

INTERPRETER

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A JOURNAL OF MORMON SCRIPTURE

Volume 8 · 2014 · Pages 87-137

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Offprint Series

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HAGAR IN LDS SCRIPTURE AND THOUGHT

Andrew C. Smith

Abstract: LDS discourse vis-à-vis Hagar has changed through the years since the foundation of the Church. Her story has been considered and utilized in a number of ways, the most prominent being as a defense of plural marriage. This paper traces the LDS usages of Hagar's story as well as proposing a new allegorical interpretation of her place within the Abrahamic drama through literary connections in the Hebrew Bible combined with Restoration scripture.

The scriptures tell the stories of many men and women throughout history that are meant to give us guidance and direction, to help us better understand our relationship to God. Ecclesiastical leaders of the past and the present have asked and continually ask us to read the scriptures daily, and the Savior has even commanded us to search them diligently.¹ In turn, then, we are meant to find meaning in the scriptures that, conveyed to us via the Holy Ghost, is supposed to give us greater hope, knowledge, and understanding of the mercy of God and His eternal plan for his children as well as gaining greater knowledge and testimony of the Savior.

How we, as humans seeking the divine, use and approach scripture and the human characters found therein is of utmost

1 For example, see John 5:39, Alma 33:2, Mormon 8:23, Jacob 4:6, 3 Nephi 23:1-2. Also see, Thomas S. Monson, "Come All Ye Sons of God," *Ensign* (May 2013): 66-67, and Robert D. Hales, "Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation," *Ensign* (November 2006): 24-27.

importance in this sense. The figure of Hagar in the Abrahamic scriptural traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) is one human character who stands as a common thread between those religious approaches. However, the views of Hagar and how she is read and used by those respective religious communities is vastly different. While her story is largely similar, interpretation of her position varies exceedingly. Her position as the second wife of Abraham assures her a preeminent position in religious historiography.

In Judaism and Christianity, she is largely eclipsed by the preeminence given to Sarah and the inheritance due to Isaac, as the firstborn of the first wife. Within Judaism, she is generally set aside in exegetical works and largely disappears within the shadow of Sarah, becoming, as one academic put it, superficially seen as a “throw-away character.”² Yet in some later Jewish traditions, Hagar is said to have later fully converted to the covenant religion of Abraham, and taken a new name, Keturah (which most consider to be Abraham’s third wife), and is reunited with Abraham after Sarah’s death.³

In the broader Christian context, Hagar’s position is largely seen only through the lens of Paul’s usage of her and Sarah, as the wives of Abraham, as metaphors for bondage and freedom, symbolizing servitude to the former, Mosaic Law, and the freedom from law found in Christ. In that context, Hagar’s position, while perhaps being seen historically as righteous, is still viewed as lesser. This downplay of her position within the spiritual drama that was Abraham’s life removes her from

2 Cynthia Gordon, “Hagar: A Throw-Away Character Among the Matriarchs?” in Kent H. Richards, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 271-277.

3 See, Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1918), 1:298. For additional Jewish interpretations, see Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, a New American Translation*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), II:145-156, 243-258.

any type of primary role. Potentially, it could even be said to portray her pejoratively. In modern times, feminist and black Christian interpretations have contributed to a resurgence in respect and analysis of her character and position within the Abrahamic drama, being seen as strength in the face of patriarchal/cultural oppressiveness and a rallying cry for the redemption and salvation of slaves, respectively.⁴

Within Islam, though, the tradition remains that while she was removed from Abraham's immediate vicinity at the behest of his first wife Sarah, her role was not diminished. Indeed, the claim can be made that within Islamic discourse, the tables are turned opposite of Judaism, and Hagar is she who is lifted up, while Sarah diminishes within her shadow. Hagar is established as a (if not *the*) Mother of the monotheistic community, her story figures prominently in the annual *Hajj* ceremony, and her efforts and experience with Abraham are held up as an intentional and integral part of God's divine plan for mankind.⁵ To be sure, there is a measure of identity construction at hand here, with those drawing their lines back to Abraham (whether Christian, Jewish, or Muslim) privileging their own line of descent. Similarly, boundary maintenance between the communities is reinforced as Muslims identify themselves with someone downplayed by the Christians as a means of firm differentiation and vice versa.

4 For an introduction and overview into these types of hermeneutics, see Phyllis Trible, "Ominous Beginnings for a Promise of Blessing," and Delores S. Williams, "Hagar in African American Biblical Appropriation," in *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives* ed. Phyllis Trible and Letty Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 22–69 and 171–84, respectively. See also, Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984).

5 For additional information on the Islamic view of Hagar, see Barbara F. Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation*, (New York/Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1994) and Riffat Hassan, "Islamic Hagar and Her Family" in Trible and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 149–67.

In all of these traditions, it is important to note that Hagar never stands on her own. She is generally viewed as one of the characters defined largely by their positions vis-à-vis the “main characters” of the narrative; they are those “whose histories have little or no intrinsic significance. They appear briefly to provide conflict, present a negative model, or simply to move the narrative forward.”⁶ Hagar is always viewed and analyzed in light of her relationship with someone else: Abraham, Sarah, or her son, Ishmael. While the text of the Bible may predispose us to this type of analytical pairing, it is odd and potentially intentionally ironic that this is the case with a woman whose main stories in the biblical text involve her by herself in the wilderness. The way she is viewed at large by Judaism and Christianity is all the more surprising in view of the fact that she is a pivotal character not only as Abraham’s wife, but also, as the current text of the Bible states, she is visited not only by angels but may have been the recipient of a visit from deity.⁷

This paper will address Hagar specifically within the LDS context. This will be done first by analyzing her presence in the LDS standard works. Second, an analysis of her presence in greater LDS discourse will be achieved through a historiographic approach: viewing how she is seen and her story used through time by Church leaders and publications. To this end, Hagar will be examined by tracing her through various other LDS writings: the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, the Journal of Discourses and General Conference addresses, Church publications, as well as scholarly and devotional literature produced by LDS academics and authors. Lastly, this paper will introduce some further analysis of Hagar

6 Gordon, “Hagar: A Throw-Away Character Among the Matriarchs?” 271.

7 See Thijs Booij, “Hagar’s Words in Genesis XVI 13B,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 30/1 (1980): 1–7. And Nicholas Wyatt, “The Meaning of El Roi and the Mythological Dimensions of Gen 16,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* (SJOT) 8/1 (1994): 141–51.

and her story from the Hebrew Bible that should be considered in addition to latter-day revelation when viewing her character. The conclusion of this paper is that Hagar, as a covenantal wife of Abraham and an allegorical symbol, should be held in greater esteem among Latter-day Saints due to the further light and knowledge of the Restoration, which can lend to a reading of her as integral in an allegorical reading of Abraham's spiritual drama as a means of teaching the salvific drama of Jesus Christ in addition to her place in fulfilling the covenant promises of the Lord to Abraham.

Hagar in the LDS Standard Works

In the standard works (or canon) of the LDS tradition, Hagar appears in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Doctrine & Covenants. There is no mention of her in the Book of Mormon or the Pearl of Great Price. By far the majority of the material about her is concentrated in Genesis (16:1–20, 21:9–21, 25:12).⁸ Her position in the New Testament and the Doctrine & Covenants is more incidental. As mentioned above, in Galatians 4:22–31, Paul uses Hagar in a metaphorical allegorization of Abraham's sons, Isaac and Ishmael. In the Doctrine & Covenants, Hagar appears only in 132:34–35, 64–65 as part of the discussion of polygamy within the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage.

In this section we will review these scriptural sections, with particular emphasis on the Genesis accounts (as they form the bulk of what we know of Hagar and are the foundation for that found in the other sections), with exegetical analysis and important aspects noted. Although this paper is mainly concerned with LDS interpretations and views of Hagar, some non-LDS academic sources will be considered to cast initial light

⁸ The last reference, Genesis 25:12, mentions Hagar only as the mother of Ishmael, whose descendants are being recounted. This is retained here only for completeness in describing her appearance in the scriptural record.

on some of the biblical allusions, literary aspects, and meanings of the story. Footnotes will be used to provide important words in the original Hebrew for the Genesis sections. As the KJV is the standard English version used by the Church, it is used here for the biblical passages.

Analysis of Genesis 16:1–16

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid,⁹ an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain¹⁰ children by her. And Abram hearkened¹¹ to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.¹² And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.¹³ And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was

9 Heb: *šip̄hāh*, meaning maid, maid servant, or female slave. This is the main word used to describe Hagar in this passages. If another word is used, it will be noted.

10 Heb: *'ibbāneh*, literally meaning "I will build up." Here and in Genesis 30:3 this is used by childless women to obtain children through the use of their female slaves/maids. It may also be a deliberate word play on the *ben*, son

11 Heb: *wayyišma'*, meaning, "And he listened."

12 Heb: *wattittēn 'ōlāh lə'abrām 'išāh lōw lə'isšāh*, "And the woman [Sarai] gave her to Abram to be for him a wife." The word for wife and woman are the same. Some give an alternate translation of "concubine" based on cognates from Akkadian. See E.A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 116–17.

13 Heb: *wattēqal gəbirtāh bə'ēnehā*, "And her mistress became trifling in her eyes." This comes from a root meaning "light," "slight." Literally, she begins making light of her mistress. The same word is used by Sarai in verse 5.

despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee.¹⁴ And when Sarai dealt hardly with her,¹⁵ she fled from her face. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face¹⁶ of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit¹⁷ thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly,¹⁸ that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael;¹⁹ because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.²⁰ And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest

14 Heb: *haṭṭōwḥ bə'ēnāyik*, literally, "what is good in your eyes."

15 Heb: *wattə'annehā sārāy*, "And Sarai afflicted her." The verb here can mean "to humble, mishandle, or afflict."

16 Heb: *mippəne*, "from the face." Face is used idiomatically also to mean "presence."

17 Heb: *wəhiṭ'annī*, "and humble yourself." The verb can mean "humble yourself" (thus "submit"), but also "to be afflicted." It is the same root of the verb used in verse 6, describing what Sarai did to her. Interestingly, this root (*Ayn-Nun-Nun*) is very close to the root for "well," "spring," or "eye" (*Ayn-Waw-Nun*), another word used in this passage both literally (verses 7) and thematically (connected with the act of "seeing").

