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NEWS AND VIEWS.

Women are now admitted to fifty American colleges.

Rev. De Witt Talmage is pronounced a success as a sensation preacher.

Theodore Tilton says the best brains in northern New York are wearing white hats. They might wear chapeaux of a more objectionable color.

Daniel W. Voorhees in one day destroyed the political record of a life-time, and that was when he became henchman to a judge with an eclesiastical mission.

An Alabama editor writes "United State," and refuses to write "United States"—a straw to show how Southern sentiment runs. What a state he must be in?

The season of scattering intellectual filth has set in over the country. It occurs quadrennially in the United States, commencing a few months before the Presidential election.

Dr. Newman failed to become a Bishop at the Methodist General Conference, and Dr. Newman mourns this second great defeat. He has remembrances of Salt Lake in connection with the previous one.

Great outcry is raised against the much marrying of the Latter-day Saints. The

News comes from France that trailing dresses for street wear are going out of fashion. So many absurd and ridiculous fashions come from Paris that the wonder is thinking American women do not, with honest republican spirit, reject them entirely. This latter one, however, is so sensible that its immediate adoption will be an evidence of good sense wisely directed.

The anti-Mormon bill of Judge Bingham seems to have fared no better in the judiciary committee of the House of Representatives than the one to which Mr. Voorhees stood sponsor. It is gratifying to think that a majority of that committee yet respect the antiquated and once revered instrument still occasionally referred to as the Constitution.

Rev. James Freeman Clark claims "that if it is an advantage to vote, women ought to have it; if a disadvantage men ought not to be obliged to bear it alone." Speaking from experience we feel safe in affirming that the Rev. gentleman is right, and we hope for a time when this immunity may be universally enjoyed by our pure-minded and light-loving sisters. We don't presume that those belonging to the opposite class care anything about it.

Mrs. Carrie F. Young, editor of the "Pacific Journal of Health," has been lecturing

Rev. Mr. Peirce, a Methodist clergyman who has made Salt Lake his headquarters for some time, in lecturing east proposed the extinction of polygamy by the introduction here of vast quantities of expensive millinery goods, and by inducing "Gentile" women to dress in gorgeous style that "Mormon" women might imitate them and run up such heavy dry goods bills that it would be impossible for a man to support more than one wife, if even one. Mr. Peirce, no doubt, preaches modesty and humility occasionally, by way of variety; now he recommends the encouragement of pride, vanity and extravagance to accomplish his "Christian" designs. The course he advises has been largely followed in many places, has tenanted brothels, aided to fill prisons, broken up families, hurled women of reputation and position down to degradation and infamy, and has met heavy denunciations from inspired men whom Mr. Peirce professes to revere. He would steal the livery of evil to serve religion in. There is not much of this reverend gentleman, and what little there is must be either very silly or very wicked.

The editor of "The Present Age" has been to a church and heard an orthodox sermon, in which the preacher took occasion to say that all religious "isms," including Mo-

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PROSPECTUS.

THE long night of darkness is now far spent—the truth revived in its primitive simplicity and purity, like the day-star of the horizon, lights up the dawn of that effulgent morn when the knowledge of God will cover the proper to order the publication of a Periodical devoted entirely to the great work of the spread of truth, sincerely praying that men may be led to carefully examine the subject, and to discern between truth and error, and act accordingly.

The mastheads of the first issues of the *Woman's Exponent* (June 1, 1872) and the *Millennial Star* (May 1840).

The Bible in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent*

Biblical Use and Interpretation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Late Nineteenth Century

Amy Easton-Flake

Despite the gradual erosion of the Bible's significance in American consciousness after the Civil War, the Bible remained "the most imported, most printed, most distributed, and most read written text in North America up through the nineteenth century."[1] The Bible's authority was not static but was continuously established as individuals and the nation turned to it for direction on living a Christian life as well as for the answers to religious, social, and political issues.[2] For most members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the nineteenth century, the Bible likewise remained their primary religious text even as they embraced and incorporated the new works of scripture revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Scholars such as Gordon Irving, Christopher C. Smith, Kent P. Jackson, and Philip L. Barlow have helped us understand how Joseph Smith and other Church leaders used scriptures in the 1830s and 1840s.[3] However, with the notable exception

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1. Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1.

2. For more, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 375–79; Seth Perry, *Bible Culture and Authority in the Early United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018), 1–9, 76.

3. Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1973): 479–87; Christopher C. Smith, "Joseph Smith in Hermeneutical Crisis," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 88–91; Kent P. Jackson, "Joseph Smith and the Bible," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63, no. 1 (2010): 38–40; Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; citations from updated edition, 2013).

of Barlow's opus *Mormons and the Bible,* scholars have not studied how members of the Church of Jesus Christ used and interpreted the Bible in the later part of the nineteenth century. In his seminal work, Barlow offers an excellent contextualized analysis of major strands of biblical interpretation within the Church of Jesus Christ as demonstrated by such notable figures as Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and William H. Chamberlin.[4] He also astutely recognizes that "[his work] is simply an attempt to make finite a nearly infinite task," and he calls in his 1991 preface for "more time-concentrated studies" of how members of the Church are using the Bible as well as for studies that focus on lay individuals, men and women, who reside inside and outside of the United States.[5] Unfortunately, Barlow's call has gone virtually unanswered for the past thirty years.

To begin to address the significant gap in current understanding of how lay members of the Church of Jesus Christ used and interpreted the Bible after the 1840s, I have conducted an extensive primary study to identify, categorize, and analyze all the references to the Bible found in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent* from 1880 to 1900.[6] My study provides general as well as specific and contextualized insights. First, I identify and explain leading assumptions that govern Church members' biblical interpretation within the context of Protestant use and interpretation in the later part of the nineteenth century. Next, I provide an overview and analysis of the statistical findings that emerged from my study. Then, informed by this general understanding of how and which books and passages of the Bible were being used, I devote the majority of the article to identifying and analyzing the major uses and doctrinal themes underscored by the passages individuals quoted and interpreted. Taken as a whole, these parts provide insight into the general membership of the Church of Jesus Christ and greatly expand our comprehensive understanding of how members of the Church interpreted and used the Bible in the late nineteenth century.

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4. See Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible,* 80–161.

5. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible,* xxii.

6. Because writers did not set off the scriptures they quoted with quotation marks or provide reference to chapters and verses, identifying all the scripture passages and references is a time-consuming and difficult task. Consequently, while my research assistants and I have tried to be as thorough and careful as possible as we read through every line of the *Millennial Star* and *Woman's Exponent* from 1880 to 1900 to find each scripture reference and passage, we likely have missed some passages.

Prevailing Assumptions Governing
Biblical Interpretation within Context

The deep commitment members of the Church of Jesus Christ had to the Bible in the nineteenth century is underscored by the frequency and nature of biblical references in their writings. A study of early periodicals printed by the Church from 1832 to 1846 revealed that "the Bible was cited nearly twenty times more frequently than the Book of Mormon."[7] When one considers both the Bible's preeminent status in nineteenth-century America and the vast number of Church members who were converts from Protestant faiths, this finding is unsurprising. What is perhaps surprising is that this statistic continues to the end of the nineteenth century, as judged by scripture usage in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent.*[8] Verses from other restoration scripture such as the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price actually appear in these periodicals more frequently than verses from the Book of Mormon, accounting for approximately 8 percent of all scripture references compared to those referring to the Book of Mormon at 4.46 percent.[9] These findings should be tempered, however, with the recognition that no definite distinction can be made between why and how Church members used and incorporated different works of scripture. This indicates that all these texts were considered scripture and that the decision of which scriptural text to incorporate was likely simply a matter of familiarity and expediency.[10]

Many of the assumptions that guided Church members' understanding of the scriptures were similar to the literal, commonsense approach followed by many of their contemporaries. Informed by the most influential epistemologies in early-nineteenth-century America—Scottish

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7. Grant Underwood, "Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology," *Dialogue* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 1984): 53.

8. Scripture references to the Book of Mormon appear 607 times in the *Millennial Star* (494) and the *Woman's Exponent* (113) between 1880 and 1900. The total number of scripture passages identified in the two publications was 13,596; consequently, references to the Book of Mormon account for 4.46 percent of all scripture references.

9. Scripture references to the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price appear 1,094 times in the *Millennial Star* (919) and the *Woman's Exponent* (175) between 1880 and 1900. The total number of scriptures identified was 13,596; consequently, references to the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price account for 8.05 percent of all scripture references.

10. For a good discussion on how early Mormon converts viewed and incorporated the Book of Mormon into their religious devotion, see Janiece Johnson, "Becoming a People of the Books: Toward an Understanding of Early Mormon Converts and the New Word of the Lord," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 27 (2018): 1–43.

Common Sense Realism and Baconian Science, which emphasized that individuals' senses could provide direct and uncomplicated knowledge of the world that was available and comprehensible to all—Americans' privileged commonsense or "literal" readings of the Bible were thought to be apparent to everyone. They believed that the Bible had direct application to modern times, the meaning of scripture was clear and unchanging, biblical narratives were real and accurate, religion and science were compatible, and prophetic statements were the word of God and were to be fulfilled exactly as written.[11]

In the last third of the nineteenth century, Americans' understanding of the Bible underwent significant changes as new findings from historians, archaeologists, and world travelers provided access to the ancient world of the Bible and allowed it to be approached in scientific, historical, and new theological terms. The discovery of earlier New Testament manuscripts and the project of revising the King James Version of the Bible in light of new understanding of Hebrew and Greek eroded some people's belief in the Bible's infallibility as transmission and translation issues came to light. Scholars of the Bible now engaged in "so-called lower criticism—textual criticism that aimed at establishing the original text of scripture free from mistranslations—and higher criticism which sought to discover the historical background of the biblical texts, their authors, sources, and literary characteristics."[12]

Looking at late-nineteenth-century periodicals produced for and by members of the Church, we discover that members who wrote for and read these magazines received at least some exposure to ideas coming out of higher criticism. On occasion, we find Church members engaging with different sources regarding biblical interpretation as they quote

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11. For more, see George M. Marsden, "Everyone One's Own Interpreter? The Bible, Science, and Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History,* ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 80–84; Noll, *America's God,* 376–85; Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible,* 10.

12. C. S. Gifford, "American Women and the Bible: The Nature of Woman as a Hermeneutical Issue," in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, ed. A. Y. Collins (Chico, Calif.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1985), 22. For more on this new scholarship, see Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Regent College Publishing, 1986), 11–31. For more on developments that challenged traditional approaches to reading the Bible as God's inspired, infallible word, see Marion Ann Taylor and Heather E. Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on the Women of Genesis* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 11–12.

from, refute, or recommend the work of scholars and Protestant theologians. More often than not, Church members refuted new ideas, but at times—similar to their Protestant contemporaries—they acknowledged insights from geology, anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and history that enhanced their understanding of the Bible or shored up biblical claims.[13]

Most often, though, the writing in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent* reveals that members of the Church, similar to lay individuals in other faith traditions, continued to employ a noncritical approach to their reading of the scriptures. They sought for timeless and universal truths, emphasized connections between biblical characters' lives and the lives of the readers, drew moral inferences, used the New Testament as a lens to interpret the Old Testament, and employed various modes of interpretation including association and proof texting.[14] Members of the Church of Jesus Christ remained in the mainstream of nineteenth-century American Christianity Bible usage as they continued to see the Bible as the inspired word of God and to turn to it for guidance and comfort. What most separated Church members' understanding and interpretation of the Bible from their Protestant contemporaries was their emphasis on acquiring knowledge through revelation in addition to scripture (the Bible was not seen as the final authority but as a springboard to revelations from God),[15] their open acknowledgement that the Bible contained mistakes of translation and transmission,[16] and their use of the Bible to support their own faith practices and theology.[17]

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13. See, for example, "Recovery of an Ancient Record," *Deseret News,* July 9, 1879, 6; "Moses and the Red Nile," *Millennial Star* 58, no. 24 (June 11, 1896): 381–83; "Confirmation of Scripture," *Millennial Star* 52, no. 40 (October 6, 1890): 638; "Jephthah's Vow," *Deseret News,* August 22, 1888, 7.

14. For more, see Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself,* 14–17; Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism,* 11–12, 27–31.

15. For more on how Mormonism appealed to both revelatory and empirical longings, see Steven C. Harper, "Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 104–6, 110–12. For more on the Bible as a springboard, see Jackson, "Joseph Smith and the Bible," 38–40; Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible,* 46–47.

16. Most significant is Smith's statement in the Wentworth letter, "We Believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly." The Wentworth letter was republished in *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1842): 706–7. See also Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 14:226–27 (August 27, 1871).

17. For a more detailed, contextualized overview of how biblical interpretation within the Church changed over the nineteenth century, see Amy Easton-Flake,

Methodology for This Study

With this general overview in mind of the assumptions that governed members of the Church of Jesus Christ's use and interpretation of the Bible, we now turn our attention to the specific information gained through a focused analysis of biblical usage within the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent*. I modeled my initial methodology for this study after one of the most useful articles I found in my research on early interpretation of the Bible within the Church—Gordon Irving's "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s." In his study, Irving identified as far as possible all the biblical references in three Church periodicals published between 1832 and 1838—the *Evening and the Morning Star* (1832–34), the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (1834–37), and the *Elders' Journal* (1837–38)—and then analyzed them to produce some impressive findings.[18] Similar to Irving's study, mine identifies as far as possible all the references to scriptures in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent* printed between 1880 and 1900. By comparing my study of the last two decades of the nineteenth century with Irving's study of the first few years of the Church of Jesus Christ in the 1830s, we gain important insights into how use and interpretation of the Bible changed or remained constant over the course of the nineteenth century. By focusing on both the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent,* we add a significant gender component to our understanding.

The *Woman's Exponent* was the obvious choice to bring in women's voices because it was the first "journal owned by, controlled by and edited by Utah ladies."[19] The *Woman's Exponent* was an eight-page, three-column quarto newspaper issued bimonthly for most of its forty-two-year run from 1872 to 1914. Never owned or officially sponsored by the Church—although official Church leadership did approve of it—it provided a space for women to express their viewpoints and interests (and was regarded by most as the organ of the Relief Society). The first edition stated that "the aim of this journal will be to discuss every subject interesting and valuable to women,"[20] and a detailed index of its

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"Nineteenth-Century Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible in the Latter-day Saint Tradition*, ed. Taylor Petrey and Cory Crawford (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

   18. Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," 479–87.

   19. Louisa Lula Greene, "Woman's Exponent: A Utah Ladies' Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 1, no. 1 (June 1, 1872): 8.

   20. Greene, "Woman's Exponent: A Utah Ladies' Journal," 8.

content over its forty-two years in print reveals that it lived up to its aim.[21] To represent men's voices at the end of the nineteenth century, I chose to study the *Millennial Star.*[22] Published in Liverpool, England, the *Millennial Star* was issued weekly during the twenty-year period under study. Although printed for and addressed to the British Saints, it represents Church members in Utah well because the editors and most of the authors were missionaries or Church leaders from Utah. While the *Millennial Star* regularly contained secular and informational articles on world news, scientific discoveries, and Church and local news from Utah, the vast majority of its weekly content was devoted to spreading the gospel and uplifting and teaching members of the Church. The periodical offered a mix of writing from leaders and lay individuals, containing correspondences from missionaries, reports from local and Churchwide conferences, explanatory articles about various gospel principles, and reprints of articles from the *Deseret News.*

General Findings within the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent*

In order to determine which books and sections of the Bible members of the Church were fond of citing, the Bible passages used in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent* between 1880 and 1900 were identified and tabulated: 9,613 individual or blocks of biblical passages were in the *Millennial Star* and 2,282 were in the *Woman's Exponent.* Table 1 gives the results of this tabulation. Each five-year period is tabulated separately, followed by the total for the twenty-year period. The first figure given is the number of passages cited, while the figure below it shows this number as a percentage of the total number of passages tabulated

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21. For historical background on the *Exponent*, see Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The Woman's Exponent: Forty-Two Years of Speaking for Women," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Summer 1976): 226–39; Carol Cornwall Madsen, *An Advocate for Women: The Public Life of Emmeline B. Wells, 1870–1920* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2006), 34–66. Also, Carol Cornwall Madsen, "'Remember the Women of Zion': A Study of the Editorial Content of the *Woman's Exponent,* a Mormon Woman's Journal, 1872–1914" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1977).

22. For men's voices in the nineteenth century, slightly more options were available. The *Juvenile Instructor,* edited by George Q. Cannon, and the *Contributor,* edited by Junius F. Wells, were possible options, but since they are both aimed at youth, they are less ideal. The *Deseret News* seemed to be another possible option, but upon investigation I found that the Bible was used very infrequently because the majority of the paper was focused on secular aspects of life.

Table 1. *Woman's Exponent and Millennial Star Bible Usage by Category*

	WE 1880–84	WE 1885–89	WE 1890–94	WE 1895–99	WE 1880–99	MS 1880–84	MS 1885–89	MS 1890–94	MS 1895–99	MS 1880–99	Irving 1830s
Genesis	45 6.11%	38 5.45%	38 7.38%	18 5.45%	139 6.10%	54 2.20%	136 4.49%	65 4.11%	64 2.51%	319 3.32%	36 3.0%
Other Pentateuch	31 4.21%	25 3.59%	16 3.11%	7 2.12%	79 3.47%	72 2.94%	134 4.42%	81 5.12%	73 2.86%	360 3.74%	44 3.6%
Historical	37 5.02%	27 3.87%	23 4.47%	15 4.55%	102 4.28%	57 2.33%	88 2.91%	44 2.78%	33 1.29%	222 2.31%	16 1.3%
Writings	74 10.04%	64 9.18%	57 11.07%	54 16.36%	249 10.93%	89 3.63%	192 6.34%	52 3.29%	90 3.53%	423 4.40%	74 6.1%
Major Prophets	45 6.11%	51 7.32%	42 8.16%	28 8.48%	166 7.28%	189 7.71%	320 10.56%	142 8.89%	246 9.64%	897 9.33%	183 15.1%
Minor Prophets	15 2.04%	14 2.01%	17 3.30%	4 1.21%	50 2.19%	48 1.96%	80 2.64%	54 3.41%	69 2.70%	251 2.61%	96 7.9%
Gospels and Acts	308 41.79%	313 44.91%	200 38.83%	118 35.76%	939 41.20%	1,037 42.31%	1,119 36.94%	675 42.67%	1079 42.30%	3,910 40.67%	345 28.5%
Paul's Letters	113 15.33%	93 13.34%	78 15.15%	48 14.55%	332 14.57%	601 24.52%	577 19.05%	310 19.60%	573 22.46%	2,061 21.44%	300 24.7%
Other Letters	30 4.07%	35 5.02%	31 6.02%	23 6.97%	119 5.22%	150 6.12%	188 6.21%	92 5.82%	189 7.41%	619 6.44%	63 5.2%
Revelation	39 5.29%	37 5.31%	13 2.52%	15 4.55%	104 4.56%	154 6.28%	195 6.44%	67 4.24%	135 5.29%	551 5.73%	54 4.5%
Old Testament	247 33.51%	219 31.42%	193 37.48%	126 38.18%	785 34.44%	509 20.77%	950 31.36%	438 27.69%	575 22.54%	2,472 25.71%	449 37.0%
New Testament	490 66.49%	478 68.58%	322 62.52%	204 61.82%	1494 65.56%	1,942 79.23%	2,079 68.64%	1,144 72.31%	1,976 77.46%	7,141 74.28%	762 63.0%
Total in NT & OT	737	697	515	330	2279	2,451	3,029	1,582	2,551	9,613	1,211

in that time period. For comparison's sake, Irving's findings for passages used in the Church periodicals between 1832 and 1838 are listed in the last column on the right in table 1. For ease of viewing, I have used standard biblical categories to report my findings.

Perhaps most striking is the clear predominance of passages coming from the Gospels and Acts. Across both the *Woman's Exponent* and the *Millennial Star,* the Gospels and Acts were consistently referenced more than any other category—ranging from 36.94 percent to 44.91 percent with a median of 40.94 percent. Paul's letters were the next most frequently cited, accounting for 14.57 percent of all scriptures in the *Woman's Exponent* and 21.44 percent of all scriptures in the *Millennial Star.* Looking at the Old Testament, the Major Prophets (Isaiah through Daniel) were cited most frequently in the *Millennial Star,* accounting for 9.33 percent of all biblical passages. However, in the *Woman's Exponent,* passages coming from the Writings (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) account for the majority of the cited passages in the Old Testament at 10.93 percent.[23] Overall, Church members displayed a marked preference for the New Testament, with it accounting for 65.56 percent of all biblical passages in the *Woman's Exponent* and 77.46 percent in the *Millennial Star.* Comparing these findings to Irving's earlier findings of 63 percent New Testament usage to 37 percent Old Testament usage, we discover an increased preference for the New Testament in the later part of the nineteenth century: a 2.56 percent increase when comparing the *Woman's Exponent* to Irving's findings and a staggering 14.46 percent increase when comparing to the *Millennial Star.* Reasons for this large discrepancy between the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent* will be addressed later on, but the overall growth in New Testament usage reflected the larger trend in American biblical usage over the course of the nineteenth century.[24]

Turning first to specific findings regarding the Old Testament, I provide three additional tables to help us understand more precisely the extent to which Church members were employing the Old Testament. Table 2 lists the twenty-nine most frequently cited books in the Old Testament and the number of times passages from that book appeared in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent.* The second figure

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23. References to the Song of Solomon appear only three times in the *Woman's Exponent* and only four times in the *Millennial Star.*

24. For more, see Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press 2013), 151–52, 156–63.

Table 2. *Woman's Exponent* and *Millennial Star*
Old Testament Usage by Books

Book	*Woman's Exponent* 1880–99			*Millennial Star* 1880–99		
	Number of Uses	Percent of Bible	Percent of Old Testament	Number of Uses	Percent of Bible	Percent of Old Testament
Genesis	139	6.10%	17.71%	319	3.32%	12.90%
Exodus	50	2.19%	6.37%	185	1.92%	7.48%
Leviticus	6	0.26%	0.76%	34	0.35%	1.38%
Numbers	11	0.48%	1.40%	40	0.42%	1.62%
Deut.	12	0.53%	1.53%	101	1.05%	4.09%
Joshua	7	0.31%	0.89%	24	0.25%	0.97%
Judges	11	0.48%	1.40%	3	0.03%	0.12%
Ruth	6	0.26%	0.76%	2	0.02%	0.08%
1 Samuel	24	1.05%	3.06%	37	0.38%	1.50%
2 Samuel	13	0.57%	1.66%	33	0.34%	1.33%
1 Kings	13	0.57%	1.66%	43	0.45%	1.74%
2 Kings	12	0.53%	1.53%	22	0.23%	0.89%
1 Chron.	4	0.18%	0.51%	11	0.11%	0.44%
2 Chron.	5	0.22%	0.64%	19	0.20%	0.77%
Esther	6	0.26%	0.76%	7	0.07%	0.28%
Job	37	1.62%	4.71%	80	0.83%	3.24%
Psalms	97	4.26%	12.36%	176	1.83%	7.12%
Proverbs	86	3.77%	10.96%	98	1.02%	3.96%
Ecclesiastes	26	1.14%	3.31%	65	0.68%	2.63%
Isaiah	114	5.00%	14.52%	539	5.61%	21.80%
Jeremiah	15	0.66%	1.91%	138	1.44%	5.58%
Lamentations	5	0.22%	0.64%	1	0.01%	0.04%
Ezekiel	3	0.13%	0.38%	83	0.86%	3.36%
Daniel	29	1.27%	3.69%	136	1.41%	5.50%
Joel	2	0.09%	0.25%	19	0.20%	0.77%
Amos	9	0.39%	1.15%	36	0.37%	1.46%
Micah	8	0.35%	1.02%	27	0.28%	1.09%
Zechariah	1	0.04%	0.13%	28	0.29%	1.13%
Malachi	22	0.97%	2.80%	103	1.07%	4.17%

given shows this number as a percentage of the total number of biblical passages in that periodical between 1880 and 1900, and the third figure given is the percentage of the total number of Old Testament passages in that periodical. For instance, with 539 references, Isaiah was the most frequently cited book in the *Millennial Star,* accounting for 5.61 percent of all biblical passages or 21.8 percent of all Old Testament passages cited. In the *Woman's Exponent*, Genesis was the most frequently cited with 139 passages, accounting for 6.1 percent of all biblical passages or 17.71 percent of all Old Testament passages; Isaiah was a close second with 114 cited passages.

Tables 3 and 4 provide increasingly detailed information as they list the Old Testament passages cited most frequently in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent,* respectively. Twenty of the thirty-nine books in the Old Testament provide 93 percent of all identifiable Old Testament passages in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent.*[25] Individuals writing for the *Woman's Exponent* cited passages from 32.51 percent or 302 of the 929 Old Testament chapters; individuals writing for the *Millennial Star* drew from 56.08 percent or 521 of the 929 Old Testament chapters. This is a marked rise from Irving's findings that "fewer than one in six Old Testament chapters were drawn upon by Mormon writers."[26] Similarly, Irving notes that fifty-three passages account for half of all Old Testament passages used,[27] whereas the 48 passages used three or more times in the *Woman's Exponent* account for only 30.45 percent of the Old Testament verses used, and the 53 passages used seven or more times in the *Millennial Star* account for only 27.87 percent of the Old Testament verses used. Collectively, these data points indicate that even though Church members in the 1880s and 1890s were overall using the Old Testament less than Church members in the 1830s, they were using a greater range of Old Testament verses. Findings on how the selectivity and range of New Testament usage altered over the course of the nineteenth century are more complicated.

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25. Compared to Irving's finding that "fifteen of the thirty-nine Old Testament books provided 93 percent of all identifiable Old Testament passages used" (484).

26. Irving, "Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," 484.

27. Irving, "Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," 484.

Table 3. Most Frequently Used Old Testament Scriptures in the *Millennial Star*

Book	Chapters in Book	Chapters Used	Passage	Times Used	Passage	Times Used
Genesis	50	42	1:26	12	22:18	9
			1:27	28	49:22	8
			1:28	15	49:26	12
			2:17	9		
Exodus	40	34	4:14	9	20:13	9
			20:12	8	20:16	9
Leviticus	27	14				
Numbers	36	14				
Deuteronomy	34	25	18:22	7	33:16	7
Joshua	24	8	24:15	10		
Judges	21	3				
1 Samuel	31	16				
2 Samuel	24	6	12:7	11	12:8	14
1 Kings	22	16	15:5	8		
2 Kings	25	11				
Job	42	19	19:25	10	38:7	10
			19:26	8	32:8	8
			38:4	7		
Psalms	150	68				
Proverbs	31	28	29:18	11		
Ecclesiastes	12	12	12:7	8		
Isaiah	66	55	1:18	8	29:14	30
			2:2	23	35:8	9
			2:3	24	54:17	8
			8:20	18	60:2	14
			24:5	34	61:1	8
			24:6	10		
Jeremiah	52	33	1:5	13	2:13	11
Ezekiel	48	24	37:19	9		
Daniel	12	12	2:44	31	2:45	10
Joel	3	2	2:28	13	2:29	7
Amos	9	6	3:7	24		
Obadiah	1	1	1:21	9		
Micah	7	5	3:11	8	4:1	9

Malachi	4	4	3:1	15	4:1	14
			3:2	10	4:5	21
			3:3	8	4:6	26
			3:10	18		
Verses used 7+ times			**Count**		689	
Total 53 Verses			**Percentage of Old Testament**		27.87%	

Table 4. Most Frequently Used Old Testament Scriptures in the *Woman's Exponent*

Book	Chapters in Book	Chapters Used	Passage	Times Used	Passage	Times Used
Genesis	50	27	1:3	3	3:16	7
			1:26	8	3:19	6
			1:27	10	22:17	5
			1:28	11	22:18	3
			2:18	12		
Exodus	40	20	20:12	4	20:5	3
Leviticus	27	5				
Numbers	36	8				
Deuteronomy	34	9	33:25	3		
Joshua	24	5				
Judges	21	5	5:7	5		
1 Samuel	31	8	15:22	8	17	4
2 Samuel	24	6				
1 Kings	22	9				
2 Kings	25	7				
Job	42	12	1:21	8	38:11	6
			13:15	3		
Psalms	150	57	2:1	3	118:24	3
			12:6	3	127:3	3
			76:10	5		
Proverbs	31	24	4:7	3	29:2	3
			16:18	6	31:10	5
			18:13	3	31:28	5
			19:17	4	31:31	4
			22:6	3		

Ecclesiastes	12	8	9:11	3	11:1	5
Isaiah	66	38	4:1	7	52:7	3
			25:6	5	55:8	5
			35:1	11	55:9	6
			45:22	3		
Jeremiah	52	10				
Ezekiel	48	3				
Daniel	12	8	2:44	4	2:45	4
Joel	3	1				
Amos	9	3	3:7	5	6:1	3
Micah	7	3	4:11	5		
Malachi	4	3	3:1	4	3:16–17	4
Verses used 3+ times			Count		239	
Total 48 Verses			Percentage of Old Testament		30.45%	

To help us look more closely at the New Testament, I offer three additional tables. Table 5 first lists the books in the New Testament and the number of times passages from each book appeared in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent.* The second figure given shows this number as a percentage of the total number of biblical passages in that periodical between 1880 and 1900. The third figure given is the percentage of the total number of New Testament passages in that periodical. For the *Millennial Star,* we find that Matthew is cited most frequently, accounting for 14.23 percent of all biblical passages or 19.16 percent of all New Testament passages, followed by John at 10.26 percent or 13.81 percent, Acts at 7.5 percent or 10.1 percent, 1 Corinthians at 5.44 percent or 7.32 percent, and Luke at 5.21 percent or 7.02 percent. For the *Woman's Exponent,* Matthew is again the most frequently quoted, accounting for 19.39 percent of all biblical passages or 29.59 percent of all New Testament passages. After that, though, the order is reversed with Luke coming in next at 8.86 percent or 13.52 percent, then John at 7.06 percent or 10.78 percent, followed by Revelation at 4.56 percent or 6.96 percent and 1 Corinthians at 4.12 percent or 6.29 percent. The greater use of Luke in the *Woman's Exponent* may be attributed to Luke's inclusion of more women in his Gospel as well as the more compassionate image of Jesus that he offers. For instance, Jesus's statement "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), recorded only in Luke, is the second most frequently cited passage in the *Woman's Exponent.*

Table 5. *Woman's Exponent* and *Millennial Star* New Testament Usage by Books

Book	*Woman's Exponent* 1880–99			*Millennial Star* 1880–99		
	Number of Uses	Percent of Bible	Percent of New Testament	Number of Uses	Percent of Bible	Percent of New Testament
Matthew	442	19.39%	29.59%	1368	14.23%	19.16%
Mark	80	3.51%	5.35%	334	3.47%	4.68%
Luke	202	8.86%	13.52%	501	5.21%	7.02%
John	161	7.06%	10.78%	986	10.26%	13.81%
Acts	54	2.37%	3.61%	721	7.50%	10.10%
Romans	60	2.63%	4.02%	313	3.26%	4.38%
1 Corinthians	94	4.12%	6.29%	523	5.44%	7.32%
2 Corinthians	26	1.14%	1.74%	89	0.93%	1.25%
Galatians	20	0.88%	1.34%	155	1.61%	2.17%
Ephesians	34	1.49%	2.28%	246	2.56%	3.44%
Philippians	13	0.57%	0.87%	53	0.55%	0.74%
Colossians	2	0.09%	0.13%	43	0.45%	0.60%
1 Thessalonians	15	0.66%	1.00%	38	0.40%	0.53%
2 Thessalonians	3	0.13%	0.20%	46	0.48%	0.64%
1 Timothy	9	0.39%	0.60%	64	0.67%	0.90%
2 Timothy	17	0.75%	1.14%	180	1.87%	2.52%
Titus	0	0.00%	0.00%	14	0.15%	0.20%
Philemon	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	0.01%	0.01%
Hebrews	39	1.71%	2.61%	296	3.08%	4.15%
James	52	2.28%	3.48%	180	1.87%	2.52%
1 Peter	31	1.36%	2.07%	159	1.65%	2.23%
2 Peter	6	0.26%	0.40%	99	1.03%	1.39%
1 John	22	0.97%	1.47%	142	1.48%	1.99%
2 John	7	0.31%	0.47%	12	0.12%	0.17%
3 John	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	0.01%	0.01%
Jude	1	0.04%	0.07%	26	0.27%	0.36%
Revelation	104	4.56%	6.96%	551	5.73%	7.72%

Tables 6 and 7 provide increasingly detailed information as they list the New Testament passages cited most frequently in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent,* respectively. In the pages of the *Millennial Star,* every chapter in the New Testament except for four appeared at least once. While this indicates that greater coverage of the New Testament was occurring at the end of the nineteenth century, writers continued to rely heavily on certain scriptures. For instance, in the 1830s, "eighteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books account for 94 percent of all New Testament passages";[28] however, between 1880 and 1900 in the *Millennial Star,* 18 books account for 96.74 percent of all New Testament scriptures used, and in the *Woman's Exponent,* 18 books account for 98.13 percent. Thus, 7 books—Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude—are used very rarely no matter the decade or publication. Yet, notably, each of the books does appear at some point within the pages of the *Millennial Star.* When we turn to statistics on individual passages, we find that members of the Church used a wider array of passages in the 1880s and 1890s than they did in the 1830s. While Irving reports that 59 passages account for more than half of all the New Testament passages used in the 1830s,[29] in the 1880s and 1890s, the 52 New Testament passages used 5 or more times in the *Woman's Exponent* account for only 31.06 percent of the verses, and the 59 New Testament verses used 15 or more times in *Millennial Star* account for only 28.34 percent.

Table 6. Most Frequently Used New Testament Scriptures in the *Millennial Star*

	Chapters in Book	Chapters Used	Passage	Times Used	Passage	Times Used
Matthew	28	28	3:15	30	15:9	19
			6:10	28	16:18	29
			6:33	32	24:14	49
			7:20	18	28:19	37
			7:21	28		
Mark	16	16	1:4	20	16:16	76
			16:15	59	16:17	23

28. Irving, "Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," 480.

29. Irving, "Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," 480.

Luke	24	24	**2:14**	18	**23:34**	26
			22:42	24		
John	21	21	**3:5**	123	**15:16**	21
			3:16	35	**15:19**	21
			3:19	18	**17:3**	37
			7:17	52	**20:17**	25
Acts	28	28	**2:38**	92	**22:16**	21
Romans	16	16	**1:16**	39		
1 Corinthians	16	16	**1:27**	17	**12:28**	28
			2:11	25	**15:22**	34
			12:3	20	**15:29**	39
2 Corinthians	13	13				
Galatians	6	6	**1:8**	48		
Ephesians	6	6	**1:10**	23	**4:12**	28
			2:20	18	**4:13**	35
			4:5	34	**4:14**	28
			4:11	31		
1 Thessalonians	5	5	**5:21**	15		
2 Thessalonians	3	3				
1 Timothy	6	6				
2 Timothy	4	4	**3:5**	34	**4:3**	44
			3:12	27	**4:4**	26
Hebrews	13	13	**1:3**	20	**11:6**	19
			5:4	55		
James	5	5	**1:5**	32		
1 Peter	5	5	**3:18**	35	**3:20**	31
			3:19	43	**4:6**	38
2 Peter	3	3				
1 John	5	5	**1:7**	22		
Revelation	22	22	**14:6**	75	**18:4**	35
			14:7	43	**19:10**	22
	Verses used 15+ times		**Count**		2024	
	Total 59 Verses		**Percentage of New Testament**		28.34%	

Table 7. Most Frequently Used New Testament Scriptures in the *Woman's Exponent*

	Chapters in Book	Chapters Used	Passage	Times Used	Passage	Times Used
Matthew	28	27	5:05	5	10:29	5
			5:07	5	10:37	6
			5:09	7	11:28–30	7
			5:11	10	16:18	5
			5:14	5	18:3	5
			5:48	7	18:7	5
			6:9	8	19:14	15
			6:33	10	25:1–13	14
			7:5	6	25:21	22
			7:7	12	25:40	10
			7:12	11	26:11	5
			7:16	5		
Mark	16	12	7:37	10	16:16	12
			16:15	10	16:17	9
Luke	24	23	2:14	15	21:1–4	8
			6:31	7	22:42	12
			10:37	5	23:34	18
John	21	20	8:7	5	15:19	7
			14:15	5	21:15–17	9
Acts	28	18	2:38	6		
Romans	16	14	12:19	11		
1 Corinthians	16	14	2:9	7	13:2–3	10
			11:11	12	13:5	5
2 Corinthians	13	8	4:17	6		
Galatians	6	5				
Ephesians	6	5	4:5	9		
1 Thessalonians	5	3	5:21	5		
2 Thessalonians	3	2				
1 Timothy	6	5				
2 Timothy	4	4				
Hebrews	13	11	12:6	10		
James	5	5	1:5	13		
1 Peter	5	5				

2 Peter	3	2				
1 John	5	4	**4:8**	5		
Revelation	22	16	**14:6**	10	**18:4**	9
			14:13	24		

Verses used 5+ times	Count	464
Total 52 Verses	Percentage of New Testament	31.06%

Major Themes and Uses of Biblical References in the *Millennial Star* and *Woman's Exponent*

While the sources of Church members' biblical references are enlightening, likely of more interest is the analysis of the content of those passages. To identify the major themes and uses of biblical references in the 1830s, Irving used the 53 verses in the Old Testament and the 59 verses in the New Testament that accounted for more than half of the total verses cited in the periodicals in the 1830s. His analysis of these passages led him to identify the following predominant themes: gospel uniformity, millennialism, primitive Church patterns, apostasy and restoration, and the special role of Israel.[30] While I initially intended to follow Irving's lead and concentrate my analysis on the most frequently used verses, as I went through my thousand-plus-page findings, I realized this would be insufficient for two main reasons: First, the most frequently used verses only account for roughly a quarter of the passages used in the 1880s and 1890s. Second, the verses most commonly cited were often used to stress multiple themes or purposes, depending on the context in which they were employed. Consequently, I determined to look at each passage and record why it was specifically being used in that instance and then look for major themes. The analysis below is based on those findings. I begin with the *Millennial Star* because of its higher frequency of scripture usage over the twenty-year period studied: 9,613 passages compared to 2,282 in the *Woman's Exponent*. It is worth noting that the *Millennial Star*'s greater number of scripture passages over the twenty-year period studied is in part due to it being a weekly rather than a bimonthly publication as was the *Woman's Exponent* and in part due to the greater number of articles that specifically

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30. Irving, "Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," 480, 483, 486–87.

expounded on gospel topics. Not surprisingly, with almost ten times the number of scriptures being analyzed in this study than in Irving's study (11,895 compared to Irving's 1,211), the number of major scriptural trends has increased. I have divided my findings for each of the periodicals into three tiers for easier access. Tier one contains themes that account for more than 10 percent of biblical usage in each respective magazine; tier two contains themes that account for 5 to 10 percent of biblical usage; and tier three contains themes that account for 3 to 5 percent of biblical usage.

Millennial Star *Tier One*

Jesus Christ is at the center of scripture usage in the *Millennial Star,* with almost 25 percent of the identified passages referring to him in some way. It is important to note, though, that most passages were identified as fitting into more than one category. For instance, Matthew 3:13–17 that relates the story of Jesus being baptized by John was tagged as teaching about both Christ and baptism. *Millennial Star* writers most frequently mentioned Christ in regard to descriptions of his nature. Many writers relied on scriptures to describe him in regard to characteristics of his mortal, physical body or to his physical body being separate from that of his Father.[31] Others used scriptures to highlight his specific character, including (most commonly) his forgiving nature, his exact obedience to his Father, his nature as being "not of this world," his perfection, and his love for all mankind.[32] After discussions of his nature, scriptures that connect to Christ most often explained how salvation comes only through Christ, the purposes and blessings of the Atonement, the necessity of being baptized as he was, or stories about his mortal existence.[33] Other themes of note within these Christ-centered passages include

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31. See J. Z. Stewart, "The Godhead," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 50 (December 12, 1887): 785–88; "A Dialogue," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 16 (April 16, 1883): 245–47; "A Friendly Discussion," *Millennial Star* 59, no. 32 (August 12, 1897): 497–511.

32. See "Characteristics of the Savior," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 30 (July 26, 1880): 473–75; Edward Isaacson, "A Jew's Reasons for Believing Jesus Christ to Be the Messiah," *Millennial Star* 50, no. 23 (June 4, 1888): 353–58; "The Foundation of Christ's Church," *Millennial Star* 43, no. 11 (March 14, 1881): 161–63.

33. See Moroni Snow, "Redemption and Regeneration," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 23 (June 7, 1880): 353–56; Hugh Findlay, "The Gospel an Antidote for the Ills of Man," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 7 (February 16, 1880): 102–3; Charles W. Stayner, "The King of Kings," *Millennial Star* 43, no. 9 (February 28, 1881): 129–31.

the Second Coming, resurrection through Christ, and prophets and apostles receiving authority from Christ and speaking for Christ.[34]

Perhaps because the *Millennial Star*'s primary objective was to share the gospel and uplift and teach members of the Church of Jesus Christ who were often relatively new converts, scriptures found their second most frequent usage (nearly 2,000 passages) in simply being a part of writers' efforts to provide summaries of scriptural texts or explanations of gospel principles (that is, what the principles were and how they differed from other religions' beliefs). These summaries gave easy-to-understand recaps of the events within Bible stories, often without naming any purpose for providing the story.[35] Summaries of the lives of various prophets and important scriptural figures, including Christ's life and ministry, also appeared frequently.[36] Many explanations of gospel principles were for lesser-understood doctrines or doctrines that would be new or different from what converts would have been taught in their prior faith traditions. These principles included tithing, the nature of Christ and God (including that they had bodies), celestial marriage, discerning spirits (including false spirits, human spirits, and spirits possessed by demons), preexistence, foreordination, resurrection, the Creation, the sacrament, and the gathering of Israel.[37] Sometimes even well-known gospel principles, such as charity, temperance, and Christ as our Savior, received this summary-explanation treatment as well.

Following the mention of Christ or summaries and explanations of biblical stories and gospel doctrines, the two most frequent deployments of scriptures (with over one thousand passages apiece) were, first, to refute the arguments of persecutors of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and, second, to argue for the necessity of modern-day

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34. See Hugh Findlay, "The Gospel an Antidote for the Ills of Man," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 7 (February 16, 1880): 102–3; Moroni Snow, "Redemption and Regeneration," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 23 (June 7, 1880): 353–56; "The Foundation of Christ's Church," *Millennial Star* 43, no. 11 (March 14, 1881): 161–63.

35. See "Isaac and Rebekah," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 11 (March 15, 1886): 174–75; B. W. Williams, "The Doctrine of the Bible in Regard to Temperance," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 29 (July 18, 1887): 452–55.

36. See E. Davis, "Our Savior and His Disciples," *Millennial Star* 47, no. 48 (November 30, 1885): 753–55.

37. See "Tithing," *Millennial Star* 46, no. 15 (April 14, 1884): 232–34; Moroni Snow, "Redemption and Regeneration," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 23 (June 7, 1880): 353–56; "The Word of Wisdom," *Millennial Star* 46, no. 11 (March 17, 1884): 168–70; "Discerning of Spirits," *Millennial Star* 58, no. 47 (November 19, 1896): 749–51.

revelation and prophets. Persecutors of the Church included, but were not limited to, the press, scientists, religious leaders, and governments, usually the U.S. government. To defend themselves from persecution, Church members who wrote in the *Millennial Star* included scriptures as part of their defenses of controversial Church policies and doctrines, including polygamy, personal revelation, God and Christ having bodies, modern-day prophets, temples, the truth of the Book of Mormon, foreordination, and the priesthood. There was also a great emphasis on using scriptures to correct other religions' doctrines, especially teachings about baptism and grace.[38] On occasion, the *Millennial Star* would publish literature antagonistic toward the Church paired with a rebuttal to that literature.[39] Similarly, the *Millennial Star* would also publish what were called "dialogues" between Church members and those of other faiths. The dialogues were conversations—sometimes fictional and scripted and sometimes based on actual conversations—in which the two people would debate various doctrines using numerous scriptures to legitimate their views.[40]

Likely because beliefs in modern-day revelation, prophecy, and prophets were among the most controversial doctrines taught by the Church of Jesus Christ, many *Millennial Star* articles addressed the reality of personal revelation, prophets and modern-day revelation, and the fulfillments of ancient prophecies. These articles used numerous scriptures to affirm that revelation is the basis of the gospel and that personal and modern-day revelation were standard in the ancient Church, even taking precedence over scripture.[41] Similar to their explication of revelation, writers used scriptures to demonstrate that prophets and prophecy were vital in the ancient Church as well as in the Church of Jesus

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38. See "Inconsistency among Opponents of the Truth," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 13 (March 27, 1882): 200–203; "Perverting the Scriptures," *Millennial Star* 59, no. 10 (March 11, 1897): 154–55.

39. See George Reynolds, "Objections to the Book of Mormon," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 14 (April 3, 1882): 213–15; B., "The Anti-'Mormon' Elements," *Millennial Star* 51, no. 37 (September 16, 1889): 584–88.

40. See E. H. Nye, "Letter from a 'Mormon' Elder to a Church of England Minister," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 51 (December 17, 1883): 812–14; J. H. A., "Mr. Duncan and the 'Mormons,'" *Millennial Star* 52, no. 42 (October 20, 1890): 657–60.

41. See Edward E. Brain, "Necessity of Continuous Revelation," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 22 (May 31, 1880): 337–40; W., "The 'Falling Away' from the Primitive Faith," *Millennial Star* 43, no. 4 (January 24, 1881): 51–54; John H. Kelson, "Answer to Mr. Conway's Objection to New Revelation," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 32 (August 9, 1886): 497–500.

Christ in the nineteenth century.[42] Prophecy, both ancient and modern, was believed to be literally fulfilled, and many articles used scriptures to show how biblical prophecies had been fulfilled with the Restoration of the gospel or would be fulfilled soon. These prophesies included warning prophecies, prophecies about the gathering of Israel, prophesies about the Apostasy and Restoration, prophesies about blessings for the righteous, and especially prophecies about the Second Coming.[43]

Millennial Star *Tier Two*

In the second tier of major scriptural trends in the *Millennial Star* are the themes of keeping the commandments and becoming a righteous Church member, baptism, the stages in the plan of salvation, and the concept of salvation itself. Writers for the *Millennial Star* frequently used scriptures to implore Church members to keep the commandments and be good members of the Church. Scriptures were an integral part of writers' exhortations for Church members to pray, pay tithing, be spiritually prepared, grow in all types of knowledge and wisdom, keep the Sabbath day holy, follow the Word of Wisdom, do good works, grow toward perfection, and be united with God and other members of the Church. Special emphasis was placed on building Zion; "building Zion" often meant that one should preach the gospel as well as provide physical assistance to others, such as the poor.[44] Using the scriptures to explicate the many qualities that should define a follower of Christ, writers encouraged Church members to be hardworking, serviceable, charitable, sincere, temperate, and devoted to the gospel.[45] Various individuals from the Bible served as examples of what to do or not do to be

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42. See R., "The Necessity of Continued Revelation," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 30 (July 25, 1887): 472–75; J. H. Paul, "Notes on the Apostasy," *Millennial Star* 59, no. 6 (February 11, 1897): 81–86.

43. See Hugh Findlay, "The Latter-day Kingdom a Necessity to the Fulfillment of Prophecy," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 16 (April 19, 1880): 244–46; C. F. Wilcox, "The Triumph of the Church," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 17 (April 24, 1882): 261; John Cooper, "The Gathering," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 8 (February 20, 1882): 116–17; Matthias F. Cowley, "Apostasy," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 13 (March 27, 1882): 197–99.

44. See A Student of Prophecy, "The Time Swiftly Approaches," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 11 (March 14, 1887): 161–65; "Preaching the Gospel," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 21 (May 23, 1887): 328–31; R., "Charity," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 28 (July 11, 1887): 440–44.

45. To teach and encourage discipleship, Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew 5–7, was particularly popular, with over 350 references.

a disciple of Christ.[46] Some writers used scriptures that warned against sin or chastised individuals, while others focused on the blessings individuals would receive from living the gospel.[47]

With over six hundred passages, baptism was the singular doctrine most commonly mentioned in the *Millennial Star* during the 1880s and 1890s. Four of the seven most frequently quoted scriptures—John 3:5, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, and 1 Corinthians 15:29—emphasize the centrality of baptism. Writers regularly used scriptures to stress the necessity of being baptized and more pointedly of being baptized properly—by immersion, with proper priesthood authority, and followed by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.[48] To establish ancient precedence for the Church of Jesus Christ's current baptismal practices, writers frequently mentioned John the Baptist and Paul.[49] They also used scriptures in their discussions on the symbolic nature of baptism and Christ's role in its efficacy.[50] Because baptism for the dead was a highly controversial topic, writers frequently turned to scriptures to argue that first-century Christians performed baptisms for the dead and to assert that the dead were taught the gospel so that they might have the opportunity to accept it and be baptized via proxy.[51]

Encapsulated in the topic stages in the plan of salvation are scriptures that writers used to address premortal life, the Creation, the Fall, the spirit world after death, the Resurrection and Final Judgment, or heaven and hell. While all these stages received repeated mention, the most oft-discussed stages were premortal life, the spirit world after death, and the Resurrection and Final Judgment. Concerning premortal life, many

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46. See M. A. Youlton, "Our Model," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 37 (September 10, 1883): 589–91; H. E. Bowring, "Shall We Be Like Them?" *Millennial Star* 48, no. 47 (November 22, 1886): 737–39.

