out of political and religious hierarchies.[32] As Tikva Frymer-Kensky put it, "the Bible presents no characteristics of human behavior as 'female' or 'male,' no division of attributes between the poles of 'feminine' and 'masculine.' The metaphysics of gender unity . . . is also expressed in the biblical creation stories."[33] Some biblical scholars have revised the androcentric interpretations of the Eden narrative, showing that in the context of the narrative itself gender unity appears to be the norm even though the androcentrism of the intervening traditions of interpretation often want it otherwise.[34] Others, however, have criticized the idea of biblical gender unity on the basis of the social expectations of the ancient Israelite audience, pointing out that, as is seen in the prevalence of misogynistic interpretations over the course of millennia, an egalitarian reception of the story would constitute an unlikely exception.[35] A closer look at these stories provides backdrop for scriptural politics of gender also in an LDS context.

The ambivalence of the Hebrew Bible on the question of natural gender hierarchies is apparent from the first chapters of Genesis, which narrate not one but two creation stories, a doubling recognized at least tacitly since antiquity. These stories, which ultimately derive from different authors, present fundamentally different pictures of the creation of the sexes. Even though they appear to have had little influence in the Old Testament after Genesis 5, they constitute a—if not *the*—textual site of gender struggle in Judeo-Christian contexts from pre-New Testament interpretation right through to modernity, including Mormonism. Gen 1:26–27 tells how humans were created "male and female," after the animals, dominating (together) the world order in the image of God who was himself at the top of the universal order. The grammatical plurals used to speak of the divine in these verses, coupled with the ambiguous number of the

noun *ĕlōhîm* have led some commentators to the conclusion that male and female humans were created in the image of male and female gods: "*ĕlōhîm* said, 'let *us* make humankind[36] in *our* image, according to *our* likeness. . . . So *ĕlōhîm* created humankind in *his* image, in the image of *ĕlōhîm* he created him: he created them male and female." Some have read the final occurrence of *ĕlōhîm* not as a proper divine name but rather as the plural noun "gods," owing to the apposition with "male and female," which might represent a trace of a pantheon of male and female divinities in whose image male and female humans were created.[37] In the retelling of Genesis in the LDS Book of Abraham, Gen 1:26–27, as opposed to JST Genesis and the Hebrew Bible, is rendered entirely in the plural: "And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them" (Abr 4:26–27).[38] Thus no biblical or LDS rendition of Gen 1 shows any apparent hierarchy of sex; rather, both have dominion and are commanded to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth.[39] Further, in these divine plurals the presence of goddesses cannot be excluded.

In the account of Genesis 2–3,[40] on the other hand, God creates humans in a process out of sequence with the scheme in Gen 1, creating first the human (*ʾādām*) from dust before the plants,[41] then the animals, then woman (not called Eve until after the expulsion), a "suitable helper"[42] from the rib of the *ʾādām*. As Gen 2–3 unfolds, of course, the asymmetric order of events seems to dictate the severity of the divine response. The woman is first to eat the fruit, then Adam, and in the resulting confrontation with God the woman is explicitly subordinated to the man: "I shall multiply your suffering and your pregnancy; in suffering shall you birth children, yet your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you" (translation mine). Motherhood here is coterminous with suffering and subordination in a way not expressed in Gen 1. Thus it is Gen 1 that, since at least the first century, commentators have cited as evidence for an originally egalitarian creation, while Gen 2–3 expresses a hierarchy of the sexes that has more frequently been appealed to as *the* biblical basis of gender relations, especially in ecclesiastical settings.

Even though the gendered hierarchies of these accounts are not explicitly referenced elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the tension between the apparent egalitarianism of Gen 1 and the apparent hierarchy of Gen 2–3 is replicated in first-century biblical interpretation (including the New Testament) and beyond. Daniel Boyarin argues that the two accounts yielded two ancient theological constructs that anticipate even recent theoretical models of sex differentiation.[43] The first, visible in the Hellenistic Jewish interpreter and philosopher Philo of Alexandria and in the writings of Paul, seizes on the difference between Gen 1 and Gen 2–3 as expressive of the difference between the eternal and the temporal. In this strain of first-century thought, the ideal is the unsexed spiritual androgyne (the singular *ʾādam* here is both male and female), created in the image of God, as opposed to the physically realized male and (subordinated) female. According to Boyarin, this explains the contradictions in Paul, who said on the one hand that "there is no male nor female . . . in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:29), and on the other that "a husband is the head of his wife," (1 Cor 11:3). He reads these as Paul's expression of the [superior] spiritual ideal and the [inferior] physical reality that will eventually be overcome, pointing out that Paul goes on to say in 1 Cor 11:11, "nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, *in the Lord*" (1 Cor 11:11; emphasis mine).[44] Both of these texts from Paul express "an androgyny that exists on the level of the spirit, however much hierarchy subsists and needs to subsist on the fleshly level in the life of society."[45] As New Testament scholars have argued, Galatians 3:28 is a part of the baptismal liturgy that specifically references Gen 1:26–27 and reverses the basic gender division to an androgynous state (Adam = male and female) as a way of expressing the future ideal.[46] In any case, there is no evidence to suggest that Paul thought there would be any heavenly hierarchy of gender any more than there would be divisions between "Jews" and "Greeks" there.[47] In the here-and-now discussed in 1 Corinthians, however, Paul's theology could accommodate hierarchy (11:3, 9) and strong sexual differentiation in custom (11:6–10), even while it emphasized care and reciprocity (7:3–4; 11:11–12) so as to prepare for the coming time in which gender would be collapsed entirely.[48]

Other traditions, such as early rabbinic Judaism, were "fully committed to a completely naturalized 'sex.'"[49] In this vein the human creature of Gen 1 was not a *spiritual* unity but rather a *bodily* hermaphrodite, a "dual-sexed creature in one body"[50] that was simply split into two separate bodies in Gen 2–3. "In the rabbinic culture, the human race was thus marked from the very beginning by corporeality, difference and heterogeneity. For the Rabbis, sexuality belonged to the original created (and not fallen) state of humanity."[51] In this construct it is not sex differentiation that is the result of the disobedience but rather the hierarchy of Gen 3:16.

Boyarin points out that these two poles, the primal spiritual androgyne and the dual-sexed bodily creature, anticipate the extremes of modern approaches to sex and gender, between strong sexual dimorphism on the one hand and the transcendence of sex on the other.[52] He goes on to show that all of these paradigms, whether ancient interpretation or modern theorizing, have difficulty avoiding the practical tendency toward a denigration of the female: "sexual dimorphism . . . seems fated always to imprison women within a biological role, while transcendence . . . seems always to be predicated on a denigration of the body and the achievement of a male-modeled androgyny, a masculine neutral."[53]

Against the backdrop of Boyarin's analysis, we find that LDS interpretation straddles the division between the two extremes.[54] In Joseph Smith's reworking of Genesis 1–6, known as the Book of Moses, the transition between the creation stories calls the first one spiritual and the second physical (Moses 3:5–7), similar to Philo, but within the same text yokes the male-female pair of Gen 1 to the body of God (2:27; 5:1–2): "In the *image of his own body*, male and female, created he them" (5:1; emphasis mine). Leaving aside the question of what it means for a singular male divine body to produce male and female spirits in its image, what is apparent here is a blurring of the polarity by articulating an ideal, *spiritual,* sexual dimorphism alongside the physical that has become a hallmark of Mormon theology.[55] Whereas for Paul it may be said that the hierarchies that he (only sometimes) condones are endemic to physical reality but have no place in the coming kingdom, the LDS interpretation raises the stakes by making both spiritual and physical creation dimorphic. This calculus is arguably the source of much of the current tension

in Mormonism over female authority, precisely because it is a battle not just for *earthly* equality (as Paul might have had it) but also for the meaning of *eternal* gender difference. Temporal arrangements are also heavenly realities.

Genesis 3:16—sometimes called the most misogynistic text in the Bible—has been a battleground of gender relations for centuries but it takes on a particular importance in LDS theology of gender for the reasons described above. In LDS commentary Gen 3:16 has commonly been read as a curse and used as evidence for the male right of rule in Church and home. In the 1973 *Ensign*, Brent Barlow used it to argue for the need to strengthen the patriarchal order in the family.[56] In 1975 President Spencer W. Kimball famously softened the language of the KJV to "preside" instead of "rule," which change now links Gen 3:16 to the Family Proclamation statement that fathers are to "preside" in the home "by divine design."[57] Others, like Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, have read the verse similarly to Paul as expressive of a temporary state: "the fact that [Adam ruling over Eve] is mentioned at all presupposes that man did not rule over woman before the fall."[58] Boyd Jay Petersen has recently shown that nineteenth-century LDS women and even some male leaders assumed the verse to be temporary and frequently thought that the curse could be lifted in their lifetimes.[59]

There is even a detectable rise in conservative LDS discomfort with an eternal hierarchy of gender. The increasing pressure towards egalitarianism in the Mormon heaven is confirmed in the extreme rereading of Gen 3:16 as a statement of equal dominion, advanced several times in recent years by a few prominent LDS commentators. In 2007 Elder Bruce C. Hafen and his wife Marie attempted to use this verse as evidence of egalitarian governance by an appeal to the underlying Hebrew preposition *bet*, the word translated as "over" in "he shall rule over you." In the August 2007 *Ensign*, the Hafens, aided by a BYU professor of Hebrew, argue: "Genesis 3:16 states that Adam is to 'rule over' Eve, but this doesn't make Adam a dictator. . . . Over in 'rule over' uses the Hebrew *bet*, which means ruling 'with,' not ruling 'over.'"[60] Since then it has been repeated several times by LDS political scientist Valerie M. Hudson, including in the April 2013 *Ensign*.[61] According to normal Biblical Hebrew usage and to the narrative context of Gen 2–3,

this translation is, unfortunately, impossible. The repetition of this mistranslation underscores well the increasing LDS need to neutralize scriptural gender hierarchies.[62] The Hebrew verb *māšal*, "to rule" requires the preposition *bet* and always means in this construction "to rule (over)," as in the sun ruling over the day (Gen 1:18), Abraham's servant over all his house (Gen 24:2), Joseph over Egypt (Gen 45:8, 26), Solomon over all the Levantine kingdoms (1 Kgs 5:1), and so forth. When the preposition *bet* is translated as "with" in English, it is an instrumental "with," as in, "I hit my thumb with a hammer." To say "together with" requires an entirely different preposition. Added to the Hebrew difficulties, the logic of the exchange—in which the sequence of the transgression yields negative consequences for the participants—clearly prohibits such an egalitarian understanding.[63] Thus, besides contravening basic Hebrew semantics and the plain logic of the verse in its context, this reading also stands in contrast even to previous LDS theology, including the JST.[64] The impossibility of this translation, and the extent to which the plain sense of the text is ignored,[65] highlights a growing discomfort, even among the ranks of General Authorities and conservative scholars, with bald-faced gender hierarchies in scripture. The only hermeneutic motivating this translation is the need to resolve the dissonance between text and modern sensibility by so thoroughly recasting the most blatantly hierarchical proof text of the Bible to legitimate the Church's stance on egalitarianism.[66] The fact that this very same biblical text was used in the same LDS publication forty years earlier to argue for the divine institution of patriarchy in the home[67] suggests that biblical scholar Athalya Brenner was correct when she said Genesis 3:16 is something of a Rorschach test revealing the interpreter's basic assumptions about gender.[68] It also underscores the fact that an appeal to precedent, especially on the topic of gender and authority, always amounts to a selection from among a variety of possibilities.

Lady Wisdom and LDS Priesthood

The struggle for authority is also expressed on the heavenly level in hierarchical struggles between male and female deities in the Hebrew Bible. A full discussion of divine gender relations would take us too far afield here; it is sufficient to point out, with Tikva Frymer-Kensky,

the long history in the ancient Near East of goddesses' power, once expressed in a rich variety of roles and characters, subsumed by ever more powerful male deities. The Hebrew Bible manifests the same trajectory of subordination, especially in the shift from polytheism and monolatry to monotheism; it preserves knowledge of once-legitimate Israelite female divinities, if only known either obliquely as traces of a worship system thriving before the seventh century BCE or as targets of reformist's cult reform.[69]

The question of the status and role of the goddess is closely connected with the question of priesthood authority in LDS theology. Since the particular LDS notions of priesthood are tied to the universal gendered existence discussed above, the discussion of the goddess is more salient to the question of priesthood than may be the case in other traditions. When priesthood, as we have seen, is less an authorization of a hereditary human exercise of cultic responsibilities than it is an eternal power exercised solely by male gods and male humans, any limitations on the agency of the goddess can serve to reinforce the gendered mortal arrangement. The previous and current theological inquiry into Mormon notions of the divine feminine have crucial implications for LDS notions of gendered priesthood, since a goddess devoid of power does not easily admit female authorities possessed of it. In any case, even a cursory study of the goddess in the world of the Hebrew Bible and in Mormon theology reveals that the opposing forces of egalitarianism and hierarchy are felt in heaven as they are on earth.[70] That this was a struggle and not simply a unidirectional sublimation by fiat is shown by the divine female figure of Wisdom, who is underrepresented in LDS theology.

The closest a woman deity comes to speaking and displaying complex agency in the Bible is in Proverbs 1–9, which presents the figure of Wisdom (*ḥokmâ*), remarkable for her unabashedly female voice and her disruption of roles that have come to be defined in LDS thought as stereotypically gendered. Wisdom is personified here as a public teacher ("at the busiest corner," 1:21), and speaks in the first person (1:22–33; 8:2–36). In 3:19–20 she is the means by which Yahweh created the world, and likewise chapter 8 speaks to the role of ("Lady") Wisdom in creation: "The LORD acquired me at the beginning of his work / the first of his acts of long ago.