18 Heb: *harbah 'arbeh*, "I will multiply exceedingly."

19 Heb: *yīšmā'ēl*, literally, "God will hear" or "God hears."

20 Heb: *'ānəyək*, "your affliction." The same root as verses 6 and 9. See notes 15 and 17.

me:²¹ for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?²² Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi;²³ behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:1–16)

Some of the more important aspects of this story, as presented in the Biblical text, stand out immediately. Hagar's status is unequivocally displayed: she is a slave, and she belongs to Sarai. Sarai gives her to Abram, as she is Sarai's property. Hagar does not belong to Abram. In the past, many have seen in this a reference to the Code of Hammurabi wherein a certain type of priestess, who was able to marry but not allowed to have children, would give a slave to her husband in order to provide him with a son and an heir. However, this ruling, while paralleling the case of Sarai and Hagar in many ways, in actuality would not have been applicable. As E. A. Speiser writes, "These provisions are restricted to certain priestesses for whom motherhood was ruled out. No such limitations applied to Sarah."²⁴

21 Heb: *'el ro'i*, "God of seeing" or "God who sees." This term has engendered much discussion, as it is uncertain as to what exactly its form is and the meaning the words should be given. See Wyatt, "Meaning of El Roi," 143. Some have seen this as another ancient cultic name for God, similar to *El Shaddai*, etc. Speiser notes: "MT is pointed defectively...perhaps on purpose, to leave the reader a choice between this, i.e., 'God of seeing,' one whom is permitted to see, and the *ro'i* of the last clause, 'one who sees me.' The explanatory gloss that follows is hopeless as it now stands." Speiser, *Genesis*, 118.

22 Heb: *hāgam hālōm rā'îi 'ahārê rō'i*, the best rendering of this is "Would I have gone here indeed searching for him that watches me?" or "Would I have gone here indeed looking for him that looks after me?" See Booij, "Hagar's Words," 7.

23 Heb: *bā'er lahay rō'i*, "The well of the living one who sees me."

24 Speiser, *Genesis*, 120..

However, Speiser points out the case is even better matched by the social laws of the Hurrians, (“a society whose customs the patriarchs knew intimately and followed often”²⁵) as found in the Nuzi texts, where a case study shows that “in this socially prominent lay family, the husband may not marry again if his wife has children. But if the union proves to be childless, the wife is required to provide a concubine, but would then have all the legal rights to the offspring.”²⁶ This would explain verse 2 of this pericope, where Sarai hoped to “obtain children by [Hagar].” This may also act as evidence against a common reading of these verses that Sarai was, through her own intellect, attempting to force the fulfillment of promises Abram had already received.²⁷ Significantly, this will also play into the next section with Hagar as a freed slave (by virtue of her marriage to Abraham).

Thematically, this section is dominated by the theme of seeing or sight, with many uses and wordplays on the words for seeing and eyes. Note the uses of such sight words as “behold” (v. 2), “see” or “saw” (vv. 4, 5, 13, 14), eyes (vv. 4, 5, 6,) and the corresponding wordplay with the words for fountain or spring and affliction (vv. 6, 7, 9).²⁸ This theme culminates in Hagar naming the God, El Ro’i, (a name that is filled with ambiguity and problematic issues deriving from its defective vowelings²⁹) and the place name that denotes the spot, Beer-Lahai-Roi, “the Well of the Living One who Sees Me.” This theme will also be prominent in the next story of Hagar (Genesis 21:9–21).³⁰

25 Speiser, *Genesis*, 121.

26 Speiser, *Genesis*, 120-121.

27 See Genesis 12:1–3. Though it should be noted, that these promises do not detail the effect of the promises with regard to Abraham’s offspring, as do the promises in Genesis 17:1–8.

28 See notes 15, 17, and 20

29 See note 21.

30 Jewish legend adds an additional element of sight, attributing the Evil Eye to Sarah, by which she afflicts Hagar (inducing a miscarriage of her first child) and Ishmael. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 239, 264.

The theme of sight is also paralleled by the theme of hearing, with the name of Ishmael being given by the angel and Abram hearkening/listening (literally, hearing) the voice of his wife. This theme will also carry over into the next section.

Thus, in this section Hagar does important things and receives important promises and visits. She is the first freed slave in the Bible. She becomes one of the elect few to directly receive the promise of innumerable posterity as well as an annunciation of the birth of a son by an angel. She is the first and only woman in scripture to name God. While the Hebrew text is somewhat ambiguous on her visitor (it could be an angel or it could be the Lord himself³¹), the LXX is much clearer, rendering vv. 13–14 as: “And she called the name of the Lord God who spoke to her, Thou art God who seest me; for she said, For I have openly seen him that appeared to me. Therefore she called the well, The well of him whom I have openly seen.” In the LXX, a theophany is much more clearly stated.

Analysis of Genesis 21:9–21

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.³² Wherefore

31 Speiser notes, “*Yahweh’s angel*. The Hebrew noun meant originally ‘messenger,’ exactly as its Greek equivalent, *angelos*. In association with a divine term, the noun refers to a manifestation of the Deity, but not necessarily a separate being. In the present chapter, for instance, the angel is later identified with Yahweh himself (vs. 13). For one reason or another, an angel is interposed, in human form as a rule, to avoid direct contact between Yahweh and mortals.” Speiser, *Genesis*, 118.

32 Hebrew: *māṣahēq*, “laughing” or “mocking.” This is a usage of the verb from which Isaac’s name derives (see Genesis 18:12–15, 21:1–7). This verb can have connotations of both rejoicing and mocking, especially when modified by a preposition, as in “laughing at” someone (in Hebrew, with b-). However, the preposition is missing here in the Hebrew: “From some of the ancient versions, the original text appears to have included, ‘with her son Isaac,’ which is lacking in the M[asoretic] T[ext], perhaps through haplography.” Speiser, *Genesis*, 155. Because of this, all manner of conclusions have been read into the text, from simple good-natured fun, to rough play, mocking, and even sexual deviancy. The

she said unto Abraham, Cast out³³ this bondwoman³⁴ and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight³⁵ because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight³⁶ because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman;³⁷ in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken³⁸ unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman³⁹ will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away:⁴⁰ and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-

LXX retains the older reading, with the relevant passage saying that Ishmael was seen “sporting with Isaac her [Sarah’s] son.” Ginzberg reports the Jewish legend that this “sport” or “mocking” involved Ishmael aiming a bow and arrow at Isaac in jest. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 264. The Genesis Rabbah traditions link the word with the trilogy of the worst possible sins: fornication, idolatry, and murder. See Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 253.

33 Hebrew: *gārēs*, “drive out,” as an imperative.

34 Hebrew: *hā’āmāh*, “female slave.” A different word than that used in the previous section and one with a potentially more pejorative meaning. Used again in the next line of this verse.

35 Hebrew: *bā’ēnē*, literally “in his eyes.”

36 Hebrew: *bā’ēnē*, literally “in his eyes.”

37 Hebrew: *āmātekhā*, “your maid/female slave.” The same word as in verse 10.

38 Hebrew: *šama’*, “listen,” imperative.

39 Hebrew: *hā’āmāh*, “female slave.” The same word as in verse 10 and 12.

40 Hebrew: *wayšalləhehā*, “and sent her away.” Note that this is a different verb than what Sarah asked him to do in verse 10. See note 29. It is also noteworthy that the LXX makes it clear that Ishmael is an infant and rides upon her shoulder: “And Abram rose up in the morning and took loaves and a skin of water, and gave them to Agar, and he put the child on her shoulder, and sent her away, and she having departed wandered in the wilderness near the well of the oath.” (vs. 14) In some Jewish legends, Sarah, by means of the Evil Eye, makes Ishmael sick, thus accounting for him needing to be carried. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 264.

sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.⁴¹ And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard⁴² the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes,⁴³ and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt. (Genesis 21:9–21)

As can be seen, the themes of sight (vv. 9, 11, 12, 16, 19) and hearing (vv. 12, 17) continue throughout this section, with the culmination in God opening the eyes of Hagar to see life-saving water.

Comparing this section to the previous (Genesis 16: 1–16) also shows a shift in terminology and address. In the first section one word for female slave or maid (*šipḥāh*) is used to describe Hagar until she is married to Abram, at which point she is described as a wife or concubine (*'iššāh*).⁴⁴ In the

41 Hebrew: *wattēḥək*, “and she wept.”

42 Hebrew: *šāma'*, “has heard.” Note that God heard the voice of Ishmael, not Hagar. This is then another reference to His name, “God hears” or “God will hear.”

43 Hebrew: *wayyipqah*, “and he opened.”

44 There is no scholarly consensus on which of these should be adopted. For a summation of the two positions, argued by Speiser (concubine) and Von Rad (wife), see Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 106–107.

second section another word (*'āmāh*), again meaning female slave, is used. At this point, though, this is from the mouth of Sarah, when she is flustered over the “mocking” of her son and commanding Abraham to drive Hagar and her son out so that he will not inherit with Isaac. This may be an indication that this second word is more of an oppressive or pejorative term.⁴⁵ However, a comparison of the usage of both words throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible does not fully support that conclusion.⁴⁶

What is clear, though, is that Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah never use Hagar’s name nor speak to her directly. Indeed, God and His messenger are the only ones in these stories who speak to her directly and use her name when doing so (Genesis 16:8, 21:17). What is also clear is that Sarah witnesses something between Ishmael and Isaac that pushes her, on the basis of inheritance issues,⁴⁷ to demand Abraham to send Hagar and her child elsewhere.⁴⁸ The text does make clear that God commands Abraham to follow the will of his wife Sarah in dismissing Hagar, changing Abraham’s view.⁴⁹ Hagar is dismissed into the wilderness, becomes the first character

45 Phyllis Trible reads it as such. See Trible, *Texts*, 30, note 9.

46 See Schneider, *Mothers*, 108.

47 Jewish legend states that Ishmael was insisting that he should receive a double portion of the inheritance. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 263.

