Gnostic elements in the Book of Mormon

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Abstract

In 1945 the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Nag Hammadi; the founding consisted of Gnostic Gospels, the Gospels helped researcher to get a more correct view of the Gnostic Movement. In the beginning of the 19th century another founding was made, according to Joseph Smith an angel appeared from heaven giving him lost Christian Gospels on golden plates, later knows as the Book of Mormon. With the new Gospels Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter day Saints: also know was Mormonism.

The thesis’ purpose has been to examine and do a literature analysis on the Book of Mormon, a recently new discovery, with secondary research on the Gnostic Gospels, also a recently new discovery. This paper will guide its reader through similarities between the two movements; with the overarching research question “What Gnostic elements can be found in the Book of Mormon?”.

The first chapter will introduce the reader to the Book of Mormon and the Gnostic movement, in chapter two the research results will be displayed followed by the analysis, discussion and conclusion that will take place in chapter three.

Key words: Gnosticism, Gnostic Gospels, the Book of Mormon, Mormonism, Gnostic movement. Important
# Table of Contents

1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5  
1.2. Purpose.......................................................................................................................... 6  
1.3. Research questions ....................................................................................................... 6  
  1.3.1 Overarching question ............................................................................................... 6  
  1.3.2 Sub questions ........................................................................................................... 6  
1.4. Restrictions .................................................................................................................. 6  
1.5. Research Methods ....................................................................................................... 8  
  Literature analysis ........................................................................................................... 8  
1.6. Key definitions ............................................................................................................ 10  
1.7 Previous research ......................................................................................................... 11  
Chapter 2 .............................................................................................................................. 15  
  2.1 Results ......................................................................................................................... 15  
    2.1.1. The Nature of Jesus according to the Gnostic ...................................................... 15  
    2.1.2 The nature of Jesus according to the Book of Mormon ........................................ 17  
    2.1.3 The Nature of man according to the Gnostic ......................................................... 19  
    2.1.4 The Nature of man according to the Book of Mormon ........................................ 21  
Chapter 3 .............................................................................................................................. 24  
  3.1 Analysis ......................................................................................................................... 24  
    3.2 Which Gnostic elements can be found in the Book of Mormon? ............................. 24  
  3.3 Discussion .................................................................................................................... 27  
  3.4 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 29  
Literature list ......................................................................................................................... 31  
  Primary source(s)............................................................................................................... 31
Secondary source(s) ........................................................................................................................................... 31

Electronic source(s) .......................................................................................................................................... 31
Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

When the channel HBO aired the TV series "Big Love" in 2006 they, with or without purpose, became the beholders of a controversial topic: “polygamy”. One can only imagine the questions raised and opinions formed about the Mormons by people knowing little about their existence and belief. Without any knowledge about Mormons, one could easily believe that all Mormons live in polygamist families after seeing “Big Love”. Of course this is not the case, as I later became aware of Mormons are divided into two different groups: the LDS church and the FLDS church, the latter one practice polygamy. Even though I have studied religion for almost one and a half years Mormons had never been brought up to discussion in the classroom. Being aware of the Mormons existence I decided to broaden my views and throw myself into something unfamiliar; nevertheless Mormons were not the only group that had caught my attention. Having read Elaine Pagels earlier in my education the Gnostic movement came to mind, the findings of the Dead Sea scrolls is a quite recent discovery and also a topic paid little attention to within my education. Both the Gnostic movement and the LDS (FLDS) church gospels have recently been discovered, whereas LDS church are expanding in the world the Gnostic movement had a hard time surviving.

As a future teacher I cannot help but to feel a responsibility to take every possible chance to broaden my knowledge about what is unfamiliar to me. Furthermore, the opportunity to explore and deepen my awareness about the unknown is always applying. Reading the Book of Mormon and about the Gnostic movement I can certainly see how similar and yet different these religious views are compared to each other. In the making of finding an interesting topic to write about as a degree project, I decided to take these two religious views and compare them against each other. Nevertheless, due to the limited time set aside to write the thesis and

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1 “Big Love” aired March 2006 in the U.S. The plot centers around a polygamist and his relationship with his three wives. The series deals with the views of the FLDS (Fundamental Latter-day Saints) church, however, it is said that Joseph Smith (the man who, according to the book of Mormon, restored the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) banned polygamy at the end of the 19th century.

2 Elaine Pagels have written a book about the Dead Sea scrolls, “The Gnostic Gospels”.

3 The Mormon’s gospels were, according to the Book of Mormon, found by Joseph Smith in the 19th century and the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1945.

4 According to sources in this thesis the Gnostic movement did not survive and the members were often hunted down and executed e.g Pagels, 2006, p 147.
limited volume of it I have been forced to narrow down a rather extended research question to two smaller sub-questions.

This essay will discuss and explore “the Book of Mormon” (with additional explanatory books) and previous research written about the Dead Sea Scrolls. With chosen methods this paper will guide its readers through essential thoughts of both Gnosticism and the Book of Mormon, tied to my research questions. The first chapter of the degree project will present purpose, research method, significant terms and previous research. Chapter two will present the results of my studies. In chapter three the analysis and a conclusion will take place.

1.2. Purpose

The aim with this thesis is to deepen my knowledge about the Book of Mormon and Gnosticism as it is important to me to create an understanding within myself towards these groups, but also to aware others about their existence. It is also an aim to compare these two religious views to find out what they have in common and if there are traces of Gnostic elements in the Book of Mormon.

1.3. Research questions

1.3.1 Overarching question

Which Gnostic elements can be found in the Book of Mormon?

1.3.2 Sub questions

- How do Gnostics view the nature of Jesus compared to the Book of Mormon?
- How do Gnostics view the nature of man compared to the Book of Mormon?

1.4. Restrictions

There was an abundance of Gospels found in Nag Hammadi 1945; unfortunately, due to the restricted time I have to write this thesis I cannot do a thorough research on these primary sources of Gnostic Gospel even though it most likely would have been interesting. This decision was made in consultation with my supervisor Peder; who suggested how it would be
interesting to examine books dealing with important facts of the Dead Sea scrolls and Gnosticism. Furthermore, there were different groups among the Gnostic believers who empathized on different Gnostic Gospels as the most important ones; this thesis will not take any consideration to the various religious views within Gnosticism. Instead the religion as a whole will be discussed according to what it is brought up in the secondary literature about the Gnostic movement and its Gnostic Gospels.