47. See James J. Chandler, "An Exhortation and Warning to the Saints," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 41 (October 11, 1886): 652–53; G. O., "Blessings and Responsibilities of the Gospel," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 46 (November 15, 1886): 728–30.

48. See Scott W. Anderson, "Is Baptism Essential?" *Millennial Star* 43, no. 10 (March 7, 1881): 145–47; J. H. A., "Baptism, How and by Whom Administered," *Millennial Star* 54, no. 24 (June 13, 1892): 376–78.

49. See J. H. A., "Remission of Sins through Baptism," *Millennial Star* 54, no. 23 (June 6, 1892): 360–62; L. F. Monch, "The Book of Mormon, and the End of the World," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 14 (April 5, 1886): 209–13.

50. See Charles Kelly, "Baptism," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 1 (January 2, 1887): 1–6; "A New Tract," *Millennial Star* 58, no. 52 (December 24, 1896): 817–22.

51. See "Baptism for the Dead," *Millennial Star* 58, no. 1 (January 2, 1896): 10–11; J. H. A., "Baptism and Its Essentiality," *Millennial Star* 54, no. 22 (May 30, 1892): 344–46.

writers referred to Jeremiah as an example of foreordination and evidence of life before mortality: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee" (Jer. 1:5). Christ's foreordination to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world also appeared frequently.[52] When discussing the spirit world after death, most writers referenced either 1 Corinthians 15:29 or 1 Peter 4:6 to explain the necessity of missionary work in the spirit world.[53] When discussing the Resurrection and Final Judgment, writers used scriptures to explain the differing degrees of glory among resurrected bodies and heavenly kingdoms as well as the universal nature of the Resurrection and Christ's role as redeemer and judge.[54]

With over 500 references, the concept of salvation itself, most often focusing on how individuals obtain salvation, matched closely the popularity of the other themes within this tier. While many writers used scriptures to explain how faith, hope, repentance, and baptism were necessary requirement for salvation,[55] the predominant idea discussed by a substantial margin was the necessity of combining work with grace to obtain salvation. Most popular were the scriptural accounts of Jesus Christ's and James's explanations of the principle of work in conjunction with grace (Matt. 7:21 and James 2:20).[56] While Christ's role as redeemer was not specifically referenced in most of these discussions, his role is mentioned implicitly through his connection to grace.

Millennial Star *Tier Three*

Obtaining a place in the third tier of major scriptural trends in the *Millennial Star* are topics that appeared in between 350 and 500 passages, namely priesthood and proper authority, the Apostasy and Restoration, the nature of God the Father, and missionary work. The Church's

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52. See "The Lord's Own," *Millennial Star* 50, no. 13 (March 26, 1888): 200–203; Edward Stevenson, "Pre-existence of Spirits and Immortality of the Soul," *Millennial Star* 46, no. 34 (August 25, 1884): 529–32.

53. See G. O., "The Atonement," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 7 (February 15, 1886): 104–7; Edward Stevenson, "The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 23 (June 7, 1886): 366–68.

54. See O. F. Whitney, "Discourse," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 31 (August 2, 1886): 481–85; J. H. A., "Obtaining Freedom," *Millennial Star* 54, no. 27 (July 4, 1892): 424–26.

55. See G. O., "Faith and Works," *Millennial Star* 54, no. 29 (July 18, 1892): 456–58; Peter Elliot, "Conversation between a Church of England Preacher and a Young Latter-day Saint," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 39 (September 24, 1883): 611–15.

56. See Charles F. Wilcox, "All Things Governed by Law," *Millennial Star* 43, no. 32 (August 8, 1881): 502–3; "Faith without Works," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 29 (July 17, 1882): 456–58.

emphasis on priesthood and proper authority distinguished it from most other faiths in the nineteenth century. Many writers relied on scriptures to discuss the need for ordinances such as baptism to be performed by those holding proper authority.[57] They likewise turned to scriptures to argue that the priesthood, which enabled this proper authority, was only to be found within the Church of Jesus Christ. Scriptures were also an integral part of describing the organization of the priesthood, the keys of the priesthood, and the two types of priesthood (Aaronic and Melchizedek).[58] To show scriptural and historical precedence of the priesthood, writers explained that people like Adam, Noah, Moses, Elias, Abraham, Malachi, Isaac, Jacob, and the Apostles had held priesthood keys. Using these biblical individuals, writers argued for the necessity of modern-day prophets and the priesthood keys they held.[59]

A closely related dominant theme in the *Millennial Star* was proving the reality of the Apostasy and subsequent Restoration of Christ's church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Validating the existence of the Apostasy was essential to establishing the need for the Restoration; consequently, *Millennial Star* authors carefully provided scriptures that not only supported the existence of the Apostasy but also provided explanations and definitions of what the Great Apostasy was.[60] While some writers used scriptures to show that the Apostasy and Restoration had scriptural precedence, other writers used scriptures about priesthood authority and priesthood leaders like Moses, Abraham, Elijah, and Malachi to argue that a restoration had occurred again through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[61]

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57. See R., "Suggestions to Elders," *Millennial Star* 50, no. 32 (August 6, 1888): 504–7; B., "The Authority of the Elders," *Millennial Star* 57, no. 28 (July 11, 1895): 440–41.

58. See Moroni Snow, "Authority," *Millennial Star* 42, no. 54 (February 2, 1880): 68–71; Joseph F. Smith, "Restoration of the Melchisedek Priesthood," *Millennial Star* 51, no. 25 (June 24, 1889): 385–90.

59. See "Authority in the Church of Christ," *Millennial Star* 54, no. 5 (February 1, 1892): 65–69; "The Foundation of Christ's Church," *Millennial Star* 43, no. 11 (March 14, 1881): 161–63; Joseph Smith, "Priesthood," *Millennial Star* 44, no. 31 (July 31, 1882): 481–84.

60. See Thomas Y. Stanford, "The Apostasy, and Discrepancies in Christianity," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 14 (April 4, 1887): 209–15; Joseph A. A. Bunot, "Great and General Apostasy of the Churches," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 26 (June 25, 1883): 401–5.

61. See H. A. Tuckett, "Did Christ Establish a Church?" *Millennial Star* 57, no. 46 (November 14, 1895): 725–27; Edwin F. Parry, "Joseph Smith's Divine Mission," *Millennial Star* 59, no. 10 (March 11, 1897): 145–52.

Similarly, the nature of God the Father was likely a prominent scriptural theme in the *Millennial Star* because writers wanted to convey the Church's distinctive beliefs about God, namely that God has a physical body and is a separate being from Jesus Christ.[62] Not surprisingly, these are the aspects of God's nature most frequently mentioned in the pages of the *Millennial Star*. Writers also frequently turned to scriptures to discuss God dwelling in heaven, his role as creator and judge, and his work to bring forth the salvation of humankind.[63] Common characteristics attributed to God and supported by biblical passages included his consistency and dependability, his justice and mercy, his forgiveness and jealousy, his omniscience and omnipotence, and of course his great love for mankind. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," was one of the ten most frequently cited verses in the *Millennial Star*.[64]

Because sharing and teaching the gospel was the stated aim of the *Millennial Star,* it is not surprising to find individuals turning to the scriptures to explicitly encourage missionary work. Most biblical references to missionary work in the *Millennial Star* mention or imply its overarching importance regarding the approaching Second Coming of Christ or its status as a commandment from Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).[65] Writers also frequently referenced events from Christ's life that showed him to be the ideal missionary and reminded readers of the biblical prophecies about the gospel being taught to every nation and the kingdom of God filling the earth.[66] Other themes of note that appeared in at least 200 biblical passages were the last days and the Second Coming, the nature and gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gathering of Israel and establishment of Zion.

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62. See "A Dialogue," *Millennial Star* 45, no. 16 (April 16, 1883): 245–47; A. T., "The God We Worship," *Millennial Star* 59, no. 19 (May 13, 1897): 289–91.

63. See S. W. Richards, "God and Life," *Millennial Star* 47, no. 28 (July 13, 1885): 436–39; "Sermon by President Wilford Woodruff," *Millennial Star* 51, no. 14 (April 8, 1889): 209–12; "A Fair Report," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 3 (January 17, 1887): 43–46.

64. See "The Only True God," *Millennial Star* 48, no. 41 (October 11, 1886): 648–51; A. T., "The God We Worship," *Millennial Star* 59, no. 19 (May 13, 1897): 289–91.

65. See N. T. Porter, "One Unchangeable Gospel," *Millennial Star* 56, no. 47 (November 19, 1894): 740–42; G. O., "To the Missionaries," *Millennial Star* 47, no. 23 (June 8, 1885): 360–61.

66. See "Divine Ecclesiasticism," *Millennial Star* 49, no. 22 (May 30, 1887): 337–39; "Discourse," *Millennial Star* 51, no. 23 (June 10, 1889): 353–55.

Woman's Exponent *Tier One*

Turning to the *Woman's Exponent*, we find significant overlap with and variation from the *Millennial Star*. The most noteworthy variation involves the two clearly dominant purposes for employing scripture in the *Woman's Exponent*—to provide instruction for living a righteous life and to support women's advancement.

Accounting for nearly 20 percent of all scripture references in the *Woman's Exponent* (over 400 passages), the leading use of scripture in the *Woman's Exponent* was to provide instructions on how to lead a good and righteous life—a life that would presumably lead one to be saved.[67] Often, writers incorporated scriptures as part of their exhortations on the necessity of developing Christlike attributes such as humility, love, mercy, forgiveness, and faith.[68] The Christlike attribute most frequently mentioned (much more than any other attribute) was charity. Writers used scriptures to describe charity in the physical sense (giving to the poor and comforting people) and also in the sense of Christ's love for everyone (including love for enemies and persecutors).[69] In addition to encouraging the development of Christlike attributes, writers for the *Woman's Exponent* regularly offered advice on how to be a good member of the Church of Jesus Christ. They used scriptures to urge readers to keep the commandments, develop their talents, read scriptures, repent, be unified in the Church, keep the Sabbath day holy, resist temptation, and share the gospel message.[70] Writers also frequently relied on scriptures to encourage readers to trust God and to be steadfast and immovable in their devotion to God and his Church. While some writers employed scriptures to warn readers of what would occur if they did not follow the commandments of God, much more often they employed

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67. For a good overview, see Zion's Convert, "Our Character," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 20–21 (March 15 and April 1, 1896): 132.

68. See Ida, "Humility," *Woman's Exponent* 14, no. 11 (November 1, 1885): 81; M. A. Welch, "Forgiveness," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 24 (May 15, 1883): 188–89; Susie Stephenson, "Faith," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 3 (July 1, 1889): 19.

69. Emma M. Myers, "Charity," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 7 (September 1, 1887): 51; Mary Ellen Kimball, "True Charity," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 22 (April 15, 1882): 169; L. L. Greene Richards, "Charity and Labor," *Woman's Exponent* 28, no. 4 (July 15, 1899): 28.

70. B. M., "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 7 (September 1, 1881): 50; S. A. Fullmer, "A Few Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 1 (June 1, 1888): 3; Homespun, "Talk," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 23 (May 1, 1881): 178; Mary Y. Corby, "Sympathy," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 3 (August 1, 1891): 19; Mary J. Morrison, "The Sabbath Day," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 1 (June 1, 1884): 3.

scriptures to remind readers of the promises and blessings that awaited those who faithfully followed Christ.[71]

What is perhaps most intriguing from a gender perspective is that following scriptures used as instruction on living a virtuous life, writers for the *Woman's Exponent* most often employed scriptures to assert women's equality, gendered capabilities and worth, or increasing expansion into public realms. That nearly 250 references (or over 12 percent of all scripture passages) are used in the service of improving women's position is unsurprising when one remembers the *Woman's Exponent*'s express focus on women and women's issues.[72] Writers repeatedly turned to the Creation narrative in the first chapter of Genesis or recounted Paul's words, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11), to validate their argument that men and women are equal before God.[73] They also commonly used scriptures to explain what they saw as women's special responsibilities to unify, comfort, uplift, and defend the Church.[74] They often turned to scripture stories involving biblical women such as Eve, Ruth, Sarah, Rachel, Deborah, Miriam, and Mary to promote their ideals of Christian womanhood or their arguments for the expansion of women's sphere.[75] Through these scriptures, writers regularly

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71. E. B. Wells, "Relief Society Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 22 (April 15, 1896): 142; Margaret V. Taylor, "Salt Lake Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 26, no. 17 (February 1, 1898): 246; Mary Ann M. Pratt, "The Way of the Transgressor is Hard," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 17 (February 1, 1885): 133–34.

72. This represents 248 of 1,999 passages, or 12.4 percent. By and large, writers for the *Woman's Exponent* sought to portray Mormon women as capable, intelligent, independent agents with crucial roles to play in society and God's kingdom. They often sought to raise the status of motherhood and women's domestic labor even as they advocated expanding women's field of action. Likewise, they extolled women's unique virtues in relation to men's even as they asserted women's fundamental equality with men.

73. See L. E. H., "Woman in Politics," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 3 (July 1, 1882): 17–18; "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 8 (September 15, 1887): 63.

74. See "Women's Meetings and Conferences," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 6 (August 15, 1890): 45–46; "Relief Society Jubilee—Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 18 (April 1, 1892): 140–44; Elizabeth B. Smith, "Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1890): 3; Z. D. H. Y., "A Few Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 23, nos. 9–10 (November 1 and 15, 1894): 204–5.

75. See Aunt Em [pseudonym for Emmeline B. Wells], "The Integrity of Ruth," *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 12 (November 15, 1878): 89; Adelia B. Cox Sidwell, "Women of the Bible," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 17 (February 1, 1890): 136; J. E. C., "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 4 (July 15, 1883): 29; Ruby Lamont, "Sonnets of the Virgin Mary," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 4 (July 15, 1895): 25.

showed how women acquired influence and success as they remained pure, chaste, and good. These expressions of women's exalted piety and purity were standard fare in nineteenth-century America and Great Britain; thus, many of these writers fit nicely within the ranks of the nineteenth-century interpreters and female activists who used the Bible to illustrate the power women wielded within traditional gender behaviors and relationships and how familial roles were not limiting or disempowering but expansive.[76] To advocate for women having the vote and a larger role in society, writers deployed scriptural stories involving biblical women such as Deborah, Miriam, and Huldah to recall the respect women had received anciently from men and more importantly from God.[77]

Recognizing these two dominant themes helps explain why writers for the *Woman's Exponent* turned to the Old Testament 34.44 percent of the time while writers for the *Millennial Star* turned to the Old Testament only 22.54 percent of the time. The three books that writers for the *Woman's Exponent* used at a significantly higher rate were Genesis, Psalms, and Proverbs. The most frequently used verses in Genesis and Proverbs, focusing most often on Eve and the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31, were consistently used to assert women's worth and equality with men. The other verses cited from Proverbs provided concise teaching statements for developing a moral character, such as "Pride goeth before destruction" (Prov. 16:18) or "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). Likewise, the verses used from Psalms encouraged desired behaviors or explained attributes of the Lord. Writers for the *Woman's Exponent* appear to have cited the Old Testament at a higher frequency because it includes more examples of female role models, and the succinct verses from Psalms and Proverbs were those that many individuals in nineteenth-century America memorized as part of their daily devotions.

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76. For a more detailed look at how Latter-day Saint women were using biblical women in the *Woman's Exponent*, see Amy Easton-Flake, "Biblical Women in the *Woman's Exponent*: Nineteenth-Century Mormon Women Interpret the Bible," in *The Bible in American Life,* ed. Philip Goff, Arthur E. Farnsley II, and Peter J. Thuesen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 93–97.

77. See E. B. Wells, "Be Wise and Hearken to Counsel," *Woman's Exponent* 5, no. 11 (November 1, 1876), 84; E. B. Wells, "Wise Women," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 10 (October 15, 1879): 76; Ella F. Smith, "Woman's Mind Equal to Man's," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 22 (April 15, 1890): 177.

Woman's Exponent *Tier Two*

Meriting a place in the second tier of major scriptural trends in the *Woman's Exponent* are those topics that have between 150 and 200 references associated with them, namely polygamy, Christ, defense against persecution, and the nature of humankind and their relationship with God.

Statistics on the frequency of scriptures defending polygamy are interesting because after President Wilford Woodruff issued the manifesto ending polygamy in 1890, all discussion of polygamy in the *Woman's Exponent* came to an abrupt halt. Consequently, the 174 scripture passages used to defend polygamy all occurred between 1880 and 1890 and account for 14 percent of all biblical passages during that decade. Similarly, nearly 10 percent of all editorials in the *Woman's Exponent* from 1871 until 1890 were devoted to vigorously defending the practice.[78] Writers of these editorials regularly turned to scriptures to show that polygamy was authorized by God and to call into question fellow Christians who denounced the Church for following God's command while still honoring biblical prophets who practiced polygamy anciently.[79] They also pointed to the practice of plural marriage as evidence that members of the Church were the inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant.[80] Worth noting is that all of these arguments may be found throughout the *Millennial Star* as well; they simply make up a smaller percentage (only 1 percent) of all scripture passages and thus did not receive prior mention.[81] The one scripture-based plural-marriage argument that seems distinct to women is seeing the Lord's answering of Hagar's, Sarah's, and Hannah's prayers as evidence of his divine approval of plural marriage and his watchful care over plural wives both

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78. Carol-Cornwall Madsen, "Voices in Print: The *Woman's Exponent,* 1872–1914," in *Women Steadfast in Christ: Talks Selected from the 1991 Women's Conference* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 72.

79. "Mormonism Will Live," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 20 (March 15, 1881): 156; Mary J. Morrison, "Celestial Marriage," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 17 (February 1, 1882): 135; Mary Ann Merrill Pratt, "Views on Plural Marriage," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 13 (December 1, 1886): 97–98; Sarah Sudweeks, "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 16 (January 15, 1887): 124–25.

80. See "A Few Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 1 (June 1, 1877), 3; Mary Ann M. Pratt, "Scripture Testimony for Plural Marriage," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 13 (December 1, 1884), 99.

81. Ninety-two out of 8,773 scriptures in the *Millennial Star* reference polygamy.

in ancient times and in the nineteenth century.[82] The marked disparity in frequency between the two publications underlines differences in audience, authors, and purposes of the two periodicals. Writers for the *Woman's Exponent* viewed the journal as a place for them to defend and promote their religious faith and way of life. It could be said that the *Woman's Exponent* focused more on the practical and the *Millennial Star* more on the theoretical. Antipolygamy legislation and sentiments had a very tangible impact on women's lives in the Mountain West; consequently, defending polygamy and their freedom to worship how they chose was at the forefront of the journal.

When we turn to the two middle-tier themes that were also prevalent in the *Millennial Star,* important distinctions between how writers in the *Woman's Exponent* and writers in the *Millennial Star* employed scriptures become clearer. For instance, looking at scriptures that speak to the theme of persecution of the Church of Jesus Christ, we find that writers in the *Millennial Star* most often used scriptures to argue that the Church's position on a number of different issues was correct. In contrast, with the exception of polygamy, a reliance on scriptures to defend the Church against specific attacks is noticeably absent in the *Woman's Exponent*. Instead, writers within the *Woman's Exponent* most often employed scriptures to comfort those who were facing persecution. These writers turned to scriptures to show how persecution was an indication of the truthfulness of the Church and a sign that its members were God's chosen people.[83] Scriptures readily illustrated that Satan was at the source of persecution, that persecution was a sign of the times, and that God was aware of his people's plight and would avenge them.[84] Writers regularly cited scriptures that encouraged readers to exercise an active faith and to recognize that God is leading his Church and will

82. Amy Easton-Flake, "Biblical Women in the *Woman's Exponent*," 97–98. For primary examples, see Sarah A. Fullmer, "Our Franchise," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 24 (May 15, 1883): 185; A Plural Wife, "My Views on Celestial, Plural Marriage," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 15 (January 1, 1887): 115.

83. See A Plural Wife, "Thoughts on the Times," *Woman's Exponent* 14, no. 17 (February 1, 1886): 131; Susannah Heiner, "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 18 (February 15, 1884): 143.

84. See Lula, "A View—February 1885," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 18 (February 15, 1885): 141; M. A. P. Hyde, "A Woman's Testimony," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 22 (April 15, 1884): 169–70; One Who Knows, "Comments," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 2 (June 15, 1882): 9–10; Ruth, "An Emphatic Protest," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 7 (September 1, 1886): 51.

make everything right in the end.[85] In comparison to the writers for the *Millennial Star,* writers for the *Woman's Exponent* seemed much more interested in providing their readers solace for the persecution they faced than defending themselves against the persecution they received for particular beliefs.

Similar distinctions are found in the way writers in the *Woman's Exponent* versus writers in the *Millennial Star* used scriptures to discuss Christ. While scriptures about Christ in the *Millennial Star* most frequently expounded on Christ's nature and life or how he makes salvation possible, scriptures in the *Woman's Exponent* most frequently focused on the role Christ played in individuals' lives as a model, mentor, and enabler.[86] Writers in the *Woman's Exponent* regularly used scriptures to embolden their readers to follow Christ's teachings and strive to emulate him. Using Christ's example as recorded in the scriptures, they encouraged readers to imitate the Savior in his communion with God, his treatment of others, his eschewing of all temptations, his path of perfection, his longsuffering, and his willingness to submit his will to God's.[87] Charity was the most frequently discussed characteristic of Christ, as writers habitually emphasized Christ's example in the scriptures to encourage readers to display greater kindness and charity, at times toward specific situations or groups of people and at times as general guidance of righteous living.[88] Writers repeatedly cited scriptures to implore readers to look forward to Christ's Second Coming and to be ready for his return.[89] At times, writers also included scriptures to teach of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, and divinity, but these

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85. "Some Important Matters," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 24 (May 15, 1885): 188; M. Holden, "A Few Evening Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 14, no. 11 (November 1, 1885): 81.

86. Camelia, "Passing Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 4 (September 1, 1893): 27; Zion's Convert, "The Good Shepherd," *Woman's Exponent* 26, no. 7 (September 1, 1897): 188; Mary Y. Corby, "Sympathy," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 3 (August 1, 1891): 19.

87. Mary Y. Corby, "Communion," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 17 (March 15, 1892): 129; Zion's Convert, "Food for Thought," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 3 (August 1, 1892): 22–23; M. E. Kimball, "The Gifts of the Gospel," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 22 (May 15, 1891): 171.

88. Mary Y. Corby, "Lord, Is It I?" *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 7 (October 1, 1891): 55; "The Present Conditions," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 15 (April 1, 1894): 116; "The Relief Society Jubilee," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 14 (January 15 and February 1, 1892): 108.

89. Mary Ann M. Pratt, "The Coming of the Savior," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 4 (July 15, 1890): 32; Zion's Convert, "Reflections of a Pioneer," *Woman's Exponent* 26, no. 11–12 (November 1 and 15, 1897): 211.

instances were in the minority.[90] Conversely, writers for the *Millennial Star* did use scriptures to implore readers to follow Christ's example and to teach of the purposes and blessings of the Atonement, but these instances did not constitute the majority of scriptures regarding Christ. Likely in part because the *Millennial Star* was geared to new converts and the *Woman's Exponent* to female members living in the Mountain West, writers for the *Millennial Star* were often more interested in expounding on the nature of Christ and teaching the faith's understandings of him while writers for the *Woman's Exponent* were more invested in how Christ's example could compel readers toward greater sanctification.

This significant distinction in each publication's emphasis to focus more on fundamental ideas and doctrine (*Millennial Star*) or personal application (*Woman's Exponent*) comes through again in the last topic to merit a place in the second tier of the *Woman's Exponent*'s scriptural themes: the nature of humankind and its relationship with God. Scriptures in this category most often emphasized the blessings individuals receive from God, the protection and love God offers humankind, the superior wisdom and knowledge God possesses, and humanity's divine potential to become like God.[91] Possessing this recognition of God's love, blessings, and plan for humankind, writers in turn regularly used scriptures to encourage readers to trust God and submit to his will.[92] The emphasis of this topic is clearly on how an understanding of God through the scriptures enables and motivates individuals to interact with him appropriately. In contrast, the related, yet significantly distinct, topic that appeared regularly in the *Millennial Star* was the nature of God, explicating the Church's teachings about God that were either similar to or distinct from other religious traditions.

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90. Phebe C. Young, "Christmas," *Woman's Exponent* 14, no. 14 (December 15, 1885): 105; Mary Y. Corby, "Sympathy," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 3 (August 1, 1891): 19.

91. M. E. Kimball, "What of the Opposite Element," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 6 (August 15, 1887): 45; S. A. Fullmer, "Woman's Voice," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 21 (April 1, 1883): 167; Emily B. Spencer, "The Opposing Party," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 18 (February 15, 1882): 144; M. E. Kimball, "Reflections on the Past," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 11 (December 1, 1891): 86, 84 (article continued from page 86 to 84, which was mislabeled also as page 86).

92. Eliza Woods Wallin, "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 6 (August 15, 1881): 45; "Elizabeth Howard," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 18 (March 15, 1893): 140–41; "Agitation Is Educational," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 3 (August 1, 1891): 20.

Woman's Exponent *Tier Three*

The last scriptural trends we will discuss are the two topics—the last days and the Second Coming, and children and parenting—that had between 70 and 100 passages associated with them. Known as *Latter-day* Saints, the writers of the *Woman's Exponent* believed that they were living in the last days and must prepare for the Second Coming.[93] They cited scriptures that explained the signs and nature of the Second Coming in order to help and inspire readers to prepare for this event.[94] Many of the scriptural references quoted in the *Woman's Exponent* indicated that prophecies about the Second Coming were being fulfilled, specifically prophecies about the destruction and devastation of the earth and the decay of people and society.[95] Writers frequently used scriptures as evidence that the current gathering in Utah was the foretold restoration of Zion, and they encouraged readers to become the beacon on the hill.[96] Some writers also used scriptures to emphasize the special role they believed women had in preparing the Saints and the earth for the Second Coming.[97]

In the *Woman's Exponent,* writers often discussed children, sometimes giving advice on how to properly raise them and other times

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93. See Jemima, "Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 23 (May 1, 1882): 179; Elizabeth B. Smith, "Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1890): 3; Mary Ann M. Pratt, "The Coming of the Savior," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 4 (July 15, 1890): 32; "R. S., Y. L. M. I. A., and P. A. Reports—Emery Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 11 (December 1, 1891): 84; Matthew 25:1–13 (parable of the ten virgins).

94. See M. E. Kimball, "The True Church," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 2 (June 15, 1882): 15; "The Times Are Significant," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 8 (September 15, 1886): 60; "The Year of Grace 1891," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 14 (January 1, 1891): 108.

95. See Aunt Em, "The Days of Our Grandmothers," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 6 (August 15, 1881): 47; Frances B. Hart, "Fulfilment of Prophecy," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 22 (April 15, 1882): 173; Mary J. Morrison, "Destruction and Desolation Yet to Come," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 16 (January 15, 1884): 122; M. E. K., "Are We Worthy?" *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 14 (December 15, 1895): 90; "The Comet," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 3 (July 1, 1881): 20; Mary Ann M. Pratt, "Things of Reality Dictated by the Spirit of Truth," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 21 (April 1, 1888): 161; "The Times Are Significant," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 8 (September 15, 1886): 60.

96. "Jubilee Celebration," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 1880): 20; Hannah T. King, "The City of the Saints," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 17 (February 1, 1882): 129.

97. See A Member, "Utah County Silk Association," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 7 (September 1, 1880): 56; Elizabeth B. Smith, "Reflections," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1890): 3; Mary Ann M. Pratt, "The Coming of the Savior," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 4 (July 15, 1890): 32.

emphasizing their great worth. At times writers incorporated scriptures into these discussions of children and parenting. Most often these scriptures reminded women of their responsibility to guide, protect, and teach their children.[98] At times, writers used scriptures to comfort women and buoy them up in their difficult task and other times to remind them that God would hold them accountable for teaching their children the gospel.[99] The most common refrain regarding children, though, was to see them and treat them as Christ did: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14).[100]

Conclusion

Taking a step back to see what conclusions we may draw from a close, in many ways statistical, analysis of scripture usage in the *Millennial Star* and the *Woman's Exponent,* we may reasonably conclude that distinctions along gender lines do exist. Women, as shown in the *Woman's Exponent,* were more apt to turn to scriptures for practical purposes—to acquire instruction for daily living, to bolster their position as women, to find comfort and solace, and to inspire greater effort through learning from Christ's example. In contrast, men, as shown in the *Millennial Star,* were more apt to use scriptures to establish an understanding of various faith tenets, such as an understanding of Christ, God, baptism, prophets, prophecies, revelation, priesthood, apostasy, restoration, and the plan of salvation. To say that women did not write about these distinguishing Church doctrines would be inaccurate, since scriptures relating to these doctrines do appear throughout the pages of the *Woman's Exponent.* Similarly, it would be inaccurate to say that men did not use the scriptures to provide instructions on daily living and other practical purposes, since scriptures speaking to these purposes appear frequently throughout the *Millennial Star.* However, the vast statistical

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98. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes in Nauvoo, and Incidents from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 9 (October 1, 1883): 71; Zina D. H. Young, "To the Sisters," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 19 (June 15, 1894): 148; see D. E. Dudley, "Home," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 20 (March 15, 1885): 155.

99. Mary Ann M. Pratt, "Training Children," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 11 (November 1, 1887): 81; Hannah T. King, "Babyhood," *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 8 (September 15, 1880): 62; K. L. C., "Scattered Thoughts," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 17 (February 1, 1889): 131.

100. The Standard, "The Baby," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 16 (February 15, 1891): 125; Ida May Smith, "Benefits of Primary Association," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 6 (August 15, 1890): 48.

discrepancies between occurrences of these various scripture usages indicate distinctions along gender lines, thus reconfirming the necessity of bringing women's employment of scriptures into any study that seeks to understand how individuals read scriptures.

Distinctions in scripture usage between the *Woman's Exponent* and the *Millennial Star* also indicate that lay members of the Church of Jesus Christ—whether they be men or women—were not simply repeating the exegesis of their Church leaders but instead were using the Bible to address their own needs and situations—to affirm life decisions, to gain comfort, to understand and promote a devout life, and to explain the doctrines of the faith they chose to follow. So while the male leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has produced the majority of recorded biblical interpretation and has had a great influence on the way members of the Church interpret and use the scriptures, there is still a great need for studies such as this that seek to access lay members' use of scripture so that we may begin to uncover and realize the significance of scriptures in the lives of the Latter-day Saint people and how that looks different across time, location, gender, and age.

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His Body Breaks

His body breaks
long before he
hangs on the cross.
He feels it in
the slow drag
of sickness
picked up
from crowds,
in the joints
worn thin
from long
walks, the
strain of
forty-day
fasts.

He is held
together with
God and glue
by Golgotha.

Eloi eloi,
he allows
himself at last,
lama
sabachthani?

—James Goldberg

This poem won honorable mention
in the 2020 Clinton F. Larson Poetry
Contest, sponsored by BYU Studies.

The Danite Constitution and Theories of Democratic Justice in Frontier America

Benjamin E. Park

Most modern Americans define liberty as the freedom to *do* things: freedom to speak, freedom to congregate, freedom to vote, freedom to worship. That is, we define it in proactive terms. But in early America, many citizens were just as likely to define liberty as freedom *from* things: freedom not to be taxed without representation, freedom not to be unjustly imprisoned, or freedom not to be oppressed. In other words, they defined it in preventive terms. And among Americans in the 1830s, perhaps the most poignant political discussion concerned the freedom to not be forcibly removed from the land on which they lived. That such a question was at the forefront of political discourse demonstrated the tumultuous nature of rights and liberties in an age of expansion and colonization.[1]

This dynamic—debates over who should belong and who should be expelled—is perhaps most poignantly captured in a fascinating and overlooked document written by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the summer of 1838. That June, leaders of a clandestine and controversial group officially titled the "Society of the Daughters of Zion," but colloquially known as the Danites, penned a new constitution for their secretive society. "We the members of the society of the Daughter of Zion," the constitution declared, "do agree to regulate ourselves under such laws as in righteousness shall be deemed

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1. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Samantha Seeley, "Beyond the American Colonization Society," *History Compass* 14, no. 3 (March 2016): 93–104.

necessary for the preservation of our holy religion."[2] The document was filled with republican language even as it subtly challenged existing democratic systems. Further, the decree instituted a new representative institution outside traditional political structures, a society that blended republicanism and vigilante justice. It is therefore a significant, if often underanalyzed, example of democratic innovation during the antebellum period, and its contents represent a fissure within America's constitutional tradition.[3]

The Danite body was no more than a few weeks old by the time they penned their constitution, but they were anxious to formalize themselves as a political organization. The Latter-day Saint community had recently experienced—and, at least to that point, had appeared to survive—an internal crisis, but they were now preparing for a growing conflict with external forces. They knew they were traversing difficult soil. Yet members of the Danite crew were aware that any appeal to political sovereignty required traditional validation. That they were now writing their own constitution reflected both their pressing desire for formal justification and their broader commitment to, yet frustration with, America's more traditional constitutional system. After concluding that local and state authorities were no longer willing to support them—particularly, their right to remain on their land—they were ready to formulate more radical forms of protection, including vigilante mobilization.

Historians of the Latter-day Saint tradition have often dissected the origins, members, and activities of the Danites—and much has been made about Joseph Smith's involvement with the group—but what often gets overlooked is how this nascent organization drew from a broader political tradition of rights and belonging within a democratic society. The society was more than just a replication of frontier vigilante justice. Indeed, the creation of the Danites—as well as its constitution—represented the culmination of tense discussions concerning who can and

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2. A transcript of the constitution is reproduced in Sampson Avard's witness testimony in "Minutes and Testimonies, 12–29 November 1838 [*State of Missouri v. Gates et al. for Treason*]," p. 10, The Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers .org/paper-summary/minutes-and-testimonies-12-29-november-1838-state-of-missouri -v-gates-et-al-for-treason/10.

3. General overviews of the Danites are found in Leland H. Gentry, "The Danite Band of 1838," *BYU Studies* 14, no. 4 (1974): 421–50; Stephen C. LeSueur, "The Danites Reconsidered: Were They Vigilantes or Just the Mormons' Version of the Elks Club?" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 14 (1994): 35–51; Alexander L. Baugh, "'We Have a Company of Danites in These Times': The Danites, Joseph Smith, and the 1838 Missouri-Mormon Conflict," *Journal of Mormon History* 45, no. 3 (July 2019): 1–25.

cannot reside within a particular community. It looked both outward toward Missouri neighbors and inward toward Mormon dissenters. The Danite constitution was the Latter-day Saint attempt to stake their political right to not be forcibly removed while also justifying their liberty to define the boundaries of their own community.

This article traces the intellectual genealogy for this debate in an attempt to accomplish two objectives: first, to add layers to what happened in Far West, Missouri, in spring and summer 1838, including a better understanding of why the Saints were seen as so threatening to their neighbors and how the members of the faith justified their decision to fight back; and second, to better understand the broader antebellum culture's struggle to define constitutional rights in an era where majoritarian rule seemed to verge on outright oppression. This article then concludes by highlighting how the actions in Missouri set the stage for another constitution written six years later in Nauvoo, another moment in which the Saints' seemingly radical actions reflected broader political anxieties. Indeed, America's democratic tradition is rife with moments of defining conflict, and the Mormon-Missouri War should be understood as exemplifying that uneven trajectory.[4]

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When missionaries sent by Joseph Smith first arrived in Missouri in early 1831, the state had existed for only a little more than a decade. Yet much had already happened during that period. Missouri was part of the Louisiana Territory acquired from France in 1803, and America viewed this western region, previously separated by the Mississippi River and claimed by competing empires, as a land ripe for expansion and colonization. The nature of that colonizing process, however, was contested. Thomas Jefferson, president at the time of the purchase, hoped it would be a land of yeomen farmers expanding what he called the "empire for liberty," as new settlements would build a growing system of free-market labor and republican rule. To many, this westward experiment represented the bold possibilities of America's imperial ambitions to

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4. For the Mormon-Missouri War, I have relied upon Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987); Alexander L. Baugh, "A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1996; Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2000); Leland Homer Gentry and Todd M. Compton, *Fire and the Sword: A History of Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836–39* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2010), 169–394.

eventually conquer the entire continent and introduce their system of democratic governance.[5]

Yet that anticipated trajectory went askew from the start, in two different yet correlated directions. First, the invention of the cotton gin increased the profitability of the slave institution, and a large number of immigrants from southern states quickly turned the Missouri territory, one of the first territories carved out of the broader Louisiana Purchase, into a region dominated by slaveholders. The fertile land and access to the Mississippi River was too inviting to large plantation owners to give up, and they swiftly wrested control away from farmers and White laborers. The capitalist empire, in which Missouri would play a key role, now revolved around slavery, a decision reflected in the infamous Missouri Compromise of 1820 that secured Missouri as a slave state and assured slavery a place in the American West. It also confirmed what had long been assumed: American settlement in this new territory required the forced removal of Indigenous populations who currently resided on its land.[6]

A second departure from America's effort to introduce democratic government across the continent involved the state of Missouri. This new state was envisioned to be a hallmark for America's democratic potential, evidence that the nation was filled with citizens capable of orderly self-rule, but instead Missouri soon became known for its extralegal action and widespread violence. Because federal authority was often absent on the frontier—and Missouri was as "frontier" as possible—citizens were wont to take justice into their own hands. Majoritarian will often sanctioned swift decisions and punishments. Those who wished for more stable forms of justice were aghast at what was taking place. After one episode of extralegal justice, Abraham Lincoln denounced the "mobocratic spirit" prevalent in the region, which he believed had previously threatened the "undecided experiment" of democracy during the young republic.[7] Similarly, when Alexis de Tocqueville toured the American

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5. Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, April 27, 1809, in J. Jefferson Looney, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series,* 3 vols. to date (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004–), 1:69. See also Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

6. See Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

7. Abraham Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, January 27, 1838," in *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858,* ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 2012), 28–36.

West, he denounced what he called the "tyranny of the majority," which often served as a more efficient yet also more unruly form of governing. Democratic rule, it seemed, was being severely tested on the edges of America's empire, spreading doubt about the nation's ambitions.[8]

Simultaneously, the American nation watched its geographic boundaries expand as politicians and citizens alike debated what groups of people belonged within its borders. Could the growing empire be home to such a disparate population, or was it destined to be a homogenous society? Much of this debate possessed a racial hue. Presidents, legislators, and judges all debated whether Indigenous peoples had the right to remain on their land. By 1838, forced removal ended up winning the day. Activists, reformers, and politicians discussed the possibility of relocating African Americans outside of America's boundaries; Black colonization, while never receiving majority support, was a constant presence in antebellum American political discourse. In the wake of the American Revolution, citizens of the new nation struggled to define a political body that encompassed such a broad range of communities and traditions; therefore, racial solidarity served as a crucial common lynchpin. This was to be a white man's republic, and those who fell outside those boundaries risked coerced relocation.[9]

But debates over removal did not only include racial minorities. During the same decade that the Cherokee were forced from their lands and the American Colonization Society reached new popular heights, Joseph Smith's followers and their neighbors were arguing over who could belong within their own communities: Latter-day Saints excluded dissenters from their society while also claiming their place within Missouri; their gentile neighbors, on the other hand, sought to expunge what they believed to be a nuisance from their frontier state while also insisting they were not encroaching upon the rights promised by religious

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8. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (1835; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 236–37, 250. For violence and the experiment of democracy, see James T. Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 633–36.

9. For the broad movements of racial removal—both Native and African American—see Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation* (New York: Basic Books, 2016). For the racial nature of political belonging during the early republic, see Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 159–208; Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

liberty. In each of these cases—Indian removal, Black colonization, and the Mormon-Missouri War—what was at stake was the right to define who belonged within a democratic body. And in nearly every occasion, participants turned to extralegal action to fulfill their initiatives.[10]

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The Latter-day Saint plights in both Ohio and Missouri took place within this context and in many ways reflected these broader concerns. Conflict with the Church's neighbors arose almost immediately after Latter-day Saints settled in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, because the "old settlers" believed the newcomers represented the dangers of democratization. There was a risk, they believed, that a few religious "frauds" could "delude" those from the bottom rungs of society, introduce communal unrest, and deceitfully claim religious liberty. After a few years of escalating tensions, in 1833 the Saints were kicked out of the county by a mob who justified their actions through appeals to societal peace. The safety of the many, they believed, was enough to countenance the removal of the few.[11]

At first, Missouri's solution to this problem fit into a broader narrative of American society: removal and segregation. Though the Saints shared the same skin color and European descent as their Missouri neighbors, their radical beliefs and countercultural message were seen as a trenchant threat, and in some important ways, they were therefore stripped of their appeals to whiteness. (Importantly, however, Latter-day Saints were never disenfranchised to the same extent as—and always

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10. For the rise of extralegal violence, see Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palsgrave Macmillan, 2003), 27–48; Irene Quenzler Brown and Richard D. Brown, *The Hanging of Ephraim Wheeler: A Story of Rape, Incest, and Justice in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). For the racial dimensions of these forms of justice, see Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

11. For the story of the early Church in Jackson County, see Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 85–105; Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Zion Rising: Joseph Smith's Early Social and Political Thought" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2008), 156–389; Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012), 32–62. For the justifications to remove the Saints, see J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 49–78.

retained access to rights that were simultaneously denied to—African and Native Americans.) To separate the Saints from their non-LDS neighbors, they were granted their own county, Caldwell, in the northern part of Missouri in 1836, akin to the segregation of unwanted native populations through the creation of confined reservations and related to the call to return freed slaves to Africa. Such a move underscored a belief that the Saints' religious tradition could not be integrated into the democratic system. The original settlers hoped that, once the Saints were separated into their own county, the radical faith would no longer serve as a thorn in the state's side. The Saints soon established Far West as the capital of this new county, and thousands immediately gathered within its borders.[12]

Shortly after the Saints were allowed some stability in Missouri, however, they began facing increasing pressure in their Ohio settlement. Though the completion and dedication of their temple in Kirtland in 1836 seemed to signify the community's success, conditions soon spiraled into division and despair. Joseph Smith's failed antibanking society fueled an already-present flame of discord, and soon a number of Saints, at both elite and common levels, were turning their backs on the man they had previously viewed as a prophet. Eventually, maintaining the Church's headquarters in Ohio became untenable, so Smith decided to relocate with his family to Far West. They were soon followed by many other Saints who chose to reaffirm their allegiance to the faith's founder. Suddenly, the new Latter-day Saint county in Missouri was both the sole headquarters and the only viable option for a community once more on the move.[13]

Yet just as Smith was on his way to join the other Saints in Far West, the nascent city was already seeking to push others out. "Quite a change has taken place among us," Apostle Thomas B. Marsh wrote Smith in early February, indicating that before they took some drastic measures, "the church was about to go to pieces." Several men who had previously overseen the Missouri settlement, notably David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Lyman Johnson, had come into conflict with

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12. For the stripping of Latter-day Saint whiteness and the relatedness between the creation of Caldwell County and Native reservations, see W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 64–67.

13. See Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 322–41.

other leaders and were threatening to cause further dissent. "We know that such an attempt," Marsh rationalized, "would . . . divide and scatter the flock." The threats had to be removed from power. Whitmer, Cowdery, and Johnson were therefore released from their leadership positions, but their lingering presence in the city continued to cause consternation.[14]

Those involved knew that this was a critical problem. The Saints had already been kicked out of two communities that decade, and they were anxious to avoid further conflict. Indeed, two months earlier, Smith had made similar warnings concerning schisms in Kirtland. He wrote a letter that included a revelation that commanded the Saints to "be aware of dissensions among them lest the enemy have power over them." They were to be vigilant about wolves dangerous enough to destroy their flock.[15] When the Prophet arrived in mid-March, dealing with these dissenters—one of whom Smith referred to as his "bosom friend"—became a top priority.[16]

The excommunication trials for these three prominent men took place the second week of April 1838, and in many ways their proceedings reflected broader social anxieties concerning belonging and removal. Of course, methods of discipline, including excommunication, were far from new for both the Church and the culture from which it was birthed. Indeed, the right to expel members from a faith community had been in place since the first Protestants arrived on the North American continent. Within a few years of the Puritans settling the Massachusetts Bay Colony, men and women were cut off from the church and, due to the ecclesiastical control of these communities, kicked out of their towns. But as the British colonies transitioned into American states, and federal and state disestablishment weakened the grasp of religious control, the fruits of excommunication became much tamer. The physical presence of multiple religious societies within a single community meant that denominations and towns could no longer be homogeneous,

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14. Thomas B. Marsh to Joseph Smith, February 15, 1838, in Mark Ashurst-McGee and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 6: February 1838–August 1839,* Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017), 23–24.

15. Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge, January 7, 1838, in Brent M. Rogers and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1836,* Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017), 494.

16. Far West Minutes, April 12, 1838, in Rogers and others, *Documents, Volume 5,* 91. The "bosom friend" referred to Oliver Cowdery.

and the primacy of one's personal conscience became sacred for the Protestant traditions. American society learned to embrace noncreedal communities where people holding disparate beliefs could coexist. The Latter-day Saint Church's 1835 "Declaration on Government and Law" reflected this idea: "We do not believe that any religious society has any authority" to punish individuals beyond "excommunicate[ing] them from their society and withdraw[ing] from their fellowship." Religious pluralism, in other words, meant embracing diverse societies.[17]

The balance between civic and religious authority pervaded these April excommunication trials in Far West. One of the accusations brought against Oliver Cowdery was for "declaring that he would not be governed by any ecclesiastical authority nor revelation whatever in his temporal affairs." There were at least two roots to this claim. First, Cowdery had sold several of his Jackson County properties to pay off his considerable debts; this went against Smith's counsel to maintain real estate holdings in Zion. And second, Cowdery was using "his influence to urge on lawsuits" against the Church regarding financial squabbles; this action, Latter-day Saint leaders concluded, was destined to cause the very type of dissension and division that had taken place in Kirtland. In the minds of those in charge, these activities were a betrayal of his ecclesiastical office and therefore a threat to the community.[18]

In the mind of Cowdery, however, such an accusation was an infringement upon his personal conscience. "This attempt to controll [*sic*] me in my temporal interests," he wrote in a letter for the trial, was "a disposition to take from me a portion of my Constitutional privileges and inherent rights." He objected to being "controlled by other than my own judgement, in a compulsory manner, in my temporal interests."

17. "Of Governments and Laws in General," circa 1835, in *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints: Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams and Co., 1835), 253. For the evolution of church discipline during this era, see Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Andrew R. Murphy, *Conscience and Community: Revisiting Toleration and Religious Dissent in Early Modern England and America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). For the move toward individualism and the sacralization of personal conscience, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State,* rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

18. Far West Minutes, April 12, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 88–90.

Such an action, he believed, was a betrayal of Anglo-American freedoms. Cowdery denounced the "attempt to set up a kind of petty government, controlled and dictated by ecclesiastical influence." The demands exceeded obligations allowed within a democratic body. In other words, Cowdery believed the Church was requiring certain obligations that transcended those expected within a voluntary church and were instead more reflective of an oppressive civic body.[19]

Similar themes saturated the trials that followed the next day with the other defendants. Like Cowdery, Lyman Johnson was accused of "stiring [*sic*] up people to prosecute them [the brethren], and urging on vexatious lawsuits," as well as "vindicating the cause of the enemies of this Church." David Whitmer was allegedly "uniting with, and possessing the same spirit with the Dissenters." In response, Johnson took issue with an ecclesiastical body attempting to control secular matters like civil lawsuits. He declared the list of charges "appears to me to be a novel document, assuming a right to compel me under pain of religious [censure] and excommunication not to appeal a lawsuit or change the venue of the same in which I am deeply interested, without the consent of a religious body." Both he and Whitmer chose to "withdraw" from the Church rather than succumb to its leaders' demands.[20]

The language used within these trials was both significant and suggestive. All three men—Cowdery, Johnson, and Whitmer—specifically and repetitively used "withdraw" to explain their separation from the Church. This word, also found in the Church's Declaration on Government and Law (D&C 134), emphasized the voluntary nature of the act. It represented the religious/civic division of rights within a democratic society. Their words and actions following these trials demonstrated their belief that, while they voluntarily withdrew from religious affiliation, they still possessed the political right to remain within the city. Their continued presence in Far West embodied a commitment to the republican ideal of noncreedal communities. Requiring individuals to leave a secular community because they were no longer part of a private faith seemed, to them, a transgression against the rules of disestablishment.

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19. Far West Minutes, April 12, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 88–90.