48 It should be noted that the two texts are contradictory about the age of Ishmael. If they are to be taken in strict chronology, Ishmael should be in his teenage years when he and his mother are pushed out. If that is the case, it is highly unlikely that she carries him (something perhaps implied in Genesis 21:14) or that she would cast him as a babe under a bush (Genesis 21:15). Jewish legend has accounted for this by attributing the Evil Eye to Sarah, which makes Ishmael sick and in need of being carried. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 264. The terminology used with reference to Ishmael is also of interest: sometimes he is referred to as a *yeled* (child) and sometimes as a *na'ar* (youth).

49 The Islamic narrative is more explicit about the command of God, but also more compassionate as Abraham leads Hagar and her son to the place where he leaves them, instead of just driving them out of his camp. See Sahih al-Bukhari 3364, Vol. 4, Book 55, Hadith 583 and Hadith 584.

in the Bible to weep, and yet subsequently experiences another visit of a divine being and is saved by the actions of the deity.

Analysis of Genesis 25:12

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: (Genesis 25:12)

In this the final reference to Hagar in the Hebrew Bible, we see again the identification of her as Egyptian. This has been a constant theme and her constant identifier throughout her time on screen. With this theme comes a dramatic look forward in time to the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt yet set as a distinct reversal: an Egyptian slave leaving the oppression or affliction suffered in the home of Abraham and Sarah, rather than Israelite slaves leaving the oppression suffered in Egypt.⁵⁰

Analysis of Galatians 4:22-31

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is [Hagar]. For this [Hagar] is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and

50 There are some direct literary connections between the two: Sarai afflicts Hagar (*'nh*), which is used for the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1:11, 12 and Deuteronomy 26:6); Hagar flees (*brh*, Genesis 16:6) just as the Israelites will flee from Pharaoh (Exodus 14:5); Sarah asks for her to be cast/driven out (*grš*), as the Israelites will be cast/driven out (Exodus 12:39).

cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.⁵¹ (Galatians 4:22–31)

Paul's use of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory set the tenor for Christian understanding of Hagar. Hagar and Sarah are portrayed respectively as symbols or figures of the Jewish law/Torah (or the synagogue), and the Gentile Christian church. However, it is important to understand the context in which Paul uses this allegory: this portion is part of an extended argument that Paul is using against certain Jewish Christians or Judaizing Gentiles who are arguing for all converts to Christianity (including Gentiles) to conform to portions of the Torah, in particular the Law of Circumcision. Thus, the use of Hagar and Sarah is a veiled criticism of the two camps in the early Christian community: "The two women no longer represent themselves but are used figuratively to represent Paul's hidden meaning in his argument against other Jewish Christians who are trying to influence the gathered assembly," writes Letty M. Russell.⁵² Paul's hermeneutic for interpreting the story of Hagar and Sarah is thus deeply tied to the political, socio-religious conflicts of his own day.

Yet, this interpretive viewpoint would be imprinted on the Christian view as it became foundational with regard to Hagar

51 King James Version

52 Letty M. Russell, "Twists and Turns in Paul's Allegory," in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 72.

and Sarah for the nascent Christian community. Letty Russell notes that Hagar, in Paul's usage, is rejected doubly, becoming even more of a pariah: "Paul doubles Hagar's rejection through the use of allegory. In Genesis she is a foreigner, a slave, and a threat to Sarah. In Galatians she is all of these and also a Jewish Christian opponent, a slave to the Jewish law, and a threat to Gentile Christian freedom in Christ."⁵³ This becomes the standard allegorical view adopted by most of the Patristic fathers. As one academic, Elizabeth A. Clark, writes:

This figurative reading of Sarah and Hagar became central to the interpretations of postbiblical Christian writers, both because it encouraged 'spiritual' readings of the Hebrew Bible in general and because it removed Hagar and Sarah from their particularized, local context in ancient Israelite history, thereby enabling their use as symbols in a larger Christian discourse.⁵⁴

This viewpoint, as derived from a limited allegory meant as rhetorical ammunition in the war of words and opinions of the early Christian community, has been enshrined in the general Christian mindset.

It seems almost to go without saying that the literal adoption of an allegorical interpretation can be a faulty foundation upon which to judge the allegorized individual and also a problematic foundation for the subsequent uses to which the allegory is adapted, especially as it is divorced from

⁵³ Russell, "Twists," 72.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth A. Clark, "Interpretive Fate amid the Church Fathers," in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 128. For more specific instances, see St. Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2010), 183–92; and Eric Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes*, (New York: Oxford, 2003), 193–99.

its original context and moorings.⁵⁵ This does a disservice to the individual, Hagar, in that it presents her as one dimensional and without humanity, emphasizing one reading of her and her characteristics and diminishing any other aspects of her story.⁵⁶ The LDS view of Hagar has certainly been influenced by Paul's use of her in Galatians. For instance, the current LDS Bible Dictionary notes "Paul uses the story as an allegory to show the difference between the two covenants, the one a covenant of bondage and the other one of freedom (Galatians 4:24)."⁵⁷

Analysis of Doctrine & Covenants 132:34–35, 64–65

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar
to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because

55 This section of scripture has been used as justification for driving out many opponents from the Christian fold, as well as for anti-Jewish interpretation and persecution. See Russell, "Twists" and Clark, "Interpretive Fate," in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*.

56 One is reminded of a similar lesson taught in April 2010 General Conference by Elder Gregory A. Schwitzer of the Seventy, dealing with a similar one-dimensional reading of Martha: "Many Sunday lessons have been taught using this story which have cast Martha in a lesser position in terms of her faith. Yet there is another story of this great woman Martha, which gives us a deeper view of her understanding and testimony. It happened when the Savior arrived to raise her brother Lazarus from the dead. On this occasion it was Martha whom we find going to Jesus 'as soon as she heard' He was coming. As she meets Him, she says that she knows that 'whatsoever [He would] ask of God, God [would] give [Him].' ...How often has Martha been misjudged as being a person who cared more for the deeds of doing than for the Spirit? However, her testimony in the trial of her brother's death clearly shows the depth of her understanding and faith. Many a sister has often heard the first story and wondered if she were a Mary or a Martha, yet the truth lies in knowing the whole person and in using good judgment. By knowing more about Martha, we find she was actually a person of deep spiritual character who had a bold and daring testimony of the Savior's mission and His divine power over life. A misjudgment of Martha may have caused us not to know the true nature of this wonderful woman," Gregory A. Schwitzer, "Developing Good Judgment and Not Judging Others," at <http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/04/developing-good-judgment-and-not-judging-others?lang=eng>, accessed 18 June 2013.

57 LDS Bible Dictionary, "Hagar."

this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.

And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law. Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not believe and administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife. (Doctrine & Covenants 132:34–35, 64–65)

Recorded in Nauvoo in 1843, Doctrine & Covenants 132 constitutes the basis in LDS scripture for ideas of celestial marriage or the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.⁵⁸ This section contains much that is beyond the scope of this paper, thus the remarks here will be limited only to Hagar's position in relation to LDS thought on these issues.

With the recording of this revelation, the issue of plural marriage, as described in this section, was associated strongly

⁵⁸ The new 2013 edition heading recognizes that some of the principles described may have been known by Joseph Smith as early as 1831. As this paper is only concerned with Hagar's specific use in the section, it can be assumed that this is dated to 1843.

with the practice of Abraham, particularly in the person of Hagar. It is notable that this section reinforces the biblical reading that Abraham did not do wrongly in taking Hagar as a wife. It also strongly states that the reason Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham was twofold: first, because God commanded it, and second, because it was law.⁵⁹ This stands in contradistinction to some interpretations that see the giving of Hagar to Abraham as Sarah attempting to fulfill promises on her own.

Hagar is thus linked heavily in LDS scriptures with a commandment of God to practice polygamy. She is the precedent for action based on the command of God. It should be noted that the LDS practice of polygamy did not take its mandate from God's command for Abraham to practice it, but used that as an example of when God had commanded it, and claimed that God had commanded it through a modern prophet in the latter days as well. This stands as the beginning of the use of Hagar as defense against attacks on the Church by other Christians on the issue of polygamy.⁶⁰

It should be noted that in these verses Hagar is still treated as a third-party object. She is the object here, never acting on her own, but is something that is to be passed along. It is also important that in this section, the use of Hagar seems to not be informed by the allegorical usage of Paul. The verses also leave open the possibility of other aspects of the story not recorded here: "and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises" (D&C 132:34). The phrase *among other things* tells us that there was more going on in the Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar drama than

59 It could be argued that these are the same thing. However, it is interesting that they can be read separately, thus potentially showing inspiration on the part of Joseph Smith as to the socio-legal circumstances of Abraham within the context of the Hurrian society, as portrayed in the Nuzi texts.

60 See footnotes 72 and 73 herein.

the command to take an additional wife or the fulfilling of the promise of extended posterity.

