Wisdom in Restoration Scripture

by

Alyson Von Feldt

The task I will take up today is to consider plainly and carefully how we may understand the Lady in the Temple (the theme of our conference) in the context of Mormon thought. The currency in which we will trade as we make this investigation is “maybes,” “possiblies,” “perhaps’,” and “conceivablies.” We will encounter ambiguity. We will raise many questions and find few answers. There will be many more questions to ask, and we will leave much unexplored. Yet I inaugurate the discussion, and I hope that many more will follow.

It is possible that what we will discuss today will be uncomfortable for some. The subject of a divine woman is a deeply sacred topic for many Mormons, almost always framed up in terms of a Heavenly Mother. In a recent *BYU Studies* article, David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido note that many Latter-day Saints seem to feel that a “sacred silence” should be kept about her. But they go on to plumb content endorsed by the Church and to document anything but a silence. They are able to summarize a robust set of reflections about Heavenly Mother. They conclude that though the church does not have not authoritative revelation about her, leaders have spoken freely and have “extrapolated” much about her from core doctrines.[[1]](#footnote-1) Paulsen, once my philosophy professor at BYU, has fond memories of discussing Heavenly Mother in church and family settings,[[2]](#footnote-2) and so do I. Whenever we sung the hymn “O My Father” in sacrament meeting when I was a little girl, my father would draw my attention to the author of the text, Eliza R. Snow, and remind me that this hymn had been my grandmother’s favorite, and my grandmother, Evelyn Skabelund, lived here in Cache Valley most of her life. I spent every summer of my childhood in her home on 3rd North. It is comfortable and fitting for me to share these thoughts here in Logan with you today.

Our exploration wilI take into account what the other conference presenters have studied and shared. Their work has referred to a Mother, a Queen, the Spirit, a Bride, a Wife, and a Tree, among many other roles and titles. It is my view that some of these roles in the context of Mormon thought lead to the possibility of a heavenly woman other than Mother in Heaven. So our discussion will reach out beyond the usual bounds of a discussion on Heavenly Mother. I thank Margaret Barker, Bill Dever, and John Thompson for their excellent scholarship and the chance to expand our minds and push our understanding of our doctrine.

We will start by reviewing Margaret’s hypothesis about the meaning of the Sun Lady vision in the book of Revelation. Then we will search Restoration scripture for evidence of a goddess in sync with her interpretation, familiarizing ourselves first, briefly, with language and ideas from the Hebrew Wisdom books. We will conclude by analyzing what latter-day leaders have said that might pose obstacles to an uncritical acceptance of her hypothesis.

# The Sun Lady Vision

Margaret has summarized her hypothesis about the Lady in the Temple for us today, and her gateway in is the Sun Lady vision in Revelation 11:19-12:17, where a woman clothed with the sun bears a son. Margaret understands this vision to hearken back to a birth-and-enthronement ritual from the time of the Davidic kings. In this ritual, the king was begotten as the Melchizedek high priest in the Holy of Holies in the temple. Margaret associates several Old Testament scriptures with this ritual: Isaiah 9:6 (cf. 2 Nephi 19), Micah 5:2-4, Psalm 110, Deuteronomy 33:2,5, and Isaiah 7:14 (cf. 2 Nephi 17:14). She shows that some early Christians believed that the vision was fulfilled at the baptism of Jesus when he is born of the Spirit, citing the now lost *Gospel of the Hebrews* which was quoted by Jerome and Origen. Thus the heavenly birth of a son to the Sun Lady corresponds specifically to the earthly event of Jesus’ receipt of the Spirit at his baptism and generally to the restoration of the first temple and the establishment of the Lord’s kingdom.[[3]](#footnote-3) We also see from John’s paper today that Nephi’s vision of the virgin and son is similar and likewise connoted to Nephi the Son’s sovereignty.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Margaret’s interpretation of this vision as signifying the restoration of the temple is extraordinarily significant for Latter-day Saints because of the restoration of the temple that we have concerned ourselves with in the Latter days. So let’s explore Margaret’s hypothesis and understand what place the divine Lady she describes may have in our belief system and in our modern day temples.

Margaret describes the Sun Lady, known elsewhere as Wisdom, as the Mother of the Lord. It would be easy for us to identify this woman with the divine person we know in Mormon thought as Heavenly Mother. But I think it is important to recognize that Margaret does not speak of this Mother in the same way that we do in Mormon thought.

In Mormon thought, the most distinctive attribute of the Mother is that she is a co-parent with Heavenly Father of our spirits in some sense. For instance, President Boyd K. Packer said that all persons “lived in a premortal existence as an individual *spirit* child of heavenly parents.”[[5]](#footnote-5) “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” states that “each [human being] is a beloved *spirit* son or daughter of heavenly parents.”[[6]](#footnote-6) But in the ancient cultic ritual that underlies the Sun Lady vision, it is the *re*birth of the heir that is celebrated—his *re*birth as a son of God in the Holy of Holies, which gives him right to the throne.

Likewise, the earthly event that the early Hebrew Christians associated with the birth of the Lady’s son in heaven is not his mortal birth in the stable, but the events, including the receipt of the Spirit, that took place at his baptism.

What John shared with us today is very compatible—the goddess in the temple is associated with water and fountains, and thus rites of transition, purification, rebirth, and renewal such as baptism, the sacrament, and anointing.

