

After accelerating growth in many parts of the world led to the organization of the First Quorum of Seventy in 1975, the nearly two dozen Assistants then serving became members of that quorum in 1976.

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BYRON R. MERRILL

ASTRONOMY, SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO

Latter-day Saint scriptures indicate that both biblical and latter-day prophets and seers were shown visions of the heavenly realms to orient them to God's dominion and eternal purposes. These visions gave information about (1) the governing of systems of WORLDS and stellar objects; (2) a heliocentric, planetary cosmology; (3) the plurality of worlds; (4) the spiritual and physical CREATION of the EARTH and the universe; and (5) the role of Jesus Christ as creator.

The BOOK OF ABRAHAM states that God's physical dominion (throne) is located near a star called Kolob (Abr. 3:2–3). While it might seem reasonable to suppose that this refers to some distinguishing feature of the universe, all efforts to identify it are speculative and not authoritative. Wherever Kolob is located, its purpose is to "govern" all planets that are of the same "order" as the Earth (Abr. 3:9). Since ABRAHAM says no more than that, it is not clear whether he is speaking physically, metaphorically, or allegorically. Thus, "to govern" might mean a physical bonding as with gravity, while "order" could conceivably mean planets similar to the Earth in size, or planets in the same region of this galaxy or even in the entire Milky Way galaxy. Kolob was also said by the Egyptians to provide the light for all stars, including that for our sun (Abr. Facsimile 2). Even so, Latter-day Saints have made no definitive comment on the meaning of these passages.

In contrast to some interpretations of biblical scholars who attribute a geocentric cosmology to the words of Joshua (10:12–14), Job (9:6–7), Isaiah (38:7–8), and other Old Testament passages, the

Book of Mormon affirms the sun-centered (heliocentric) view accepted by modern planetary physics. The prophets Nephi₂ (Hel. 12:13–15) and Alma₂ agree that "surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun" (Alma 30:44).

Psalm 8:3–4 has been the classic text for discussion of the "plurality of worlds." LDS scriptures give even more direct support for modern astronomers' search for extraterrestrial intelligence. The prophets Enoch, Moses, and Joseph Smith all received revelations dealing with the existence of sentient life on other planets. Moses revealed both the spatial and temporal existence of countless worlds: that God had created "worlds without number," that "many worlds. . . have [already] passed away," and that other worlds are yet to be created (Moses 1:33–38). Joseph Smith received revelations explaining that through Jesus Christ these worlds are created and inhabited (D&C 76:22–24; 93:9–10; Moses 1:33), that all kingdoms are bound by certain LAWS and conditions (D&C 88:36–38, 42–47), and that resurrected beings reside on celestialized planets (D&C 130:4–7).

The various creation accounts in LDS scripture outline a spirit creation of the heavens and the earth that preceded the physical creation, thus affirming the spiritual nature of the cosmos (Moses 2–3; Abr. 4–5); spirit is indeed "matter" of a different order (D&C 131:7–8). While Moses calls creation periods "days," Abraham speaks of "times" and of thousand-year days (Abr. 3:4; 5:13), suggesting a complex physical creation process.

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ERICH ROBERT PAUL

ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

The atonement of Jesus Christ is the foreordained but voluntary act of the Only Begotten Son of God. He offered his life, including his innocent body, blood, and spiritual anguish as a redeeming ransom (1) for the effect of the fall of Adam upon all