20. Far West Minutes, April 13, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6*, 96–97, 102.

But the Latter-day Saint town of Far West did not fit that traditional model. This was in large part due to the Church's experience in Kirtland, where internal dissension had led to the collapse of their community in Ohio. Leaders were therefore willing to take drastic measures. But the vision of a Zion city also raised questions concerning societal belonging. Two weeks after the high-profile excommunication trials, Joseph Smith dictated a revelatory mandate for their town. "Let the City Far West," the voice of God proclaimed, "be a holy and consecrated land unto me." Their gathering place was meant to be "a reffuge [*sic*] from the storm and from [God's] wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole Earth." To achieve this, though, their community had to meet a standard of righteousness. The gathering principles located in the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's early revelations, as well as in the city plans for Missouri's original Zion in Independence, were predicated upon societal unity and holiness.[21]

In many ways, this was an echo of the covenantal theology of colonial America's Puritans, who famously eschewed religious diversity as containing the seeds of disunity. Zion as a spiritual ideal could not be accomplished without spiritual harmony, they argued. John Winthrop, the famed minister who delivered the prominent appeal for the colony to become a "City on a Hill," specified that their community was to reject the "natural" form of liberty, which granted citizens the freedom to do whatever they wanted, and to embrace the "moral" standard instead, which allowed residents only the freedom to do what was *right*. Religious liberty, in other words, was the liberty to practice the true religion. This standard eventually led to conflicts with dissenters like Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, because their "heresies" were considered threats to communal stability. And even as religious control over New England colonies waned and more secular legacies persisted, the colonies instituted the practice of "warning out" any newcomers that they felt might menace social cohesion.[22]

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21. Joseph Smith, Revelation, April 26, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 114–15. For Smith's early thinking on Zion as a political theology, see Ashurst-McGee, "Zion Rising"; Benjamin E. Park, "To Fill Up the World: Joseph Smith as Urban Planner," *Mormon Historical Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 1–27.

22. For Puritans practices, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *As a City on a Hill: The Story of America's Most Famous Lay Sermon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 44–57. For New England practices of "warning out," see Josiah Henry Benton, *Warning Out in New England, 1656–1817* (Boston: W. B. Clarke, 1911); Cornelia H. Dayton and

Only after the American Revolution and the new social policies it introduced did these practices subside. But even then, individuals and families who were poor and otherwise marginalized could at times find it difficult to gain permanent residency in towns and villages. Those who were considered a nuisance to society, either through extremist views or the inability for self-dependence, were often forced to uproot and find a home elsewhere. Groups of supposed zealots were seen as a particular threat, since democratic governance appeared ripe for manipulation by societies with an inordinate number of untrustworthy residents. Such was, indeed, the justification given by the Jackson County residents when they evicted Mormon settlers in 1833.[23]

Similarly, Joseph Smith's Zion, as a political reality, could not be realized without communal conformity. Far West was to be a society for the elect, a gathering point for those who followed priesthood counsel. Cowdery, Johnson, and Whitmer, having been found guilty of causing dissension, could therefore be excluded not only from the Church's spiritual fellowship but also from the physical city. The three men believed it was their right, within a democratic republic, to live where they pleased; Smith and other leaders of the faith, however, believed that, as a majority of the city, they had the right to expel the miscreants.

Yet still the dissenters remained. Their continued presence rankled Church leadership. "How blind and infatuated are the minds of men, when once turned from Rigteousness [*sic*] to wickedness?" Joseph Smith wrote in mid-June 1838.[24] Their agitation threatened to disrupt the Missouri settlement. Something had to be done. Sidney Rigdon delivered a blistering public sermon likening the dissenters to salt that had lost is savor, which "is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and troden [*sic*] under foot of men."[25] There was no room for heretics in the city of the Saints. Eighty-three members signed their names

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Sharon V. Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). "Warning out" refers to a widespread practice in New England communities of pressuring or coercing "outsiders" to settle elsewhere.

23. See Fluhman, *"Peculiar People,"* 49–78.

24. Joseph Smith, Journal, July 4, 1838, in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839,* Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 276; Letter to Wilford Woodruff, circa 18 June 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 156.

25. "Journal, March–September 1838," 47, July 4, 1838, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 21, 2021, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-march -september-1838/33.

to a letter commanding the three men, along with John Whitmer and William Phelps, to leave peaceably within three days. "We will have no more promises to reform," the letter warned.[26] According to Smith's scribe, George Robinson, "these men took warning, and soon they were seen bounding over the prairie like the scape Goat to carry off their own sins." Once they were evacuated, the Saints could finally relax. "Their influence is gone," Robinson noted a couple weeks later. Or so they hoped.[27]

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The peace would not last. After directing their anger inward, members of the Latter-day Saint community were now ready to direct their attention outward. Worried that their stay in Caldwell County would bring the same result as in Jackson, they emphasized their rights to remain on their new land and build their righteous community. They would no longer be pushed into exile.

The power dynamics of expelling dissenters (in which the Saints could easily claim majority support) and opposing external pressure (in which they claimed minority protection) are seemingly contradictory. However, in reality, they reflect a common anxiety. In both instances, the Saints desired the right to self-rule, including the right to determine resident acceptance. They demanded ownership of land and control over those who lived on it. This paradox was at the heart of the democratic experiment, and foundational ideals—self-rule and equal protection—could at times appear to be in opposition. In many instances, as with the Latter-day Saints in Missouri, the principles existed simultaneously within the same community. Thus, having once exerted their right to evict citizens due to their appeals for communal harmony, they now expressed their desire to confront any external threats to civic participation.[28]

Once again, Sidney Rigdon stoked the flames of discord. Shortly after the dissenters fled the city, Rigdon delivered a fiery oration at Fourth of July festivities that declared that, though the Saints had "suffered [constant] abuse without cause," from that time forward "we will suffer it no more." Threats of violence from surrounding communities

26. "Missouri v. Gates," 17 (June 1838).

27. Joseph Smith, Journal, July 4, 1838, in Jessee and others, *Journals, Volume 1,* 278.

28. For the paradox of democratic governance, see Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy,* 655–710.

had put the Saints once more on the defensive. "That mob that comes on us to disturb us," he bellowed, "it shall be between us and them a war of extermination." Rigdon did not spare grisly details: "We will follow them till the last drop of their blood is spilled," and the Saints were willing to "carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, [until] one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed." Joseph Smith added his amen, along with the large Latter-day Saint congregation's, to Rigdon's words. "This day was spent in cellebrating [*sic*] the 4 of July," Smith's journal noted, "and also to make our [own] decleration [*sic*] of Independence from all mobs and persecutions." A month later, Smith urged the Saints "to hold ourselves in readiness at a moment's warning, well armed and equipped." The Saints were not going to shy away from battle.[29]

But how does one justify this exclusive rhetoric, both internally toward dissenters and externally toward non–Latter-day Saint neighbors? How did they, as a religious body, have the authority to define the boundaries of a civic society? These were crucial questions. Indeed, Latter-day Saint leaders knew they could neither expel people from society on religious grounds nor mobilize an armed response merely as an organized religion, because either action would be an infringement upon religious liberty. The Church's political "motto" from March of that year, penned just a few months previous, included the proclamations "Exalt the standard of Democracy!" and "Down with that of Priestcraft!" Even Sidney Rigdon's Independence Day address denounced "all attempts . . . to unite church and state." At least rhetorically, Joseph Smith's community seemed committed to traditional boundaries of freedom.[30]

But desperate times required desperate measures. To fulfill that need, then, the "Society of the Daughter of Zion," commonly called the "Danites," was organized in the weeks between the forced eviction of internal dissenters and the warning of extermination to external threats. It was designed to serve as a civic body that could function as a political apparatus doing the bidding of, but remaining separate from, the

29. Sidney Rigdon, *Oration Delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon, on the 4th of July, 1838* (Far West: Journal Office, 1838), 12. Joseph Smith, Journal, July 4, 1838, in Jessee and others, *Journals, Volume 1,* 276. Joseph Smith, Sermon, August 12, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 215.

30. Motto, circa March 16 or 17, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 44–45. Rigdon, *Oration Delivered,* 5.

organized Church. The organization served as the answer to the question of how they could define the rights and boundaries of their religious community within a democratic, secular society.[31]

Many historians have highlighted the vigilante nature of the Danite society. Indeed, within frontier communities, where forms of justice, systems of state, and, to a lesser extent, federal intervention seemed absent, it was not rare for local communities to mobilize extralegal bodies in order to save their people from some threat. Justice could be achieved more swiftly and more righteously in the hands of invested locals who were supposedly fulfilling majoritarian wishes. This had a long history within American culture, stemming from the Committees of Safety organized in colonial America in response to British taxes all the way to lynchings in the postbellum South. In a significant way, the Saints in Missouri were another example of the nation's long vigilante tradition.[32]

The Danites, however, went further than a traditional vigilante group by explicitly framing their organization as a representative body built upon republican traditions. The most significant embodiment of their aspirations, of course, was their constitution. The Danite constitution, likely created around the time the society was created, reflected a political philosophy that both drew from and appropriated America's democratic tradition. "Whereas in all bodies laws are necessary for the permanent Safety and well being of society," the document began, "we the members of the society . . . agree to regulate ourselves under such laws as in righteousness shall be deemed necessary for the preservation of our holy religion and of our most sacred rights and the rights of our wives and Children." This was not an offensive group, it urged, since it was their primary "object to support and defend the rights confered [*sic*] on us by our venerable sires who purchased them with the pledges of their lives fortunes and sacred honours." The last line, drawn directly

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31. For contemporary accounts of the society's creation, see Reed Peck to "Dear Friends," Quincy, Ill., September 18, 1839, p. 73, in Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.; John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (*Commonly Called Mormons*) (St. Louis: self-pub., 1839), 30–32.

32. See, for example, Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). For an example of framing the Danites as a form of vigilante justice, see LeSueur, "The Danites Reconsidered"; for the Danites as a military group, see Baugh, "We Have a Company of Danites in These Times."

from the Declaration of Independence, emphasized the patriotic tradition they meant to invoke. The cause of the current conflict was found in the Saints being stripped of their American liberties, and so they believed it was within their right to follow the American example of resistance—even to the point of bloodshed.[33]

But the document did not merely reaffirm American constitutional principles in pursuit of vigilante justice. The Danite constitution also planted the seeds for political dissent—and even extralegal action—based on radical extensions of those religious and political ideals. Because "all power belongs Originally and legitimately to the people," the first article explained, the people "have a right to dispose of it as they Shall deem fit." This Lockean idea, which drew from natural rights discourse, implied the preeminence of social contracts. But now, in the Danite context, it was used to justify the creation of extralegal political bodies. "As it is inconvenient and impossible to convene the people in all cases"—that is, when democracy fails to efficiently bring about just conclusions—it is necessary to pass "the legislative powers . . . into the hands of a [new] representation." Power must be removed from the wicked and placed in the hands of the righteous.[34]

This idea was not completely new within the Latter-day Saint tradition. Indeed, the Church's motto back in March had heralded "Aristarchy," or government by the best men. In this case, the best men were those chosen by a godly society. Based on this true principle of representative authority, the Danites were then vindicated in their quest to form an extralegal body with power to mobilize. The Saints were inheritors of a long tradition in which the guarantor of natural rights was outside the limited confines of organized government, instead flowing from the populous bodies. This power justified both internal and external actions: internally, the Danite society could remove people who were classified as societal nuisances; externally, they could fight to preserve their rights against "Gentile" threats. Imperial anxieties always faced both directions.[35]

Americans were accustomed to appealing to higher laws and populous support to justify extralegal action, and many of these arguments concerned the expulsion of unwanted people. In 1824, President James Monroe proposed that "it would promote essentially the security and

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33. "Missouri v. Gates," 10.
34. "Missouri v. Gates," 10.
35. Motto, circa March 16 or 17, 1838, in Ashurst-McGee and others, *Documents, Volume 6,* 44–45.

happiness of the [Native] tribes within our limits if they could be prevailed upon to retire west and north of our States and Territories." The removal of Indigenous populations had been a staple for Anglo-American societies since the dawn of colonization, but it had become more pressing in the antebellum period as visions of westward expansion made the land even more desirable. When Andrew Jackson took office a few years later, the voluntary removal turned into forced expulsion. He justified the Cherokee Indian Removal Act by citing the "waves of population and civilization" that required western lands. This belief in populist vindication trumped even Supreme Court rulings.[36]

Simultaneously, the creation of the American Colonization Society, which featured many of the same elite white politicians who fought for Indian removal, formalized their call for the deportation of Blacks to Africa. At their founding meeting, one participant, a senator from Maryland, declared that the possibility for a mixed society was "closed for ever, by our habits and our feelings." Free Blacks and slaves would never fit within white culture and therefore had to be sent to a "distinct nation." Each initiative drew from what they believed to be natural rights granted to majority rule, consistent with America's founding ideals. Mainstream culture, it appeared, reserved the right to expel those who did not fit their image of the nation.[37]

Indeed, this particular rhetoric of natural rights had already been used in the Mormon-Missouri conflict prior to 1838. The same passage from the Declaration of Independence that was used in the Danite constitution—that their actions were justified in defense of "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honours"—had previously appeared in the writings by the Jackson County mob that evicted Saints out of their Independence settlement. "We agree to use such means as may be sufficient to remove [the Saints]," the manifesto stated, "and to that end we each pledge to each other our bodily powers, our lives, fortunes, and sacred honors." The Saints were seen as the minority threat to majority rule in Jackson County; five years later, dissenters were seen as the

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36. James Monroe, "Extinguishment of Indian Title to Lands in Georgia: Communicated to the House of Representatives, April 2, 1824," in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs,* 2 vols. (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832–1834), 2:460. Andrew Jackson, "State of the Union Address, December 6, 1830," in *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents,* ed. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, 3d ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016), 120.

37. *First Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: D. Rapine, 1818), 29–30.

minority threat to majority Latter-day Saint rule in Caldwell County. That members of the faith would come around to invoking the same rhetoric a half-decade after their own expulsion, mere months before yet another violent removal, highlights the ironies of frontier justice.[38]

The Danite constitution did not make clear how it fit into the larger political structure currently in place, either at state or federal levels. At most, its statement that the society was convened only because it was "inconvenient and impossible to convene the people in all cases" suggested the Danite institution was to be temporary in nature, a safeguard until existent judicial and political powers could once again be restored. At the very least, though, the Danite constitution did not appear to explicitly threaten the American government, or even the Missouri state, with replacement. For the time being, they were to work within already-present systems, albeit in radical ways. Yet that commitment became more tenuous in mid-July, when a second Danite society was organized in nearby Daviess County. While in Clay County they could claim the Danite militia acted as a county force under state control, the presence of another unit in Daviess, separate and distinct from the Daviess County militia, challenged the assumption of state cooperation.[39]

As expected, the weeks and months that followed the Danites' organization quickly descended into violence. A skirmish over voting rights in Daviess County grew into organized conflict, as both sides raised militias to protect what they believed were their rights. Smith and his followers insisted that they were merely professing their privileges as citizens to settle in free territory and exercise suffrage; their neighbors responded with complaints that the Church was breaking a deal to remain solely in Caldwell County. Neither group was willing to back down. Even after a majority of Daviess residents supported a committee's decision to remove all members of the faith, local Saints refused to give up ground

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38. "Appendix 2: Constitution of the Society of the Daughter of Zion, circa Late June 1838," Joseph Smith Papters, accessed February 9, 2021, https://www.josephsmithpapers .org/paper-summary/appendix-2-constitution-of-the-society-of-the-daughter-of-zion -circa-late-june-1838/1; "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," 349, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 22, 2021, https://www.josephsmith papers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30 -august-1834/355.

39. "Missouri v. Gates," 11. For the creation of a second militia, this time in Daviess County, see William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed: Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838* (Pittsburgh: self-pub., 1840); Baugh, "We have a Company of Danites in These Times," 13–14.

and commenced their own raids on neighboring residents. Nearby communities raised vigilance committees in return, and Latter-day Saint leaders martialed their own defense, a process enabled by the new Danite network. Eventually, the fighting resulted in direct conflict at the Battle of Crooked River. As competing troops met during late October, nearly all involved were convinced their actions were justified by an American tradition of extralegal defense based on natural rights.

After reports of the battle arrived in the state capital, Lilburn Boggs, Missouri's governor, acted swiftly. His executive order declared that members of the Latter-day Saint faith "must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace." Importantly, his action also drew from the same political ideology that the Saints had used to justify the creation of the Danite organization: the preservation of peace and unity justified the removal of threats to democratic order. To those involved in the Danites, when democracy was under siege and there was no time to appeal for help through official channels, extralegal councils were needed to maintain stability, and Rigdon went so far as to threaten a war of extermination; to Boggs, suppressing extralegal threats to public peace took precedence over the dissenters' rights to remain on their property, which in turn justified an extermination order. In the words of both leaders, extermination was the radical solution to democratic unrest. Populist authority—whether at the local or state level—determined who could remain and who could be removed.[40]

Only one side, however, had the resources to follow through on the threat. Latter-day Saint communities were quickly surrounded and outnumbered in early November. Through a series of negotiations, some strained, Joseph Smith was eventually arrested and imprisoned along with a number of other Church leaders as they awaited trial for crimes including arson, burglary, treason, and murder. They were then held as ransom that winter as thousands of Saints were forced to leave their belongings and relocate outside the state. In the end, it was the members of the Latter-day Saint Church who gave in to majoritarian demands.

As seen in the Mormon-Missouri experience, not to mention the contemporary debates over African and Native populations, the politics

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40. Lilburn Boggs, executive order, October 27, 1838, later labeled as Executive Order #44, Mormon War Papers, 1837–1841, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri.

of Lockean liberties held negative as well as positive implications for societal belonging. The freedom to create self-governing societies ruled by majority opinion allowed citizens to not only construct communities after their own likeness and image but also remove those who failed to match those priorities. Imagining political rights in antebellum America was as much a practice of exclusion as it was of inclusion.

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These tensions did not disappear after the Saints left Missouri—at least not in the long term. When the Latter-day Saints first arrived in Illinois in 1839, where they soon established a new hub in Nauvoo, they were initially welcomed by state and political party officials. But as those relationships eroded over the next five years, Joseph Smith was once again forced to consider extralegal solutions to democratic problems. This time his actions were even more radical, which in turn raised questions concerning the Saints' belonging within the nation. At the heart of the debate was yet another new constitution.

In March 1844, following provocative information concerning new settlement options outside of Illinois, Smith once again organized a new council. There were many similarities between this new organization and its predecessor. Like the Danites, the council was a secret endeavor; like the Danites, while it had a long and cumbersome title—"The Kingdom of God and His Laws"—it was also known by a more colloquial name, in this case the "Council of Fifty"; like the Danites, participants concluded that existing democratic structures had failed them, which necessitated drastic action; like the Danites, they used the language of democracy and republicanism to claim that they were fulfilling the natural rights promised in America; and finally, like the Danites, the new council even wrote its own constitution.[41]

But there were significant differences between these two extralegal constitutions, which in turn represented the changes between 1838 and 1844. Unlike in Missouri, where the Saints wished to remain under state authority and merely hoped to buttress their own local rule, the Council of Fifty was designed to replace local, state, and even national

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41. Matthew J. Grow and others, eds., *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016). See Benjamin E. Park, "Joseph Smith's Kingdom of God: The Council of Fifty and the Mormon Challenge to American Democracy," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 87, no. 4 (December 2018): 1029–55.

government; by the time of their crisis in Illinois, the Saints had given up hope that America could be redeemed. And further, while the Danites' constitution positioned itself as an example of democratic control and secular governance based on natural laws, the Council of Fifty explicitly appealed to theocratic order as a solution to democracy's excesses. In other words, by 1844, Joseph Smith was willing, and even anxious, to declare America's democratic system a failure and replace it with God's law and righteous priestly government.[42]

Simultaneously, state authorities wrestled with the same question Lilburn Boggs had faced in 1838: At what point was the government justified in forcibly relocating a troublesome religion? At first, Thomas Ford, Illinois's governor, refused to step in, which eventually led to Smith's own death at the hands of a local mob. But after another year of violence followed the killing, Ford and other state authorities reconsidered the matter. Once again, at issue was the rights of a religious group to remain or be removed. In October 1845, a convention held in Carthage, the Hancock County seat, concluded that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had to leave, as no community could exist near the Saints without being drawn into a collision with them. Though not going so far as Boggs as to sign an executive order demanding as much, Ford then urged the Saints to follow the convention's opinion, to which Brigham Young and other Church leaders begrudgingly agreed.[43]

The Church, once again, was found on the wrong side of political belonging. In trying to solidify the boundaries around their own community, they were expelled from the broader society. The Saints insisted on their right to remain—including the privilege to police their own community—but their neighbors trumpeted their right for forced removal. In the end, just like in cases of Indigenous removal and Black colonization, the will of the majority justified the relocation of the minority group.

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42. The broader story of the democratic crisis of Nauvoo is told in Benjamin E. Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

43. Carthage Committee, resolutions, "Manuscript History of the Anti-Mormon Disturbances in Illinois," circa 1845, Thomas C. Sharp and Allied Anti-Mormon Papers, Beineke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. See also John Hardin, William Warren, Stephen A. Douglas, and James McDougall to the First President and High Council of the Church of Latter Day Saints, October 3, 1845, in Grow and others, *Council of Fifty, Minutes,* 488–90.

Americans today often highlight the triumph of democracy in securing the inclusion of diverse populations and divergent perspectives. But such a tribute, long part of the national myth, overlooks the complicated trajectory of democratic rule, especially during the antebellum period. Rights for individuals and groups were often contested, and the right to merely remain on a particular piece of property was frequently up for debate. The story of Joseph Smith and his followers, especially during those tense months of summer and fall 1838, aptly demonstrates the paradoxes of democratic justice, especially on the frontier.

My Stepdad Was a Bank Robber

Billy Wilson

I remember standing on the back porch of our rental in Meadow Vista, California—the steady gurgles of a running creek in the backyard, the faint smell of dry firewood in the cardboard box behind me. Dad (the contract killer, not the bank robber) wore a tank top and jeans with the pant legs cut into very short shorts. He was six foot two, an anomaly in our lineage of shorter men. I don't recall him ever yelling at me, and he was naturally amicable, but he did raise his voice on occasion and could crack granite with his eyes. On cold days, the white scars on his face became noticeable, like a black light revealing pale incantations in secret ink. But today was a hot day. Today, he was handsome.

We were likely having a spat about an unscheduled visit with Mom. I suspect that having chores at Dad's house and no chores at Mom's house played into the tension, but I can't remember the details anymore. Voice elevated, he declared, "You know how Joseph committed suicide? He killed himself while trying to rob a bank."

I was momentarily stunned by the revelation. My stepdad was a bank robber.

Dad ended up driving me to Mom's house for the weekend. We followed the freeway as it weaved through the forested foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. The truck changed lanes into the first off-ramp of Auburn, a town cleverly situated below the snow line and above the fog line. Today, though, everything was just hot. The flesh behind my knees stuck to the cracked leather seat of Dad's Datsun pickup. I worked the crank handle with both hands to open the window and watched the brownish evergreens blur past with the warm wind.

The tires crackled over the long gravel driveway as we pulled up to Mom's ranch house. Its exterior paint was as red as a fire truck. The pottery and flowers lining the perimeter of the ranch house bore witness that the queen of horticulture lived there. Across from the white front porch, on the other side of the green lawn, was the familiar rose tree. It came to exist when a nearby rosebush wrapped its branches around the base of an oak tree and climbed up slowly, year over year, until the rosebush stood seventy feet tall. Its dense constellations of pink blossoms grew in brilliance against the firmament of wood and leaves, and its fragrance filled the yard.

I can't remember who Mom's partner was at the time. She went through a flurry of romances after Joseph died.

Mom may have been with Rick, a shirtless, long-haired, bearded, hairy man whom Mom married during a fling in Reno. She kicked him out within months, partially because of the way his eyes would settle on my older sister, but mostly because he tried to tell Mom who she could and could not see.

She may have been with Curtis, whom Dad suspected was a crank addict because of the way he wrapped his arm behind his head to scratch the other side of his neck. Dad dropped his suspicions a few notches when he learned that Curtis had a pacemaker.

It may have been Richard, whom the locals at Sportsman's Bar called the Kid from Hell. He was apparently an altar boy in his youth, but by the time I knew him, he had to cuss to think and always smelled very drunk in the evenings. Mom ended up marrying him later, but that was a fluke. She needed to either kick Richard out or marry him to attend my temple sealing, and she couldn't kick someone out who was fighting cancer.

Anyway. Mom was probably with someone at the time because she stays up to date with Gaia portals and their fifth-dimensional transformative love energies.

The inside of the ranch house was covered in pictures, paintings, and poems from my sister and me. My kindergarten drawing of a triangular lion was prominently displayed with its county-fair blue ribbon. There were also rain drums, crystals, and a dark blanket hanging on the wall with a deer embroidered onto it. Eagle feathers lay on the coffee table. Her bed was in the living room in front of the TV. Above it was a poster of Native American men with long black hair and shirts made of bones and leather, each chief with a wise saying beneath his portrait. "All things are connected." "Man belongs to the earth. Earth does not

belong to man." "We do not borrow the earth from our ancestors; we take it from our children."

During my visit, Mom praised me with compliments, calling me the smartest, most handsome, most talented son. She nourished me with cream of wheat, fried potatoes, salmon patties, canned spinach with lemon squirted on top, and other homemade delights. She let me watch TV and play video games for hours.

At some point, I asked Mom about Joseph committing suicide. She paused. After some thought, she clarified that Joseph had not killed himself, but that he was shot down by cops in the parking lot. He bled out on the asphalt, ambulance en route. "They didn't even try to save him," she lamented contemptuously.

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A decade and a half passed. I lived in Orem, Utah, with my wife and five children. Our hard church shoes scraped across the ice-encrusted sidewalk, shuffling double-time to the meetinghouse before all body warmth dissipated through our thin shirts and dresses.

I was the elders quorum instructor that day. We met in the soft chairs behind the chapel podium. During the lesson, I absentmindedly referred to my crazy family, which invited looks from the quorum. They scrutinized my ecclesiastically parted hair, my slight slouch, and my recessed chin. I recognized the direction we were going and unconsciously pursed my lips. Any explanation would swell over the embankment of gospel learning into forbidden paths.

I had an unusual number of cards in my hand for proving how pagan my family was, and there were new revelations each year, but as a personal rule, I did not play those cards until the implicated family members were long dead. I didn't want any relatives to crumple over from a 300-milligram injection of searing public shame. That might show up in the toxicology report.

My two stories that met the date-of-decease requirement belonged to my father and my stepfather, may they rest in peace. My dad was a contract killer, and my stepfather was a bank robber.

Also, my mother has a very strange taste in men. This is not one of the cards.

I apologetically smiled and delivered the line, "My stepdad was a bank robber who got shot to death in Riverside."

John, the miles-tall police officer in the front row, leaned forward and exclaimed, "Whoa!" with fascination, and from then on, I wore my

bank-robber stepdad like a badge of honor. I came from a tough family, and that meant I was extra special for living the gospel.

My mind began to rummage through other family stories that I could leverage for personal aggrandizement. As I considered which family skeletons were old enough to pull down from the attic for display, it occurred to me—no one had done Joseph's temple work. I was not sure which housing project in the spirit world contained the bank robbers, but maybe this would be Joseph's ticket into a better neighborhood.

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Descending down the atrium stairs of the Harold B. Lee Library into its underground floors made my task feel official. The footsteps in the Family History Library were dampened by tiled carpet, and the silence made every key press feel like I was throwing a typewriter striker. Finding Joseph online was easy. I opened up the Social Security Death Index, and soon Joseph's place and date of death were displayed on the screen. Riverside, California. August 21.

The date seemed peculiar. I linked the source to Joseph's FamilySearch record, then looked at his date of death again. What was with that date? I peered at the numbers on the monitor until the seed of realization sprouted. That date was four days before my birthday. I leaned back in my chair and rubbed my temples.

Did Joseph rob a bank *for my birthday?*

I recalled a VHS home video I had recently watched of my eighth birthday, a pool party. I had an incalculable number of wrapped presents, spoils of war from my competing parents and the litany of kids Mom had invited. My adult self grimaced as I watched my young self become primal over the stack of presents. I screamed with frenetic childhood delight with each present ripped open, raising the gift in triumph, shaking the Super Soaker or the Nerf Gun or the thing-that-you-pull-the-zip-cord-and-the-helicopter-flies-up or the birthday-Ninja-Turtle-that-blew-like-a-kazoo or the goggles or the rubber-ball-strung-to-a-paddle. Immediately I would throw the plastic toy to the grass so I could skin the next present.

But that wasn't the right birthday.

The seventh birthday, yes, that was memorialized by another mental snippet of roughly ten seconds. I was particularly confused that morning because my sister and mother showed up crying. We were in an amber-stained log cabin Dad had rented from my future stepmother. As morning rays poured through the open front door, Mom pronounced with water-stained eyes, "Joseph is dead!"

I don't remember what presents I got that year. I can't remember those things anymore.

⌐

Rectangular paper slip in breast pocket, I entered the Provo Temple to perform vicarious saving ordinances for my bank-robber stepdad. I went through the baptism, confirmation, washing, anointing, and clothing ordinances. My service culminated in the endowment session and admission into the celestial room. Sitting down on a celestial chair, I picked up a Book of Mormon.

Letting books of scripture fall open was a little ritual of mine, inspired by the story of President Monson flipping open a Book of Mormon next to someone's deathbed and happening upon Alma 40:11. I often attempted these fall-on-your-lap revelations, although it usually amounted to me fishing for God.

I let the Book of Mormon fall open, looked down, and read these words: "Condemn me not because of mine imperfection."

This was not from God; this was from Joseph. He knew I had introduced him as a bank robber at church.

Continuing down the verse, I read, "But rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been."

I looked away from the page and took a deep breath, shifting in my chair. As my eyes explored the room, they fell on the mural of Jesus Christ and rested there for a long time.

God identifies the mistakes of His children. The antagonists of the Book of Mormon—Sherem, Korihor, Kishkumen, Amalickiah, Ammoron, Tubaloth—are probably mortified to have their acts codified into the scriptures as sin for the world to see, but there they are, the Surgeon General's warning against the plague of sin.

Yet, God may have another reason for exposing the spiritual maladies of villains. Perhaps God wants to heal them. Perhaps those villains have salvageable sparks of divinity that He can fan back to health in the next life. Some repentance is possible in the spirit world. A crown of glory is still available for those wayward spirits who finally come unto Him with fear and trembling.

I could examine Joseph's imperfections and learn wisdom. I had no Urim and Thummim, so I began to search for Joseph with my hands out, fingers spread, feeling through the haze of my memories and the mystery of Mom's stories.

I knew from Mom that Joseph's family hated him.

I also knew that Joseph served in the Vietnam War. His tour was interrupted by a barrel mine. The explosion threw him fifty feet, blowing his clothes off. It killed the rest of his platoon, and he received a Purple Heart. I first heard this story as a kid, at which time I was concerned about how Joseph must have felt being naked in a jungle.

I remembered the sound of his voice, a gravelly tenor that matched the dark eyes, messy black hair, and perpetual stubble. It seemed he had always shaved three days ago. He was a bit short and pudgy like a teddy bear, enough to be a choice snuggler with Mom on the waterbed in the living room.

Two photographs of him were fresh in my mind. In one, he was holding a beer at Sportsman's Bar alongside other patrons, flipping off the person behind the camera. In the other, he was crouching next to me in a hollowed-out, horizontal redwood tree, both of us grinning, my feet dangling over the barky edge.

I remembered the time Joseph made me eat a botched dinner. I kept giggling in the middle of drinks until my plate was a swimming pool of apple juice, mashed potatoes, and meat. He wouldn't let me crawl away from the TV tray until I ate every soggy morsel. This punishment seemed villainous to me.

I don't recall any words he said to me, though. I can't remember those things anymore.

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Last year, my oldest child was getting baptized, so we bought a plane ticket for Mom to come to Utah. She found our home barely habitable due to there being only one TV with nothing but over-the-air channels. To fill the time, my wife began asking her questions about her childhood, and soon, sitting together on a white couch with pictures of temples above us, Mom opened chapters from her book of life that were previously sealed shut.

"Your dad and me, the first seven years, we were happy," she started. "We built a house together from the ground up. It was just that last year things got bad. See, Dad was trying to find work when he ran into his old friends—bad ones. They called themselves the Dirty Dozen. And he got back into drugs.

"Joseph, he was so sweet. He met me, okay, when I was working a job that I wasn't proud of. But he didn't know that I was *married* to your dad. He thought your dad was my brother. When he found out the truth,

he flipped. He took his rifle, and when your dad came to the house, Joseph pointed it at his chest and said, 'You cross that line, you are in the *red* zone.' He took us and we drove all night straight to California. He always had a gun on him after that."

There was more, but the rule, you see. Mom is still alive.

Today, I still don't know how I feel about Joseph. On one hand, he split Mom and Dad apart like an iron wedge. On the other hand, that marriage had already reached bizarre levels of depravity that are too embarrassing to describe—not just for my parents, but also for me. Maybe it was time for Joseph to shake things up with an assault rifle aimed at Dad's chest. Maybe it was time for our sudden getaway out of Arizona to that red ranch on the Sierra Nevadas.

Dad soon followed us to California, finally leaving behind the band of mercenaries he had gotten mixed up with during the Arizona drug wars. Once out of the darkness, he came to himself. Soon he was attending church and dragging me along. He could not baptize me, so my bishop did. He eventually regained Church fellowship.

When I moved to the ranch as a teenager, Dad regularly fasted and prayed for me, a confused kid grappling with the dissonance of mortality. One day I came across Mom's dusty old Bible, opened up Genesis and began reading. A week later, I called Dad and told him I wanted to come back to church.

Dad died a Melchizedek priesthood holder in good standing with God. I think. He often remarked that he was aiming for the lowest tier of the celestial kingdom.

So thanks, Joseph, for saving my family in your roundabout, destructive way. And please forgive me for how spoiled I was.

Perhaps resurrected beings need escorts just like first-time temple patrons. If things work out for me, I could be an escort for Joseph on the day he rises. I could guide him to his rendezvous with God.

If there are vestiges of the world clinging to him, I could help a little. I could examine his forearms and pluck out the rock chips of the asphalt he collapsed on. If he needed to be washed, I could take a sponge and rub out the traces of dried blood from his matted hair and even apply some oil to the bullet prints on his back. I could give him a square pile of garments made white with the blood of the Lamb. When he returned from his changing room, we could link arms and walk up a flight of fiery glass stairs together.

Reaching the top, I could point him to the final veil and the hand of his Redeemer. He would see the nail print in the palm and grasp it, then

be pulled through to embrace the Lord. His memories would flood back, again knowing, and never forgetting again, that he was a son of the Most High God in the premortal realms. Any sense of worthlessness would flee him. Weeping, his head would be anointed with oil and a crown of glory placed thereon.

Angels would rejoice over Joseph, pull out his book of life, and redact his misdeeds with the pen of forgiveness. At that point, I could brandish this essay and, borrowing that pen, scribble out its title to write the words, "My Stepdad Is a Good Man."

Then I wouldn't have to remember these things anymore.

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Event or Process? How "the Chamber of Old Father Whitmer" Helps Us Understand Priesthood Restoration

Michael Hubbard MacKay

Recent studies describing the restoration of the priesthood have noted and demonstrated that we have been anachronistically shaping our 1829 restoration narrative around twentieth-century notions that the Melchizedek Priesthood represents a separate "authority" or "power" that is distinctly independent from the body of ordained men (it has become something we hold rather than something we join). Jonathan Stapley argues that by the early twentieth century General Authorities explicitly defined priesthood as "the exclusive authority and power of God," whereas before then it was used more ecclesiastically.[1] Though Joseph Smith was certainly a restorationist, like many antebellum Americans, scholars have tended to frame his restorationism in terms of how the power or authority of God was restored (emphasizing priesthood as something you hold). For example, we focus on how John the Baptist restored an independent entity called the Aaronic Priesthood and how Peter, James, and John restored the higher companion priesthood called

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1. Stapley describes the priesthood within three categories developing across time. First is ecclesiastical, which describes priesthood as a body of leaders called the priesthood who would "channel the power of God." Second, he associates the temple theologies developed in Nauvoo with the priesthood that "constituted the very structure of the cosmos." Finally, at the turn of the twentieth century, "instead of viewing priesthood as channeling the power of God, church leaders began to describe the priesthood as the power of God." Jonathan Stapley, *The Power of Godliness: Mormon Liturgy and Cosmology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11, 12. Stapley also quotes President N. Eldon Tanner saying, "The priesthood is the power by which all things were created and the power by which God has done those things" (26).

the Melchizedek Priesthood.[2] If Stapley is correct, we have good reason to return to the historical record to discover more precisely what the restoration looked like.[3] Perhaps we have been focusing too narrowly upon two events, when there was in fact a deeper sense of restoration that encompassed a far broader sense of theophany.

"Priesthood Restoration as Event"	"Priesthood Restoration as Process"
1. Based on an early twentieth-century definition of Priesthood	1. Based on the historical definition of priesthood, 1829 to 1844
2. Stable, not developing	2. Unstable, developing
3. Restored exclusive power of God	3. Restored as parts of a whole
4. Restored as separate entities (priesthood, Melchizedek Priesthood, Aaronic Priesthood)	4. All parts restoring the whole
5. Restored exclusively by Peter, James, and John	5. Restored by "diverse angels" from Adam down to Joseph Smith

This article challenges the idea that priesthood restoration was an event that restored specific independent "authority" and "power" by carefully examining the historical restoration as a process. Demonstrating the need for such analysis, Joseph Smith wrote that "divers angels, from . . . Adam down to the present" restored the gospel and the last dispensation.[4] The event we usually refer to as the restoration of the priesthood was just the beginning of a long process.[5] As a 2015 article

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2. See Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

3. The terminology is difficult, to say the least, especially when we are looking for the 1829 historical record that confirms our twentieth-century conceptions of priesthood. See Roger Terry, "Authority and Priesthood in the LDS Church, Part 1: Definitions and Development," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 1 (2018): 25–29. Terry explains, for example, that in 1831 "there was no concept of priesthood as an abstract authority encompassing various offices. There were only offices, and two of these were 'priesthood' and 'high priesthood' (priests and high priests)."

4. Doctrine and Covenants 128:21 mentions "the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!"

5. I use the term *process* to develop the reality that Joseph Smith did not treat priesthood like an entity that was passed to him. This does not mean that power wasn't held by the priesthood or that it could not be used in metaphor as

on the Church's website summarized, "Historical documents make clear . . . that the appearance of Peter, James, and John near Harmony was only the beginning of the restoration of priesthood authority."[6] Furthermore, the suggestion that priesthood restoration was a process and not a single event should be palatable considering the restoration of keys in 1836 through Moses, Elias, and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple and the idea that future keys will yet be restored, such as the keys of the Resurrection.[7] As recently as October 2018, in an interview in Concepción, Chile, President Russell M. Nelson said, "We're witnesses to a process of restoration. If you think the Church has been fully restored, you're just seeing the beginning. There is much more to come." Also, in April 2014, in general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf declared, "In reality, the Restoration is an ongoing process; we are living in it right now."[8]

To develop the possibility that priesthood restoration is a process and that it includes multiple restorations, this article considers one frequently overlooked event in the Restoration, usually spoken of as the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer. So, what was this event? First, it was an experience Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had in the

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something someone could hold, but instead the process of restoration emphasizes the restoration of a priesthood that the Saints joined. By joining the priesthood, they held power and authority. In an 1841 discourse, Joseph Smith taught, "All priesthood is Melchizedeck; but there are different portions or degrees of it." "Discourse, 5 January 1841, as Reported by William Clayton," 5, the Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 25, 2021, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/account-of-meeting-and-discourse-5-january-1841-as-reported-by-william-clayton/2.

6. Mark Staker and Curtis Ashton, "Where Was the Priesthood Restored?" August 21, 2015, https://history.lds.org/article/where-was-the-priesthood-restored?lang=eng. This article was revised on February 25, 2019. The quoted text was changed to: "Historical documents make clear that after Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood near Harmony, additional understanding and keys were revealed and committed to Joseph."

7. Brigham Young was recorded as stating, "We cannot receive, while in the flesh, the keys to form and fashion kingdoms and to organize matter, for they are beyond our capacity and calling, beyond this world." In addition, he stated, "We have not, neither can we receive here, the ordinance and the keys of the resurrection. They will be given to those who have passed off this stage of action and have received their bodies again, as many have already done and many more will." Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 15:137 (August 24, 1872).

8. Russell M. Nelson, in "Latter-day Saint Prophet, Wife and Apostle Share Insights of Global Ministry," October 30, 2018, accessed February 12, 2021, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/latter-day-saint-prophet-wife-apostle-share-insights-global-ministry?lang=eng; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Are You Sleeping through the Restoration?" *Ensign* 44, no. 5 (May 2014): 59.
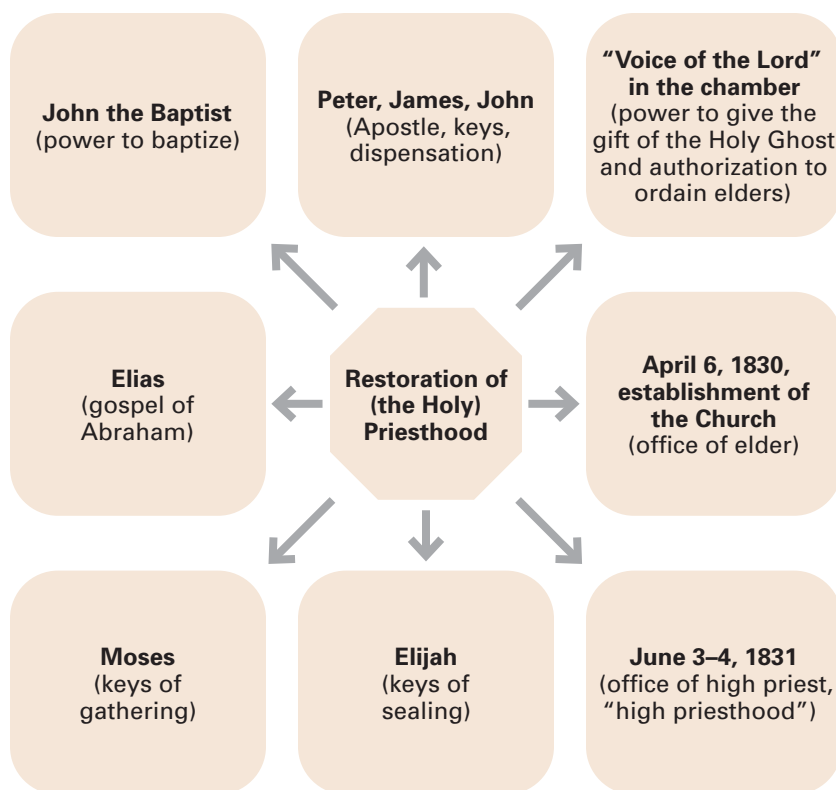
Figure 1. Restoration of (the Holy) Priesthood. This diagram provides eight examples of historical restoration events that could be included as part of the narrative of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is not all-inclusive.

upstairs room of Peter and Mary Whitmer's house in Fayette Township, New York. In June 1829, Joseph and Oliver were finishing the translation of the Book of Mormon and contemplating the visitation of John the Baptist that had happened just a few weeks earlier. After they spent countless hours in the upstairs bedroom, referred to as a "chamber," the "word of the Lord" came to them, directing them to ordain each other elders and to establish the Church of Christ. Joseph recalled that this event was associated with the restoration of the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the office of elder, making it a perfect example to explore how priesthood restoration was a

process that included multiple components.[9] This event is not forgotten by history because it was included in Doctrine and Covenants 128:21 and described in Joseph Smith's official 1839 history. His letter to the Saints (D&C 128) emphatically declares, "Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; a voice of truth out the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy" (v. 19). Joseph continued, "And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county" (v. 21).

Few members of the Church discuss this experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer as an important part of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, regardless of Joseph Smith's emphasis of it in scripture and in his history.[10] This is understandable because, admittedly, very little is known about this event. The details we get are from Joseph, but it is uncertain whether the event was a revelation to his mind, if it actually included the audible voice of the Lord, or if the Lord physically or spiritually appeared to them in the chamber.[11] What is clear is that Joseph Smith's most extensively written account of priesthood restoration, in his own history, uses the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer to demonstrate the ongoing restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This article will examine this event, but not in isolation. Instead it will try to examine how Joseph used this event to explain the developing restoration of the priesthood. To do this, this article will examine Joseph Smith's 1839 accounts of the restoration of the priesthood in his official history.[12]

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9. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," 26–27, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 26, 2021, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/32.

10. Conversation about the chamber of Father Whitmer is slowly entering into discussions about the priesthood restoration. See the editors' introduction to Michael Hubbard MacKay and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831,* Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), xxxviii–xxxix; and Mark Staker and Curtis Ashton's article on the Church's website about the priesthood restoration site, "Where Was the Priesthood Restored?"

11. One account states that "the voice of God" was heard in the chamber of Father Whitmer (D&C 128:21), while Joseph Smith's history states that the word of the Lord "came unto us in the Chamber." "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 26–27.

12. Joseph Smith's history was originally started in 1838, drafted periodically through 1839, and eventually copied into the first fifty-nine pages of a large volume, later labeled as A-1. Karen Lynn Davidson and others, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012), 187–464. This history can be found on the Joseph Smith Papers website, and a version of it is found in Joseph

This article will first look at how Joseph positioned the Peter, James, and John visit in his history and how it was associated with the apostleship, keys, and dispensations. Then, in comparison, it will analyze his account of the chamber of Father Whitmer and how it was associated with the restoration of the priesthood.[13] The Peter, James, and John narrative in Joseph's history described the restoration of administrative authority, generally described as "keys."[14] The experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer, on the other hand, is described as a series of events to demonstrate how the general power to perform ordinances and hold offices in the Church was revealed.[15] This examination of Joseph's history not only emphasizes the importance of the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer, but it also offers a possibility for why we favor the Peter, James, and John narrative.[16]

Peter, James, and John

Priesthood restoration is usually articulated by emphasizing that John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood (May 15, 1829), and then soon thereafter Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood (circa late May 1829) to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. This framework is simple and compelling, in which we get one priesthood from John the Baptist and the other priesthood from the Apostles. This avoids the complicated and sometimes distracting historical development of priesthood terminology and ecclesiology and allows us to focus upon the orderly divine nature of priesthood restoration. The

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Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971).

13. The process of priesthood restoration in Joseph Smith's history could be compared to the accounting of the First Vision. There were numerous accounts of these events but few that were fully developed and articulated in a narrative format. Comparing early accounts to Joseph Smith's history shows development and perspective, while the accounts in the history are reflective, calculated, and historically informed from his previous accounts. See Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1,* 192–202.

14. See MacKay and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 166 n. 267; and Matthew C. Godfrey and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835,* Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016), 408–12.

15. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 17, 27, 37.

16. Fitting this together with Jonathan Stapley's work, it demonstrates that the twentieth-century emphasis on priesthood as something you hold can only be associated with the power one receives from joining a priesthood. Defining priesthood restoration as a process of events and restorations emphasizes the power of the priesthood through a grand dispensational and eternal priesthood order.

explanatory power of this model is remarkable for teaching the doctrinal significance of the restoration.

Other models emphasize priesthood restoration differently but also provide a different kind of knowledge about the restoration, though they are admittedly far less compelling in their ability to present a concise message. Historical development, for example, focuses on complex shifts and movements across time that create issues when they are compared to doctrinal concepts. For example, the words *Aaronic* and *Melchizedek* and their association with the priesthood only developed in the years after 1829; the terms were defined in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants in the revelation that became section 107. Terms like *Melchizedek* were certainly used in the Book of Mormon, the book of Moses, and Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible by 1831, yet it is still clear that the duality of priesthood developed across time and was not established immediately.[17] (Therefore this makes defining the priesthood as two events—divided by Aaronic and Melchizedek—anachronistic, since it was not just terminology that developed, it was the idea that there were two priesthoods.) The duality of the priesthood was first observed through the development of ecclesiastical offices and the difference between elders and the other offices described in Doctrine and Covenants 20. Joseph Smith's 1832 history intimates two different priesthoods, and then D&C 84 codified that separation, describing the priesthood as lower and higher priesthoods. Yet even then the revelation calls the two priesthoods after Moses and Aaron, instead of Melchizedek and Aaron.[18] In April 1835, the "Instruction of Priesthood" (D&C 107) finally defined and clarified that "there are two divisions, or grand heads—one is the Melchizedek priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic, or Levitical priesthood."[19] The terminology attributed to John the Baptist in Doctrine and Covenants 13 describing the Aaronic Priesthood was written in 1839 as part of Joseph's history after the two priesthoods had been clearly defined. This developing terminology makes it difficult to label what John the Baptist restored

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17. Chapter 13 of the book of Alma is a good example of the priesthood, even when attached to the person Melchizedek, as still not being defined as if there are two priesthoods.

18. See Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1,* 10–11; Matthew C. Godfrey and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833,* Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 289–303; for references to priesthood in Doctrine and Covenants 76, see Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2,* 188.

19. See Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* 309–12.

historically in 1829 as the "Aaronic" Priesthood and what Peter, James, and John restored as the "Melchizedek" Priesthood. This is certainly a historical argument and can only be taken so far, since these visits were eventually labeled that way, but it is also highly problematic to not uncover and understand the historical development that led to the later conclusions.