It is also worth mentioning that I will in this essay use two copies of Elaine Pagels’ book “The Gnostic Gospel”, one Swedish version and one English version (published 2006). Furthermore, when Pagels is quoted directly within the essay it is only from the English version. In other contexts when Pagels is referred to the footnote will state which copy is used as a reference. The Swedish version (published in 1998) is used as an additional help to fully understand Pagels’ research and results, it was also the first version I read.

Neither am I, due to the restricted volume of this project, able to do an extended research on all the holy scripts of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (see 1.6 for broader explanation). Members of LDS do not only see to “the Book of Mormon”, but also a Bible and additional books called “Doctrines and Conventions” and “Pearl of Great Price”. Further the LDS church believe in living prophets and apostles whom will provide them with extra interpretations of the Holy Scriptures mentioned above. This extensive material is indeed interesting, but not something that can be include in this thesis. By excluding the King James Bible, Doctrine and Convents, Pearl of Great Price a united picture of the LDS church religious belief will not be declared; furthermore, the degree project’s intention is not to investigate all the scriptures belonging to the LDS church but instead it is suppose to be a research on the Book of Mormon (and Gnosticism). Neither will the FLDS church be mentioned in this essay because they hold a different stand point on the Book of Mormon.

In addition to the Book of Mormon I have also chosen to take the advantage of extra material which highlights important quotes and histories in the Book of Mormon. The book “Gospel Principles” and the LDS church’s official web sites www.mormon.org and www.lds.org will be used as guidance in this thesis to locate extracts and main thoughts in the Book of Mormon. However, these additional sources give a different view on the LDS church.

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5 King James Bible
6 Which is according to the www.mormon.org revelations given to Joseph Smith.
7 Is, according to www.mormon.org, a book consisting of Joseph Smith revelations, translations and narrations.
compared to the Book of Mormon itself, the “Gospel Principles” and the web sites are written by and for members of the LDS church and for people thinking of joining the church. Being aware of this fact I have still chosen to use them as extra material as a help to my degree project.

The Book of Mormon uses several names for “God”. During certain parts of this essay the several names of “God” will appear in contexts discussing the Book of Mormon, however, they do not reflect any personal opinions or religious views of my own. But are simply used to declare how the Book of Mormon presents its religious view.

It is also of importance to mention that this thesis will only do a textural comparison between the Gnostic movement and the Book of Mormon belief system and therefore it is not necessary to take side in the discussion of the authenticity of the documents. However, it is of order to mention a few lines concerning the debate of the Book of Mormon and Mormonism similarities to Gnosticism; even though this thesis does not take sides in the discussion, it is needed, before hand, to lay out a opinions concerning the matter. Several articles can be found where researchers question the linguistic character in the Book of Mormon; this has showed to be a lively debate about the Book of Mormon and its authenticity. One article mention how it is not possible that the Book of Mormon has been written by different authors, the linguistics in the Book of Mormon indicates how it is mainly written by one person; preferably by Smith himself. However, the authors to the article also discuss the possibility that someone else than Smith has authored the chapters in the Book of Mormon, but even if that would have been the case, the book still reflects the mind of Smith himself.

1.5. Research Methods

*Literature analysis*

As a research method I have decided to do a literature analysis of “The Book of Mormon” with guidance from secondary sources “Gospel Principles”, [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org) and [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org); researching the Gnostic movement/Gnostic Gospels a close reading of chosen

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10 Jockers. Matthew L., 2008, p.469
secondary sources will be made. The literature analysis of “The Book of Mormon” demands a certain level of close-reading in contrast to the chosen secondary literature dealing with Gnosticism; Johansson & Svedner (2006) have written a book about the process of examination papers and it discusses different types of literature analysis one can chose to use as a research method. “Närläsning” is the method most applying to work with during the process of writing this degree project. Johansson & Svedner says the following about “närläsning”:

I närläsningen ingår alltså att försöka kartlägga innehållet så noggrant som möjligt […] Den verkliga exakta läsningen existerar förmodligen inte, men man måste sträva efter största möjliga exakthet.

In addition to a close-reading of the Book of Mormon I will, as mentioned above, examine the secondary material written about Gnosticism. I will not do an exact close-reading on the actual gospels found in Nag Hammadi 1945, as several of the authors have already done close-reading on the Gnostic Gospels. Therefore, I will investigate the material written about Gnosticism and Gnostic Gospels in books written by Elaine Pagels (“De gnostiska evangelierna” 1998 & “The Gnostic Gospel” 2006), Bengt Hägglund (“Teologins Historia” 1981), Hans Jonas (“The Gnostic Religion” 2001), Henry Chadwick (“Den tidiga kyrkans historia” 2005) and Kent Gunnarsson’s doctoral thesis (“Den kristna gnosticismens återkomst” 2004).

To search for Gnostic elements in the Book of Mormon and to do a comparison between the two religious groups is one attempt to see the Book of Mormon in another perspective and to put into a new social framework; Fiona Bowie who has written a book on anthropology of Religion states in her book how “the anthropology of religion does not focus on beliefs and ritual alone, but tries to contextualize religious behavior within a broad social framework”.

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11 See 1.7 for authors and their research.
13 “Close-reading includes trying to define the context as thorough as possible […] A real and exact close-reading probably do not exists, but you must strive for the most possible accuracy”. p. 65.
14 Bowie, 2006, p.117
1.6. Key definitions

**Gnosticism** – is derived from *gnosis* and is a dualistic movement where the main purpose is to obtain *gnosis*\(^\text{15}\), which is necessary to attain salvation\(^\text{16}\). Hägglund states that **Gnosticism** is an umbrella term for several different movements during the early Christian centuries and continues to define the main goal of Gnosticism, which is to release the spirit from the human body (the matter)\(^\text{17}\). Hägglund also points out that Gnosticism was seen as a threat against Christianity\(^\text{18}\). Furthermore, there were different groups within the Gnostic movement.

**Gnosis** – is a Greek word and translates into *knowledge*\(^\text{19}\). Elaine Pagel points out how *gnosis* should be seen as an intuition process within the human mind and not rational knowledge, whereas the human gain knowledge and seek insight about her/himself. Pagel continues to discuss *gnosis* and says:

> As the gnóstics use the term, we could translate it as ‘insight’, for gnosis involves an intuitive process of knowing oneself. And to know oneself, they claimed, is to know human nature and human destiny\(^\text{20}\).