LDS Uses and Views of Hagar: A Historiographic Approach

Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible, while not considered canon or part of the LDS Standard Works, does give some insights on how Joseph Smith approached the Hagar story.⁶¹ It introduces some small, yet significant, changes to the stories of Hagar as recorded in the Bible. In addition to many minor changes, the significant changes include the following:

- JST Genesis 16:14 (KJV 16:13) relates that "she called the name of the angel of the Lord," rather than the name of the Lord. In this way, Joseph changes her experience from a full theophany or vision of God, to a lesser theophany (if it could be called that) of an angelic visitation.
- JST Genesis 16:15–16 (KJV 16:13) replaces the troublesome sentence in the Hebrew that she utters with "And he spake unto her, saying, Knowest thou that God seest thee? And she said, I know that God seest me, for I have also here looked after him." This removes some of the major issues that scholars have been forced to deal with in this section of corrupted or ambiguous Hebrew, as well as describing her in a dialectic with the angel, which shows her to have strength of mind and will, and not just be a passive recipient.
- JST Genesis 16:17–18 (KJV 16:14) rearranges the structure from the KJV and states "And there was a well between

61 There are differing opinions about the nature of the JST. For a brief introduction, see Kevin Barney, "Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19/3 (1987): 85–102. For a more in-depth analysis, see Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation" *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible—A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1975); Kent P Jackson, Robert J. Matthews, and Scott H. Faulring, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2004).

Kadesh and Bered, near where Hagar saw the angel. And the name of the angel was Beer-la-hai-roi; wherefore the well was called Beer-la-hai-roi for a memorial.” In this case, the name of the angel is given as “The Well of the Living One who Sees Me.”

- JST Genesis 21:12 (KJV 21:14) rewords and changes the view of Abraham sending Hagar and her son away: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, and she took the child, and he sent her away.” This removes the image of Hagar with the bottle of water “on her shoulder” from the traditional narrative and says that she actively took the child (Ishmael), rather than having him also placed on her shoulder. This may indicate influence of the literal chronology on Joseph, as it is illogical for the teenage Ishmael to be placed on her back.
- JST Genesis 21:18–19 (KJV 21:21) again changes order and emphasis, saying “and he [Ishmael] dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, he and his mother. And he took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.” The phrase “he and his mother” gives added emphasis that Hagar is there with him, but then Ishmael himself takes a wife out of Egypt, a change from the biblical story in which “his mother took him a wife out of Egypt.”

The changes seen in the JST are significant in that (if the JST is considered an authentic source) they could alter many of the notions about Hagar in the LDS community. Joseph apparently felt that Hagar had not seen the Lord but rather an angel and thus shifted the relevant passages to reflect that understanding, even if it left the angel with a fairly awkward name. This potentially decreases the prestige and importance that could be ascribed to Hagar from one of the few “pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8) who had seen God to a recipient of heavenly messengers (even so, a decidedly honored and important position).

Similarly, Joseph introduced changes to the commonly held interpretive views of Abraham sending her away and her life in Paran with Ishmael. These changes affect the way the story, and thus the reader's view, of Hagar is understood. She exerts her power by taking the child herself when she leaves, and she is added as a specific element in the story of her son in Paran but loses some characterizations of strength and power (not carrying the jug of water, not choosing the wife of her son, etc.). In general though, Joseph's approach to Hagar in the JST continues to show her as a multidimensional character with both strengths and weaknesses in the same manner that the largely contextual story of the Hebrew Bible does.

The larger contextual story as presented in Genesis is lost throughout much of the rest of LDS historical views of Hagar. She becomes a much flatter character as, in general, her story and her character are used only in limited ways. The usages of Hagar can be placed generally into four categories: (1) as a defense of polygamy, (2) as an example of angelic ministration, (3) as an example of blessings on account of righteousness, and (4) as connected to comparison with other religions. However, it should not be assumed that these are exclusionary categories: individual instances that invoke Hagar as scriptural character could be classified simultaneously in any of them. First, the most prominent way Hagar and her story are used in LDS views is in the defense of polygamy and LDS doctrines of marriage. This usage of the scriptural story dominates her presence in Mormon thought, even though it is largely confined to the nineteenth century as will be shown below.

While the defense of polygamy is by far the most prevalent usage Hagar has been put to, there are other instances in which she will appear in Mormon thought and publications. A second more limited or less prevalent use of Hagar is as an example, usually in a list of many other scriptural individuals, of a person who received an angelic visitation. This is used largely in the

context of preaching focused on the continuation of heavenly visitation and revelation in the present day. In the third category, an even rarer use includes Hagar being portrayed, almost always in connection with Abraham and Sarah as an example of the blessings of righteousness including the overcoming of extreme tests or trials (such as Sarah's barrenness) through faith. The fourth category includes discussion of Hagar in connection with other religions (Judaism or Islam). There are also a number of other miscellaneous usages that do not fit in any of these categories that will be noted.

In the following sections, we will cover the usage of Hagar in various LDS outlets through history, using the *Journal of Discourses*, General Conference addresses, and other Church publications: the *Contributor*, which became the *Improvement Era*, and the *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*.

Hagar in LDS Discourse in the 1800s

In the *Journal of Discourses*, consisting of twenty-six volumes of addresses given by leaders of the Church in the Utah territory (Deseret) between 1851 and 1886, Hagar appears by name in seven distinct discourses, which fall into the first and third categories.⁶² Two of these instances have her being used in a general way (category three): Jedediah Grant in 1853 uses her as one example among many in his dealing with "uniformity,"⁶³ and Erastus Snow in 1882 expounds upon Sarah's voluntarily

62 The analysis here only deals with those times when Hagar's name is used by the publication. There may be other times that she is referred to yet not named. This analysis is meant to be representative of the ways and means Hagar is used in LDS discourse, not as a comprehensive listing of every instance she is named and referred to.

63 Jedediah Grant, "Uniformity" (August 7, 1853) in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:342-49.

giving Hagar to Abraham, an example of faith and righteousness in the challenge of her barrenness.⁶⁴

The other five discourses that invoke Hagar by name involve the defense of LDS marriage doctrines and specifically the practice of polygamy. These discourses were given by Orson Pratt (who gave two of them, in 1852 and 1874),⁶⁵ Orson Hyde (1874),⁶⁶ Charles C. Rich (1877),⁶⁷ and Charles W. Penrose (1884).⁶⁸ A few example segments from these discourses are given here to illustrate the general usage of Hagar in the defense of plural marriage.

Orson Pratt, 1852:

Why not look upon Abraham's blessings as your own, for the Lord blessed him with a promise of seed as numerous as the sand upon the seashore; so will you be blessed, or else you will not inherit the blessings of Abraham. How did Abraham manage to get a foundation laid for this mighty kingdom? Was he to accomplish it all through one wife? No, Sarah gave a certain woman to him whose name was Hagar, and by her a seed was to be raised up unto him. Is this all? No. We read of his wife Keturah, and also of a plurality of wives and concubines, which he had, from whom he raised up many sons. Here then, was a foundation

64 Erastus Snow, "The Marriage Question" (February 26, 1882) in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:224-34.

65 Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage" (August 29, 1852) in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:53-66, and "God's Ancient People Polygamists" (October 7, 1874) in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:214-29.

66 Orson Hyde, "Living Faith in God" (February 8, 1874) in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:4-14.

67 Charles C. Rich, "Expectations Deferred" (November 11, 1877) in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:161-68.

68 Charles W. Penrose, "Religious Liberty Guaranteed by the Constitution" (July 26, 1884), in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:218-30.

laid for the fulfilment [sic] of the great and grand promise concerning the multiplicity of his seed. It would have been rather a slow process, if Abraham had been confined to one wife, like some of those narrow, contracted nations of modern Christianity.⁶⁹

Orson Pratt, 1874:

[In the millennium] Old Father Abraham will come up with his several wives, namely Sarah, Hagar and Keturah and some others mentioned in Genesis; and besides these all the holy prophets will be here on the earth. I do not think there will be any legislation against polygamy.

By and by they will build a polygamous city.⁷⁰

Orson Hyde, 1874:

I was once conversing with a Presbyterian minister on the subject of polygamy. Said I to him—"My dear sir, where do you expect to go when you die?" He said—"To some good place, I hope." "To heaven, I suppose?" "Yes," said he, "I hope to go there." Said I—"Right into Abraham's bosom." Well, he said, figuratively, that was correct. Said I, "If you go right into Abraham's bosom there will be on one side Sarai and on the other Hagar, and if you make a deadshot right into Abraham's bosom how do you expect to dodge polygamy? If you get into Abraham's bosom you get into a curious

69 Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," 60..

70 Orson Pratt, "God's Ancient People Polygamists," 228.

place.” By this time his argument was exhausted and our conversation closed.⁷¹

In these representative examples, it is clear that Hagar is important mainly for being the plural wife of Abraham and for giving him posterity. The conversation of Orson Hyde with an unnamed Christian minister gives a typical example of the apologetic usages of Hagar for LDS doctrines of plural marriage in the face of opposition from other Christians. She is expressly not important, in any of these examples, because of her own righteousness, the visitation of an angel, or the promises she receives from God. She is reduced to being a subordinate of Abraham and Sarah, albeit one who is useful for defending LDS marriage practices.