The point of this section is to examine how Joseph Smith described the visit of Peter, James, and John in his 1839 history, a description that unavoidably complicates the priesthood restoration narrative. The description also calls for textual analysis and an unpacking of Joseph's history. The most obvious way that Joseph could have included the Peter, James, and John visit is by including it in a chronology of events to mark the date that they visited Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Unfortunately, he did not identify a date or associate their visit with other contextualized events. His history does not make timing—*when* the visit of Peter, James, and John happened—an important data point for understanding the apostolic visit. Most historians have deduced that they came sometime between May 15, 1829, and July 1830. There are two primary events within this fifteen-month window that historians debate over to determine when they came. Larry Porter, a BYU professor who published his study of the priesthood restoration in the *Ensign* in 1979, argues that they came within a few weeks after John the Baptist in late May or early June 1829 (I favor this argument, but Joseph Smith does not find it necessary to identify the date in his 1839 history).[20] By contrast, Richard Bushman and others have argued that there is evidence that the visitation could have occurred as Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery rushed out of a trial in Colesville, New York, in early July 1830.[21] The second date is theologically at odds with the idea that the "keys of the kingdom" were needed to establish the Church and has not been adopted by most Church members. Nonetheless, neither of these scenarios has been overwhelmingly adopted by scholars, in part because Joseph Smith never used the dating as a way to understand the purpose of the apostolic visit. His 1839 history in particular does something completely different, and though the timing issue is interesting and relevant

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20. Larry C. Porter, "Dating the Melchizedek Priesthood," *Ensign* 9, no. 6 (1979): 5–10.

21. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 162–63 and 240–41 n. 55; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 16–27; Gregory Prince, *Power from On High* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996).

for other reasons, it is a fact that Joseph's history does not try to place the apostolic visit historically in a time frame that matters here.[22]

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22. The context for the event began in January 1829 when Joseph Knight Sr. gave Joseph Smith Sr. and Samuel Smith a ride from Colesville, New York, on his sleigh to Harmony, Pennsylvania. Knight remembered that once they arrived, he "gave the old man [Joseph Smith Sr.] a half a dollar and Joseph a little money to Buoy paper to translate." Joseph Knight Sr., Reminiscences, in Dean Jesse, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (1976): 36. By April 7, Smith was translating in earnest with Oliver Cowdery, but by April 27, Smith needed $50 to pay his father-in-law for the house he had purchased from him on April 6. Davidson and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 28–33; "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 13; Oliver Cowdery, Norton, Ohio, to William W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, *LDS Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 1 (October 1834): 14. Joseph Knight Jr. remembered his father being unable to raise the money, so Joseph came to Joseph Knight Jr., who remembered, "I sold my house lot and sent him a one horse wagon." Joseph Knight Jr., Autobiographical Sketch, 1862, 1, Church History Library (hereafter CHL), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, MS 286, accessed January 26, 2021, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=0963cfb9-cc6f-45ad-96eb-71e52cb28e00&crate=0&index=0. Joseph made the payment on April 27, just three weeks after the translation had begun. As the translation continued, Smith and Cowdery ran out of paper and provisions, which brought the translation to a halt.

They paused their work and traveled to Colesville, New York, to see if Joseph Knight Sr. would provide them with more paper and food to help them finish the translation. When they found that Knight was visiting another township on business, they returned to Harmony to find work to help pay for the provisions themselves. During this same time, Cowdery had been writing to David Whitmer in Fayette, who agreed to bring his wagon to Harmony to help them move to Fayette. Knowing that they needed provisions and paper to finish the translation in Fayette, Knight remembered them looking for work when he arrived. With intentions of helping, he brought a barrel of mackerel, nine or ten bushels of grain, five or six bushels of potatoes, and a pound of tea, but most importantly, "lined paper" for the translation. His intentions were to provide for them "provisions enough to Last till the translation was done." Knight Sr., Reminiscences, in Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection," 36.

Knight's arrival can potentially offer a historical event in May 1829 that meets the requirement for when the Peter, James, and John scenario occurred. First, we know that Samuel was at Joseph's house "a few days" after May 15, 1829, likely between May 16 and 25. Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1,* 296, 299 n. 107; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, bk. 8, pgs. 3–4, CHL, MS 2049. Creating this window was relevant to Joseph Smith's history because the history was trying to date when Smith received D&C 11 and calculate when they moved to Fayette, New York. The history explains that Samuel was in Harmony a "few days" after May 15 and before Hyrum arrived, at which time Joseph delivered D&C 11 to him. MacKay and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 50–54. It states that Samuel was baptized and "he returned to his father's house." It then adds, "Not many days afterwards, my brother Hyrum Smith came to us" in Harmony. Therefore, the broadest window in which Samuel was in Harmony, Pennsylvania, was between May 16 and 25, 1829. Completely unrelated to Joseph Smith's history and without access to the
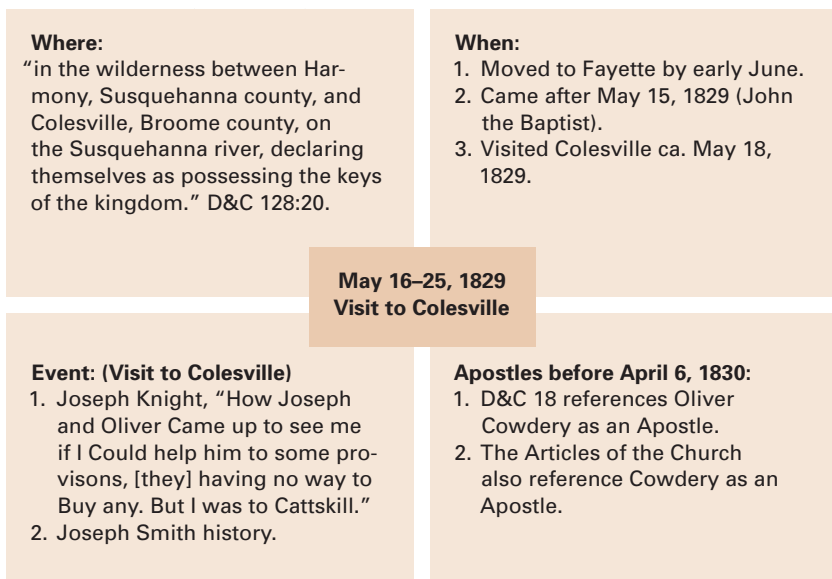
Where:
"in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom." D&C 128:20.

When:
1. Moved to Fayette by early June.
2. Came after May 15, 1829 (John the Baptist).
3. Visited Colesville ca. May 18, 1829.

May 16–25, 1829
Visit to Colesville

Event: (Visit to Colesville)
1. Joseph Knight, "How Joseph and Oliver Came up to see me if I Could help him to some provisons, [they] having no way to Buy any. But I was to Cattskill."
2. Joseph Smith history.

Apostles before April 6, 1830:
1. D&C 18 references Oliver Cowdery as an Apostle.
2. The Articles of the Church also reference Cowdery as an Apostle.

FIGURE 2. May 1829—the Larry Porter Thesis. This represents some of the evidence for dating the Peter, James, and John visit to late May 1829. This argument has been traditionally been associated with the research of Larry Porter.

Where:
"in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom." D&C 128:20.

When: (early July 1830)
Joseph Smith: "I was enabled to escape them. . . . After a few days however, I again returned to Colesville, in company with Oliver Cowdery." History, A-1, 47.

Early July 1830
Colesville Trial

Event: Colesville Trial
Joseph Smith, "The Court finding the charges against me, not sustained, I was accordingly acquitted, to the great satisfaction of my friends, and vexation of my enemies, who were still determined upon molesting me, but through the instrumentality of my new friend, the Constable."

Evidence:
1. Addison Everett's mention of Mr. Reid their lawyer in July 1830. Joseph and Oliver were exhausted and traveling at night.
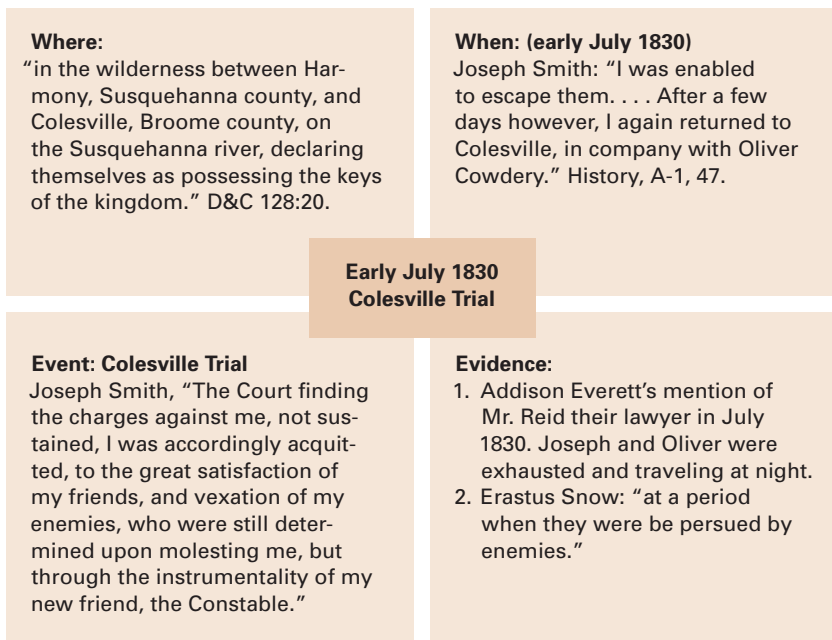2. Erastus Snow: "at a period when they were be persued by enemies."

FIGURE 3. July 1830—the Bushman Thesis. This represents some of the evidence for dating the Peter, James, and John visit to July 1830. This argument has been traditionally associated with the research of D. Michael Quinn and Richard Lyman Bushman.

Joseph explicitly mentions Peter, James, and John twice in his history, and both mentions provide some indication for why the trio came, at least as we look at how Joseph included them in his history. The first mention of Peter, James, and John has nothing to do with their visit, but begins to indicate their purpose and how Joseph Smith was using their visit in his history. This first mention will also be explored even more extensively below, since they are mentioned as part of the dialogue between John the Baptist, Joseph Smith, and Oliver Cowdery. John the Baptist is described in the 1839 history as claiming to lack the authority to give the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost, telling them "that this should be conferred on [them] hereafter." John the Baptist also told them that "he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John who held the keys of the priesthood," evoking a kind of delegation of authority from the Apostles to himself. This use of the term *keys* and the notion of delegation or administration reflects a later use of the term, which was more likely to be used to reference the access to the "mysteries of the kingdom," revelation, or scripture in the time between 1829 and 1832.[23] The idea of delegation and the relationship with the keys of the priesthood began developing with the presidency of the High Priesthood in Doctrine and Covenants 65:2, and then by March 1832 (D&C 81:2), the term "keys" was used explicitly to reference the presidency and the distribution of authority.[24] Even then the idea of keys and Apostles

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history, Joseph Knight Sr. explained that when he traveled to Harmony, he saw Samuel Smith at Joseph Smith's Harmony home, but not Hyrum Smith. Therefore, Knight went to Harmony during that very small window of time when Samuel was at Joseph's house. Therefore, sometime between when Samuel arrived and when he returned to Manchester, Smith and Cowdery traveled to Colesville to get provisions from Joseph Knight Sr. The following day, before Samuel left, Knight came to Harmony and provided them with provisions. Given the correlation between these two primary accounts, Smith and Cowdery's visit to Colesville took place about May 20, 1829. The dating of their travel provides an event that can be used within the deductive reasoning for identifying the *scenario* described by Joseph Smith in D&C 128. However, it still only analyzes possible scenarios for dating Smith's reminiscent account.

23. As early as April 1830, one of Joseph Smith's revelations (D&C 6:27–28) uses the term "keys" to reference his ability to translate the Book of Mormon. Then in September 1830 another revelation references "keys" as access to "the mysteries, and the revelations" (D&C 28:7).

24. Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 92–94. On October 30, 1831, Joseph Smith used the term *keys* to represent authority at this point in D&C 65:2, rather than the previous use of the term *keys* to receive revelation. He revealed, "The keys of the kingdom of God is committed unto man on the Earth & from thence shall the Gospel roll forth unto the ends of the Earth." The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants added to

was never fully developed or connected together in revelation until 1835 when the Twelve Apostles were called. This is relevant to Joseph Smith's history because the first reference to Peter, James, and John is not about the purpose of their visit, but instead it is about their authority to authorize and delegate keys to John the Baptist. This is anachronistic terminology and invites the question about how Joseph Smith was using the role of Peter, James, and John in his history.

References to Peter, James, and John in Joseph Smith's History (A-1)

First Reference	*Second Reference*
John the Baptist references Peter, James, and John	Peter, James, and John were mentioned in the 1835 version of D&C 27:12–13

The second reference to Peter, James, and John in Joseph's history is not even found within the prose but instead is found in the text of Doctrine and Covenants 27 that was inserted into his history chronologically as part of the events that happened at the end of summer 1830. What makes this even more complicated is the fact that the part of the revelation that describes the visit of Peter, James, and John was added to the revelation in 1835. Interestingly, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was the first published documentation of the visit of Peter, James, and John. The additions made to section 27 also emphasize the transmission of priesthood authority or keys to Joseph Smith by multiple biblical prophets and patriarchs to govern the modern church.[25]

Retrospectively, Peter, James, and John became one link in a long chain leading back from dispensation to dispensation and patriarch to patriarch in a line of key-holding authority back to Adam. As such, the verses in Doctrine and Covenants 27 inform us that the Apostles delivered to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery administrative keys and a new dispensation in the form of their apostleship. The 1835 text of

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D&C 68 explicit references to the "Melchizedek priesthood," "keys," and "presidency." Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* 357. Contemporarily, D&C 81:2 included the following instruction to Joseph Smith's counselor Jesse Gause, referring to "the calling wherewith your called even to be a high Priest in my church and councellor unto my servant Joseph unto whom <I> have given the keys of the Kingdom which belongs to always to the prisidency of the high Priesthood; therefor verily I acknowledge him and will bless him and also thee inasmuch as thou art faithful in councel in the office." Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2,* 208.
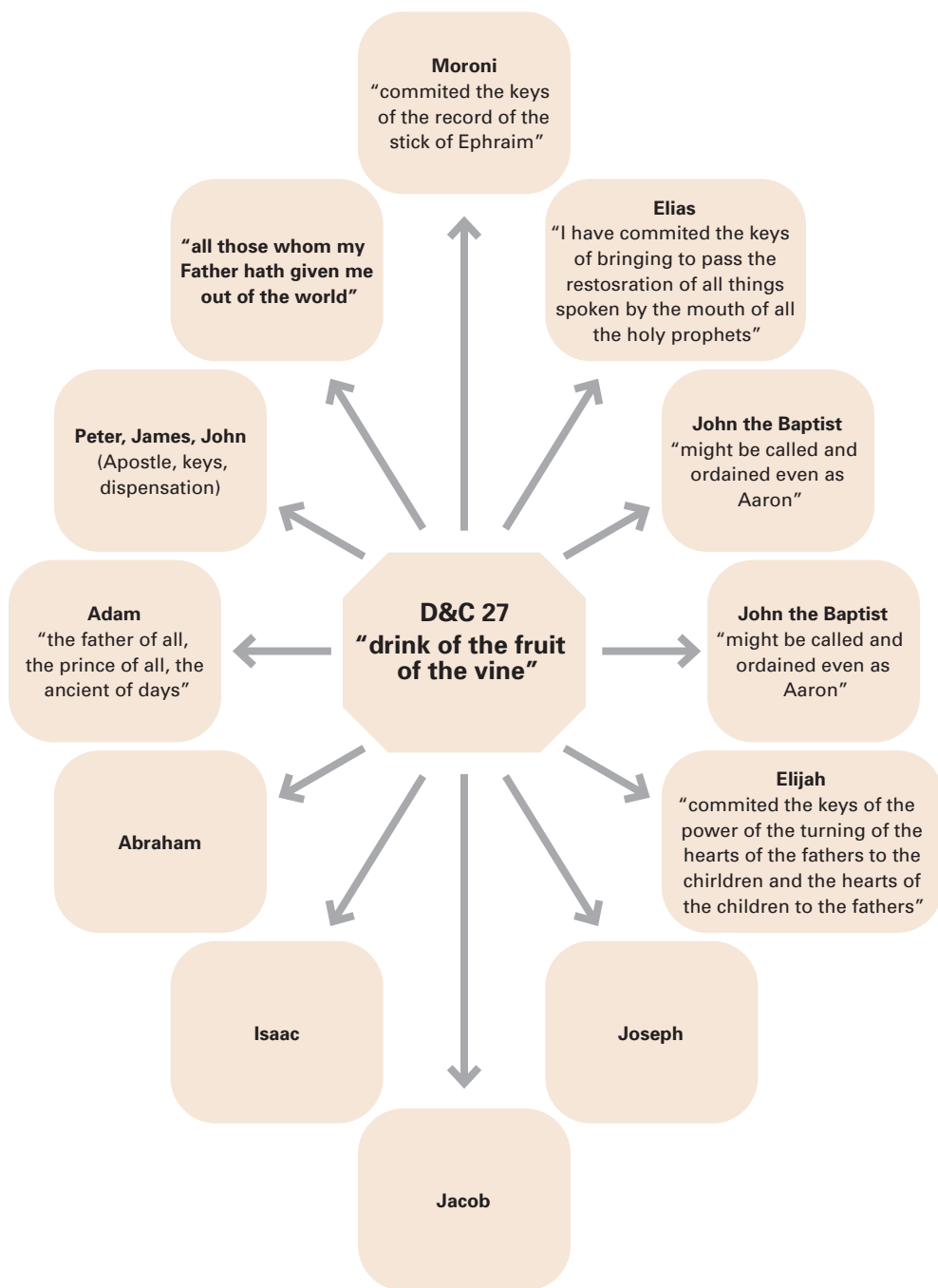
25. Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* 408–11.

Moroni
"commited the keys
of the record of the
stick of Ephraim"

Elias
"I have commited the keys
of bringing to pass the
restosration of all things
spoken by the mouth of all
the holy prophets"

"all those whom my
Father hath given me
out of the world"

John the Baptist
"might be called and
ordained even as
Aaron"

Peter, James, John
(Apostle, keys,
dispensation)

D&C 27
"drink of the fruit
of the vine"

John the Baptist
"might be called and
ordained even as
Aaron"

Adam
"the father of all,
the prince of all, the
ancient of days"

Elijah
"commited the keys of the
power of the turning of the
hearts of the fathers to the
chirldren and the hearts of
the children to the fathers"

Abraham

Isaac

Joseph

Jacob

Figure 4. The Lord's Supper with the Ancient Patriarchs. This is a list of restora-
tion events and the principal actors/participants who will one day partake of the
sacramental wine with Jesus Christ.

section 27 describes the purpose of the Peter, James, and John visit without referencing priesthood, high priesthood, and especially Melchizedek priesthood:

Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13	*Doctrine and Covenants* 128:20
Ordained Apostles	
"ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles"	
Committed Keys of the Kingdom	
"I have committed the keys of my kingdom."	"Declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom."
Committed A New Dispensation	
"I have committed . . . a dispensation of the gospel for the last times."	"and the dispensation of the fulness of times!"

FIGURE 5. What Did Peter, James, and John Restore? This table compares the two revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* (27 and 128) that describe the purpose of the visit of Peter, James, and John.

> And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry: and of the same things which I revealed unto them: unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last days times; and for the fulness of times, in which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth.[26]

Though the uninterrupted line of authority from dispensation to dispensation was not defined by each patriarch possessing the apostleship, Doctrine and Covenants 27 emphasized the postincarnation apostleship because Peter, James, and John ordained Smith and Cowdery to be Apostles. Also, though there is no identifiable unified narrative that tells the story of the developing apostleship or the changing ideas about keys over Joseph's life, they are nonetheless a theme that emerges throughout Joseph Smith's history. The restoration of the apostleship and the ability to call additional Apostles, like the New Testament Apostles, emerged

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26. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 52. This is not an explicit account of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph used the narrative of Peter, James, and John as an explicit reference to how they received administrative keys to distribute and govern the priesthood (see previous footnote).

first in the text of the 1829 Book of Mormon.[27] This was the seed that would eventually grow into the Latter-day Saint Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1835.[28] The text of the Book of Mormon created an ecclesiastical possibility for Christ's Apostles to be replicated as a quorum or authoritative body of twelve, in spite of the fact that antebellum Protestants believed there was no succession of the New Testament Apostles.[29] Steps were also taken to call additional Apostles in 1829, even before the Church of Christ was established, when a revelation was given to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer to call "even unto twelve" as part of the restoration.[30]

Though they did not call twelve immediately, the revelation developed much like many of the other revelations, as a major initiative that would flower over years. For example, as the Church established its ecclesiastical structure and administrative center, the mention of twelve Apostles emerged again in the fall of 1831. Church leadership had recently been introduced to a higher expression of the priesthood and the office of high priest as an administrative office in the Church.[31] On October 26, 1831, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon offered instruction on the priesthood at a Church conference.[32] Cowdery also informed the Church that he had been recently told that the twelve "would be

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27. The Book of Mormon declares, "Wherefore, the twelve ministers of thy seed shall be judged of them; for ye are of the house of Israel" (1 Ne. 12:9). See Michael Hubbard MacKay, *Prophetic Authority: Democratic Hierarchy and the Mormon Priesthood* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2020), ch. 3; and Taylor G. Petrey, "Purity and Parallels: Constructing the Apostasy Narrative of Early Christianity," in *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy,* ed. Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 174–95.

28. MacKay, *Prophetic Authority,* ch. 6.

29. Adam Clark, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorized Version Including the Marginal Reading and Parallel Texts. With a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1831), 736–37; Gregory A. Prince, *Power from On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 56–62; Albert C. Outler, "Biblical Primitivism in Early American Methodism," in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church,* ed. Richard T. Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 134–37.

30. Davidson and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 69–74; Prince, *Power from On High,* 56–62.

31. MacKay, *Prophetic Authority,* ch. 3; Davidson and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 317–27.

32. Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2,* 79.

ordained & sent forth from the land Zion."[33] Then, just a few days later, one of Joseph Smith's revelations (D&C 65:2) addressed the authority of the kingdom of God, which would prepare the earth for the Second Coming of Christ. It stated, "The keys of the kingdom of God is committed unto man on the Earth & from thence shall the Gospel roll forth unto the ends of the Earth, as the stone which is hewn from the Mountain without hands shall role forth untill it hath filled the whole Earth."[34]

Considering this slow development of the apostleship and the fact that it was initiated in 1829 (D&C 18), its latent development may have been a reason for Joseph to exclude the Peter, James, and John visit from the part of his history that described 1829.[35] Within months of each other, in 1835, the first members of the Quorum of the Twelve were ordained and the Peter, James, and John visit was added to D&C 27. Then the 1835 additions to D&C 27 ended up in Joseph Smith's history as if they were written in the summer of 1830. Joseph had numerous places in his history to emphasize the Peter, James, and John visit, but instead he let the text of D&C 27 describe the event. With that brief mention, his history of 1835 described the ordination of the Twelve Apostles.

The idea of keys flowered over time also. Paralleling the keys given to Peter in the New Testament by Christ, this authority was intended to be used to build the "kingdom of heaven" on earth. This was also associated with the creation of the presidency of the High Priesthood who would use those keys to authorize and administer the priesthood in the last days.[36] Authority was delegated to leaders like bishops, who were also high priests, to administer to Church members and distribute authority among them.[37]

By 1835, the administrative authority described as keys was codified into revelation through authorized revisions added to previous revelations and by additional new revelations in preparation to publish the Doctrine and Covenants. In particular, the majority of the verses in

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33. "Minutes, 25–26 October 1831," in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2,* 87; also "Minute Book 2," 25–26 October 1831, Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.joseph smithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/17.

34. Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2,* 92–93.

35. For a detailed history of apostleship in 1829 and 1830, see MacKay, *Prophetic Authority,* ch. 3.

36. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:2: "Unto whom I have given the keys of the Kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood." Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2,* 208.

37. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:14–17 and 84:18–29.

section 27 were added after the original revelation in 1830,[38] and these later additions introduced an apocalyptic event just before Christ's Second Coming in which the patriarchs across the dispensations would meet to return their "keys" of their dispensations back to Adam.[39] It is in this added part of D&C 27 that Peter, James, and John are mentioned as having delivered the "keys of the kingdom" to Joseph Smith in succession with all of the patriarchs.[40] Additions to several revelations (D&C 7, 27, 68, and 107) all represented the administrative and distributive authority of the priesthood and the importance of the concept of keys. In other words, as Joseph and editors of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants prepared the revelations for publication, keys and administration were emphasized more than ever before. Of course, the Peter, James, and John visit was understood and described in terms of administration and keys.

In particular, these changes came as Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and the presidency chose and ordained twelve Apostles for the first time.[41] Once they were ordained and before the Twelve were sent out to the branches of the Church across the United States, Joseph provided them with instruction on the priesthood (now D&C 107) that outlined the priesthood orders and Church governance. The Twelve

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38. In preparation for subsequent printings of his revelations, Joseph Smith (or those under his direction) amended and added to many early Doctrine and Covenants verses to clarify and expand ideas based on developing revelation. To compare our current edition of section 27 with the early manuscript version in Revelation Book 1, see "Revelation, circa August 1830 [D&C 27]," 36, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-circa-august-1830-dc-27/2.

39. The "Instruction on Priesthood" (D&C 107:53) explained that in the last days of Adam's life he blessed his posterity with his "last blessing." The 1835 additions to D&C 27 describe the gathering of past patriarchs at the Second Coming to take the sacrament and return their keys to Adam. Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* 308–21, 408–11.

40. Compare MacKay and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 164–66, and Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* 408–11.

41. See MacKay, *Prophetic Authority,* ch. 3; Ronald K. Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (1981): 301–41; Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership, 1830–1841" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981); Ronald W. Walker, "Six Days in August: Brigham Young and the Succession Crisis of 1844," in *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration,* ed. Arnold K. Garr and David J. Whitaker (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 161–96; Christopher J. Blythe, "Recreating Religion: The Response to Joseph Smith's Innovations in the Second Prophetic Generation of Mormonism" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 2001); D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 105–264.

were instructed that "the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage."[42] Each priesthood and office were delineated and defined within the ecclesiology that identified how authority within the branches of the Church was distributed. In particular, the Twelve became the traveling high council that held the keys of the kingdom and who would establish leaders and distribute the keys to local authorities and offices outside of Zion and her stakes.[43] To some extent, this was a moment when the Peter, James, and John visit could have been understood with more precision and understanding.

The revelatory additions to Doctrine and Covenants 7, 27, 68, and 107 shape the primary narrative in Joseph Smith's history and explain why the Peter, James, and John narrative in the history emphasizes administrative keys and apostolic restoration. Joseph Smith framed the visit of Peter, James, and John within the administrative and distributive developments that created the Latter-day Saint concept of keys, the ordination of Apostles, and purpose of the last dispensation. His history captures this narrative within the development of Latter-day Saint ecclesiology, particularly as part of his revelations about priesthood authority. The restoration of priesthood through Peter, James, and John was described as administrative (broadly speaking, as if this administrative authority controlled the kingdom of God and the last dispensation), rather than simply a restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.[44] These categories

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42. Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* 316.

43. There is scholarly debate about the Twelve Apostles receiving the keys, since only a few of them were given keys in their blessings and ordinations. Additionally, they did not immediately receive administrative authorities like they would once they returned from the mission to England. Yet it is clear that their ordination was a fulfillment of the commandment to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer in D&C 18 "to search out the Twelve" (v. 37) and was associated with the 1835 version of D&C 27 that explicitly claims that Peter, James, and John delivered the "keys of the kingdom" as part of the authority that was given to Joseph and Oliver as ordained Apostles.

44. Joseph Smith had faced significant challenges to his authority in Kirtland and in Missouri. This is a likely reason for him to begin to trace his authority back to angelic visits. It should be specifically noted that Joseph's 1832 history states, "The Lord brought forth and established by his hand <firstly> he receiving the testamony from on high seccondly the ministering of Angels thirdly the reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministring of—Aangels to adminster the letter of the Law <Gospel—><—the law and commandments as they were given unto him—> and in <the> ordinencs, forthly a confirmation and reception of the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God power and ordinence from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit the Kees of the Kingdom of God confered upon

and narratives are clearly not indivisible, but rather overlapping, which enabled Joseph to also address the restoration of the priesthood as a nonadministrative power to perform saving ordinances.

The Restoration of Melchizedek Priesthood: The Power to Baptize, Give the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and Ordain Elders

The second restoration narrative that Joseph Smith describes in his history is about the power to perform ordinances and ordain individuals to priesthood offices. This restoration is formed around three events: (1) the visit of John the Baptist, (2) the chamber of Father Whitmer, and (3) the establishment of the Church of Christ. The key to understanding this narrative is realizing that Joseph Smith did not describe these events separately. In fact, the core of this argument depends upon not only the textual connections Joseph Smith used to inseparably link them together but also the fact that he left the Peter, James, and John visit out of this 1829 narrative in his official history. In other words, Joseph connected these three events together and disconnected the visit of Peter, James, and John from these three events.

This is no small demarcation, since Joseph Smith claimed that the three events together restored the power to baptize, the power to give the Gift of the Holy Ghost, the Melchizedek priesthood, the office of elder, and the directive to organize the Church. Yet it can be demonstrated that Joseph Smith's intentions were to create this narrative and to intentionally leave the Peter, James, and John narrative to be discussed later in his history. Many Latter-day Saints follow Larry Porter's argument that Peter, James, and John visited in the second half of May 1829, the timing of which would put their visit in the middle of the period that I'm calling here the "second narrative," yet Joseph Smith conspicuously left their visit out of the chronological flow of the events he narrated in his 1839 history.[45]

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him and the continuation of the blessings of God to him &c." Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1,* 10. Matthew C. Godfrey, "A Culmination of Learning: D&C and the Doctrine of the Priesthood," in *You Shall Have My Word: Exploring the Text of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 167–81.

45. Larry Porter, "The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods," *Ensign* 26, no. 12 (December 1996): 30–47.

Textual Connection between the John the Baptist Narrative and the "Chamber of Father Whitmer"

Joseph Smith, History, Vol. A-1

John the Baptist in the woods in Harmony, Pennsylvania, pp. 17–18.	**"Voice of the Lord"** in the **"*chamber of Father Whitmer*"** in Fayette, New York, pp. 27–28.
Three Promises made by John the Baptist in Smith's history and fulfilled in the chamber.	Transition: "We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the Angel [John the Baptist] that conferred upon us the Aaronick Priesthood had given us, viz:"
Promise 1 (power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost)	**Fulfillment 1** (power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost)
"He said this Aaronic priesthood had not the power of laying on of hands, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on \<us\> hereafter"	"Authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."
Promise 2 (Melchizedek Priesthood)	**Fulfillment 2** (Melchizedek Priesthood)
Melchizedek "priesthood he said should in due time be conferred on us."	"that provided we continued faithful; we should also have the Melchesidec Priesthood"
Promise 3 (office of elder)	**Fulfillments 3** (office of elder)
"And that I should be called the first Elder of the Church and he the second."	"when the word of the Lord, came unto us in the Chamber, commanding us; that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, and that he also should ordain me to the same office"

FIGURE 6. Textual Connection between the John the Baptist Narrative and the "Chamber of Father Whitmer." This chart demonstrates that there are three promises made by John the Baptist that are all fulfilled in the chamber of Father Whitmer (restoration of power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the office of elder). The experience in the chamber came as a direct result of the dialogue with John the Baptist, not the visit from Peter, James, and John. (This table was originally designed by the author for *Prophetic Authority: Democratic Hierarchy and the Mormon Priesthood.*)

The key to understanding Joseph Smith's narrative is in the language he used to connect the John the Baptist visit, the chamber of Father Whitmer, and the establishment of the Church. Thus, the best place to start is with Joseph Smith's account of the John the Baptist visit. Joseph's history describes three promises that John the Baptist makes to Joseph Smith: (1) to receive the power to give the Holy Ghost, (2) to receive the Melchizedek priesthood, and (3) to be ordained the first elder. Many readers have assumed, for good reason, that these three promises were fulfilled by the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood through Peter, James, and John.[46] However, Joseph Smith's own 1839 history does not turn to the visit of Peter, James, and John to fulfill these promises. Instead, he leaves the apostolic visitation out and describes the fulfillment of all three promises to have occurred at the house of Peter Whitmer Sr., where they were finishing the translation of the Book of Mormon in the chamber of Father Whitmer, and in the April 6, 1830, organization of the Church of Christ.[47]

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46. One of the passages that readers of the history use to claim that Peter, James, and John fulfilled the promises John made is a misreading of the history. It states: "The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this priesthood upon us said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the new Testament, and that he acted under the direction <of> Peter, James, and John, who held the keys of the priesthood of Melchisedeck, which priesthood he said should in due time be conferred on us. And that I should be called the first Elder of the Church and he the second." "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 18. This passage actually demonstrates that the Peter, James, and John narrative was about the restoration of keys and administrative authority, when it states that John "acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John." The misreading happens when the reader connects the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood with Peter, James, and John. It does not say that they were going to restore the priesthood, but rather that the priesthood they hold will be restored. This misreading is best demonstrated from following the history's textual connection between John the Baptist's promises and their fulfillment in the chamber of Father Whitmer (fig. 6). A careful reading of this passage supports the two narratives described in Joseph Smith's history.

47. John the Baptist came on May 15, and the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer occurred in the middle of June 1829. There are very few things I would disagree with in Larry Porter's research, but I question his notion that Peter, James, and John fulfilled John the Baptist's promises. Porter claims that "the ancient Apostles had instructed Joseph and Oliver to not yet ordain each other to an office within the Melchizedek Priesthood," which is not supported in Joseph's 1838 history, where Joseph states that when they were in the chamber of Father Whitmer, they "became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the Angel [John the Baptist] that conferred upon us the Aaronick Priesthood had given us" (fig. 6). Porter has developed a sophisticated argument for dating when Peter, James, and John visited Smith and Cowdery (which I

Joseph Smith's history directly connects the promises given by John the Baptist to the purpose of the events that occurred in the chamber of Father Whitmer. He began by writing, "We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the Angel [John the Baptist] that conferred upon us the Aaronick Priesthood had given us." In other words, Joseph and Oliver asked for the fulfillment of John the Baptist's promises. First, they asked for the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost, and second, they asked for the associated Melchizedek Priesthood. Within Joseph Smith's accounts about the restoration of the priesthood (whether he was explaining the restoration of priesthood through Moses, John the Baptist, Elias, or Elijah), none of them explicitly claim that the "Melchizedek Priesthood" was restored by them, except for in the chamber of Father Whitmer.[48] Curiously, none of his accounts about Peter, James, and John claimed that they restored the Melchizedek Priesthood either. After asking the Lord for the fulfillment of John the Baptist's promises, Joseph Smith wrote that "here to our unspeakable satisfaction did we realize the truth of the Saviour's promise; 'Ask, and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'" He explained that "we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord, came unto us in the Chamber, commanding us; that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, and that he also should ordain me to the same office."[49]

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agree with, and I do think the Apostles came before the experience in the chamber), but this point about the Apostles evoking the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer is not true, at least according to Joseph's history. It is also not supported by any extant historical document. Porter, "Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood," 38–39. Following Porter's lead, *Saints: The Standard of Truth* also tries to make the same connection. It states, "The Lord's ancient apostles Peter, James, and John had appeared to them and conferred on them Melchizedek Priesthood, *as John the Baptist promised.*" *Saints: The Standard of Truth, 1815*–1846 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 84, emphasis added. On the other hand, other recent explanations have chosen to allow the reader to simply read the account describing the event in the chamber of Father Whitmer. The Joseph Smith Papers Project, in particular, chose to let the account stand on its own in the introduction to *Documents, Volume 1.* Davidson and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* xxxix. Richard Lyman Bushman did the same in *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alford Knopf, 2006), 79–80.

48. Brian Q. Cannon and BYU Studies Staff, "Seventy Contemporaneous Priesthood Restoration Documents," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844,* ed. John Welch with Erick B. Carlson (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 215–64.

49. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 27.

Joseph Smith's History
"according to previous commandment"

Commandment	Fulfillment
The Chamber of Old Father Whitmer, June 1829, Joseph Smith, History, vol. A-1, 27.	Establishment of the Church, April 6, 1830, Joseph Smith, History, vol. A-1, 37.
"commanding us; that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, and that he also should ordain me to the same office."	"I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an Elder of the Church. . . . He ordained me also to the office of an Elder of said Church."
"such times, as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together."	"we had received commandment to organize the Church And accordingly we met together for that purpose, at the house of the above mentioned Mr Whitmer [Peter Whitmer Sr.] (being six in number) on Tuesday the sixth day of April, AD One thousand, eight hundred and thirty."
"have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers, or not."	"We proceeded, (according to previous commandment) to call on our brethren to know whether they accepted us as their teachers."
"when also we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them, and to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them."	"We then broke bread, blessed it, and brake it with them, also wine, blessed it, and drank it with them."
"then attend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon all those whom we had previously baptized; doing all things in the name of the Lord."	"We then laid our hands on each individual member of the Church present that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the Church of Christ."

FIGURE 7. "According to Previous Commandment." This chart demonstrates that the text of Joseph Smith's history explicitly connects the commandments in the chamber of Father Whitmer with the establishment of the Church of Christ on April 6, 1830.

Joseph Smith's history unquestionably connects the visit of John the Baptist and the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer but then describes additional commandments in the chamber, given by Christ, to be fulfilled at the establishment of the Church. According to Joseph's history, Christ commanded them to (1) ordain each other as the first and second elders, (2) to perform those ordinations at the establishment of the Church where believers had been gathered, (3) where the congregation could vote by common consent to accept Joseph and Oliver as their leaders, (4) then prepare and receive the Lord's Supper, and finally (5) give the Gift of the Holy Ghost to those who had been baptized. Joseph Smith's history explicitly states, "We proceeded, (according to previous commandment)"[50] to follow what was given by the Lord in the chamber of Father Whitmer. The Prophet fulfilled, at the April 6, 1830, establishment of the Church, all five commandments given in the chamber as shown by figure 7.

Through this examination of the text of Joseph Smith's history, it is clear that Joseph Smith saw the visitation of John the Baptist and the events that followed as essential aspects of a single restoration narrative. The visit of John the Baptist, the experience in the chamber of Father Whitmer, and the establishment of the Church were part of one single restoration narrative that restored the power to baptize, the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Melchizedek Priesthood, the office of elder, and the Church of Christ. The fact that these terms have to be understood in an 1835–1839 context actually makes these restoration narratives more potent, though more anachronistic for an 1829 context, regarding a conception of how the priesthood was restored. When Joseph Smith worked on his history in 1839, he was well aware of the historical changes that had occurred over the previous decade, yet he felt confident in declaring that the "Melchizedek Priesthood" was restored in the chamber of Father Whitmer. His history is a complicated text, but in this instance, there is little reason to question the deliberate narrative developed from a retrospective position.[51] This specific narrative

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50. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 37.

51. That being said, the question of intent will always be a factor. Was Joseph Smith cognizant of the fact that his official history described the chamber of Father Whitmer as part of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood? The textual links described above are enough to assure us as readers that the author of the text undoubtedly intended the John the Baptist appearance, the chamber of Father Whitmer experience, and the establishment of the Church to be one continuous narrative. So, if the text demonstrates clear intent, then one must question the author. Is Joseph Smith the author? The primary

moves us away from traditional accounts that describe the restoration of the priesthood as an event because it was a process including several events that constituted the Restoration.

It was never just one event that welcomed Joseph Smith and the Church's leadership into the priesthood and offered them the authority to perform ordinances and govern The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph continued to outline the process of events in his history and revelations. His history itself chronologically works through numerous restoration events to demonstrate the process of the restoration. For example, his history starts soon after the narratives described above by including the 1835 version of D&C 27 in which numerous restoration experiences are noted, including when Peter, James, and John ordained him and Oliver Cowdery as Apostles. Then, perhaps even more perplexing, on June 3, 1831, Joseph was "ordained to the High Priesthood under the hand of br. Lyman Wight" and he "conferred, <the high priesthood> for the first time, upon several of the elders."[52] Following this event, he was guided by revelation to form the Presidency of the High Priesthood, construct quorums, and create new sacraments. By 1836, the priesthood was then restored through Jesus, Moses, Elias, and Elijah (D&C 110) in the Kirtland temple.[53] Interestingly, with retrospection, Joseph wrote in his history that from his earliest visits with Moroni, Moroni told to him, "I will reveal unto you the Priesthood by the hand of Elijah the prophet."[54] All of this complicates the traditional two-event

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critique would be to question whether James Mulholland, the scribe for the history, created this narrative. This is an impossible task to prove one way or the other, but Joseph never changed the account, even though he had numerous chances to fix errors. Instead, Joseph printed the history publicly in the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo. Joseph was considered its author, a stance that the Joseph Smith Papers Project has also embraced.

52. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 118. MacKay and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 326. High priesthood is often referred to as a specific power that is later called the "Melchizedek Priesthood" in D&C 107 in 1835. Here it is the group of high priests that make up the high priesthood. This gives the sense of joining the priesthood, rather than being given a specific power. By 1835, there are two priesthoods the leaders could join, Aaronic and Melchizedek, the second being associated with the high priesthood. The process of communing with angels and participating with heaven happens over time and constitutes the restoration of the priesthoods, or the restoration of the living church participating in the priesthood.

53. Dean Jesse and others, *Journals, Volume 1*, 219–22.

54. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 5. The use of the term "reveal" suggests that Moroni was referencing priesthood as something you would join rather than something you would hold. The edits to D&C 107 in 1835 suggest that the priesthood order on earth went back to Adam. Elijah, Elias, and Moses "revealed" this priesthood order and

restoration narrative of the Melchizedek Priesthood by including multiple restoration events across Joseph Smith's ministry that were part of that restoration.

Conclusion

As Church members, we have commonly abbreviated the narrative of the restoration of the priesthood by associating the Aaronic Priesthood with John the Baptist and the Melchizedek Priesthood with Peter, James, and John. Yet members are well aware that priesthood restoration was a process, not an event, or even just two events. Members are well aware of the abridgments we make to the priesthood restoration narrative, but occasionally we need reminders of its nuanced and ongoing history. To expand our understanding should be an exciting part of this process.

The process of the restoration of the priesthood is described in revelations like Doctrine and Covenants 27, 107, 110, and 128 to be a meeting of heavenly beings on earth with Joseph Smith. In fact, D&C 128:21 records that Joseph was visited by "divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time." The priesthood existed before the foundation of the world and Joseph was welcomed to join by angels who delivered "their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept" (D&C 128:21). The priesthood was not treated or restored as the power of God, but God's power was used authoritatively by this holy order and restored by angels who were ordained members of the priesthood. As such, the priesthood was later described as the restoration of something one could hold, as if Melchizedek Priesthood was restored in that way and within a single visit or event.

The discrepancy between the priesthood being restored as a single event and it being restored as part of a process of events can be explained by the complicated transition after Joseph Smith's death and when Brigham Young become the second prophet. By 1839, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had become increasingly important, and once they returned from their mission to England, they took on more authoritative administrative roles. In Nauvoo, they participated in the most important councils and temple rites, and by the end of Joseph's life, they

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offered up keys of their dispensations that would open doors in the final dispensation to prepare the earth for the Second Coming.

Michael
"detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light"

Peter, James, John
(Apostle, keys, dispensation)

"voice of the Lord" in the Chamber
(power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost)

"voice of the Lord"
"declaring the three witnessee to bear record of the book"

D&C 128
"declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood"

Michael the archangel

Moroni
"declaring the fulfilment of the prophets"

Gabriel

Divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time

Raphael

Figure 8. Doctrine and Covenants 128. This chart is a list of visitations that Joseph Smith describes in D&C 128, which can be compared with figures 1 (a historical example) and 4 (D&C 27) to demonstrate that priesthood restoration is expressed as a process within scripture.

had become the predominant key-holding quorum of the Church.[55] After Joseph Smith's death, their authority needed to be demonstrated.

As the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles found itself holding the reins of the Church, the visit of Peter, James, and John was the restoration event that best represented the priesthood restoration and became highlighted as the Church developed over time. Brigham Young emphasized the centrality of apostleship above all other restorations, marking the Peter, James, and John visit as the central event in the restoration of the priesthood.[56] In 1853, Brigham addressed the membership to demonstrate the foundational authority that the Apostles held in their hands. He preached, "I speak thus to show you the order of the Priesthood." He insisted, "We will now commence with the Apostleship, where Joseph commenced." He explained that after Joseph "was ordained to this office, then he had the right to organize and build up the kingdom of God, for he had committed unto him the *keys* of the *Priesthood.*" Having the keys of that same priesthood given to him as an Apostle, Brigham declared, "All the Priesthood, all the keys, all the gifts, all the endowments, and everything preparatory to entering into the presence of the Father and of the Son, are in, composed of, circumscribed by, or I might say incorporated within the circumference of, the Apostleship."[57] Brigham Young's emphasis on the centrality of the Peter, James, and John visitation has since then become the Church's official position, expressed in simple and compelling terms. This paper, conversely, has developed an additional historical reconstruction of priesthood restoration by focusing directly upon how Joseph Smith told the

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55. See D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *BYU Studies* 16, no. 2 (1976): 187–233; Reid L. Harper, "The Mantle of Joseph: Creation of a Mormon Miracle," *Journal of Mormon History* 22, no. 2 (1996): 35–71; Orson Pratt, *Divine Authority; or, The Question Was Joseph Sent of God?* (Liverpool: R. James, 1848), 4–5, 7; Parley P. Pratt, *Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Liverpool, Eng.: Wilford Woodruff, 1845), 1–2; Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 3:257; Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4,* xxviii, 312–15, 318; Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, March 23, 1846; Reuben Miller, Journal, October 21, 1848, CHL, accessed January 29, 2021, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=22222322-f4fe-41e3-aa86-bfc54b94df92&crate=0&index=14.

56. Joseph Smith believed that the Peter, James, and John visit was highly significant and essential. This comment above is tempered by the fact that Joseph Smith described them as restoring the kingdom of God and "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 128:20).

57. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses,* 1:134–35 (April 6, 1853).

story in 1839, centered on his experience with "the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer" (D&C 128:21).

This suggests that priesthood restoration was a process. Joseph Smith's accounting of the Peter, James, and John visit, which was clearly part of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, was associated with apostleship, keys, and dispensations; it was not a single event that restored the priesthood but rather the conferring of an office and administrative authorities that developed over time. Additionally, Joseph's history framed the John the Baptist visit together with the "voice of the Lord" in the chamber of Father Whitmer and the establishment of the Church to emphasize this part of the process, not to emphasize an event. This bound the restoration of ordinances, offices, and priesthood together in his detailed account of priesthood restoration in 1839.

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A Short Tribute to My Genealogical Butcher Chart

If you were to parse me
Like meat on a banner
You'd find all my ancestors
In parts or in manner.

Dissect the whole of me
You'll find them there.
One in my eye color.
One in my hair.

Which great-great loved words—
Like sausage all mingled
In Swedish or German—
Some rhyming or jingled?

Which father loved fibers?
Which mother loved clay?
Which one had my hip bone
With sensuous sway?

Which ones—like the giblets
With uncertain uses—
Could wiggle their ears
or create great excuses?

From their loins I sprang.
I'm glad for each part,
For DNA shared with my
Own unique heart!

—Linda Hoffman Kimball

Wake Up and Dream

Eva Koleva Timothy

The cover piece, *Star Stretching,* was inspired by a favorite saying of my mission president, Elder Ronald Rasband: "It is better to aim for the stars and drag your feet in the treetops than to aim for the treetops and drag your feet in the mud."

Aiming high and dreaming big is something I learned early on in life.

I was born as the only child to two amazing parents in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the midst of Communism and the Cold War. We were a tight family that lived on dreams of freedom and not much else.

I never knew my grandfather Peter, a prominent newspaperman at the end of World War II who refused to publish propaganda for the Communists when they came into power. Shortly thereafter, he was taken from his wife and seven children by a couple of men in a black car and imprisoned for a period of years in a concentration camp for his beliefs. Our family was blacklisted from that point on.

My father was a talented artist and painter in his own right, but without party favor he could never gain admittance to the university to pursue a career, so he did autobody work and drove a taxi to keep us fed. He also painted a mural of the Beatles across the entire kitchen wall of our small studio apartment as a reminder of the West and the freedom we longed for.

In the midst of all that poverty, oppression, and darkness, I learned that the light is always there if you learn to look for it. At times it would show up in small details like a flower growing through a crack in the cement. At times it was an ability to belly laugh at the ludicrousness of

the world around us. And at those most difficult moments, it was the light from a dream for a better future.

Following those dreams and by God's grace, I discovered the restored gospel, made wonderful friends throughout the world, and came to study film and photography in the USA. So many of my deepest hopes and dreams have been realized; still, I've learned that one cannot afford to go through life dreamless.

Looking back on missions accomplished brings gratitude, but it is heeding the calls to face fears, overcome failure, and truly stretch ourselves and our capacities that makes life a wonderful and fulfilling adventure.

This is the notion that inspired this particular piece and the overarching project *Awake* in the midst of a worldwide crisis. I believe we are most awake when immersed in our dreams. So I've taken a fanciful dive into the symbols and emotions of a visionary life: reaching and dancing, flying and falling, fleeing and facing, seeing and imagining, wishing and pleading.

