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# 10 “I AM A SON OF GOD”: MOSES’ ASCENSION INTO THE DIVINE COUNCIL

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**I**n a 2007 article, biblical scholar Michael S. Heiser emphasized, “The divine council is central to a correct understanding of biblical theology, though few have recognized that fact. . . . The interaction on Israel’s divine council needs to continue.”<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the motif of the divine council, or council in heaven, is found in each Latter-day Saint book of scripture: the Bible (Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 82; Isaiah 6:1–9),<sup>2</sup> the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 1:8–13),<sup>3</sup> the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 76:58; 121:32; 132:20), and the Pearl of Great Price (Abraham 3:22–28; 4:1; 5:2). Shortly before his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith delivered a powerful sermon that, among other things, explained the divine council and its function.<sup>4</sup> Missionaries discuss the premortal council with investigators and potential converts in one of the missionary lessons.<sup>5</sup> These examples, which could be multiplied, demonstrate the importance of the divine council in LDS thought. The concept of the divine council is one of the foundational doctrinal points of the plan of salvation.

A careful reading of the first chapter in the Book of Moses yields even more evidence of the importance of the divine council

in scriptural narrative. This dramatic opening to the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis delivers a powerful example of how Moses became a member of the divine council in what is a common ancient Near Eastern motif. This remarkable narrative is compelling evidence for the authenticity of Joseph Smith's revelation concerning Moses. It roots the narrative of the Book of Moses in the world of the ancient Near East. It should not come as a surprise, as Stephen D. Ricks aptly reminds us, that "Joseph Smith . . . was nothing if not also a restorer of ancient doctrines."<sup>6</sup>

### THE DIVINE COUNCIL: AN OVERVIEW

Before we explore Moses' ascension to the divine council in Moses 1, it is only appropriate to provide a brief overview of the concept of the divine council in ancient Israelite thought. Taylor Halverson, a teaching and learning consultant at Brigham Young University, provided a succinct and helpful definition of the divine council:

Ancient Israelites believed that God resided in heaven, surrounded by his heavenly council. Just as a royal court consists of different members with different roles and purposes (e.g., counselor, messenger, jester, warrior, or bodyguard), so too God's heavenly court was composed of a variety of heavenly beings. According to the Old Testament, God's heavenly council consisted of beings such as the sons of God (see Psalm 89:7; Job 38:7), gods (see Psalms 58:1; 82:1; 97:7; 138:1), the stars (see Job 38:7), members of the council of God (see Job 15:8), members of the assembly of holy ones (see Psalm 89:5–6; Job 5:1), ministers (see Psalm 103:21), prophets (see Amos 3:7), and angels.<sup>7</sup>

Several scholars have analyzed the divine council and its significance in Israelite religion. Stephen A. Geller indicates that

"older, especially poetic, texts portray the deity as seated among the assembly of divine beings, who are sometimes . . . called *bene el(im)*, ('sons of gods'), *kedoshim* ('holy ones'), among other terms."<sup>8</sup> Ronald Hendel similarly notes that "[Yahweh] . . . was not . . . the only god in Israelite religion. Like a king in his court, Yahweh was served by lesser deities, variously called 'the sons of God,' 'the host of heaven,' and similar titles."<sup>9</sup> H. Haag explains that several Old Testament texts clearly describe "a pantheon [of gods] under the leadership of a supreme God."<sup>10</sup> E. Theodore Mullen Jr., in his classic study on the divine council, explains:

El . . . was the king, father, and progenitor of the gods in Canaanite mythology. As such, he stood at the head of the pantheon, unaffected by the various conflicts among the younger, cosmogonic deities. When consulted, he delivered his decree. El must thus be pictured as the aged judge who, as we shall show, sat at the head of the assembly, surrounded by the other gods. Likewise, the pictures of Yahweh in his council present him as the head of the assembly, the god whose decree determined the decision and actions of his messengers and holy ones.<sup>11</sup>

So prevalent is the evidence for this polytheistic depiction of God sitting in a council of other gods that some scholars are now coming to question the propriety of using the term *monotheism* to describe the religion of preexilic Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Besides these divine personages being identified variously as "gods," "sons of God(s)," "holy ones," and "angels," the divine council in ancient Israel was also composed of earthly prophets who were commissioned to carry out the will of the council.<sup>13</sup> Multiple examples in the Bible demonstrate this phenomenon. Prophets such as Micaiah (1 Kings 22), Isaiah (Isaiah 6),<sup>14</sup> Zechariah (Zechariah 1), and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1–2), among others, all experienced similar theophanies that introduced them into the divine council. In a passage from the Bible well known to Latter-day