This usage is mirrored in other Church publications of the period. For example, in the *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* (the Church's official publication in Great Britain from 1840 to 1970) during the nineteenth century, Hagar the wife of Abraham is mentioned by name in thirty-three articles. Of those, twenty fall into the defense of plural marriage category, three are in reference to her angelic visitation, four are in reference to blessings of righteousness of Abraham and Sarah, seven are in the last category related to other religions, and three outliers fall into none of those categories, consisting mainly of incidental references.⁷²

71 Orson Hyde, “Living Faith in God,” 11.

72 It should be remembered that these are not exclusive categories, so there is some overlap between some of them, mainly between defending polygamy and connections with other religions (i.e., describing something normative in other religious contexts to defend it in the LDS context). In the defense of polygamy category (vol:no): 13:19, 20, and 21 (1851); 15:1, 7 (1853); 16:21 (1854); 18:22 (1856); 21:46 (1859); 27:47 (1865); 28:17 (1866); 29:31 (1867); 31:7 (1869); 32:9 (1870); 37:47 (1875); 45:30 (1883); 47:2, 46 (1885); 48:39 (1886); 49:13 (1887); 52:42 (1890). Angelic Visitation: 5:11 (1845); 38:28 (1977); 43:20 (1881); Blessings of Righteousness and Obedience: 15:38 (1853); 20:20 (1858); 49:25 (1887); 60:43 (1898). Other Religions: 13:19, 20, and 21 (1851); 18:20 (1856); 23:5 (1861); 29:31

In the *Contributor*, a journal representing the Mutual Improvement Association of the Church from 1879 to 1896, Hagar is mentioned by name only four times: twice in connection with defense of plural marriage, once incidentally while talking of Abraham, and once while recounting the history of the Middle Ages and Islam.⁷³ In 1896, this journal was followed by the *Improvement Era* (1896–1970), wherein Hagar is used only once, as a defense of polygamy even after the Manifesto before the turn of the century (in 1898).⁷⁴

In general then, we can see that Hagar's main use within LDS discourse through the nineteenth century was the defense of plural marriage. Other uses existed, but it is clear that in the minds of the Saints in those days, Hagar was largely to be considered in connection with polygamy. This is very likely caused by the fact that her only appearance in latter-day revelation is to be found in such a connection, in Doctrine and Covenants 132.

Hagar in LDS Discourse in the 1900s

The prevalence and usage of Hagar in LDS discourse after the turn of the century and perhaps more particularly after the Manifesto of 1890 changed considerably. With the removal of institutional support of plural marriage in the Church, the uses that Latter-day Saints had for Hagar shifted from being dominated by scriptural or theological defense of the institution of plural marriage (with a few other minor scriptural uses and incidental references) to being dominated by the incidental references.

(1867); 57:28 (1895). Incidental References: 33:47 (1871); 49:40 (1887); 50:23 (1888).

⁷³ The *Contributor*, Plural marriage defense: 3:2 (August 1882), 3:6 (December 1884). In connection with Abraham: 4:12 (September 1883). In connection with history: 14:10 (August 1893). There is one more incidental reference to a rock formation in a cave named after Hagar in 4:8 (February 1887).

⁷⁴ *Improvement Era* 1/7 (May 1898).

From the turn of the century until 1970 (when it was succeeded by the *Ensign*), the *Improvement Era* mentions Hagar by name in only eighteen different pieces. None of these are explicit defenses of polygamy. There is one that discusses her in the context of angels and a couple that discuss her in the context of other religions.⁷⁵ There are only three that could be considered theologically important as discussing her in the context of blessings of righteousness and obedience.⁷⁶ LDS academic mentions of Hagar find their beginnings here, with a few articles by Hugh Nibley (that would later appear in his books).⁷⁷ As this specific discourse will be considered on its own below, it is sufficient here to note that they do have a place in the general LDS discourse as found in the general publications of the Church.

The majority of mentions of Hagar in this publication through 1970 are incidental at best: a brief mention of Hagar while discussing Abraham's servant or Ishmael⁷⁸ or using her as a simile: "Like Hagar, he couldn't watch his son die."⁷⁹ Others are even more minor: her name used in a scriptural crossword puzzle or her name appearing in advertisements for films depicting stories from Genesis.⁸⁰ What these mentions of Hagar tell us is that while she did have a place in Mormon thought, it was no longer as important or vital as it had been.

In the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, from 1900 to 1970, the presentation of Hagar is again a story of decreasing importance. There are ten articles that use her by name. Most are

75 Angelic visitation: *Improvement Era* 47/4 (April 1944). Other religions: 11/12 (October 1908), 16/11 (September 1913).

76 *Improvement Era* 39/5 (May 1936), 50/1 (January 1947), and 56:12 (December 1953). The last of these is a specific question about Egyptian lineage and the ban on Priesthood presented to Joseph Fielding Smith.

77 *Improvement Era* 72/4 (April 1969) and 73/4 (April 1970).

78 See *Improvement Era* 13/7 (May 1910) and 41/11 (November 1938).

79 *Improvement Era* 42/10, 632.

80 *Improvement Era* 45/10, 670 (October 1942), and 56/1, 2, and 3 (January, February and March 1953).

incidental, discussing different meanings of names or naming practices in the Old Testament, scriptural connections with Egypt, or a discussion of Biblical ethics.⁸¹ The most incidental is her position as one of the wrong answers in a couple of scriptural multiple-choice quizzes.⁸² There is one discussion of her as a recipient of angelic visitation.⁸³ Importantly, three instances refer to lesson materials that utilize her as a righteous example or model of obedience to authority and earnest service.⁸⁴ In contrast to the thirty-three articles that mention her name in this publication from 1840 to 1900, the ten that appear from 1900 to 1970 is a distinct drop.⁸⁵

In the *Ensign*, which began its run as the premier Church publication in 1970, Hagar is depicted very similarly up to the present. Mentions of her are largely confined to incidental remarks included within the framework of describing or analyzing Abraham. These mentions include a simple chart showing the lineage from Abraham,⁸⁶ discussions of his descendants⁸⁷ and inheritance issues,⁸⁸ descriptions of places

81 On names and naming: *Millennial Star* 63/12 (21 March 1901) 178, and 77/31 (22 June 1911), 399; on Egypt connections, 83/33 (18 August 1921), 523; on biblical ethics, 35/10 (8 March 1923), 145.

82 *Millennial Star*, 110/3 (March 1948), 79 and 116/4 (April 1954), 104.

83 *Millennial Star* 82/16 (15 April 1920), 253.

84 *Millennial Star*, 70/41 (8 October 1908), 656 and 73/25 (22 June 1911), 399; and 94/8 (25 February 1932), 126.

85 It should be noted that the *Millennial Star* produced a startling amount of material in this period. Until April 1943, when it shifted to a monthly publication, the journal produced a weekly magazine consisting of hundreds of pages of written materials.

86 See Edward J. Brandt, "The Families of Abraham and Israel," *Ensign*, May 1973.

87 See E.L.V. Richardson, "What is a Jew?" *Ensign*, May 1972; and Daniel H. Ludlow, "Of the House of Israel," *Ensign*, January 1991.

88 See Daniel H. Ludlow, "I Have a Question: What Laws Governed the Inheritance of Birthright in the Old Testament?," *Ensign*, September 1980.

he lived,⁸⁹ or artwork associated with him.⁹⁰ Sometimes these incidental mentions occur in the context of praising Sarah.⁹¹ Continuing the trend of discussing Hagar in the context of other religions, the *Ensign* provided important articles that use her as a bridge to understanding the beliefs of others, particularly Muslims, or other geographic areas.⁹²

In addition to this continuation of former usages, in the *Ensign* during the last quarter of the 1900s, another image or examination began to occur with greater frequency. Hagar was lifted up as a woman of strength whose experience could be likened unto us personally. In 1978, Maureen Ebert Leavitt, in an article called “Privacy and a Sense of Self,” held up Hagar as one among many illustrations from the scriptures of those who in solitude have achieved extremely sacred experiences: “Many sacred experiences have occurred in solitude. Samuel was alone when the Lord called to him. Hagar was comforted by an angel in the desert—and Jacob wrestled there with a heavenly messenger.”⁹³

In the Relief Society General Meeting of October 1995, Aileen H. Clyde, then second counselor in the Relief Society, turned to Hagar in her address to the Relief Society, the first time Hagar was mentioned by name in a general meeting of the Church in over a hundred years. She says “When I think

89 See Jay M. Todd, “Some Dwellings Sites of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” *Ensign*, March 1973.

90 See the collections of art published as “Abraham: Father of the Faithful,” *Ensign*, February 2006 and “She Shall Be Called Woman: Women of the Old Testament,” *Ensign*, September 2006. It is interesting, that whereas the second of these compilations is meant to portray the women themselves, the piece of artwork devoted to Hagar is the same as that used in the Abraham-oriented collection published earlier.

91 See Carol Rollins, “Sarah’s Trial,” *Ensign*, March 1977.

92 See John Tvedtnes, “Who is an Arab?” *Ensign*, April 1974; James Mayfield, “Ishmael, Our Brother,” *Ensign*, June 1979; and Thomas and Judith Parker, “Blessed Be Egypt My People,” *Ensign*, September 1983.

93 Maureen Ebert Leavitt, “Privacy and a Sense of Self,” *Ensign*, August 1978.

of lifesaving water and of wells, I also think of Hagar (see Genesis. 21:14–20). Hers is a complicated family story,” and then recounts her story as recounted in Genesis. She continues saying,

We, like Hagar, are required to see “a well of water.” We, like the woman at the well, must ask of the Lord: “Give me this water, that I thirst not” (John 4:15). This is the purpose of Relief Society. It teaches us as daughters of God how to see and how to ask for that which we need of the Lord so that we need not thirst again.⁹⁴

The move from an understanding of Hagar as theologically important solely for her position as a plural wife, through periods of disregard, to a member of the Relief Society General Presidency’s holding her up as an example of righteousness, outside of her relationship to Abraham and Sarah, to be emulated by all the women of the Relief Society is a profound shift.⁹⁵

In these publications can be seen that the typical nineteenth-century description of a largely unidimensional Hagar used mainly in defense of plural marriage was flattened even further, into near obscurity, converted into just one more scriptural character that can be mentioned incidentally from time to time. This change is very likely the result of Hagar’s being so connected in the LDS psyche with polygamy that when plural marriage was stopped, there was very little need to mention her. Perceptions of Hagar began to change in the last quarter of the twentieth century as more scholarly attention was being paid to the scriptures in general and as the rise of the

94 Aileen H. Clyde, “What is Relief Society For?” *Ensign*, November 1995.

95 Hagar is mentioned again, albeit again in an incidental manner, in October 2007 General Conference by Elder Spencer J. Condie. See Spencer J. Condie, “Claim the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, November 2007.

global church engendered discussions of commonalities with other regions and religions, particularly Islam.