It's a message that feels particularly pertinent as so much of the status quo is upended and things seem so upside-down. People are sincerely looking for light and need the beacon of daring dreamers. Such dramatic change also has the power to pique our senses and readies our souls to make, create, and do the kinds of things that light up our small corner of the world.

May you awake to your dreams!

Remnant or Replacement?
Outlining a Possible Apostasy Narrative

Nicholas J. Frederick and Joseph M. Spencer

Since early in the twentieth century, it has been common for Latter-day Saints to speak of a "Great Apostasy" that occurred in the centuries following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such a general apostasy has been viewed as providing the basic motivation for the Restoration, begun in earnest with Joseph Smith's First Vision in 1820. The traditional apostasy narrative has centered on the argument that the church founded by Jesus Christ once possessed the same organization, doctrine, and authority restored in the nineteenth century but that, over time, these crucial components were either lost or corrupted. It has been maintained that the development of new rituals or changes to already-existing ordinances led to a decay in doctrine and practice, while the death of the original twelve Apostles left the church without authority or revelation to guide it. Further, the persecution of Christians (by both pagans and Jews) and the incorporation of Greek philosophy have also been taken to have played a role in diminishing the authenticity of the early church. This well-known way of narrating early Christian apostasy owes its origins and developments to the efforts of, primarily, three authors: B. H. Roberts (in *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* and *The Falling Away*), James E. Talmage (in *The Great Apostasy*), and Joseph Fielding Smith (in *Essentials in Church History*). In the words of historian Eric Dursteler, these three authors have "unquestionably . . . provided the foundation for all subsequent discussions of the apostasy.

In many ways, this trio's conceptualizations still inform how Mormons think about the apostasy."[1]

This traditional narrative has been recently and productively challenged, however. In March 2012, a group of scholars gathered at Brigham Young University to discuss ways of "Exploring Mormon Conceptions of the Apostasy." Papers presented on that occasion appeared in print two years later when Oxford University Press published *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy*.[2] As the subtitle of the published volume suggests, its contributors explore how increasing historical consciousness among Latter-day Saints has generated a need to reformulate traditional narratives about apostasy.[3] Recognizing that different ways of telling the story of apostasy have served diverse institutional needs at distinct moments in Latter-day Saint history, emphasizing that traditional narratives have problems at both ethical and historiographical levels, editors Miranda Wilcox and John Young ask "what narrative reformulations will facilitate the *next* phase of institutional development."[4] If it is true—and we believe it is—that *some* kind of story about apostasy must motivate the need for the Restoration, how might Latter-day Saints narrate their faith's departure from other religious traditions in a fashion that is both intellectually defensible and pastorally productive?[5]

Standing Apart contains essays explicitly meant to contribute "new approaches" to the task of "renarrating the apostasy,"[6] but the book does more to deconstruct than to reconstruct apostasy narratives. In many ways, this is as it should be. Critical analysis of past narratives must precede serious efforts at reconstruction. Nonetheless, readers may finish the book wishing that the contributors had made stronger

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1. Eric Dursteler, "Inheriting the 'Great Apostasy': The Evolution of Mormon Views on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Journal of Mormon History* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 30.

2. See Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young, eds., *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

3. In many ways, this effort began with an earlier volume: Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press and FARMS, 2005).

4. Wilcox and Young, *Standing Apart,* 6, emphasis added. Ethical concerns arise from intimations of wickedness and deliberate deception on the part of well-meaning Christians, while historiographical concerns arise from reliance on dated secondary treatments rather than reliable primary sources.

5. See Wilcox and Young, *Standing Apart,* 17.

6. See Wilcox and Young, *Standing Apart,* 127–334.

recommendations for a new apostasy narrative—even without consensus among proposals. Those outlining "new approaches" in the volume generally limit themselves to offering vague prescriptions (such as that new narrators should cultivate an ecumenical spirit and emphasize complexity over simplicity).[7] These are helpful signposts, delimiting boundaries within which work on narrating the apostasy might occur, but they give no real sense of what a new apostasy narrative might look like. The inventive work of providing a potentially useful apostasy narrative remains undone. Accordingly, we aim here to outline one possible approach to constructing a new apostasy narrative. We insist on deriving our basic commitments from scripture, with an eye especially to the Book of Mormon. Several authors—including a contributor to *Standing Apart*—have suggested that the apocalyptic vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 provides resources for an adequate apostasy narrative.[8] In effect, we attempt here to sort out the implications of Nephi's vision for interpreting apostasy in the history of Christianity. We propose that Nephi's vision as the root of apostasy is the moment when Christians began to perceive themselves as replacing Jews as covenantal Israel. The Book of Mormon and other aspects of the Restoration correct the prevalent anti-Jewish *replacement* theology in Christianity by recentering the Christian message on covenantal Israelite foundations through the rehabilitation of a *remnant* theology (along with the restoration of priesthoods necessary for gathering and binding the human family in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises).[9]

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7. The only real exception is Terryl Givens, providing the volume's epilogue. See Terryl Givens, "'We Have Only the Old Thing': Rethinking Mormon Restoration," in *Standing Apart,* 338.

8. See John D. Young, "Long Narratives: Toward a New Mormon Understanding of Apostasy," in *Standing Apart,* 310–17; as well as, especially, John W. Welch, "Modern Revelation: A Guide to Research about the Apostasy," in Reynolds, *Early Christians in Disarray,* 105–11. Also crucial in this regard is Noel B. Reynolds, "What Went Wrong for the Early Christians?" in Reynolds, *Early Christians in Disarray,* 5–6, 15–19; and Noel B. Reynolds, "The Decline of Covenant in Early Christian Thought," in Reynolds, *Early Christians in Disarray,* 297, 319–24; see also Bryson Bachman and Noel B. Reynolds, "Traditional Christian Sacraments and Covenants," in Steven C. Harper and others, eds., *Prelude to the Restoration: From Apostasy to the Restored Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 24–39. Reynolds focuses on many of the same passages we will address, although he comes to different conclusions. We will address these differences in the course of our argument.

9. We will explain the terms "replacement theology" and "remnant theology" later in this paper.

In a word, in this essay we will attempt to show how Nephi calls for an understanding of apostasy focused primarily on how Christians understand their relationship to the covenants given anciently to Israel. Our treatment of this issue falls into two parts. In the first, we consider Nephi's vision directly, spelling out the way it (schematically) narrates the beginnings of Christian apostasy. In the second part, we then look more broadly at how Book of Mormon prophets—with Jesus Christ among them—spell out a proper understanding of Christianity's relationship to Israel's covenants. A brief conclusion draws out some general reflections. We might note that this essay is, for us, just the beginning of a larger project. Here we outline the scriptural warrant for and basic shape of a responsible apostasy narrative for early Christianity. In future publications, we aim to turn from the Book of Mormon to a direct considering of the texts of earliest Christianity to show how Nephi's vision might be corroborated by history.

Nephi's Vision and the Apostasy

Readers might naturally turn to the first verses of 1 Nephi 13 to reflect on the apostasy—the passage in which Nephi first sees the great and abominable church. As John W. Welch has pointed out, though, this passage actually "mentions very little" about the nature and identity of the great and abominable church.[10] Therefore, we wish instead to privilege the second half of 1 Nephi 13, where Nephi witnesses what the "church" in question does at the very beginning of its historical entrance. The key passage concerns the existence, the history, and the ultimate destiny of a book, the Christian Bible. The passage comes after Nephi has prophetically viewed the European discovery of the New World and some of its aftermath. At this point in the vision, Nephi describes seeing peoples of European descent (identified in the text simply as "Gentiles") occupying the New World after gaining political independence. Nephi's focus comes then to rest on "a book" he sees "carried forth among them" (1 Ne. 13:20). Amy Easton-Flake has underscored the way the literary organization of Nephi's vision helps to lay particular emphasis on this moment.[11] It deserves the closest attention.

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10. Welch, "Modern Revelation," 106–7. For important warnings about misidentifying the church in question, see Stephen E. Robinson, "Nephi's 'Great and Abominable Church,'" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 32–39, 70.

11. See Amy Easton-Flake, "Lehi's Dream as a Template for Understanding Each Act of Nephi's Vision," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and*

When Nephi confess that he does not know "the meaning of the book," an angel explains this meaning to Nephi and therefore to his readers (1 Ne. 13:21). The explanation makes clear that the book of Nephi's vision is the Christian Bible. But the explanation does much more than that. The angel's words divide readily into three sequences: (1) verse 23 outlines the actual contents of the book; (2) verses 24–33 explain the complex provenance of the book; and (3) verses 34–37 announce a divine plan to address problems with the book. All three sequences deserve reflection because together they dramatically clarify the notion of early Christian apostasy contained in the Book of Mormon—in particular, the notion that apostasy concerns the status of Christianity's relationship to Israel's covenants.

Sequence One: 1 Nephi 13:23

The first sequence of the angel's explanation provides a sense for the Bible's contents, but it neither enumerates the volume's several books (Genesis, Isaiah, Job, Mark, Romans, and so on) nor names the volume's two testaments (Old, New).[12] Instead, the angel describes the Bible's contents in terms of what makes the book "of great worth unto the Gentiles" (1 Ne. 13:23). Peculiarly, what makes the book so valuable is what it has to say about *covenants*. Moreover, in view here are clearly not covenants associated with particular ordinances—for example, the baptismal covenant or covenants made during the temple endowment.[13]

Nephi's Vision, The 40th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 190–91.

12. It is worth noting that the Greek word translated as "testament" literally means "covenant."

13. Reynolds, "What Went Wrong for the Early Christians?" 5–6, interprets the angel's subsequent reference in verse 26 to "many covenants of the Lord" as indicating "ordinances such as baptism, priesthood ordination, and marriage." The proximity between verses 23 and 26 makes such an interpretation unlikely, since in context the phrase "covenants of the Lord" has primarily to do with the covenants made historically to Israel. To be sure, Reynolds also suggests—in "The Decline of Covenants in Early Christian Thought," 321—that "Nephi radicalizes the traditional notions of Israel's covenant with God by extending the covenant invitation to all peoples and making it an individual choice for each person." The idea here would be that the historical covenants given to Israel were, through Jesus Christ's messianic fulfillment of the law of Moses, redirected from historically particular Israel to the whole of the human family and reconfigured to be made with individuals rather than with a whole people. We concede that such an approach to Israel's covenants has often been made, but it makes

Rather, in question are explicitly "the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel" (v. 23). Nephi's angelic guide thus makes the core of the Christian Bible what it says about the covenant by which God has bound himself to the family of Abraham and Sarah. Signaling this, the angel twice refers in verse 23 to "the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel." The phrase appears at the outset of the verse, ostensibly to introduce the book's meaning; and then it appears again at the verse's end, apparently to underscore the book's covenantal bearings. From start to finish, the angel presents the basic makeup of the Christian Bible as covenantal, in the specific sense of the covenants historically given by God to Israel. For this reason, it seems important that the angel describes the volume both as "a record of the Jews" and as "proceed[ing] out of the mouth of a Jew" (1 Ne. 13:23). According to Nephi's vision, the Bible is a Jewish book, and its chief contribution is to recount and explain the reception and implications of Israel's covenant. It is for these reasons ("wherefore," says verse 23) that the Bible is "of great worth unto the Gentiles."[14]

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little sense of the strong emphasis that the Book of Mormon (like the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants) lies on promises made to Israel regarding eventual national redemption through gentile assistance. In support of his interpretation, Reynolds cites 2 Nephi 30:2 and 2 Nephi 6:13. Unfortunately, neither passage helps his case. 2 Nephi 30:2 suggests neither a redirection nor an individualization of Israel's covenant. Instead, it underscores the need for "Gentiles" and "Jews" to, respectively, join themselves to or remain within "the covenant people of the Lord." When the passage goes on to say that "the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son," the plural pronoun "them" should be emphasized; a whole people seems clearly in view. 2 Nephi 6:13 is still more problematic as a proof-text. When Jacob says there that "the covenant people of the Lord . . . are they who wait for him," the context makes clear that he does not mean (as Reynolds intimates) that all who repentantly trust in God receive individual covenants from him. Jacob means to claim, rather, that Isaiah's talk of "waiting for the Lord" straightforwardly refers to Jews, "the covenant people of the Lord," who, even after Christ's advent, "still wait for the coming of the Messiah." This passage too thus assumes that "the covenant people of the Lord" is in fact historical Israel, and there is neither redirection nor reconfiguration of the covenant in view.

14. There is ambiguity in the angel's statement about the Bible's "great worth unto the Gentiles." It could indicate that Gentiles in the early American Republic consciously attributed value to the Bible because of its covenantal content, or it could indicate that, unbeknownst to Gentiles in the early American Republic, the Bible is covenantal in orientation and only so will eventually be of real worth to them. For reasons that will become clear, we prefer the second of these interpretations.

Sequence Two: 1 Nephi 13:24–33

After describing the Bible's contents, the angel further explains the book's meaning by tracing its provenance. This second sequence of the text opens by returning to the moment when "the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew," chiefly to note its inclusion of "the fulness of the gospel of the Lord" at the time of its original production (1 Ne. 13:24). The angel then claims that "these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God" (v. 25). The exact referent of "these things" is unclear. It might refer to the book under discussion—a possibility made likely by the fact that Book of Mormon authors, Nephi included, often refer to their own written records with the phrase "these things."[15] It might alternatively refer to "the fulness of the gospel" (v. 24)—a possibility made likely by the fact that the object whose purity is compromised in a following verse is "the gospel of the Lamb" (v. 26).[16] The possibility should not be excluded that in fact *both* the book and the fulness of the gospel are included in "these things"; subsequent verses speak of things "taken away" both "from the gospel of the Lamb" (v. 26) and "from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God" (v. 28). Whether accomplished solely *through* "the book," then, or somehow independent of "the book," what Nephi's angelic guide reports is the arrival "in purity" of a "fulness of the gospel" among "the Gentiles" soon after Christ's resurrection. The text presents this as having occurred before any real apostasy; it is only "after they [these things] go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles," that problems arise (v. 26).

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15. For examples from Nephi's record, see 1 Nephi 13:35; 19:19; 2 Nephi 25:3, 16, 21, 22; 26:14; 33:11.

16. Further strengthening this second possibility is the simple fact that, given all we know today regarding the processes by which the Christian Bible assumed its final form, it seems inappropriate to describe the Bible as ever having circulated in "purity." On the other hand, one certainly might understand the text of the Book of Mormon at this point as registering a polemical disagreement with modern critical reconstructions of the processes of redaction and canonization. At least one author has argued against any pursuit of "purity" in constructing apostasy narratives (see Taylor G. Petrey, "Purity and Parallels: Constructing the Apostasy Narrative of Early Christianity," in *Standing Apart,* 174–95), but while endorsements of hybridity and warnings against historical "purity" are welcome, *some* role is to be played by purity in any construction of an apostasy narrative taking its orientation from 1 Nephi 13–14. The question will be exactly *what* is pure at Christianity's origins.

Problems arise, of course, principally with "the formation of that great and abominable church" (1 Ne. 13:26), but the angel never makes exactly clear *when* this formation takes place. It clearly occurs only "after" the Lamb's gospel arrives among non-Israelites—hence, no earlier than the mid-first century. It is also clear that the great and abominable church's formation is fully accomplished before the Bible "goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles" (v. 29), but it is difficult to know when it can rightly be said that the Bible does this. At the latest, the angel would be referring to the early modern period (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), since he goes on to speak of the Bible traveling "across the many waters . . . with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity" (v. 29). Before this late development in Christian history, the great and abominable church is fully formed. These details thus do little to nail down historical referents, since they situate the rise of the great and abominable church between the middle of the first century and the end of the fifteenth century. Does the text, then, provide other details that might allow for more historical specificity?

Answers arguably lie in what *makes* the abominable church abominable. It "is the most abominable of all other churches" (1 Ne. 13:5) precisely because ("for behold," the angel says) "they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Ne. 13:26). The "gospel of the Lord," originally present in its "fulness" in the book (v. 24), is here the principal victim of the great and abominable church. The impoverishment of this fulness through acts of "taking away" is deliberate, according to the angel: "And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men" (v. 27). The angel's language suggests a deliberate gentile program of altered interpretation ("pervert"), ultimately aimed at making it impossible to see what should be immediately obvious ("blind") and building up popular resistance to what should speak to the heart ("harden").[17] Crucially, as John Young points out, the text here "makes a vital distinction between those who commit the initial act of rebellion, with their eyes wide open, so to speak, and those who are taught the apostate traditions put into place

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17. Use of the word "pervert" in connection with "the right ways of the Lord" suggests, in Book of Mormon parlance, a deliberate shift in interpretive approach. See, for instance, the use of similar language in Jacob 7:7.

by those who rebelled willfully."[18] The angel describes a programmatic effort by certain influential Gentiles, an effort to alter the basic world-view of other Gentiles who profess the full gospel of the Lamb. Consequently, many innocent persons, "because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb," ultimately "stumble" (v. 29).[19]

The problem for Gentiles who profess the full gospel, it seems, is that the replacement of one interpretive frame with another makes it difficult or impossible to understand the Bible or the gospel they receive from "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (1 Ne. 13:26). In fact, Nephi's angelic guide explicitly connects the loss of the gospel's fulness to impoverished readings of the Bible. "Wherefore," he says, "thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God" (v. 28). This passage seems on its surface to indicate that portions of the Bible were excised or otherwise altered by corrupt persons, and many commentators have interpreted the text this way, even amassing evidence for direct manipulation of biblical texts.[20] Certainly, the passage can be read in this way. But it is crucial to recognize that the angel presents any direct tampering with the actual text of the Bible as occurring only after *and because of* the transformation of the general understanding of the Lamb's gospel. It is a *consequence* of the gospel's dilution, which, as John Welch notes, "could have occurred more by altering the meaning or understanding of the concepts taught by the Lord than by changing the words themselves."[21] It is not difficult to see how an early conceptual transformation of the gospel would later lead to a situation where "writings that no longer made sense, or no longer sounded right, or spoke of things no longer practiced would naturally fall into disfavor and out of use."[22] At any rate, Stephen Robinson is certainly right that "the notion of shifty-eyed medieval monks rewriting the scriptures is unfair and bigoted." We would further argue, parallel to Robinson, that the culprits are rather to be found "in the second half

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18. Young, "Long Narratives," 313.

19. More sinisterly, some in the great and abominable church apparently (but maybe only at a later period) "destroy" and "bring . . . down into captivity" the few "saints of God" who see through the deception (1 Ne. 13:9).

20. See, for instance, John Gee, "The Corruption of Scripture in Early Christianity," in Reynolds, *Early Christians in Disarray,* 163–204.

21. Welch, "Modern Revelation," 108.

22. Welch, "Modern Revelation," 110–11.

of the first century and would have done much of [their] work by the middle of the second century."[23] Anything amiss in medieval Christianity was more the innocent product of a problematic foundation laid centuries earlier than anything else.

The key to becoming still more specific about the meaning of the angel's words in 1 Nephi 13 is to focus on what exactly the great and abominable church "takes away" from the gospel—and eventually, perhaps only indirectly, from the Bible also. According to the text, Gentiles associated with founding the great and abominable church take two sorts of things from the gospel and the text: first, "they have taken away . . . many parts which are plain and most precious"; second, "many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Ne. 13:26). Of these two categories, the first receives stronger emphasis in the text, mentioned four more times in this second sequence (see vv. 28, 29 [twice], and 32) and three times in the third sequence (see vv. 34 [twice] and 35). Even so, the *previous* double mention in verse 23 of "the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel" helps to underscore the importance of the reference to "many covenants" in verse 26. Further, later in Nephi's vision, the angel introduces history's end by reminding Nephi of "the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel" (1 Ne. 14:8). The vision then concludes when the angel predicts the commencement of "the work of the Father," accomplished in "preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel" (1 Ne. 14:17). Although the "plain and precious" things receive focused attention in the angel's direct exposition of the Bible's role in history, it is unmistakably the "covenants of the Lord" that organize the larger history within which the Bible plays its role. It seems crucial to attend to *both* sorts of things said to be "taken away" from the gospel and the book—both the "plain and precious" *and* "many covenants."

Sequence Three: 1 Nephi 13:34–37

As it turns out, there is reason to think that the "plain and precious things" are in fact closely tied to the covenants mentioned. This becomes clear in the third sequence as the angel explains the Bible's meaning. Although the Gentiles "stumble" because of "the most plain and precious

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23. Robinson, "Nephi's 'Great and Abominable Church,'" 39. As we have noted, we will attempt to address the details of documentary evidence for this historical reconstruction in other publications.

parts" that "have been kept back by that abominable church," nonetheless the Lamb promises to "bring forth" his gospel, "which shall be plain and precious" (1 Ne. 13:34). This is to occur through a determinate set of events. The angel explains, quoting the Lamb himself, "I will manifest myself unto thy [that is, Nephi's] seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after that thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb" (v. 35). These lines tell a simple story. First, the Lamb predicts his own much-later visit to Nephi's descendants ("I will manifest myself unto thy seed"), later recorded in 3 Nephi 11–28. Second, the Lamb says that this six-centuries-later ministry will be recorded ("that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them"), a record found either in the sources lying behind 3 Nephi or directly in 3 Nephi itself. Third, the Lamb explains that the record of his New World ministry will be preserved for the last days, to come forth through Joseph Smith's instrumentality ("these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb"). What the angel tells Nephi in just these few words, then, is this: It is the teachings found specifically in 3 Nephi that are preserved to supplement the problematic interpretations of the Christian Bible on offer in historical Christianity. *These* are the "plain and precious parts."

What does this have to do with the theme of the covenants historically given to Israel? As most careful readers of 3 Nephi recognize, the chief emphasis of Christ's sermons among Lehi's descendants is Israelite history. Although some passages in 3 Nephi (especially chapters 11–14, 18–19, and 27) make efforts at clarifying the basics of Christian discipleship, the majority of Christ's teachings in 3 Nephi focus exclusively and in detail on covenantal history and its larger significance (see especially chapters 15–17, 20–26, 28). As Grant Hardy notes, in 3 Nephi "it's not all about [Christ]; he [himself] explains how he fits into the Father's plans and the historical covenants made with Israel," rather than focusing on atonement and individual redemption.[24] When Nephi's angelic

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24. Grant Hardy, "3 Nephi Conference Panel Discussion," in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture,* ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2012), 385–86. See also Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 180–83.

guide lays particular emphasis on the "things" Christ would "minister" to Nephi's seed, identifying these with the "plain and precious" (1 Ne. 13:35), he indicates that the plain and precious things referred to in Nephi's vision primarily concern the covenants given to Israel.[25] While "many covenants" of the Lord—particular covenantal encounters with Israel, perhaps—may have been directly removed, the "many parts [of the gospel] which are plain and most precious" seem to have been lost through the disappearance of a proper understanding of the whole set of Israel's historical covenants, many of which *do* appear in the Christian Bible (1 Ne. 13:26). At any rate, if it is in fact 3 Nephi that principally restores an understanding of the "plain and precious," it is arguably *covenantal* theology that is the chief focus of what Nephi sees being "taken away" from the gospel and the Bible. That the "plain and precious" concerns Israel's covenant is further confirmed when Nephi later describes the second half of his record—that is, 2 Nephi—as focused on "the more plain and precious parts" of his own ministry and prophecies (1 Ne. 19:3). As careful readers of 2 Nephi know, covenantal history is a key focus of that book.[26]

We might, then, briefly revisit in this context the use of the phrase "plain and most precious" from sequence two of the angel's explanation of the Bible and its significance. It seems that, at its heart, the angel's message has been that the key founding event of the apostasy was the historical transformation of Christianity's understanding of Israel's covenant. Of course, to understand 1 Nephi 13:26 and its talk of the "plain and most precious" parts of "the gospel of the Lamb" in this way, it is necessary to shift away from a commonly held opinion. It is often assumed that the "plain and precious" parts taken from the gospel and the Bible are doctrines commonly recognized as unique to The Church

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25. Traditional Latter-day Saint readings of 3 Nephi tend to downplay the importance of the covenantal sermons making up the bulk of the book, but see Victor L. Ludlow, "The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10–23:5," in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture,* 147–74. For an example of downplaying the importance of the covenant, see Andrew C. Skinner, *Third Nephi: The Fifth Gospel* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2012).

26. For more on the literary implications of 1 Nephi 19:1–6, see Frederick W. Axelgard, "1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (1986): 53–66; and Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology,* 2d ed. (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2016), 33–68. For an important but, in our view, unconvincing critique of these approaches, see Noel B. Reynolds, "On Doubting Nephi's Break between 1 and 2 Nephi: A Critique of Joseph Spencer's *An Other Testament: On Typology,*" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 25 (2017): 85–102.

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[27] But while the Restoration unmistakably includes the emergence or reemergence of ideas foreign to most of modern Christianity, it must be said—as Terryl Givens notes—that "those beliefs most commonly associated with Mormonism are nowhere to be found" in the Book of Mormon. It "contains no explicit mention of exaltation (the eventual deification of man), the degrees of glory, tithing, the Word of Wisdom, baptism for the dead, premortal existence, or eternal marriage."[28] Givens suggests elsewhere that if the Book of Mormon altered anything of obvious significance in mainline Christian theology at the time of its appearance, the change lies principally or even solely in the way it "served to radically reconstitute covenant theology."[29] For this reason, it makes good sense to claim that the Book of Mormon—3 Nephi especially—does its most innovative work by redrafting the meaning of Israel's historical covenant rather than by introducing long-lost doctrines about the nature of God, the salvation of families, the premortal existence, or the tiered nature of the afterlife. Thus, although many Latter-day Saints have understood Nephi's talk of the "plain and precious" as referring to doctrines removed or altered under the influence of especially Greek thought and culture, it seems best to understand the phrase as focusing principally or exclusively on the understanding of Israel's covenant.[30]

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27. A second opinion about Nephi's meaning, less frequently heard but in our view equally problematic in the context of interpreting 1 Nephi 13, is the idea that Nephi's reference to "many covenants" in verse 26 concerns specific ordinances once discussed in the Bible but eventually removed. We discuss this interpretation in an earlier note. It might be added at this point, though, that Noel Reynolds's frequent emphasis in recent work on the Book of Mormon's definition of the "gospel," combined with verse 26's attachment of "parts . . . plain and most precious" to "the gospel of the Lamb," strengthens his interpretation. This is, in fact, possible, but we are more inclined to assume that what the angel calls "the *fulness* of the gospel" (1 Ne. 13:24, emphasis added) is the whole covenantal picture within which the more narrowly construed six-part gospel (of faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, endurance, and salvation) plays a key but inexhaustive role. We assume that the *fulness* of the gospel is, precisely, what the Book of Mormon restores (see D&C 20:9) through its clarification of the gospel *and* of the latter's relationship to the larger Israelite covenant.

28. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 186.

29. Terryl L. Givens, *Feeding the Flock: The Foundations of Mormon Thought; Church and Praxis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.

30. For a helpful critique of standard accusations against ancient Greek philosophy as a source of apostasy, see Daniel W. Graham and James L. Siebach, "The Introduction of Philosophy into Early Christianity," in Reynolds, *Early Christians in Disarray,* 205–37.

In our argument, then, the point of 1 Nephi 13:26 and its description of the initial process of apostasy is to claim that Christianity went astray when it developed a problematic understanding of historical Israel's role in God's larger covenantal purposes. From the Book of Mormon's perspective, the "Great Apostasy," whatever else it includes, concerns first and foremost *the transformation of the self-understanding of Jesus's followers through a reconceptualization of Israel's covenants as exclusively pertaining to themselves.* It concerns, in other words, a misappropriation of Israel's identity. Certainly, the Book of Mormon claims to restore a peculiar understanding of Israel's covenants, an understanding outlined most forcefully in Jesus Christ's sermons in 3 Nephi (closely related to Nephi's teachings in 2 Nephi). If we are to give a historiographically responsible account of the events prophesied by Nephi, it seems we must seek a set of events in Christian history through which the historical importance of Israel's covenants—as well as of Israel itself—was deeply and drastically reformulated.

In our view, it is not difficult to identify such a series of events in Christian history—specifically in early Christian history. The transformation in question arguably occurred in preliminary form between the late first century and the end of the second century. As we have already noted, we must leave the details of such an argument for another occasion. For now it must be sufficient just to clarify the lens through which we might look at early Christian historical records, as it is first necessary to become clearer about exactly what the Book of Mormon presents as the *right* covenant theology, the theological vision abandoned in apostasy.[31]

The Book of Mormon and Covenant Theology

The basic problem with traditional Christian approaches to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is summed up nicely in a passage in 2 Nephi. In direct response to "Gentiles"—Christians of European descent—who say, "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible," Nephi quotes the Lord's rebuke: "O ye Gentiles! Have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated

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31. Terryl Givens has recently outlined what he takes to be the Book of Mormon's unique covenant theology, taking a broadly comparative approach. See Givens, *Feeding the Flock,* 14–21.

them, and have not sought to recover them" (2 Ne. 29:3, 5).[32] Here, in an imagined conversation with modern Christianity, Nephi has God claim "the Jews" as his "ancient covenant people" and expects modern Christians to understand that claim. But the history of Christianity has been one of cursing, hatred, and neglect toward Jews. The text presents this attitude as bewildering, leading God himself to ask, "What do the Gentiles mean?" (2 Ne. 29:4). Christianity, the Book of Mormon indicates, bears a problematic relationship to its roots.[33] In scholarly terms, the theological crime of which God accuses Christianity in 2 Nephi is supersessionism.[34] In effect, Christianity supplants the biblical texts' *remnant* theology with *replacement* theology—terms that will require clarification. It will be necessary here, therefore, to trace the contours of the remnant theologies found in the Book of Mormon. This theoretical work establishes the path from clarifying Nephi's view of apostasy to actually studying the apostasy historically. However, before turning directly to the scriptural texts that form the focus of this section of the paper, it should prove useful to provide at least preliminary definitions of replacement theology (or supersessionism) and remnant theology. These will function in the remainder of our argument.

Replacement Theology

Replacement theology, or supersessionism, in its simplest form, is unsurprisingly defined by its commitment to the idea that Christianity *replaces* or *supersedes* Judaism. This idea, as Walter Brueggemann notes, relies on the traditional "absolutist claims of Christian theology."[35] Supersessionism trades on the idea that Christianity, to the exclusion of Judaism (as well as every other religious tradition), represents the only

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32. It is possible—but in our view, a mistake—to interpret "ancient" in the phrase "ancient covenant people" to indicate that the people in question were only the "covenant people" anciently.

33. The metaphor of the root, combined with that of problematic (over)growth, appears in the Book of Mormon in the allegory of the olive tree, attributed to Zenos, an Old World prophet (see Jacob 5:8, 11, 18, 34–37, 48, 53–54, 59–60, 65–66, 73). It seems most likely that the image of the roots in the allegory is meant to signal, principally, the covenantal origins of both Judaism and Christianity.

34. See the similar conclusion in Steven Epperson, *Mormons and Jews: Early Mormon Theologies of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 19–41.

35. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 112.

true or correct understanding of and approach to God. Of course, religious absolutism does not directly entail supersessionism. But because historical Christianity binds itself to the Old Testament and the New Testament, taking into its own scriptural canon the holy book (and associated history) of another religious tradition, its religious absolutism requires some account of its relationship to Judaism. Most frequently, this relationship has been historically conceived in terms of replacement, promoting some form of the idea that Christianity *takes over* Judaism's former heritage. The advent of the New Testament does not eliminate the Old Testament, according to most supersessionist views, but it subjects the Hebrew Scriptures to a radical reinterpretation.

Such reinterpretation can take several (sometimes overlapping) shapes. Scholars helpfully distinguish among three sorts of supersessionism, all traceable to early Christian writers but also visible in much of twenty-first-century Christianity.[36] First and most ethically troubling is "punitive supersessionism," the view that God has punished Jews for failing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. This sort of supersessionism reads the Old Testament to find promises of divine judgment against Israel and then traces their supposed fulfillment in the appalling history of Jewish persecution. Second is "economic supersessionism," which has reference not to markets but to the theological notion of the divine economy; the basic idea in this form of replacement theology is that the Christian church effectively supplants historical Israel as the referent in all the divine promises in the Hebrew Scriptures. Consequently, this sort of supersessionism reads the Old Testament with the aim to reapply all promises of Israelite redemption to Christ's salvation of Christian believers. Finally and somewhat more complexly, there is "structural supersessionism," which assumes that the Israelite background of the New Testament is irrelevant to its interpretation—this because Christianity should be regarded as a timeless moral philosophy. This final form of supersessionism essentially dismisses the task of reading the Old Testament (except where it confirms Christian ethics). Of course, all three forms of supersessionism have contributed to the long and terrible history of Jewish persecution.

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36. See, for example, Steven D. Aguzzi, *Israel, the Church, and Millenarianism: A Way beyond Replacement Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2018). For a much more fine-grained typology, see Terence L. Donaldson, "Supersessionism and Early Christian Self-Definition," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* 3 (2016): 1–32.

For its part, as we will show in the next subsection, the Book of Mormon emphatically rejects the last two of these forms of supersessionism. It also rejects, though less forthrightly, the first form. That is to say, some Book of Mormon passages do in fact indicate antipathy toward (at least certain) Jews and certainly suggest (without explicitly stating) that divine will is involved in the history of Jewish persecution.[37] But the volume seldom, if ever, uses these occasional potentially anti-Jewish moments as an interpretive lens for reading the Hebrew scriptures. Instead, it emphatically interprets the words of the Israelite prophets to underscore its anticipation of redemption for historical Israel, literally and completely.[38] The Book of Mormon thus appears to espouse supersessionism's polar opposite, exchanging the Christian tradition's dominant replacement theologies with a remnant theology. Of course, the Book of Mormon is in no way unique in embracing some form of remnant theology—especially after the Nazi extermination of millions of Jews, which has turned many Christian theologians away from certain supersessionist readings. And it must be said that there is no *one* shape of remnant theology in the larger Christian tradition (in the earliest Christian sources or in the theological traditions of both mainline and heterodox Christianity). Even within the New Testament, there are different conceptions of the Israelite remnant, and the theme of the remnant has taken distinct shapes at different times when it has emerged in Christian history.[39] What the Book of Mormon offers, then,

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37. See especially 2 Nephi 10:3–6; 25:2, where it is implied that Jewish persecution is a consequence of certain Jews' involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is, however, surprisingly difficult to find arguments in print that these passages are actually anti-Jewish. For a somewhat fuller treatment of the texts in question along such lines, see Epperson, *Mormons and Jews,* 25.

38. See, again, Epperson, *Mormons and Jews,* 19–41.

39. The most significant replacement-theological development within the history of remnant theology deserves notice because it has its origins in the same historical milieu as the Restoration, and because the religious tradition from which it hails has produced some of the most significant historical-critical work on the remnant theme in biblical sources. William Miller, the famous millenarian of nineteenth-century America, utilized a traditional supersessionist interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures to apply their prophecies to spiritual (rather than literal) Israel. Claiming, against the larger millenarian tradition, that "the theory of the return of the Jews was not sustained by the Word," Miller essentially produced an "anti-Jewish Adventism," as Steven Epperson calls it. George L. Berlin, *Defending the Faith: Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Writing on Christianity and Jesus* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989), 4; and Epperson, *Mormons and Jews,* 20. When Ellen G. White subsequently spoke as an Adventist prophet about

is only *a* remnant theology, *one possible* remnant theology, but it unmistakably proffers this as an alternative to Christianity's dominant replacement theologies, be they of whatever sort they might.

Remnant Theology

The basic idea animating remnant theologies has its origins in a Hebrew (and, more generally, ancient Near Eastern) tradition that reflected theologically on the significance of the survivors of major disasters.[40] Following the Babylonian deportation, for example, some Hebrew prophets identified surviving deportees as having returned through God's providence and so bearing responsibility for announcing God's goodness to the world. Seeing such survivors as saved for the fulfillment of a sacred task, this tradition then generally regarded the delivered remnant as responsible to perpetuate the people favored by God. In the Israelite context, this idea comprised several aspects, concisely summarized by Mark Elliot: "The idea of the remnant in Israel through history expressed [a] sense of continuing, or conserving, the true Israelite religion; it expressed a minority consciousness; and it certainly lent itself to developments in a corporate or community direction."[41] The theme appears throughout the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Bible, and it played a central role for many Jewish groups between the late sixth century BC and the late first century AD. The earliest forms of remnant theology among those professing the name of Jesus were thus part of widespread Jewish interest in the remnant theme. The idea of the remnant effectively provided a dissenting movement like nascent Christianity with a concept that not only granted continuity with the larger Hebrew tradition but also provided the opportunity to depart from the tradition through theological innovations on the remnant theme. In other words, the remnant idea maintained the movement's proximity to the remainder of Judaism while allowing for the articulation of novel development in God's work with human beings.

the remnant people of God, with reference to Adventists themselves, a replacement-theological concept of the remnant was effectively born.

40. For an overview, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1972).

41. Mark A. Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 242.

As we have noted, we will address uses of the remnant idea in first-century Christianity on another occasion. Here, we wish to outline the use of the concept in the Book of Mormon, where another line of development appears. It can be shown that certain voices in the New Testament view themselves as members of the remnant of Israel, a select portion of the covenant people with a task to spur (or even "provoke," as Paul puts it) all of Israel's redemption. *Nephite* voices in the Book of Mormon, however, do not so much themselves *constitute* as *address themselves to* a remnant of Israel destined to play a role in spurring Israel's redemption in the last days. This is clear from the Book of Mormon's title page, which identifies as the volume's intended audience "the Lamanites, which are a remnant of the house of Israel." The point of the volume, it explains, "is to shew unto the remnant of the house of Israel" something about its relationship to the promises given to Abraham. The Book of Mormon thus outlines a remnant theology, but with an emphasis on what, from the Book of Mormon's perspective, was the distant future of the remnant and its role in covenant history.

Given the frequent appearance of remnant language in the Book of Mormon's Isaiah quotations—especially in the long quotation of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi—the source for all Nephite theologizing on the theme is clear.[42] But beginning already with Nephi, Isaiah's remnant theme is "likened" in the Book of Mormon to a history of Israel witnessed in vision by uniquely New World prophets (outlined in detail in 1 Nephi 11–14 and 2 Nephi 25–30). Due to historical Christianity's inability to discern covenantal themes in the Bible, God arranges for a Nephite record of "plain and precious" things to come forth in the last days (1 Ne. 13:35), reconstructing for Gentiles "the fulness of the gospel of the Lord" (1 Ne. 13:24). Gentiles benefit enormously from the fact that it is "unto" them that the Nephite record first comes (v. 35), since this provides them with an opportunity—in the ambiguous phrasing of the text—to "be numbered among the seed of [Lehi]" or "among the house

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42. The word "remnant" does not appear in other Isaiah quotations included in the Book of Mormon, but the idea of the remnant is present in those quotations as well. Isaiah 48–54, most all of which appears in scattered places in the Book of Mormon, is implicitly understood in the larger framework of the book of Isaiah as addressed *to* the remnant, even if such language is not used directly. For a much-expanded treatment of these ideas, see Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Draper: Greg Kofford Books, 2016).

of Israel" (1 Ne. 14:2).[43] Gentiles thus receive a chance to set Christianity straight. But the promises are realized only inasmuch as "the Gentiles" take the Book of Mormon to its original addressees, "the remnant of the seed of [Nephi's] brethren" (1 Ne. 13:38; see also 1 Ne. 15:13–14; 2 Ne. 30:3–4). The Gentiles are the deeply benefitted middlemen in a literary transaction between ancient Nephite prophets and latter-day Lamanite survivors (see 2 Ne. 28:2). With Gentiles openly being converted and the remnant of Israel newly aware of its covenantal roots, the book goes "also [to] the Jews" (1 Ne. 13:39) and "to all kindreds, tongues, and people" (1 Ne. 13:40) to spur the final events of covenantal history. The "great and abominable church" falls, and "the work of the Father" finally "commence[s] in preparing the way for the fulfilling of [the Father's] covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel" (1 Ne. 14:17).

Nephi is the first to sketch this picture in the Book of Mormon. Christ, visiting Lehi's children after his resurrection, confirms it. He too speaks of a Nephite record to "be kept" so that it can "be manifested unto the Gentiles," who might then achieve a "fulness" as they take the record to Lehi's children (3 Ne. 16:4).[44] As Christ puts this point later, the record is to be "made known" to Gentiles by "the Father" and then "come forth of the Father from them" to latter-day Lamanites (3 Ne. 21:3). He further specifies that God involves the Gentiles in this to "show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles . . . may be numbered among [Christ's] people," the "house of Israel" (3 Ne. 21:6). Christ designates this coming forth of the Book of Mormon as "a sign . . . that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people which are of the house of Israel" (3 Ne. 21:7). Like Nephi, Christ also issues warnings to unrepentant Gentiles, but he does so in ways far more frightening than

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43. It must be said that the exact meaning of "being numbered among" Israel remains unclear. Does this mean that Gentiles *become* Israelites in some fashion? Does it mean that they come to dwell *alongside* Israel without a direct change of identity? Does it suggest any kind of change on the part of Israelites in a kind of gentile direction, perhaps with a slight supersessionist air? Obviously, we prefer to understand the metaphor to imply a kind of covenantal primacy for Israel, to whom Gentiles are then joined—whatever that looks like in practical terms.

44. The use of the word "fulness" here, slightly awkward in its context in 3 Nephi 16, mirrors the language of Paul in Romans 11:25: "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." For representative recent commentary on the meaning of the phrase "the fulness of the Gentiles" in Paul's letter, see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 679–80.

Nephi's record. Despite the Gentiles' privileges, if they "sin" and "reject the fulness of [Christ's] gospel," they will lose "the fulness" (3 Ne. 16:10). And the Father will turn his attention to the covenant people: "And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people," Christ quotes the Father as saying, "and I will bring my gospel unto them" (3 Ne. 16:11). Meanwhile, the prospects for unbelieving Gentiles are bleak: "If they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer . . . my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down" (3 Ne. 16:15). Twice Christ illustrates this gentile destruction with frightening language borrowed from Micah, speaking of the "remnant of the house of Jacob, . . . as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver" (3 Ne. 20:16; see also 3 Ne. 21:12).

For Christ as for Nephi, Israel's story concludes with the redemption of Israel's remnants in the plural.[45] Lehi's children as well as "the remnant" of "other tribes" are to be "brought to a knowledge" of Christ and then "gather[ed] . . . in from the four quarters of the earth" (3 Ne. 16:4–5). Christ thus equates the time of the "fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people" with the time when "the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth" will be "gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north" (3 Ne. 20:12–13). These remnants come to "the knowledge of the Lord their God" and to the appropriate "land[s] for [their] inheritance" (3 Ne. 20:13–14). More particularly—on this point Christ goes further than Nephi—repentant Gentiles numbered among Israel are to "assist . . . the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem" (3 Ne. 21:23).

In all these prophecies and sermons, the Book of Mormon outlines a consistent remnant theology whose overall picture must not be lost in the details. Lehi's children eventually face apocalyptic destruction—first at their own hands in the wars that end Nephite history and then at the hands of Gentiles arriving in the New World in the early modern period. But the remnant of Lehi's seed that survives these devastations then plays a vital role in the history of the covenant, poised to receive the

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45. This is the focus, too, of the covenantal history in Zenos's allegory of the olive tree (in Jacob 5), which has obvious connections with both Lehi's prophecy in 1 Nephi 10 and Paul's discussion of remnant theology in Romans 9–11.

writings of their long-dead kin. These writings come to them through gentile intermediaries, giving the latter an opportunity to involve themselves in Israel's promises, and the Gentiles' involvement opens the way for the redemption of the Israelite remnant in the New World (as well as of various Israelite remnants scattered across the earth). All this the Lehites—and especially Nephi—tie to prophecies from Isaiah, finding there an outline of the history that interests them.

Conclusion

When Joseph Smith decided to dictate his history in 1838, he told his scribes that the angelic visit first alerting him to the existence of the Nephite gold plates included a recitation of passages from the book of Malachi. Famously, however, he said that the angel quoted these passages "with a little variation" from known renderings of the biblical text (JS–H 1:36). Too seldom is it noted that the variant text quoted by the angel replaced Malachi's talk of parents' and children's hearts turning to each other in mutual reconciliation (see Mal. 4:5–6) with a rather different sort of talk. God would, through an appropriate messenger, "plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (JS–H 1:39). This variant text speaks only of a turning in *one* direction, describing latter-day "children" coming to know of and then be oriented by promises made to the patriarchs—"the fathers." As the Prophet told the story in 1838, he first learned of the Book of Mormon's existence while simultaneously learning that God intended to call the world's attention anew to Israel's ancient covenants. In this paper, we have argued that such a call to return to the Abrahamic covenant forms a major—if not the chief—foundation of the project of the Restoration. The Book of Mormon describes its own coming forth as restoring Christianity's covenantal focus, lost early in Christian history through the imposition of an anti-Jewish interpretive framework, one (as we have said) that we plan to explain in more detail in later publications.

To be sure, we fully recognize that the picture of the apostasy we have drawn up here is different from traditional ways of imagining what occurred. Where the latter have attempted to trace corruption in traditional theological categories (like the nature of God or the understanding of the sacraments), we have argued that theological problems associated with the apostasy concerned conceptions of Israel's role in God's world-historical intentions—what theologians often call salvation history. Further, where traditional accounts have largely attached

blame to maturing Christian theology in the fourth and fifth centuries (principally in and around the writings of Saint Augustine), we view the relevant problems within Christian self-understanding as being apparent as soon as the Christian message began attracting gentile converts (already in the mid-first century, but especially at the end of the first century and during the second century). We are convinced that our account makes far better sense of Latter-day Saint scripture. At the same time, we wish to underscore that we have here provided only a *first sketch* of an apostasy narrative that is ethically responsible (because it is nonsupersessionist) and historiographically defensible (as we will have to show elsewhere). In other words, we have aimed here only to show what a response to the call implicitly issued in Miranda Wilcox and John Young's *Standing Apart* might look like. At the least, though, we hope this presentation serves to clarify the Book of Mormon's provocation regarding the nature of Christian history—and to strengthen our collective resolve to seek out every remnant of Israel as we work within the context of the Restoration.

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All Things Sing Praise

The anteater's tongue licking praise in the tunnels of the termite mound.
The alpaca spitting praise, *olé!*
Serrano peppers' praise in perspiration.
Plastic praise: the Taj Mahal, a million interlocking Lego blocks.
Draw bridge praise slowly, slowly opening.
Elevator praise crescendoing on the ninetieth floor.
The uplifted pinkie's praise of the saucer.
Praise of the white matter of the cerebellum.
Nervous praise of the nerves.
Praise of the prosthetic standing in for the missing leg.
Single-toned praise of the tuning fork.
Praise of iodine stinging a cut.
Humble praise of the blue spruce chopped down.
After dark, a pile of bad potatoes glowing praise.
Praise snored or snorted by the contented pug.
Cornsilk praise fertilizing each kernel.
Sticky praise of the traveling cockleburr.
The worm's quiet praise eating the earth.

—Susan Elizabeth Howe

Gospel Ethics

Hinckley A. Jones-Sanpei

Unavoidable ethical and moral decisions permeate our lives. From the personal (how we treat our family members and the people we interact with) to the political (what we do about the increasing number of mass shootings in our country and refugees at our borders or how we behave during a worldwide pandemic), our decisions have moral and ethical implications that reveal our priorities and values. Traditional approaches to ethics and economic policymaking emphasize isolated rational individuals and their direct interactions with other self-sufficient, rational individuals. Yet at different points in our lives, all of us are dependent on others—some we know and others we may not know. As such, traditional approaches to ethics are limited in many ways and often fail to consider both the common experiences of human life and the scriptural example of our Savior, Jesus Christ. However, one less-well-known ethical approach—the ethics of care—is based on the lived experience of all people and is more compatible with the gospel that Jesus taught and modeled than are the more traditional approaches to ethics in our personal and public decision-making.

In this article, I claim that a gospel ethics is an ethics of care, emphasizing the interrelational aspects of human nature and the simple fact that all of us have needs that must be met through the caretaking of others. As such, a gospel ethics inspires individuals and communities to facilitate and encourage the personal development of each of Heavenly Father's children by valuing and prioritizing our reciprocal caring responsibilities. Each of us, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, should ask ourselves, How do my personal and

political choices impact not only the people I know—my family and smaller communities—but also the people I do not know? Furthermore, what are the ethical and moral choices I could make to build the potential for nurturing others in all of my communities—family, friends, neighborhood, city, workplace, state, nation, and even the world community? We know how we should treat the people in our families and neighborhoods, although we often fail and must get back up and try again. What is even more difficult is to recognize that Christ asks us to treat the strangers we will never know with the same care and compassion with which we treat our families and neighbors. We will fail because we are human, but it is still what we are asked to do.

Background

C. S. Lewis uses the analogy of an armada to point out that there are three levels of morality.[1] His first level, what we most commonly think of as ethics, is found in the relationships between people. How do we treat others? Are the boats in the armada close enough, but not too close? The second level of morality is within ourselves. Who is the individual we are becoming, and is that individual right with God? Is your personal boat in good working order? The third level involves the general purpose of the communities in which we participate—including our families, neighborhoods, cities, nations, and even the world-wide community. Is the armada headed in the right direction? Are we, together with our multiple communities, moving toward God? Are we creating nurturing environments in our homes and communities? Are we becoming a more Zion-like community or society? Lewis's third level of morality is where public policy resides—in the political decisions we make as a community and in our individual choices that impact others in our various communities. Just like an armada, Lewis's three levels of morality rely on each other. Our relationship with God influences our relationships with other people, and both influence the multiple communities in which we participate. Similarly, the personal ethical choices that influence our various communities are opportunities to practice ethical choices that both reflect and impact our relationships with other people and with God and create the individuals we become over the course of our lives.