Saints, we are informed that “surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). David Bokovoy informs us that the context of this verse is that of a prophet being introduced into the divine council. “Though translated as ‘secret’ in the King James Version of the Bible,” writes Bokovoy, “the noun *sôd*, in this instance, refers to God’s divine council.”<sup>15</sup> Bokovoy continues by clarifying that “by participating in the council, prophets become *mal’âkim* or ‘angels.’ Literally a *mal’âk* was one who was sent—that is, a messenger. . . . Therefore, in becoming members of God’s council who *see* and *hear* as they *stand* in the assembly, Old Testament prophets were sent as messengers and mediators for the council (see Jeremiah 23:18).”<sup>16</sup> This assertion has direct relevance in how we view the ascension of Moses in the opening chapter of the Book of Moses.

#### MOSES I AS A TEMPLE-ASCENSION TEXT

In an illuminating and important commentary on the Book of Moses, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw provides convincing evidence that connects the Book of Moses with ancient temple symbolism and the ascension motif.<sup>17</sup> As Bradshaw observes at the beginning of his commentary on Moses 1: “The details of Moses’ experience in chapter 1 place it squarely in the tradition of ancient ‘heavenly ascent’ literature and its relationship to temple theology, rites, and ordinances. Although the stories of such ascents are similar in many respects to temple initiation rites, they make the claim of being something more. While ancient temple rituals dramatically depict a figurative journey into the presence of God, the ascent literature portrays prophets who experience actual encounters with Deity within the *heavenly* temple.”<sup>18</sup>

Turning to the text of Moses 1 itself, we open with Moses being “caught up into an exceedingly high mountain” (Moses 1:1). Immediately we have a description that characterizes this

as a temple-ascension text. The tops of mountains were symbolically linked with the temple in the ancient Near East.<sup>19</sup> Not only that, but the divine assembly of God is also depicted in the Hebrew Bible as being on the top of a mountain.<sup>20</sup> Take, for instance, Isaiah 14:12–14, where the “Shining One, son of Dawn” is thrown down to Sheol for pompously assuming that he would “sit in the mount of assembly [another name for the heavenly assembly of the gods], On the summit of Zaphon” (Isaiah 14:13, Jewish Publication Society Tanakh). Commentary by Benjamin D. Sommer in a footnote provided in the *Jewish Study Bible* (Isaiah 14:12–15) helpfully clarifies that “Isaiah refers ironically to the king [of Babylon] as *Shining One, son of Dawn*, applying to him the name of a character from ancient Canaanite myth. (The *Shining One* is not known from Canaanite texts, but his father, *Dawn*, is described in Canaanite myth as a son of the high god El.) . . . This character seems to have attempted to join the head of the pantheon, whether this was El (who was known in Canaanite texts as Most High) or Baal (whose palace was located on the *summit* of Mount *Zaphon*).”<sup>21</sup>

Another text from the Hebrew Bible that associates the top of a mountain with the abode of the heavenly assembly is Psalm 48:3. Here the Psalmist sings of the Lord’s “holy mountain—fair-crested, joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, summit of Zaphon, city of the great king” (JPS Tanakh). Marc Zvi Brettler (Psalm 48:3f, JPS Tanakh) draws attention to the fact that the summit or mount of Zaphon is, according to Canaanite belief, the residence of Baal and another name of the divine abode of the members of the heavenly court.

Returning to the text of Moses 1, we read that while on the top of the mountain, Moses beholds the face of God while the glory of God falls upon him, so as to ensure that he could “endure [God’s] presence” (Moses 1:2).<sup>22</sup> After introducing himself and showing Moses his majestic creations in a panoramic vision, God informs

Moses that he has “a work for [him]” to do (Moses 1:6). As is similar with the call narratives of other Old Testament prophets, Moses is depicted as being commissioned to carry forth the will of the head of the council through a direct communication with God.

### MOSES AS A SON OF GOD

Most important to our present study is Moses 1:4, where God calls Moses “my son.” This phrase is repeated in verse 6, where Moses is also said to be “in the similitude of mine Only Begotten.” Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines *similitude* as “likeness; resemblance; likeness in nature, qualities or appearance; as *similitude* of substance.”<sup>23</sup>