We Latter-days Saints do not know if Mother in Heaven, the mother of our premortal spirits, has an overt role in any aspect of our salvation such as the spiritual rebirth of a mortal. Associating her with the rituals of purification is not something that has been done in our doctrine. Therefore, we should be careful in concluding that the Sun Lady in the vision as Margaret understands her is the same as our Mother in Heaven. It may be true, but we have very little evidence connecting her with a specific event or ordinance on earth.

As Margaret points out, the early Hebrew Christians identified the Mother of the Lord with the Holy Spirit, because they believed hers was the voice Jesus heard at his baptism, saying, “You are my first begotten son who reigns forever.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Elsewhere, Margaret has said that “the goddess is most familiar in her role as the Holy Spirit.”[[8]](#footnote-8) A serious Latter-day Saint study of the goddess, then, must probe this possibility. It presents both some opportunities as well as some challenges. The opportunities are enticing because the Latter-day Saint doctrine of the Holy Spirit, unlike that of Mother in Heaven, is theologically robust. Joseph Smith himself identified the Holy Spirit as one of the most differentiating features of the Restoration,[[9]](#footnote-9) and Lynne Hilton Wilson’s recent study of Joseph Smith’s pneumatology—the study of the Holy Spirit—used word counts to confirm the preeminent role of the Spirit in Mormon thought. She found that Restoration scripture (the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price) “cite[s] the Spirit 3.5 times more often per one thousand words than the Bible.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

But the challenges are formidable, because church leaders of the 19th and 20th centuries taught that the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit in the “form of a man,” and church leaders to this day use male or neuter pronouns when discussing the Holy Spirit.

We will discuss the opportunities first, and then we then take up the challenges.

# The Spirit in select Hebrew Wisdom Texts: Proverbs, ben Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon

The scriptures of the Restoration do not present the Spirit as feminine, nor do they explicitly take up the topic of the goddess at all. But certain passages in all of the Restoration scriptures do have strong affinities with the Hebrew Wisdom literature—the ancient writings that explore the subject of God’s wisdom or describe the Lady Wisdom.[[11]](#footnote-11) It is by understanding these affinities that we can recognize how surprisingly often Restoration scripture does speak about wisdom, does link wisdom and the Spirit, and may allude to a goddess. So we will very briefly study some of the most important passages within the Hebrew Wisdom corpus, and then we will turn to Mormon scripture to see if Wisdom can be found.

## Proverbs 1-9[[12]](#footnote-12)

The book of Proverbs took its final form after the Babylonian exile but includes some material that dates back to the time of the monoarchy.[[13]](#footnote-13) In Proverbs 1-9 Wisdom is a herald who cries out to the masses in the city, trying to get their attention and promising to “pour out [her] spirit” to them (Proverbs 1:20-23). If they allow her to enter their hearts, she will help them overcome the temptations of the “evil man” and “strange woman” and lead them on “paths of the righteous” (2:10-20). She will be a tree of life to them that listen to her, and they will be happy, healthy, and long-lived (3:8, 12-18). We are well to “seek her early” (8:17), to “forsake her not,” to “love her,” (4:6), and to make her our intimate and friend. Her path is contrasted with the “path of darkness,” for hers is “as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (4:14-19). With her as our guide, we will progressively grow in light and knowledge, and our happiness and vitality will be eternal.

In what perhaps are allusions to temple rites of ascension and coronation, we are repeatedly urged to “*take fast hold* of instruction; let her not go” (4:13), to “*lay hold upon her*” (3:18), and to “*embrace her*” (4:8). If we do, the promise is made that “she shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a *crown* *of glory* shall she deliver to thee” (4:9).

Wisdom in Proverbs is immanent, inclusive, and powerful. She appears in Proverbs ready and eager to journey with those who will follow her on the paths of life, protecting them and directing them, finally having a hand in their eventual deification.

In the poem in 8:22-31, Wisdom speaks in the first person. She proclaims here that she was with the Lord before the creation began, and as he worked she watched enthusiastically, taking great interest in the world and especially in humankind. When I first took notice of this passage, I assumed it was Heavenly Mother, standing at the side of Heavenly Father as his companion while he presided over the creation. So I initially thought the text offered a unique glimpse into her role as a co-creator of the world and loving mother who eagerly anticipated the advent of her children on the earth. I thought I had identified here accessible scriptural evidence of her existence and maternal interest in us; this passage provided cherished clues about her roles and personality.

But upon reflection, it came to be my view that it is unlikely to be Mother in Heaven who we see here. This woman is a spirit daughter, “brought forth” or “begotten” of the Lord (*qanani* v. 22, *holalti* vs. 24-25), playing (*mesaheqet* v. 30-31) before him as a child and eagerly anticipating the advent of humankind on earth. In Mormon thought, Mother in Heaven would not logically have been begotten by the Father. As Eliza R. Snow reasoned in her famous poem, heavenly parents are not single.[[14]](#footnote-14) Rather, Mother in Heaven already would have been existent with him and would technically have been the mother of Wisdom’s premortal spirit with the Most High God as her father. I believe now that it is likely that this passage describes a daughter of God, not his wife. “Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman” (Proverbs 7:4).

Margaret has described the goddess as the Mother, and Bill has argued she’s the Wife. I say Sister. Now you have all three to choose from.