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1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 70–73.

Lewis's analogy highlights an issue of semantics: the difference between morality and ethics. Both words have a similar etymology, originating from Latin and Greek words meaning "custom, manners, character, or proper behavior in society." Essentially, both morality and ethics ask, What is the right thing to do in a given situation? Over time, their meanings have become more nuanced, and now we often think of ethics as choices or actions and morality as fundamental beliefs. In other words, morality is the why, the explanation, underlying the ethical choices we make. One well-known textbook on ethical leadership acknowledges that some philosophers distinguish between ethics—"the systematic study of the principles of right and wrong behavior"—and morals—"specific standards of right and wrong." However, the author goes on to say that "just as many scholars appear to use these terms interchangeably."[2] In this paper, I have chosen to acknowledge the blurring between the terms in common usage, which makes distinguishing between them in discussions of practical application somewhat artificial. The focus of this paper is on ethical decision-making and how those personal choices impact the networks of relationships surrounding every human being. As Lewis's analogy illustrates, there are multiple levels of ethical and moral choices that are best illustrated through relationships: our personal relationship with God, our relationships with other people, and, finally, relationships within and between multiple communities. Conventionally, such choices are considered the foundation of the study of ethics.

Traditionally, there are three widely accepted approaches to morality and ethics—deontological, consequentialist, and teleological or virtue ethics. Deontological ethics focuses on intent and emphasizes adherence to specific rules that can be applied by everyone and that show respect for individual autonomy. Consequentialism, on the other hand, stresses outcomes, encouraging decisions leading to the greatest good for the greatest number. Finally, virtue ethics focuses on developing individual character strengths such as integrity, knowledge, and courage in a teleological sense of progressing toward an ideal self. These traditional approaches to ethics emphasize different aspects of moral and ethical choices—intent, consequences, and personal virtue—but like in the story of the blind men and the elephant, each approach provides a limited perspective in its attempts to answer the question, What is the right thing to do in a given situation? The missing or neglected or

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2. Craig E. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership: Casting Light or Shadow* (New York: Sage, 2021), xxiii.

possibly assumed element in these traditional approaches to ethics is the network of relationships that nurture human beings and make our lives possible.

As human beings, all of us participate in multiple communities. The smallest community includes only two people—a marriage, for example. The largest community includes all of the people sharing the geographical space of our planet. In between are extended families, ward families, neighborhoods, cities, states, nations, professional networks, work communities, and even recreational communities such as running and biking groups and teams. In each of these communities, members are trying to share limited resources (money, time, clean water and air, services, and so forth) with diverse groups of people. How we allocate and share those limited resources is the essence of ethical decision-making and has been the focus of general social science—for example, philosophy, political science, economics, and sociology.

The classical philosophy that provides the core foundation for all the social sciences is written primarily by men who have had the luxury of devoting their lives to thinking and writing. They did not concern themselves with preparing meals, doing laundry, or raising children. Most philosophers—Aristotle and Adam Smith, for example—had networks of caretakers—generally slaves or women—supporting them and their intellectual pursuits.[3] Few were married or had children to take care of, and many enjoyed lives of relative wealth, leaving significant solitary time for intellectual pursuits without having to worry about parenting or caretaking responsibilities.[4] They were the beneficiaries of networks of relationships that took care of them, and because they either did not see the support networks that made their reflective lives possible or did not appreciate and value the significance of those networks, they created theories answering the ethical question—What is the right thing to do?—considering only rational, independent adults *in isolation.*

Most members of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not study philosophy and may not be aware of these traditional approaches to ethics. An approach to ethics they may recognize, at least in principle, is Christian ethics. However, there are extensive

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3. Ruth E. Groenhout, *Connected Lives: Human Nature and an Ethics of Care* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 25.

4. Katrine Marçal, *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner? A Story of Women and Economics,* trans. Saskia Vogel (New York: Pegasus Books, 2016), 16; David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (New York: Random House, 2019), 67.

writings on Christian ethics, and it is difficult to identify the "right thing to do" because of the many different approaches. One list of possible approaches to Christian ethics, for example, includes the best moral philosophy through the ages, the moral standards of Christendom, the ethics of the Christian church, the ethics of the Bible, the ethics of the New Testament, or the ethical insights of Jesus.[5] While all of these approaches have been called Christian ethics, the ethical insights of Jesus seem to be the closest to the shared Christian goal of following his example. For example, even though the Old Testament was Jesus's Bible that he studied and loved, he used it primarily as a foundation to which he added additional meaning. In the Sermon on the Mount, he referred six times to known teachings from the Old Testament and then expanded them. For example, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . . But I say unto you . . ." (Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 38–39, 43–44). In a similar fashion, we emphasize his insights and apply them to the current human situations in which we find ourselves, focusing on the teachings of Christ as closely as possible. According to Georgia Harkness, Christian ethics is the "systematic study of the way of life exemplified and taught by Jesus, applied to the manifold problems and decisions of human existence."[6] This application is what members of the Church are trying to do, and it is a joy to be part of a congregation where, despite our different understandings and interpretations, there is a commonality in the desire to follow Christ's example of doing good, as he cared for the people around him and taught them to care for each other. Members of the Church most likely practice this version of Christian ethics within their families, and some may extend it to their wards or even neighborhoods. Yet many of us find it difficult to extend that care to communities that are different from us, especially communities we can barely imagine in other parts of the world.

One of the difficulties with extending that care, especially in our larger political communities, is that the commonality we find in our wards and even with other Christians—the desire to follow Christ—is not universally shared. Expecting non-Christians to adhere to the norms of Christian ethics is not a possibility in our larger political communities. Fortunately, a philosophical approach to ethics with substantial parallels to Christ's ethical insights is available.

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5. Georgia Harkness, *Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), chap. 1, Religion Online, https://www.religion-online.org/book/christian-ethics/.

6. Harkness, *Christian Ethics*, chap. 1, sec. 1.

Ethics of Care

In response to shortcomings in the traditional philosophical approaches, the ethics of care was developed in the 1980s and '90s. The ethics of care, in direct comparison to ethics created by isolated philosophers, emphasizes the essential relationships between people, the importance of devoting time and energy to nurturing those relationships, and the collective responsibility to create communities that prioritize relationships and cultivate an individual's personal ability to nurture others. While each of the more well-known philosophical approaches highlights important perspectives in answering the question, What is the right thing to do? their approaches are incomplete because they neglect the complexities of human existence by focusing on individuals and disregarding relationships. An approach to ethics focused on the isolated rational individual ignores the networks of relationships required to raise a child and ultimately to produce that celebrated isolated rational individual. These approaches ignore the reciprocity required to perpetuate the communities that nurture those networks. They assume away cultural and societal differences in the search for a normative universal standard, rather than encouraging the commonalities of caring that work to transcend those cultural and societal differences. Finally, they ignore the bodies created to house our spirits and the care that those physical bodies require throughout the life course, choosing instead to focus solely on the adult rational mind, creating ethical systems that assume all participants are fully rational, independent adults.

Beginning with the moral obligation to care for those who are dependent and vulnerable, such as infants and children, an ethics of care focuses on meeting the needs of individuals embedded in networks of relationships. No human life exists without receiving and, ideally, giving care. Care is inspired both by memories of being cared for as infants (as we are cared for, we learn to first care for others and then eventually to take care of them as responsible adults) and by a desire to see ourselves as caring individuals[7]—in other words, as being Christlike. As children mature, we hope they will progress teleologically through obedience to rules, considering the consequences of their choices, and eventually desiring to become more Christlike. As they develop, they will ideally learn and practice empathy for others, begin to recognize and appreciate

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7. Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 44–46; Nel Noddings, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 30.

the relationships that support them and their communities, and ultimately demonstrate care and responsibility for others by contributing to those communities. Practice in caring for others is necessary to become a full adult—one who is aware of and can care for the needs of others.

An ethics of care is based on the theory that there is moral significance in relationships. As human beings, we are born into positions of dependency. As children, we rely on others—parents or caretakers—to "take care" of us, to teach us how to take care of ourselves as autonomous individuals, and to encourage us to take care of others in anticipation of a lifetime of relationships. As we are cared for and learn to care for others, we learn to interact with respect and compassion within our networks of relationships and eventually beyond those narrow networks to ever larger communities. The progression of gradually maturing and assuming caretaking responsibilities for other people is a teleological process in the Aristotelian sense, and there are some who suggest the ethics of care is a subcategory of virtue ethics.[8] Regardless of the specific classification, the gospel focus on building caring relationships through ministering as Christ did is uniquely paralleled in the ethics of care argument that human caring, the memory of caring and being cared for, and the desire to become a caring person are the foundations of ethical behavior. It is in being cared for and in turn taking care of others that we learn and practice empathy and compassion and, by extension, how to treat the people in our communities with respect and charity. It is through experiencing caring relationships that we learn empathy and compassion—prerequisites for both deontological rules and consequentialist decision-making.

In comparison to Aristotle's virtue ethics, which emphasizes logos—the masculine spirit of logic in the orthodox Greek sense—ethical choices, as in "What is the right, or caring, thing to do?" seem to be more naturally guided by the Greek feminine spirit of love and compassion. The ethics of care can be seen as "feminine in the deep classical sense—rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness."[9] However, similar to Christ's expanding on Old Testament teachings, the ethics of care surpasses traditional gender stereotypes. It is neither feminine

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8. Margaret A. McLaren, "Feminist Ethics: Care as a Virtue," in *Feminists Doing Ethics,* ed. Peggy DesAutels and Joanne Waugh (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 116.

9. Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 2.

nor masculine but extends beyond these stereotypical classifications to a shared human need for care. The core of ethical choices—the connection between wanting to protect oneself and recognizing the possibility of hurting others[10]—requires the ability to empathize and see others as human beings deserving respect rather than the ability to distance oneself from others and objectively reason through a moral dilemma. To begin an ethical decision with a longing for goodness and empathy does not preclude a role for moral reasoning but recognizes the foundation of such moral reasoning in caring relationships and thus the necessity to include receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness in our ethical and moral decision-making.

Ethical systems based on abstract principles, such as the deontology as advocated by Kant and Rawls, are "ambiguous and unstable."[11] Attempting to create an ethical structure and universal rules from behind a veil of ignorance of our own position, or based in an imaginary autonomous will, masks, if not completely ignores, the difficulty of escaping from our own implicit biases while in the role of universal rule-makers. Furthermore, rules based on false assumptions of the universality of rationalism—the idea that all rational people would agree on the same course of action—separate us from each other with self-righteous ideologies. After all, "equally informed, impartial, rational persons sometimes can disagree."[12] Rather than focusing on the rationality and objectivity of decision-makers and resulting "objective" rules and decisions, an ethics of care advocates listening to and learning from those in our networks of care and negotiating the path to our shared goals together. From the perspective of an ethics of care, all ethical efforts must "be directed to maintenance of conditions that will permit caring to flourish."[13] While there may be some commonalities in those conditions, there may also be differences depending on the community of interest. The question to ask ourselves is, What are the ethical choices that will foster and build relationships and the potential for nurturing others in all of our communities—family, friends, neighborhoods, wards, cities, workplaces, states, nations, and world?

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10. Deni Elliott, *Ethical Challenges: Building an Ethics Toolkit* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 1–3.

11. Noddings, *Caring,* 5.

12. Bernard Gert, *Common Morality: Deciding What to Do* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 57.

13. Noddings, *Caring,* 5.

Popular books on ethics often describe a situation and then analyze it using multiple ethical approaches from various philosophical perspectives, asking, What is the right thing to do?[14] The trolley example is one of the most common, and entire books have been written discussing variations on British philosopher Philippa Foot's 1967 thought experiment.[15] The basic scenario is that a trolley is careening out of control, and you are standing by a switch that would allow you to divert the trolley to a side track where it would kill one person rather than continue on the current track and injure and possibly kill five people. Another variation has you watching from an overpass, and the only way to save the five people is to drop a heavy object on the track. Conveniently standing next to you is a large, obese person who would block the trolley if you pushed him onto the track. What is the "right" thing to do? After years of using examples such as this to promote class discussions, I have concluded that while they are excellent for engaging students and illustrating different theoretical approaches, they are less useful in prescribing a specific course of action. I could say that my interpretation of the trolley scenario would mandate taking action to kill or injure one individual and save the five (consequentialism). Or, I could say that my responsibility is to respect life, which would arguably mandate taking no action that would kill another human being (deontology). However, both of those decisions could be (and in my classes always are) strongly debated. After all, most of us want to make our own decisions, not be told what to do. As such, we are experts at rationalizing and justifying our behavior. It seems that more than recommending a specific course of action, such exercises allow us to look at ethical situations in different ways—to multiply the lenses through which we see the world and the ethical and moral choices around us. Interestingly, I have learned that a consensus on a course of action is often easier to reach than the rationale or justification for that course of action. Similarly, a consensus on a goal—or community mission—is almost always easier to achieve than a consensus on a course of action designed to achieve that goal. Skills such as conflict resolution, negotiation, and, above all, empathy and compassion for others are necessary for us to find the consensus required in order to live and thrive in our various communities.

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14. Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

15. Phillipa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect," *Oxford Review* 5 (1967): 5–15.

While we cherish our autonomy and individual rights to make our own choices, each of us participates in multiple communities—families, wards, neighborhoods, professional organizations, nations, and global populations—and our individual choices influence and change those communities. The ethics of care requires us to consider our decisions and the resulting externalities[16] in light of those many relationships. For example, my decision concerning where to send my child to school influences multiple communities within which my child and I both participate. What would happen to the neighborhood schools and the children in them if all the involved parents with time to volunteer in the classrooms moved their children to a charter or private school? Over twenty years ago, I was talking with an elementary school teacher from California who told me that the school where she taught had so few parent volunteers that they needed to strategically assign students to classrooms so each teacher would have the necessary parental support. Another friend told me about her experience in the heavily African American neighborhood of Hyde Park, Chicago, in the 1970s. The local public school suffered significantly from the flight of involved parents to the private University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, which gives priority to the children of faculty and employees. A few young faculty families who lacked the wherewithal to afford the Laboratory Schools banded together and enrolled their children in the neighborhood K–8 school. Their willingness to volunteer and use their expertise to augment the school's curriculum and extracurricular activities helped the local public school become one of the most sought-after schools in the area. Those families recognized that their choices impacted multiple communities, and their commitment to their local school changed that community dramatically.

Our decisions about where we will live and raise our families and how involved we will be in our various communities all impact the other people in those communities and, as such, are ethical choices. Even my choice to spend my time reading and writing rather than building relationships with my neighbors is an ethical choice. The ethics of care seeks to recognize that the realm of ethics extends beyond justice and equity to include relationships and the tensions and complexities of human interactions. Ultimately, our choices with respect to our own personal growth, nurturing children and other people, developing communities, and protecting

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16. An economic term meaning the impact of a choice or decision on other people who were not involved in making the decision. Externalities can be negative or positive. My beekeeping may have a positive externality on my neighbor who gardens but a negative externality on my other neighbor's child, who may be stung.

the earth are all ethical choices and have implications that impact our lives and the many communities to which we belong.

Christianity, at its core, is about relationships. The primary relationship is with God, but our relationships with the people in our communities also reflect that primary relationship, as Mosiah pointed out when he said, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). Both the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament and the two great commandments in the New Testament are primarily about these two relationships—our relationship with God and our relationships with other people. Our relationship with God is reflected in our relationships with others, and our relationships with others reflect our relationship with God.

Every activity of Jesus Christ can be seen as care. In his compassion and empathy for both the woman taken in adultery and her accusers, he found a middle ground of mercy for the one by protecting her life yet respecting the law by telling her to "go, and sin no more" (John 8:1–11). Ultimately, he is the example. He taught people how to become their best selves by caring for others. He cared for the sick—healing them and treating them with compassion. He held children and cared for them. He flogged the moneychangers—demonstrating care for his Father's house and showing that caring is not necessarily always passive and gentle but often involves setting boundaries. He served his discouraged disciples breakfast and washed the feet of his Apostles. Jesus Christ is the example "who overcomes nationalistic and racist divisions, facilitating the availability of human persons to one another and to God."[17]

All disciples of Christ are called to be nurturers, caretakers, and servants of others both within the community of Saints and within the larger communities of neighbors, fellow citizens, and citizens of the world who may be strangers to us but not to Christ. Our wards and communities "succeed when the Saints feel the love of Christ for each other above their self-interest. . . . And they succeed when the Holy Ghost guides the caregiver to know what the Lord knows is best for the person whom He is trying to help."[18] As Christians, we need an ethical approach that places relationships at the center of our decision-making, just as relationships and honoring God by caring for others are at the center of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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17. Marianne Sawicki, "Yes," in *Philosophy, Feminism, and Faith,* ed. Ruth E. Groenhout and Marya Bower (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 113.

18. Henry B. Eyring, "Inspired Ministering," *Ensign* 48, no. 5 (May 2018): 62.

Caring, as mentioned above, is not always passive and gentle and often requires setting boundaries. One example of boundary setting is parenting. Children become adults as they learn to take care of themselves (self-care) and to care for and take care of others. The process of developing into an adult from a helpless infant is one of gradually expanding boundaries carefully created by nurturing parents. There are pathologies of care at both extremes. When adults do not nurture children and model appropriate caring behavior, the children have a much more difficult time becoming caring adults. On the other hand, excessive caring or the notorious "helicopter parenting" prevents children from becoming caring adults by not allowing them to practice and develop the ability to take care of themselves and the people around them.

At times, relationships between adults may also require setting boundaries as Christ did. For example, some people live in neighborhoods with homeowner associations that have rules and bylaws regulating fences and trees. In one such situation, an elderly gentleman cared a lot about three trees in his backyard that were preventing the construction of a neighborhood fence and were threatening to fall on his neighbors' houses due to their proximity and large size. The association rules, created with the community good in mind and based on a history of legal cases between neighbors, clearly required the removal of the trees. But the man cared for these trees, and because some of his neighbors cared about him, they wanted him to have the trees. Yet other neighbors' houses were in danger. The situation threatened the peace of the neighborhood, and attorneys were called in. What is the right thing to do in such a situation? Ultimately, two of the trees were removed, but the third stayed. Sometimes boundaries established through rules and laws are necessary to remind us how our personal choices may impact others in our communities, but as in this situation, the ability to modify such rules to show care for the individual is also an example of caring for others in our communities.

In another example, a caring individual, well-known in his community, had to shut down his business because his friends and neighbors were all trying to use a "friends and family" discount—trying to take advantage of an existing personal relationship to benefit monetarily from a business transaction.[19] Such difficulties reflect a lack of

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19. Lindon J. Robison, David R. Just, and Jeffrey R. Oliver, "Doing Business in the World without Becoming Worldly," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2019): 65–90.

awareness and caring on the part of the friends and neighbors who were so absorbed in their own needs and wants that they failed to recognize and respect the business owner's need to care for himself and his family. The authors who share this example, Robison, Just, and Oliver, distinguish between relational goods—such as goods created in caring communities—and commodities, in an effort to describe how to engage in business transactions without becoming worldly. They use the distinction between relational goods and commodities to argue that relational goods should not be involved in business transactions. However, distinguishing between relational goods and commodities is an artificial distinction, because from God's perspective all goods are relational. Somewhere a child of God with a family and friends to support created those goods, and the globalization of our economy should not be used to justify treating them differently than our neighbor or family member in a business transaction. Someone's father or mother or son or daughter, somewhere, picked that avocado in order to provide care for someone, and treating it as a commodity rather than a relational good treats that human being—even one we do not know—as less than a son or daughter of God. It is our inability to recognize the people in the global supply chain as sons and daughters of God that allows us to treat these relational goods as mere commodities. The difficulty in a global economy is that we do not know the people who grow our food and make the products that we purchase, and we care only about the people we know. In the example of the homeowners association, it was easier to see the impact of personal choices on the larger community. In a global market, it is more difficult to see the impact of our choices on unknown strangers.

Infants do not seem to see other people as real—as unique individuals. There is a developmental phase when most children begin to recognize that their moms are "real"—someone who is not just "mom," but a unique individual with other relationships and activities and hopes and dreams.[20] As the child continues to develop and her awareness

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20. James N. Butcher and Charles D. Spielberger, eds., *Advances in Personality Assessment: Volume 8* (New York: Routledge, 2013). Chapter 3 of Eugene C. Roehlkepartain and others, eds., *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006), "Stages of Faith From Infancy Through Adolescence: Reflections on Three Decades of Faith Development Theory," summarizes child-development theory and talks about the naïve cognitive egocentrism of toddlerhood and early childhood that gives way to simple perspective taking and growing interiority awareness of first the self and then others. Generally during

expands beyond her parents and family, she may come to recognize that the neighbors are real too. Next, she may come to see strangers on the street as potentially real. Ultimately, as a young adult, perhaps after serving an LDS mission, she may come to recognize that people she will never have an opportunity to meet are just as real to God as she is, and that learning to see as God does means recognizing that all people are real and in need of care. Some people may never see other people as real. Most of us tend to care only about the people we know, the people we recognize as real—especially if those "other people" are different from us in any way. Yet that is one of the reasons we are here—to learn to care about others the way God does. We fail. We have poor imaginations and are incredibly self-centered. We are amazingly good at rationalizing our choices and justifying our focus on ourselves, our families, and the communities of people that are like us. But that is one reason why Christ atoned for our sins and why we have the opportunity to change and try again.

As the Church continues down the path of globalization, we will have more and more opportunities to care for people who are different, sometimes very different, from us. The goal is to recognize the often hidden similarities and appreciate the often obvious differences. As one woman writing about Relief Society members in Hong Kong said, "Decolonizing our minds as a global community of Latter-day Saints means being cognizant of both where we can find common cause with each other and where we are different and in need of highly individualized ministry that acknowledges and compensates for historical or structural asymmetry."[21] Somehow we need to see beyond our immediate communities to the people of the world that God loves and cares for and, like a good parent, is waiting for us to recognize as real.

One reason we do not recognize others as real is because they are so far away. For example, during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020,[22] the response in the United States was "characterized

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adolescence and beyond, we see interpersonal perspective taking and the emergence of mutual interpersonal perspective taking—or, in the language of care ethics, recognizing that other people are real. See pages 37–40.

21. Stacilee Ford, "Sister Acts: Relief Society and Flexible Citizenship in Hong Kong," in *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion,* ed. Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), 224.

22. Although the novel coronavirus (officially named SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19 was identified in 2019 (hence the identifier COVID-19), the World Health Organization did not declare a worldwide pandemic until March 11, 2020.

by antimask behavior, antivaccine beliefs, conspiracy theories about the origins of COVID-19, and vocal support by elected officials for unproven therapies."[23] It did not impact many of the people in the United States directly, and few knew people who were sick. Thousands of people overseas were dying, but they were far away and reported by news sources that some Americans viewed as untrustworthy, and therefore those deaths were not recognized as real. Those deaths overseas to people in different countries were not as real as the immediate economic impact of shelter-in-place public policies. What was real were their shuttered small businesses and the impact on their finances from the economic shutdowns. When faced with the possible inability to buy groceries for their families, concern for strangers thousands of miles away was much less of a priority—not even a consideration. The issue is that while we have a difficult time caring about people who are different from us, who are not as real to us as our families and our neighbors, that is exactly what we are called to do as followers of Christ—care for the strangers we will never meet.

In the Book of Mormon, when Christ comes to the Nephites after his death, he tells them that he has other people to teach and visit (Jacob 5; 3 Ne. 15). The Nephites are not the only people who worship him and who want to sit at his feet and learn from him. In that time period, the small communities scattered across the world did not impact each other. Alma's choices did not impact Cicero and Virgil, who lived during approximately the same time period on the other side of the planet. During the age of globalization, however, my choices in the United States impact the lives of people in China and India whom I will never meet. Unlike Alma's choices, our public-policy decisions in the United States impact the lives of everyone across the globe. It is easy to rationalize our choices as market decisions regarding commodities and thus ignore their impact on others. However, that rationalizing denies the fact that those others are also our brothers and sisters.

Core Principles of an Ethics of Care

In addition to the focus on relationships, there are several core principles of an ethics of care that distinguish it in emphasis from the more traditional approaches to ethics. Primarily, *context matters.* The circumstances of our choices impact the morality of those choices because

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23. Bruce L. Miller, "Science Denial and COVID Conspiracy Theories: Potential Neurological Mechanisms and Possible Responses," *JAMA* 324, no. 22 (2020): 2255–56.

ethical choices do not occur in a vacuum. The ethics of care suggests that ethical choices may be influenced by the circumstances in which they are made. While this may lead to charges of ethical relativism, critiques of ethical relativism allow for moral objectivism, which recognizes similarities in human nature and that moral principles are functions of human needs and interests.[24] For example, while parenting styles may differ across cultures and even within cultures, the moral principle of nurturing those within our care crosses all cultural boundaries. Historian Jared Diamond told of an observer watching a small child play with a sharp knife. The observer watched in concern as the child swung the nine-inch kitchen knife around his body, only to watch the child drop the knife and the mother reach around, retrieve the knife, and hand it back to the child.[25] Such a permissive attitude toward sharp objects would be rare in U.S. culture but is normal among the Piraha Indians in the Amazon. Both cultures share the moral principle of nurturing those within our care but demonstrate that nurturing care differently—one protecting children from risk and the other encouraging children to learn to assess personal risk. Across all cultures, given the similarities in human nature and needs, we could expect to observe areas of widespread agreement yet often find specific areas of disagreement.

The need to include contextual difference in moral systems has led to several philosophers and ethicists developing alternative interpretations of deontology, or rule-based ethics. For example, one philosopher suggested that rules of moral salience learned during the development of moral agents in specific communities may "alter our idea of how an agent perceives situations that require moral judgment."[26] In other words, cultural differences in child-rearing practices may lead to different rules of moral salience. Attitudes toward children playing with knives may have ethical connotations in some cultures that do not exist in others.

Another ethicist has identified a system of common morality that includes both moral rules—actions that are immoral unless justified (for example, killing or lying)—and moral ideals, or actions that are

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24. Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2001), 14–44.

25. Jared Diamond, *The World until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies?* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2012), 198.

26. Barbara Herman, "The Practice of Moral Judgment," *Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 8 (1985): 422, https://doi.org/10.2307/2026397.

often morally good (for example, relieving suffering or promoting flourishing).[27] While the ethicist argues that moral rules are universal—unless the context is such that moral agents would agree otherwise—moral ideals do not have the same consensus. Similarly, the ethics of care position that context matters is not an appeal to moral relativity but an observation that the application within a community of shared beliefs (such as gun use) to common moral principles (for example, do not kill) may result in different ethical actions depending on the community—or context—in which they occur.

One example that illustrates how an ethics of care can transcend cultural differences is found in how different cultures and states approach gun ownership. A universal standard would recommend a single policy regardless of cultural differences. However, the development of gunpowder was followed by disparities between cultures and individuals with access to gunpowder and those without, as documented by historian Marshall Hodgson,[28] as well as later playing a key role in European dominance of the New World. States quickly began to regulate the availability and use of such powerful weapons. For example, most European and Middle Eastern countries do not allow citizens to own guns. Yet during the U.S. Revolutionary War, the revolutionaries established a decentralized locus of power through manufacturing and extensive access to weaponry, which was later solidified in the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. As a consequence, in the United States, politicians regularly debate the merits of various gun regulations where the argument based on Second Amendment rights is often mediated by an ethics of care perspective. For example, gun-control arguments emphasizing the frequency with which improperly stored guns are used to commit suicide or to kill a family member suggest that a common concern of caring for others may be able to transcend the cultural differences toward gun ownership within the United States as well as between nations.

A second principle in the ethics of care is that as human beings, we all have multiple caring responsibilities—to ourselves, our families, our larger communities—and ethical decision-making requires us to consider those relationships and our responsibilities to others in our

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27. Gert, *Common Morality,* 23.

28. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization,* 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 3:16.

choices and prioritizing. *Balancing those caring responsibilities* requires careful judgement, practice, and even failure. We cannot take care of everyone all the time the way we wish we could. So, we make decisions based on the best available information at the time. Sometimes, in hindsight, we wish we had made a different choice. Often, we wish we had known then what we know now. However, learning to make those moral choices with limited information and practicing them over time, failing and trying again or doing something different, is how we create ourselves over the course of our lives—a process of becoming closer to our ideal selves.

Another core principle of the ethics of care is the focus on a *human ideal.* There is a consensus across cultures and time with respect to ideal character and personal virtues, as documented by psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman.[29] Among their primary sources were Aristotle and other Greek philosophers who regarded virtues as the character traits that make someone a good person. Aristotle argued that people of high moral character possessed both intellectual virtues such as prudence and wisdom and moral virtues such as courage, generosity, and justice. He also taught that persons of high moral character engage in virtuous activities that promote happiness.[30] While there may be nuanced differences in interpretation, most people have a desire to develop virtues such as courage, integrity, wisdom, and compassion—virtues that are demonstrated primarily in our relationships to others and the ethical choices we make that impact those relationships. The desire to develop those virtues reveals a core value—the desire to become your ideal self.

Evaluating any moral situation or individual character requires both the contextual facts and the values illustrated by a human ideal, and neither is independent of the other. True objectivity is not value neutral. It assumes a value orientation as a base of reference.[31] For example, a physician's assessment of health is made in the context of a healthy ideal and with the desire to promote that ideal. Without the knowledge of the characteristics of a healthy individual or healthy ideal, a physician would not be able to diagnose an unhealthy individual because there would be

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29. Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33–89.

30. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1.1103b(1), II.3.1105a(10).

31. Groenhout, *Connected Lives,* 122–24.

no basis for comparison. Similarly, without a sense of an ideal character, or the ideal person we would like to become or would like our children to become, we have no means of assessing the gap between our current state of being and the ideal self we are moving toward.

A related principle is that of *simultaneity*. It is crucial that as parents, teachers, and nurturers, we simultaneously hold both the future ideal and the present reality of the one cared for in our minds as we nurture and teach. In other words, we simultaneously acknowledge where the child is currently in her development and recognize the adult she could become. The nurturing task is to aid her movement from her current place toward that ideal. In some situations, we recognize that the child may never become that "ideal" adult due to physical or mental limitations or other circumstances. However, we still acknowledge the human ideal she could have become without those inherent constraints. In order to care for and nurture her, the carer needs to be able to hold both the current reality of the child and the human ideal simultaneously.[32]

Recognizing that many of the members of our communities are not fully developed adults capable of making rational moral decisions is a fundamental principle of the ethics of care. Communities—whether small families or large nations—have a responsibility to *protect the vulnerable* among us. Because of the responsibility to protect the vulnerable, the ethics of care is *critical of violence* and its potentially adverse effects both on individuals and the relationships required for those individuals to flourish. The use of violence diminishes us ethically[33] because rather than nurturing individuals and relationships, violence destroys them.

A final core principle of an ethics of care is the desire to *create systems and institutions that prioritize nurturing individuals* rather than the strategic pursuit of money and power and their attendant use.[34] Many people and institutions justify their pursuit of power by their intent to use that power to help the vulnerable or provide for their family. For some, that may be true. However, for many the pursuit of power for the sake of power is clearly the goal. In his book *The Second Mountain,* David Brooks describes the difference between what he calls the first mountain and the second mountain with respect to personal development. The first mountain is

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32. Groenhout, *Connected Lives,* 43–48.

33. Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 137–39.

34. Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 170.

about building up the ego and defining the self—ambitious, strategic, independent. The second mountain, on the other hand, is about shedding the ego and losing the self—relational, intimate, and transformative.[35] Second-mountain people and institutions nurture and transform others.

Examples of Moral Issues

One of the most popular examples used to illustrate ethical and moral decision-making is the decision a woman may make to either bear a child or have an abortion. Frequently, when circumstances necessitating this decision arise, we turn to religion for guidance, but the issue of whether or not a fetus is created life is a nonmoral belief, and for members of the Church it is not settled doctrine.[36] One could characterize an abortion dilemma as caring for either the woman or the fetus, but clearly caring for both is important. Acknowledging competing responsibilities is a fundamental part of an ethics of care, as well as the context of the moral decision. "The rightness or wrongness of abortion decisions is not a matter of conformity to independently existing human/political rights or moral rules, but derives instead from the character or motivation that lies behind such decisions."[37] Motivation matters to morality, and therefore context matters. An abortion in the case of rape or incest is morally different from an abortion for convenience. This abortion example illustrates that balancing multiple responsibilities, considering context, moving toward a human ideal, protecting the vulnerable, respecting agency, and limiting violence are all factors to be considered in making ethical choices—illustrating that the process of making an ethical decision is as important as the final choice. Because the process of making a specific choice is as important as the resulting law or rule, it is difficult to make a law that takes into account the immense variety of possible contexts. The obstacles to establishing a process of public decision-making that acknowledges the myriad of conflating factors in

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35. David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (New York: Random House, 2019), xvi.

36. Donna L. Bowen, "Respect for Life: Abortion in Islam and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 188–89; Dallin H. Oaks, "Weightier Matters," *Ensign* 31, no. 1 (January 2001): 13–15. For the Church's official position on abortion, see *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* 38.6.1, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title98.

37. Michael Slote, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 17.

such a complex issue could be why the United States has difficulty establishing and maintaining a consistent abortion policy.

Other examples of different understandings of moral issues are illustrated in a recent study of members of the Church published in *The Next Mormons.*[38] Jana Riess reports on differences among members with respect to their positions on moral issues and provides an excellent opportunity for considering moral choices with respect to age cohorts and life experiences. While the study is descriptive, and therefore causal relationships cannot be concluded, the findings may shed some light on what different age groups consider in their moral reasoning with respect to issues regarding both family relationships and larger societal responsibilities.

Family Relationships

Interestingly, according to Riess, more millennials (ages 18–36 when surveyed in 2016) reported that getting a divorce was morally wrong than older cohorts. Yet simultaneously, those same millennials were less likely than the older cohorts to report that having an abortion, an affair, a baby outside of marriage, more than one wife, or a "sex change" was morally wrong.[39] While the data do not support causal relationships and are merely descriptive, Riess suggests that the millennials' views on divorce could be influenced by the dramatic increase in the United States' divorce rate during their parents' generation.[40] Or it could merely be the idealism of youth, since many haven't experienced the realities that many divorcing couples face. Regardless, while the descriptive generational differences may be a result of being in different phases of the life course, one possibility is that the generational differences could also follow from changes in how millennials think about morality—less focus on absolutes and more emphasis on nurturing others.

Each of the generational differences mentioned above—even the anomalous difference where more millennials felt that getting a divorce was morally wrong than older generations—suggests that millennials feel taking care of other people is a priority over absolute rules. Marriage is a commitment to take care of another person and any children

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38. Jana Riess, *The Next Mormons: How Millennials Are Changing the LDS Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

39. Riess, *Next Mormons,* 179–81.

40. Riess, *Next Mormons,* 180.

brought into that family, and divorce ruptures that commitment to care. The generational differences in moral judgement with respect to having an affair, a baby outside of marriage, more than one wife, and even a "sex change" can all be understood in terms of a greater emphasis on caring for and taking care of individuals rather than showing respect for societal norms and institutions. While this interpretation is not definitive given the limited data provided, it is an illustration that a discussion of caring responsibilities may provide a bridge for generations at odds with each other with respect to their different perspectives on ethical and moral choices. Perhaps the language of caring and responsibility promoted by the ethics of care may facilitate dialogue and understanding among people from different generations.

After all, what are the moral issues here? Where is the morality in a marriage and extended family relationships? Across all societies, religions, and cultures, marriage is at its core a social commitment to take care of another person and any offspring resulting from the union. Given that many people marry before they even know themselves very well, much less are capable of truly knowing the person they marry, that is a significant commitment. Yet it is in the commitment to care and the ensuing opportunities to practice caretaking that we are stretched and grow to become closer to our ideal selves. Somehow, in the balancing between care of others and care of self, we make choices and decisions that create ourselves and ideally move toward increasing goodness—toward the human ideal.

It is the ethics of care that encourages us to look beyond the hyper-individualism of the twenty-first century to consider the others in our communities of care and identity and our responsibilities to them. The individual rights emphasized by our social traditions contribute to the hyperindividualism, leaving us fighting for personal rights rather than fulfilling responsibilities to the communities we have committed to, such as family, friends, colleagues, clients, patients, students, ward families, nations, and states. On the other hand, caring in terms of fulfilling responsibilities to our larger communities requires broader thinking than just personal responsibility for one's own actions. It requires that people know "where they come from, to whom and to what they are related, and how."[41] Without that broader thinking and awareness, we become myopic and focus just on ourselves and our immediate

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41. Tronto, *Caring Democracy,* 120.

communities, ignoring "the ways in which this 'we' . . . is the result of a confluence of circumstances as well as individual (or familial) initiative."[42] The ethics of care encourages us to see beyond our small communities to the larger communities that we are part of and that our personal choices impact.

One of the core failures of any market economy is the creation of externalities—or an outcome created by a person or institution that makes others better or worse off without their permission. Pollution is probably the most common example of a negative externality, and pollination by bees is an example of a positive externality. The role of government and public policy is often seen as stepping in to control or account for externalities, yet we are finding those institutions insufficient with respect to many externalities, such as climate change and pollution. However, when we care about the other people in our communities, we effectively internalize their well-being and modify the externalities our personal and public choices create. Most of the important social issues of our day are externalities created by people who are unaware and uncaring of the impact of their choices on others. However, since the financial crisis of 2008, there is a growing sense that "markets have become detached from morals"[43] and that the logic and morals illustrated by our practices of buying and selling goods and services have sidelined the pursuit of the public good as described in the U.S. Constitution. There is a growing sense that the language of caring for others may be a bridge to bring diverse groups of people together to discuss how our collective choices impact the strangers in our world. The ethics of care requires that we consider the impact of our choices on not only our family and close communities but also on the strangers in the world whom we will never know.

Societal Responsibilities

In addition to what might be considered individual moral choices, Riess asks specifically about societal responsibilities, or community issues that we address politically at the state or national level, by asking respondents

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42. Tronto, *Caring Democracy,* 120.

43. Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 8.

to rank their views on some top issues facing America. Again, there are interesting differences between millennials and their older cohorts.[44]

For example, more than 30 percent of the millennials surveyed, both current and former Church members, responded that the top issue facing the United States today is poverty, hunger, and homelessness. Among older Latter-day Saints, the top issues were moral or religious decline and terrorism. One of the core principles of an ethics of care is that all systems and institutions should be focused on nurturing individuals rather than pursuing and using power. In other words, in prioritizing the core governmental responsibilities of military and police protection compared to social services, or nurturing citizens, millennials seem to see social services as a higher priority. Economic inequality, police brutality, inadequate health care, and racism were all reported as more important concerns by millennials than by earlier generations among current members of the Church. Among former Church members, health care was a higher priority for earlier generations than for millennials (possibly because older people generally have more health concerns), but otherwise we see the same trends in governmental priorities as expressed by current Church members. In other words, when asked about a list of issues we are facing as a nation, millennials reported that issues related to nurturing individuals (such as poverty, hunger, homelessness, economic inequality, racism, police brutality, and lack of health care) were more important to them than these same issues were to older respondents, who prioritized general issues such as terrorism, moral/religious decline, high taxes, and an ineffective political system.

The ethics of care makes it more difficult to avoid personal responsibilities, which is a growing problem in the United States, where the political environment is focused on individual rights rather than responsibilities to specific others and the common good.[45] One political scientist suggests that a core function of democracies is to allocate caring responsibilities and to ensure that all citizens are capable of providing care.[46] After all, who are we responsible to care for in our smaller communities of care? Primarily, our families and those we have committed to care for, but what about our larger communities that are filled with strangers to us but not to God?

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44. Riess, *Next Mormons,* 177.

45. Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 76, 110–13.

46. Tronto, *Caring Democracy,* x–xii.

Applied Gospel Ethics: What Are We Trying to Accomplish?

One of the key questions we ask ourselves is, Why am I here? What is it that I am trying to accomplish—both as an individual and as a member of a community of Saints? One of the core tenets of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we believe in personal development and growth. We believe that as a loving father, God's purpose is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of [all people]" (Moses 1:39). In other words, God desires the personal development of each individual. In our attempts to become like Christ, not only are we personally trying to become like him, but, because human beings cannot develop and grow without the care provided by communities, we are also trying to create nurturing communities. As followers of Christ, we seek to develop communities—families, wards, neighborhoods, cities, nations, and even the world—that encourage and enable personal growth by building caring relationships and facilitating the development of children to move beyond the self-absorption of childhood into first caring about, then caring for, and finally taking care of others in their communities.

The core purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to facilitate this process of personal development—both in ourselves and in others. Hugh Nibley describes the process in *Approaching Zion*: "As an unceasing stream of children enter the scene, they must learn it all from the beginning, and for them it is as fresh and new as the world in the creation, and nothing is more delightful to their elders than to teach them and watch them learn and grow while the teachers themselves discover wonder upon wonder, more than a lifetime can contain, both in the world around them and in the contemplative depths of their own minds."[47] As we cultivate communities and environments that facilitate personal development, we recognize that it is the networks of caring relationships in our families, wards, and neighborhoods that "enable people of different states and cultures to live in peace, to respect each other's rights, to care together for their environments, and to improve the lives of their children."[48] Expanding those networks of caring relationships to include people we may never meet is what we are asked to do as Christians and followers of Christ.

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47. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion,* ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 9 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 452.

48. Held, *Ethics of Care,* 168.

While Christian ethics may guide our personal choices, virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism are more likely to guide our public choices, and they assume the existence of networks of caring relationships. When we do not prioritize caring relationships, each of us is inclined to maximize our own personal interests—which often translates into doing whatever is necessary to accumulate money and its popular attendants, power and prestige—an outcome neither anticipated nor encouraged by traditional approaches to ethics but nonetheless observable in the public culture of American hyperindividualism. Many of us justify, or rationalize, accumulating money, power, and prestige to provide for our families and benefit society. But both the Old and the New Testament teach the fundamental principle of responsibility to care for the stranger, pushing us as individuals away from our limited circles of care into an extended care for all of God's children and all of God's creation. The gospel admonition to care for others is not limited to our family and those we choose to care about and take care of. Balancing those caring responsibilities is a core part of the ethics of care. One of the key questions we ask ourselves is how to balance the priorities of caring for ourselves, the people in our closest communities such as our families and friends, slightly larger communities such as wards and neighborhoods, and the many larger communities of strangers— strangers to us, but not to Christ.

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has given us an opportunity to model care for strangers in our communities. Dr. Emily Landon, chief infectious disease epidemiologist at the University of Chicago Medicine, spoke at a press conference with Illinois governor J. B. Pritzker on March 21, 2020, where the governor announced a stay-at-home order. As Dr. Landon talked about the need for everyone to stay home and self-quarantine, she said, "The numbers you see today in the news are the people who got sick a week ago. And there are so many people who got sick today who haven't even noticed that they got sick yet. They picked up the virus and it'll take a week to see that show in our numbers. Waiting for hospitals to be overwhelmed will leave the following week's patients with nowhere to go. In short, without taking drastic measures, the healthy and optimistic among us will doom the vulnerable."[49] Because of the

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49. Quoted in Molly Walsh, "Chicago Doctor's Blunt Speech about COVID-19 Hits Home across the Country; Read Her Full Speech," 5Chicago, March 21, 2020, https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-doctors-blunt-speech-about-covid-19-hit-home-across-the-country-read-her-full-speech/2241815/.

fast-spreading virus, our medical system did not have the ability to take care of the number of people needing medical assistance. The only way to slow the rate of infection was for people to stay home and not interact with each other. Yet even with the universal consensus among infectious disease experts, beaches and other public places were crowded with people ignoring their ability to carry the virus to their elderly and immunocompromised friends and family members, as well as the strangers who were not yet "real" to them. Blind to their own condition—exposed or not—others took action and complied with stay-at-home orders and social distancing requests. As Dr. David Kessler, professor of epidemiology, said, we need "a new clause in our social contract. . . . Just as we obey the most basic laws in order to protect all of us, everyone needs to accept responsibility for not only their circle of friends, family and colleagues, but for the wider community. Our collective behavior will be the primary determinant of whether we can keep this virus in check. We each hold the health of our neighbors in our hands."[50] The coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020 is an opportunity to take care of the strangers in our communities, yet because we often do not consider the consequences of our choices on strangers, many have refused to do the things necessary to take care of those at risk. On the other hand, medical personnel, scientists, and some manufacturers exercised a generosity of spirit, or virtue, by deploying unique and irreplaceable assets in working to save others, thus winning the love and respect of their larger communities.[51]

When rationalizing our personal and political choices, it is possible to use almost any ethical approach—after all, we are smart people, and we can justify almost any desired course of action—even to the distortion of those ethical approaches. Yet, without caring relationships as the foundation for our ethical choices, the other ethical approaches seem nonsensical and can be more easily twisted to support rationalizing our self-absorbed behaviors. What is the point of promoting the greatest good for the greatest number if we care only about ourselves and our immediate family? What is the point of following ethical rules if not to support a network of caring relationships? Is it possible that the other ethical approaches simply assume the network of relationships

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50. David A. Kessler, "We Need a New Social Contract for the Coronavirus," *New York Times,* April 20, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/20/opinion/coronavirus -social-contract.html.

51. Rebecca Goldstein, "What Would Aristotle Do in a Pandemic?" *Wall Street Journal,* April 16, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-would-aristotle-do-in-a-pan demic-11587048934.

and caring that the ethics of care makes explicit—an earlier version of what we call implicit biases today?

Adam Smith, in his book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* suggests that morals and ethics are taught through the medium of relationships by instilling a sense of propriety in each of us by means of developing an impartial spectator to remind us of community norms.[52] After all, according to American philosopher Marilyn Friedman, people "are fundamentally social beings who develop the competency of autonomy . . . in a context of values, meanings, and modes of self-reflection that cannot exist except as constituted by social practices. . . . It is now well recognized that our reflective capacities and our very identities are always at least partly constituted by communal traditions and norms."[53] Smith suggests we naturally use these norms as an internal voice—asking how our neighbors would view a certain choice—to determine what is moral and ethical.[54] Children learn appropriate behavior in their communities by watching others. While some may argue that this example illustrates the cultural relativity of ethics and morals, it is the ethics of care that recognizes that the commonality of caring has the potential to transcend our cultural and societal differences. It is our shared goal of taking care of others that allows us to see beyond cultural and societal differences—such as the tradition of stoning women caught in adultery during the time of Christ. We may disagree on how to care for others, but we can agree that as followers of Christ we are all called to serve, minister to, and care for others in our communities. A shared commitment to the goal of caring for and nurturing others will change the conversation, help us recognize our responsibility to others in our various communities, and possibly even allow us to acknowledge cultural and societal variations in our different approaches to caring.

Conclusion

When I see the social problems of society, I find that many of them stem from selfishness and a lack of consideration for others. As Parker J. Palmer said, "When we forget that politics is about weaving a fabric of compassion and justice on which everyone can depend, the first to suffer are the most vulnerable among us—our children, the elderly, the

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52. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 19–26, I.i.4(1)–I.i.5(10).

53. Quoted in Held, *Ethics of Care,* 47.

54. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 19–26, I.i.4(1)–I.i.5(10).

mentally ill, the poor, and the homeless. As they suffer, so does the integrity of our democracy."[55] In our desire to be ethical Christians, our first obligation is to care for the people around us, to actively contribute to a community of caring, and to create as best we can a society where the care of others is a clear priority; recognizing, of course, that self-care is equally essential. "Our lonely eternal selves can only flower into full selfhood in relationship with other eternal selves. . . . Those relationships require that we curb our radical egotism in obedience and self-sacrifice, even at the cost of what seems our precious integrity. They require that we enter into genuine dialogue with other selves, appreciate their sometimes contradictory integrity, [and] learn to speak the truth, but in love."[56] Individuals grow and develop within networks of relationships, and as adults our primary responsibility is to create communities where all children can thrive. Making ethical choices that facilitate and build networks of care in all of our communities is the path that Christ modeled for us. In today's world, what can we do as individuals to move along the path of caring not just for our own families and neighborhoods but also through our public policy choices that impact the strangers that are not yet real to us but have always been real to Christ?

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55. Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), dedication page.

56. Eugene England, *Dialogues with Myself: Personal Essays on Mormon Experience* (Midvale, Utah: Orion Books, 1984), x–xi.

Bayou

Slowly the rain plays thin strings, plucking.

Wet and grumbling beneath the sassafras and pear,
a woman slouches from her shack to weed,
pouring her muttering among the trees,
rippling the dripping air.

Odors of oil and fish untwist,
unraveled from air by fingering wet;
gripped in green steam the cypress sweat.
Grey-eyed morning, blurred in the damp,
wades on pale legs into the swamp.

Slowly the rain's strings stay, unstrung.

An egret melts out of cypress leaves,
its creenings drizzling and sweet;
Down to the grass and mud it glimmers
like liquid silver.

Lured by myrtle blooms oozing through dim,
the tidewater comes on its knees:
an old man puzzling between dark roads,
feeling familiar trees.