**Nag Hammadi** – is village where the Gnostic gospels were found in 1945; however, there was not only Gnostic Gospels that were found in Nag Hammadi but also texts belonging to other religious groups\(^\text{21}\). When the mentioning of Nag Hammadi occurs in this essay it is as a collective name of the Gnostic Gospels found in Nag Hammadi and not the other religious groups.

**The Book of Mormon** – The nature of the Book of Mormon, according to the Mormons themselves\(^\text{22}\), is explained in the introduction to the Book of Mormon:

> The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Their words, written on gold plates, were quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon […] After Mormon completed his writings, he delivered the account to

\(^\text{15}\) http://www.ne.se/gnosticism
\(^\text{16}\) Jonas, 2001, p.32
\(^\text{17}\) Hägglund, 1981, p 16
\(^\text{18}\) Pagels, 1998, discuss the same topic in chapter V (p 183 ff.), analyzing the twist between the Orthodox Church and the Gnostics.
\(^\text{20}\) Pagels, 2006, p.18
\(^\text{21}\) Pagels, 1998, p. 32
\(^\text{22}\) See 1.4 for opposite opinion.
his son Moroni, who added a few words of his own and hid up the plates in the hill Cumorah\textsuperscript{23}.

The Book of Mormon, according to itself, was brought forward by Joseph Smith. He had gotten a revelation by the resurrected Moroni (son of Mormon). The Book of Mormon which was written upon golden plates was later translated by Joseph Smith\textsuperscript{24}.

As mentioned above the LDS church, not the FLDS church, will be discussed in this thesis; however, the Fundamentalist Latter-day Saints (FLDS) also follow the Book of Mormon (with the additional scriptures as the LDS church). Nevertheless, the FLDS group see to its own chosen prophets and apostles and do not share the same family values as the LDS church.

1.7 Previous research

There have been several books written about Gnosticism, me and my supervisor agreed on books that should be used for previous research in this essay. The previous research will be presented below and starts with a presentation of the secondary research on Gnosticism followed by the secondary research on the Book of Mormon. The books will be presented and a short briefing on the authors will be held. The Book of Mormon will not be presented below as it is not seen as previous research but as a primary source.

“The Gnostic Religion” is authored by Hans Jonas who is a philosopher, but found that religion was too important not to be studied in the same context as philosophy. Jonas argued philosophy could not be studied without a religious phenomenon. Jonas wrote a book dealing with Gnosticism because he thought it to be a challenge for a philosopher. Jonas’ book centers around the Gnostic movement, their history and recent research in the field. “The Gnostic Religion” is a fruitful book about the Gnostic movement. Jonas research has been helpful in writing this thesis as it is providing information about the basic believes of the Gnostic and their history. Jonas’ main focus in “the Gnostic Religion” is the Gnosticism movement’s complex view of dualism. However, in the epilogue of the book Jonas discusses and compares Gnosticism with Existentialism and Nihilism. In the epilogue the main conclusions are made about Gnosticism; nevertheless, they are made in the light of comparison to two other movements. The negative aspect of this book is how Jonas sometimes neglects to discuss

\textsuperscript{23} Introduction to the Book of Mormon
\textsuperscript{24} Introduction to the Book of Mormon
different Gnostic gospels and their take on dualism; Jonas discussion on Jesus Christ could at times become ambiguous.

Henry Chadwick was appointed Regius professor at Oxford- and Cambridge University and is the author of “Den tidiga kyrkans historia” (“The Early Chruch”). This book deals with important events and conflicts among different religious groups between the apostolate time to the beginning of the Middle Ages. For this degree project I have only read and used parts specifically dealing with Gnosticism. Chadwick presents the Gnostic movement’s history and belief system shortly in one chapter. After the review Gnosticism is mentioned a few more times in context where Chadwick describes them as enemies to the other Christian groups. The few parts written about Gnosticism consists of good and useful information; one has to keep in mind how this book is not written as a proclamation for the Gnostic movement, but as a book pointing out historical moments that were crucial for several Christian churches and groups.

“Teologins Historia” is composed by Bengt Hägglund, this book is his most widely spread work during his career. Hägglund was a professor emeritus in Christianities history of idea at Lund University, Sweden. “Teologins Historia” deals with Gnosticism in a short yet informative manner; however, the book does not only focus on the Gnostic movement but many other religious groups. Therefore, I have only read the chapters which are of importance for this essay. Hägglund presents relevant facts about Gnosticism religious believes; in addition he presents various groups within Gnosticism. Negative aspect with this book for this essay is the focus that was put on to explain the differences of the different Gnostic groups.

Elaine Pagels (a professor in History of Religion at Princeton University, USA) has authored “The Gnostic Gospels”, which gives a thorough comparison between the Orthodox and the Gnostic movement in the early Christian centuries. Pagels explores, explains and presents several Gnostic Gospel found in Nag Hammadi 1945. Pagels main focus, the comparison, gives a clear picture of Gnosticism and their stand points. By providing several quotes and discussions concerning them Pagels makes it easier to follow Gnostics’ believes and the importance of the Gnostic Gospel. “The Gnostic Gospels” as an explanatory book creates an understanding within the reader how Christianity could have evolved differently if let. Pagels’ comparison between the Gnostic movement and the Orthodox church is thorough and leaves the reader with no question of how the two groups parted in their religious view. The book
also creates an understanding for the Gnostic belief system, how and why they thought and acted as they did. “The Gnostic Gospels” centers around the core of Gnosticism, their main purpose in life and how to achieve it. Additionally, the author draws the conclusion how the Orthodox survived through history because of their controlled hierarchy, a hierarchy Gnosticism lacked. I have taken part of the entire book, both volumes, but chosen to lay extra focus on the chapters and parts describing Jesus Christ and the nature of man. One can see it as negative how Pagels only chose to do a comparison between Gnosticism and one other Christian group, as it would have been interesting to have more inputs from other Christian groups as well.

Kent Gunnarsson has written a doctrinal thesis “The Return of Christian Gnosticism. An Investigation of the Theology of Ulf Ekman”, which investigates Gnosticism in different time areas. The main focus lays on modern Gnosticism and research on of today, specifically Ulf Ekman’s theology, how can one define and relate to Gnosticism is the modern world of today. For this thesis the main focus had been on the section dealing with ancient Gnosticism. Gunnarsson’s thesis has been interesting reading; however, one can wish that more Gnostic researchers would have been brought up to discussion.

