

- 157 **G**[ARRETTSON ?], M. (K. ?); Cath[erine ?]. GARRETTSON, and one other person. Religious MANUSCRIPT LETTER to one newly-married Maria Potter, care of Bishop Brownell (in New Haven, Connecticut); forwarded to Mrs. Maria Potter, Schenectady, New York (New Haven postmark, "Apr 23"). New York [City] postmark, April 21. No year given, but probably 1820s.

24½ cm. 3 pp. + address portion. Dating above based on the postmarks. Purchased March 7, 1987 from Elwyn J. Doubleday. Presented in my *Mormon List Twenty-Three* (Ithaca, New York: Rick Grunder – Books, March 1987), item 11. LOCATION: Grunder.

Wistfully congratulating the bride on this "event which I hope & believe will contribute to your happiness both in time & eternity . . ." For another letter, which assumed even more pointedly that marriage lasts through eternity, see MP 471 (W[ilcox].). On this subject, see also MP 121 (Peggy Dow, section headed "Eternal Marriage") and MP 242 ("Mary").

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- 158 **[GASS, Jacob ?, and Johan Peter MILLER]** *CHRONICON EPHRATENSE; A History of the Community of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Lancaster County, Penn'a, by "Lamech and Agrippa."* Translated from the Original German by J. Max Hark, D. D. Lancaster, Pa.: Published by S. H. Zahm & Co., 1889.

23 cm. xvi, 288 pp. Title printed in black and red. Typeset facsimile of first-edition title page with community seal, p. [xi]. First edition in English (first published in German at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, 1786). OCLC identifies the authors as "Brother Lamech," died 1763 (*i.e.*, Jacob Gass?) and Johann Peter Miller, 1709-96 ("Agrippa, . . . also known as Prior Jaebez"); translated by Joseph Maximillian Hark, 1849-1930.

Howes G 76 (both editions) calls this the "Chief source for the history of this Pennsylvania cloister founded by Conrad Beissel." Randall L. Ericson (Couper Librarian, Hamilton College) states that this work ". . . furnishes an abstract of the diary of the Brotherhood, but is primarily a biography of Beissel." He describes Hamilton's copy as 26 cm. (illustrated untrimmed; number 151 of a total presumed edition of 200 copies; Ericson, 139-40). The copy I examined for this entry was hand-numbered "1" in the pre-printed space provided on the back of the title page, beneath which was an old blue stamp of the New York Public Library.

In *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism*, Dan Vogel writes that the ". . . early Mormon notion of priesthood seems congruent with that described in the Book of Mormon, which speaks of a high priesthood but mentions no need for angelic ordination. Alma's discourse on the priesthood of Melchizedek emphasizes foreordination rather than physical earthly ordination."

(Vogel 1988, 112)

The Whitmer family, early sponsors of the Book of Mormon, could have heard this concept before. Peter Whitmer was born in 1773 at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, less than forty miles from the Ephrata Cloister in adjoining Lancaster County. The founder of Ephrata, Conrad Beissel, had died only five years before Peter Whitmer was born, and his music was widely known. Beissel compiled the first Pennsylvania German hymnal, printed by Benjamin Franklin in 1730. The Whitmers were Pennsylvania Germans, and after they moved to Seneca County, New York, their minister Diedrich Willers Sr. frequently preached in German. For further details, see [MP 254](#) (Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry*, bibliographic notes).

David Whitmer wrote in 1887 that he did not approve of the idea of there being a Melchizedek priesthood in the Church of Christ (Whitmer 1887, 62-67), but the idea certainly existed in the culture from which the Book of Mormon sprang. Vogel adds:

The concept of certain individuals being foreordained to the high priesthood is not unlike the beliefs of the Ephrata Commune, a group of German mystics who settled near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the 1720s. Their leader, Friedsam Gottrecht, was, as the tradition goes, "pre-ordained to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. [Vogel 1988, 126 n. 65]

For this intriguing detail, Vogel cites the *Chronicon Ephratense* now at hand, which reads on page 3:

The Superintendent first saw the light of the world in the year 1690 at Eberbach, a village on the Neckar, . . . in the Palatinate, and bore the family name, John Conrad Beissel. His father carried on the trade of a baker, but was so given to drink that he sank all he owned down his throat, and then died, leaving behind a poor widow with a numerous family. This, his youngest son, was born two months after his death, and was therefore a true *opus post-humum*; by which orphan-birth the Spirit indicated his future lone condition, and that, as one pre-ordained to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, he should derive little comfort from his natural kindred. [p. 3]

This early official account - here first translated into English - should be a valuable source for further Mormon background study. In *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, Michael Quinn summarized some of the similarities between the Ephrata beliefs and later Mormonism:

Mormon revelations used terms for the priesthood that also echoed the American environment of magic and religion. The "Vision" revelation of 1832 stated: "And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son"