—Pamela J. Hamblin

Becoming Zion

Some Reflections on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Deidre Nicole Green

Some years ago, I was confronted with the realization that other people's betrayal and deception, which eventually crescendoed into blatant and dehumanizing cruelty, might result in the loss of much of what I had worked for in my professional, ecclesial, and personal life. This situation drove me to a deep need to understand forgiveness, which I pursued through studying philosophical and theological perspectives on the topic as well as through personal reflection. Through specific academic opportunities that included fieldwork in Rwanda and South Africa, I discovered the voices of Latter-day Saint women who had gained hard-won knowledge and wisdom about forgiveness through their experiences of enduring genocide and apartheid. When I heard firsthand about their lives, I was able to see how their understanding of God and the gospel helped them navigate the complexity of forgiving others who had perpetrated major harms against them without causing them to further harm themselves. Through my encounters with them, I realized that although I had studied and written on the topic of forgiveness in academic contexts,[1] I wanted more insight from personal study of the scriptures. As a practicing Latter-day Saint, I became interested in examining the unique resources that the restored gospel offers on this

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1. See Deidre Nicole Green, "Works of Love in a World of Violence: Kierkegaard, Feminism, and the Limits of Self-Sacrifice," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 568–83; Deidre Nicole Green, *Works of Love in a World of Violence: Kierkegaard, Feminism, and the Limits of Self-Sacrifice* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); Deidre Nicole Green, "Radical Forgiveness" in *Love and Justice*, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth and Trevor W. Kimball (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 183–205.

topic. This essay combines what I have learned through my academic study, my personal study of the gospel, the wisdom of other Latter-day Saint women, and my own life lessons.

Defining Forgiveness

I have learned that a genuine definition of forgiveness must take into consideration the situation of those who have been wronged, and that this consideration must include an awareness of the disparate levels of power between those who have been wronged and those who have committed the wrong. Forgiveness cannot be coerced or compelled, and it ought not be conceived in overly simplistic or facile ways, particularly when those who are in a position to forgive are disempowered and marginalized. Bringing a feminist lens to any vision of Christian love demands deliberating over complex questions about how to forgive in ways that neither leave people excessively vulnerable to revictimization and injustice nor place undue burdens on marginalized and disempowered persons to forgive. A helpful framework for analyzing the entangled issues involved in forgiveness comes from one theologian who warns, "Versions of cheap . . . forgiveness create the illusion of caring about the quality of human relations while simultaneously masking the ways in which people's lives are enmeshed in patterns of destructiveness." He asserts that such counterfeit forms "of forgiveness often exacerbate human destructiveness precisely because their illusions and masking create a moral and political vacuum."[2] In his view, we must avoid two dangers: on the one hand, "a cheap therapeutic forgiveness," and on the other, the "eclipse of forgiveness by encroaching darkness."[3] In other words, forgiveness ought to neither be reduced to an unreflective and thoughtless conciliation nor be cynically written off as utterly impossible. In this brief essay, I begin to sketch out a theology of forgiveness that avoids both cynicism and the denial of the gravity of wrongdoing, a theology that I believe points us toward becoming Zion.

Forgiveness requires love, and it also works to further cultivate love. In the personal experience mentioned above, I found that in seeking insight from the divine about how I could possibly be in such a situation, the only answer that ever came was "You're the one who wanted to learn to love—I already know how." I knew that part of why I was confronting this situation was to learn to love in a way more akin to how God loves. Margaret

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2. L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 6.

3. Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness,* 33.

Farley, emeritus professor of Christian ethics at Yale Divinity School, has written that there is "no genuine Christian forgiveness without love, and love is sometimes tested in its ultimate possibility and imperative by the forgiveness it generates."[4] In the divine sphere, mercy cannot rob justice (Alma 42:25). For this reason, I understand that forgiveness must be in the service of justice as well as love,[5] lest it undermine the strength of our relationships. As an aspect of authentic communal life, particularly for a community striving to become Zion, forgiveness allows a diverse group of imperfect people to remain cohesive. Forgiveness offers itself as resistance against all the forces that would otherwise tear us apart. I have come to view forgiveness and reconciliation as essential means to our becoming[6]— both as individuals and as a Zion community, which scripture describes as a people "of one heart and one mind, [dwelling] in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18).

The Renewal of Forgiveness

Forgiveness renews the individual who has been wronged and makes her growth possible. For Christians, forgiveness stands as an absolute moral imperative: we ought to forgive everyone all of the time because our own forgiveness by God is conditional on our choices to forgive others (Matt. 6:14–15); additionally, we ought to forgive others just as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32). Commenting in a 1924 Relief Society general conference on the difficult challenge this doctrine poses, Jennie Brimhall Knight taught, "To those who have been sorely tried and bitterly offended, remember it requires a prayerful, generous, and merciful heart coupled with a strong will to forgive, but remember also, an unforgiving heart places a barrier between itself and God's forgiveness."[7] Referencing Matthew 18:21–35, Knight reemphasized that one is to forgive all people their trespasses *from one's heart.*[8] This means that forgiveness is neither trite nor superficial but requires

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4. Margaret A. Farley, *Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics,* ed. Jamie L. Manson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2015), 319.

5. This is taken from the title of an essay found in Farley, *Changing the Questions,* 319–42.

6. Kelly Oliver, "Forgiveness and Community," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 42 (2004, supplement): 1–2. Oliver alludes to her reliance upon Hegel, primarily from his *Phenomenology of Spirit,* in her analysis, yet does not cite him closely on these points.

7. Jennie Brimhall Knight, "Forgiveness Is Like Mercy," in *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women,* ed. Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017), 125.

8. Knight, "Forgiveness Is Like Mercy," 124.

an inner willingness that effects an internal transformation of the one who forgives. It is the one who chooses to undergo this transformation by forgiving that benefits at least as much as the one who is forgiven. Knight highlighted what she dubbed "unforgiveness" as a particularly vexing pitfall along the path that leads to happiness.[9] Perhaps it is for this reason that in the Book of Mormon, it is a specific sort of forgiveness—one that is unconditional, lavish, generous, and offered without restraint—that is lifted up as exemplary.[10]

Yet the Book of Mormon also introduces an internal tension around the issue of forgiveness. Alma states that we need to forgive our neighbor when *he says that* he repents (Mosiah 26:31). This echoes much of what is expressed in the previous paragraph. Moroni, however, offers a striking qualification, stating that in order to be forgiven, members of the church must seek forgiveness *with real intent* (Moro. 6:8). This tension demands discernment in order to know how to approach a particular situation. Moroni seems to give us a safeguard against manipulation or facile forgiveness that might hinder rather than foster real change, both on the part of the perpetrator and the victim. He does this by allowing us to set boundaries between ourselves and someone who seems likely to become a repeat offender, given that their request for forgiveness is not totally sincere and therefore not totally indicative of change. As one contemporary theologian explains, forgiveness is not the same as resignation to abusive behaviors or unjust circumstances. "Acceptance of suffering is not an inherent characteristic of love; only resistance to suffering is. . . . What love really requires is resistance towards the abuse."[11] Similarly, Elder David E. Sorensen maintains that "forgiveness of sins should not be confused with tolerating evil. . . . Although we must forgive a neighbor who injures us, we should still work constructively to prevent that injury from being repeated."[12] These theological perspectives, like Moroni's qualification, attune us to the fact that forgiving is not just about the transformation of the one who forgives; it is also intended to facilitate the transformation of the one who is forgiven.

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9. Knight, "Forgiveness Is Like Mercy," 123.

10. Nephi recounts that he "frankly" forgave his brothers (1 Ne. 7:21). *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "frankly," accessed November 20, 2018, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74240.

11. Asle Eikrem, *God as Sacrificial Love: A Systematic Exploration of a Controversial Notion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 110–11.

12. David E. Sorensen, "Forgiveness Will Change Bitterness to Love," *Ensign* 33, no. 5 (May 2003): 12.

Forgiveness is a creative act that brings about something new and allows for the progress and freedom of the individual who is forgiven. Philosopher Julia Kristeva understands forgiving as choosing to allow another to make a new person of herself, creating a new narrative that has passed "through the love of forgiveness" and has been "transferred to the love of forgiveness."[13] It is further freeing to the one who forgives in that it allows her to act independently of the wrongdoer's actions, whereas before her agency had been compromised by the wrongdoer's act itself as well as by her reactivity to it. Naming the problems of irreversibility and unpredictability in all human action, Hannah Arendt asserts that forgiveness is "the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences *both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven.*"[14] She holds that since we "cannot stop acting as long as we live, we must never stop forgiving either."[15] Because it is the "only reaction that acts in an unexpected way," forgiveness "retains, though being a reaction, something of the original character of action."[16] In other words, it does not respond to unjust or unloving actions in a way that is dictated by those actions but in a way that involves more agency and creativity on the part of the one who is harmed and is in a position to forgive. In contrast to vengeance, forgiveness affords a new beginning, releasing us from some consequences of the past, even if it does not undo them.[17] Another scholar elaborating on Arendt's insights emphasizes that "without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would,

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13. Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia,* trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989)*,* 204.

14. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 241, emphasis mine. Forgiveness is a free and creative act in part because it does not depend upon anything external to the one who chooses to forgive. As Timothy Jackson puts it, forgiveness does not require something on the part of the forgiven—it presupposes nothing more than freedom and guilt. It is a gift that, for Jackson, is "literally a giving-in-advance and without qualification." Timothy P. Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 140. Note also: highlighting the power of forgiveness to free individuals from the irreversibility of their actions, Arendt understands forgiveness as the "possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility—of being unable to undo what one has done." Arendt, *Human Condition,* 237.

15. Hannah Arendt, "The Tradition of Political Thought," in *The Promise of Politics,* ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 57.

16. Arendt, *Human Condition,* 241.

17. Marguerite La Caze, "Promising and Forgiveness," in *Hannah Arendt: Key Concepts,* ed. Patrick Hayden (Durham: Acumen, 2014), 213.

as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover," so that, in effect, "we would remain the victims of its consequences forever."[18] As an active choice, forgiveness is a form of sacrifice that frees both the wrongdoer and the one harmed from the past. This sacrifice includes not only giving up a claim that could otherwise be pressed but also giving up an ideal about who the wrongdoer should have been by loving and accepting who she is and seeing her actions clearly. At the same time, forgiveness allows the one who is forgiven to believe that she is seen in a new light and is no longer beholden to the image of who she was at the time of wrongdoing.

My own life experience and the experiences of others have taught me the value of forgiveness for becoming unencumbered by the weight of past mistakes and sufferings. My insight that my experiences could help me learn to love in a more godly way did not resolve for me the issue that other people's attitudes and actions toward me seemed to be able to hinder my ability to become who I wanted to be and realize the objectives I had set for my life. Yet I have come to the understanding that no matter how hurt or hindered I might have been by others' choices, only my own choice not to forgive them could have the power to damn me so ultimately. Forgiveness has enabled me to progress toward my goals despite the harms and obstacles introduced by others' actions, unobstructed by blame, resentment, or bitterness. Part of what forgiveness resists is the complacency and passivity that succumbs to old patterns of relating and old images of self and others that otherwise remain static and in perpetual reaction to each other. In the absence of forgiveness, people become stymied and immobilized, "forever doomed to relive a broken history."[19] Many African women I have spoken with have confirmed this truth: both individual and collective progress prove to be impossible in the absence of forgiveness and reconciliation.

One young Rwandan woman, whose father was killed in the 1994 genocide, has an ongoing debate about the relationship between forgiveness and justice with her sister, who refuses to forgive their father's murderer. In speaking with her sister, she insists, "You need to move on. You need to forgive them for you to be able to move on and be whatever you want to be." The young woman views forgiveness as a real option that brings more freedom and growth. Further, she believes that the greater injustice is to continually reduce the perpetrator, as well as his family, to the status

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18. Arendt, *Human Condition,* 237.

19. Paul O. Ingram, ed., *Constructing a Relational Cosmology,* Princeton Monograph Series 62 (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2006), ch. 3.

of enemies and even to the unjust act itself. She emphatically declares, "We're not going to do the same thing to his children because that's going to be . . . a circle and it's not justice."[20] The refusal to forgive, according to this young woman, debilitates everyone involved by imprisoning them according to their past actions and identities in an inescapable cycle that renders both individual and communal growth unattainable. Rather than viewing forgiveness as circumventing justice, her notion of justice actually relies upon forgiveness, which frees everyone to become better selves and therefore better members of the larger community.

Forgiveness enables us to escape the death that comes through sin and evil and pass from death to life. Escaping the death that comes about through sin and evil, we not only return to life but also invite the possibility of *new* life.[21] As it is through love for one another that we pass "from death to life" (1 Jn. 3:14, NRSV), to struggle for relentless love through forgiveness and reconciliation is to embrace the abundant life promised by the Christian gospel (John 10:10). It is a way in which we reclaim life from all of the myriad forces that would rob us of it. Forgiveness is, in effect, the means by which we bring about our own spiritual resurrection. This imagery points to Jesus Christ who pleads from the cross for the forgiveness of those that kill him (Luke 23:34), pushing back against evil and destruction. In this exemplary instance, forgiveness actively resists the passivity of suffering and manifests that love is in fact stronger than death by refusing to relinquish love and thereby succumb to sin even in the face of death (see Song 8:6). Merciful love, not sin, has the final word in Christ's mortal life, and this ought to inform how followers of Christ live out their lives as well.

Forgiveness makes it possible to see others and ourselves not as static and trapped but as susceptible to renewal and worthy of love. Simone Weil observes, "Men owe us what we imagine they will give us. We must forgive them this debt. To accept the fact that they are other than the creatures of our imagination is to imitate the renunciation of God. I also am other than what I imagine myself to be. To know this is forgiveness."[22] Forgiveness involves seeing ourselves and others as what we are: fallible human beings rather than idealized versions of ourselves that can exist only in our minds. This demands that we take responsibility for how we

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20. Anonymous, interview by Deidre Green, August 11, 2016, p. 14, Women, Religion, and Transitional Justice in South Africa and Rwanda Oral Histories, repository. See Green, "Radical Forgiveness," 191.

21. Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness,* 88.

22. Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 9.

see ourselves and others, acknowledging that seeing itself entails an act of volition. Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre articulates that when I am seen, I am a defenseless creature in the face of the other's infinite freedom. Objectified by the look of the other, I experience myself as fixed in my place in the world.[23] In light of this insight about the fixity involved in being seen, we might say that when one asks for forgiveness, one asks to be seen differently: not just as a wrongdoer but as someone who has, by way of repentance, transcended those acts and is no longer identical with the one who committed the wrong.[24] Similarly, self-forgiveness is less a matter of altering one's perspective about what has taken place than it is a matter of interpreting oneself differently.[25] Some self-reproach about past mistakes may remain and even be in order, and yet forgiveness mitigates the power of those mistakes, so that we "can now live well enough."[26] Insofar as we have a "decision to make about how to see,"[27] we can come to see ourselves and others with more love and compassion, as fundamentally good *and* fully accountable for the evils we commit, with an understanding that we have the agency to change and become better as we repair the wrongs we commit against others and ourselves.

Love and Justice

Forgiveness, in order to be real and complete, calls for both love and justice. One who has been wronged must learn to love the one who has wronged her, desiring the moral betterment of that person as well as herself. Therefore, forgiveness requires the naming of injustices, violations, and harms, as well as a call for reparations. These actions are done not just out of self-love, but out of a love for one's neighbors, including those who are one's enemies. Yet freeing ourselves and others for a new future

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23. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Routledge, 2003), 292–93.

24. Joseph Beatty, "Forgiveness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1970): 246–52, cited in Robin S. Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect," *Ethics* 112 (October 2001): 79.

25. Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect," 79.

26. Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect," 83.

27. Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect," 80. Margaret Farley opines that making efforts to re-envision ourselves and others is also a means of *maintaining* love. She states that "the way to keep our love alive is to try to keep seeing," insisting that we ought to "'attend' more carefully, more consistently—as we heighten our capacity to see." Margaret A. Farley, *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 54. On understanding how we see as a matter of will, see Robert C. Solomon, *About Love: Reinventing Romance for Our Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 78, 126. See Green, *Works of Love in a World of Violence,* 127.

must not circumvent the rigorous work of acknowledging and naming the wrongs committed in the past. Because I believe that the promotion of justice is inherent in the work of forgiveness, which is impelled by love, I endorse a definition of forgiveness as willing "the well-being of victim and violator *in the fullest possible knowledge of the nature of the violation.*"[28] More than this, forgiveness extends to laboring for the moral betterment of wrongdoers so that forgiveness frees them in truly lasting ways. This means that naming others' wrongs against us and calling for their reparative actions is done out of both a vital self-love and a love for the perpetrator, who is also a neighbor. Because love and justice are not counter to each other but rather conducive to each other, forgiveness must be mutually informed by both of these divine attributes that human beings are called to embrace and enact. As we individually and collectively cultivate these attributes of love and justice within ourselves, forgiveness and reconciliation become more than processes—they become the way in which we are oriented toward the world. As we come to embody forgiveness, we can become the place "where God," who is love, "in truth is."[29]

The Role of Community

Because the processes of naming injustices, violations, and harms—and also the call for reparations—are communal, they involve the community in the work of forgiveness in ways that can lead toward a Zion society. The Zion community must learn to treat both perpetrators and victims in ways that are appropriately just and merciful. In his great essay on the Atonement, Eugene England called Latter-day Saints to seek to engender within ourselves and our community the kind of love that could encompass everyone: "Each of us must come to a kind of love that can be extended equally to victim and victimizer, dispossessed and dispossessor—and even to ourselves—a kind of love that moves us to demand justice in society and within ourselves and then goes beyond justice to offer forgiveness and healing and beyond guilt to offer redemption and newness of life."[30] Developing the kind of love that can extend forgiveness without shortchanging justice is necessary for

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28. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 145, emphasis added. See Green, "Radical Forgiveness," 192.

29. Søren Kierkegaard, *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions,* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 23. See Green, "Radical Forgiveness," 204.

30. Eugene England, "That They Might Not Suffer: The Gift of Atonement," *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy* 8, no. 4, article 5 (1982): 26–27.

cultivating a Zion community and further offers the means whereby we can develop our divine potential as we rely on the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Through the Atonement of Christ, members of the Zion community can learn to hope for others to be redeemed and therefore to hope for their own redemption. Latter-day Saint leader and educator Francine Bennion explains how forgiveness attends to wounds on both sides of relationships by considering the extensiveness of Christ's atoning work: "As I think of the atonement of Christ, it seems to me that if our sins are to be forgiven, the results of them must be erased. If my mistakes are to be forgiven, other persons must be healed from any effects of them. In the same way, if other persons are to be released by the atonement, then we must be healed from their mistakes."[31] This understanding of atonement parallels a conception of restorative justice as bidirectional such that both victim and perpetrator can be redeemed. I believe that it is primarily through forgiveness that one demonstrates a willingness both to be redeemed and to see others be redeemed. Further, it is through forgiveness that one plays a role in the redemption of others—whether that is the redemption from the wounds of trauma imposed by others or the redemption from the sin of inflicting pain on those whom we ought to have treated with love.

This willingness both to be redeemed and allow others the experience of redemption parallels loving one's neighbor as oneself (see Matt. 22:39). One Christian Zimbabwean woman I interviewed reflected on the fact that often a lack of self-love results in a diminished ability to forgive oneself and to forgive others, explaining this in terms of the fact that Christianity teaches we must love our neighbors as ourselves. She reasoned that this is because self-love must precede the ability to love other people.[32] To her, an inability to forgive another implies a lack of love of self, indicative of seeing oneself as unworthy of redemption—an attitude that subsequently extends to others. To properly love oneself is both to free the self from the suffering of resentment against a wrongdoer and to offer freedom to that wrongdoer.[33] Our beliefs about others' worthiness of forgiveness and God's willingness to forgive them mirrors

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31. Francine R. Bennion, "A Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering," in Reeder and Holbrook, *At the Pulpit,* 230.

32. Anonymous, interview by Deidre Green, August 1, 2016, transcript 85, p. 16, Women, Religion, and Transitional Justice in South Africa and Rwanda Oral Histories.

33. Anonymous, interview by Deidre Green, August 1, 2016, transcript 85, p. 16.

our sense of our own worthiness of forgiveness. Christian thinker Søren Kierkegaard writes, "If you refuse to forgive, then you actually want something else: you want to make God hard-hearted so that he, too, would not forgive—how then could this hard-hearted God forgive you? If you cannot bear people's faults against you, how then should God be able to bear your sins against him?"[34] That is to say that forgiveness of others, defined in part as a willingness to see others redeemed, directly correlates to our own willingness to be redeemed. Conversely, if, as the Christian gospel suggests, the experience of being forgiven impels me to forgive, then to realize the imperative to forgive fully, I must receive forgiveness and forgive myself. Otherwise, my understanding of divine mercy must remain incomplete.

Within a community striving to become Zion, all members must learn to extend love and justice to one another. A reconciled, life-giving Zion community is possible when "many high ones [are] brought low, and . . . many low ones [are] exalted" (D&C 112:8). This entails that people with relative power humble themselves and become vulnerable by inviting those they have harmed to voice the pain they have experienced. Recall Jesus's teaching in the New Testament: "If you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar . . . ; first be reconciled to your brother or sister" (Matt. 5:23–24, NRSV). In other words, those who have caused offense need to set aside outward practices of piety in order to make amends with those who have suffered injustice and a lack of love—a lack of being desired and affirmed by the communities to which they belong. This hard work requires communities to recognize that the only way out of pain is through it.[35] Rather than willfully ignoring or covering over harms that have been done, such a community must acknowledge that forgiveness entails a "lifetime investment in naming ourselves and each other as *we are* and as *we can be* in the continuing evolution of our humanity."[36] This process of moral and communal evolution requires us to rigorously engage our need for change on personal and social levels; this process includes being able both to extend and receive forgiveness and to forgive ourselves.

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34. Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love,* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 384.

35. Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World,* ed. Douglas C. Abrams (New York: Harper One, 2014), 103.

36. Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence,* 14, emphasis added. See Green, "Radical Forgiveness," 192.

We can see one possible model for how to engage this challenging work in the Latter-day Saint film *Jane and Emma.* Throughout the film, Emma and Joseph Smith appear to advocate for Jane Manning James in multiple ways despite the racism she suffers from others. However, in what I consider to be a key moment of the film, Jane enumerates for Emma the many ways in which Emma has failed to be an ally to Jane through Emma's own unjust actions, including being silent when she should have stood up for Jane, thereby failing to protect Jane from others in the Nauvoo community—a community aspiring to become Zion. Jane's articulation of her personal suffering highlights how her community falls short of achieving their own ideal, and this articulation is absolutely crucial in order to enable the community to eventually achieve this ideal. Rather than dismiss Jane's grievances, deny the truth of her accusations, or walk away from her criticism, Emma chooses to remain and to hear Jane out as tears fill her own eyes. I take this scene as a model for what we can do today in the Latter-day Saint community—those with relative privilege must listen to those who have been overlooked, demeaned, or treated unfairly. Moreover (in order to live in accordance with Christ's injunction to be reconciled to our sisters and brothers before offering a gift to God, as discussed above), those with relative privilege and power whose sisters or brothers have something against them must not just listen willingly when confronted; they must go further by actually initiating such conversations, creating a space for communication, and inviting those who have been wronged to name their hurts and set the agenda for the reparative work that can restore relationships and allow everyone to move forward together.

At the same time, these types of restorative practices need not be limited by necessitating that the individual wrongdoer initiate reparation, especially when that is not possible. Particularly in terms of systemic injustices, such as racism, those on the side of privilege can seek to repair a broken history by listening, even if they are not directly responsible for that broken history. An illustrative example comes from a woman who attended the Maxwell Institute Symposium on Forgiveness and Reconciliation on May 30, 2018.[37] She shared that listening to the talk given by Joseph Sebarenzi, a survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, was especially meaningful for her because the genocide took place when she was a young adult—it stands out in her mind as the first major conflict she was aware of at an age when she felt a responsibility as

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37. Video of Joseph Sebarenzi's talk, as well as Mpho Tutu van Furth's talk, are available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8EDjfE-07w, accessed November 20, 2018.

an American, and so she also internalized much guilt when the United States failed to offer aid and intervention in a timely manner. She shared with me that listening to Sebarenzi, a former speaker of the Rwandan Parliament, was healing for her because even though she could do nothing to help the Rwandan people in 1994, she could listen to Sebarenzi tell his story of suffering and survival now. Not only was it healing for the survivor to share his story, which detailed the loss of much of his family and the destruction done to his country, but it was also healing to listen to that story for someone only indirectly involved but who for years had internalized guilt as a member of a country that chose to remain a bystander. Listening to the hurts we—or the communities we identify with—cause and have caused in the historical past is part of the work of healing and reconciliation, even if separation from the events through time or geographical distance allows us to believe they are so remote that they no longer demand resolution.

This truth was poignantly and profoundly impressed upon me during an interview with a Catholic woman in Rwanda. I asked her, "What does reconciliation mean to you?" She responded simply, "This is reconciliation." A bit puzzled, I looked quizzically at the interpreter and back at the woman. I probed further to try to understand what she meant. She stated clearly and powerfully, "I am black and you are white, and we are sitting here talking to each other. This is reconciliation." Although she and I had never met prior to the interview and so had never even had occasion to experience racial tension between us, we represented different groups with a long-standing history of unjust relations—I represented a privileged white colonialist who she could expect to want nothing more than to use her for my own ends by extracting information from her, and who would see her and treat her as less than myself. Yet we chose to engage in dialogue, sitting together and looking into one another's eyes. By doing so, we made one small step toward healing the nearly unspeakable pains of the past and reconciling the larger communities we each represent.

Two examples of the kind of forgiveness that genuinely offers the possibility of a healed, restored community—a Zion community—are the Old Testament story of Joseph of Egypt and the story of Julia Mavimbela, a Black South African Latter-day Saint woman who lived in Soweto at the time of apartheid. The possibility of a reconciled community rests on individual choices to give and receive forgiveness. The story of Joseph found in Genesis illustrates this dynamic. When finally faced with the brothers who had left him for dead, Joseph told them that despite their evil intentions, God was able to work through the situation to bring

about redemption not only for Joseph but for the abusive brothers who had sold him, as well as his entire nation. Joseph states, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones" (Gen. 50:20–21, NRSV). Unequivocal that his brothers' behavior was evil, Joseph refuses to offer a mitigating explanation or to deny or minimize the harms done. Yet even as he names the evil, he makes plain that God's redemptive action is already—and always has been—at work. Joseph's wording conveys that God does not intend, orchestrate, or even condone the evil committed by human beings but that God refuses to be foiled by the evil of human beings. And this is, I believe, a point on which divine life proves exemplary for human life. Moreover, by acknowledging God's salvific action in his own life, Joseph recognizes that he has been redeemed from his suffering and the sins of others; this presumably makes him more willing to see his perpetrators as able to be redeemed from their sin. Because he sees his own life as redeemed and himself as fundamentally redeemable, he is better able to view others in this way. When given the chance to punish or attack his brothers, Joseph instead shows them who they are and reveals to them their own story anew, in a redemptive light.[38]

One young Rwandan Latter-day Saint woman echoes the insight that Joseph demonstrates. She states that her mother taught her the following: "Forgive your sisters. If you don't forgive them, already you will reduce the love with which you love them. One day you can even kill them. You have to forgive them."[39] Although Joseph might not have killed his brothers, he was in a position to retaliate against them by leaving them for dead when they came to him for deliverance from famine. Yet because he could forgive and see the divine grace operative in his own life, he could extend grace and give life to his desperate family. This story demonstrates how forgiveness both requires and allows us to

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38. Womanist scholar M. Shawn Copeland has pointed out that Joseph doesn't assault his brothers, but instead he shows them who they are. M. Shawn Copeland, "Faith, Hope, and Love Today: Challenges and Opportunities" (paper, Claremont Graduate University, April 15–16, 2016). I would add to this that Joseph shows his brothers that they are individuals who can be redeemed, and he also shows them that although the sins they have committed against another human being are truly evil in a way that cannot be ignored or overlooked, their sins are not so great that they can preempt God's redemptive possibilities in the life of the person they have wronged or even in their own lives.

39. Anonymous, interview by Deidre Green, August 11, 2016, transcript 94, p. 14, Women, Religion, and Transitional Justice in South Africa and Rwanda Oral Histories.

choose to see ourselves and each other differently.[40] Perhaps one reason that Joseph is such a salient figure in the Book of Mormon is due to his example of forgiveness toward his brothers, who represent disparate tribes. Joseph looms throughout a text in which myriad forms of strife, sin, oppression, and alienation abound—largely as a result of the family schism between the Lamanites and Nephites, and perhaps in part because he offers an example of how reconciliation can heal the multiple social consequences of schism.

Julia Mavimbela, a Black woman who lived in Soweto under apartheid and who was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is an example of the way that forgiveness can lead to activism aimed at bringing about justice and reconciliation. By her own account, Mavimbela struggled with bitterness and hatred after her husband was killed in an automobile collision with a white man. Although evidence pointed to the other driver being responsible for the crash, white police officers attributed the crash to Mavimbela's deceased husband, a determination that was based on the officers' racial bias. Attesting to her own grief due to the tragedy and the injustice surrounding it, Julia had the following inscribed on her husband's tombstone: "But the lump remains," referring to the lump in the throat of a person in mourning. She explains, "The lump that remained was one of hatred and bitterness—for the man who caused the accident, for the policeman who lied, [and] for the court who deemed my husband responsible for the accident that took his life." Yet the political situation of the time impelled Mavimbela to move beyond her bitterness. In the mid-1970s, Soweto erupted in violence over racial injustice. As Mavimbela described it, "Soweto became unlike any place we had known—it was as if we were in a battlefield." She felt that she must seek healing for herself and her community in order to resist the possibility of becoming even more embittered. To this end, she established a community garden. As she taught local children who were immersed in institutionalized forms of oppression, hatred, and othering how to cultivate and care for life, she enjoined them, "Let us dig the soil of bitterness, throw in a seed of love, and see what fruits it can give us. . . . Love will not come without forgiving others."[41] Julia Mavimbela's example teaches that forgiveness is how we ensure that violence, however it manifests in our own lives,

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40. Robin S. Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect," *Ethics* 112 (October 2001): 79.

41. Julia Mavimbela, quoted in Matthew K. Heiss, "Healing the Beloved Country: The Faith of Julia Mavimbela," *Ensign* 47, no. 7 (July 2017): 42–43.

does not become the master of us all.[42] She further shows that valuing forgiveness means actively working to bring about a community with a more expansive sense of itself. Mavimbela's own healing—and her own becoming—took place not in isolation, but as she worked to help her community become a forgiving, reconciled community, one might say a Zion community. This same call to work toward reconciliation extends itself to all of us so that we can collaboratively realize the vision of a Zion community as we struggle together to embody a Christlike love that is both just and merciful, that is able to encompass all.

Conclusion

A unified and just community requires reflective and conscientious practices of forgiveness and reconciliation in order to sustain itself and allow all of its members to flourish. While these practices confront us with some of our greatest challenges, they are what make joyful life possible in a world full of fallible human beings in constant relation. The need for these practices applies in both the private and the political spheres and must be implemented on both personal and institutional levels. Those who have been harmed by injustices and misdeeds are able to reclaim life through these vital means of forgiveness and reconciliation. Yet because the life that is reclaimed remains inescapably communal, we must learn to live with both perpetrators and victims in ways that appropriately engage love, justice, and mercy. Forgiveness and reconciliation must be leveraged to resist the countless forces that work to vitiate the relationships that would constitute Zion; this work includes preserving authenticity and resilience within these various relations. Through our intentional and creative uses of agency in the processes of forgiveness and reconciliation, we can facilitate transformation within ourselves, others, and our entire community in order to truly become Zion.

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42. See Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness,* 69.

Signs of the Times

Racism, Tribalism, and Disinformation before the Comings of Christ

Luke Drake

"The Lord has placed in our hands a volume of scripture which is both ancient and modern."[1]

Each of the major narrators/compilers of the Book of Mormon evince varying degrees of understanding that their work is destined for modern readers who would face a set of modern concerns.[2] This essay suggests that Mormon's editorial hand—on display both in the redaction of the words of Samuel the Lamanite and in the narration of the events surrounding Samuel's ministry—can be understood to address pressing issues faced by latter-day readers: specifically, the perils posed by racism, "tribalism," and disinformation.

At the heart of this study are "signs" and their significations in the Book of Mormon narrative, particularly those signs preceding the birth and death of Jesus (Hel. 13–3 Ne. 8). While in many ways these signs resemble what we find broadly in ancient Israelite literature (that is, they portend and accompany the workings of God in human history, fostering belief among the faithful), it is precisely in the differences between the ancient biblical record and the Book of Mormon narrative that a unique set of warnings are brought into relief. God's people, according to the Nephite record, are at risk of spurning inspired messengers on

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1. Bruce R. McConkie, in *Official Report of the One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 28.

2. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially 59–86, 92–102, 221–22.

account of racist or hyperpolarized worldviews and thereby risk thwarting signs of salvation by suppressing the truth. Furthermore, Mormon's account depicts a people whose capacity to appreciate and act on divine signs is diminished by their propensity to propagate falsehoods, many of which have been circulated by bad actors.

To demonstrate all of this, I'll begin by describing the nature and function of signs in biblical literature, with an emphasis on ancient discourse surrounding the "signs and wonders" of the Exodus, which were anciently understood as unmistakable, persuasive expressions of the divine hand in Israelite liberation. I'll turn then to the prophetic ministry of Samuel the Lamanite and its aftermath. There, too, divine signs gesture toward human redemption, but their communicative power is threatened, and at times even thwarted, by this interrelated set of social ills.

Divine Signs in Ancient Israelite Literature

Ancient Israelite literature is brimming with signs.[3] They permeate the cosmos: the sun and moon signify the changing times and seasons (Gen. 1:14), and the arc of the rainbow indicates that God will never destroy the world by water again (Gen. 9:12–15). Signs shape and imbue human bodies with various meanings: Cain's body is marked with a sign to ward off would-be vigilantes (Gen. 4:13–15), and male Israelites are circumcised as a sign of belonging to God's covenant (Gen. 17:11). Religious practice is frequently described in terms of signs and their significance: Sabbath observance, for example, is described as "a sign between [God] and the children of Israel for ever" (Ex. 31:17), and the blood of the Passover lamb acts as a sign that restrains the Lord's destroying hand (Ex. 12:13).

The Exodus narrative especially abounds with signs, which tend to be miraculous events that demonstrate God's liberating hand in the destiny of Israel. Hence, when Moses doubts his capacity to free his people from Egypt, the Lord promises him a sign (Ex. 3:10–12). Prior to approaching Pharaoh for the first time, Moses and Aaron gather the "elders of the children of Israel," and Moses performs "signs in the sight of the people," leading them to believe (Ex. 4:28–31). Furthermore, in a passage that has proved troublesome to Jewish and Christian readers

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3. "Action[s] . . . occurrence[s] . . . event[s] by which a person recognizes, learns, remembers, or perceives the authenticity of something." F. J. Helfmeyer, "Ôth," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:170.

since antiquity, Exodus portrays God as saying, "I hardened [Pharaoh's] heart, and the heart of his servants, *that I might shew these my signs before him*: And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; *that ye may know how that I am the Lord*" (Ex. 10:1–2, emphasis added).[4] In other words, according to this rendering of the tradition, God hardens Pharaoh's heart in order to multiply the number of signs that the Israelites see in order that they, and future generations, might know that the Lord is God.[5]

Of particular importance to this essay is the phrase "signs and wonders." It appears at least eighteen times in biblical literature, and is first used to describe Moses's miraculous displays of power before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:3). In later Jewish memory and tradition, the phrase becomes practically synonymous with the Exodus narrative[6]—a point that we will return to below.

Finally, we should take note of two common characteristics of signs in ancient Israelite literature. First, while they serve various functions—such as communicating knowledge, instilling confidence in believers, confirming covenantal relationships, and so forth—signs are generally depicted in positive terms. Like divine fingerprints, they are the evidence of God's hand in ancient Israelite life, history, and salvation.[7] It

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4. "The central problem," notes Claire Mathews McGinnis, "has been how to reconcile God's goodness and justice with the portrayal of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the people go, and then punishing him apparently for that refusal." Claire Mathews McGinnis, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Christian and Jewish Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 43.

5. Other passages that reflect this tradition include Exodus 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; Deuteronomy 29:2–4; and Joshua 11:20. Note that biblical literature is not consistent on the cause of Pharaoh's hardened heart: for example, Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34. In his inspired revision of the biblical texts, the Prophet Joseph Smith modified many of these passages in accordance with restored gospel principles regarding human agency. Hence, the Joseph Smith Translation of Exodus 7:3 reads, "And *Pharaoh* will harden *his* heart, *as I said unto thee;* and *thou shalt* multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

6. Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:2–3; 34:10–12; Nehemiah 9:10; Psalms 78:42–53; 105:26–36; 135:9; Jeremiah 32:20–21; Nehemiah 9:10. Later Jewish witnesses include Baruch 2:11; Sirach 36:5–6; Wisdom 10:16–19. See Karl Rengstorf, "σημεῖον," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Freidrich, trans. Geoffery W. Bromiley, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964–73), 7:200–69, especially 210–21.

7. Through later prophets, for instance, God repeatedly gives divine signs to Israel (Isa. 20:1–6; 55:12–13; Jer. 44:24–30; Ezek. 12:1–16), Israel's monarchs (Saul: 1 Sam. 10:1–13;

should be no surprise, then, that later recipients of biblical literature (early Christians, early Jews, and the descendants of Lehi) would likewise elaborate on divine signs in their own retellings of God's dealings. Second, in most biblical narratives, signs are an efficient and frequently persuasive means of divine communication. Only in very rare instances are they misapprehended by their intended audiences.

Signs and Sign-Seeking in the New Testament and Book of Mormon

Like the accounts in the Old Testament, the New Testament Gospels tend to reiterate the reality and faith-affirming value of divinely given signs in God's redemptive activity.[8] In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the disciples ask Jesus to reveal to them the signs of his coming, which Jesus does without reprimand (Matt. 24:3–26; Mark 13:3–23; Luke 21:7–23). The author of Luke and Acts is especially fond of illustrating that God's activity in history is marked by signs: the babe in the manger (Luke 2:12), the miraculous deeds of the Apostles (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 8:13; 14:3), and even the form of Jesus himself (Luke 2:34; 11:30) all variously act as signs that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Divinely sanctioned signs play an even more pronounced role in the Gospel of John. In fact, the fourth Gospel goes so far as to describe itself as *a collection of signs* that has been assembled to attest to Jesus's divinity, in order "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30–31).[9] This tendency in John, however, is largely masked if one only reads the Gospel in the King James Version, which systematically renders Jesus's miraculous "signs" (Greek: *sēmeia*) as "miracles."[10] Hence, the New Revised Standard Version's rendering of John 2:11 ("Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him") is probably more in the spirit of what the

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Jeroboam: 1 Kgs. 13:1–5; Ahaz: Isa. 7:10–25; Hezekiah: 2 Kgs. 19–20; 2 Chr. 32:20–26; Isa. 38:4–22), and the surrounding nations (Isa. 19:19–22; Isa. 66:18–21).

    8. Rengstorf, "σημεῖον," 230–37.

    9. The Gospel of John narrates seven miraculous events prior to Jesus's resurrection, five of which are called "signs" (a detail that is obscured by the KJV's use of the term "miracles"): turning water to wine (2:1–11), healing the official's son (4:46–54), multiplying loaves (6:1–14), healing a blind man (9:1–16), and raising Lazarus (11:1–45). Signs are mentioned elsewhere at 2:23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; and 12:37. See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* Anchor Bible Series, vol. 29 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), cxxxviii–cxliv.

    10. John 2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:18, 37.

author of the fourth Gospel had in mind than what we find in the King James translation ("This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him").[11]

When the New Testament Gospels refer to divine signs in negative terms, it is not with respect to their value in the divine plan but rather to the human practice of *sign seeking.* Each of the synoptic Gospels contains shared traditions in which Jesus excoriates those who would *demand signs* from heaven in order to engender belief (for example Matt. 12:38–42; 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:29).[12] This trend is manifest in the Book of Mormon as well. While "signs" are described positively in a handful of passages,[13] there are also memorable "sign seeking" episodes that denounce prominent antagonists who make hostile or disbelieving demands from prophetic authorities.[14]

In sum, there is a rich tradition of divine signs and their signification in ancient Israelite literature, as well as in later Jewish, Christian, and Nephite writings. God is characteristically understood to give signs that persuasively communicate particular truths, covenants, warnings, and promises to his people.

Signs of Salvation in the Words of Samuel (Hel. 13:5–15:17)

With this backdrop in place, we are in a position to turn to the most extensive treatment of divine signs in the Book of Mormon narrative—the signs of Jesus's birth and death as foretold by Samuel and then narrated by Mormon. Like their ancient Israelite forebears, both Samuel and Mormon understand signs to be an established aspect of sacred history. At key moments, however, their formulations of such signs diverge both from biblical tradition and from one another in ways that point neatly to the latter-day threats of racial animus, tribal sentiment, and the spread of disinformation. We begin, then, with Samuel.

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11. Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul describes his success among the Gentiles as the product of the "Spirit of God" *and* his ability to work "signs and wonders" (Rom. 15:18–19). He describes the signs of a true Apostle in language of "signs, and wonders" in 2 Corinthians 12:12. See also Mark 16:17.

12. In Matthew 12:38–42, Jesus rebukes some of the scribes and Pharisees for seeking a sign but then proceeds to give them a sign.

13. Mosiah 3:15; Helaman 9. Nephi also quotes ancient prophets who view the term favorably: Zenos (1 Ne. 19:10, 13) and Isaiah (2 Ne. 17–18). These references do not include Samuel's use of the term, which I discuss below.

14. Specifically, Sherem (Jacob 7) and Korihor (Alma 30), but note also Alma's speech to the Zoramites in Alma 32:17.

Samuel's dominant message from atop the walls of Zarahemla is one of repentance (Hel. 13:6–13, 29–39; 14:9–11, 19; 15:1–3, 12–17). He begins by warning the Nephites of specific consequences if they fail to repent (Hel. 13:6–39). He concludes by comparing the respective predicaments of both the Lamanites and the Nephites: unlike the penitent and steadfast Lamanites, the Nephites face the threat of utter annihilation unless they repent on account of the "many mighty works" that the Lord has done among them (Hel. 15:2–17). Between these two exhortations is Samuel's discussion of signs, which connects variously to his overarching message.

In Helaman 14, Samuel identifies two sets of signs that will mark the birth and death of the Messiah. To herald the birth of Jesus, wondrous lights will convert the night of Christ's birth into a time with no darkness (14:3–4), a new star will appear in the night sky (v. 5), and multiple other "signs and wonders" will appear in the heavens (v. 6).[15] At the death of Christ, the promised signs will be correspondingly antithetical to the signs of his birth. Instead of offering more light to the world, heavenly bodies will withhold it, leaving the land in darkness (v. 20).[16] Further signs will be given both in the heavens and on the earth in the form of dissolution and ruin: the land will tremble and rage, yielding cataclysmic changes to its form and landscape, producing increases in extreme weather, and even driving many of the righteous dead from their graves (vv. 21–27). The function of these signs, according to Samuel, corresponds to the role of divine signs elsewhere in Israelite literature and aligns with the prevailing theme of his preaching: they will be given to generate belief unto repentance (Hel. 14:11–13; 15:3).

Notably, Samuel restricts his usage of the term "sign(s)" to the cosmic happenings that will occur concurrently with the birth and death of Jesus (Hel. 14:2–8, 12, 14, 20–28). There appears to be little doubt in Samuel's mind that these signs—like the signs given to Israelites of old—will effectively communicate God's liberating hand in human history: "ye shall *all* be amazed, and wonder," he predicts to his Nephite listeners, "insomuch that ye shall fall to the earth. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall believe on the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life" (Hel. 14:7–8; emphasis added).

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15. On Samuel's use of "signs and wonders" and other biblical language, see Shon Hopkin and John Hilton III, "Samuel's Reliance on Biblical Language," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 45–48, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol24/iss1/3.

16. See also 1 Nephi 19:10.

Immediately after describing these signs, Samuel adds that many would see "*greater things* than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men" (Hel. 14:28; emphasis added). The meaning of this passage depends, in part, on how you punctuate it. The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, of course, had no punctuation. As it currently stands, the passage suggests that "greater things" will be given in order to inspire belief in the cosmic signs described by Samuel (which themselves are given to engender belief in the birth and death of the Christ). Royal Skousen has suggested an alternative interpretation based on a comparative analysis of grammar elsewhere in the Book of Mormon and marked by a subtle change in punctuation (an inserted dash), as reconstructed here:

> and the angel said unto me
> (1) that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe[—]
> (2) that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men.[17]

Skousen's proposed insertion of a dash results in the angel making two separate declarations: (1) that many will see things that are greater than the promised cosmic signs, to the intent that they might believe, and (2) that everyone on the face of the land will see the cosmic signs of Jesus's birth and death, to the intent that they might not disbelieve.[18] Regardless of whether Skousen's reading accurately captures the angel's intended meaning, it appears to be in line with Mormon's understanding of the events that follow, as we will see below. Neither Samuel nor the angel elaborate on what these "greater things" will be.

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17. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part Five, Alma 52–3 Nephi 7*, 2d ed. (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2017), 5:3257, italics and bolding removed.

18. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 5:3257: "The righteous believe because the Lord reveals even greater events before they [the signs of Jesus's birth and death] have happened, while the world will have no excuse for not believing after these events [the signs of Jesus's birth and death] have actually occurred."

Nephite Racism and the Misapprehension of Divine Signs

Samuel interrupts his prophetic exposition on divine signs to indict his listeners for attempting to thwart his message: "And now, because I am a Lamanite, and have spoken unto you the words which the Lord hath commanded me, and because it was hard against you, ye are angry with me and do seek to destroy me, and have cast me out from among you" (Hel. 14:10). Commentators on Samuel's sermon wisely emphasize that prophetic words too often go unheeded because they are "hard against" those who hear them.[19] But this, at best, comprises only a portion of Samuel's critique. His listeners seek to silence him not just because he speaks the word of the Lord, but because *he is a Lamanite who speaks the word of the Lord.*[20] In modern terms, we might say that the Nephites of Zarahemla seek to suppress Samuel's message—a message meant to attune them to the signs of God's liberating activity—on account of racist ideologies[21] or their commitment to cultural polarization, what we might refer to as "tribalism" (addressed in the section below).

Mormon's editorial work surrounding Samuel's mission seems to punctuate the charge that the Nephites' sense of racial superiority inhibits their reception of the divine message. Mormon repeatedly—almost excessively—calls attention to Samuel's Lamanite heritage when narrating his prophetic activity.[22] Whenever he introduces or reintroduces Samuel's name in the narrative, Mormon begins by referring to him as "a" or "the Lamanite" (Hel. 13:2; 14:1; 16:1; 3 Ne. 1:5; 8:3).[23] By so doing, Mormon ensures that the prophet's name is mnemonically inseparable from his race (in Latter-day Saint circles he is *always*

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19. *Book of Mormon Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 286.

20. In 1954, Spencer W. Kimball referred to this verse in a general conference address that condemned Latter-day Saint discrimination against Native Americans. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Evil of Intolerance," in *One Hundred Twenty-Fourth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1954), 103–8.

21. For decades, interpreters have variously sought to describe the function of race in the Book of Mormon as well as the text's posture toward racist ideologies. For an introduction with bibliography, see Patrick Q. Mason, "Mormonism and Race," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History,* ed. Kathryn Gin Lum and Paul Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 156–71.

22. As noted already in Jared Hickman, "*The Book of Mormon* as Amerindian Apocalypse," *American Literature* 86, no. 3 (2014): 452, https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-2717371.

23. Jesus, as recorded by Mormon, does the same: 3 Nephi 23:9.

"Samuel the Lamanite"), serving perhaps as an ongoing indictment of Nephite bigotry. Furthermore, the book of Helaman is structured in ways that emphasize a racialized element to Samuel's rejection by the people of Zarahemla. After all, Samuel is not the only figure in the book of Helaman to stand on a high place, call the Nephites to repentance, and point to signs as evidence of God's intervening hand: the prophet Nephi goes through a similar exercise just a few chapters earlier (Hel. 7–9). That Mormon is inviting us to read Nephi's and Samuel's stories alongside one another is further suggested by his pairing of the two prophets in a section heading prior to Helaman 7: "The Prophecy of Nephi, the Son of Helaman—God threatens the people of Nephi that he will visit them in his anger, to their utter destruction except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites."[24]

Nephi's sermon mirrors Samuel's, with a few striking differences. Both prophets receive mixed responses from their Nephite listeners, eliciting conversions as well as calls for violence—but only Samuel is met with actual stones and arrows. The Nephites who believe Nephi's words defend him in the face of impending aggression (Hel. 8:1–10), while those who believe Samuel's words abandon him in order to seek out Nephi (Hel. 16:1). And although both prophets foretell remarkable events with specificity, only Samuel's words are treated with some degree of neglect, as corrected by the resurrected Jesus (3 Ne. 23:9–13). In the words of Jared Hickman, "Laid bare here is a reluctance on the part of the Nephite prophets to include in their narrative something they themselves recognize as true prophecy, because, at least in part it seems, it came from a Lamanite. The text's editorial process is brought into view, and it is at least suggested that the values governing that process may have as much to do with ethnic pride as divine inspiration."[25]

In fierce contrast to its reception among ancient Nephites, Samuel's prophetic address is not only among the longest in Mormon's entire abridgment,[26] but it is also the final speech that Mormon includes

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24. Mormon refers to Samuel alone in the subsequent section heading, prior to Helaman 13: "The prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites."