“Gospel Principles” is published by the Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Salt Lake City, Utah. “Gospel Principles” is both for those who wish to learn more about the scriptures and the LDS church and also those who teach about the LDS church and the scriptures. The main questions and themes of the LDS church are presented in the book, each question/theme has its own chapter e.g. one chapter discusses “Scriptures” another “The Priesthood”. At the end of each chapter the title “additional scriptures” (=references) to all four scriptures are written which provides a help for those who would like to find more quotes dealing with the chosen topic. In this thesis the chapters concerning the nature of man and Jesus Christ have been read; using the “additional scriptures” to locate important quotes for the research questions of this essay has been given me a chance to focus on what is seen as ‘important’ in the Book of Mormon. On the other hand, one has to keep in mind how “Gospel Principles” only speaks for and positively about the LDS church and the Book of Mormon. It does not refer to research made by non-members of the LDS church or the Book of Mormon, this book main purpose is to function as a ‘missionary’ and is taught in Sunday classes at church.
www.mormon.org and www.lds.org are the official web sites of the LDS church. Through these pages one can locate important quotes and read about the church and its scriptures. The admin of the web sites is the LDS church, which is responsible for the information given on the pages. I have read most parts of each web site and used their references to the Book of Mormon. However, like the book “Gospel Principles” these pages do only present positive aspects of being a member of the LDS church and the positive views of becoming a member of the LDS church and following its belief.
Chapter 2

2.1 Results

To present the results as unambiguous as possible each sub-question will be its own heading and the result under the heading will only focus on the results for that specific question. Each sub-question with the results will be divided into two titles, each one representing one of religious movement. The order will be the following: first the nature of Jesus will be laid out combined with the results of each group. Followed by the results to the question about the nature of man, starting with the Gnostic view followed by the Book of Mormon; this will be the general pattern used through-out this essay.

2.1.1. The Nature of Jesus according to the Gnostic

Pagels states how the Gnostic gospels do not follow the same order as the Christian ones when telling the story about the life of Jesus. Whereas the Christian Gospels of Luke, Mark, John and Matthew start from the beginning with Maria giving birth to Jesus, the Gnostic Gospels focus more on the time during and after Jesus’ crucifixion.

One of the scriptures Pagels discusses, found in Nag Hammadi, is the Apocalypse of Peter which describes Jesus crucifixion, in her discussion about her own research Pagels refers to quotes by Peter. The following quote highlight the Gnostic debate concerning Jesus’ suffering during his crucifixion:

... I saw him apparently being seized by them. I said, ‘What am I seeing. O Lord? Is it really you whom they take? And are you holding on to me? And are they hammering the feet and hands of another? Who is this one above the cross, who is glad and laughing?’ The Savior said to me, ‘He whom you saw being glad and laughing above the cross is the Living Jesus. But he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is his freshly parts, which is the substitute. They put to shame that which remained in his likeness. And look at him, and [look at] me!’

According to Pagels the Acts of Johan implies that Jesus did not suffer during his crucifixion, with the given reason that Jesus was a spiritual being who could adapt himself to human

25 Pagels, 2006, p.91
forms. Pagels goes on writing about the different views of the Gnostic Gospels concerning Jesus’ crucifixion and the nature of Jesus. Some Gnostic Gospels claim the son of God was beyond any human nature and therefore could only feel human pain but did not die on the cross; while other Gospels mean that Jesus’ human side suffered during the crucifixion. Hägglund has also in his research come to the same stand point as Pagels concerning Jesus’ nature. Hägglund writes how when Jesus appeared in front of people he was ‘dressed’ in a pretence body; and continuous by stating how, just like Pagels, Jesus was beyond suffering and did not die on the cross. Pagels means that the Gnostic gospels implied how Jesus Christ’s crucifixion was the moment when the gnosis inside of him was discovered.

Jonas devotes one chapter to discuss a Gnostic Syrian Greek text called “the Hymn of the Pearl” which also highlights the discussion concerning Jesus’ suffering on the cross. This chapter tries to explain how one should interpret the Hymn of the Pearl, with its changeable view of the Savior, the King’s son. The Savior is indeed a divine person, but does not represent the universal of the human soul. Even though the Savior is divine he still undergoes the same destiny as the rest of humanity, to a point where he must be saved by himself:

For the parts of divinity lost to the darkness can be reached only down there in the depth in which they are swallowed up; and the power which holds them, that of the world, can overcome only from within. This means that the savior-god must assimilate himself to the forms of cosmic existence and thereby subject himself to its conditions.

Some Gnostic believers find it that people cannot experience the resurrected Jesus in person, in flesh and blood; however, they can experience the ‘spiritual’ Jesus’ presence in their dreams or when they are under trance. Furthermore, according to Pagels, the Gnostic movement does not view Jesus’ resurrection as a unique moment in time. Instead they find it to be an opportunity to experience Jesus Christ’s presence. Meaning how apostles living after Jesus crucifixion did not have to experience Jesus as an earthly person of flesh and blood, but could as an alternative meet him on a spiritual level long after this death. One of the many

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26 Pagels, 2006, p.91
27 Pagels, 1998, p.47
28 Gunnarsson ‘agrees’ on this point saying that Jesus had one nature, which was the spiritual one that in turn took on a carnal body. Jesus as a person also only has one nature, which was his physical body. p. 18
30 Jonas, 2001, p.127
31 Pagels, 1998, p.53
32 Pagels, 1998, p.62
Gnostic teacher Valentinus\textsuperscript{33} preached to the people saying how Jesus, during his time on earth, had shared a secret of the one true belief with some of his apostles. These apostles had kept the secret to themselves only sharing it with others whom they found ready to receive the privilege of \textit{gnosis}. After Jesus’ death, he kept on reappearing before apostles and giving them new insights about the divine/holy\textsuperscript{34}.

The Gnostic gospel of Philip discusses how Jesus’ resurrection should not be seen as literal. The gospel of Philip explains how humanity should not wait to die or see death as the moment they will become resurrected; instead humans should seek resurrection while they are alive and living. The Gnostic movement, according to Pagels, all sought to be resurrected when they were still alive, seeing how it would give them the opportunity to feel Jesus’ presence\textsuperscript{35}. The gospel of Philip, like Hägglund stated above, means that when Jesus reappeared on earth he could do so in different characters. The characters made it possible for people to experience his presence and be able to see him, as a person, the gospel claims that Jesus appeared before old and young ones\textsuperscript{36}.

