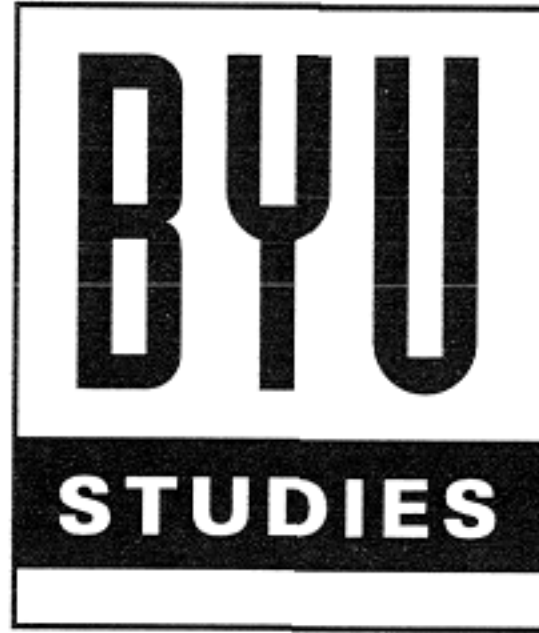


BYU

STUDIES







A MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
LATTER-DAY SAINT  
JOURNAL





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*BYU Studies* is dedicated to the correlation of revealed and discovered truth and to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious avenues of knowledge. This periodical strives to explore scholarly perspectives on LDS topics. It is committed to seeking truth “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) and recognizes that all knowledge without charity is nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). It proceeds on the premise that faith and reason, revelation and scholarly learning, obedience and creativity are compatible; they are “many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20).

Contributions from all fields of learning are invited. *BYU Studies* strives to publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view and are obviously relevant to subjects of general interest to Latter-day Saints, while conforming to high scholarly standards. *BYU Studies* invites poetry and personal essays dealing with the life of the mind, reflections on personal and spiritual responses to academic experiences, intellectual choices, values, responsibilities, and methods. All personal essays received will be entered in our annual personal essay contest. Short studies and notes are also welcomed.

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COVER: James C. Christensen (1942–), *Gethsemane*. Acrylic, 1984. Courtesy James C. Christensen.