LDS Academic and Devotional Literature

The LDS academic community provides an interesting discourse in which standard scholarly approaches to texts (scriptural or otherwise) can be applied in conjunction with the ideas and knowledge derived from modern revelation. Devotional literature (in many ways largely based on academic works) utilizes scriptural stories in ways meant to promote faith and personal application. In some instances there is much overlap between the two approaches, largely under the label apologetics; fully separating the two in modern LDS discourse can be difficult. In both there are pitfalls similar to standard theological approaches in dealing with characters: it is easy to fall into the trap of reading the characters in only one way, unidimensionally, or casting them in negative lights due to “allegiance” to other characters. For instance, one academic notes that because of the concept of Abraham and Sarah as ideal covenant spouses, there is a “temptation...to paint [Hagar] as the nemesis, the intruder, the foreigner to faith.”⁹⁶ It is also possible to read too much into one source in light of another and make incorrect assumptions of primacy, influence, or meaning.

Surveying some of the LDS academic approaches to Hagar, we can see that many of the older assumptions and accepted teachings about Hagar are in some cases retained but are largely

⁹⁶ Camille Fronk Olson, *Women in the Old Testament*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2009), 29. “The simple fact that two women seemingly in competition for the same blessings from opposing angles appear in the same story is enough to invite serious debate and unfair comparisons. A common argument contends that because Sarah and Hagar disagreed at times and were dissimilar in many ways, they were the complete opposite of each other. Therefore, the argument concludes, one of them was righteous and loved by God, whereas the other made bad choices and was spiritually rejected.”

examined thoughtfully and carefully to create images of a real person with strengths and flaws rather than simply a form character meant to push plot or provide conflict.⁹⁷ In many ways, LDS academic and devotional literature in the latter half of the twentieth century and in the early twenty-first century retain the lens of viewing Hagar vis-à-vis her relationship with Abraham and Sarah. In general, it is impossible not to do so. Hagar's story is so heavily intertwined with her relationship with Abraham that removing her from that context would reduce her to almost nothing. How one views that context, though, will color Hagar.

Hugh Nibley used the character of Hagar in a number of different ways. In one work, he appropriated her as an identifying marker where the drama of Abraham unfolded.⁹⁸ However, his main discussion of Hagar exists in his article "The Sacrifice of Sarah."⁹⁹ As the title of this article suggests, Hagar is discussed only within the context of her subordinate relationship with Sarah. As the second wife, this lesser position is largely accepted as fact and is something Hagar seems to have had issues dealing with. However, Nibley takes it further, seeing Hagar's involvement with Abraham and Sarah within the context of other patriarchal narratives in which a conscious attempt is made to break up righteous couples: "More conspicuous is the repeated recurrence of a ritual love triangle in which a third party threatens to break up a devoted couple. Such is the story of Hagar, who sought to supplant Sarah in

97 I will not try here to overview every academic, scholarly, or devotional piece written by members of the LDS community that may mention Hagar. What will be presented covers the major contributors and those that focus on her specifically to paint in broad brushstrokes the predominant views and understandings of Hagar.

98 Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000), 229–30.

99 Hugh Nibley, "The Sacrifice of Sarah," *Improvement Era* 37/4 (April 1970), 79–95. This is later included as chapter 8 in Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1981).

Abraham's household and was turned out into the desert to perish of thirst."¹⁰⁰ In this manner, Nibley portrays her as a threat to Abraham and Sarah, a trial to be overcome by them. He does not state, however, if this is because God placed her as such or not. However, Nibley also portrays her as having a crisis similar to Abraham and Sarah:

So here, to cut it short, we have Hagar praying for deliverance from a heat death, visited by an angel, and promised the same blessing in her hour of crisis as was given to Sarah and Abraham in theirs. There is a difference, of course: by "despising" and taunting her afflicted mistress and then by deserting her, Hagar had *not* been true and faithful, and the angel sternly ordered her back to the path of duty whereas the promises given to her offspring are heavy with qualifications and limitations. The issue is as ever one of authority for, as Josephus puts it, Hagar sought precedence over Sarah, and the angel told her to return to her "rulers" (*despotas*) or else she would perish, but if she obeyed she would bear a son who would rule in that desert land. She too founded a royal line.¹⁰¹

Nibley here deftly follows through with the standard identifier of Hagar as a test of the righteousness of Abraham and Sarah. As seen above, throughout much of LDS history, she has been seen in this light: Sarah is given the test of giving Hagar to her husband, and when she does so obediently, the Lord blesses her with children for righteously passing the test. Yet Nibley goes beyond that to point to another layer of importance for the character. She is a normal human being, flawed with pride and desiring authority, yet is able to humble herself and submit to her duty as enumerated to her by an angel. Her obedience

100 Nibley, *Abraham*, 357.

101 Nibley, *Abraham*, 358. Emphasis in original.

to that duty enables her to gain the same blessings promised to Abraham and to be the head of a royal line.

Works of LDS devotional literature fall on both sides of the line vis-à-vis presenting Hagar in positive, multidimensional, or negative, unidimensional light. Carol Cornwall Madsen speaks of Hagar only as defined against Sarah, as the covenant wife of Abraham.¹⁰²

Sarah willingly gave Abraham her handmaid Hagar so that Sarah might “obtain children by her,” thereby providing Abraham with posterity but also removing her reproach and securing her own status through the son that would be accounted hers through her maidservant. The contempt Hagar unexpectedly demonstrated toward Sarah after conceiving, however, set in motion the unfortunate events that resulted in Hagar’s eventual exile and the fulfillment of the covenant through Sarah and her son Isaac. Sarah was to be the mother of promise, her son, Isaac, heir to the birthright. Hagar was outside the chosen lineage and Sarah’s gift of her servant would not satisfy the terms of the covenant.¹⁰³

This presentation of Hagar seems to insinuate that if Hagar had not sinned by her contempt, she would still have held a place in the covenant by being the birthmother of the child of the covenant. Thus her hardship under Sarah’s hands and her exile are “unfortunate” but seemingly what she deserved, and the Lord provided miraculously for Isaac to be born and the covenant to continue. Yet this is contradicted by Madsen’s

102 Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Mothers in Israel: Sarah’s Legacy,” in *Women of Wisdom and Knowledge: Talks Selected from the BYU Women’s Conferences*, ed. Marie Cornwall and Susan Howe (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990), 179–201.

103 Madsen, “Sarah’s Legacy,” 181–82.

declaration that Hagar was outside the correct lineage and thus could never have “satisfied” the covenant. This portrayal of Hagar is negative by not seeing her as part of a covenant (despite the promises she receives from the angel/Lord). It is also unidimensional in that it portrays her as a complete foil to Sarah: Sarah must be righteous, thus Hagar is not.

S. Michael Wilcox, in his book *Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits*, also presents Hagar and Sarah as distinctly intertwined foils.¹⁰⁴ However, while Hagar is noted negatively for having “wrongly assumed a superior attitude to her mistress,” she is also portrayed very positively as a model of repentance and humility after having been dealt with harshly by Sarah.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Wilcox strongly asserts the scriptural position that God was aware of and watched over Hagar in her needs, something he applies to modern audiences. This portrayal is largely positive and multidimensional. Hagar is seen as a righteous, albeit flawed person who is given assurances by the Lord through heavenly ministration:

Hagar learned that the Lord was watching over her. He knew why she had fled; he knew her thoughts and desires. Before he sent her back, the Lord assured her [of her blessings]...When Hagar and Ishmael were sent away after the birth of Isaac, the Lord once again saw the plight of Hagar and took care of her, and he reaffirmed that Ishmael would be made a great nation.¹⁰⁶

While Wilcox is generally positive, he does not deal with Hagar as the second or subordinate wife, nor the issues of priesthood lineage and inheritance. He is more concerned with understanding her as an example of righteous behavior.

104 S. Michael Wilcox, *Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1998).

105 Wilcox, *Daughters*, 29.

106 Wilcox, *Daughters*, 31.

In the last few years, the subordinate position of Hagar has in some ways even been called into question. Janet C. Hovorka, in her article “Sarah and Hagar: Ancient Women of the Abrahamic Covenant,” points out that virtually identical covenants seem to have been made between Abraham, each of his wives, and the Lord.¹⁰⁷ She states,

Scripture gives much more information about Sarah than Hagar. And what is available about Hagar is tightly focused on three events—the conception of Ishmael, the fleeing from Sarah, and the banishment (Genesis 16, 21). It is therefore more difficult to ascertain the extent of her involvement in the covenant. However, a careful examination of the biblical text shows that Hagar enjoyed many of the same aspects of the Abrahamic covenant that Sarah and Abraham did.¹⁰⁸

In the article, Hovorka details the stipulations, blessings, and tokens or signs associated with making that covenant which occurred in the stories of Sarah and Hagar. Even with the lack of information about Hagar specifically, it is shown that she abides by the stipulations (obedience and sacrifice) and is given promises of the exact three blessings typically known for Abraham and Sarah, blessings of posterity, land for them to inherit, and the presence of God with them. She ends the article with an application of these types of covenants in the LDS experience: through the rite of temple marriage. She explains,

Modern Latter-day Saints believe the Abrahamic covenant is passed on in a temple marriage. The requirements of obedience are similar to those for

¹⁰⁷ Janet C. Hovorka, “Sarah and Hagar: Ancient Women of the Abrahamic Covenant,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 147–66.

¹⁰⁸ Hovorka, “Sarah and Hagar,” 157.