\textbf{2.1.2 The nature of Jesus according to the Book of Mormon}

In the Book of Mormon one can read how the coming of Jesus was predicted long before his birth. Through visions chosen prophets, in the Book of Mormon, received the message about Jesus’ coming and about the nature of Jesus: “And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the son of God, the father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary”\textsuperscript{37}. The Book of Mormon cites how Jesus shall come to earth and reunite the people with God and give them the Holy Ghost through baptism: “and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost”\textsuperscript{38}.

Helaman, one of the prophets in the Book of Mormon, preached unto the people about the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God before Jesus Christ had come onto earth:

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{33} Valentinus was one of the teachers/preachers on Gnosticism, others were Simon Magus, Markus (Jonas, 2001, p.74), Marcion etc.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Pagels, 1998, p.66-67.
\item\textsuperscript{35} Pagels, 1998, p.64
\item\textsuperscript{36} Pagels, 1998, p. 70-71
\item\textsuperscript{37} Mosiha 3:8, also see Alma 7:10.
\item\textsuperscript{38} In the Book of Mormon 3 Nephi 26:17
\end{itemize}
And also that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and ye might know the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name.

Helaman manifests Jesus to be the son of God and when Jesus has finally come down to earth, he himself declares the same. In a speech Jesus held after his coming to earth one can read how he created the heaven and earth and he is in the father and the father is in him. How he, Jesus, is “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end”. Jesus expresses during the speech how he has been sent to earth to save the people by taking upon him all their sins. According to the Book of Mormon Jesus has several missions on earth, Jesus is not only the son of God, but also the “Redeemer” and a “Savior” for all mankind, and his mission on earth is to create a path for the people to be reunited with God.

In the Book of Mormon the prophet Alma speaks of Jesus’ role as the ‘Savior’ and proclaims how his death will save humanity from temporal death and give them the opportunity to live with their God in his kingdom. Furthermore, as a ‘redeemer’ Jesus promise to give all mankind an eternal life as long as they believe in him. As the Son of God Jesus is not only immortal, but he can create wonders. As can be read in many passages before and after Jesus resurrection, Jesus consists of a power which makes it possible for him to perform miracles. Jesus performs extraordinary tasks, he heals the sick, raises the dead, makes the blind see, makes the dumb hear, and appears out of heaven.

Even though the Book of Mormon announces Jesus Christ as immortal, it also shows how Jesus is in some ways holds a mortal side. One of the most emphasized passages showing how Jesus is also as mortal as the rest of mankind is Jesus suffering during his crucifixion:

And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon the

39 Helaman 14:12.
40 3 Nephi 9:15 ff
41 3 Nephi 9:18.
42 In the Book of Mormon 3 Nephi 26:17 “and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost”. In Helaman 13:15 the death of Jesus is discussed “For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come”. See also 3 Nephi 10:10, 11:27, 12:45, 19:23, 28:7 for the nature of Jesus and his mission on earth.
43 3 Nephi 5:20, Mormon 3:14, Moroni 8:29
44 Alma 11:42
45 2 Nephi 9:23 “And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God”
46 Ether 3:14
47 3 Nephi 11:8, 17:9, 20:1-7, 26:14-16, Mosiah 3:5-11
transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord
God hath spoken it\(^{48}\), [...] Son to be lifted up upon cross and slain for sins of world\(^{49}\).

After Jesus’ death he emerges and appears for prophets and apostles for a long time, during
Jesus’ appearances he shows the power rested in him by God. 3 Nephi is one of the many
prophets who got to experience Jesus’ resurrection:

[…] they saw a Man descending out of heaven […] he stretched his hand and spake [...] 
behold, I am the light of the world […] when Jesus had spoken these words the whole 
multitude fell to the earth […] ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the 
whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world\(^{50}\).

Jesus did not only spoke about the power rested in him; but also of this second coming to the
earth and how it was to enlighten people. Jesus told the people how they should live their 
lives to obtain immortality and be reunited with God. As the Savior Jesus had the power to 
establish an everlasting relationship between God and humanity; however, as one can read in 
the book of Mormon, it was only possible if he took upon him all human sins and suffered a 
painful death\(^{51}\).

2.1.3 The Nature of man according to the Gnostic

Pagels writes how the Gnostic believers view the human body as the death of the soul; in 
addition, the resurrection should be seen as a moment of enlightening. Resurrection makes it 
possible for the soul to reform and take on a spiritual existence. Jonas means how the fall of 
the human was a “pre-cosmic”\(^{52}\) fall to earth. To free the soul from the body humans need to 
find gnosis and stop being depended on their materialistic world and thinking\(^{53}\). Jonas states 
that people are living an alien life and that humans have drifted away from what they should 
be:

\(^{48}\) Alma 34:8  
\(^{49}\) Alma 30:26 & 3 see also 3 Nephi 11:14.  
\(^{50}\) 3 Nephi 11:8-14, also see Helaman 14:20, Jacob 4:11  
\(^{51}\) Alma 7:11-12 talks of the necessity death of Jesus Christ: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and 
afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon 
him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of 
death which binds his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with 
mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to 
their infirmities.”  
\(^{52}\) Jonas, 2001, p.62  
\(^{53}\) Jonas, 2001, p.162
It was the great “why?” which, far from being appeased by the awakening and the reminder of its origin, is powerfully stirred up by them and becomes a main concern of the gnosis initiated\(^{54}\).

In addition Jonas explains how humans should reason about *gnosis:* the ultimate “object” of gnosis is God: its event in the soul transforms the knower himself by making him a partaker in divine existence\(^{55}\). Jonas continues by explaining how Gnosticism views man as incomplete without gnosis. To get salvation gnosis must be obtained; Chadwick also discusses the Gnostic’s plan of salvation\(^{56}\). Jonas puts it: people need to wake up from their sleep and rediscover themselves and stop walking in the dark\(^{57}\):

> The soul or spirit […] fell into the world or into the body\(^{58}\) […] Indeed, we shall find that in Gnostic thought the world takes the place of the traditional underworld and is itself already the realm of the dead, that is, if those who have to be raised to life again\(^{59}\).