/ Ages ago I was poured out / at the first, before the beginning of the earth" (8:22–23). And further, "when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker"[71] (8:29–30 NRSV). She is the source not only of righteousness and creativity, but of power, wealth, knowledge, foresight, and justice: "I have good advice and sound wisdom; / I have insight, I have strength. / By me kings reign, / and rulers decree what is just; / by me rulers rule, / and nobles, all who govern rightly. . . . Riches and honor are with me, / enduring wealth and prosperity. I walk in the way of righteousness, / along the paths of justice" (Prov 8:14–16, 18, 20). Many scholars see this chapter as the reflex of a once vibrant tradition of goddess worship in Ancient Israel that was suppressed as strict monotheism became entrenched, or as an originally Egyptian or Canaanite goddess translated into a post-exilic Israelite context.[72] Some, including even LDS authorities, have connected this creative, agentive aspect of Wisdom with the (grammatically feminine) spirit (*rûʿḥ ʾĕlōhîm*) in Gen 1:2 that moves on the face of the waters.[73] This interpretation may also be supported by the description of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:23 as having been "poured out," which may evoke the pouring of oil for anointing kings, of other liquids for rituals of worship, and/or the pouring out of God's spirit (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17–18, 33). Further, the description in Proverbs 8 of a divine woman as *the* source of regal power, knowledge, justice, and creation—with no reference to motherhood or domesticity—places this text in sharp contrast with the more famous misogynistic biblical passages and hints at a struggle for female agency playing out on the cosmic level even within an entrenched patriarchy.[74] When compared with an LDS notion of priesthood as the supreme active force in the cosmos, this text troubles the interpretations that otherwise associate such force with male actors and, arguably, male being.[75] Wisdom is a nearly perfect analogue to the LDS definitions of priesthood discussed above: the power by which the universe was created and ordered and the proximate source of knowledge and understanding. She is, as the figure of Jesus in much of Christian theology, both supremely powerful and immediately approachable, participating in the creation and the quotidian. While Proverbs sometimes hints at her subordination to God and is written from an

unabashedly male perspective to a male audience, it also suggests the possibility that she was "outside of God, not merely a divine attribute,"[76] the means he "acquired" (8:22) to bring the world into being.[77] Notwithstanding some mitigating forces of subordination even present in these texts,[78] Proverbs 1–9 (and especially ch. 8) give voice to an active, speaking Goddess and manifests a female order and power in (non-reproductive) creation. If the Mormon basis of priesthood is a power prepared from before the foundation of the world (Alma 13:1–3), and the primary function of its wielders is teaching, Lady Wisdom is exactly coterminous with LDS priesthood and could form a basis of new understandings of this power and its gendered qualities.[79]

Biblical Conceptions of Priesthood

Joseph Smith's close engagement with biblical text may provide a model for a contemporary LDS engagement with the Bible on the topic of priesthood. As discussed above, Latter-day Saints and non-LDS biblical scholars use the term "priesthood" differently, especially since, as Richard Bushman and Mark Ashurst-McGee have pointed out, Joseph Smith's revelations uniquely blended the Reformation notion of a "priesthood of all believers" with the Old Testament framework of offices and ritual power.[80] The previous work of Anthony Hutchinson, Melodie Moench Charles, and Todd Compton has clearly laid out the terminological problems when it comes to discussing LDS priesthood and the Bible.[81] Paramount is the fact that "priesthood" is a term never used in the Bible in the way that Latter-day Saints understand it, even though the concept of an institution of priests certainly was operative.[82] Further complicating the issue, what came to be understood as the major division in LDS priesthood orders, Melchizedek and Aaronic, is nowhere visible in the Bible. To be sure, it was out of a combination of revelations based on close reading of the Bible and social developments in the early LDS church that the division evolved, but no biblical scholar concludes from biblical evidence that anciently there were two priesthood orders as Latter-day Saints understand them. The Hebrew Bible tells many stories directly and indirectly about strife between different priestly lines (see below), and at times (non-Aaronid) Levites were apparently subordinated to Aaronid

priests, but they are never understood in qualitatively higher and lower general orders, and never explicitly connected to the figure of Melchizedek, who is only mentioned in two enigmatic texts in the Hebrew Bible.[83] Furthermore, different texts show different views of priestly hierarchies, and some seem to assume that at certain times in Israel's past it was not necessary to hail from a priestly lineage to perform priestly duties such as sacrifice.[84]

What LDS priesthood shares with the Bible, however, is the basic notion that priests stand at the often-dangerous intersection between God and his people, life and death, sacred and profane. In terms more familiar to Latter-day Saints, priests not only represented the people to Yahweh, they also represented Yahweh to the people,[85] "identifying and clarifying the purpose of a given ritual, reifying tradition by the recitation of laws or the record of legal precedent, and preserving the catalogue of hymns and prayers that the deity would expect or even demand to be recited at specific occasions."[86] In some places they are described as judges of local disputes (Deut 17:8–13), scribes, and keepers of esoteric knowledge and religious history.[87] In the absence of Israelite kingship in the Second Temple period, they would become the highest native political authority. To stand at this threshold brought mortal risk along with power, as in the stories of the priests Nadav and Avihu (Lev 10), Dathan and Abiram (Num 16) and Uzzah (2 Sam 6). It is no surprise then that the origin accounts of the Levites, told no less than four times in the Bible, all depict the Levites as violently zealous for Yahweh, even against their fellow Israelites. Indeed, violence seems to be intimately bound up with priestly service.[88]

One of the most influential (and often overlooked) roles of the priests was as the main keepers of the traditions and knowledge from which major portions of the (Hebrew) Bible would take shape. These traditions were passed down through institutions that, by the time the texts were assembled, had become more centralized and stratified along with the state to which they belonged.[89] Whereas in pre-monarchic Israel it was apparently possible for men (and possibly women, see below) outside designated lineages to act as priests, religious authority was restricted as political power became concentrated, especially in Jerusalem. In the process of centralization, the struggle between various priestly lineages became pitched

in a way that is manifest in several stories of conflict among priestly houses.[90] The most famous are those in the Pentateuch that depict the disloyalty of prominent priestly figures, such as the golden calf episode (Exod 32) or the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (Num 16). Most scholars see these as having been told in much later times to justify or attack the ascendency of one lineage over another.[91] Indeed, perhaps the most significant change in Old Testament priesthood when David moved the capital from Hebron to Jerusalem (previously a non-Israelite city; 2 Sam 5–6) and installed the ark there, which resulted in the appointment of *two* chief priests, Abiathar and Zadok. Later Solomon banished Abiathar to Anathoth (1 Kgs 2) for having supported his half-brother Adonijah's claim to David's throne. Thus the Zadokites came to control the newly built temple in Jerusalem and maintained control for centuries, but the rivalries between these priestly families continued at least through Jeremiah's time.[92] It is clear that priests used their power as custodians of knowledge and history to employ older traditions to influence and to make sense of the social changes underway in monarchic and post-monarchic Israel. There is also strong evidence, discussed below, of the deliberate manipulation of texts by their later custodians to remove and downplay priestly agency in narratives about women.[93]

As with nearly all public institutions and bureaucracies (and stories) in the Bible, the text as we have it gives the impression that men always dominated Israelite priesthood. Such was not always the case in the ancient Near East, where there is significant evidence for a wide variety of priestly and other official roles available to women within the cult and society.[94] The most famous example is the third-millennium Akkadian *entu*-priest Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon of Agade, to whom are attributed many hymns and prayers and who is depicted in at least one stone relief, making her the first named author known to history and one of the earliest women to be depicted visually.[95] Almost two millennia later we find Nabonidus consulting earlier textual and visual records ostensibly because the office of high priestess had been forgotten in his day and he wanted to install his daughter therein. While there is no direct prohibition of female priestly service in the Bible (or in LDS scripture), most texts assume male exclusivity along with other non-gender criteria, such as a restriction to the proper lineage. However, it is difficult to

hold up the assumption of gender exclusivity as normative evidence, since not only were the authors and curators of these texts men, but they were also priests or male functionaries with vested and conflicted interests in the way the story was told. As power became concentrated during the monarchy in fewer and fewer lines, the doors that appear to have been more open to women in earlier periods were shut firmly, and, crucially, *were made to look as if they had always been*.[96] Biblical scholars have pointed out that in the Bible, even though women were never priests, neither were the vast majority of men,[97] and even the strongly androcentric priestly narrators in the Hebrew Bible show an enhanced (though still unequal) status of women connected to priestly lineages.[98] The picture becomes even more complex, however, when we turn to the cases of women who arguably acted as priests, mostly ignored in LDS treatments of women and authority: Hannah, Jael, and Zipporah.[99]

Hannah

The case of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1–3 is remarkable for the way the story juxtaposes Hannah with the male authorities around her (sons of Eli, her husband Elkanah), especially in the way she acts against their misunderstandings or doubt. The text presents Elkanah as concerned but not fully on board with her efforts to have a son; Hannah takes the initiative to approach the Lord in the temple at Shiloh herself. In 1 Sam 1:9 Hannah "presented herself before Yahweh" in the courtyard of the temple, observed by the priest Eli from his seat beside the doorpost, making a silent vow that she would dedicate her son to the Lord if he would lift her barrenness.[100] Eli dismissively misunderstands her prayer as drunkenness, but upon her explanation he expresses hope that her desire will be granted. When it is, she names the child, which is a practice that likely conveyed social authority, as the position of name-giver signaled influence over the thing named.[101] Hannah breaks company with her husband on his next journeys to Shiloh until the child is weaned, at which point the Bible says without comment that *she* brings the boy, a three-year-old bull, and other offerings to the temple, and *they* (Hannah and Elkanah) slaughter the bull and take the child to Eli.[102] Upon Samuel's consecration as a lifelong nazirite, Hannah then sings a song (1 Sam 2) that reflects an ancient Near Eastern and

biblical tradition of women as composers of cultic hymns.[103] Thus Hannah wields considerable cultic power. While it would go beyond the evidence to say that she served as a priest as did Eli, it is clear that her service exceeded that which apparently was allowed to women as the cult became centralized, and certainly that of the Second Temple, where women could not approach even the courtyard of the temple building itself. In any case, Hannah had authoritative agency: naming, vowing, sacrificing, dedicating, composing. Rather than circumscribing Hannah's power, maternity leads her to exercise authority in reference to her existence as a woman.[104] Her example provides a foundation for imagining female priesthood power in a way that does not collapse gender difference.

Hannah's role as a cultic agent is probably most strongly confirmed by the deliberate manipulation of the Hebrew texts concerning her activity. The Hebrew text of the books of Samuel is notoriously corrupt, with the witnesses of the Septuagint (LXX) and Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q51=4QSamuel[a]) providing strong evidence of such. Some of the textual corruption is clearly accidental, but some appears to be the result of one or more scribes taking strong issue with the implication that Hannah exercised priestly agency.[105] In the Masoretic (Hebrew) text (MT), on which virtually all modern translations are based, the line in 1 Sam 1:23 that originally read, "Only, may the Lord establish that which goes out of your [Hannah's] mouth," as it is in LXX and 4QSam[a], the text was changed to "Only, may the Lord establish his word." Further, MT has removed three notices about Hannah in the presence of the Lord (1 Sam 1:9, 14, 18) and added the clause to verse 9 that she had been drinking. In verse 18 LXX, Hannah leaves Eli and goes to her quarters connected to the Temple to have a ritual meal with Elkanah. Donald Parry points out that these quarters (*liškâ* in Hebrew) are otherwise only connected to males, including priests and Levites; this was probably omitted deliberately from MT.[106] Hannah probably originally also said in 1:8, "here am I" (so LXX), as only males do elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (including, famously, her son), and overwhelmingly in contexts of divine apparition. Hannah's final pilgrimage to Shiloh in LXX has her explicitly entering the temple (1:24a) and presenting her son before Eli. In 4QSam[a], it is Hannah, not Elkanah, who worships in 1:28b. Thus MT exhibits a

marked discomfort and deliberate textual manipulation specifically connected with the cultic activity of Hannah. This discomfort also explains the addition, only in MT, of the note that the sons of Eli slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (2:22): not only does it further implicate the sons of Eli, it also diminishes the status of female cultic activity exhibited in LXX and 4QSam[a].[107] This tampering shows the difficulty in making historical claims from the Bible about exclusively male priesthood activity not just because of the authors' androcentric blinders, but also because of deliberate manipulation of the text, likely undertaken to make an earlier time conform to the norms of the scribe's contemporary situation or to his more strongly gendered notions of acceptable practice. For the MT scribes, it seems, even Hannah's limited priestly activity is too strongly put, and makes this impossible to rule out an explicit striking of female priesthood from the scriptural record before the text was finalized.

Jael

The story of Jael, told at the beginning of Judges, has also been connected to priestly traditions. Her introduction in Judges 4:17 is traditionally translated "Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite," but others read "woman of the Kenite clan" because *ḥeber* can also mean "community" or "group."[108] The Kenites were a clan well known for their priestly service, Moses's father-in-law Jethro, priest of Midian, being the most famous.[109] Even if her status as Heber's "woman" holds, it is only mentioned in the text to show how *she* ended up at a sacred site far from Kenite territory, since Heber (or this Kenite group) left the heartland of Moses's father-in-law (here called Hobab) and encamped "by the terebinth of Zaanannim" near Kedesh, which is a city of refuge managed by priests (Judg 4:11).[110] "Heber" as an individual has no role in the story other than to explain Jael's location. Jael is keeper of her own tent, to which the Canaanite general Sisera flees for sanctuary, probably indicating her tent was more than her private dwelling. No impropriety is marked in the way he, or the Israelite general Barak later, enters her tent. As Sisera rests, Jael drives a spike through his temple and then goes out to invite Barak back to her tent to show him the vanquished foe. In Judges 5, the ancient poem known as the Song of Deborah, Jael is

presented alongside Shamgar ben Anat, one of the judges who also delivered Israel through violence (Judg 3:31).[111] Interpreters have frequently read the narrative about Jael as one of seduction, but this is beyond the evidence and reflects more on the interpreters' assumptions than on the biblical characterization of Jael.[112] Rather, her priestly lineage, her tent-sanctuary pitched at a sacred site, and possibly even the emphasis on her decisive violence in the service of the community suggest she was understood as a priest at one point.