If she is not Heavenly Mother, who is she, this spirit sister of ours? We will continue exploring the possibility that she may plausibly be Holy Spirit. The Hebrew Wisdom books that follow Proverbs in the period of second temple Judaism also closely link Wisdom and the Spirit. They are ben Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, both part of a collection sometimes known as the Apocrypha. They are deutero-canonical, meaning that they were not included in the Hebrew canon nor later in the Protestant canon, though they were embraced by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. The Lord told Joseph Smith that there are “many things” in the Apocrypha “that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly” though there are “some things” that are not true “which are interpolations by the hands of men.” Those who read these texts can understand the truth “by the Spirit” and be benefited (Doctrine and Covenants 91:2, 4-5). So the Spirit can help sincere seekers discern what truth is to be found in these passages.

## Ben Sirach

Ben Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, was written in the early second century B.C.E. by a Hebrew teacher named Jesus ben Sirach and later translated into Greek by his nephew of the same name. Early chapters follow Proverbs in teaching that Wisdom was created before all things and “poured out” upon all the Lord’s works (1:4, 9). The author asks (after Job 28:12), “To whom has the root of wisdom been revealed? Or who hath known her wise counsels?” In chapter 1 the answer is ecumenical: “She is with all flesh according to his gift” (1:10); but elsewhere she is said to dwell specifically with the nation of Israel (24:8). The teacher explains that the Lord gives her as a gift to those who love him, fear him, and keep his commandments (10-14, 26). As in Proverbs, she is the guide on the right path, but the wearing-in may be rocky:

For at first she will walk with [man] by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and shew him her secrets” (4:17-18; note the phrase “straight way,” similar to the “straight and narrow path” described in 1 Nephi 8:20 and 2 Nephi 31:9, 18-19.)

Temple allusions abound as they do in Proverbs 1-9:

[Wisdom] *layeth hold* of them that seek her” (4:11).

He that *holdeth her fast* shall inherit glory” (4:13),

When thou hast *got hold of her*, let her not go (5:27).

Then shall her fetters be a strong defence for thee, and her chains a *robe of glory*. For there is a golden ornament upon her, and her bands are *purple* lace. Thou shalt put her on as a *robe of honour*, and shalt put her about thee as a *crown* of joy” (5:29-30).[[15]](#footnote-15)

With the *bread* of understanding shall she feed him, and give him the *water* of wisdom to drink.  
He shall be stayed upon her, and shall not be moved; and shall rely upon her, and shall not be confounded. She shall exalt him above his neighbors, and in the midst of the congregation shall she open his mouth. He shall find joy and a *crown* of gladness, and she shall cause him to inherit an everlasting *name*” (15:3-6).

He hath set *fire* and *water* before thee: stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt” (15:16; referring to the bronze sea and the candlesticks of the temple).

The beautiful poem that comprises chapter 24 looks forward to the day when she herself will stand in the heavenly council of the most high god and recount her origins. She will explain that she “came out of the mouth of the most High and covered the earth as a cloud,” moving throughout the creation (24:3-6). The text thus associates her with God’s word and the Spirit of God in Gen 1:2:

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

When Wisdom seeks for a place to make her home, the Lord assigns her to dwell with Israel. She puts down roots in the temple as a high priestess: “In the tabernacle I served before him; and so was I established in Sion” (24:6-11). She compares herself with a variety of trees and fragrant spices and perfumes, and she implores those who desire wisdom to fill themselves with her fruits (24:12-19).

An earlier passage warns readers neither to seek “things that are too hard for thee” nor to be “curious in unnecessary matters” (3:21, 23)—a caution presumably against searching for heavenly mysteries—and dismisses heavenly vision as unnecessary (“it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes the things that are in secret;” 3:21). But in the poem of chapter 24 Wisdom generously implores all to come and feast and drink deeply, reassuring that those that partake will never be satiated nor confounded” (24:19-22).

## The Wisdom of Solomon

The last book from the Hebrew Wisdom corpus that we will take up today, the Wisdom of Solomon, was composed in Greek about 100 B.C.E. The unknown author has “Solomon” describing his quest to obtain Wisdom. “When I perceived that I could not otherwise obtain her, except God gave her to me; and that was a point of wisdom also to know whose gift she was; I prayed unto the Lord . . . with my whole heart “ (8:21). He depicts her sitting by God’s throne (9:4) and implores God to give her to him:

O send her out of the holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory, that being present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee. For she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she shall lead me soberly in my doings, and preserve me in her power. . . . For what is man that he can know the counsel of God? Or who can think what the will of the Lord is? For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth. . . . And thy counsel who hath known, except though give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above? For so the ways of them which lived on the earth were reformed, and men were taught the things that are pleasing unto thee, and were saved through wisdom. (9:10-11, 13-17).

In the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom and the Holy Spirit are identical. The author describes Wisdom’s qualities, her origin, and her intimate relationship with God:

For wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me: for in her is an understanding spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtil, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good, Kind to man, steadfast, sure, free from care, having all power, overseeing all things, and going through all understanding, pure, and most subtil, spirits. For wisdom is more moving than any motion: she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. (7:22-28)

This remarkable passage tells us much about Wisdom, who here is the Spirit. She is sent by God. She pervades and oversees all things. She is pure and unspotted, and therefore cannot be comprehended by anything unclean. She transforms souls into “friends of God.” She radiates his goodness. Peter Schäefer explains:

The imagery used here is that of energy being transmitted from its source (God) to its recipient (Wisdom). God is power, glory, light, energy; Wisdom is the steam or vapor, the effluence and radiance that goes forth from the divine power source, the mirror that reflects it. Wisdom receives, connects, and reflects the divine energy; she is the medium through which it enters the world. . . . God enters human beings through Wisdom, his effusion and reflection, and she transforms them in such a way that they become his “friends”; that is, his “image and likeness” (Gen 1:26). She directs the divine energy down to earth and enables humankind to redirect it to God.[[16]](#footnote-16)

These qualities of Wisdom as the Spirit go beyond the traits of the Spirit in the Old Testament, where the Spirit is primarily a force of life,[[17]](#footnote-17) the agent of judgment,[[18]](#footnote-18) or the gift of prophecy.[[19]](#footnote-19) In this text, for the first time clearly, the Spirit has a salvific effect: when souls willingly seek for her and join with her, she makes them new. They are made into the likeness of God. They learn about his power, and they feel it. “For she is a treasure unto men that never faileth: which they that use become the friends of God” (7:14). “To be allied unto Wisdom is immortality” (8:17).

The author has Solomon desiring to live with Wisdom and speaking about it in connubial terms.

I loved her, and sought her out from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty. In that she is conversant with God, she magnifieth her nobility: yea, the Lord of all things himself loved her. For she is privy to the mysteries of the knowledge of God, and a lover of his works. (8:2-4)

Peter Schäfer explains that as one who sits besides God’s throne,

She is the *parhedros*, “coadjutor” of God. Moreover, as coadjutor, she is clearly depicted as a woman (8:3): “She adds lustre to her noble birth, because it is given her to live with God (*symbiōsin theou echousa*); the Lord of all things loved her (*ēgapēsen autēn*). This is not a neutral, almost physical energy radiating from God, but God’s beloved wife. And again, precisely the same image is transferred to Solomon. Soloman, too, falls in love with her and takes her home as his wife to live with him: “Wisdom I have loved (*ephilēsa*); I sought her out when I was young and longed to win her for my bride; I was in love (*erastēs egenomēn*) with her beauty” (8:3). “So I determined to take her home to live with me (pros symbiōsin)” (8:9). Here the same word is used as in Wisdom’s living together with God: *symbiōsis*. God gives Wisdom, his beloved spouse, to live with Solomon (the ideal archetype of all human beings), “for nothing is acceptable to God but the person who makes his home with Wisdom (*ton sophia synoikounta*)” (7:28).[[20]](#footnote-20)

Whereas in Proverbs, Wisdom was God’s daughter and our sister, in this text, she is God’s wife who sits next to his throne. Elsewhere in the Wisdom of Solomon she is “the mother” of “all good things” (7:11-12). She is immanent, journeying with all who seek her; she has the power to teach, guide, and transform those with whom she lives.

# Wisdom in the Book of Mormon

After this far too limited study of Wisdom in selected Hebrew canonical and deuteron-canonical texts, we now turn to a study of Wisdom in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants.

I have argued elsewhere that portions of the Book of Mormon show remarkable affinities to Proverbs 1-9,[[21]](#footnote-21) so I will take that up only briefly today. Suffice it to say that forms, themes, and language from Proverbs 1-9 appear in the Book of Mormon, suggesting that the more recent Biblical text drew on an old tradition known also to Lehi and Nephi and passed on to their descendants in the new world. Motifs from 1 and 2 Nephi such as the tree of life, the great whore, and opposing paths toward life in one direction and hell in the other are all attested in Proverbs 1-9, as is the contrast between wisdom and foolishness/pride, wakefulness vs. sleep, remembrance vs. forgetfulness, and more. Though Wisdom qua Lady Wisdom is not mentioned, symbols and images associated with the Lady that appear in the Book of Mormon include the tree of life, the fountain of waters, and the virgin with a child whom Nephi saw in vision. There are also instances of possible wordplay with the name of the name of Asherah. The root of this name, *’shr*, is also the root of Hebrew words often translated as “happiness”—as in the happiness obtained by partaking of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:10–12; 11:21–23)—and “straight”—as in “the strai[gh]t and narrow path” of 2 Nephi 31:9, 18-19 (see also 1 Nephi 8:20). Dan Peterson and I between us have documented many of these goddess symbols in the Book of Mormon in more detail.[[22]](#footnote-22)

What about the goddess and the Spirit? Does the Book of Mormon associate the goddess symbols and the Spirit in any way? I think the answer to that question is possibly yes in the sense that some Book of Mormon teachings about the Holy Ghost are coupled with language from the Wisdom tradition. This should not be surprising, for as we saw earlier, Wisdom and the Holy Ghost are linked in both ben Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, and the precedent for doing so may reach back as far as other symbols and language from the Wisdom tradition that also appear in the Book of Mormon.

One of those symbols is the upright path. Proverbs—and other Wisdom books, as we have seen--understands Wisdom to be a guide on the path of righteousness: “I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment” (Proverbs 8:20). The text in Proverbs contrasts Wisdom with an adulterous woman, in league with an evil man, who leads in an opposing direction, guiding followers off the “paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness” (Proverbs 2:13). Indeed, some scholars have suggested that the path metaphor is *the* unifying concept in Hebrew wisdom literature.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In the Book of Mormon a dichotomy between two paths is also a fundamental unifying concept.[[24]](#footnote-24) Nephi’s writing corresponds closely to Proverbs: on the one hand, he tells of the church of the Lamb of God and “the way of everlasting life,” and on the other, the church of the devil, personified as the “whore of all the earth,” and “the way of everlasting death” (1 Nephi 14:10, 2 Nephi 10:23). In the Wisdom books, Wisdom is a gift who leads on the path of uprightness (Proverbs 2:13, Ben Sirach 4:18) . Nephi’s analogue is the Holy Ghost, who is given to those who repent and are baptized and then acts as a guide on the path of life.