25. Hickman, "Amerindian Apocalypse," 452.

26. Along with public sermons given by the resurrected Jesus (3 Ne. 12–16), Benjamin, the great Nephite king of the land of Zarahemla (Mosiah 2–5), and Abinadi (Mosiah 12–16).

prior to the ministry of the resurrected Christ himself. Samuel, then, is the featured voice of warning before the establishment of a messianic kingdom, a remarkable narrative detail that subverts facile Nephite conceptions of election and participation in the history of salvation.[27]

When read along such lines, these passages might serve as resources for Latter-day Saints who see the imperative to "review processes, laws, and organizational attitudes regarding racism and root them out once and for all"[28] as inseparable from their covenantal relationship with God[29] and who seek to nourish a Church whose membership becomes increasingly distributed across racial and ethnic lines. Samuel's narrative is a sobering reminder that a "chosen people of the Lord"—in this case, the Nephites (Hel. 15:3)—is not guaranteed immunity to widespread outbreaks of racist ideologies.[30] It offers another layer of meaning to the 1832 warning against the ruinous effects (both to the individual and

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27. Hickman, "Amerindian Apocalypse," 450–55.

28. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Locking Arms for Racial Harmony in America," *Medium,* June 8, 2020, https://medium.com/@Ch_JesusChrist/locking-arms-for-racial-harmony-in-america-2f62180abf37. This statement was published approximately two weeks after the killing of George Floyd (May 25, 2020) and was signed by Russell M. Nelson (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) and by Derrick Johnson, Leon Russell, and Amos C. Brown (NAACP).

29. After a 2017 White supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, culminated in the murder of Heather Heyer, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued statements that publicly disavowed claims that the Church was neutral toward White supremacist views, stating that "nothing could be further from the truth," that "white supremacist attitudes are morally wrong and sinful, and we condemn them," and that "Church members who promote or pursue a 'white culture' or white supremacy agenda are not in harmony with the teachings of the Church," in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Church Issues Statements on Situation in Charlottesville, Virginia," *Church Newsroom*, August 15, 2017, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-statement-charlottesville-virginia.

30. See Kimberly Matheson Berkey, *Helaman: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020); Russell M. Nelson, "Let God Prevail," *Ensign* 50, no. 11 (November 2020): 94; Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Need for Greater Kindness," *Ensign* 36, no. 5 (May 2006): 58. Darius Gray has offered a valuable set of concrete questions to help Latter-day Saints understand, reflect on, and repent of latent racist tendencies. Such questions include: would I "have difficulty welcoming someone of a particular race into [my] family"? Do I "feel less compassion toward those of a different race who suffer the effects of poverty, war, famine, crime"? Do I "prefer associating only with those of [my] own race and think others should too"? See Darius Gray, "Healing Wounds of Racism," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, last modified April 5, 2018, https://ca.churchofjesuschrist.org/healing-wounds-of-racism.

to the collective) of "treat[ing] lightly" the narrative complexity of this "new covenant, even the Book of Mormon" (D&C 84:54–58).[31]

Nephite Tribalism and the Misapprehension of Divine Signs

Samuel's function within the Book of Mormon narrative may offer another set of resources for the modern reader, particularly when read as a critique of Nephite tribalism and its capacity to keep otherwise good people from embracing new, or previously unappreciated, truths. The term "tribalism," as I am using it somewhat loosely here, refers to something that goes beyond the profound human impulse to belong to, protect, and preserve one's tribe.[32] Rather, by "tribalism" I refer to the human propensity to place particular group loyalties and "victories" *above all else*, including, among other things, previously held moral values, commitment to established truths, the acquisition of new truths, ideological consistency, and the well-being of individuals in other tribes. Tribalism prevents us from hearing God's voice in the words of those with whom we disagree politically.[33] It tends toward the sort of insularity that presumes that truths will be received and revealed exclusively by those within our own walls.[34] It impedes the restored gospel imperative

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31. For a discussion on how literary echoes within Samuel's sermon can be read as an internal critique of Nephite racial discrimination and patriarchy, see Kimberly M. Berkey and Joseph M. Spencer, "'Great Cause to Mourn': The Complexity of The Book of Mormon's Presentation of Gender and Race," in *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon,* ed. Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 298–320. For a recent treatment on racism elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, see Deidre Nicole Green, *Jacob: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020), 74–80.

32. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1–7.

33. Shanto Iyengar and Sean J. Westwood, "Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization," *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 3 (2015): 690–707.

34. Joseph Smith asked, "Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes. . . . We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up or we shall not come out pure Mormons." "History, 1838–1856, Volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844]," 1681 (July 23, 1843), the Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/51. Brigham Young said it this way: "Be willing to receive the truth, let it come from whom it may; no difference, not a particle" in *Discourses of Brigham Young: Second President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1941), 17. See also Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Faith of Our Father," *Ensign*, 38, no. 5 (May 2008):

to seek out light and learning from the arts and sciences (D&C 88:118). Contemporary research on human behavior demonstrates that people across ideological divides are prone to accept falsehood and reject truth if and when doing so might safeguard their status within cherished group affiliations.[35]

A remarkable conclusion within the burgeoning field of the science of science communication (that is, the scientific study of how scientific findings are communicated to various audiences[36]) is that our scientific literacy and reasoning abilities do *not,* in themselves, make us more likely to accept scientific truths that run counter to our tribal affinities. In fact, the more adept we are at scientific reasoning and actively open-minded thinking, the more able we are to repurpose scientific findings in ways that support tribal alliances, thus exacerbating cultural polarization.[37] Tribe too often comes before truth.

One of the more instructive aspects of the figure of Samuel is the way in which he is so thoroughly illustrated by Mormon as the quintessential outsider. Samuel originates from a foreign land (Hel. 13:2). He preaches a countercultural message (Hel. 13:2–4, 24–28). His sojourn is short-lived; his departure, final (Hel. 16:7–8).[38] Even his spatial relationship to the city is meaningfully narrated. First expelled (Hel. 13:2), then denied reentry, Samuel is forced to scale the walls of Zarahemla to deliver the Lord's message—walls that were built precisely to keep outsiders *out.* His act of preaching, then, is an act of intrusion. Significantly, of Samuel's many teachings the only ones that Mormon records are those that are preached atop—but never within—those walls (Hel. 13:4). The Lord informs his people of signs by means of one "outside" of the tribe—and because of this many fail to hear his voice.

75; and Eboo Patel, "What It Means to Be Educated," Brigham Young University forum, October 22, 2020, accessed February 8, 2021, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/eboo-patel/what-it-means-to-be-educated/.

35. For summaries of such studies, see Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012); and Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader, 2020).

36. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Dan M. Kahan, and Dietram A. Scheufele, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Science of Science Communication* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

37. Dan H. Kahan, "Why Smart People Are Vulnerable to Putting Tribe before Truth," *Scientific American,* December 3, 2018, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/why-smart-people-are-vulnerable-to-putting-tribe-before-truth/.

38. Hickman, "Amerindian Apocalypse," 452, discusses these narrative details through the lens of race.

Today tribalism is widespread but not insurmountable. Recent social-science research suggests that individuals who are more likely to embrace scientific findings, even when such findings threaten previously held worldviews or tribal affinities, share a common characteristic. In addition to possessing some degree of science literacy (knowledge, reasoning abilities), they exhibit a marked degree of science *curiosity*.[39] High-curiosity individuals' yearning for light and knowledge eclipses the security offered by a tribe. Such curiosity is a fundamental principle of restored gospel discipleship. Curiosity prompted Jesus's followers to step away from prior allegiances in order to "come and see" (John 1:39). It led the Prophet Joseph to the Sacred Grove. It is a spiritual gift worth seeking.

A recent Brigham Young University devotional by President M. Russell Ballard may serve as a model for how a genuine spirit of curiosity can be used to overcome propensities toward tribalism.[40] President Ballard begins his speech by acknowledging and then rejecting the generational tribalism that pervades contemporary discourse, specifically the criticisms leveled at younger generations by older ones. He speaks of an earnest desire to "understand and learn more" about millennials and Gen Zs,[41] and recounts many hours "listening, pondering, learning, and praying about" them. He then dedicates a significant portion of his address to celebrating specific qualities that he finds in these younger generations. He specifically praises Gen Zs and millennials for their sensitivity to questions of identity and social change; their commitment to environmental, economic, and social sustainability; and their "desire for authenticity and transparency," stating that members of older generations could learn from these younger tribes. President Ballard's words are instructive in that they simultaneously

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39. "Afforded a choice, low-curiosity individuals opt for familiar evidence consistent with what they already believe. . . . Consuming a richer diet of information, high-curiosity citizens predictably form less one-sided and hence less polarized views. This empirical research paints a more complex picture of the cognitively virtuous democratic citizen. To be sure, she knows a good deal about scientific discoveries and methods. But of equal importance, she experiences wonder and awe—the emotional signatures of curiosity—at the insights that science affords into the hidden processes of nature." Kahan, "Why Smart People Are Vulnerable."

40. M. Russell Ballard, "Children of Heavenly Father," Brigham Young University devotional, March 3, 2020, accessed February 8, 2021, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/m-russell-ballard/children-heavenly-father/.

41. The Pew Research Center defines "millennial" as one born between 1981 and 1996 and "Gen Z" as one born after 1997. Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," *Fact Tank,* January 17, 2019.

acknowledge the differences between tribes (in this case, generations) and preach a message of unity through our shared spiritual ancestry (as children of Heavenly Parents) and destiny (wrought through the unifying power of Christ's Atonement).[42] His message is a reminder that the hard work of overcoming tribalism requires significant time, energy, humility, and charity and that it is easier and significantly more self-gratifying to point out the tribalistic tendencies in others than it is identify and eradicate them from within ourselves. It is a message made more urgent by Mormon's alarming description of the Nephite state of affairs just decades after Samuel's sermon: the persistent neglect of divine signs gives rise to inequality and other manifestations of wickedness (3 Ne. 6), culminating in the absolute fracture of Nephite society, with "people . . . divided one against another," "separate[d] one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends" (3 Ne. 7:2).

Invoking Exodus:
Signs of Liberation in Mormon's Narrative (Hel. 16–3 Ne. 8)

When narrating the events leading up to the birth and death of Jesus, Mormon uses the term "signs" in ways that differ subtly from what we find in Samuel's speech. Whereas Samuel limits his usage of the term "sign(s)" to conclusive, cosmic events that are concurrent with Jesus's faraway birth and death, Mormon applies the term to a variety of miraculous happenings (often described as "signs and wonders"[43]) that take place over extended periods of time, that are frequently the product of prophetic activity, and that are often misapprehended. Hence, those who believe in Samuel's words find Nephi "showing signs and wonders, working miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come" (Hel. 16:4). The "more part of the people," however, remain hardened (Hel. 16:6, 10–12).[44] In his description of the

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42. For another model sermon on unity and diversity, see Chieko N. Okazaki, "Baskets and Bottles," *Ensign* 26, no. 5 (May 1996): 12–13.

43. The term "signs and wonders" (and terms closely related to it) appears seven times in Mormon's narration of the events leading up to Jesus's appearance (Hel. 16:4; 16:13; 16:23; 3 Ne. 1:22; 2:1; 2:3). In addition, the term is found three times in Samuel's speech, one of which being in a paraphrase of an angel's words (Hel. 14:6, 28; 15:3).

44. Although the term "sign" isn't specifically used to describe Samuel's miraculous escape from the stones and arrows of the people of Zarahemla, the event seems to function as a sign which, like many of the other signs in Mormon's account, is largely rejected (see Hel. 16:3, 6). That some Nephites interpret Samuel's survival as a sign of divine intervention suggests a relatively small city wall.

years that follow, Mormon refers to "great signs given unto the people, and wonders"—once more, however, the majority of people "harden their hearts, all save it were the most believing" (Hel. 16:13–15, 23). After Nephi's departure from the land, Mormon states that "there began to be greater signs and greater miracles wrought among the people," though these too are dismissed by the unbelieving majority (3 Ne. 1:4–9). All of these (mostly misapprehended) signs precede the cosmic signs foretold by Samuel, which at last persuade the people to believe and repent (3 Ne. 1:10–26). Later, when narrating the events leading up to the death of Jesus, Mormon describes the wonder-working abilities of Nephi's son (also named Nephi) as "signs . . . among the people" that are on par with the more stunning deeds of Jesus in the Gospels: he casts out demons, he raises the dead, and angels minister to him daily (3 Ne. 7:18–22; see also 8:4). Even Nephi's words function as compelling signs of power which serve to enrage the majority of those who hear them (3 Ne. 7:18–20). Once more, Mormon has laid out a number of signs that are generally misapprehended prior to the cosmic, convincing "sign" of Jesus's death as prophesied by Samuel.

It appears, then, that Mormon has reformulated the "greater things" promised by the angel and Samuel (Hel. 14:28) into an extended set of "greater *signs*" (3 Ne. 1:4; emphasis added)—signs that have little effect on a Nephite audience until the climactic, cosmic heralding foretold by Samuel. Skousen's suggestion that the angelic prophecy contains two separate declarations (that many would see greater things prior to the cosmic signs in order that they might believe and that everyone would witness the cosmic signs so that none could disbelieve) accords with Mormon's formulation of Nephite history.

And yet Mormon's narrative, I suggest, does more than just give historical fulfillment to prophecy; it articulates Nephite history in ways that evoke a sacred past, namely ancient Israelite conceptions of the Exodus.[45] By shaping the Nephite narrative in terms of "signs and wonders" that are largely misapprehended by a "hardened" human audience,[46] Mormon draws a loose set of parallels between the emancipatory efforts of Moses and the liberatory life and death of Jesus Christ.

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45. A trend seen elsewhere in Mormon's, and Nephi's, writings. See S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1998), 75–98; Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon,* 41–47 (Nephi) and 157–60 (Mormon).

46. Helaman 13:8, 12, 29; 16:12, 15, 22; 3 Nephi 1:22.

Such parallels are accentuated by the types of phenomena included in Mormon's narration. Whereas the specific signs promised by Samuel are strictly phenomena of *nature* (heavenly light and darkness, earthquakes, and so forth), the "greater signs" described by Mormon often refer to the miraculous wonder-workings of God's elect (for example, Nephi [son of Helaman], Hel. 16:4; the righteous, 3 Ne. 7:22; Nephi [son of Nephi], 3 Ne. 7:15–20). Just as Moses performed miraculous "signs and wonders" before a hardened Pharaoh prior to Israel's liberation, so God's righteous servants performed signs and wonders before the Nephites prior to the redemptive birth and death of Jesus. Any doubt as to whether these literary parallels are, in fact, part of Mormon's editorial program can be dispelled by the presence of the subsequent and more widely celebrated parallelisms between Moses and Jesus as lawgivers: for just as Moses experiences a vocal theophany (Ex. 19:16–25) prior to receiving the law on Sinai (Ex. 20), so the Nephites hear the voice of Christ (3 Ne. 8–9)[47] prior to receiving the law from the resurrected Jesus (3 Ne. 11–18).[48] All of this narrative artistry aligns with Mormon's editorial tendencies elsewhere in his abridgment: he calls his modern readers' attention to historical patterns and parallelisms that serve as evidence of God's hand in human history, and he delights in thoroughly documenting the fulfillment of prophecy.[49]

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47. Exodus associates Moses's encounter with the voice of God on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19) with violent forces of nature: the mountain shakes and is enshrouded by thick smoke (because "the Lord descended upon it in fire"). Even the Lord's response (Ex. 19:19) to Moses can be read in terms of extreme natural phenomena: the King James Version reads, "Moses spake, and God answered him *by a voice*" (Hebrew: *b^eqôl,* emphasis added)—a phrase that could just as well be rendered, "God answered him *with thunder.*" The latter reading is more in line with the broader themes of the passage, as well as with the "stereotypical features of theophany in ancient Semitic poetry," as discussed in Carol Meyers, *Exodus: The New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 155. Meanwhile, prior to Jesus's deliverance of the law in Bountiful (3 Ne 11–18) the voice of the resurrected Christ speaks in the aftermath of another set of terrible natural forces: earthquakes (3 Ne. 8:6, 10–12), fires (v. 8), storms (vv. 6, 12), thunder (vv. 6, 12), and eventually, darkness (v. 19).

48. The parallelisms between Moses's teachings as a lawgiver in Exodus and Jesus's Sermon on the Mount were recognized in the ancient Mediterranean as early as the fourth century AD (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 3.2), and have been the subject of much contemporary academic research. Consider Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 172–94.

49. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon,* 110–11, 154–66 (historical parallelisms) and 112–13, 180–213 (fulfillment of prophecy).

And while Mormon works to accentuate similarities between the signs surrounding Israelite liberation (through Moses) and the signs heralding human redemption (through Christ), he likewise draws our attention to specific differences between the Israelite and Nephite reception of such signs. It is to these differences that we will turn in the final section of this paper.

Mormon's Warning:
Disinformation and the Misapprehension of Divine Signs

One key difference between the "signs and wonders" in the Exodus narrative and in Mormon's abridgment of Nephite history is the manner in which they are received by God's people. When the enslaved Israelites are presented with divine signs, there is no indication that they question them, as Moses had feared. Rather, they immediately believe (Ex. 4:29–31). Even Pharaoh's magicians express belief soon after seeing the divine signs produced by Moses (Ex. 8:18–19). Only Pharaoh remains obstinate.[50] When later biblical literature critiques the ancient Israelites for unbelief in or faithlessness toward God's signs and wonders, it is always with respect to their actions *after* they believed in divine signs, *after* their successful emancipation from Egypt.[51] Later Jewish authors critique their Israelite forebears for forgetfulness and neglectfulness of prior graces but do not accuse them of disbelieving the signs and wonders that were immediately before them.

Mormon presents a very different picture of the Nephites for his latter-day audience. Not only do the Nephites fall prey to the same sort of spiritual amnesia that is lamented in later Jewish literature (3 Ne. 2:1), but many of them fail to recognize and act on divine signs and wonders in the first place—even when such signs are before their very eyes (Hel. 16:4–6, 13–15, 23; 3 Ne. 1:4–6). In other words, the Nephite posture toward divine signs corresponds more with *Pharaoh's* disposition toward the divine hand than it does with the attitude of ancient Israelites prior to their liberation. But unlike Exodus's somewhat nondescript portrait of Pharaoh's "hardening," Mormon describes a handful of specific Nephite justifications for their disbelief in the signs before them. They "depend upon their own strength and . . . wisdom" to interpret the signs and wonders given to them (Hel. 16:15). They attribute signs to coincidence or false tradition, deny the reasonability of Samuel's words, and peddle

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50. Though even he expresses contrition now and then (Ex. 9:27–28 and 10:17).
51. Nehemiah 9:16–17; Psalm 78:42–58; Jeremiah 32:20–23.

in unfounded conspiracies, contentions, and other "foolish and vain" forms of discourse (Hel. 16:16–22).[52] Most strikingly—and to my knowledge this is a point that has not been discussed at length—Mormon suggests that these socially and spiritually disruptive behaviors derive from a nefarious third party who has the power to act as a deceptive intermediary between the signs of truth and the people of God. According to Mormon, Satan goes about "spreading *rumors and contentions* upon all the face of the land," contributing to "foolish and vain" imaginations, and hardening "the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come" (Hel. 16:22; emphasis added). Unlike ancient Israelite narratives that blame the perceiver for misperceived signs,[53] Mormon suggests that the principal threat to a clear-eyed view of divine signals is *disinformation*, disseminated into the hearts and minds of good people.

Disinformation is different from misinformation.[54] Misinformation is bad information: all of us are variously misinformed and prone to spread misinformation throughout our lives. Disinformation is bad information that is *intentionally circulated by a bad actor.* And while the spread of misinformation is detrimental to us all, disinformation has the power to be acutely destructive, since bad actors can (and do) design their messages in ways that produce specifically deleterious effects.

We live in an era of unprecedented access to disinformation. Advances in technology allow bad actors (trolls, ideologues, conspiracy theorists, hyperpartisan outlets) to manipulate what multitudes of people see and hear (for example, false information, photo manipulation, "deepfakes") on a global scale, using social networks and mass

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52. Ancient Israelite tradition may have informed the Nephite accusations in Helaman 16:18–19 as well as their justifications for violence against Samuel. Deuteronomy 13:1–5 warns the Israelites of prophets who produce heavenly signs and wonders in order to lead the people to worship other gods and instructs that such figures be put to death. According to Helaman 16:18–19, some Nephites disbelieve signs and wonders by accusing Samuel of preaching a geographically "foreign" God: "if [the Christ is] . . . the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem? Yea, why will he not show himself in this land as well as in the land of Jerusalem?"

53. Or those traditions that blame the Lord: see the discussion at note 5 above.

54. Luciano Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 260; Dean Jackson, "Issue Brief: Distinguishing Disinformation from Propaganda, Misinformation, and 'Fake News,'" *National Endowment for Democracy*, October 17, 2017, https://www.ned.org/issue-brief-distinguishing-disinformation-from-propaganda -misinformation-and-fake-news/.

media to misrepresent both the past and the present. These efforts are then magnified by a digital landscape that incentivizes institutions and individuals to seek "clicks, retweets, and likes"—"whatever can attract 'eyeballs.'"[55] Complicating all of this is the degree to which you or I may assume (wrongly) that we are not susceptible to believing or promoting false information[56] as well as the way in which the term "fake news" is frequently appropriated to discredit *accurate* information that is politically unfavorable.

Modern disinformation campaigns target all aspects of human experience. Religious disinformation targets the spiritual development and well-being of honest seekers of truth by weaponizing historical and cultural information in ways that are designed to unsettle, wound, and mislead. Totalitarian regimes employ disinformation to exercise political control over their subjects.[57] Other disinformation campaigns—such as those waged by tobacco industry executives for decades in the twentieth century—target the physical well-being of individuals and global populations, trading in pseudoscience and false narratives that conflict with the hard-earned truths that past and present generations have gained through rigorous intellectual inquiry.[58] Over the last decade, we have witnessed a rise in geo-political disinformation warfare, disseminated to garner power by sowing chaos and distrust among nations and their citizens.[59] These disinformation initiatives are particularly effective when they exploit existing societal divisions and aggravate tribal sentiment.[60]

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55. Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online* (New York: Data and Society Research Institute, 2017), 42.

56. Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, "The Spread of True and False News Online," *Science* 359, no. 6380 (March 9, 2018): 1146–51, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559.

57. Hannah Arendt, "Hannah Arendt: From an Interview," *New York Review* 25, no. 16 (October 26, 1978), https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1978/10/26/hannah-arendt-from-an-interview/.

58. See Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 10–35.

59. Alina Polyakova and Spencer Phipps Boyer, *The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, March 2018).

60. Robert S. Mueller III, "Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election. Volumes I & II. (Redacted version of 4/18/2019)," *U.S. Department of Justice Publications and Materials* (2019): 21–27, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/usjusticematls/47.

Mormon's depiction of a society that is undermined by bad actors who spread "rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land" is truly a message for the modern reader (Hel. 16:22).[61] It is especially notable that the Nephite propensity to consume and propagate disinformation comes (literally, at least) on the heels of their rejection of Samuel and in tandem with the rejection of other countercultural prophetic voices: Nephite racism and tribalism, it seems, exacerbate their tendency to label truth as fiction, while broadcasting falsehoods conceived in bad faith. Because of their failure to recognize and act on the divine signs before them, the Nephites open themselves up to their own destruction—their prosperity wanes, they fall into civil war, and the Spirit is withdrawn from among them.

In recent years, a chorus of modern voices has joined with Mormon in warning against the tides of disinformation, offering insight into how governments and individuals can combat its destructive spread. A simple, but recurring, bit of wisdom for individuals is to *seek the counsel of a diverse set of well-qualified and well-intentioned experts on issues of importance.* In response to hundreds of solicited questions put to him by Brigham Young University students, President M. Russell Ballard said, "My calling and life experiences allow me to respond to certain types of questions. There are other types of questions that require an expert in a specific subject matter. . . . I worry sometimes that members expect too much from Church leaders and teachers—expecting them to be experts in subjects well beyond their duties and responsibilities. . . . If you have a question that requires an expert, please take the time to find a thoughtful and qualified expert to help you."[62] Hence, while we believe that the authority to communicate doctrine, to govern the Church, and to administer the ordinances of salvation resides with those whom the Lord has called, we can combat disinformation and its ill effects in other critical arenas of human experience by seeking to apply the wisdom of those who have paid the price for expertise: be it in the realms of human health, history, climate, education, economics, the environment, or public policy.[63] Current cultural trends that devalue expertise in a field of study might

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61. In 2017, the lexicographers of Collins Dictionary named "fake news" their word of the year. In 2019, "disinformation" was the word of the year for NPR's *Fresh Air.*

62. M. Russell Ballard, "Questions and Answers," Brigham Young University devotional, November 14, 2017, accessed February 8, 2021, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/m -russell-ballard/questions-and-answers/.

63. Melody Barnes, "The Education of the American Mind," Brigham Young University forum, September 29, 2020, accessed February 8, 2021, https://speeches.byu.edu/ talks/melody-barnes/education-american-mind/.

be compared to the Nephites' propensity "to depend upon their own strength and . . . wisdom" (Hel. 16:15), leading to unfounded and false conclusions about the "signs" before them.

In matters of spiritual disinformation, it is of utmost importance to seek out reputable, thorough, and well-meaning experts on topics that are challenging or controversial. Speaking to university students, Elder D. Todd Christofferson warned against "form[ing] conclusions based on unexamined assertions or incomplete research" as well as against "be[ing] influenced by insincere seekers": "While some honestly pursue truth and real understanding, others are intent on finding or creating doubts. . . . If there are differing interpretations possible, they will pick the most negative. . . . They may share their assumptions and speculations with some glee, but either can't or won't search further to find contradictory information."[64] Such counsel can cut both ways: well-meaning religious educators were recently cautioned against spreading bad information in the form of "faith-promoting or unsubstantiated rumors or outdated understandings and explanations of our doctrine and practices from the past."[65] The refrain "Don't study Church history too little" is a tacit prescription against the strains of spiritual disinformation that prevent us from seeing and embracing the restored gospel in its fullness.[66] The Gospel Topics essays were produced precisely to offer "balanced and reliable interpretations of the facts for controversial and unfamiliar Church-related subjects" in an environment where students have "unlimited access to information."[67]

Conclusion

"It used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he [or she] who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context."[68] Faced with the challenge of choosing how to narrate the years prior to Jesus's first coming for a distant audience who would anticipate an imminent Second Coming, Mormon presents a historical narrative in which signs are both abundantly given and abundantly misconstrued.

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64. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Prophet Joseph Smith," Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, September 24, 2013, accessed February 8, 2021, https://www.byui.edu/devotionals/elder-d-todd-christofferson.

65. M. Russell Ballard, "By Study and by Faith," *Ensign* 46, no. 12 (December 2016): 27.

66. Christofferson, "Prophet Joseph Smith."

67. Ballard, "By Study and by Faith," 26.

68. Edward Hallett Carr, *What Is History?* 2d ed. (New York: Penguin: 1987), 11.

Racial animus. Tribalistic thinking. Disinformation. These, according to Samuel and Mormon, are among the evils that led scores of unwitting Nephites to misinterpret the signs before them. In parallel fashion, such evils threaten to deceive the elect today—infecting minds, clouding judgment, and impeding people's full participation in the blessings of the restored gospel and human flourishing. If Mormon's record is, in fact, meant to shed light on what we might expect prior to the end of times, then the widespread misapprehension of signs itself serves as a sign of those times. In this way, the Book of Mormon, in concert with inspired contemporary voices, may serve as a witness and a warning against these latter-day dangers, thereby offering safety for the soul.

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Aguas Vivas

Thea Jo Buell

So, was there anything you just couldn't find there?" I asked the newly returned missionary. He had been home from Guatemala for a few months, and I would be leaving for the same country soon.

He looked puzzled at my question and thought for several seconds before answering. "Balloons," he said.

It was my turn to look puzzled. Why would a missionary need balloons? I was later to wish he had mentioned cotton swabs, which was more the sort of answer I was looking for, but as I collected supplies for my upcoming service, I trustingly purchased a half dozen bags of inexpensive, brightly colored party balloons and tucked them into a corner of my luggage.

I carried the balloons with me for seven months. Then I was sent to serve in Escuintla, a port city by the El Salvadoranean border. Sister Garcia and I were assigned two areas, one a sprawling slum known as La Limonada and the other an outlying area of tightly packed houses, newly opened to missionaries, called Aguas Vivas. An auspicious name, Aguas Vivas: Living Waters.

My companion and I set out on our first morning to explore this new area. We stepped from the bus and looked around at the painted cement and unpainted wood houses. We both felt a thrill of the Spirit course through our souls. The Lord had work for us to do here. Eagerly, we approached the first house and knocked.

Several hours later we climbed wearily back onto the bus. We had tracted every house in the small area. Some doors had not been answered, of course, the occupants away or wary of visitors, but at all others we

had been politely but firmly rebuffed. We felt drained and wondered at the earlier powerful affirmation we had felt. I glanced behind me as the houses slipped from sight. I felt an invisible barrier settle between us and Aguas Vivas, like a giant hand clamping down over the area, preventing us from reaching its inhabitants.

Several days later we found ourselves with some free time and felt impressed to return to the neighborhood. But again we sensed that strange barrier and knew that our work would be fruitless. We boarded the next bus and headed for La Limonada.

This experience repeated itself several times during the coming weeks, then evolved into a habit. Each day, after lunch, when we typically had few appointments, we would ride the bus to Aguas Vivas. We would stand at the side of the unpaved road for a few moments, waiting for inspiration or at least guidance. But always we felt that same sense of emptiness, of a firm spiritual wall standing before us.

We rarely met adults on the streets here. The men were at the docks, either working or looking for work and would not be home until evening. The women were inside, cooking or cleaning. The streets were the playground of the young, ever-present, involved in the various inventive games of children who owned no toys and whose parents lacked the money for school and books.

We visited, found no change, and went on our way to La Limonada. But we never forgot the surge of certainty we had felt on our first day in Aguas Vivas, that here was a fertile field, ready for harvest.

There was no conscious thought or plan to my actions one day as I opened a package of balloons and stuffed a handful of them into my bookbag. We arrived in Aguas Vivas as usual, and without set purpose I took out a balloon and inflated it. Curious, the nearby children gathered several paces away. I knotted the balloon and held it out to them. I said nothing, so the children would understand that we wanted nothing from them, that the gift came with no strings attached. They hung back, uncertain. Then one intrepid boy of about six stepped forward and grasped the balloon. His sister made a move to stop him, but he dashed off down the street with his prize, batting the balloon up into the air repeatedly in the seemingly instinctive game always played with a first-time balloon.

I inflated a second balloon, and suddenly a dozen eager hands reached toward us. Soon the street was filled with laughing children and bright balloons. We left to catch the bus to La Limonada.

We returned the next day and the next. The children no longer hung back from us but gathered happily at our approach. And their hopes were rewarded as each day we offered them more inflated balloons. Sister Garcia, a native Guatemalan, started to visit with the children as I occupied myself with the balloons. She listened laughingly to their childish gossip and answered their shy questions about my pale complexion.

Soon the number of children waiting for balloons grew as word spread of our strange gifts. I began stuffing more balloons into my bookbag. Our visits to Aguas Vivas now lasted twenty or thirty minutes, until every child was paired with a bright balloon. There were no arguments about colors, no disagreements about who was first in line. These gifts were too rare and precious to fight about; they were simply to be accepted and embraced in their moment. After the last child had darted off, Sister Garcia and I would board the bus to La Limonada. I was always slightly dizzy but abundantly happy. The balloons, it turned out, were a bright spot in our day as well.

Balloons are transient creatures, especially in a world of sharp corners, hard gravel, and rough cement. This ensured that no child of Aguas Vivas was able to save his or her balloon. They were always used up within a short time of receiving them. The children did not mourn the loss but returned to collect a new balloon each day, happy for the moment of brightness in their lives, like a tiny taste of Christmas each afternoon. But they kept their physical distance from us, and we were careful never to tread on this sacred space. The children were rightfully wary. Their lives were not without real danger, and like the skin of a balloon, the fragile trust they placed in us was something we dared not scratch.

A week or two passed. Sister Garcia and I were handing out balloons as usual to a happy crowd of children. In time, only two girls remained. They had stood quietly at the edge of the crowd, slightly apart. I inflated a balloon and held it out to them. They made no move to reach for it. The balloon was handed to a little boy who ran up suddenly, his eyes bright and eager. I pulled out another balloon, but the older girl shook her head. "My mother wants to meet you," she said.

The girls led us to a ramshackle house and opened the gate. We walked down an open corridor to the back room their family rented. Their mother, Flor, invited us in. "I just wanted to meet the people who were giving balloons to the children," she said. "I wanted to know what kind of people would do something like that."

We told Flor we had another gift we would like to share, and she and her girls listened as we introduced them to the restored gospel. "You need to come back when my husband is home," Flor said. We made an appointment to do just that.

We emerged back into the sunlight of the street and without a word began knocking on doors. A miracle had transformed the little neighborhood: the invisible hand that had held it firmly locked away from us was pushed back by the curiosity of its own people. Now every door in Aguas Vivas opened to us. Aside from those who were not at home, every family invited us in and asked us to teach them. Every home responded in the same way: "We wanted to meet the people who would give balloons to children. We were told you were wicked, but now we cannot believe it. We want to hear what you have to say."

We learned that a local minister had coached the residents of Aguas Vivas in how to "deal with the Mormons." He had instructed them to answer their doors and politely decline our invitations. He had taught several powerful and frightening sermons on the terrible wickedness of the Mormons. It was his hand that had held this area in its grip. But bright balloons given without price or expectation had broken belief in his words and driven away the veil of falsehood.

Soon we were spending all our time teaching in Aguas Vivas. We had been having little success in La Limonada. The discussions we had taught there had mostly been to bored women looking for company or to those who longed for a listening ear to hear their complaints. In Aguas Vivas, we felt again the strength of the Spirit that had surged through us that first day.

Several weeks passed, and we were preparing three families for baptism: Flor and her family, a widower and his teenaged children, and the Mesa family. We had been led to the Mesa family by a little boy, Saúl, much as we had been led to Flor's family. Elena Mesa had let us in to her small but comfortable home, laughing. "I cannot turn you away," she said. "My son has been begging us to have you in. He heard you teach one of his friend's families. He says he likes the way your words make him feel."

We taught a message on the Atonement of Christ. Five-year-old Saúl sat transfixed, and his mother listened intently. Three other young children sat quietly, enjoying the pictures of Christ we had brought with us. Unbeknownst to us, Elena's husband, Carlos, had returned from work and sat outside on the porch, listening. He entered as we finished our

discussion. "We were told you did not believe in Christ," he said. "But I know now that is not true. Your teachings are good for my family. You are welcome in my home."

When we introduced the Book of Mormon to the Mesa family, Carlos seemed troubled. He accepted the book, but said little. For several visits, he was quiet and unresponsive. But he did not turn us away. One evening, as we sat down to begin teaching, he placed the Book of Mormon on the coffee table between us. "I have read this book," he declared. "There is nothing but truth in it."

We were stunned.

"Several years ago," he went on, "two young men gave me a copy of this book. I took it to my minister, and he told me the book was evil and must be burned, so that is what I did. But now I have read this book, and I know it is from God. There is not one word of evil in it." He looked at us expectantly.

We responded with an affirmation that the book was true. But it was not the response he anticipated.

"Now I going to hell," he explained. "I have burned a holy book."

I limped through an explanation of how the truth was in the message of the book, that the paper it was printed on was not sacred. There was no sin in his action.

My companion recovered my fumble. "Through baptism," she said. "All sins are washed away."

Now eleven people had committed to enter the waters of baptism. Joyfully we made preparations for the solemn event. But my heart was troubled. Flor had agreed to be baptized but had openly declared that it was simply a decision to follow her husband's choice. She had learned what we had taught and indicated that she understood it, but it was clear she did not yet have a testimony of her own. She was being baptized because her husband and children desired it, and she wished merely to keep unity in her marriage and family.

When we first met Manuel Melendez, Flor's husband, we had taken him for something of a simpleton. He was rumpled and dirty and had difficulty expressing himself, stumbling over simple phrases. We soon learned he was the town drunk. But he had been present and attentive at our discussions. When we had challenged him to live the Word of Wisdom, he agreed. We saw the doubtful glances of his family. It was something Manuel had tried many times to do, he told us. "I have heard other preachers, but you have finally brought me a message powerful

enough to help me do it," he declared haltingly. "I feel the strength of it in my soul. God is with me stronger than he has ever been before. I shall beat the devil this time."

Over the weeks, we saw a miraculous transformation in Manuel. He now sat before us, straight-backed, steady, and clean. His eyes sparkled with intelligence, and we were taken aback at his eloquence and quick mind. Flor's eyes shone softly with renewed respect. The man she had fallen in love with had been returned to her.

But there was a hard knot of sadness in Flor that even her husband's renewed spirit and the message we taught could not dispel. I thought it was the shame of being the wife of the town drunk and the burden of having to provide for her family, but weeks passed, and the dull ache in her eyes did not improve.

So I worried and prayed.

We stopped by Flor's home to prepare the paperwork for the family's baptisms. The elders would come by in an hour for their interviews. All was moving forward. I sat with Flor, collecting names and dates while Sister Garcia did the same with Manuel. I was nearly finished as I asked the routine question, "Do you have any other children?"

"No," Flor responded.

I returned to the form but felt instantly confused. I surprised myself by asking again, "Do you have any other children? Older children? Children who do not live with you perhaps?"

"No," Flor responded, annoyed.

I chided myself for my inability to concentrate. "Don't offend the woman," I scolded myself silently. "You asked the question, and she answered it. Leave her alone." But the form now made no sense to me, and I could not write a single letter.

I turned to Flor, and the question rose unbidden to my lips. "Do you have any other children?" I was horrified at my own words.

Flor looked at me strangely, not a friendly look. She sighed heavily, as if at confession. "I had a baby," she said. "But she only lived a few weeks. She doesn't count."

My heart swelled; my confusion dispelled. I had heard this teaching before—it was commonly held among Guatemalan women. They were told when a baby died to just forget about it and have another one. Little ones that died in infancy were simply lost. Strong women did not grieve, but simply got on with their lives.

"Oh, Flor," I said. "Your baby does count." Quietly, I reviewed the plan of salvation, explaining the place in it for little children who died.

They were alive in Christ, who knew them and loved them. The day would come when Flor would meet her little one and hold her again in her arms.

Hope kindled in Flor's eyes, and her heart softened and changed. The dullness that had so long defined her drifted away. Hesitantly at first, then with rising joy, she gave the name and the birth and death dates of her baby girl, and I recorded them. Tears trickled down Flor's cheeks as she held the paper in her hands. Until now, there had been no mortal record made of her child's fleeting life, and this paper gave acknowledgement and reality to that child's existence. Finally, Flor's heart was free to believe what it had always known—that her daughter did count—and Flor at last could love her and grieve for her.

Ephemeral as a balloon, little Maria had slipped into and out of this thorny world, leaving her mother's arms aching and reaching for a remembered brightness. Now that reaching was answered as an unexpected gift flowed through her, touching her heart and granting her the gentle, healing testimony of hope. It was the gift of living water.

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Life and Times of John Pierce Hawley:
A Mormon Ulysses of the American West
By Melvin C. Johnson

Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019

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Reviewed by Adam Oliver Stokes

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In recent years there has been a growing effort to expand the defi-
nition of "Mormonism" within Mormon studies. "Mormonism," in
twenty-first-century scholarship, refers not only to the largest organiza-
tion in the restoration tradition—namely, The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints, headquartered in Utah—but also to other branches
and movements within the restoration tradition. Joseph Smith's move-
ment includes the Reorganized Church (RLDS, now known as the Com-
munity of Christ), the Bickertonite church (Church of Jesus Christ),
the Strangite church, and the Elijah Message church, among others. In
large part, this expanded understanding of what qualifies as "Mormon"
has come about through collaboration between the Utah Saints and
these other branches of the faith. The most recent and notable example
of such collaboration is the Joseph Smith Papers Project, an excellent
corpus of primary source material published by The Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints with cooperation and contributions from
both Brigham Young University and Community of Christ scholars.

Incorporating a variety of movements and sects has fostered interest
in early Church figures and pioneers previously ignored or marginalized
within Mormon studies. Particular attention has been given to RLDS
personalities, such as John Pierce Hawley, whose stories are an untapped
source of history and knowledge of the early Church and of the interac-
tion among the many groups claiming to be the successors of the move-
ment inaugurated by the Prophet Joseph Smith. The present volume,
Life and Times of John Pierce Hawley, reflects this effort and provides an
important contribution to the field of Mormon studies and history.

Melvin C. Johnson's work on Hawley effortlessly and successfully
fuses theological and historical issues. A long-standing gulf has existed
between Mormon theologians and historians. At times, historians have

focused exclusively on pioneer culture or on the rise and development of certain organizations (for example, Relief Society) without discussing the theological beliefs undergirding these topics. Johnson notes how various theological controversies within the early religious movement, from plural marriage to the Adam-God doctrine, shaped Hawley's own theology and his and his family's decisions throughout their journey westward, culminating in their settlement in the Lyman Wight colony in Zodiac, Texas.

The structure of the volume highlights different epochs in the life of Hawley, from his upbringing within the early Latter-day Saint movement as a contemporary of Joseph Smith, Orson Pratt, and Brigham Young to his initial acceptance—and then rejection—of various Brighamite doctrines as an adult, which facilitated his eventual affiliation with the RLDS church. Paralleling the structure of Homer's *Odyssey,* Johnson divides the chapters and sections of his book by locales the Hawley family inhabited during their journey. And in a modern parallel to Winston Groom's *Forrest Gump*[1]—whose title character, while on his journey, finds himself at the center of key events in American history—Hawley's travels place him and his family in the center of key events within Mormon history, including the flight from Nauvoo and the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

Johnson skillfully avoids certain pitfalls common to even the best of Mormon biographies and histories. In contrast to other biographies, such as the brilliant biography on Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris by Larry Porter and Susan Black,[2] *Life and Times of John Pierce Hawley* does not deal extensively with the ancestral history of its subject, which keeps the information relevant and does not distract readers from the main issues at hand. Furthermore, Johnson does not attempt to introduce his readers to the story of early Mormonism (for example, Joseph Smith's First Vision and the translation of the Book of Mormon), even though Hawley was a contemporary of this era. Johnson instead assumes, correctly in my opinion, that his readership is familiar with the events surrounding the origins of the Restoration.

Another highlight of Johnson's work is his excellent use of primary source material. He includes not only selections from Hawley's writings but also conversations between Hawley and other early Church figures

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1. Winston Groom, *Forrest Gump* (New York: Doubleday, 1986).

2. Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter, *Martin Harris: Uncompromising Witness of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2018).

such as Brigham Young and Orson Pratt. Before this publication, such material was largely inaccessible to lay readers. The appendix of the book contains the most important primary sources involving Hawley, including the entire transcript of the Temple Lot Case, a dispute over land in Jackson County, Missouri, that was designated by the Prophet Joseph Smith as the location of both the biblical Eden and of a future temple (LDS D&C 84; RLDS D&C 83). Hawley, as a leader of the RLDS church, was a central figure in this dispute between his church and the Hedrickite Church of Christ (171–83).

As a resource for primary texts dealing with Mormon history, Johnson's work is invaluable to Mormon studies. Johnson's treatment of Hawley, however, is not flawless. At times, in an effort to discuss personae relevant to Hawley, Johnson introduces many figures who are ultimately irrelevant to his main subject. Furthermore, readers may sense that Johnson is trying to do too much. He touches on a variety of issues ranging from polygamy to gender to race; these topics, while discussed in relation to Hawley's life, ironically detract from the book's examination of Hawley. Johnson's work would have benefited considerably by focusing on a single issue rather than on multiple, divergent ones. As a result, readers encounter Hawley only as a distant historical figure rather than as a humanized figure with strengths and weaknesses.[3] This feeling of disconnect was particularly pronounced for myself as a member of the Community of Christ since I felt unable to see the relevance of Hawley to my tradition outside of being a Mormon in the pioneer period.

Johnson's work overall is an important contribution to the field inasmuch as it examines an overlooked figure in the Latter-day Saint movements. It is my hope that readers will obtain a more personal and intimate encounter with John Pierce Hawley either in a future work done by Johnson or by another scholar of Mormon history.

Adam Oliver Stokes has degrees in religious studies from Duke University and Yale Divinity School. His work has been featured in numerous magazines and journals, and he is the author of Perspectives on the Old Testament, published by Cognella Academic Press. He teaches classical Latin at Allentown High School in New Jersey and serves as adjunct professor of theology at Saint Joseph's University.

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3. For better examples of personalized biographies, see Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); and John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Joseph W. Geisner, editor. *Writing Mormon History: Historians and Their Books*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2020.

In *Writing Mormon History: Historians and their Books,* edited by Joseph W. Geisner, well-known historians reflect on their influential publications in the field of Mormon studies. These historians describe their interest in their respective topics, key points and resources they discovered, and their obstacles and successes on the path to publication.

Polly Aird describes researching an ancestor who was branded an apostate during the mid-nineteenth-century Mormon Reformation. Will Bagley candidly recounts his investigation of the horrific 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre. Todd Compton recalls his pre-internet research on Joseph Smith's plural wives. Brian C. Hales explains the background of his three-volume history of Joseph Smith's practice of plural marriage. Melvin C. Johnson uses his biographies on Lyman Wight and John Hawley to advise future historians.

William P. MacKinnon describes decades working on his two groundbreaking volumes about the Utah War. Linda King Newell narrates her collaboration with Valeen Tippetts Avery (deceased) on the first-ever scholarly biography of Emma Hale Smith. Gregory A. Prince recounts the many interviews that led to his acclaimed biography of President David O. McKay. D. Michael Quinn provides excerpts from his journals documenting his career as a Mormon historian. Craig S. Smith uses his time researching historian-pioneer Juanita Brooks to examine the uncertain history of Brooks's publication of her grandfather's biography.

George D. Smith describes the journey of four of his books on multiple topics: William Clayton's diaries, the beginnings of plural marriage, B. H. Roberts's Book of Mormon analyses, and Brigham Young's journals. Vickie Cleverley Speek details her biography of James J. Strang, a participant in the post–Joseph Smith succession crisis. Susan Staker summarizes her current work in progress, a study of Joseph Smith's stories. Daniel P. Stone gives insight into a little-known Mormon prophet, William Bickerton. John G. Turner reveals details about his biography of the complex, controversial Brigham Young.

This book gives insight into historical controversies, the construction of Mormon studies, and the complicated relationship between scholars and the modern organizations whose history they strive to reassemble. In the introduction, Geisner expresses a desire to publish a second volume including more women historians, people of color, and studies of Restoration groups other than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (x). However, regardless of omissions, historians, students of history, scholars, and aspiring authors will all benefit from this volume.

—Tina Hawley

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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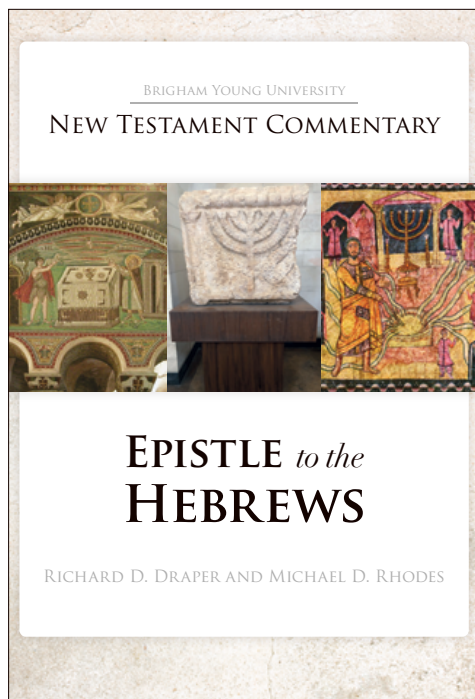
Epistle to the Hebrews

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The Epistle to the Hebrews is a faith-filled testimony of Jesus Christ. This commentary is the most comprehensive study of the epistle that Latter-day Saint scholars have yet produced. The volume is not written for an academic audience but for anyone interested in a detailed examination of this highly spiritual and insightful work.

The commentary presents the full Greek text alongside the King James Version and the authors' New Rendition, followed by translation notes and analysis. The translation notes explain the meaning and context of words, phrases, and passages and the choice of words in the New Rendition. The analysis examines the doctrine and teachings of each section, opening the epistle to the reader's understanding.

The work strives to be up to date, comprehensive, scholarly, and as doctrinally sound as possible. It relies on the canon of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Joseph Smith Translation, and teachings of latter-day prophets alongside rigorous biblical scholarship and the original Greek text.

This commentary has the same purpose as the epistle itself: to bear witness of the Lord and his lifegiving ministry.