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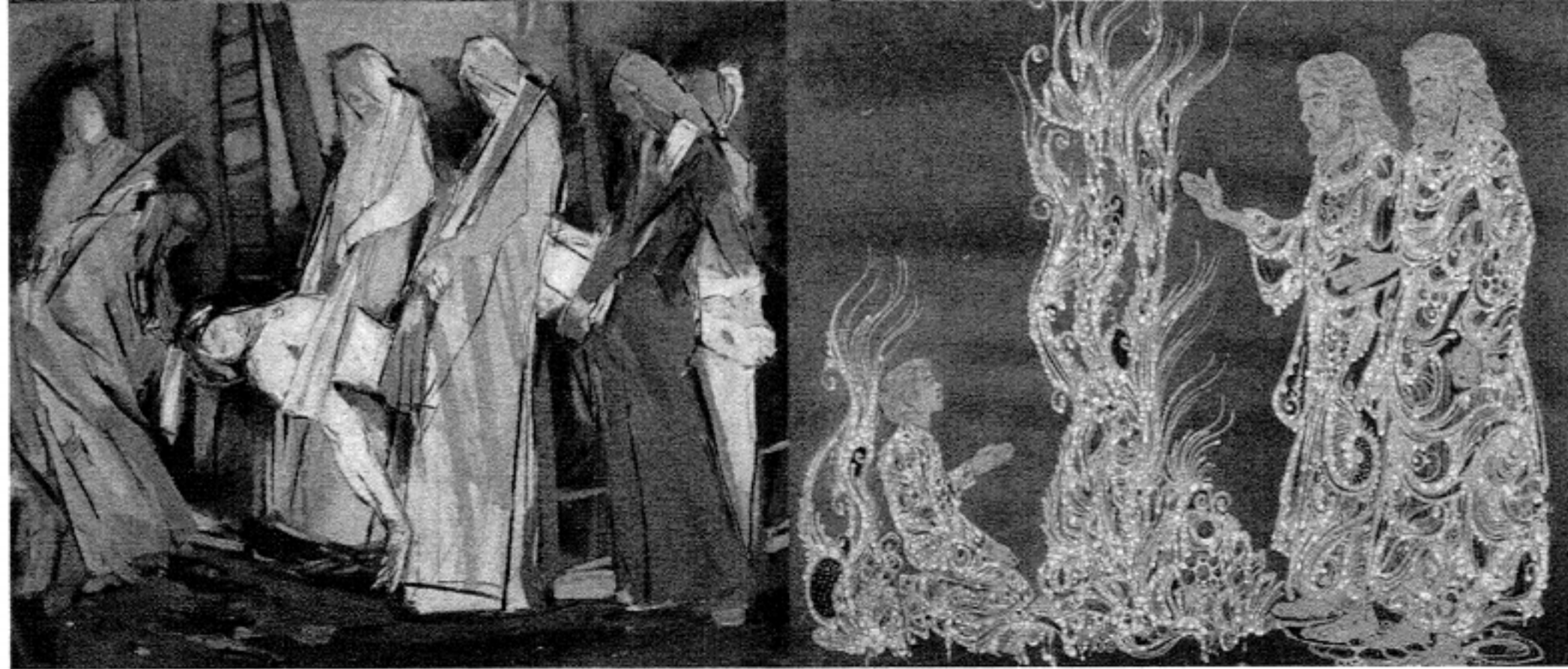
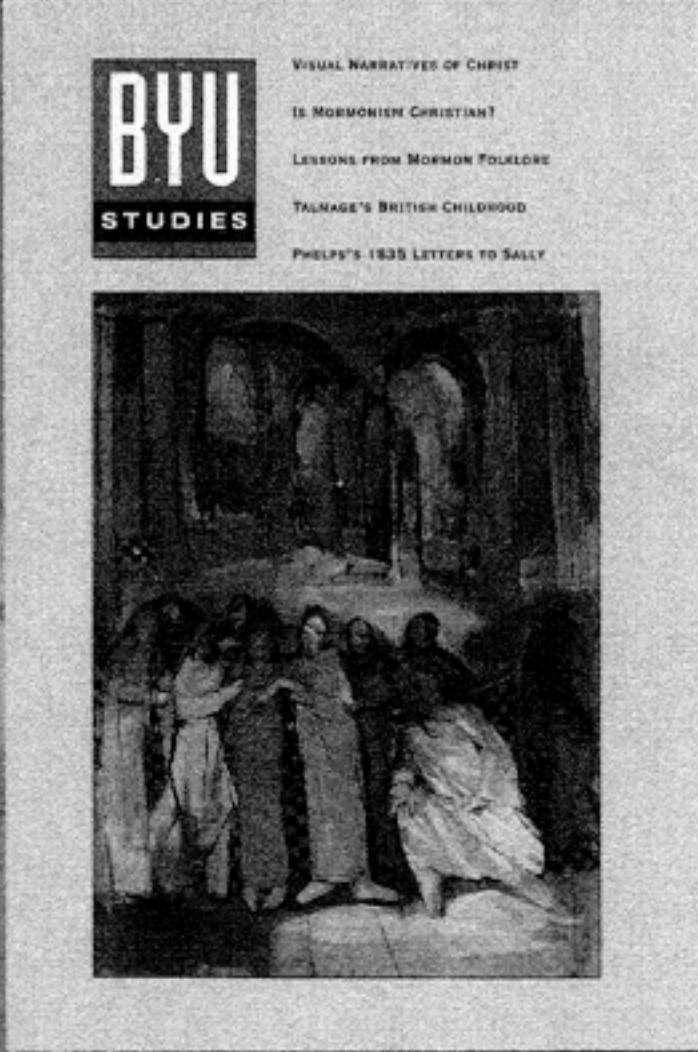
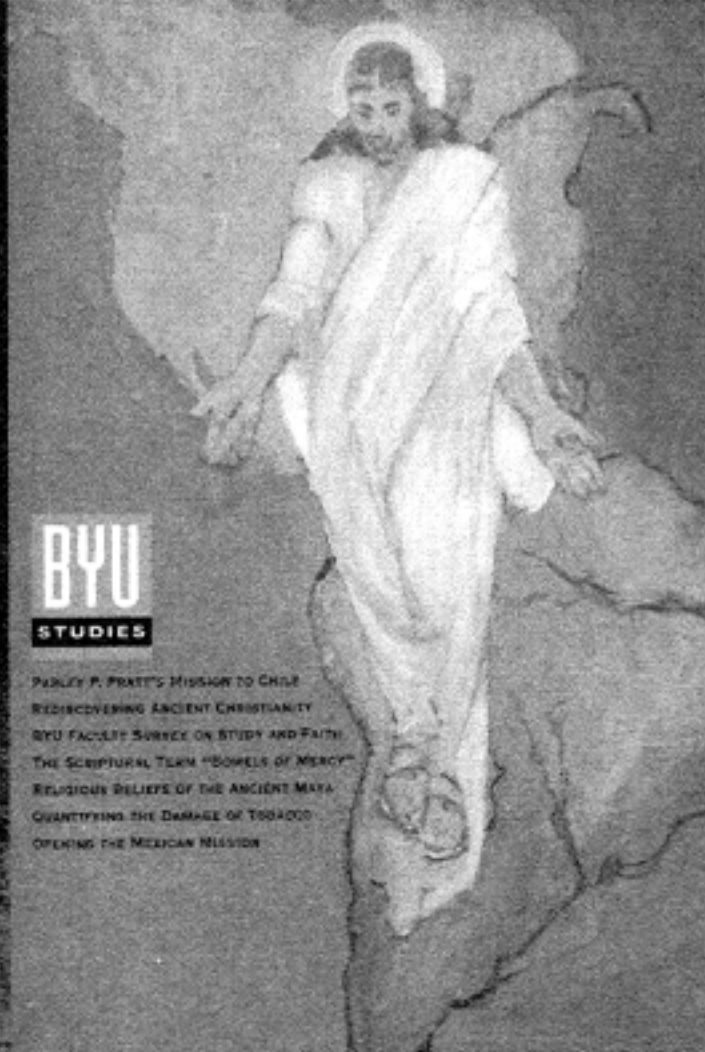