Zipporah

It is no accident that our final example also concerns a Kenite. Zipporah, Moses's wife, is the daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian, and is almost entirely absent from the narrative in Exodus, with the exception of an enigmatic passage in Exodus 4. While in Midian (i.e., Kenite territory), Yahweh tells Moses to go back to Egypt to demand the Israelites' release from Pharaoh. Moses asks leave of Jethro, who grants it, and he and Zipporah and their sons set off. Then, apparently on the way,[113] Moses receives further instructions from Yahweh to tell Pharaoh that Yahweh will kill Pharaoh's firstborn son if Pharaoh does not let Israel (Yahweh's "firstborn son") go. Almost as if this part of the story reminds the narrator that Moses grew up in the Egyptian court and was probably therefore uncircumcised, Yahweh shows up as the family stops for the night and, without explanation, attempts to kill Moses. "But Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched [Moses's] 'feet' with it and said, 'Truly you are a spouse of blood to me!' So he let him alone. It was then she said, 'a spouse of blood by circumcision'" (Exod 4:25–26).[114] Not only is Zipporah daughter of a chief priest, she literally stands between Yahweh and his people and saves their lives through her ritual mediation, establishing precedent for a cultic practice now lost to us. In Exodus and elsewhere, circumcision and sacrifice are closely associated (Exod 12:1–28, 43–49; Josh 5:2–12). Zipporah clearly performs a ritual of substitution that, in later times, would be the exclusive domain of men. Though brief, this remarkable text hints at a deeper tradition of female priesthood in the earliest days of Israel.

These women are cultic agents whose roles are priestly even within ostensibly male-dominated cultic frameworks, such that they

acted in priestly roles. Hannah and Zipporah perform ritual acts reserved for males in other texts, and they and Jael engage in types of violence that also characterize Levites' behavior: ritual slaughter (Hannah), homicide (Jael), and circumcision (Zipporah).[115] That the priestly character of each of these examples must be teased out speaks to the likely discomfort the storyteller/editor had with indicating a female office directly, a discomfort in evidence in the transmission of the story of Hannah. Whereas we saw earlier that stories about eponymous priests such as Aaron were told as a way of challenging claims to priesthood, we see another aspect of textual manipulation with regard to women in the cult. The priests and other male functionaries who curated these texts would have likely been uncomfortable with the depiction of a system at odds with their own, but nevertheless were not at complete liberty to deviate from the collective memory of their culture. Still, set within the larger framework of LDS use of biblical texts to understand priesthood, the fact that biblical evidence is infrequent does not need to be a major cause for concern, since some of the most central notions of LDS priesthood were developed out of obscure textual adumbrations.[116] Those discussed here that raise the possibility of female priests in ancient Israel provide ample means for LDS theological inquiry, especially given the fact that Joseph Smith promised to make the women's Relief Society organization "move according to the ancient Priesthood . . . . that he was going to make of this Society a kingdom of priests a[s] in Enoch's day—as in Paul's day."[117]

Prophets Male and Female

The struggle for female prophetic authority is much more visible than the case of female priestly authority. The LDS conception of prophecy is more closely aligned with that of the Bible than is the case with priesthood, although in both LDS and biblical contexts priesthood and prophecy exhibit considerable overlap. Prophets in the ancient Near East generally acted as mouthpieces for a god, and in the Hebrew Bible they have the additional role of intermediaries. Thus priests and prophets both mediated between God and people, and it is not surprising to find the same person, for instance, Samuel and Elijah, performing both roles at times.[118] As Mark Leuchter puts it, "The 'priests' of Jerusalem oversaw ritual

and divine instruction while the 'prophets' of Jerusalem delivered fresh oracles from the divine, but the differences between the two roles are more a matter of the emphasis of their activity than a strict separation between types."[119] Such is also the case in the LDS priesthood hierarchy, in which the heads of the priesthood are sustained as "prophets, seers and revelators" even though the title "prophet" in LDS hierarchy does not technically constitute an office in the way that "priest" and even "apostle" do. Still, the connection is so close that the LDS manual *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood* states, "all the prophets of the Lord in each dispensation since Adam have held this [priesthood] authority."[120]

The Old Testament specifically mentions five female prophets: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, the wife of Isaiah, and Noadiah, while the New Testament names Anna.[121] The first three exhibit agency within their roles as prophet. Miriam composes victory hymns and alludes to Yahweh speaking through her, though she is on the losing end of a confrontation with Moses, after which her voice is never heard from again; Deborah judges all Israel, prophesies regularly, leads armies, composes victory hymns; Huldah is the prophet whose testimony is required to determine the authenticity of the scroll of the law found by Josiah's officials, and she prophesies concerning the death of Josiah; Noadiah is grouped with those prophets who opposed Nehemiah, and Isaiah's wife's activity as prophet is not described, unless it be the conception of a child. Thus the possibility of women acting within their roles as prophets, undifferentiated from their male counterparts, is well established. Even in the cases of the opposition of Miriam and Noadiah, they are not singled out for their gender, but are included with at least one other male in their contention.[122]

The cases of Huldah and Deborah require further scrutiny. Huldah appears in 2 Kings 23 as the prophet to whom the king turns for divine authorization of the newly discovered book of the law, the crucial development in the narrative about Josiah's reform. She thus functions in the same way as Isaiah during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of Isaiah 7 and Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in Isaiah 36–38. Upon learning of the discovery of the scroll in the temple, Josiah sends his emissaries to Huldah for divine verification. In responding, she speaks for God: "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Tell the

man who sent you to me, 'Thus says Yahweh, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read'" (2 Kgs 22:15–16). Some have contended that the fact that Huldah goes on to wrongly predict Josiah's peaceful death suggests the author meant to cast her as a false prophet on the basis of Deut 18:21–22, but this is not explicit in the text. Moreover, as Thomas Römer argues, Josiah's death "in peace" means not that he would not die in battle, but that he would be spared "the spectacle of Jerusalem's destruction," as opposed, for example, to the fate of Jehoiakim (cf. Jer 36:30–31).[123] In any case, Josiah inaugurates his famous sweeping reforms on the basis of her confirmation, hardly a condemnation of a false prophet. Huldah thus authorizes the ideas not just at the center of Josiah's reform but also of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history (Joshua–2 Kings). It would be more than a little perplexing to entrust the prophetic validity of the newly discovered scripture and of the royal agenda to a prophet the author ultimately considered illegitimate.

Deborah

Finally, and most promiment, Deborah has long energized and troubled biblical interpreters[124] precisely because of her sex, but the text of Judges finds no trouble therewith. She is described as the "wife of Lappidoth," but scholars recognize, that because of anomalies in the way her putative husband is presented, the phrase should rather be rendered "woman of flames," or even "wielder of torches,"[125] possibly in reference to her prophetic specialty but certainly evocative elsewhere of theophany (Gen 15:17; Exod 20:18). Not only is she a prophet, she is Israel's judge, as were Tola and Samson in the book of Judges and also Eli and Samuel in the beginning of Samuel (1 Sam 4:18; 7:16–17). The text says more about her judicial activity than that of any other judge: that she would sit under the "palm of Deborah" and the Israelites would come to her for judgment. She also possessed power by virtue of her prophetic authority to muster armies: she speaks for Yahweh and summons the general Barak, who only agrees to go into battle if she is with him. She is known for her compositions (Judg 5:5), including the victory song of Judges 5. There she is also curiously called a "mother in Israel," which appears to be used as

a title, something she "arose as." Scholars have suggested this as a counterpart to the appellation of prophets as "fathers" (2 Kgs 2:12; 6:21). If this is the case, it may hint at the existence of her "children," which would be prophetic apprentices analogous to those of Elijah, called "sons of the prophets" (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7), and therefore possibly an order of female prophets. The concentration of cultic, political and military leadership in the person of Deborah makes her only peers in biblical history Moses or possibly Melchizedek. Translated into LDS terms, Deborah functioned as did Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, or Brigham Young in Utah; there are no other comparable analogues.

On the question of female prophetic authority it is thus established that women were authorized at the highest levels to receive revelation from, and to speak to, the people on behalf of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible. As Melodie Moench Charles notes, though, the treatment of Deborah and Huldah in LDS reference materials exhibits a discomfort similar to that which we saw with Hannah in the Masoretic Hebrew text. The editors of the LDS Bible Dictionary, working from a non-LDS base text, changed the wording of the entry on Deborah from a "prophetess" to "a famous woman who judged Israel," while Huldah was excised altogether (whereas she had been present in the base text).[126] In the new online "Guide to the Scriptures," however, the entry "Deborah" has been corrected to read "prophetess" in place of "famous woman."[127] Huldah is not treated alone, but the Guide has included a new entry, "prophetess," that names Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna as women who were called prophetesses in the Bible, but cautions "a prophetess does not hold the priesthood or its keys," without further explanation.[128] This assertion merits more detailed exploration, especially given Paul's expectation that women regularly prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). As with priests and goddesses, the cases of the female prophets clearly demonstrate legitimacy in the struggle for (and brief triumph of) female authority that has characterized our discussion thus far.

The Book of Judges and the Evaluation of Women's Authority

The evidence above shows women operating in roles Latter-day Saints would designate as priesthood offices if men occupied them. Equally important here, however, is the prominent struggle for

authority manifest in all of these texts, a struggle which repeatedly shows women as actors, and even as agents of priesthood power as understood in LDS terms, that is then removed, rejected, or lost as power is concentrated in the hands of men. The loss of female authority and opportunity as institutions grow and societies "stabilize" is not a sociological surprise. Jo Ann Hackett has called attention to the pattern in which the development of institutions pushes women to the margins, even when they had enjoyed prior dominance in a given arena, such as medicine. It is a pattern that is manifest at many points in the Bible, especially in the Book of Judges.

One can detect in Judges an *evaluation* of the relation between the status of women and the health of the covenant community. The loss of female authority is not only outlined in the Book of Judges, it is assigned an overtly negative value and may be read as a litmus test for the health of Israelite society. The text shows the Israelites careening toward disintegration in the days when "there was no king in Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes" (e.g., Judg 17:6). This disintegration is perhaps most apparent in the way women are treated with disproportionate frequency (relative to other books) and on a declining trajectory. At the beginning we find Deborah prophesying and judging Israel and Jael coming to the rescue in her capacity as priest, but as the narrative progresses women diminish in power and are stripped of authority, of agency, and even of name. Abimelech gives ominous voice to the fate of women under kings after an unnamed woman saves the temple refugees from his tyranny by dropping a stone on his head and crushing his skull. He says to his armor-bearer: "Draw your sword and kill me, so people will not say about me, 'A woman killed him'" (Judg 9:54). As Judges continues, we find the sacrifice of a young female firstborn (Jephthah's daughter, Judg 11), the death of the most (in)famous judge, Samson, by Delilah's treachery, and, in the final chapters, the unnamed concubine of a Levite casually turned over to fellow Israelite men for a brutal gang-rape following which her husband dismembered her as a way of calling the tribes of Israel to war against one of their own. Judges is bookended on the one hand by Deborah and Jael, who use their agency to muster the armies and defeat the enemies of Israel, and on the other by the Levite's concubine, whose passive body is used not only by her assailants

but also by her Levite husband to rally the Israelites. Judges can be read as intentionally equating the declining treatment, agency, and status of women with the declining health of Israelite society.[129] Continuing into the book of Samuel, the results of this declining health lead toward kingship, which is ambivalently characterized both as a solution to the decline and as a rejection of Yahweh (1 Sam 8).[130] One is tempted to say that a major loss in the bargain of kingship is female cultic agency. Even though it is ultimately unclear whether the author considered the advent of kingship as a boon to women, it is clear that the earlier, "healthier" situation at the beginning of Judges shows women holding status equal and even superior to men, triumphing over their male oppressors within and outside Israel. The book of Judges can therefore be read to condemn the decline of female authority and to idealize the situation in which women were judges—presidents, in LDS terms—and prophets. This text, furthermore, opens the way to the deployment of LDS discourses of apostasy that allow an evaluation based on canonical texts not just in the case of early Israel, but of the continual rejection of female authority in postbiblical contexts, to which we will return below. It now remains to treat the struggle for female authority in New Testament texts.

Priesthood and New Testament Women

The New Testament arose in a period for which there is better contemporary documentation than in the case of most of the Old Testament, which contributes to the fact that studies of women and gender in the New Testament and its context are disproportionately more voluminous than that of similar studies of the world of the Hebrew Bible. The discussion here will thus be necessarily summative and incomplete but will attempt to point to those instances most important for an LDS understanding of the struggle for female authority. The New Testament evidence complicates the discussion of priesthood in Mormonism because it is intertwined textually with the Hebrew Bible, and, at the same time, developed in a vastly different socio-political and religious landscape from it. As is frequently noted by scholars, the Temple was not a central focus of Jesus's teachings, and he certainly did not describe the community

of disciples, or its leadership, in priesthood terminology.[131] For the first hundred years of Christianity, the records of Jesus's earliest followers show a similar lack of interest in cultic institutions, whose force was diluted in texts such as 1 Peter 2:9, which applies the "royal priesthood" of Exodus 19:6 to the whole Christian community. Nevertheless, as Christian communities grew and ecclesiastical roles developed, the pattern of greater female leadership preceding institutional centralization holds again. There is early evidence of women occupying roles of apostle and deacon, followed by an effort to deny women such offices (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:9–15).[132]

Gospels

On the surface the Gospels seem less concerned with issues of institutional authority, probably because the Jesus movement arose largely outside elite sacerdotal contexts. Further, Jesus's sometimes radical social critique of existing power structures seems to hold out greater opportunities for historically oppressed groups, including women, and subsequently these groups often appealed to the Gospels to support their claims.[133] Thus, studies of gender in the gospels often focus on the notion of discipleship as presented in the text, rather than on ecclesiastical hierarchy. These studies have revealed strong evidence that the authors promoted, in harmony with their understanding of Jesus, a "discipleship of equals," a term coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.[134] Given the charge in LDS discussions of ecclesiastical equality that advocates of female ordination are unduly preoccupied with "sameness" rather than equality, it is important to note that Schüssler Fiorenza has emphasized that equality in her view does not imply the collapse of all distinction, including gender, but rather seeks equality *in* difference, an equality of "status, dignity, and rights" rather than an equality of maleness and femaleness.[135] Especially relevant here are the gospels of Luke and John, both of which exhibit a tendency to add women to their source material to balance the depiction of discipleship,[136] although this is not necessarily an unqualified gain for women, as a closer look reveals.