To free oneself man needs to stop being materialistic and see beyond the things that are in the world. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world”\(^{60}\). Chadwick also comments on the Gnostics’ take on people’s dependency on materialistic things, and how people depending on the materialistic belongings are beyond saving\(^{61}\). Jonas brings up the discussion about the first human on earth who saved himself. According to the Gnostic movement Adam was the first person who awoke from his sleep; Jonas explains the idea of ‘the sleeping Adam’ and says “men in general are “asleep” in the world”\(^{62}\). In the Garden Adam was sleeping and did not see beyond the world; eventually he woke up and gained gnosis which set him free. It is by gaining gnosis one can prepare for one’s return\(^{63}\):

\(^{54}\) Jonas, 2001, p. 88  
\(^{55}\) Jonas, 2001, p.35  
\(^{56}\) Chadwick, 2005, p 34  
\(^{57}\) Jonas, 2001, p. 80 se also p.89,69,70 for Jonas’ discussion and quotes from the dead sea scrolls present the topic about how humans need to “wake up from sleep”.  
\(^{58}\) Jonas, 2001, p.62  
\(^{59}\) Jonas, 2001, p.68  
\(^{60}\) Jonas, 2001, p.73. See Gunnarson, 2004, who also explains the dualistic thinking within Gnosticism in his doctrine thesis mainly on page 17-18.  
\(^{61}\) Chadwick, 2005, p.36  
\(^{62}\) Jonas, 2001, p.70  
\(^{63}\) Jonas, 2001, p.165
It is no exaggeration to say that the discovery of this transcendent inner principle in man and the supreme about its destiny is the very center of gnostic religion. Salvation has nothing to do with remission of sin.

As mentioned in the last line, sin has no place in the Gnostic doctrine, which instead discusses ignorance of humanity. Hägglund comments on the dualistic thought in Gnosticism and describes how Gnostics have a rigorous view on the dualism between the spirit world and the matter world. To reach salvation, as mentioned above, humans need to gain gnosis and see beyond the materialistic world they live in.

In addition, the salvation has a broader explanation than just to see beyond the materialistic world. Gunnarson says the following:

Gemensamma drag hos gnostikerna när det gällde soteriologin var att de genom den så kallade fallmyten ville förklara hur den gudomliga ljusgnistan kommit att bli fången i materien och människans kropp, samt hur ljusgnistan eller anden skulle befrias och frälsas ur denna fångenskap. [...] gnosis befria anden från kroppen och på så sätt frälsa människan från den demiurgiska fysiska och onda världen. Gnosis var inte bara ett frälsningsmedel utan gnosis var själva frälsningen i sig. Denna kunskap och insikt gav människan en ny identitet; hon var gudomlig till den sanna naturen och härstammande från den okände högste guden som stod över fördärv och ondska.

2.1.4 The Nature of man according to the Book of Mormon

According to the Book of Mormon humanity’s main goal is to be reunited with God; however, to be lead onto the path to salvation humans need to fulfill several steps during their life time. The Book of Mormon acknowledges the fall of Adam and Eve, as humans’ first and necessary step in the plan of salvation. First and foremost the Garden of Eden was not placed on earth and by Adam and Eve eating from the forbidden fruit, the apple, they made it possible for all humanity to return to God as they fell onto earth:

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64 Jonas, 2001, p.124
65 Jonas, 2001, p.127
66 My translation: "The common characteristics applied by all the Gnostic concerning their soteriology was that they through the so called ‘myth of the fall’ tried to explain how the divine sparkle came to be a prisoner within the matter and the human body, and how this sparkle or spirit would be set free and saved from its captivity. [...] gnosis would free the spirit from the body and redeem the human from its demiurgic physical and evil world. Gnosis was not just seen as the source to obtain salvation but was salvation itself. This newly gained knowledge incorporated the human being with a new identity; to her true nature she was now divine and originated from the unknown powerful god that stood above all corruption and evil." 2004, p. 18
And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth [...] and now behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would have not fallen [...] and they must have remained forever, and had no end [...] Adam fell that men might be [...] And the Messiah cometh [...] he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever⁶⁷.

Humans are by nature mortal and thereby the enemy of God⁶⁸. The plan of salvation offers humanity to become immortal/everlasting. The first step in the plan of salvation is to read the Book of Mormon, by asking God of its truth the Holy Ghost will be brought into a person’s life⁶⁹. To fully receive the Holy Ghost as a companion one need to be baptized. Alma⁷⁰ speaks of how baptism is the way for humans to show that they are willing to repent their sins and make a convent with God. The convent with God leads to an eternal life⁷¹. By baptism humans will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost this will guide them to an eternal life, which is the purpose for all humanity:

For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life⁷².

God established the ritual of baptism before Jesus came to earth. In 2 Nephi God demands the people to repent and to be baptized in water, baptism will give humanity the gift of the Holy Ghost. 2 Nephi also declares how the acceptance of the Holy Ghost is necessary to be able to walk on the path towards salvation⁷³ and to receive eternal life⁷⁴. Furthermore, before baptism can take place humans need to believe in the life and power of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon speaks about a physical and spiritual death. The spiritual death is inevitable for humans, it is when they fall to earth (= get born. This was made possible by Adam and Eve). According to 2 Nephi the physical appearance of humans (their bodies) will eventually die. Nevertheless, the Book of Mormon states how inside every human being a spirit exists and when death comes to people on earth their spirit will leave the body and live

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⁶⁸ Mosiha 3:19  
⁶⁹ Moroni 10:4-5  
⁷⁰ Alma 7:14-16.  
⁷¹ Moroni 10:34.  
⁷² 2 Nephi 31:17-18  
⁷³ 2 Nephi 31:5-13  
⁷⁴ Alma 7:14-16
on. The spirit will eventually be reunited with their earthly physical body and in that the moment humans will become immortal\(^\text{75}\). Furthermore, to be able to become everlasting people need to follow the plan of redemption\(^\text{76}\), which will prepare them for the life after this. The first step for humans in the plan of redemption, according to the Book of Mormon, is to repent and acknowledge the sins they have committed in this life. However, it is the sin that makes the human mortal and without the help from God she cannot be set free:

> And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance\(^\text{77}\) […] For behold this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors\(^\text{78}\).

By nature humans who do not believe in the Eternal father are considered filthy and the only way to become ‘clean’ is to repent, ‘cleanliness’ is a necessity since no filthy creature can be in the presence of God\(^\text{79}\). If humans do not repent they cannot “inherit the kingdom of God”\(^\text{80}\) and “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”\(^\text{81}\).

After human has done what is asked of them in the Book of Mormon they must wait till judgment day to find out if their work has been righteous and if so they can be reunited with their Heavenly Father:

> And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you\(^\text{82}\).