Moses being identified as a son of God is very significant. It directly involves Moses with the divine council. As noted previously by Halverson, one of the unique titles given to individual members of the divine council included “son of God.” According to Gene M. Tucker, the title “son of [fill in the blank]” in a Semitic context either can refer to the literal offspring of an individual (including God’s literal progeny of divine beings in his heavenly council) or can act as a generic title for someone belonging to a particular caste, guild, tribe, group, or class.<sup>24</sup> This generic form explains references in the Hebrew Bible to the “sons of Israel,” “sons of Zion,” “sons of the east,” “descendants of Aaron,” “sons of the perfumers,” “sons of prophets,” and “son of virtue.” In each instance the term “son[s] of [fill in the blank]” serves to designate members of the specific group or class.<sup>25</sup> With regard to the phrase “son[s] of God,” W. R. F. Browning concludes that such, in a Semitic sense, is an appropriate appellation for Israelite kings as well as faithful Jews.<sup>26</sup> Since the Israelites were commanded to be holy even as God was holy (see Leviticus 11:44), it is understandable that, ideally, righteous Israelites could identify with God and

his angelic host with the same quality of holiness and thus take upon themselves the same divine title of “son(s) of God.”

Dan Belnap, in an intriguing article exploring Moses 1, insightfully explains that God’s declaration of Moses as his son “emphasizes the familial relationship between Moses and God” and “speaks not only of [Moses’] divine heritage but also of his potential to be like God through exaltation.” This declaration, according to Belnap, “highlights [Moses’] covenantal relationship with God.”<sup>27</sup> This relationship falls directly in line with an ancient Near Eastern conception of sonship. As Belnap further clarifies, “The terms [*father* and *son*] are used throughout the ancient Near East to refer to political and social relationships. In ancient Israel they are used to describe the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.”<sup>28</sup>

Most strikingly, scholars have catalogued ancient Jewish and later Christian religious traditions that explicitly speak of Moses’ deification into God’s angelic council, usually in association with Moses’ ascent on Mount Sinai.<sup>29</sup> Jarl Fossum, for instance, has observed that “in Samaritanism, Moses is ‘the Son of the house of God,’ a title which characterizes him as belonging to the angelic dynasty. Being the ‘Elohim from humankind’ . . . Moses is actually the highest among the angelic sons of God.” Furthermore, according to Fossum, “R. Jose ben Halafta (2d century) says that since God calls Moses ‘faithful in all His house’ (cf. Num 12:7), ‘he ranks higher than the ministering angels.’”<sup>30</sup>

John Lierman has detailed a depiction of “the elevation of Moses to a divine kingship or to divine standing” in one of the texts found in the Qumran corpus,<sup>31</sup> while Crispian H. T. Fletcher-Louis has amassed a plethora of ancient sources, including the Qumran text 4Q374, Philo, Josephus, and numerous pseudepigrapha, all ascribing a divine status to Moses among the angelic council of God.<sup>32</sup> After a careful review of the available evidence, Fletcher-Louis concludes that this “fundamentally Jewish tradition” is “rooted in the Biblical text (e.g. Exod. 7:1).”<sup>33</sup>

With these examples in mind, we can plausibly conclude that Moses' classification as a son of God is meant to ratify his membership in the divine council. This understanding also helps clarify Satan's motive in calling Moses a "son of man" after Moses descended from the mountain to begin his commission. The text informs us that upon his descent from the mount, "behold, Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me" (Moses 1:12). Moses rebuffs Satan by challengingly asking him, "Who art thou?" and insisting that he (Moses) is "a son of God, in the similitude of [God's] Only Begotten" (Moses 1:13).

When viewed within the context of the divine council, this dialogue between Satan and Moses takes upon itself a new meaning. Satan's tactic was to bring Moses down to a level of mere humanity by calling him a "son of man." Sure enough, Moses was a "son of man" in the sense that he was a mortal. The term "son of man" in Hebrew (*ben 'ādām*) simply denotes "mortal" or "human being."<sup>34</sup> Although the King James translators followed a literal reading of the Hebrew, many contemporary English translations (including the New Revised Standard Version and the JPS Tanakh) of the Hebrew Bible routinely translate *ben 'ādām* as "mortal." However, since Moses was designated a "son of God" by God himself, he was much more than merely a "son of man." His deification into the divine council put him far above the status of a groveling human. Satan wished to strip Moses of his prophetic legitimacy by denying his association in the divine council as a "son of God." As Rodney Turner explains, Moses' divine calling as a spokesman for God was "challenged when Moses was accosted by Satan himself: 'Moses, *son of man*, worship me.' (Moses 1:12). This is the ruse the devil has employed since time immemorial. He has ever sought to strip the Lord's people of their peculiar standing with him and drag them down to the level of unregenerate humanity. . . . Moses would not be robbed!"<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the description of Moses as being in the "similitude" of the premortal Christ hearkens to Genesis 1:26–27, wherein mankind is said to be made in the image and likeness of God. The careful reader will not fail to notice that the first person plural pronoun "us" and the plural possessive adjective "our" is used in the text. Scholars have noted that such is evidence for the presence of the divine council in these verses.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Moses' identification in Moses 1:6 as being in the similitude, or the likeness and image, of God and his Only Begotten Son parallels the decree of the head of the council given in Genesis 1:26–27. This is yet another instance of Moses being associated with the divine council in the text of Moses 1.