Many have noted that there are more passages about women in the Gospel of Luke than in the other gospels, about half of which are unique to Luke.[137] A careful analysis of these passages, though,

demonstrates Luke's concern for women maintaining their proper position and a suppression or recasting of stories in which women challenge Jesus (cf. Mark 7:24–30) or are commissioned to spread the gospel among gentiles (cf. John 4). This is less surprising when we take the companion volume to Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, into account. There the author shows a proclivity toward establishing Peter's primacy and a general harmony and structure among the male apostles.[138] The Gospel of John, on the other hand, has arguably the highest view of women in the earliest community. Women are responsible for the initiation of signs, for revealing Jesus's identity through discourse with him, and for supervising all aspects of his death.[139] Margaret M. Beirne takes this evidence as revealing John's view of a "genuine discipleship of equals" given his unique structural juxtaposition of male and female disciples.[140]

Especially important for an LDS framework is the way apostolic authority is portrayed. The fusion of "the twelve" with apostleship was a development that postdated Paul and not a concept or office uniformly understood throughout the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3, 5–8).[141] Most ancient notions of apostleship require both the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to the person in question and his divine commission to spread the message.[142] The work of Ann Graham Brock reveals that Luke and John represent canonical poles in their view of apostolic authority, especially with regard to Peter and Mary Magdalene, and therefore demonstrate a very early battle for apostolic authority.[143] Luke systematically removes Mary's privileged place among the disciples as well as any potentially poor light that may be cast on Peter. For example, he deletes the reciprocal rebukes of Peter and Jesus (Mk 8:32–33//Matt 16:22–23) and is the only one to add the exclusive resurrection appearance to Peter (Luke 24:33–34). At the same time, Luke breaks with the other canonical gospels in denying both Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene and his commission to her to testify to his resurrection, the two crucial components of apostleship.[144]

John does not share Luke's elevated view of Peter. Rather, for John, Peter is not even specifically called by Jesus, and he is certainly not the first.[145] Where Matthew, Mark, and Luke have Peter revealing Jesus's identity as the son of God (Mk 8:29; Matt 16:16; Luke 9:20), in John this confession is done by Martha (11:27), and

Peter's recognition and confession are less forceful, as he calls Jesus the "holy one of God" (6:69), a phrase that could signify a divinely-sanctioned human, such as a prophet. In John, Jesus does not call the twelve, and even though the author knows about such traditions, he de-emphasizes their significance (6:70).[146] John also only uses the term "apostle" once in a passage "that conveys a warning about status,"[147] which, given that the author of John is writing after the other evangelists, is likely a deliberate omission. At the same time, the gospel of John generally portrays stronger women than does Luke,[148] and this applies especially to Mary Magdalene. Mary and Peter are explicitly juxtaposed at the tomb when, finding it empty, she calls Peter and the beloved disciple, who come and witness its emptiness. Upon their departure Jesus appears exclusively to Mary and commissions her to bear witness to the disciples. Thus the gospel of John reverses the picture we find in Luke; now Mary is championed at the expense of Peter. Between these two poles, Mark and Matthew skew toward the portrayal of John, a point Brock notes as significant in light of the usual agreement of the synoptic gospels against John.[149]

The struggle evidenced in Luke and John plays out in other texts both inside and outside the canon(s). Brock sets the conflict seen in the New Testament within the broader context of the first several centuries of Christianity and thus adds to the mounting evidence of female authority in the early Church. This includes the later, non-biblical traditions that she was a prostitute,[150] as well as the title *apostola apostolorum*, "apostle to the apostles" and Bishop Hippolytus's third-century assertion that "Christ showed himself to the (male) apostles and said to them: . . . 'It is I who appeared to these women and I who wanted to send them to you as apostles."[151] That the tradition endured is suggested by Gregory of Antioch's sixth-century citation of Jesus's words at the tomb to the two Marys: "Be the first teachers of the teachers, so that Peter who denied me learns that I can also choose women as apostles."[152]

Besides the adumbration in Luke and John of a pitched battle for apostolic preeminence between Peter and Mary, these texts are most remarkable for their witness to tradition—to *narratives*—as one of the grounds on which the contest was fought. Both drew on earlier material at the same time as they innovated and adjusted in order to

convey their vision of how the contemporary church should look. This is both a common theme and an indication about the power of narrative for reshaping priesthood traditions and theologies in the face of social change.

Pauline Letters

The letters attributed to Paul have the distinction of providing both the strongest evidence for female authority and the strongest rejection thereof. In Romans 16, for example, Paul names a female deacon (Phoebe) and apostle (Junia) among several other prominent women. In 1 Timothy 2:12, however, women are not permitted to have authority over men or teach in church services. The Pauline letters have therefore received a great deal of attention in studies of the role of women in Christian leadership. Although these contradictions have been the focus of many studies, including an LDS context, they are worth exploring once again here in detail.

In addition to the verses in 1 Corinthians 11 that say husbands are the head of their wives as Christ is the head of the Church, two other letters urge wives to be submissive and subordinate to their husbands (Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–4:1). These passages do not explicitly comment on the significance of this hierarchy for gender relations outside of marriage or for the way this might constrain leadership roles in the ecclesiastical community. The normative value of these texts for modern practice is troubled by the fact that few denominations, Mormonism included, follow the rules for which the hierarchical order was invoked in these texts as a justification.[153] Women are not required to wear head coverings in public worship, as Paul strongly contends is a practice based on the created order (1 Cor 11:3–15), nor are the rules governing relations between slaves and masters in Col 3:22–4:1 understood to support the modern practice of slavery. As Hutchinson notes, this disconnect "demonstrates the cultural contingency of the rule."[154]

Some letters in the Pauline corpus speak more directly to the question of ecclesiastical leadership, however. The strongest of these is 1 Tim 2:8–15, which treats women's behavior in the churches generally: "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not

deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty" (vv. 11–15 NRSV). Here the order of creation is explicitly linked to gendered leadership, which supports not only male exclusivity but also radical receptivity on the part of the woman: no teaching, no speaking while learning, completely submissive. These verses bear close resemblance to 1 Cor 14:34–38, which appear in the middle of instructions about the management of spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, in gatherings: "As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (NRSV).

Although it would seem that these texts clearly indicate a generalized division of administrative labor between men and women, there are many reasons to reject their normative bearing on modern practice. First, current LDS practice already ignores much in these verses. Women do not learn in silence with full submission, and women speak and pray publicly and are not required to veil their heads. As Hutchinson notes, "the fact that women *do* teach in the modern LDS Church casts doubt upon any attempt to use this text to establish an exclusionary ordination policy."[155] Second, there are strong reasons to think someone besides Paul wrote these verses. It is a consensus among New Testament scholars that the pastoral epistles (1–2 Timothy; Titus) were forged in Paul's name after his death to gain an authoritative voice for endorsement of the author's contemporary agenda. This is supported by differences in style, language, and theology as well as anachronistic use of terminology. The fact that 1 Timothy forbids women access to offices such as bishop is an anachronism that gives away the author's context and ecclesiastical environment. In the case of 1 Cor 14:34–38, the verses are intrusive in theme and bear strong resemblance to 1 Timothy 2, which indicates their secondary insertion into the chapter. There are also very good reasons to doubt the authenticity of Ephesians and Colossians as letters authored by Paul.

The third and perhaps strongest reason to reject these texts as normative for modern Church practice, however, is that they do not

appear to have been normative even for Paul and even assuming he wrote them. A few chapters before his apparent pronouncement that women everywhere are to be silent in meetings (1 Cor 14:34–38), Paul assumes that women prophesy in these same meetings (1 Cor 11) and in Acts 18:26 Priscilla teaches the convert Apollos alongside her husband Aquila in Ephesus, a congregation Paul established. She is also mentioned in Romans 16, a chapter that merits a closer look because it undercuts the idea of an ecclesiastical hierarchy based on gender and, more important, gives positive evidence of female leadership in some of the earliest Christian communities.

Romans 16 has for decades been at the heart of this discussion because in it, Paul mentions as a matter of course several prominent women described as fellow ministers active in the church community.[156] He refers to Prisc[ill]a alongside her husband (Rom 16:3–4) as a co-worker with Paul in Christ who was apparently willing to endure death for Paul's sake and whose home was a meetinghouse. A certain Mary is also mentioned (v. 6) as one who worked hard (*ekopiasen*) among the community. In this chapter the verb *kopiaō* is only used for women, including Mary, Persis, and Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12). The latter two are also named in other undisputed letters of Paul (1 Cor 16:16; 1 Thess 5:12) in which Paul tells the communities to be subject to these women. This seems at odds with the prohibition in 1 Timothy on women having authority over men, not to mention the injunction against speaking or teaching.

The women most famously discussed in Romans 16 are, however, the deacon Phoebe and the apostle Junia. Paul introduces Phoebe as "a deacon (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchreae," and instructs his audience to "welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well" (Rom 16:1–2 NRSV). The KJV translates the Greek *diakonos* here as "servant" while in other texts, such as Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12, it renders "deacon," apparently based solely on the sex of the referent. While the term can indeed mean "minister" or "servant," justifying the difference between understanding "servant" or "deacon" in Romans versus Philemon or Timothy without a tautology is difficult.[157] Additionally, Paul's further specification of Phoebe as a deacon *of the church*, and also a benefactor (*prostatis*), speaks to her leadership and to the

possible point of emergence of the office of deacon in Christianity.[158] Little wonder she is the first person named in the chapter.

The double standard of avoiding official terms for Phoebe solely based on gender concerns finds a twentieth-century parallel in the case of Junia. In Romans 16:7 Paul enjoins the church in Rome to "greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me. They are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (NRSV). Although the name has been understood as feminine in gender since antiquity, in the twentieth century some began to argue that the Greek *Iounian* should be understood as "Junias," a masculine name. Eldon Epp has recently thoroughly discredited this argument, which was clearly driven by the supposition that women could not be apostles.[159] Another point of contention concerns whether the phrase rendered "prominent among the apostles" should be translated instead as "of note among the apostles," i.e., that apostles knew this (non-apostolic) couple well. Though this is in the realm of possibility, two pieces of evidence militate against it. First, the fact that Paul notes the couple's earlier entrance into the Christian community relative to his own bolsters the claim of apostleship. Some argue that "apostle" here need not indicate an office in the Church, but that it existed as a general term alongside the capital-A "Apostle" synonymous with the Twelve. This line of reasoning, however, would also undercut Paul's own apostolic claim, even in the same letter (cf. Rom 1:1). Second, as Hutchinson notes, "in Paul the preposition *en* in this kind of locution normally means 'among.' Had he meant 'to' he probably would have used the dative *apostolois* without the preposition. What we have is reference to a woman Paul considered not only an apostle, but an outstanding one."[160]

Romans 16 presents more than a collection of unflinching notices about women in early Christian communities. Rather, it presumes women played an active role in the center of leadership, preaching, and ministry alongside men. None of the anxiety about women's status in the hierarchy, so prominent in 1 Timothy, is in evidence in Romans 16. Not only does this chapter contradict multiple times the statements in the androcentric texts above, it does so by naming women and their titles. As we saw with Mary Magdalene, the major obstacles to understanding Junia as an apostle come

from interpreters' assumptions about women's opportunities for leadership rather than from the texts themselves.

To summarize the complex evidence about gender and authority in the Pauline letters, the texts do not speak with a unified voice, nor does modern LDS worship find uniform normativity in them. We can attribute some antiphony—perhaps the most dissonant—to other authors writing in Paul's name (1 Timothy, Ephesians, Colossians) and to interpolation (1 Cor 14:34–38). The other apparent contradictions involving the submissiveness of wives to husbands (1 Cor 11) as compared with the apparent erasure of gender (Gal 3:28) in Christ may be in fact the result of Paul's differentiation between created order and eternal order discussed above. He makes room for, and even endorses, certain cultural contingencies of subordination, such as slavery and marriage, in favor of not disrupting preparations for the coming kingdom of God. In Christ Jesus, however, Paul seems to hold out the possibility of adopting the non-hierarchical eternal structure promised in the baptismal pronouncement in Galatians 3. At the very least, one cannot easily negate the positive evidence from the Pauline letters of women serving in leadership roles that in the LDS Church are priesthood offices.

In the Pauline letters—disputed and otherwise—as in nearly every other text we have encountered to this point, we also find in evidence the struggle for authority at many levels, beginning in the New Testament itself and continuing to modern efforts to interpret it. The disputed letters bear witness to the struggle for gendered authority in a second-century context. The bare fact of the injunction of 1 Timothy against female participation in church settings witnesses to the reality of women's ecclesiastical activity at the same time that its inclusion in the canon demonstrates the success of the exclusionary process. The modern struggle for authority is seen in the gendered hermeneutics whereby Phoebe is denied status as deacon and Junia is rendered masculine, both solely on the basis of prevailing assumptions about female authority. That these hints of a more egalitarian early Christian arrangement survived at all—and among the very earliest textual witnesses to Christian practice—once again urges careful attention to the implications of female priesthood authority. As with the many other texts we have seen, these pseudepigraphic writings both appeal to and transform

tradition through text, this time by assuming the authoritative voice of Paul and extending themes of gender adumbrated in the undisputed letters. The skepticism of inerrancy claims endemic to LDS theology allows and perhaps even requires an interrogation of the authorial bases of the texts in question here, thus avoiding many of the obstacles confronting other denominations. Mormonism potentially makes room for disentangling contradictory threads and, in doing so, for the theological neutralization of the most misogynistic texts in the Pauline corpus.

Women in Early Christianity

Questions about the reliability of texts like Romans 16 that depict women in leadership roles at the center of the earliest Christian formation have led scholars to look with greater intensity at gender in the first Christian centuries. Studies of women and gender in early Christianity have burgeoned since the 1970s such that even a full sketch of the contours of the area of study is impossible here. For our purposes it is important to note the increasingly high resolution of the picture of women in Greco-Roman and Levantine contexts in the first centuries A.D. Some of the older positive explanations for a presumed higher rate of female conversion—such as that the liberating message of Jesus attracted people from segments of society oppressed under Judaism—have been replaced by models that combine sociology, anthropology, archaeology as well as literary criticism and philology.[161] The notion discussed above that women found greater opportunities for leadership and public agency during times of change has been alternatively championed and resisted and continues to be at the center of discussion.[162]

Crucial to this question is the recognition of the primary social locus of Christian communities not in an entirely public sphere as it would be in the third century and later, but rather in "house churches," which seems automatically to suggest greater leadership opportunities for women since, some argue, their primary domain in Greco-Roman society was domestic, and, as we argued was the case in ancient Israel, the move to the public sphere and subsequent welding of centralized public and religious authority pushed women to the margins.[163] Scholars point out, however, that the evidence is considerably more complex, and that the homes in

which Christians would have met were themselves situated at the juncture between public and private. Indeed, the domestic location can be seen either as a means to greater female power and agency or, as in the case of 1 Timothy 3, a way of enshrining the patriarchy of the home in the church organization. That upper-class homes were also semi-public venues in which men and women ran their businesses calls into question the assumption that they were entirely the domain of women. Evidence does point, however, to women as responsible for hospitality; Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald argue that the female leaders of houses mentioned in the New Testament—Mary mother of John, Mark (Acts 2:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14, 40), Nympha (Col 4:15), and possibly Chloe (1 Cor 11:1)—likely "hosted formal dinners and presided at them, including the assembly of the *ekklesia*."[164] These spaces were also centers of teaching and communication, and as such also place women in the center of developing Christian practice. If these women did preside at the regular meetings of Christian congregations, they were acting analogously to bishops in Mormon terms.