This is clearest near the end of Nephi’s record. In 2 Nephi 31 Nephi recounts Christ’s baptism, which he has seen in a vision. He notes how “the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.” The baptismal event “showeth . . . unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them” (2 Nephi 31:8-9). Then Nephi hears “the voice of the Son . . . saying: He that is baptized in my name to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do” (2 Ne 31:12). It is remarkable that the Son himself emphasizes that the culmination of the baptismal experience is the reception of the Spirit (2 Ne. 31:17-18). Then Nephi turns to an explanation of how to proceed afterone has commenced on this path. “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

I have argued elsewhere that the phrase “strait and narrow path,” conceivably evidences wordplay with the name Asherah because the goddess’ Hebrew name may be derived from an older verb meaning “to tread, to go straight.” In describing the path as “strait [straight],” Nephi after his father before him may be implicitly emphasizing that the tree of life to which the path leads is a symbol of the goddess. Then Nephi, in turn, describes the Holy Ghost as the guide on that path.[[25]](#footnote-25)

To be sure, Nephi also associates Christ with the path toward eternal life. It is his path, after all, and the “the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul” (2 Nephi 25:29).[[26]](#footnote-26) But Nephi makes the distinction between Christ as the gatekeeper and the Holy Ghost as the guide who will “speak the words of Christ” and “show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3, 5).

If this analysis is right, it makes sense to wonder why Nephi was not more explicit. Why didn’t he outright refer to the Holy Ghost as Asherah or Wisdom or a goddess? Why didn’t he use feminine pronouns in speaking of the Holy Ghost? These could all be translation issues, not issues with Nephi’s original text. In other words, the changes could have occurred when the translation was made into English and before it was given by revelation to Joseph Smith. But I don’t think it is necessary to speculate like that. Nephi himself offers the clue. As soon as the words “the Holy Ghost . . . will show unto you all things what ye should do” had been etched in the small plates, Nephi is brought up short. “I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be” (2 Nephi 32:5, 7). It was only a few chapters back that he taught that the word of God will be withdrawn from those who do not seek to know more, while those who receive truth with gladness will receive wisdom by the power of the Holy Ghost. (2 Nephi 28:29-31).[[27]](#footnote-27)

Later figures in the Book of Mormon also variously associate Wisdom, the paths of righteousness, and the Holy Ghost:

And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the *Spirit of the Lord*, that it may have no place in you to *guide* you in *wisdom’s* *paths* that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved. I say unto you , that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God, therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit. . . . (King Benjamin--Mosiah 2:36-37)

O how marvelous are the works of the Lord, and how long doth he suffer with his people; yea, and how blind and impenetrable are the understandings of the children of men; for they will not seek *wisdom*, neither do they desire that *she* should rule over them! (King Limhi--Mosiah 8:20).

But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be *led* by the *Holy Spirit*, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering. (Alma--Alma 13:28)

Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in *wisdom’s* *paths*! (Editor, Mormon--Helaman 12:5)

The Book of Mormon teaches that the Holy Ghost is a guide that we are wise to turn to for direction in the way of eternal life.

Nephi also explains that what places a person on this path is the “remission of sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” that comes after water-baptism (2 Ne 31:17). Prophets after Nephi continue to link the cleansing power with the Spirit and the goddess imagery.

For example, after King Benjamin’s people had been moved to express their faith in Christ and desire for forgiveness through his atonement, “the *Spirit of the Lord* came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come” (Mosiah 4:3). King Benjamin employs powerful tree-of-life/wisdom vocabulary to help describe this moment as one of enduring transformation:

As ye have come to the *knowledge* of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have *tasted* of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great *joy* in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing *steadfastly* [upright/straight/ *yoshar*?] in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always *rejoice*, and be filled with the *love of God*, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall *grow* in the *knowledge* of the glory of him that created you, or in the *knowledge* of that which is just and true. (Mosiah 4:11-12)

As John pointed out today, Alma does something similar—he links baptism with the tree of life. Alma says, “Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62). John suggests that it is a “strong possibility” that Alma is saying that “baptism is the equivalent to partaking of the tree of life.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

That there is language like this throughout the Book of Mormon, often linking Wisdom roles or symbols with the Holy Ghost, is remarkable. It seems tenable to conclude that the Book of Mormon has something to say about Wisdom, but says it in terms of the Holy Ghost. Or conversely, the Jews writing in the Wisdom tradition said something about the Spirit in the language of Wisdom. Either way, cross-referencing the Wisdom books—particularly Proverbs 1-9—and the Book of Mormon helps us learn more about the Holy Ghost, especially, possibly, but not certainly—as a divine woman.

I think it is the Book of Mormon which helps us more clearly grasp how the Holy Spirit, if she is female, may merit the title of Mother. For Nephi, the Holy Ghost is a partner with Christ in the salvation of humankind. Both have a role in bringing individuals along the path to eternal life. In Mosiah, it is through the Spirit’s power that King Benjamin’s people are reborn when they have faith in Christ’s atonement and can be called “the children of Christ.” In this case it is a whole community that is brought into a relationship with God. Christ’s atonement inspires them to seek remission of sins. The Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent works a “mighty change” such that they “have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). It is in this way that the Spirit is the Mother of new spiritual life as Christ is the Father.