Even unbelievers will be aware of God and then they have the chance to repent, and if they do God will take them in\(^\text{83}\).

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\(^{75}\) 2 Nephi 9:10-16  
\(^{76}\) Alma 42:13  
\(^{77}\) Alma 42:29  
\(^{78}\) Alma 34:32  
\(^{79}\) Alma 7:21 “And he doth not dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God; therefore I say unto you the time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness”.  
\(^{80}\) Alma 9:12  
\(^{81}\) Alma 10:20  
\(^{82}\) Mormon 6:21  
\(^{83}\) Alma 40:10-11. However, the Book of Mormon mentions in a few passages how the unbelievers will not be accepted by God, see Alma 7:21, 3 Nephi 19:35, Mosiah 1:17, Mormon 9:8, Alma 6:3.
Chapter 3

3.1 Analysis

What we can see in the result part is that the Gnostic movement and the Book of Mormon share certain similar elements in their belief systems, as mentioned in 1.4 today’s researcher have found several Gnostic elements within Mormonism. This analysis will present an analytic view of results discussing Gnostic elements found in the Book of Mormon. The overarching question will be of main focus; however, the sub-questions will lead the analytic discussion. The pattern for the analysis will be the same as for the result part (see 2.1).

3.2 Which Gnostic elements can be found in the Book of Mormon?

Jesus’ suffering during the crucifixion and the importance of his crucifixion holds different meanings if one compares what is said in the Book of Mormon and the secondary sources on Gnosticism. Nevertheless, both religious views mean Jesus achieved a milestone for humanity by getting crucified. The Gnostic movement believes Jesus received *gnosis* and saved himself during his crucifixion; when Jesus saved himself through gnosis, according to the Gnostic, he set an example of how one can free oneself from the materialistic world and experienced the world as it really is. The Book of Mormon states how necessary Jesus’ crucifixion was for mankind, as in created an everlasting relationship with God. A Gnostic element found in the Book of Mormon is how Jesus taking upon himself all the sin of humanity made it possible for people to understand the meaning of life on earth and how they could free themselves.

One could state that both the Gnostic movement and the Book of Mormon share the same vision of a Savior when they emphasize on Jesus’ death as a must in history to free people, even though they have different meanings of the concept “free”. According to Gnosticism Jesus free the people by receiving *gnosis* and sharing the secret teaching he makes the people

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84 Jonas, 2001, p.127  
85 The Book of Mormon. Helaman 13:15
aware of the road they should take\textsuperscript{86}, when Jesus takes upon himself all the sins people are set free and can create a relationship with God\textsuperscript{87}. 

Regarding Jesus physical and spiritual person one can see Gnostic elements in the Book of Mormon. The Gnostic movement sates that Jesus was a spiritual being dressed in a human body, a divine being who was both the human son and a spirit. When one read in the Book of Mormon one can draw common elements to Gnosticism on this matter; the Book of Mormon also claims that Jesus is a spirit in a human body and a divine figure. Both religious views state how the spirits, as Jesus’ spirit, comes from and should again return to its origin. Jesus’ task on earth was to inform the people of their true nature, a task that both the Gnostic Gospel and the Book of Mormon proclaims.

The Book of Mormon and the Gnostic share some similar elements regarding Jesus’ physical image as a man. Hägglund writes in his book how the Gnostics meant Jesus was dressed in a pretence body, and could therefore neither die on the cross nor had his death an actual meaning\textsuperscript{88}. The Gnostics movement merely saw Jesus as the accommodator between the people and the higher power\textsuperscript{89}. He was supposed to enlighten the people and give them the knowledge to set them free from their earthly body, their physical body\textsuperscript{90}. Jesus did enlighten several chosen apostles with the secret knowledge of life after his crucifixion, according to Pagles and Jonas. Nevertheless, apostles who had taken part in the secret knowledge, gnosis, could visit Jesus in their dreams or when under trance. Similar thoughts concerning Jesus’ physical body can found in the Book of Mormon, which also set Jesus out to be an accommodator of knowledge. The Book of Mormon describes Jesus and his many tasks and tells plenty of stories about him; he functions not only as the son of God, the redeemer, savior, the beginning and the end, but he also heals people and make the dead alive again. All these metaphoric names and wonders he performs, according to the Book of Mormon, show how powerful Jesus is. Furthermore, the Book of Mormon writes about the revelations Jesus had before people long after his crucifixion. The revelations was when Jesus taught the apostles and the people how to be reunited with their father and be set free from the death of their

\textsuperscript{86} Pagels, 1998, p.172
\textsuperscript{87} The Book of Mormon. Helaman 13:15
\textsuperscript{88} Hägglund, 1981, p.21. Pagels highlights the Gnostic Gospel take on about Jesus’ death meaning how Jesus in his “human-body” died and suffered, on the other hand, the divine within Jesus could not die nor feel pain during the crucifixion. 1998, p.147.
\textsuperscript{89} Hägglund, 1981, p.21 (the Gnostics’ God, which is not written about in this thesis).
\textsuperscript{90} Hägglund 1981, p.20
physical body91. Both the Gnostic movement and the Book of Mormon expect the people to perform one task to be set free; the Book of Mormon speaks of “sin” and how the people must repent, while Gnosticism has replaced “sin” with “ignorance” and speaks of how people must wake up and see the world in its true colors92. Even though the religious groups use a different vocabulary from each other, they emphasize on freedom and give an “answer” to how the people can reach salvation.

Regarding the resurrection Gnosticism and the Book of Mormon part view of its meaning. The Gnostic movement cites that people should not wait till death takes them over and then expect resurrection; instead they should seek resurrection in this life when they are alive. In contrast, the Book of Mormon mean it is of high importance that man dies, because without death humans cannot be resurrected and without resurrection they cannot be reunited with their Heavenly Father. The Book of Mormon does not only speak about how resurrection is important, but also how humans should prepare themselves for Jesus’ second coming. On the other hand, one could also distinct a common future in their differences. Both religious views seek resurrection but part in the opinion of how it should be obtained, still emphasizing the importance of its existents.