Although the process of institutionalization and centralization firmly pushed women to the margins of ecclesiastical hierarchy, this move obviously did not end the struggle. Some women found alternative means to authority and status in self-authorization and in the renunciation of sex, as portrayed in the *Acts of Thekla*, a document contemporary (perhaps not coincidentally) with the Pastoral Epistles.[165] Others challenged the male-dominated hierarchy more directly. Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek provide substantial documentary evidence from literary texts as well as inscriptions indicating that women did hold the offices of Deaconess (well-known especially in the Eastern Church but attested also in the West) and Presbyter (elder).[166] Though the nature of the evidence—comprising mostly either screeds against women in the clergy or terse inscriptions indicating little more than names and titles—prevents a clear view of duties, roles, and relation to male counterparts, it is sufficient to establish the struggle for female authority well after the merging of political and ecclesiastical power.

Letter to the Hebrews and LDS Priesthood

The final New Testament text crucial for discussion is the Letter to the Hebrews, in which the link forged between Jesus and Melchizedek

had profound influence on Joseph Smith's articulation of priesthood, visible especially in the dominant quotation of Hebrews in Smith's revision of Genesis 14. The anonymous author of Hebrews, which was ostensibly composed as a letter but reads more like a sermon than an address to a specific Christian community, draws creatively on various traditions in the Hebrew Bible to solve a socio-religious problem, namely the relationship between Judaism and the Christian community emerging from it. The Hebrew scriptures and Jewish tradition could not simply be jettisoned, because it was within that framework that Jesus and his disciples operated and understood their roles, but at the same time, with the expansion of the message of the resurrected Jesus into non-Jewish areas, the question of religious practice naturally arose. It was a problem that famously exercised Paul, who also turned to biblical exegesis to answer the same question, using, for example, the note in Galatians 3 about Abra[ha]m's belief and Yahweh's declaration of his righteousness in Gen 15:6 to show that one could be justified by faith outside the law.

Hebrews appeals to a different set of texts to explain the necessity of Jewish heritage as well as its supersession in the figure of Jesus. At the core is the author's mapping of Jesus onto the Jewish sacrificial cult, especially the Day of Atonement ceremonies described in Leviticus 16. The major historical hurdle to be overcome was that Jesus was not a priest or from a priestly lineage. For this reason the author invoked the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, who is found in only four verses in two passages in the Hebrew Bible: once as the king of Salem to whom Abraham pays tithes in Genesis 14:18–20 and again in Psalm 110:4 as having something to do with an enduring priesthood and kingship.[167] As with most such enigmatic passages, the tantalizing brevity and provocative silences caused many interpreters to rush into the breach to flesh out the biography and purpose of this figure. James Kugel discusses how interpreters both before and after the New Testament teased out of the suggestive scraps of these two texts a figure more exalted than the one portrayed in the Bible.[168] Some of these interpretive traditions were apparently influential in the composition of Hebrews, the most notable being the notion found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (predating Hebrews) that Melchizedek was a priest in the heavenly temple, because of the opening verses of Psalm 110: "take your throne at my right hand," and "the lord sends out from Zion your mighty scepter," as well as

"a priest forever." Also of concern to interpreters was Melchizedek's parentage. Since he was not of the family of Abraham and was apparently Abraham's superior, exegetes were at pains to explain this relationship in terms of chosen lineage since Jerusalem was known to be a non-Israelite town until the time of David. Thus the notion developed especially in Jewish circles that Melchizedek was the same person as Shem.[169] For the author of Hebrews, however, the silence surrounding Melchizedek's genealogy indicated *that he had none*; he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy" (Heb 7:3). These two concepts—(a) an eternal high priest (b) without lineage—allowed Jesus, a non-Levite, access to a higher, eternal priesthood. It allowed Hebrews to show Jesus, by virtue of the eternal priesthood and his offering of (his own eternal) blood, as simultaneously fulfilling and making obsolete the core of Jewish worship. Like Paul in Galatians 3, then, the author's appeal to a difficult passage regarding a pre-Mosaic figure uses Jewish tradition precisely to make an end-run around it.

For Joseph Smith, however, Hebrews was not simply about Jesus; it also held the key to understanding an eternal order of non-hereditary priesthood superior to that of the Levites that was held not just by Jesus, as the author of Hebrews has it, but by all the central male figures of the Old and New Testaments. Smith combined Hebrews with the narration in Exodus 34 of Moses re-ascending the mountain to retrieve two new tablets after he had smashed the first set in the Golden Calf incident two chapters earlier, seeing in this text an aborted attempt to give all Israelites (males?) the higher priesthood.[170] It was almost certainly his revision of Exodus 34 that provided the structure for the articulation in D&C 84 (esp. vv. 24–26) of higher and lower priesthoods and, tellingly, the covenant that attended the receipt of the higher priesthood (D&C 84:39–41).[171] Thus Joseph Smith does with Hebrews and Exodus what the author of Hebrews had done with Genesis and Psalm 110: he put the biblical texts into conversation with each other to establish new understandings of priesthood in response to contemporary social and theological concerns.[172] This precedent of interpretation might open space for new LDS readings of priesthood on the question of gender and authority.

Rites of Ordination

The act of ordination seems to be the standard by which recent Church statements have dismissed biblical evidence, and it is vital in contemporary Mormon affirmations of authority. Article of Faith 5 says "a man must be called of God by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority." Thus the official church statement that there is no record of Jesus ordaining women requires an unpacking of what scriptural ordination looks like, especially since most scholars agree that Jesus did not ordain anyone, woman or man, to ecclesiastical office in the Bible. The most explicit scriptural evidence for ordination as the ritual transfer of authority comes from Exodus and Leviticus, which speak of the consecration, ordination, and anointing of priests. If this is the standard the Otterson statement has in mind, it is one that cannot be met almost anywhere else for any office besides the priestly legal texts in the Pentateuch, and especially not in the New Testament.

If one broadens the definition of ordination to an expression of divine commission, there are many ways the Bible signals the commission. In KJV John 15:16, Jesus refers to his having chosen and "ordained" disciples, but (a) the Greek *tithemi* need not convey ordination to an office but rather a generic appointment, and (b) it remains unclear, even if the word "ordained" is kept, to what the disciples were ordained. Priesthood is certainly not directly in view here unless in a very generic (non-biblical) sense. Acts 6 depicts the twelve choosing and laying hands on seven subordinates chosen to look after logistics, though it is unclear here too whether this indicates a permanent office.

Other means of declaring intentional divine selection and commission vary widely and include: personal visions (Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22; Paul in Acts 9), Yahweh touching the mouth (Jeremiah 1), winged serpents touching the mouth with a coal (Isa 6), eating a scroll (Ezekiel 1), and casting lots to decide on the new apostle (Acts 1:23–26). Even more important, the charge, commission, or ordination of most of the male religious authorities in the Bible (even for individual priests) is not described; to list their title was enough, especially if their actions could be assumed to affirm their status. Thus Deborah gives oracles of Yahweh and successfully routs the

Canaanites—is her commission in doubt? The same goes for most of the other women treated here. Furthermore, if Paul's criteria for apostleship include both a vision of the resurrected Jesus and the charge to bear witness of it, Mary Magdalene and the other female witnesses can be considered apostles, "ordained" in the same way Paul was. On the other hand, we have many prominent male figures considered prophets who not only do not describe their ordination (e.g., Elijah, Abinadi), but who are not even specifically called prophets: Amos, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Malachi, Daniel. Further, the LDS understanding of important male figures in the Bible as priesthood holders, such as Adam and Abraham in D&C 84, is arrived at by a revelatory process that has not yet dealt with their female counterparts. Even to cite examples of priesthood and ordination from the Book of Mormon is to ignore the substantial differences in offices and priesthood structure between the Book of Mormon and the current LDS church. There is therefore not only lack of precedent for female ordination in scripture, but much of modern LDS practice of male ordination similarly either lacks precedent entirely or is only weakly attested. In other words, the Bible does not speak unequivocally about either male or female ordination practices as understood or performed by Latter-day Saints.

Finally, the case of the priesthood ordinations of Joseph Smith and associates at the (literal) hands of angelic messengers complicates any facile claim about priesthood ordination in scripture. The significant gap in time and characterization between the priesthood restoration events and their description reflects an evolution in the understanding of these events.[173] While multiple documents confirm Joseph Smith's claim to authorization by angelic authority in 1829, the specific link between John the Baptist and the Aaronic priesthood was not forged until after the concept of Aaronic priesthood had itself developed, after 1835. Even more complicated is the question of Melchizedek priesthood restoration, understood today to have taken place at an uncertain date and place by the laying on of hands from Peter, James, and John. Not only is this event murky in origin, but, as Michael MacKay shows, Joseph Smith never cited it during his lifetime as the moment of restoration of, and ordination to, the highest priesthood. Rather, MacKay points to a

less widely cited event in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in which Smith and Oliver Cowdery apparently were authorized *by voice* to perform ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood and to ordain each other Elders.[174] He also points to the Book of Mormon for evidence of authorization to the highest authority solely by divine speech-acts (Helaman 10:6–12). Not only does the history of the LDS church reflect a gradual process of understanding priesthood and restoring it, but it also attests that ordination is possible through pure perception and not exclusively through physical conferral. In any case, all of these examples show different ways of indicating ordination such that ordination of the female authorities discussed earlier is impossible to rule out, even within an LDS framework.

Conclusion: Precedent, Narrative, and Native Resolutions

> All things had under the Authority of the Priesthood at any former period shall be had again— bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets.
>
> —Joseph Smith, 5 October 1840[175]

> I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. —Joel 2:28 // Acts 2:17

The scriptural evidence presented here makes as compelling a case for female precedent in most LDS priesthood offices as for males, including the highest: Deacon (Phoebe), Priest (Zipporah, Jael, Hannah), Bishop (Deborah and perhaps Mary mother of John, Mark, Lydia, Nympha, and Chloe),[176] Apostle (Mary Magdalene, Junia), as well as Prophet (Deborah, Huldah, Miriam, Isaiah's wife, Noadiah), and president of the Church (Deborah). This is a remarkable number given the strongly androcentric production and social setting of the texts. These women make difficult any LDS claim that there were no ordained women in the Bible, especially given the problems with the definition of ordination described above. The simple presence of these figures creates tensions in the particular Mormon constellation of ecclesiastical authority, a tension demonstrated in, for example, the excision of Huldah from the LDS Bible

Dictionary and the manipulation of the entry on Deborah. Another source of tension we have seen is the way LDS priesthood hierarchy is not the province of a narrow cultic institution but extends into potentially every home, which intensifies gender relations and fuses priesthood with an eternal gender identity that is at odds with some biblical notions of gender equality. This tension is replicated in the strong dual commitment of the Church to gender equality and to a gendered restriction of priesthood agency. Yet the particular LDS framework also yields unique possibilities for an endemic resolution of these tensions, because although the extension of the concept of priesthood supports the gender hierarchy by marking sex as the most important distinction, it also encompasses roles such as prophet and apostle that were clearly held by biblical women.

The object of this study has been not so much to draw back the curtain to reveal a pristine egalitarian state in which women held priesthood, but rather to point to a cyclical process of empowerment and denial playing out on divine and human levels and in every era important to Mormon theology. What is revealed time and again is precedent followed by restriction and asymmetrically gendered interpretations. Seen thusly, the question becomes whether this cycle can be understood and accommodated in LDS theology.

One can begin to address this question by attention to the importance of narrative in establishing and understanding authority. At many points we saw ancient and modern authors not simply appealing to tradition but shaping, tailoring, and reconfiguring even (and perhaps especially) very thin textual evidence to address contemporary concerns and produce new knowledge in the face of significant social development. We see it at work in the disappearance and diminishing of women in the wake of the centralization of cultic power in Exodus, Judges, and Samuel; in the way the Deuteronomists excised Asherah worship and non-Jerusalem shrines using Moses's voice; in the way stories were told about priestly progenitors such as Moses and Aaron and their descendants in order to justify the contemporary preeminence of one line over another; in the way Luke and John tweaked their source material so as to promote or demote the apostolic claims of Mary Magdalene and Peter; in the way the author of the Pastoral Epistles adopted Paul's voice in order to combat the appearance of women in the church

hierarchy; in the way the author of Hebrews drew on many biblical and non-biblical texts and traditions to understand Jesus as a priest, and in the way Joseph Smith extended Hebrews.[177] Indeed, the turning points in Joseph Smith's revelatory career were rarely fully understood even by him from the start. One thinks especially of the multiple and divergent accounts of the first vision and the gradual articulation of the angelic conferral of both Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods as well as the development of priesthood structure and organization itself, which happened in step with scriptural inquiry and social exigency.

More important than the weight of precedent is the ability to assemble from it a new picture that is in recognizable harmony with the tradition. In keeping with the biblical pattern of reshaping tradition, a new but familiar picture of women's relation to priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could be assembled from canonical materials. The scriptural evidence of the repeated struggle for the wielding of female authority provides a solid basis for new approaches to the question of power, authority, and gender in the LDS tradition, not just in establishing precedent for authoritative women but also for establishing divine female power, for the exercise of agency, and for the negative evaluation of subordinating gender relations. Future theological reflection might draw, therefore, on the description in Proverbs 8 of a divine, female-gendered creative power overseen by an active and accessible goddess; the equation of female agency and authority with the health of the community of God in the book of Judges; and the patterns of Deborah, Jael, Zipporah, and Mary Magdalene as survivals of the female priesthood Joseph Smith said existed "in the days of Enoch . . . [and] in the days of Paul."