Abraham's covenant. The blessings promised are explicitly the same. The sealing ceremony name changes are tokens of the covenant and associated with LDS temple marriages.¹⁰⁹

This approach diverges from standard LDS (and general Judeo-Christian) understanding of the story wherein Hagar, while being a wife of Abraham, is seen still as subordinate to Sarah as the first wife. This traditional line of thinking is heavily steeped in the idea that the covenant was passed through Sarah to Isaac, Jacob, and the rest of the children of Israel, whereas Hagar and her descendants, although included in Abraham's posterity, are not included in the promises of priesthood lineage from Abraham. The idea that Hagar also had equal portion with the Abrahamic covenant (albeit in an individual covenant with Abraham and the Lord without involving Sarah) as Hovorka describes has important considerations within LDS discourse, as it reinforces and fits well with the ideas and doctrines of plural marriage as described in Doctrine and Covenants 132.

Camille Fronk Olson also comments on the relationship of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar as it relates to LDS concepts of eternal marriage and how we view Hagar in general. While retaining the traditional lesser status of Hagar, she stresses how important Hagar is as a model who should not be compared unfairly with Sarah: "Although Hagar did not receive the high calling in the covenant that Sarai was given, Hagar's importance to God and that of her unborn son are attested in the Genesis narrative."¹¹⁰ It is important to note the use of the term "calling," a conspicuously Mormon usage meaning a responsibility, position, or stewardship one is given by revelation from the Lord. Olson's view is acknowledged as heavily influenced by the Pauline view that Hagar represented the lesser law:

109 Hovorka, "Sarah and Hagar," 165.

110 Olson, *Women*, 38.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul drew on this symbolism to teach the restrictiveness of the law of Moses in contrast to the Lord's higher law. In the allegory, Hagar and her descendants represented the lesser law while Sarah and her descendants symbolized the law of Christ (Galatians 4:21–31). Both the higher law and the law of Moses came from God, but the higher law promises something greater. Ishmael's descendants, although great, would need to come to Isaac's descendants for the promises of the covenant and the Savior's greatest blessings.¹¹¹

Despite this, Olson readily states that Hagar in the eternities enjoys all the blessings of exaltation, even though she was of a lesser "calling" in this life. She states "Hagar's eternal destiny is likewise taught in modern scripture. Revelation to the Prophet Joseph indicates that all the wives of the patriarchs will enjoy the blessings of exaltation with their husbands," as found in Doctrine and Covenants 132:37.¹¹² Likewise, while she retains the traditional status arrangement, she does acknowledge that "knowing that God willed Hagar to be included in this marriage trio and that she must have therefore believed in Abram's God directs us to consider her with equal acceptance."¹¹³ This is why the concept of a "calling" becomes important; in Church doctrine and discourse, all callings are considered equal as part of the "body of Christ," and thus, while Hagar's calling was

111 Olson, *Women*, 43–44.

112 Olson, *Women*, 44. She specifically notes that the mention of "concubines" that Abraham received covers Hagar as well as Keturah (and Bilhah and Zilpah later), who are received into their exaltation. She defines a concubine as "a legal wife who was elevated from servant status by her marriage. Her increased status did not, however, equal that of the chief wife, who was always a free woman." Olson, *Women*, 37.

113 Olson, *Women*, 37.

of lesser outward importance, it was still an equally valid and important calling for her.¹¹⁴

In the last few decades, contemporary academic discourse coupled with Church growth has contributed to another shift in the view of Hagar. While still recognizing her role as a plural wife, the traditional view of her as subordinate to Sarah in spiritual and covenantal matters is slowly changing to a more equal but different role.

Continuing the Discussion: Hagar's Place in Light of the Restored Gospel

The preceding discussion has highlighted the changes that have occurred over time in the ways that the LDS community has viewed Hagar and utilized her in religious discourse. A major determinative factor that has been shown to this point is that according to LDS scripture, Hagar was made the wife of Abraham because of the commandment of God. Opposed to the rest of the Judeo-Christian community that relies solely upon the account in Genesis (where the text attributes the idea and action to Sarah, although Abraham is commanded by God to hearken to her), the Doctrine and Covenants makes clear that perhaps in conjunction with contemporary law, God commanded Hagar to be taken as a wife: "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it." (D&C 132:34–35).

This places a significant conundrum in LDS discourse as regarding Hagar--the Lord does not give commands such as this lightly, so what was the purpose for Hagar to marry

114 See 1 Corinthians 12.

Abraham? The verses just cited give the answer that part of the reason was the posterity whom she would provide for Abraham that fulfilled “among other things” the promises given to him and her regarding their offspring. But what were the “other things” that were accomplished by Hagar’s marrying Abraham and the subsequent actions and reactions leading to the eventual banishment of Hagar and her son? To provide a few potential answer to this question (assuredly there are many), we will return to the Genesis account and examine specific literary connections at play between the Hagar narratives and the Adam and Eve narrative in Genesis 3 as well as in other sections of the LDS standard works.

The connections between the Hagar stories (and her relationship with Abraham and Sarah) and the characters and actions of Eve and Adam in the Garden are too many and too distinct to have been placed in the Hebrew Bible text accidentally.¹¹⁵ Indeed, it is apparent that the author of the Genesis account distinctly wanted his audience to recall the occurrences in the Garden of Eden, a few chapters previous to the events related to Hagar. Reviewing the general Hagar stories in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 16:1–16, 21:9–21) yields a number of interesting connections to the Garden pericope (Genesis 3).

In Genesis 3:6 and 16:3, there occurs an exact replication of verbs. In the Garden, the woman “took (*wetiqah*) of the fruit of it [the tree] and she ate, and she gave (*wetiten*) also to her man.” In the later context, “Sarai, the wife of Avram, took (*wetiqah*) the Egyptian Hagar, her handmaid...and she gave (*wetiten*) her to Avram.” In this case, Hagar is presented, via an exact replication of the words used in the Garden, in the position of the forbidden fruit, the article/entity that once taken or used will fundamentally change the relationships of those involved

115 Some of the parallels pointed out here are also discussed in Phyllis Tribble, “Ominous Beginnings for a Promise of Blessing” in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 33–69.

with each other (and potentially with deity). This seems to indicate that the author is wanting to portray the marriage of Hagar and Abraham as the beginning of a new age or initiating a change in the ways and means of God's dealings with man and the way that mankind should view themselves vis-à-vis deity.

In Genesis 3:17 and 16:2 another literary parallel occurs. In the Garden scenario, the Lord describes Adam's action to him: "because you listened (*šama'ta*) to the voice (*leqol*) of your wife/woman." Similarly, "Avram listened (*weyišma'*) to the voice (*leqol*) of Sarai." While the verbs are not exactly replicated (but still involve the same words), the recreation of the scene with Avram as Adam listening or hearkening to the voice of his wife in taking the fruit/Hagar is strikingly similar enough to stand as direct allusion. This again places Adam following Eve in taking the fruit in juxtaposition to Abraham marrying Hagar.

In Genesis 3:16 and 16:10, both Eve and Hagar are extended similar promises of great, multitudinous descendants. To Eve, the Lord says, "I will indeed multiply (*harbah 'arbeh*) your sorrow and your conception." While to Hagar, the messenger of the Lord says, "I will indeed multiply (*harbah 'arbeh*) your seed that it shall not be numbered for multitude." With the exact words used to begin the promises and the functional equivalence between "conception" and "seed," it stands to reason that the promise to Hagar is meant to echo that made to Eve. This is strengthened by the addition of Hagar's being told to submit herself to the afflictions of Sarai (Genesis 16:6, 9), paralleling the multiplication of Eve's sorrow.¹¹⁶ It is also of note that Abraham is the only other character in the Bible to receive directly such a promise with the same words (*harbah*

¹¹⁶ It is very intriguing to read Mosiah 3:19 in light of Hagar's story. Based on the theme of submission as well as the location at the temple and King Benjamin's understanding of covenant in Christ, it may well be that the story of Hagar informed his thinking.

'arbeh) in Genesis 22:17, which is generally then also accepted as a promise to Sarah also.

In both stories, in Genesis 3:23–24 and 21:10, 14, at the point of expulsion an interesting verbal usage occurs. The Lord both sent (*wayšalḥehu*) and drove (*waygareš*) Adam and Eve out of the Garden. Similarly (and perhaps tellingly), Sarah commands Abraham to drive out (*gereš*) Hagar and her son, but Abraham sends (*wayšalḥeha*) Hagar away. In this manner, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael is meant to be viewed as another expulsion from a state similar to the Garden of Eden, implying that Abraham and Sarah remain there. Hagar literally and figuratively goes into the wilderness of affliction.

A final connection between Eve and Hagar is found in Genesis 3:7 and 21:19: both have their eyes opened. The eyes of Adam and Eve after eating of the fruit “were opened” (*watipaqahnah*) and God opened (*wayipqah*) Hagar’s eyes in her moment of need. In the Hagar narratives this represents the culmination of the themes of sight mentioned above, the point when God plays an explicit role in her salvation. In the Adam and Eve narrative (especially that found in LDS temples), this is also the point where God steps in to participate in the salvation of Adam and Eve via a covenantal relationship, rebuking Satan, clothing them in coats of skins, and preventing them from eating of the Tree of Life and voiding the proposed plan of salvation.¹¹⁷ This theme of having eyes opened is also replicated in the Garden story found in the Book of Moses: “She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they had been naked” (Moses 4:12–13). Later Adam declares, “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened,

117 See Alma 12:21–24 and 42:3–5.

and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10).

From these references, it is clear that the author of the Hagar passages wanted to draw attention back to the earlier story of Adam and Eve in the Garden. What is also strikingly emphasized, most especially by the parallel promises, the opening of eyes, and the expulsion at the hands of Abraham, is the relationship of Hagar to Eve. It is plain that the author of this story wanted Hagar to be seen as a parallel to the great mother figure, even if her general status within the family of Abraham in the Genesis narrative was more vague.¹¹⁸ What are we to make of these literary connections? From a standard Jewish or Christian standpoint, it could be hard to understand them. However, the restored Gospel, with a more detailed understanding of the Plan of Salvation, can give a different perspective, which sheds additional light on the situation.