Upon his victory over Satan, Moses is once again brought up into the presence of God and given the charge to "write the things which I shall speak" (Moses 1:40). The concluding admonition given to Moses in chapter 1 is to "show them [the words of the Lord given to Moses upon the mount] not unto any except them that believe" (Moses 1:42). Moses is therefore commanded to be circumspect in fulfilling his commission.

## CONCLUSION

Moses' gripping experience in the opening chapter of the Book of Moses is best understood as a Near Eastern temple–ascension narrative wherein a prophet (1) ascends into the presence of God and his royal assembly residing in the heavenly temple on the cosmic mountain, (2) receives a divine, angelic rank as a member of the council, and (3) receives a mandate or commission and is sent back down to earth to become a messenger for the council. Moses 1 gives us several indicators (including the setting on the top of a mountain, Moses being brought into the presence of God, and Moses being identified as a "son of God") that Moses was introduced into the divine council and was given the awesome

responsibility of being a messenger of God. Furthermore, Moses' ascension and deification into the heavenly council fits nicely within an ancient Near Eastern setting. Moses 1 unmistakably contains many of the hallmarks present in similar ascension narratives. The Prophet Joseph Smith was not exaggerating when he called the Book of Moses a "precious morsel."<sup>37</sup>

## NOTES

1. Michael S. Heiser, "Israel's Divine Council, Mormonism, and Evangelicalism: Clarifying the Issues and Directions for Future Study," *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 323. Gerald Cooke similarly indicates that "any serious investigation of conceptions of God in the Old Testament must deal with recurrent references which suggest a pluralistic conception of deity." Gerald Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 35, no. 1 (1964): 22.
2. For an excellent Latter-day Saint overview of the presence of the divine council in the biblical record, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Ye Are Gods': Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind," in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, Donald W. Parry, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 471–594. For a brief LDS overview, see Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 262.
3. See John W. Welch, "The Calling of Lehi as a Prophet in the World of Jerusalem," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and JoAnn H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 421–48; Blake Thomas Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 67–95; LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord? The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011).
4. "The head God called together the Gods and sat in grand council

- to bring forth the world. The grand councilors sat at the head in yonder heavens and contemplated the creation of the worlds which were created at the time. . . . In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it." *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 6:307–8. For a fantastic analysis of Joseph Smith's teachings on the divine council, see Kevin L. Barney, "Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith's Understanding of Genesis 1:1," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 107–24.
5. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 48–49.
  6. Stephen D. Ricks, "Ancient Views of Creation and the Doctrine of Creation *ex Nihilo*," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 319.
  7. Taylor Halverson, "The Path of Angels: A Biblical Pattern for the Role of Angels in Physical Salvation," in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 154.
  8. Stephen A. Geller, "The Religion of the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 207–28.
  9. Ronald Hendel, "Israelite Religion," in *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and others (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), xlv.
  10. H. Haag, "ben," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1986), 1:681; my translation.
  11. E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 24 (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1980), 120.
  12. See, for instance, Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1–15. Other scholars have discussed the development from Israelite "polytheism" to "monotheism" and its significance in Israelite history. For instance, Carmel McCarthy, *Biblia Hebraica: Deuteronomy* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche



- Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 140–41, 152–53, elaborates on the “deliberate emendation” of Deuteronomy 32 by the hands of later scribes “for theological motives,” specifically, to eliminate the polytheistic portrayal of God abiding in his divine court. Similarly, Samuel Shaviv, “The Polytheistic Origins of the Biblical Flood Narrative,” *Vetus Testamentum* 54, no. 4 (2004): 544, has offered evidence that “salient polytheistic descriptions” in the Flood Narrative have been “expunge[d]” by scribes wishing to “monotheize this text.” See also generally Baruch Halpern, “Monotheism,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 524–27; William Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 252–303; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992).
13. See John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 22.
  14. For a more extensive exploration into the presence of the divine council in the book of Isaiah, see Christopher R. Seitz, “The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 2 (1990): 229–47. For a Latter-day Saint perspective on this same subject, see David E. Bokovoy, “On Christ and Covenants: An LDS Reading of Isaiah’s Prophetic Call,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 3 (2011): 29–49.
  15. David Bokovoy, “Ye Really *Are* Gods’: A Response to Michael Heiser Concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 299. Heinz-Josef Fabry has provided a detailed analysis of the use of *sōd* in the Hebrew Bible, including its connection with the divine council. See Heinz-Josef Fabry, “*sōd*,” in *Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament*, 5:775–82. See also generally *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, ed. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, 13th ed. (1996; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), “*sōd*.”
  16. Bokovoy, “Ye Really *Are* Gods,” 299–300; emphasis in original.
  17. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2010). For a condensed version of this voluminous commentary, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2010), esp. 17–51. Another helpful commentary on this theme is E. Douglas Clark, “A Prologue to Genesis: Moses 1 in Light of Jewish Traditions,” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006): 129–42.
  18. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness*, 1:37; emphasis in original. See also Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness*, 2:293–95. Compare Andrew F. Ehat, “Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord? Sesquicentennial Reflections of a Sacred Day: 4 May 1842,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 52–53.
  19. Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 133–37. Compare Parry’s remarks with William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely, *Solomon’s Temple: Myth and History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 10.
  20. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 25, is emphatic that the “assembly of the gods did indeed meet on a mountain.”
  21. Benjamin D. Sommer, Isaiah 14:12–15, *Jewish Study Bible*, 812.
  22. Margaret Barker and Kevin Christensen have explored the connection between theophanies of Deity and temple symbolism, demonstrating a profound correlation between the two. See Margaret Barker and Kevin Christensen, “Seeking the Face of the Lord: Joseph Smith and the First Temple Tradition,” in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143–72.
  23. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed. (New York: S. Converse, 1828), “similitude.”
  24. Gene M. Tucker, “Sons of God, Children of God,” in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (New York: HarperCollins, 1985), 981–82. See also the important commentary of Brendan Byrne, “Sons of God,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:156–59. Byrne, “Sons of God,” 156, notes at least three distinct classifications attending the phrase “sons of God” that complement Tucker’s insight: “(1) . . . divine or angelic beings; (2) . . . Israelites or Israel as a whole; or (3) . . . the king.”
  25. Robin Gallaher Branch and Lee E. Klosinski, “Sons,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1240–41. Haag, “*ben*,” *Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament*, 1:668–82, provides an exhaustive

- analysis of sonship in the ancient Near East.
26. W. R. F. Browning, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 349.
  27. Dan Belnap, "Where Is Thy Glory?" Moses 1, the Nature of Truth, and the Plan of Salvation," *Religious Educator* 10, no. 2 (2009): 164. Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," 24, writes that "the 'sons of (the) God(s)' are those who are of the realm of the gods, who partake of divinity."
  28. Belnap, "Where Is Thy Glory?," 164. Belnap concludes, "By affirming that Moses is his son, God acknowledges Moses's faithfulness and status as an heir, worthy to be in his presence."
  29. For an overview of this intriguing theme, see John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 25–34.
  30. Jarl Fossum, "Son of God," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:130; internal citations removed. Also pertinent is Fossum's identification of other prophetic figures, most prominently Enoch in the pseudepigraphal text *3 Enoch*, who are also exalted into the divine council and granted divine secrets as Moses is in Moses 1 ("Son of God," 130–31).
  31. John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 232–38.
  32. See Crispian H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, and Soteriology* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 173–84; "4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology," in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3, no. 3 (1996): 236–52; "Some Reflections on Angelomorphic Humanity Texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7, no. 3 (2000): 292–312.
  33. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 174. Fletcher-Louis details not only the angelization of Moses in Jewish tradition, but also Adam, Enoch, the patriarchs, and later Jewish communities such as the Essenes at Qumran (see Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 140–73, 184–215).
  34. Donald Senior, "Son of Man," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1242.
  35. Rodney Turner, "The Vision of Moses," in *The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, vol. 2, *Studies in Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 53.
  36. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 22, explains

- that "the heavenly court is mentioned in connection with the first human(s) (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; Job 15:7–8)." Jon D. Levenson, Genesis 1:26–28, *Jewish Study Bible*, 14, similarly notes that "the plural construction (*Let us . . .*) most likely reflects a setting in the divine council. . . . God the King announces the proposed course of action to His cabinet of subordinate deities, though He alone retains the power of decision." Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," 22, also emphasizes that Genesis 1:26–27 "represent[s] a conception of [a] plurality of divine beings." Along with these authorities John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 95, agrees that the divine council provides "a contextual understanding of the plurals in the early chapters of Genesis (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7)." From a Latter-day Saint point of view, Elder James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 18–19, also linked the presence of the divine council with the creation of man.
37. *History of the Church*, 1:98.