This material might also explain the present lack of female authority in relation to the past and potentially the future. The decline pictured in the Book of Judges was rooted in a cyclical pattern of oppression and deliverance that evokes the unique LDS way of relating to the past, a relation mediated by the term "apostasy," which is also understood to be historically cyclical on scales from dispensational to individual.[178] The concepts of apostasy and restoration have been at the heart of LDS self-understanding from the beginning. Terryl Givens recently pointed out that Joseph Smith's

definition of corruption from the primitive church as a justification for the radical reshaping of Christian tradition was exactly the opposite of the prevailing Protestant notions.[179] According to Givens, for Smith and for the subsequent church, restoration was not a *removal* of accretions like the restoration of a painting darkened by the patina of time (as other Protestants saw it) but a *replacement* of that which was lost, primarily of original authority.[180] It is in precisely this respect that Mormonism stands in a uniquely advantageous position when it comes to understanding the history of biblical authority: it is able to acknowledge not just the content of scripture but the particular (even the particularly misogynistic) conditions under which scripture developed. Apostasy as a cyclical loss of authority makes it possible to explain the struggle visible in all the texts above, not just in their basic narrative content but also in the ways texts were edited and selected and alternative narratives excluded. It can explain, for example, the inclusion of the Pastoral Epistles in the canon and the exclusion of the *Acts of Thekla*. In what President Dieter F. Uchtdorf described as an "ongoing Restoration,"[181] it seems that few concepts would be as consonant with the LDS notion of lost authority as the loss of female authority. It is a loss adumbrated in the partial restitution of priesthood authority to women in the last years of Joseph Smith's life.[182]

Seen this way, the loss of female authority is entirely congruent with Joseph Smith's view, as Givens describes it, of "restoration as an untidy and imperfect process involving many sources, varying degrees of inspiration, and stops and starts."[183] If the project of Restoration is a replacement of things lost, the repeated denial of genuine female authority can be seen in LDS terms as a fundamental human tendency of apostasy replicated in virtually every generation: a tendency so ingrained, so part of the fabric of human existence as to make female authority one of the last principles to be restored, because it was one of the first to go.

To return to the opening comparison of the gendered priesthood ban to the racial priesthood ban, it seems the Bible presents stronger evidence for women holding priesthood—especially as Latter-day Saints understand the term—than does early Mormon history for black men ordained during Joseph Smith's lifetime. In the comparison, however, we find a kind of reversal of sources: in

the case of the racial ban, there were clear modern indications of ordinations of black men but only indirect scriptural justification; in the case of the gendered ban, there is clear biblical evidence of women holding the highest offices, while the modern evidence stops just short of ordination in Joseph Smith's lifetime. Latter-day Saint women have no modern Elijah Abels; they instead have Deborah and Jael, Phoebe and Junia. Maybe more important than precedent of personnel is the clear and repeated scriptural evidence of the assertion and removal of female authority on many levels, from biblical events to text composition to transmission to interpretation. More important still, in my view, is the richness of the Bible and Mormon scripture, treated preliminarily here, for uncovering and exploring narratives of female authority within an LDS framework. It is in precisely this area that much theological and interpretative work remains to be done.

Notes

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1. After Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, JSOTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 170.

2. "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority: The Case of the *Gospel of Mary* (Magdalene)," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 21–41, 335–43; here 21.

3. Official Declaration 2.

4. Especially Lester Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue* 8 (1973): 11–86; Armand Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

5. The "Gospel Topics" essay on lds.org (https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng) draws more extensively on careful academic

research to help make sense of the ban in the history of the Church. At the time of writing, no official Church publication has attempted to deal in a similar way with the gender ban.

6. Ibid.

7. BBC World Service, "Sister Saints—Women and the Mormons" broadcast, August 23, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p024wttp. Transcript and emphasis mine. He made a similar statement in an earlier open letter released to several LDS blogs: "I suppose we do not know all the reasons why Christ did not ordain women as apostles, either in the New Testament of the Book of Mormon, or when the Church was restored in modern times. We only know that he did not" ("Context Missing from Discussion about Women," May 29, 2014, http://bycommonconsent.com/2014/05/29/an-open-letter-from-otterson-context-missing-from-discussion-about-women/). LDS Apostles have made similar comments: Elder Oaks called the gender division "a divinely decreed pattern" ("The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood," April 5, 2014, https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng); Elder Neil Andersen ("Power in the Priesthood," October 6, 2013, https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/power-in-the-priesthood?lang=eng) cites 1 Nephi 11:16–17 ("I do not know the meaning of all things") in response to why only men hold the priesthood; Elder David Bednar voiced similar agnosis in the Europe Area Sisters' Meeting in Frankfurt on September 9, 2014.

8. Compare the new heading to Official Declaration 2: "Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice [of prohibiting blacks from priesthood ordination]."

9. See "Women in the Church," https://www.lds.org/topics/women-in-the-church?lang=eng.

10. Exemplary evidence for this will be discussed below. On the androcentrism of LDS scripture, see Melodie Moench Charles, "Precedents for Mormon Women" in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 37–63; Lynn Matthews Anderson, "Toward a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Saint Scripture," *Dialogue* 27 no. 2 (1994): 185–203.

11. See the discussion of Carol Meyers's work below.

12. The classic critique of even feminist contributions to androcentric power structures is Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

13. Which is often itself motivated by androcentrism and even anti-semitism.

14. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Re-Visioning Christian Origins: *In Memory of Her* Revisited," in *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society,* JSNTSup 241, edited by Kieran J. O'Mahony (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 225–50, esp. 243.

15. Carol A. Newsom, "Women as Biblical Interpreters Before the Twentieth Century," in *Women's Bible Commentary,* 3rd. ed., edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Rindge, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012),11–26.

16. On LDS attitudes toward the Bible, see Philip A. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible,* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

17. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Re-Visioning Christian Origins," 236.

18. Major scholarly discussions of gendered authority and LDS scripture include: Moench Charles, "Precedents for Mormon Women;" idem, "Scriptural Precedents for Priesthood," *Dialogue* 18, no. 3 (1985): 15–20; Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 154–78; Anthony A. Hutchinson, "Women and Ordination: An Introduction to the Biblical Context," *Dialogue* 14 (1981): 58–74; Todd Compton, "Was Jesus a Feminist?" *Dialogue* 32, no. 4 (1999): 1–17; idem, "Kingdom of Priests: Priesthood, Temple, and Women in the Old Testament and in the Restoration," *Dialogue* 36, no. 3 (2003): 41–59.

19. Described in, for example, the 2014 Priesthood/Relief Society curriculum, *Teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, p. 166. This definition is repeated in the 2014 talk of Elder Dallin Oaks ("Keys and Authority of the Priesthood"). For a fuller discussion of historical priesthood definitions, see Toscano and Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox*, 143–53.

20. See *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* s.v. "Priesthood."

21. History of the Church 4:207–12.

22. HC 3:385–92.

23. "The Power of the Priesthood," April 3, 2010, https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/04/the-power-of-the-priesthood.

24. Ibid., quoting Joseph F. Smith in *Gospel Doctrine,* 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 287.

25. "Priesthood Authority in the Family and in the Church," October 1, 2005, https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2005/10/priesthood-authority-in-the-family-and-the-church?lang=eng.

26. *Handbook 2* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), §2.1 (https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/title-page?lang=eng).

27. Ibid., §15.4

28. This sense has been downplayed in recent statements and discussions, which emphasize being acted upon, or *receiving* the blessings of the priesthood. For example, Sheri L. Dew plainly stated "it is more blessed to receive" and that "power would be available to men and women through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement, through the gift of the Holy Ghost and the ministering of angels, and it would also be available to men and women alike through the restoration of the priesthood. Both men and women would have full access to this power, though in different ways" (*Women and the Priesthood: What One Mormon Woman Believes* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013], ch. 4 [Kindle edition]). As Elder Neal L. Anderson phrased it on October 6, 2013, "We sometimes overly associate the power of the priesthood with men in the Church. The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all—men, women, and children." He compared the priesthood power to sunlight entering a room through a window: "A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings. The blessings of the priesthood are infinitely greater than the one who is asked to administer the gift" ("Power in the Priesthood"). This can only be true if the phrase "blessings of the priesthood" excludes the possibility that the ability to "direct, control, and govern" is a blessing. In this line of reasoning, the passive role of reception is equated with the divine while the existence of agents who are actively able to bless is elided. The agent's role of active service is underplayed in an attempt to create a more egalitarian rendering of the interaction. Thus the "power to act" aspect in the current definition of LDS priesthood is downplayed in favor of the "salvation of mankind" component. It is seen perhaps most clearly in Elder Oaks's 2014 statement: "Priesthood power blesses all of us. Priesthood keys direct women as well as men, and priesthood ordinances and priesthood authority pertain to women as well as men" ("Keys and Authority"). Here agency rests with keys and ordinances instead of with the social actors who turn the keys and perform the ordinances.

29. Mary Keller rethinks the role of female agency in religion by locating the power of some ecstatic performers in their radical receptivity, their "instrumental agency," being wielded as a hammer or played as a flute: *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Jonathan Stökl discusses and ultimately rejects the relevance of this model to the ancient Near Eastern evidence: "The Role of Women in the Prophetical Process at Mari: A Critique of Mary Keller's Theory of Agency," in *Thinking Towards New Horizons: Collected Communications to the XIXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament Ljubljana 2007*, edited by Hermann Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin, Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 55 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008), 173–88.

30. For a summary of the recent LDS turbulence and discourse surrounding this issue, see Neylan McBaine, *Women at Church: Magnifying LDS Women's Local Impact* (Draper, Utah: Kofford Books, 2014), 7–15. For examples of these non-scriptural approaches and justifications, see Dew, *Women and the Priesthood*; Oaks, "Keys and Authority"; Julie B. Beck, "Mothers Who Know," October 7, 2007, https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/10/mothers-who-know?lang=eng; Andersen, "Power in the Priesthood." For earlier analysis of non-scriptural LDS rhetoric, see Sonja Farnsworth, "Mormonism's Odd Couple: The Motherhood-Priesthood Connection," in *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism,* edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 299–314. Available online at http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=975.

31. On the problems of using the label "patriarchy," see Carol L. Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?" *JBL* 133 (2014): 8–27. *Pace* Meyers, I use the term here not to indicate that men had all power over women in every sphere (as was once claimed for ancient Greece and continues to be claimed for ancient Israel), but to indicate the male-dominated hierarchy articulated in terms of kinship and not simply gender.

32. The New Testament comes slightly closer in 1 Cor 11 and 1 Tim 3, but there the reason for subordination is tied to order of creation and to behavior, not to innate qualities. Again, while hierarchy is assumed, philosophical reasons for such are absent. See also discussion of Gen 3:16, below.

33. "The Ideology of Gender in the Bible and the Ancient Near East," in *Studies in the Bible and Feminist Criticism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 188.

34. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), esp. 72–143; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987), 104–30; Carol L. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), passim.

35. S. S. Lanser, "(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Inferring Genesis 2–3," *Semeia* 41 (1988): 67–84; but against this see Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*.

36. As virtually every commentator notes, the Hebrew word *ʾādām* is not used as a personal name until chapter 5 and thus many translate it as "earthling," since the folk etymology given in the text connects "*ʾādām*" with "earth" (*ʾădāmâ*). While maintaining the nuance is important, this should not be read as evidence of early egalitarianism, since the fact that the word for "human" becomes the male human's personal name is another clear link between maleness and normative humanness. See discussion in Ronald A. Simkins, "Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth," in *Genesis,* Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 32–52, esp. 44–46.

37. See Michael Coogan, *God and Sex: What the Bible Really Says* (New York: Twelve, 2010), 176; David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23. My thanks to David Bokovoy for pointing out these references.

38. While it may be unlikely that, given the narrative context, female gods were implied here, neither the text nor LDS theology explicitly precludes the possibility. On the differences in the creation narratives, see the detailed treatment of Anthony A. Hutchinson, "A Mormon Midrash? LDS Creation Narratives Reconsidered," *Dialogue* 21, no. 4 (1988), 11–74.

39. That is not to say that the priestly author of Genesis 1 was an egalitarian himself. It is important, however, in the comparative relation between Genesis 1 and 2–3.

40. Technically speaking, the creation account of Gen 1 continues through Gen 2:4a, meaning that the second creation account spans Gen 2:4b–3:24. I use "Gen 1" and "Gen 2–3" therefore as an easy shorthand.

41. Compare Gen 1:11–12 with 2:5–7.

42. The myriad treatments of the Hebrew phrase "*ʿēzer knegdô*" have demonstrated that no kind of menial assistant is envisioned; *ʿēzer* is elsewhere only applied to divinity. For LDS implications, see Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, "The Redemption of Eve," in *Sisters in Spirit*, 3–36.

43. Daniel Boyarin, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 117–35; cf. idem, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," *Representations* 41 (1993): 1–33 (repr. in *A Feminist Companion to Paul*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 13–41).

44. See Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender" for a thorough discussion of the seeming contradictions in Paul.

45. Boyarin, "Gender," 124.

46. Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13, no. 1 (1974): 165–208; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

47. Boyarin puts it succinctly: "If Paul took 'no Jew or Greek' as seriously as all of Galatians attests that he clearly did, how could he possibly—unless he is a hypocrite or incoherent—not have taken 'no male or female' with equal seriousness?" ("Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 22).

48. On this see also Richard B. Hays, "Paul on the Relation of Men and Women," in *A Feminist Companion to Paul*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 137–47 (repr. of idem, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament:*

Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 46–59).

49. Boyarin, "Gender," 118.

50. Ibid., 128.

51. Ibid., 129.

52. Seen in the work of Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray. See Boyarin, "Gender," 128–33. On the relevance of Irigaray's work to Mormon thought, see Taylor Petrey's forthcoming article, "Rethinking Mormonism's Heavenly Mother," *Harvard Theological Review* (forthcoming).

53. Boyarin, "Gender," 132.

54. The problems of relating Gen 1 and 2–3 across the "P-J seam" in LDS creation narratives are thoroughly treated in Hutchinson, "LDS Creation Narratives," esp. 31ff.

55. See Taylor Petrey, "Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology," *Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (2011): 106–41; idem, "Rethinking Mormonism's Heavenly Mother."

56. Brent A. Barlow, "Strengthening the Patriarchal Order in the Home," *Ensign* (Feb. 1973): https://www.lds.org/ensign/1973/02/strengthening-the-patriarchal-order-in-the-home?lang=eng.