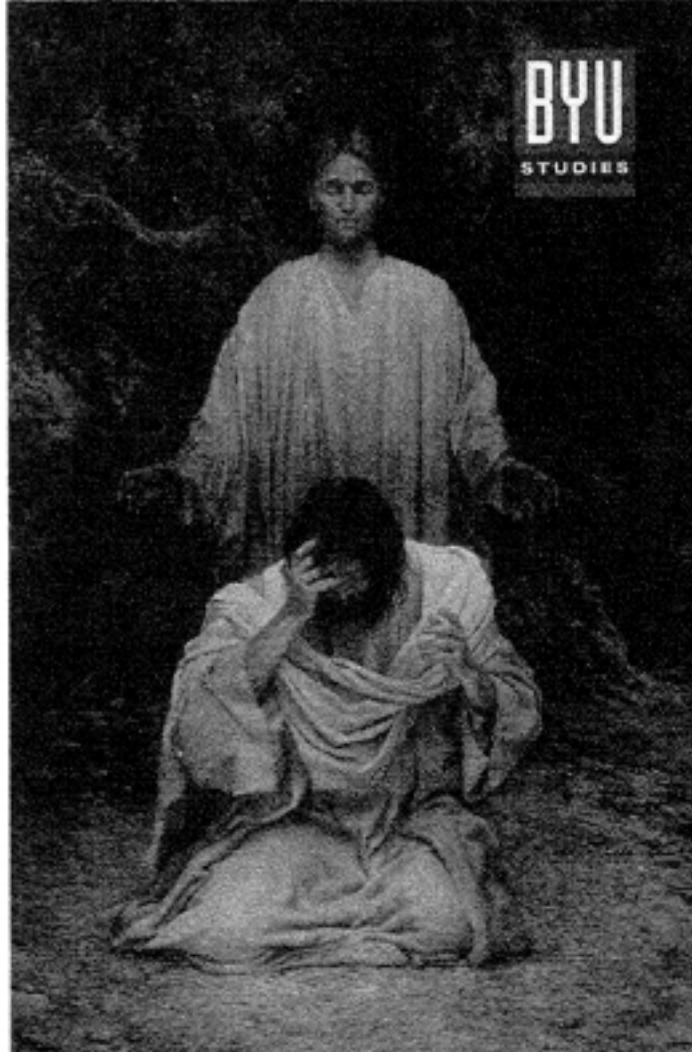
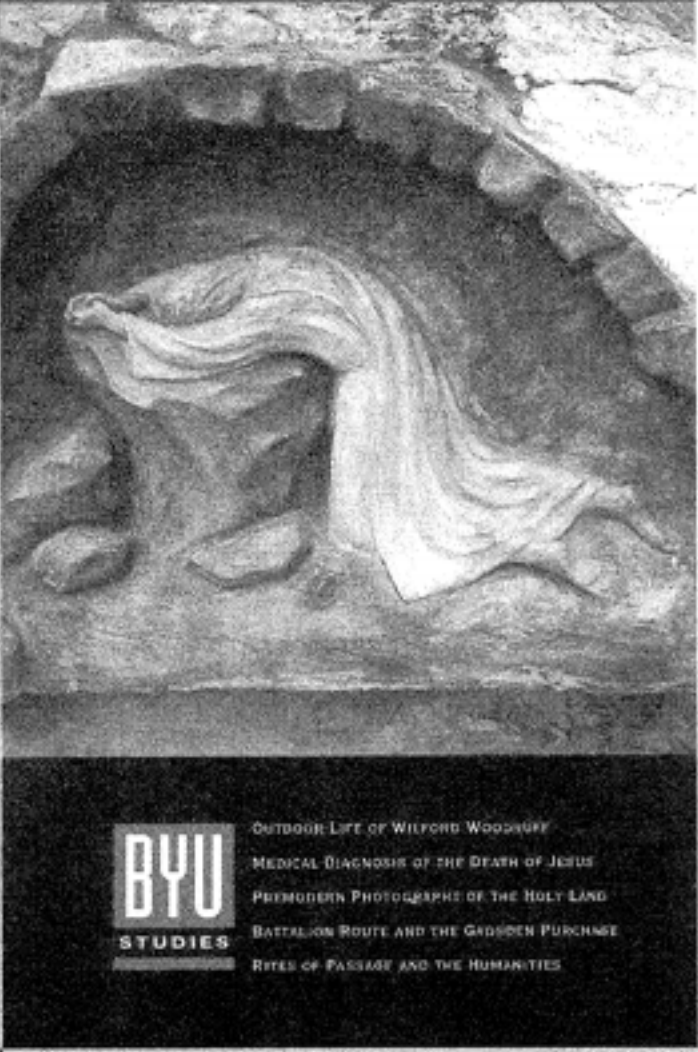
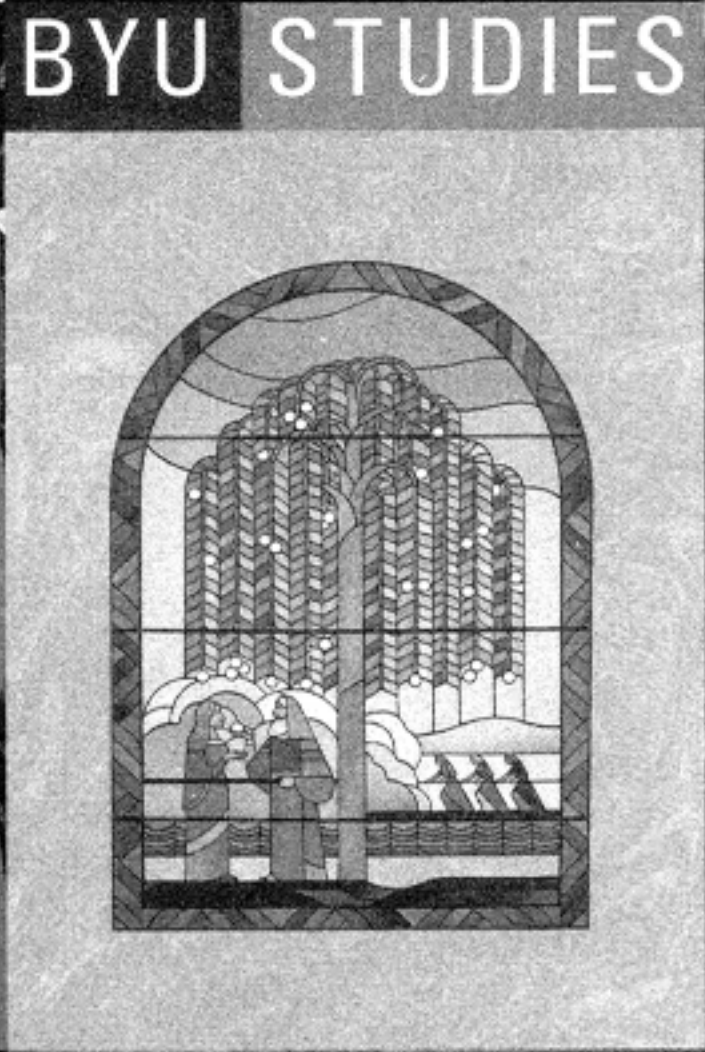
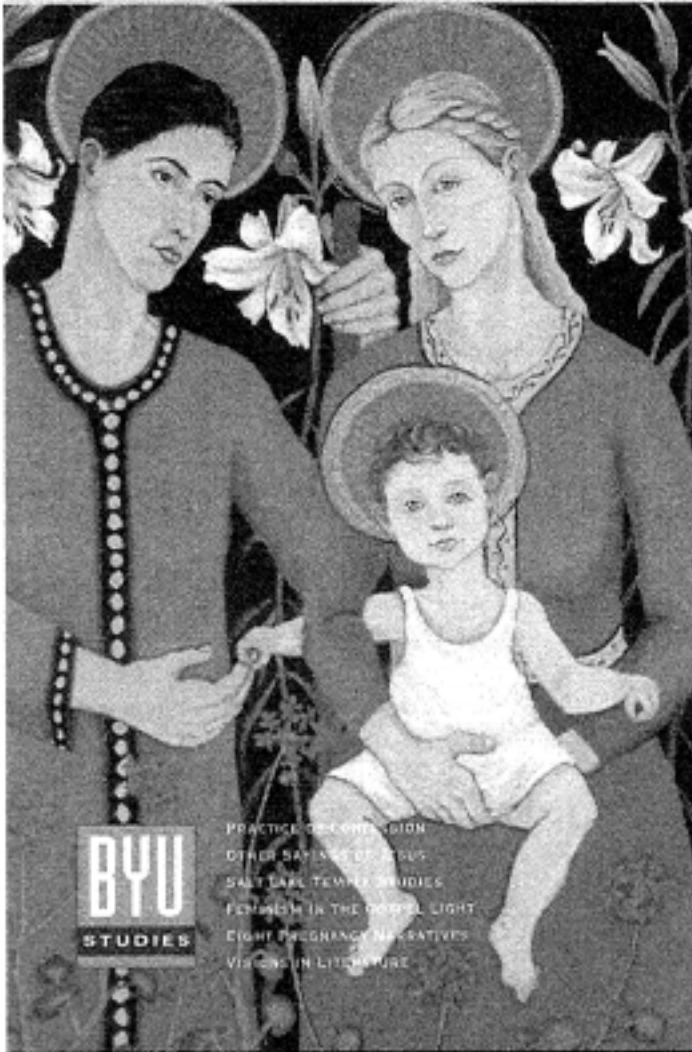
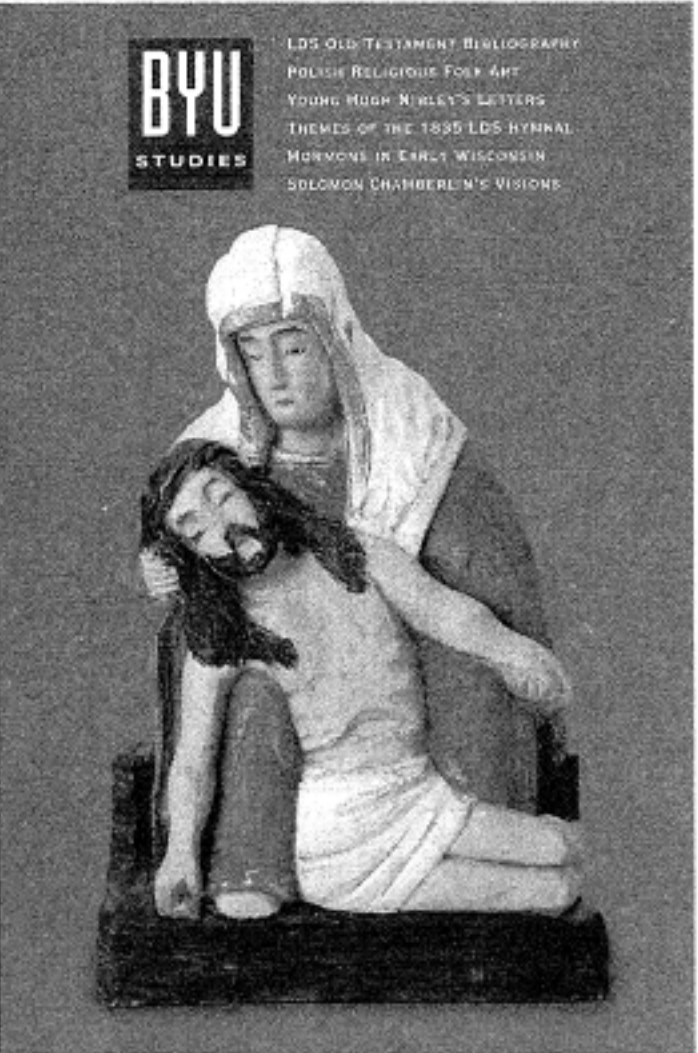