Thus we can understand that the Sun Lady gives birth as a renewed people join her in the temple and become her’s and Christ’s children in a relationship of increasing love and unity.

Thinking about the Spirit as the Mother makes sense in Mormon thought only if what is meant is that she is the mother of the spiritual rebirth of mortals. But it does not make sense if we mean that the Spirit is the mother of our premortal spirits. In other words, the Spirit cannot be our Mother in Heaven, co-parent with Father in Heaven.

Joseph Smith taught that only resurrected, celestial bodies may continue to increase.[[29]](#footnote-29) The First Presidency under Joseph F. Smith declared that “only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring.”[[30]](#footnote-30) So logically, Mother in Heaven must have a resurrected, glorified body. But the Holy Ghost, Joseph taught, is a personage of spirit in contrast to the Father and the Son, who have bodies “of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Therefore, Mother in Heaven and the Holy Ghost cannot be the same person. One has a resurrected body of flesh and bones and the other does not.

# Wisdom in Doctrine and Covenants

What of the Doctrine and Covenants? In revelations given in the Latter-days, is anything added that would help us understand more about Wisdom, or Wisdom as the Spirit, or of a divine woman in some other sense? Again, I think the answer possibly yes.

There are a few select passages which evidence language and images from the wisdom literature and which associate wisdom and the Spirit. For example:

1. Seek not for riches but for *wisdom*; and, behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. (Doctrine and Covenants 11:7; cf. 6:7, 14:7, 19:38)
2. And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that *Spirit* which *leadeth* to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my *Spirit*.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my *Spirit*, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive. (D&C 11:12-14)

1. For they that are *wise* and have received the truth, and have taken the *Holy Spirit* for their *guide*, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. (Doctrine and Covenants 45:57; note the tree imagery, and compare Mosiah 2:36)
2. And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom. . . . And their *wisdom* shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

For by my *Spirit* will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man. (Doctrine and Covenants 76:7,9-10; cf. 1 Nephi 10:17)

1. Let him that is ignorant learn *wisdom* by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear;

For my *Spirit* is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly. (Doctrine and Covenants 136:32-33)

I suggest that these similarities to the Wisdom tradition are due to a consistency in the wording of revelation—that God, speaking to Jews in Jerusalem and Alexandria or to Lehi’s children somewhere in the new world or to Joseph Smith in 19th century America—taught the same teachings, referenced the same underlying symbols and ordinances, and even inspired the prophets and translators in the use of similar words.

# The Gender of the Holy Spirit

Now we turn to an examination of beliefs about the Holy Ghost’s gender in the Latter-day church and the plausibility of a female Holy Spirit.

In my analysis, the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants never refer to the Holy Ghost, the Spirit, or the Comforter using a personal pronoun that reveals gender, male or female. Demonstrative pronouns (this, that) and relative pronouns (which, who) are used frequently, but these forms are all neuter. For example:

1. I will tell you in your mind and heart, by the Holy Ghost, *which* shall come upon you and *which* shall dwell in your heart. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2
2. Put your trust in the Spirit *which* leadeth to do good—yea to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and *this* is my Spirit. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12
3. Watch over him that his faith fail not, and it shall be given by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, *that* knoweth all things. Doctrine and Covenants 35:19
4. To preach the gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter, *which* was sent forth to teach the truth. Doctrine and Covenants 50:14
5. Who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, *which* the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true. Doctrine and Covenants 76:53

The consistent use of the pronouns *which* or *that* instead of *who* actually contributes to the persistent ambiguity, since ancient times, of the actual personhood of the Spirit. At times it is unclear if what is meant is the Light of Christ—the life energy that proceeds from God and fills all space--or the person who is the third member of the Godhead. In modern English, we would expect the pronoun “who” to be used when referring to a person rather than “which” or “that” as in the examples above.

The ambiguity is perpetuated when a neuter personal pronoun is chosen to refer to the Spirit:

That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the *Spirit of the Lord* is grieved; and when *it* is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37).

But Joseph Smith clarified this ambiguity once and for all when he explained that the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. . . (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22).

Nevertheless, the neuter personal pronoun “it” is used in the very next verse: “a man may receive the Holy Ghost, and *it* may descend upon him and not tarry with him” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:23)! We would expect either “he” or “she” to be used to refer to the Spirit especially when the antecedent is explicitly a person.[[31]](#footnote-31)

I am not arguing that Joseph believed that the Holy Ghost was a divine woman but that this knowledge was deliberately concealed in the revelations. There is no evidence for this whatsoever. The revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants teach about the attributes of the Holy Ghost only; none of them teaches about the Holy Ghost in a personal way that makes gender clear or explains divine origins. Indeed, as we saw above, throughout most of the Doctrine and Covenants, not only is the *gender* of the Holy Ghost ambiguous, but very often the *personhood* of the Holy Ghost is ambiguous. Joseph Smith’s understanding of this seems to have changed over time, because in an early (1929) revelation, the Holy Ghost is said to dwell in one’s heart (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2), yet by 1843, Joseph knows that the Holy Ghost is a distinct divine person and explains that therefore “a person cannot have the personage of the Holy Ghost in his heart.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