57. President Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign* (March 1976) The address was originally given in the Relief Society General Conference session, October 1–2, 1975, https://www.lds.org/ensign/1976/03/the-blessings-and-responsibilities-of-womanhood?lang=eng; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," https://www.lds.org/topics/family-proclamation?lang=eng.

58. Rockwood, "The Redemption of Eve," 21.

59. Boyd Jay Petersen, "Redeemed from the Curse Placed upon Her: Dialogic Discourse on Eve in *The Woman's Exponent*," *Journal of Mormon History* 40 (2014): 135–74, especially 162–65. Cf. D&C 61:17, in which the effects of the curse on the land are reversed for the saints.

60. Bruce C. and Marie K. Hafen, "Crossing Thresholds and Becoming Equal Partners," *Ensign* (Aug. 2007): 27.

61. http://squaretwo.org/Sq2AddlCommentarySherlock.html; http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2010-fair-conference/2010-the-two-trees; http://mormonscholarstestify.org/1718/valerie-hudson-cassler; Valerie M. Hudson and Richard B. Miller, "Equal Partnership in Marriage," *Ensign* (April 2013): https://www.lds.org/ensign/2013/04/equal-partnership-in-marriage?lang=eng.

62. However, biblical commentators have for almost a millennium found other ways to neutralize the passage. See examples in Newsom, "Women as Biblical Interpreters," 11–26; see also Meyers's intriguing analysis (*Rediscovering Eve*, 81–102), in which she limits the "ruling" to an etiology of sexual (rather than holistic) relations. She renders the verse as "I will make great your toil and many your pregnancies; / with hardship shall you have children. / Your turning is to your man/husband, / and he shall rule/control you (sexually)" (102).

63. If one ignores these difficulties, it might make for an interesting LDS midrash on the verse, especially if one then reads Gen 4:7 as Sin "ruling with" Cain.

64. See Moses 4:22 and, e.g., the statement of Brigham Young: "There is a curse upon the woman that is not upon the man, namely, that 'her whole affections shall be towards her husband,' and what is next? 'He shall rule over you'" (*Journal of Discourses*, 4:57 [September 21, 1856]).

65. This is not to say that the plain sense of the text requires or justifies a totalizing gender hierarchy.

66. There is arguably a subtler side of this interpretation, too, which wants to find the tension felt in modern Mormon society also expressed in ancient Israel: in other words, if ancient Israel could maintain that men and women "ruled together" while still having an exclusively male priesthood, this would support the current structure in the LDS Church.

67. Barlow, "Patriarchal Order."

68. "Any interpretation of this utterance—as a curse, aetiological statement of fact, blessing or otherwise—is largely dependent on the reader's gender position and may vary considerably" (Athalya Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and "Sexuality" in the Hebrew Bible* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 53).

69. Archaeological and epigraphic records confirm the nontrivial existence of Asherah as female consort of Yahweh. Biblical scholars point out that Hosea, one of the earliest writing prophets, excoriates the Israelites for worship of Baal (or baals) but not of Asherah (or asherahs), reflecting a time in which such worship was legitimate. See the thorough treatment of Baruch Halpern, "The Baal (and the Asherah) in Seventh-Century Judah: YHWH's Retainers Retired," in *Konsequente Traditionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Klaus Baltzer zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by R. Bartelmus, *OBO* 126 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 115–54. For a basic outline of the parameters and recent discussion, see Sung Jin Park, "The Cultic Identity of Asherah in the Deuteronomic Ideology of Israel," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123 (2011): 553–64. Noteworthy in this regard are the multiple inscriptions at Kuntillet 'Ajrud which bless individuals by Yahweh and "by his Asherah." The debate as to whether Asherah refers to a cult object or to a personal name seems decided by the male and female

bes-figures over which the words are inscribed. In any case, the unproblematic worship of Asherah is confirmed here. For evidence of the "disappearing goddess," see Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); Mark S. Smith, "The Blessing God and Goddess: A Longitudinal View from Ugarit to 'Yahweh and his asherah' at Kuntillet 'Ajrud," in *Enigmas and Images: Studies in Honor of Tryggve N. D. Mettinger,* edited by Göran Eidevall and Blaženka Scheuer, CBOTS 58 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 213–26 (esp. 224–25).

70. On the limitations of Heavenly Mother in Mormon theology, see Moench Charles, "New Mormon Heaven"; Petrey, "Rethinking Mormonism's Heavenly Mother."

71. Not, as in the KJV, "as one brought up with him."

72. On Wisdom as a Canaanite goddess, see Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim, 1986). On the Egyptian connections, see C. Bauer-Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9: Eine Form- und Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterial,* Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 22 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, West Germany: Neukirchener, 1966); Michael V. Fox, "World Order and Ma'at: A Crooked Parallel," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 23 (1995): 37–48. Gustav Boström argued for a Mesopotamian connection: *Proverbiastudien: Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib in Sprüche 1–9,* Lunds Universitets Årsskrift 30 (Lund, Sweden: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1935). Cf. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and his Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9 (2000): 16–25, 80–81; esp. 22–25.

73. For LDS precedent see David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "'A Mother There': A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies* 50 (2011): 70–97, here 80.

74. The Sophia traditions in Gnostic texts show a similar figure; see Deirdre Good, *Reconstructing the Tradition of Sophia in Gnostic Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

75. One might associate her with Joseph Smith's statement that the Melchizedek Priesthood "is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time" (HC 4:207).

76. Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Creation," *JBL* 104 (1985): 3–11, here 9. He also points to Gerhard von Rad's identification of Wisdom as the matrix in which the earth was created, the "self-revelation" of creation.

77. The verb rendered "acquire" [*qnh*] can also be translated "create" and even "procreate," and it takes its place as one of the many strongly ambivalent

terms surrounding the figure of Wisdom, which might itself be a hallmark of Wisdom literature but also speaks to the rich potential of this figure for LDS theology. See discussion in David Bokovoy, "Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Reassessment of *qnh* in Genesis 4:1," *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2012): 1–17.

78. Carol A. Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1–9" in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel,* edited by Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress, 1989), 142–60; Athalya Brenner and F. van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), esp. 54, 127. See, finally, the nuanced approach of Gerlinde Baumann, "The Figure with Many Facets: The Literary and Theological Functions of Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9," in *Wisdom and Psalms*, Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 44–78.

79. See, for example, Baumann, "The Figure with Many Facets"; Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985); see also Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig, *Sophia: The Future of Feminist Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

80. Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 153, 251–69; Mark Ashurst McGee, "Zion Rising: Joseph Smith's Early Social and Political Thought," PhD Diss., Arizona State University, 2008, 310. On the Reformation notion itself, see Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

81. Moench Charles, "Precedents for Mormon Women," and "Scriptural Precedents for Priesthood;" Hutchinson, "Women and Ordination;" Compton, "Was Jesus a Feminist?" and "Kingdom of Priests."

82. For an excellent overview of priesthood in the Hebrew Bible, see Mark A. Leuchter, "The Priesthood in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 no. 2 (2010): 100–10.

83. During the lifetime of Joseph Smith and until the twentieth century, the term "high priesthood" referred not to the general Melchizedek Priesthood but to the office of high priest. See extensive discussion in Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995) and, recently, in William V. Smith, "Early Mormon Priesthood Revelations: Text, Impact, and Evolution," *Dialogue* 46, no. 4 (2013): 1–84 (here 39–46).

84. For example, Micah (Judg 17–18); cf. also discussion of Hannah and Elkanah below.

85. "When priesthood authority is exercised properly, priesthood bearers do what He would do if He were present" (Packer, "Power in the Priesthood").

86. Leuchter, "Priesthood," 101.

87. For example, Shaphanides (see Leuchter, "Priesthood," 105), Ezra (Ezra 7:1–5).

88. The four main texts are: Gen 49:5–7; Deut 33:8–11; Gen 34:25–26, 31; Exod 32:26–29. See Joel S. Baden, "The Violent Origins of the Levites: Text and Tradition," in *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition,* edited by Mark Leuchter and Jeremy Hutton (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 103–16. Phineas's violent zeal, moreover, in Num 25 results in Yahweh's promise to Phinehas of perpetual priesthood. It seems no accident, then, that the spectacular violence done to the concubine in Judg 19 came at the hands of a Levite. Other texts hint at the nexus of priesthood and violence: the Kenites/Midianites, connected both to the first homicide (Cain, in Gen 4) and to the priestly clan in whose territory Moses first encountered Yahweh and who provided him with a priestly wife (see below). It was, of course, to the Kenite/Midianite territory that Moses fled after having killed an Egyptian. See full summary in Baruch Halpern, "Kenites," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:17–22.

89. Not that such processes were without significant tension, especially with the monarchy. See Jeremy Hutton, "All the King's Men: The Families of the Priests in Cross-Cultural Perspective," in *"Seitenblicke": Literarische und historische Studien zu Nebenfiguren im zweiten Samuelbuch,* edited by Walter Dietrich, OBO 249 (Fribourg and Göttingen: Academic Press and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 121–51; and Stephen L. Cook, "Those Stubborn Levites: Overcoming Levitical Disenfranchisement," in *Levites and Priests,* 155–70.

90. The classic and still-informative study of these conflict stories is that of Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 195–215. For a summary of problems these stories present, as well as scholarly solutions, see George W. Ramsey, "Zadok," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1035–36.

91. Compare the language describing Jeroboam's installation of the calves in Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:28) with Aaron's making of the Golden Calf (Exod 32:4).

92. Some scholars see the figure of Zadok as originally a Jebusite priest native to (pre-Israelite) Jerusalem, owing to his problematic genealogy and to the similarity of his name to other prominent Canaanite Jerusalemites, Melchi*zedek* and Adoni*zedek*, among other details. Others, however, argue that this is not necessary, especially since the explicit connection to Melchizedek is never made in the text, and argue instead for a northern priesthood that traced its lineage to Moses (Abiathar and the Elides) locked in a power struggle with a southern line deriving from Aaron (Zadok).

93. Cory D. Crawford, "Between Shadow and Substance: The Historical Relationship of Tabernacle and Temple in Light of Architecture and Iconography," in *Levites and Priests,* 117–33.

94. For an excellent collection and discussion of the major ancient Near Eastern primary sources, see Mark W. Chavalas, *Women in the Ancient Near East: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2014). See also the detailed work of Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

95. See discussion in, for example, Zainab Bahrani, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 113–17.

96. See examples below for discussion of the textual evidence in the stories of Hannah, Junia, and Mary Magdalene.

97. See, for example, Hannah K. Harrington, "Leviticus," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 70–78 (here 77); and the discussion and examples in Compton, "Kingdom of Priests," 49.

98. See Sarah Shechtman's excellent treatments: "Women in the Priestly Narrative," in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions,* edited by Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments 95 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2009), 175–86; idem, "The Social Status of Priestly and Levite Women," in *Levites and Priests*, 83–99; idem, *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist and Source-Critical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009).

99. One could also include here Tamar in Genesis 38, whose actions and those of her accusers presuppose a connection to a (poorly documented) sexual cultic service.

100. For discussion of "before Yahweh" in architectural context, see Michael B. Hundley, "Before YHWH at the Tent of Meeting," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 15–26.

101. See discussion in Carol L. Meyers, "Hannah and Her Sacrifice: Reclaiming Female Agency," in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings,* edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 93–104, here 97–99.

102. Women also are said to offer sacrifice in connection with vows in Prov 7:14.

103. Miriam, as prophet, in Exod 15; Deborah, also prophet, in Judg 5; more generally Judg 11:34; 1 Sam 18:7; 21:11; 29:5; 2 Sam 1:20. See also Julie Smith, "'I Will Sing to the Lord': Women's Songs in the Scriptures," *Dialogue* 45, no. 3 (2012): 56–69.

104. See discussion and references below, in the New Testament section on discipleship.

105. What follows is only, necessarily, a brief overview of much careful text-critical work. It is well established that the Massoretic text in the cases discussed is the inferior text. See, among the many treatments, Anneli Aejmelaeus, "Corruption or Correction? Textual Development in the MT of 1 Samuel 1," in

Textual Criticism and Dead Sea Scrolls Studies in Honor of Julio Trebolle Barrera (JSJSup 158, edited by A. Piquer Otero and P. A. Torijano Morales (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–17; idem, "Hannah's Psalm in 4QSam[a]," in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel: The Entangling of the Textual and Literary History,* VTSup 132, edited by P. Hugo and A. Schenker (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 23–37; Donald W. Parry, "Hannah in the Presence of the Lord," in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel*, 53–73; Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 3d ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), esp. 254–56. On the general ability to discern textual manipulation in MT without the contrary evidence of LXX or other versions, see Alexander Rofé, "The History of Israelite Religion and the Biblical Text: Corrections Due to the Unification of Worship," in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov,* edited by S. Paul, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 759–93.

106. "Hannah in the Presence of the Lord," 63.

107. Cf. Exod 38:8, where women serve at the entrance unproblematically. Alexander Rofé argues persuasively that this phrase in 1 Sam 2:22 is an addition in MT because the scribe wants to further implicate the sons of Eli, but he does not connect it specifically with the crucial discomfort of ch. 1 ("Israelite Religion and Biblical Text," 772–73).

108. Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 97–98.

109. See Halpern, "Kenites."

110. Benjamin Mazar points out that a terebinth with a place-name following (e.g., Gen 12:6–7; 13:38) is always a holy site elsewhere ("The Sanctuary of Arad and the Family of Hobab the Kenite," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 [1965]: 297–303). On Kedesh as a city of refuge (Josh 20:7), see Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 98.

111. His name means "son of (the Goddess) Anat" (on whose proclivity toward violence see above). It is entirely appropriate for a man said to have slain 600 Philistines with an oxgoad.

112. The note about Sisera falling "between her feet" in Judg 5:27 has been taken together with the tent-setting as evidence of Ja'el using her sexuality to entice and distract him. As Jack Sasson notes in his recent Judges commentary, to assume they were in a copulative embrace does not accord with the mechanics of her fatal blow (*Judges 1–12,* AB 6D [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014] 317), and instead is likely the well-known biblical (and ancient Near Eastern) trope of the vanquished lying at the feet of the victor. See, however, Ackerman's proposal that Jael, like Anat, is cast as a kind of erotic assassin, whose sexuality is not far from violence (*Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 61).