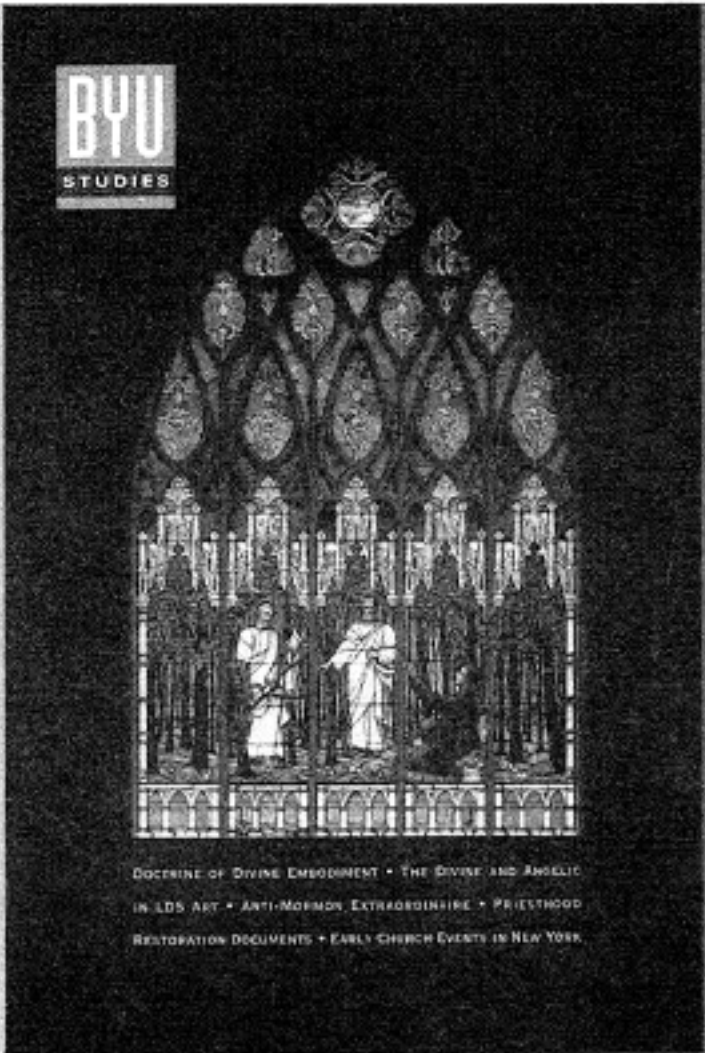
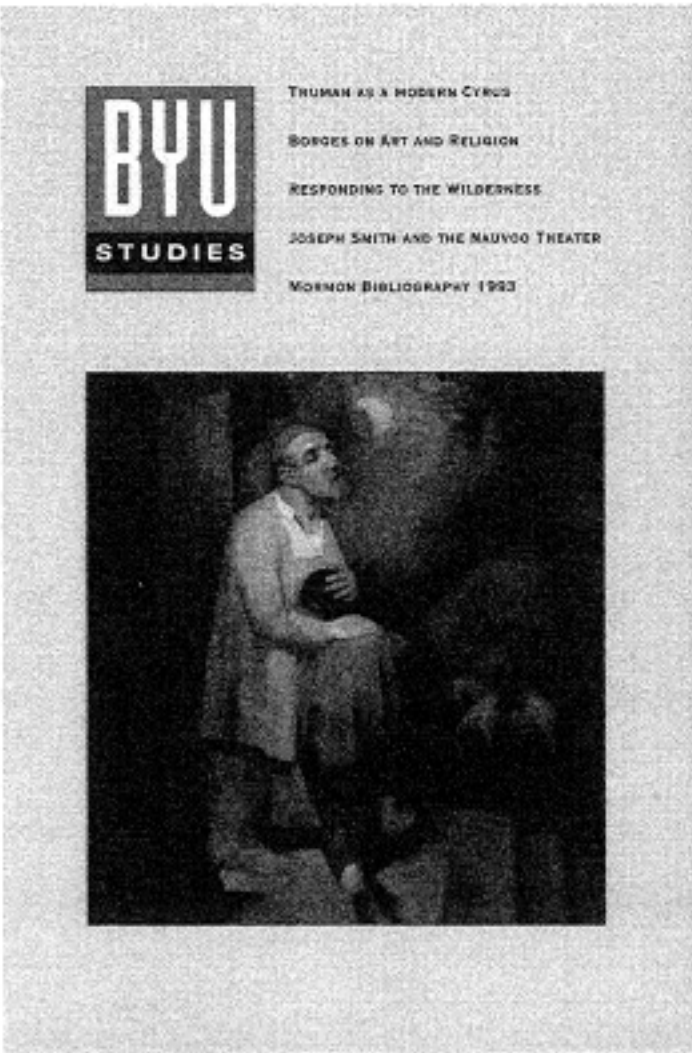
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# Four LDS Perspectives on Images of Christ