In Mormon discourse, the Holy Ghost has been known as “it” or “he.” Though Joseph Smith never spoke to the gender of the Holy Ghost, some church leaders and scholars from early Mormonism to current times have avowed that the Holy Spirit is a man; for example:

“The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one in essence, as the hearts of three *men* who are united in all things.” (Brigham Young)[[33]](#footnote-33)

“One personage, called the Holy Ghost, could not dwell at the same instant in two or more Saints. If *He* were in one, *He* would most certainly be absent from all others.” (Orson Pratt)[[34]](#footnote-34)

“The Spirit has manifested *Himself* in the form of a *man* (See 1 Nephi 11:11). . . . That the Spirit of the Lord is capable of manifesting himself in the form and figure of a *man*, is indicated by the wonderful interview between the Spirit and Nephi, in which *he* revealed *Himself* to the prophet, questioned *him* concerning his desires and belief, instructed *him* in the things of God, speaking face to face with the man.” (James E. Talmage)[[35]](#footnote-35)

“*He* is a Spirit in the form of a *man.*” (Joseph Fielding Smith) [[36]](#footnote-36)

“We learn these truths relative to the Gods we worship . . . They are three holy *men*, two having bodies of flesh and bones, the third being a personage of spirit.” (Bruce R. McConkie)[[37]](#footnote-37)

“The Savior referred to the Holy Ghost as a *male* person. Speaking to his disciples, he said, ‘. . . It is expedient that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send *him* unto you’ (John 16:7. Italics added).’” (Marion G. Romney)[[38]](#footnote-38)

“The Holy Ghost is a spirit *man*, a spirit *son* of God the Father.”[[39]](#footnote-39) (Joseph Fielding McConkie)

The scriptural text that is behind at least some of these statements is 1 Nephi 11:11, where, as Talmage said, Nephi speaks face-to-face with a heavenly individual he refers to as “the Spirit” (1 Nephi 11:2). Nephi seems surprised to encounter the Spirit in bodily form after first being “caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain” (1 Ne 11:1). “I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another” (1 Nephi 11:11). Sidney B. Sperry reasons that this being could have been either the pre-existent Christ or else the Holy Ghost in person, and he concludes the latter largely because the title “Spirit of the Lord” elsewhere in the Book of Mormon never seems to refer to Christ but rather to the Holy Ghost.[[40]](#footnote-40) Perhaps there are other possibilities not considered by Sperry: the Spirit Nephi speaks with could be an angel such as Michael or Gabriel.

But, as Robert L. Millet concludes, “if this is a personal appearance of the Holy Ghost to a man, it is indeed a singular occasion, so far as our scriptural accounts are concerned.” And he is right, because even in the Wisdom books, which are candidates for significant texts about the personal Holy Spirit, Wisdom appears only in the invisible world during creation or in the heavenly council of the Gods and never in personal form on the earth, though she does “take root” in the temple.[[41]](#footnote-41)

As for Marion G. Romney’s appeal to the text of John 16, we cannot be sure that the English translation of these verses accurately captures Jesus’ original use of pronouns. The translation of his words, probably spoken in Aramaic, was made first into Greek and then into Latin before being rendered in English; the gender assigned to the word for “Spirit” differs amongst these languages (the Hebrew *ruach*/Aramaic *ruah* is feminine, the Greek *pneuma* is neuter, the Latin *spiritus* is masculine, and the English *spirit* is neuter with a male pronoun assigned by the translators).

Joseph Fielding Smith pointedly asserted that “the Holy Ghost is not a woman, as some have declared, and therefore is not the mother of Jesus Christ.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

Yet despite the trend of statements that the Holy Ghost is spirit man, I think some doctrinal uncertainly remains. A 4 May 2007 statement issued by the church states:

**Not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine.  A single statement made by a single leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, but is not meant to be officially binding for the whole Church.  With divine inspiration, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counsel together to establish doctrine that is consistently proclaimed in official Church publications.**

It is not clear if these statements on the Holy Ghost made by prophets, apostles, and prominent scholars are meant to be binding on church members. Especially because the interpretation of the core scripture that undergirds some of the assertions--1 Nephi 11:11--remains ambiguous, I think we can judiciously surmise that the question of the Holy Ghost’s gender may not yet be entirely settled. I think we should be quite circumspect in uncritically accepting the hypothesis of a female Spirit, but I do not think we need to reject it out of hand.

# Where Shall Wisdom be Found?

Indeed, the extensive ancient scriptural and archeological evidence for a heavenly woman lends merit to the discussion. The vivid description of Wisdom as a female divine person linked with the Spirit in the Wisdom books of Proverbs, ben Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon gives us solid reason to explore the possibility that the Holy Ghost is feminine.

Where else but in the Hebrew wisdom books do we have substantial passages that are candidates for the origin and calling of the Holy Ghost—assisting at the creation and finding delight in humankind, seeking to guide them in their journey, and taking up her—or his—residence in the temple of the Lord? Where else do we find Wisdom/Spirit standing in the Council of the Most High and opening her—or his—mouth to “glorify in the midst of her people” (ben Sirach 24:1), conceivably as Joseph Smith describes Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and “divers angels” doing, “all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:21).