The Gnostic elements of how humanity can become partakers in a divine existence can be discerned in the Book of Mormon. The Gnostic movement talks about the finding of gnosis and its importance to humans, as it is their only way to reach salvation. Nevertheless, as important gnosis might be it is not just given to people, instead man need to seek it and make some effort in the process. One needs to, according Gnosticism, seek the knowledge and find it within oneself. The Book of Mormon shares similar thoughts; according to the book humans can neither expect to receive a relationship with God nor knowledge about the plan of salvation if they do not follow certain steps. As mentioned in the result part people need to see beyond this life and acknowledge the existence Jesus Christ and accept Heavenly Father as the creator of all beings. The acknowledgment of God’s existence is the first step for man, after this humanity will gain knowledge and become a part of the plan of salvation. Consequently, the Gnostics’ belief system regarding of gnosis (knowledge) is an element found in the Book of Mormon, which subscribes the gaining of knowledge to its readers. Because without knowledge or the understanding of God’s intelligence humanity will be lost

91 See 2.1.1
92 Jonas, 2001, p.127
souls trapped in physical bodies. Immortality is a another Gnostic element found in The Book of Mormon; the Book of Mormon proclaims how the human soul is immortal and will live on long after this life; as does the Gnostic movement. That is why both religious views embrace the importance of the right knowledge.

Furthermore, Gnosticism and the Book of Mormon also share a common element in their idea of humans’ first fall. Both religious views acknowledge humans’ fall to earth. Jonas discusses the “pre-cosmic” fall and the Book of Mormon discusses “spiritual death”; both leaving the fall to be described as man’s destiny, with the ultimate goal to become a partaker in a divine existence. Gnosticism and the Book of Mormon make clear statements within their belief systems that humanity both came from and must again return to their righteous place which is not on earth. Adam therefore holds a special meaning to both religious views as he was the first human to guide man onto the path of salvation. With Adam gaining knowledge, by according to the Book of Mormon the eating of the apple and falling to earth\textsuperscript{93} or according to Gnosticism awakening from his sleep and seeing the world as it is\textsuperscript{94}, humanity got the chance to return to the higher source and to understand the meaning of life, Adam’s act is also viewed as a necessity for humanity by both religious views.

To sum up, the analysis above points out Gnostic elements found in the Book of Mormon through the results of this essay. The Book of Mormon has several similar thoughts as the Gnostic belief system concerning the nature of man and the nature of Jesus. Even though they part opinions regarding the importance of Jesus’ crucifixion, one can read how both views emphasize on the plan of salvation, the fall of Adam and Eve, how humanity can become complete with the right knowledge and a to free the spirits trapped in human bodies. As mentioned in 1.4 several debates regarding similarities between the two religious groups has been laid out; however, one could if compared more of the scriptures of the LDS church more Gnostic elements could be detected within Gnosticism.

3.3 Discussion

During the process of writing the thesis interesting information and knowledge about the Book of Mormon and the Gnostic movement has appeared; however, due to the limited time

\textsuperscript{93} The Book of Mormon
\textsuperscript{94} Jonas, 2001, p 126
and volume of the essay a strict focus on the research questions had to take place and other information could not be taken into account. Therefore it was necessary to have a discussion part to give room to themes that could not be concluded on the thesis and subjects for further research.

As written in chapter one the LDS church does not only, in their religious practice, use the Book of Mormon but also three other books (see 1.4). If one would do a research study on all four scriptures, with the same research questions as in this thesis, one would notice more similarities between the LDS church and the Gnostic movement. For example, what could not be mentioned in this essay, both movements believe in a female Goddess, a mother figure. Something that is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon, but in the other scriptures of the LDS church; the Gnostic movement shared the similar thoughts and believed there existed both a God Father and a God mother. The idea of a female object holding power would certainly be an interesting topic to do a research on.

Another interesting point this paper could not examine is the LDS church view of Jesus suffering in the garden of Gethsemane before the actual crucifixion, the LDS church emphasizes on how Jesus suffered more in Gethsemane and the time in the garden he took upon himself all suffering of humanity which made the pain more crucial than during the crucifixion. The garden of Gethsemane is also mentioned in the Bible, New Testament. “Gospel Principles” does give references to Book of Mormon concerning Gethsemane; however, the passages in the Book of Mormon are too ambiguous for the reader, who will have a difficulties to distinguish it is the garden of Gethsemane the Book of Mormon discusses. It would make an interesting topic to examine different scriptures describing Jesus’ suffering and the scriptures take on that matter.

Furthermore, the Mormon Church has a strong belief in several heavens and excludes the existence of a hell completely from their belief system. According to the secondary sources the people following the LDS Church will end up in the heaven where God lives. People who are not Mormons will get a chance to convert; however, real evil people e.g. Hitler will end up in the last of the three heavens without the chance to meet God. It would certainly be interesting to investigate more in both the Gnostic movement and Mormonism, since Gnosticism neither has a ‘classical view’ of heaven and hell.
Concerning the Gnostic movement it would have been interesting do to an extended research on the Dead Sea scrolls and compare them with all the scriptures of the LDS church. By doing so a research on only primary sources would take place; a research like this would certainly give room to investigate the Gospels more closely. To investigate the primary sources of the Gnostic movement is something I personally think could make an interesting thesis; however, it would demand a longer research period than what is given on this level.

3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was to put explore Gnosticism and the Book of Mormon to deepen not only my personal knowledge but also others, but the purpose was also to find out and do a comparison between these two religious groups to distinct similarities. With the questions focusing on Gnostic elements that could be found in the Book of Mormon, extra attention was given to examine common thoughts concerning the nature of man and the nature of Jesus Christ. In the result part and the analysis one can distinct difference and similarities within the two religious groups. Both religious movements emphasizes on how humans are incomplete spirits lost on earth, with the chance to become complete if one follow their plan of salvation. Jesus functions as an accommodator within the two religious movements and spreads the right knowledge onto man. The fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden as a moment where humanity take the first right step in the plan of salvation, is a Gnostics element that became very visible in the Book of Mormon during the research of this thesis.

It is impossible with a degree project of this volume to cover a whole belief system; this thesis has only viewed small sections of two religions. However, writing this thesis has made me more conscious and knowledgeable on the LDS church and the Book of Mormon; in addition I do understand the importance of the foundlings of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Nag Hammadi and the content of several of the Gnostic Gospels.

In conclusion, this thesis has researched two aspects within the Gnostic movement and in the Book of Mormon. In the result part the movements are separated to give the reader a chance to form its opinion on both religious views. However, in the analysis part one can more easily distinct the Gnostic elements found in the Book of Mormon. The movements hold several similar ideas in their belief systems, as mentioned earlier more than what could be covered within the frames of this thesis; there are several topics to do further research on concerning
both movements and this degree project has only touched a small part of the research that can be executed within its field.
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