## Introduction

Doris R. Dant

As members of a Christ-centered church and consumers of a proliferation of visual images, Latter-day Saints face the enigma of wanting to know their Savior but not having a detailed description of either his mortal or resurrected physical appearance. How should an artist depict Christ? Why do individual members have both strong attachments and aversions to certain images? What conscious principles, if any, stand behind the selection of images for use in official and unofficial LDS publications?

The following four articles in this issue of *BYU Studies* address these core issues from the perspectives of a Latter-day Saint artist, a cultural historian, an art historian, and a religion professor. Opening the discussion is James C. Christensen. Although best known as a painter of fantasy, Christensen has grappled for years with issues that unavoidably arise in painting the Savior. We asked him to share with us his personal resolution and while doing so to discuss his painting *Gethsemane*, which is featured on our cover. The result is an intimate—and profound—article, a testimony of the value of “taking up the gauntlet.”

A century of images forms the backdrop for Noel Carmack’s ambitious article on the role of images of Christ in Latter-day Saint culture. A preservation librarian and art teacher, Carmack argues that broad cultural forces in American religions as well as Church educational agendas underlie the popularity of certain images. These images, he believes, reflect changes over time in the LDS culture’s emphasis on certain characteristics of Christ.

The curator of the current exhibit of images of Christ at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City and an art consultant for *BYU Studies*, Richard G. Oman has spent his career studying and exhibiting Latter-day Saint art. In his article, Oman takes as a starting point some modifications to Carmack’s generalizations. Then he uses these preliminary observations to remind us that great religious art invites us to answer the question, “What think ye of Christ?” Oman warns artists that if they “focus only on bright, cheerful, well-lit, tightly detailed images of Christ” they will miss the power of shadows. They may even unwittingly trivialize the depth of the Savior’s mortal experiences and of our potential response to our Lord.

A faculty member of Brigham Young University and photography editor for *BYU Studies*, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel issues a call to think more



critically about our response to images of Christ. Not only should we learn about the differences between modern cultures and that of Israel two thousand years ago, but we should bring that sophistication to the scriptures and the images attempting to portray them. “[Our] preconceived ideas are often found hollow and wanting,” he writes. “Let Jesus be Jesus.”

Throughout these articles are interwoven several items of debate. As one example, Carmack predicts a single “ultimate Mormon visual likeness of Christ.” Moving us to that end, he claims, is Church correlation, which has “homogenized” the images sanctioned for appearance in official Church publications. Oman, on the other hand, notes the degree of “visual pluralism” enjoyed within the Church and sees it as one reason the Church has been so successful internationally. Christensen makes a case that in the premillennial world there will never be an ultimate likeness of Jesus. Each of us invents an image of Christ, and because these images differ, no one image will please everyone. To this process of invention, Holzapfel says, each individual brings “a personal religious, educational, and cultural background” that determines what is acceptable in an image of Christ.

In spite of the comprehensiveness of this discussion, some related issues remain to be addressed in future research. For instance, to what extent do the peace and prosperity enjoyed by many Church members in North America affect their preferences for certain artistic styles in paintings of Christ and the portrayal of particular character traits or events in the ministry of the Savior?

Since 1990, images of Christ have been featured on ten covers of *BYU Studies*, and representations symbolically referring to the Savior and the fruits of his Atonement have appeared on four additional covers.<sup>1</sup> We offer this roundtable in the context of this emphasis.

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Doris R. Dant (doris\_dant@byu.edu) is Executive Editor of *BYU Studies* and Associate Teaching Professor of English at Brigham Young University. She has written on art for *BYU Studies* and with John W. Welch coauthored *The Book of Mormon Paintings of Minerva Teichert* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1997).

1. *BYU Studies* has published images of Christ on the following covers (listed as volume number, issue number, and year of publication): 30.3, 1990 (back cover); 33.3, 1993 (both front and back covers); 35.4, 1996 (both front and back covers); 36.2, 1996–97; 37.2, 1997–98; 37.4, 1997–98; 38.1, 1999; 38.4, 1999; and 39.3, 2000. The symbolic covers are found on 32.4, 1992 (tree of life, both front and back covers); 34.1, 1994 (the father of the prodigal son); and 38.2, 1999 (the Good Samaritan).