113. Originally the instructions in 4:21–23 were part of a different narrative from the rest of the story, but have been placed there by the compiler of Penta-

teuchal documents. It is no accident that they are placed immediately before the following narrative, which describes a threat to another firstborn (Moses) and his redemption by the blood of his own firstborn son.

114. As noted for centuries, "feet" here and in many other places in the Bible is a euphemism for male genitalia. Thus the foreskin of the son substitutes for that of the father, evoking the common biblical ideal of sacrificing the firstborn or substituting something in his place. See Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) for a full discussion of the theme and its examples in scripture. On the JST and attendant issues for Latter-day Saints, see Kevin Barney, "Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis," *Dialogue* 33, no. 1 (2000): 57–99, here 92–94.

115. See Smith's excellent discussion of the scriptural praise for these violent acts in "Women's Songs," 58–59.

116. Mention should also be made of the revelations developing from the barest of textual support, such as baptism for the dead, on the basis of 1 Cor 15:29.

117. See the entry March 31, 1842, in the "Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book," available at http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book?p=19&highlight=ancient%20priesthood (accessed Oct. 22, 2014).

118. This mediatory role is, however, unique in the ancient Near East and may not have been part of the earliest stages of prophecy during the monarchy.

119. Leuchter, "Priesthood," 103.

120. *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood,* Part A (2000), 9.

121. Prophecy outside the Bible has also been of scholarly concern, especially in the past three decades. Among ancient Near Eastern cultures, prophecy as a phenomenon detectable in writing so far has shown up almost exclusively in Mari in the second millennium BC, in Neo-Assyria in the first, and in the Hebrew Bible. In all three contexts, there is clear evidence of female prophets, and in the case of Neo-Assyria, as Corrine Carvalho and Jonathan Stökl point out: "If our evidence is to be trusted, the vast majority of Neo-Assyrian prophets were female" ("Introduction," in *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East,* edited by Jonathan Stökl [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013], 1–8, here 3). Lester Grabbe, further, has argued that it is difficult to find evidence anywhere for a specifically female-gendered office, that is, for "prophetess" as distinct from a "prophet" who happens to be female; male and female prophets occupied the same role and not separate gendered (hierarchical) versions ("'Her Outdoors': An Anthropological Perspective on Female Prophets and Prophecy," in *Prophets Male and Female*, 11–26). Stökl's comprehensive survey of all three ancient Near Eastern contexts

shows the Hebrew Bible's apparent overwhelming preference for male prophets to be somewhat anomalous, possibly owing to the tendency (though not a rule) of prophets speaking for deities of the same sex (*Prophecy in the Ancient Near East,* CHANE 56 [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 216–17; idem, "Ishtar's Women, YHWH's Men? A Curious Gender Bias in Neo-Assyrian and Biblical Prophecy," *ZAW* 121 [2009]: 87–100). It is possible furthermore that the grammar of Hebrew, which allows groups of mixed gender to be referred to by masculine pronouns and verb conjugations, skews the numbers to make the disparity seem all the greater (See Stökl, *Prophecy*, 217).

122. For Miriam it was Aaron, and for Noadiah it was "the rest of the prophets" (Neh 6:14).

123. Thomas Römer, "From Prophet to Scribe: Jeremiah, Huldah, and the Invention of the Book," in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script,* edited by Philip R. Davies and Thomas Römer (Durham, England: Acumen, 2013), 86–96, here 93.

124. See Joy A. Schroeder, *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) on text and interpretational history of Deborah, as well as the summary "Deborah, Jael and their Interpreters," in *Women's Bible Commentary,* 128–32.

125. See Sasson, *Judges 1–12*, 255–56.

126. See Charles, "Precedents," 43.

127. See https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/deborah?lang=eng&letter=d (accessed Nov. 1, 2014).

128. Online at https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/prophetess (accessed Nov. 24, 2014).

129. On the sociological pattern of women's marginalization as institutions are centralized, see Jo Ann Hackett, "In the Days of Jael: Reclaiming the History of Women in Ancient Israel," in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality,* edited by C. W. Atkinson, C. H. Buchanan, and M. R. Miles (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 15–38; idem, "Women's Studies and the Hebrew Bible," in *The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures,* edited by R. E. Friedman and H. G. M. Williamson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 141–64.

130. An interesting correlation with the book of Judges's inital characterization of women's authority is visible in the beginning of Sameul, where Samuel is described as the last judge. It is perhaps no accident that in this last gasp of the ideal kingless arrangement, Hannah also evokes the authority that characterized Jael and Deborah.

131. See summary of A. E. Harvey, "Priesthood," in *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 565–67.

132. On the obstacle that this text continues to be for female authority, see, for example, the analysis in the House of Bishops' Working Party report "Women Bishops in the Church of England?" (London: Archbishops' Council, 2004), 228–35, esp. 231. Some however read 1 Tim 3:11 as indicating the possibility of women in the diaconate, though this seems a stretch given the surrounding verses and the general tenor of the epistle.

133. The Gospel narratives were important, for example, in Sarah Moore Grimké's 1837 stance against the pastors who wanted to curtail her public involvement with abolitionism: "The Lord Jesus defines the duties of his followers in his Sermon on the Mount. He lays down grand principles by which they should be governed, without any reference to sex or condition. . . . I follow him through all his precepts, and find him giving the same directions to women as to men, never even referring to the distinction now so strenuously insisted upon between masculine and feminine virtues" ("July 1837 Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman. Addressed to Mary S. Parker" [Boston: I. Knapp, 1838], 128). I am indebted to Rebekah Crawford for pointing me to this text.

134. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), xxiv.

135. See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 113–14. See fuller discussion and slight correction in Margaret Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals,* JSNTSup (London: Shefflied, 2003), 32–33. Valerie Hudson and Elder D. Todd Christofferson, for instance, have raised the specter of sameness in the LDS debate about women's authority: Hudson, "Rectifying the Names: Reflections on 'Womanhood and Language' by [Ralph] Hancock," *SquareTwo* 7, no. 3 (2014): http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleHudsonRectificationNames.html; see also idem, "Equal Partnership in Marriage"; Christofferson, "The Moral Force of Women," October 5, 2013 (https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/the-moral-force-of-women?lang=eng): expresses a "concern . . . from those who, in the name of equality, want to erase all differences between the masculine and the feminine."

136. For this phenomenon in Luke, see, for example, Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Rindge, "Gospel of Luke," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 493–516.

137. Schaberg and Rindge, "Gospel of Luke," 498; see also Ann Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority,* HTS 51 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Theological Studies, 2003), 36–37.

138. Compare the treatment of the council of Jerusalem in Acts with that of Paul (Acts 15; Gal 1–2).

139. See Gail R. O'Day, "Gospel of John," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 517–30, esp 519.

140. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel,* passim.

141. See Taylor Petrey, "Purity and Parallels: Constructing the Apostasy Narrative in Early Christianity," in *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 174–95.

142. Luke also seems to require that the apostles have been a companion of Jesus during his earthly ministry; women also fit this criterion. See Hutchinson, "Women and Ordination," 64.

143. Brock, *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle*. This is not to say that she is the first to treat the subject; see, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 51–52.

144. Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 19–39.

145. John 21 casts Peter in a positive light uncharacteristic of the rest of John. It is no accident that this chapter comes after the apparent conclusion to the book in John 20, and has been regarded by many scholars as an appendix added by a later editor. See discussion in Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 51–52.

146. On this see ibid., 43–45.

147. Ibid., 45; see John 13:16.

148. See, for example, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4; the contrast between Martha's belief and Thomas's doubt (John 11:27 vs. 20:29); and Mary's anointing of Jesus and his rebuke of Judas when he complains (11:54–12:11). For a full discussion of these and other examples, see ibid., 55–60.

149. Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 41–60. As Brock notes, they both are eclipsed by the mysterious Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John, however.

150. This is an interpretation stemming, not coincidentally, from the story of the female sinner (not prostitute) at the end of Luke 7 and the introduction of Mary Magdalene in the beginning of Luke 8.

151. Hippolytus, *De Cantico,* 24–26; CSCO, 264: 43–49; cited in Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 1–2.

152. Cited in Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 172.

153. See Hutchinson, "Women and Ordination," 66–68.

154. Ibid., 66.

155. Ibid., 67; emphasis Hutchinson's.

156. The classic study is that of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Co-Workers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," *Word and World* 6 (1986): 420–33. Moench Charles treats the chapter in the context of the LDS canon ("Precedents for Mormon Women," 54–56), as does Hutchinson, "Women and Ordination," 65–66.

157. See discussion in, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 47–48. For LDS context, see Hutchinson, "Women and Ordination," 65.

158. The author of Acts cites what he may understand to be the origin of the office of deacon in entirely male terms (Acts 6:1–6), which probably accounts for the reluctance of the KJV translators to call Phoebe a deacon. It should not surprise us, however, to find contradiction in the development of church organization between Acts and the undisputed letters of Paul, nor the characterization of the development of offices as orderly and androcentric. See discussion of Luke-Acts above.

159. Clare K. Rothschild (Review of Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle, Journal of Religion* 87 [2007]: 270) summarizes nicely the evidence Epp presents: "(1) Junia was a common Roman name; (2) ancient writers without exception read *'Iουνιαν* as Junia; (3) *'Ιουνιαν* was the reading of the Greek New Testament from Erasmus (1517) to Nestle (1927); (4) all early translations transcribe the name as feminine; (5) 'Junia' was understood in all English translations of the New Testament from Tyndale (1526/1534) until the late nineteenth century; (6) neither of the masculine forms is attested in ancient texts anywhere; and (7) the contraction hypothesis (i.e., Lat. Junianus) is flawed (23–24)."

160. "Women and Ordination," 66.

161. On this see Judith M. Lieu, "The 'Attraction of Women' in/to Early Judaism and Christianity: Gender and the Politics of Conversion," *JSNT* 72 (1998): 5–22. Scholars have also raised important objections to the characterization of Judaism as oppressive and Christianity as liberating as the unfounded reinscription of anti-Semitic dogmas. The seminal works on this are Bernadette J. Brooten, "Jewish Women's History in the Roman Period: A Task for Christian Theology," *HTR* 79 (1986): 22–30; and especially Judith Plaskow, "Christian Feminism and Anti-Judaism," *Cross Currents* 28 (1978): 306–09.

162. Sociologist Rodney Stark (*The Rise of Christianity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]) has engendered strong reaction for his claims that women joined the early Christian movement and his narrative of how it took hold and grew before the fourth century. His comparison with (and especially his projections about the future of) Mormonism makes his work especially interesting for the study of women in the early LDS Church. See discussion in Lieu, "Attraction of Women," 6–8.

163. A strong expression of this view is that of Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993); also Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women,* translated by O. C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

164. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 12.

165. On *Thekla*, see Francine Cardman, "Women, Ministry, and Church Order" in *Women and Christian Origins,* edited by Ross S. Kraemer and Mary R. D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 301–02. On alternative means to authority and the renunciation of sex, see the seminal work of Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

166. Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Women's Ordination: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

167. What may not be exactly clear is that some translators are not sure that in this text "Melchizedek" is referenced simply as the phrase "righteous king."

168. James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 276–93.

169. This is, incidentally, an interpretation probably picked up by Joseph F. Smith in D&C 138:41: "Shem, the great high priest," sandwiched between Noah and Abraham. Cf. the language of D&C 107:2, where Melchizedek is called the "great high priest."

170. A careful reading of Exodus 34 shows, however, that three traditions are being brought together here, none of which understands the covenant to have been altered because of the Golden Calf incident. In one, Moses is simply retrieving an exact copy of the earlier tablets, and in another he is writing down (for the first time!) the instructions the Lord gave him. See discussion in Joel S. Baden, "The Deuteronomic Evidence for the Documentary Theory," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research,* FAT 78, edited by Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 327–44.

171. Kent Jackson (personal communication) kindly provided crucial information on this sequencing: At the end of July 1832, Joseph Smith and Frederick G. Williams returned to the Old Testament translation in Gen 24:58, page 60 of the 119-page JST manuscript. Exodus 34 comes ten manuscript pages later. On July 31, 1832, Smith indicated that he and Williams were "making rapid strides" in the Old Testament. Doctrine and Covenants 84 was received about two months later on September 22–23, 1832, making it likely that Exod 34 was reworked not long before D&C 84.

172. That is not to say that there were not other significant influences in Hebrews or in D&C 84; only that these provided the key ideas.

173. See Prince, *Power from on High*, 1–45; Quinn "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority*, 365–85; Michael H. MacKay, "Endowed with Power: Prophets, Angels, and the Restoration of the Priesthood," (unpublished ms. under review).

174. See HC 1:62: "We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronic Priesthood had given

us, viz., that provided we continued faithful, we should also have the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house, in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired; and here, to our unspeakable satisfaction, did we realize the truth of the Savior's promise—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"—for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the *word of the Lord* came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that *I should ordain* Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office" (emphasis added). See also MacKay, *Endowed with Power*, passim.

175. HC 4:211.

176. Deborah is included here in her capacity as "judge in Israel," cf. D&C 58:17–18, which specifically links modern bishops to ancient judges. The New Testament women are conjectures based on their likely oversight of Christian house churches (Acts 20:28; the polemic stance in 1 Timothy clearly prefers that bishops be male, but the stringency bespeaks an underlying struggle in which such was probably not the case; This is of course in addition to its spurious authorship). Aside from this possibility, no bishops, male or female, are named in the New Testament.

177. For a broader view of the reshaping of history in the Bible and Latter-day Saint scriptures, including a fuller discussion of the case of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history, see Cory D. Crawford, "Competing Histories in the Bible and in Latter-day Saint Tradition," in *Standing Apart*, 129–46.

178. On apostasy narratives, see the collection of essays in *Standing Apart*.

179. *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23–41.

180. Ibid., 41.

181. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Are You Sleeping Through the Restoration?" April 5, 2014, https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/are-you-sleeping-through-the-restoration?lang=eng.

182. I agree here with Gregory Prince (*Power from on High*, 207, n.25), challenging D. Michael Quinn's assertion that LDS women have had the priesthood since 1843 ("Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority*, 365–409), that early Church documents do not support a full granting of priesthood authority to women since those documents show an ultimate subordination to male authority, as well with the sense that the foundation for female authority will have to be sought elsewhere. I propose it may be found in the biblical texts discussed here.

183. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 38–39.