As we seek for Wisdom, we can also recognize other possibilities. Wisdom may be neither Heavenly Mother nor the Holy Spirit, but some other great and noble spirit with an extraordinary role to play on earth when she finally becomes mortal that we have never envisioned. Indeed there could be multiple heavenly women reflected in the echoes and shadows of the Hebrew goddess; our capacity to disentangle them may be limited until further revelation is granted:

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now; Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Doctrine and Covenants 121:26-29).

If the prophets of the Church do clarify the origin, destiny, and gender of the Holy Spirit, or if they provide authoritative revelation about our Mother in Heaven’s interaction with mortals or role in the heavens, we then may know with certainty how to understand the Wisdom books. We will then know what to make of the hypotheses in Margaret's work, and Bill’s, and all of the other dedicated scholars who have found evidence of the goddess.

In closing, I quote from the Olive Leaf revelation of December 1832: “Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118).

We seek Wisdom neither by study alone nor by faith alone, but by study and also by faith (see D&C 88:118). May the search on both fronts move forward apace.

1. David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, “A Mother There: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 70-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Paulsen and Pulido, “A Mother There,” 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Elsewhere Barker associates the Sun Lady vision with the earthly event of Jesus’ birth to Mary as well. Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord,* vol. 1 of *The Lady in the Temple* (London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2012), 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John S. Thompson, “The Lady at the Horizon: Egyptian Tree-Goddess Iconography and Sacred Trees in Israelite Scripture and Temple Theology,” in [title of current volume], (2013): [p. no.]; cf. 1 Nephi 11:18-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Boyd K. Packer, “Counsel to Young Men,” *Ensign* 39 (May 2009): 50; emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* 31 (November 1995): 102; emphasis added. For a discussion on Heavenly Mother as parent and wife, see Paulsen and Pulido, “A Mother There,” 76-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Margaret Barker, “The Woman Clothed with the Sun in the Book of Revelation, [title of current volume} (2013): [page number]. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Margaret Barker, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 2000), 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. He told President Martin Van Buren, who asked how his religion diverged from other religions, that it was in “mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.” He later explained that all other points of differentiation are “contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Joseph Smith Jr., History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 4:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lynne Hilton Wilson, “A New Pneumatology: Comparing Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Spirit with His Contemporaries and the Bible,” *BYU Studies* 51, no. 1 (2012): 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. They also have significant affinities with the broader wisdom tradition—or “temple theology” as Margaret calls it—but in this paper we will limit our discussion. See Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004) and Margaret Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem,* ed. John Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 523-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For a more extensive and detailed analysis, see Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, "My Secret Is with the Righteous: Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Occasional Papers 5* (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 48-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “In the heav’ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare. Truth is reason, truth eternal, tells me I’ve a mother there.” “O My Father,” in Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Purple was a color worn by the high priest in the first temple. See Exodus 28:5-6, 8, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Peter Schäffer, *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Genesis 2:7, Job 33:4, Psalms 104:29-30, and Ezekiel 37:9-10. For a discussion, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids:1998), 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See Isaiah 4:4 and Jeremiah 4:11-12. For a discussion, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit,* vol. 2 of *Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 1998), 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See Hosea 9:7; Micah 3:8; and Ezekiel 2:2, 3:24. For a discussion, see Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit,* 23-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Schäffer, *Mirror of His Beauty*, 36-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Von Feldt, “His Secret is with the Righteous.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid and Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson,* ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 193–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation and Commentary,* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 128-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Mack C. Sterling, “The Way of Life and the Way of Death in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 152-204. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Von Feldt, “Does God have Wife,” 16. See also William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 101, and Margaret Barker, “The Fragrant Tree,” in *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity,* ed. John B. Welch and Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Wisdom 7:15 says that God “is the guide even of wisdom.” [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. A passage in the Doctrine and Covenants says that God gives knowledge by the “unspeakable gift” of the Holy Ghost (Doctrine and Covenants 121:26). Is that because it *cannot be* spoken of, or *should not* be spoken of? Of course, we speak of the gift of the Holy Ghost all the time. Also, compare Doctrine and Covenants 1:33: “And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Thompson, *The Lady at the Horizon*, [page no.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. “Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost, will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory.” Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church,* 5:391. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “The Father and the Son,” *Improvement Era* 19 (August 1916): 942. For a discussion, see Paulsen and Pulido, “A Mother There,” 76-77. For a reprint, see “The Father and the Son,” Ensign 32 (April 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. For a discussion of D&C 130:22, see Ronald E. Bartholomew, “The Textual Development of D&C 130:22 and the Embodiment of the Holy Ghost, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52:3 (2013): 4-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This is the original wording of the last phrase of Doctrine and Covenants 130:22. See Bartholomew, “The Textual Development of D&C 130:22,” 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Brigham Young, as quoted by John A. Widtsoe, *In Tabernacle,* Nov. 29, 1857, JD6:95; DBY:30. As quoted in Rulon T. Burton, *We Believe: Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Tabernacle Books, 1994), 408. Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Orson Pratt, “The Holy Spirit,” in *Tracts by Orson Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and President of Said Church throughout Great Britain and All European Countries* (Liverpool: LDS Book and Star Depot, August 25, 1856–March 15, 1857), 50–56. Italics mine. See also Bartholomew, “The Textual Development of D&C 130:22), 20-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book: 1981), 159-160. Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 7 vols., (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:38. Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1978), 120. Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Marion G. Romney, “The Holy Ghost,” *Ensign* 4 (May 1974). Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Joseph Fielding McConkie, “Holy Ghost,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:649. Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1967), 27-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See Proverbs 8:22-31 and Sirach 24: 1-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:39. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)