# That's Not *My* Jesus

## An Artist's Personal Perspective on Images of Christ

James C. Christensen

When I was growing up, I was taught that we should not have pictures and statues of Christ in our homes or meetinghouses. Nothing was to come between us and the individual image each of us had of the Lord we worshipped. Now members of the LDS Church are expressing a need for a good image of the Savior that they can reflect upon. For artists, that shift becomes a major challenge as they work to create the desired images.

### **Images of the Savior: Thinking of the Same Individual and Seeing Him Differently**

In struggling with the issues involved in painting Christ, I have (as have artists other than myself) come to realize that we do not actually need to have a physically accurate portrayal of Jesus Christ. For artists, the goal is to create a character in an image that we can identify with, that we can relate to. But at the same time that character should not remind us of a neighbor or some acquaintance. Christ is too personal to each of us. He must be portrayed with universal but distinct qualities.

Nowhere in the Book of Mormon, in this dispensation's revelations, or in the writings of living prophets can I find a detailed physical description of Jesus Christ. I believe that that is by design, not by accident, because in our minds each of us creates a picture of the Savior that we worship—an immortal being. We also create a visual symbol for our Father in Heaven. For many of us, that image is a grandfatherly character, giving rise to an interesting paradox: we are going to be resurrected in our prime, but we create an image of Father in Heaven as an older man with a two-foot white beard. I suppose if our Father in Heaven appeared as a very handsome thirty-year-old, we might have a harder time visually identifying him. Consequently, with both the Savior and our Father in Heaven, physical accuracy is not the artist's objective.

Our dilemma is that on the one hand we want to know Christ personally and on the other hand we do not know what he looks like. I have worked through my cycles of going through the historical record attempting to find out his ethnic nature and physical appearance. Would he be Semitic?



Would he be red haired and blue eyed? Would he be as a Davidic descendent—ruddy and fair? Where does the forked beard come from? Does he even have a beard? The questions can go on ad infinitum.

Gary Ernest Smith has done as much research on the subject of Christ's physical appearance as anybody. He examined records of the races of people living in Palestine, the physiognomy of the people.<sup>1</sup> Because of the second commandment, to make no graven images, Jewish converts made no portraits of Jesus. From the Roman Christian era, there is a portrait of Christ that legend attributes to Saint Luke. Around A.D. 300 people felt a need to have images of Christ, which would give more substance to the church, so the clergy provided the material. The image of the Savior largely evolved in the first five hundred years A.D., and since then, we seem to be locked into a certain image and to be concerned primarily with how long, how short, how light, how dark we make Christ's hair. That form of minutiae is where we get into the changes of popular taste.

As Mormons we believe that someone could see Christ today; Doctrine and Covenants 93:1 states, "See my face and know that I am." Yet while we believe that many people have had this experience, no one ever says, "This is what I saw. He looks more like Tom Selleck than like Richard Attenborough." No, the descriptions are always in such terms as light, gold, and shining. I think—and this is the gospel according to Christensen—that visions show Him in so much light and energy that a person simply cannot see structural detail. Such a vision must be similar to standing in a cave for a while and suddenly having someone put a floodlight in your face. You cannot see much in that light. There is also the issue of how mortals see a vision of the Lord. We have been told that a person cannot endure such a vision without the aid of the Holy Ghost (D&C 67:11–12). And Paul reminds us that "the things of God knoweth no man, except he has the Spirit of God" (JST 1 Cor. 2:11).

I think that in dreams and visions the Lord gives us images that are comfortable for us. I read once that a woman had a near-death vision of her uncle, who had drowned while fishing; he appeared in his fishing waders.<sup>2</sup> Does Uncle have to wear fishing waders for eternity? No, he appeared in an image that would be recognizable to his niece. Similarly, the Savior—living outside of time, existing on a different plane, being resurrected—can, I think, make his presence known to us in any way that is needed.

After working my way through the historical accuracy issue, I drew this conclusion: any artist who paints the Savior just needs to build an acceptable generic icon. A picture of the Savior without the beard and a different hairstyle would not be recognized as the Savior. We identify him by certain traditional traits such as shoulder-length hair and forked beard. We can



spot him even in historical paintings that are terribly anachronistic. Flemish masters would often set the Flight into Egypt in the middle of Belgium, with everybody around dressed like burghers, but the Holy Family is still readily identifiable: they have “badges” that say who they are. We rely on those badges. But they have nothing to do with what the Savior does or does not look like.

I have come back around to asking myself how I can use those badges, those symbols, to create an image of Christ that communicates something about the way I feel or that is a painting other people can identify with. It is very hard. I applaud Del Parson for taking it on, because my first reaction is, “Del, you did a great job.” I know and respect Del. I think *The Lord Jesus Christ* is a successful painting. Is it my Jesus? No. But I realize that if I were to paint the Savior exactly the way that it would work for me probably two-thirds of the people who would see it would say, “Nice, Jim, but it is not my Jesus.” That would happen no matter who the artist is. So artists face an interesting challenge. I once did some sketches of the Savior and showed them to my wife. She said, “I like this one and this one, but I really do not like that one.” She said the Savior’s face was too round and she did not like the hairdo. I asked her, “What if this sketch was a dead likeness of the man Jesus?” She said, “Well, I just don’t think it is.” Suddenly, I saw why we do not have a perfectly satisfying picture of what he looked like. We each invent our own image of the Savior, and artists are expected to work within all those invented images.

Many years ago, I had occasion to visit with Elder Boyd K. Packer about a painting I had done for a Deseret Book cover. It was a portrait of Jesus. We discussed various aspects of the painting for a while, and then I said, “You know, Elder Packer, when one is in the presence of one of the Twelve, with a picture like this, it’s very tempting to ask, ‘How close did I get?’” He smiled, shook his head for a moment, turned to me, and said, “How do you think BYU’s basketball team is going to do this year?” The message was there. If, through revelation, an individual does know the Savior, it is a supremely sacred experience, much too personal for conversation.