(D&C 76:57; also 107:9, 29, 71, 73, 76; 124:123). This description of a priesthood conferred in modern times by ordination departed from the Bible by linking this priesthood with Enoch, but this LDS revelation was reminiscent of earlier priesthood practices of Ephrata. This Pennsylvania commune combined mysticism with Rosicrucianism, alchemy, astrology, divining rods, and ceremonial magic. The nineteenth-century historian of Ephrata wrote that in August 1740 the leader of the commune "solemnly consecrated Brothers Onesimus (Israel Eckerling) Jaebez (Peter Miller) and *Enoch* (Conrad Weiser) to the priesthood, by the laying on of hands; after which they were admitted to the ancient *Order of Melchizedek* by having the degree conferred on them in ancient form." Just as LDS leaders sometimes had pseudonyms (like "the code name Enoch" for Joseph Smith) in the publication of revelations, Ephrata's leaders also had new names such as Enoch for Conrad Weiser. [Quinn 1998, 222-23, emphasis added by Quinn in the quote above taken from Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarials of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: By the author, 1899-1900), I:386. Quinn also cites other sources for Ephrata, see p. 522, nn. 365-67.]

The following verse in the *Chronicon* appears in a footnote giving the lyrics of an Ephrata hymn, "Song of the Lilies," sung during a 1730s visit by convert George Adam Martin and others to an assembly of the Sisters. "An inward emotion here seized me;" wrote Martin, "my spirit felt the presence of a divine majesty; the veil was removed, in which all the nations are enveloped. I saw the pathway of the saints into the holy of holies . . . ," p. 255. The sisters began by singing a hymn, "The streets of Zion are desolate." The brethren then sang the "Song of the Lilies," the "simplicity" of which "astonished the Sisters." (p. 256) Verse seven is given as follows:

Melchizedek's altar, here also it stands,  
 As master it guardeth this purest of bands;  
 As oft as he thinks of them in his abode  
 The manna of Paradise falls to their lot.  
 The strength of the lilies, like secret-kept fire,  
 Springs forth with new force in the virginal choir. [p. 257 n.]

#### "PRIESTHOOD":

At that time [late 1730s] there was among the Brethren at the Settlement one by the name of Elimelech, one of the Eckerlins, whom the stars had formed for a priest and redeemer of the bodily life, so that while other Brethren, spent their time in hard labor, he sought his own pastures and imposed his priesthood upon people. And though he was a great opponent of the Germantown Baptists, so that at [p. 123 ends] their meetings he often preached them all out of the room; he nevertheless finally left the convent, and removed to them, when Peter Becker received him on condition that he must suspend his priesthood. But he did not

carry this out; but established a large congregation in South Carolina under their auspices . . .

After the Superintendent had ordained Brother Elimelech to be teacher at Amwell, he publicly consecrated him to this office by the laying on of hands . . . Among the Superintendent's printed Letters, the 54th was written to Elimelech at that time, and is full of priestly unction; . . . [p. 124 ends]

This letter he took with him to Amwell, where he showed it to everyone as his credentials which he had received from the Superintendent. His people indeed sought to sustain him in his office, but when they noticed that it was an imitated affair and not inborn, they lost courage . . . [pp. 123-25]

Now the Prior [Brother Onesimus] had three brothers after the flesh, who indeed were continually striving with him for the priesthood, but who nevertheless always stood up for him when he was attacked by others. [p. 133]

#### **BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD:**

There is another circumstance that belongs here, though it happened in the year 1738. About that time the custom came into vogue to have one's self baptized for the dead, as it was supposed from the words of Paul that the first Christians did the same. Two Brethren first originated this at the Settlement, Elimelech and Timotheus, the first of whom had himself baptized for his deceased mother, and the other for his deceased father, although it was known that both their parents had been baptized in Germany. This custom was practiced for many years in the households, and has not yet wholly died out, there always being some who became substitutes and pledges for their parents, or other relatives, though these had in their life time received their divine calling, but had not attained unto the covenant of God. [p. 122]

In footnotes below this passage, the authors identify "Elimelech" as Emmanuel ECKERLIN, and "Timotheus" as Alexander MACK. (p. 122, nn. 2-3; Mack was a Baptist who joined the order, pp. 48-50, 118). Baptism for the dead, then, was going on a few miles from where young Peter Whitmer then lived. Quinn adds that . . .

. . . this practice . . . continued at Ephrata and among other German sectarians from the 1730s to the 1830s. The revelation of 1841 authorized the Latter-day Saints to "be baptized for those who are dead" (D&C 124:29). Just as the Christian occultists of Ephrata were baptized for both genders, Brigham Young observed: "When Joseph received the revelation that we have in our possession concerning the dead, the subject was opened to him, not in full but in part . . . Then women were baptized for men and men for women, &c." [p. 224]