With the influence of LDS doctrines of eternal marriage and the Abrahamic covenant, it is clear that one reason the connection is made is precisely because the inauguration of the Abrahamic covenant, as expressed in the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage, did represent a new era of God’s dealings with mankind. This is precisely why Abraham holds the status that he does as the head of the Abrahamic faiths. Viewing Hagar as a necessary covenantal portion of this new era, rather than simply a human attempt to provide progeny, is not the hallmark of Jewish or Christian understandings. It does, however, exhibit itself in Islamic understandings where Hagar is seen as the spiritual ancestress of all Muslims who participated fully in Abraham’s attempt to establish the spiritual re-creation of monotheism (which is paralleled with the physical creation of Adam and Eve).¹¹⁹ But this doesn’t

118 Schneider, *Mothers*, 107.

119 See Stowasser, *Women*, and Hassan, “Islamic Hagar” for more in-depth detail on Hagar in Islamic discourse.

fully answer the question, leaving one wondering why eternal marriage with Sarah alone was not enough.

Additional insight may be gleaned from other prophetic books of the Old Testament. Many of the prophets of the Old Testament undertook what have become known as prophetic action oracles, specific actions that were commanded by the Lord in order to give a sign, image, or symbol of that which the Lord would accomplish among the children of Israel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Zechariah, and Zedekiah as well as Abraham and Moses undertook prophetic action of this type.¹²⁰ Donald Parry states that the prophets' "unconventional action, gesture, movement, or posture of itself may not have had an immediate practical purpose but had symbolic meaning or metaphoric application. The future action was the typological fulfillment of the first, original action."¹²¹ Similarly, he also makes the point that "two themes constantly recur in the nonverbal prophecies—the theme of God's judgment against an individual, community, or nation and the theme of the mission, attributes, goals, or atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ."¹²²

In many cases, it was the prophet himself who stood as a symbol, as was told to Ezekiel: "I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel" (Ezek 12:6). However, in some instances, the symbol was to be accomplished by the example of the prophet and his family. For instance, Hosea was commanded to take a harlot to wife as a sign for Israel, and the children conceived in this union were also signs.¹²³ Isaiah ben Amoz was

120 For a concise overview of prophetic action oracles as well as a listing of Biblical examples, see Donald W. Parry, "Symbolic Action as Prophecy in the Old Testament" in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005), 337–55. Parry mentions Abraham in conjunction with the Sacrifice of Isaac but not in the way that I do here.

121 Parry, "Symbolic Action," 337.

122 Parry, "Symbolic Action," 341.

123 See Hosea 1:1–11.

also considered such and recorded “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion” (Isaiah 8:18).

Abraham, in addition to being provided posterity, achieved similar purposes when he was commanded to marry Hagar. One non-LDS academic, speaking about the relationship of Ishmael and Isaac, states

Certainly the story has made of Ishmael a mere shadow of Isaac, but he remains his brother, and in this narrative he clearly acts as alter ego of Isaac, bearing as it were the negative qualities with which Isaac would otherwise be burdened. The echo in this exegesis of Leviticus 16 is no accident, for the sacrificial victims of the rites of yom kippur, taken respectively to the altar and the wilderness, are precisely balanced by the fates of Ishmael and Isaac, a point emphasized by the doublet of the Ishmael story in Genesis 21,8–21 and its proximity to the sacrifice of Isaac in chapter 22. Indeed, Ishmael is in every respect a scapegoat.¹²⁴

Thus it is clear that the life of Abraham and his sons dramatizes what would become the central ritual of atonement in the Israelite temple theology. While one son is set to be sacrificed, the other is driven into the wilderness. While most commentaries concentrate upon the allegorical meaning of Isaac’s sacrifice, it is, in some ways incomplete without discussing also Ishmael.

Nephi tells us that the Law of Moses was meant to be understood as a symbol of the coming of the Lord and his atoning sacrifice.

124 Wyatt, “The Meaning of El Roi,” 149

And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments. And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. (2 Nephi 25:24–27)

Considered in this way the rituals of the Day of Atonement must be seen as pointing to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Understanding the goat that is to be slaughtered as a type of Christ is simple, but what are we to make of the goat that literally bears the sins of the people into the wilderness? Historically the answers have ranged from a symbol of Christ to a symbol of Satan. The debate of what the scapegoat represents has been contested for nearly the entire history of Christianity.¹²⁵ Analysis of the Yom Kippur rituals without considering the stories of Abraham and Isaac and Abraham and Ishmael as the etiology of the rituals is also incomplete.

125 For a brief overview of some of the pertinent points of the debate, see James L. Carroll, “An Expanded View of the Israelite Scapegoat,” *Selections from the Religious Education Student Symposium 2005* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005), 1–15. Also available online at <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/selections-2005-religious-education-student-symposium/expanded-view-israelite-scapegoat>. Carroll posits that from an LDS perspective the two goats are best understood as symbols of physical and spiritual death.

It is not my intent to attempt a definitive reading here. However, an alternate reading of the family of Abraham based on the factors discussed above could be as an extended allegory or a multivalent symbol or sign of the parentage and roles of Jesus Christ and provide reasonable answers for why Hagar, as a second wife, was commanded to marry Abraham. Considering the parallels pointed out above with the Garden narrative, it would make sense to consider Abraham and Sarah as a divine couple—Heavenly Father and Mother— that remains in a heavenly setting while sending their “perfect,” miraculous, or divine son to be sacrificed, an “infinite and eternal sacrifice” (Alma 34:10). However, Hagar, as the expelled mortal woman, would provide the physical body for a mortal son to be raised in a fallen wilderness without the physical presence of his father.

This view of Hagar as part of this multivalent symbol would also account for the literary comparison of Hagar to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In this manner, she represents the changes in the relationship of deity with mankind through the Fall brought about by Adam and Eve as well as looking forward to the changes in that relationship wrought by the Atonement of Christ. The heavy connections between Hagar and Eve, seen through the lens of the Restored Gospel, can be explained as Hagar stands as a symbol of the woman whose seed will bruise or crush the head of the serpent.¹²⁶ Thus Hagar can also stand as a type and shadow of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the woman of Revelation forced into the wilderness.¹²⁷ It is significant that in the standard works only two individuals are commanded of the Lord to marry a specific other person, Hagar and Joseph, the husband of Mary.¹²⁸

126 See Genesis 3:14–15.

127 See Revelation 12:1–6.

128 See Matthew 1:20–25. In verse 24, the KJV relates that Joseph “did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him” which may be interpreted in more modern usage as meaning ‘was asked.’ Other translations relate that he was com-

In this way the Lord, by means of Abraham and his family, provided symbolic action to illustrate or foreshadow the dual nature of Christ as both of divine parentage as well as of a human mother. Such a position could only be accomplished by one who was obedient and true to her covenants, who had had her eyes opened to the glory of the Lord. Hagar's marriage to Abraham as a second wife was thus necessary. Abraham and Sarah's eternal marriage alone would not be enough to reflect the effects and symbolism of the New and Everlasting Marriage Covenant in concert with the Atonement of Christ. Similarly then, Hagar and Sarah can be construed as equals, albeit with differing roles, Sarah representing an infinitely more powerful divine Mother while Hagar represents the fallible, human mother. Yet each is equally necessary in the Plan of Salvation as the Mother of the Son of God, one by spirit, the other by flesh.

Such an allegorical and spiritualized reading of the Abrahamic drama is possible only in the context of the Restored Gospel. It necessitates the knowledge of the eternal marriage covenant as well as the revealed knowledge of a Mother in Heaven. Other religious traditions without such doctrines cannot understand in such a way the literary and symbolic stories of Hagar and by extension Abraham and Sarah. Similarly, such a reading can be accomplished only when the LDS audience moves away from unidimensional understandings of Hagar, either by viewing her as a one-dimensional, unfaithful counterpoint to Sarah's righteousness or accepting as literal the allegorical rendering of Paul to a multivalent and multi-dimensional reading of Hagar. While acknowledging her faults (and the faults of Abraham and Sarah), this reading allows Hagar (and Abraham and Sarah) to play an integral part or fill an important calling in the dramatizing of the Eternal Plan even while being imperfect human beings.

manded to do so, according to the Greek, *prosetaxen* (προσέταξεν) from *prostató* (προστάτω), meaning 'to command

Conclusion

Hagar is a complex character within the standard works of the LDS tradition. However, throughout much of the history of the Church and its members, her character has been flattened in various ways to achieve limited goals and usages. As has been shown generally from the establishment of the Church in 1830, LDS views of Hagar have shifted depending upon how and for what she was utilized, congruent with the needs and understandings of the members at those times. During the nineteenth century in LDS discourse, the issue of plural marriage dominated the depiction and usage of Hagar, although other uses can be found. Following the Manifesto and through the middle of the twentieth century, Hagar in many ways fell out of common usage within LDS discourse, probably due mainly to her distinct association with plural marriage in the minds of Latter-day Saints. She continued to appear in Church publications, however, due to other roles unrelated to her distinct status as the second wife of Abraham (i.e., as recipient of heavenly visitations, mother of Ishmael, etc.). The increase in academic discourse, Church expansion worldwide, and greater interest in women in the scriptures prompted by feminist readings (all of which have played a role in enhancing ideals of egalitarianism in the Church and members' understanding of the Gospel) have led to a shift in understanding of her place within Abraham's household. She is steadily being granted a role more equal to that of Sarah as a covenant wife of Abraham, albeit with a different "calling" or role.

Such a characterization of Hagar and the household of Abraham opens up new vistas of allegorical interpretation, allowing LDS interpretation to see Hagar and Sarah as representative symbols not only of the standard ideas of old versus new law or gentile versus promised lineage but also as signs of a Heavenly Mother and a mortal mother for Jesus

Christ and his salvific role as Redeemer. This rendering also gives meaning to some of the “other things” that the marriage of Hagar to Abraham accomplished beyond simply the granting of the promised posterity.

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