A few years later, I had the opportunity to visit with President Kimball at his home. I had painted a portrait of him and his wife, and when I brought up the fact that I was working a picture of Christ, we were invited to come to his house with reference material and notes to discuss the painting. My wife and I sat around the kitchen table eating milk and cookies with the prophet and his wife. All the pictures of Jesus I could find were laid out on the table. Sister Kimball had opinions on several of the pictures, but the prophet said nothing. Finally I said, “Look, President, I have been around (I was very young and just thought I had been around) enough to know that we’re not going to be given a detailed physical description of the Savior, but if you were going to hang a painting of the Savior in your office,



Courtesy James C. Christensen.



FIG. 1. James C. Christensen (1942–), *The Woman Taken in Adultery*. Acrylic, 18" x 24". A picture can evoke an image of the Savior even when he is not actually in the scene. In *The Woman Taken in Adultery* by James C. Christensen, the rock dropped by the woman's accusers, her meditative mood, and her worshipful pose call to my mind an image of the Savior nearby writing on the ground. The shredded sheet draped around the woman causes me to reflect upon the state of my own soul, tattered by its own forms of sin, and to hear the echo of his decrees: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. . . . Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:7, 11).  
—Doris Dant, editor

what would you want that picture to be like?" He took off his glasses and put his face about a foot away from mine and said, "I love people; that's my gift. I truly love people. Can you see anything in my eyes that tells you that I love people? In that picture, I would like to see in the Savior's eyes that he truly loves people. It is not affected; it is not his job. He truly loves all people."

Well, that was an overwhelming challenge for me. I felt his unconditional love, and I think I understood what he said. But to translate that feeling into the eyes of a painting was more than I was capable of. I threw away dozens of subsequent drawings of the Savior and did not do another Christ painting for many years. I did not want to do it until I had the image right. Years later, when I painted *Gethsemane*, I skirted the problem by painting the Savior with his head down.



More recently, within the last couple of years, I said to Elder Packer, “I need to be painting for the Church. What shall I do?” He looked me in the eye, stuck his finger close to my face, and said, “Paint the Savior.” I told him the whole President Kimball story and complained, “It’s too hard!” He said, “No, it’s not. You have the training, the artistic talent, and the sensitivity. You can do it.” So I agreed I would—how many hints does a person need? As members of the Church, we always pray, “Lord, tell me what you want me to do.” So when the President of the Twelve points his finger at you and says, “Do this!” you do not go home and whine in your prayers, “I need a little better direction.”

Since then I have felt the need to again attempt to portray Christ. Probably I will never do a head shot to be hung in the family room. Rather, I want to find moments that reverberate beyond that instant—moments in his life or moments in which he is involved but not physically present: Mary just after the Annunciation or the woman taken in adultery, contemplating what has happened to her and trying to pull her life together (fig. 1). Such times give us something to reflect upon.

I often contemplate what mental image I have of the Savior. When I think about the closeness of his presence during prayers, I am as often as not looking at the smoke detector in the ceiling of my room. I could not give you a police artist–sketch version of what I think he might look like, but I do not doubt that I would recognize him. I know that when I see him I will know who he is.

### ***Gethsemane***

Some years ago, I felt drawn to paint the Savior in Gethsemane. Typical paintings of the Atonement look too serene, too much like evening prayer. They are very unsatisfactory for me. On the other hand, I am not a subscriber to crucifixes with bleeding knees and thorns and scrapes and lashes—I do not think we need that. But for me there was no satisfactory painting describing or even alluding to what we believe the Savior experienced in the Garden.

I considered painting the Savior in the most extreme agony. Collapsed, face down, hands in the dirt. Were he to lift up his head, his face would be covered with dust and sweat. But I have not painted that image because he is still our God. It would be unseemly to depict him in an undignified way—even if that image might be historically or pictorially accurate.

So I looked for a balance: showing the agony and passion and yet being careful to not portray Christ in an undignified, disrespectful way. I found a clue in Luke 22:43: “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.” That passage resonated with me. I considered the idea of the angel strengthening him by giving him a blessing. In subsequent



reading, I found that Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggested that the angel could be Adam.<sup>3</sup> In a beautiful symmetry, the two gardens come together. Both beings are present in both gardens. Adam helped bring about the Fall; Jesus saves us from it: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

In *Gethsemane* I hoped to capture Christ’s burden and agony in a way that people could see and feel to some degree (see the cover of this issue). The light comes across his back, so we see these broad shoulders being pressed down with the weight of our sins. His face is in shadow. His hair is wet from sweat or blood and is messy, not coifed. He has sunk to his knees, not arranged himself in a formal manner of prayer. I have tried to capture a meaningful gesture, but it was not an accident that I picked a moment where his hands go to his face. In a sense, with so much of the Savior’s face hidden, the viewers can create and identify with “their” Jesus.

### **Favorite Images: Strength and Power**

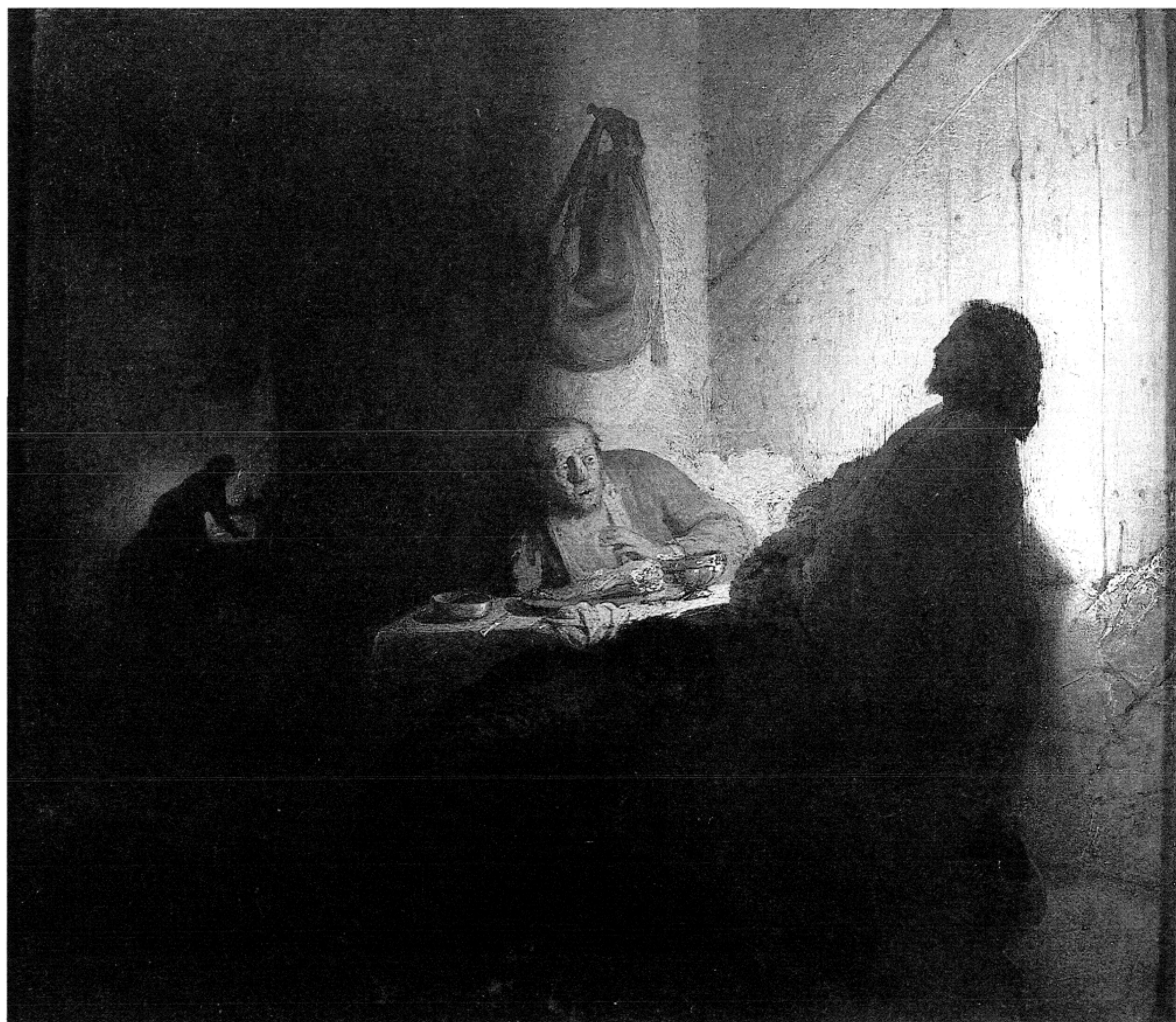
Some of my favorite images of Christ are the Carl Bloch paintings.<sup>4</sup> (See plates 2 and 3 in “Images of Christ,” this issue.) They are stylized, but as a painter, I like the way he puts the images together. I like the strength of the light and dark in his pieces. The paintings have drama without becoming melodramatic. Bloch’s work fills the niche better for me than any of the other popular pieces, which I have always felt are too soft. I remember seeing a lot of watercolors of Christ when I was a child; even then I did not like them. I did not know the word *insipid* then, but that is what I thought about them. They just did not have any strength.

Another of my favorite paintings of the Savior is *Supper at Emmaus* by Rembrandt (fig. 2). Rembrandt seizes the moment when the two men who are dining with him go, “Aha!”—that instant before the Savior vanishes (Luke 24:31). It is incredible timing—catching the disciples looking so startled. A light is behind the Savior, showing him with a strong profile but with no detail in that profile. Christ is there in the picture, but Rembrandt did not deal with the issue of a “true” image. There is nothing in this image of Christ about which I can say, “I don’t like that very much,” “His face is too thin,” or, “His eyes are the wrong color.” It is a powerful image.

As for a crucifixion painting, I tend to judge on the basis of the image and the moment rather than by a body of work. Velasquez’s painting of the Crucifixion, with a simple, stark black background, is an incredibly evocative image. Some of Caravaggio’s work is very powerful.

I tend to prefer healthy, masculine figures. I never have liked the image of Christ as the man of sorrows, the victim, the passive, effeminate man. Art went through a Gothic period, where people had to be emaciated because to celebrate the human body was blasphemous. But today we





Giraudon/Art Resource, N.Y.

FIG. 2. *Supper at Emmaus*, by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69). Paper on panel, 15  $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 16  $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André.



believe the physical body is very important, so I imagine Jesus as he grew up in the house of his father: I think he was physically in shape. He worked with his hands; he walked a lot. But more importantly, his quiet inner strength ought to be obvious in his physical likeness.

### **Acceptability: Determining a Course**

Some of us deal constantly with an interesting compromise between doing what is acceptable and marketable and doing what is true to our own vision. Having the inevitable ego of the artist and trying to work with a committee who must consider the worldwide implications of every image can be difficult. I can paint a beardless, short-haired Christ and simply shake my fist and say, “I’m as right about the image as you are”—but not have the painting published. Or I can take up the gauntlet and work on a solution. If I totally opt out of the struggle, the committee will find someone else. But I will miss a chance to learn how to better serve the Church through my art.

My tendency has been to say, “Let me paint something. If it turns out to be something you want to use, you can have it. Anything I have is yours to use. But let me paint it, and then you decide if you want it.” Some pieces that have worked for me would not be acceptable to a Church selection committee, so I do not submit them. That is all right with me. Now, I would never paint anything that I felt was beneath me or contrary to my religious feelings. But sometimes I may do a painting that is too personal or enough out of the mainstream that the Church would not use it. I am okay with that. But maybe once in a while I can paint a *Gethsemane* or something else that will cause a committee to say, “Wow! This is something we can use.” This approach has worked pretty successfully for me; it allows me to be comfortable with myself and with the day-to-day administration of the Church.

Sometimes one of my pieces is a response to an epiphany—my own revelation—or my need to find answers. *Gethsemane* came out of my effort to understand the Atonement. I do not know if I understand it any better than I did before, but at least I feel that visually I have addressed some ideas that are important for me. If I can address a moment conceptually in a way that engages people, moves people, communicates something of what I am thinking, then I am willing to tackle it. But the image must say something better for me than whatever else is out there, or there is no reason for me to do it.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, artists must come to terms with the limitations of mortal understanding. Our finite minds and senses do not have the ability to begin

to comprehend the eternal realm of God. Because of those limitations, the best any artist can create is a dim shadow of a glorious reality. Imagine trying to paint this description of the Savior:

And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof. (3 Ne. 19:25)

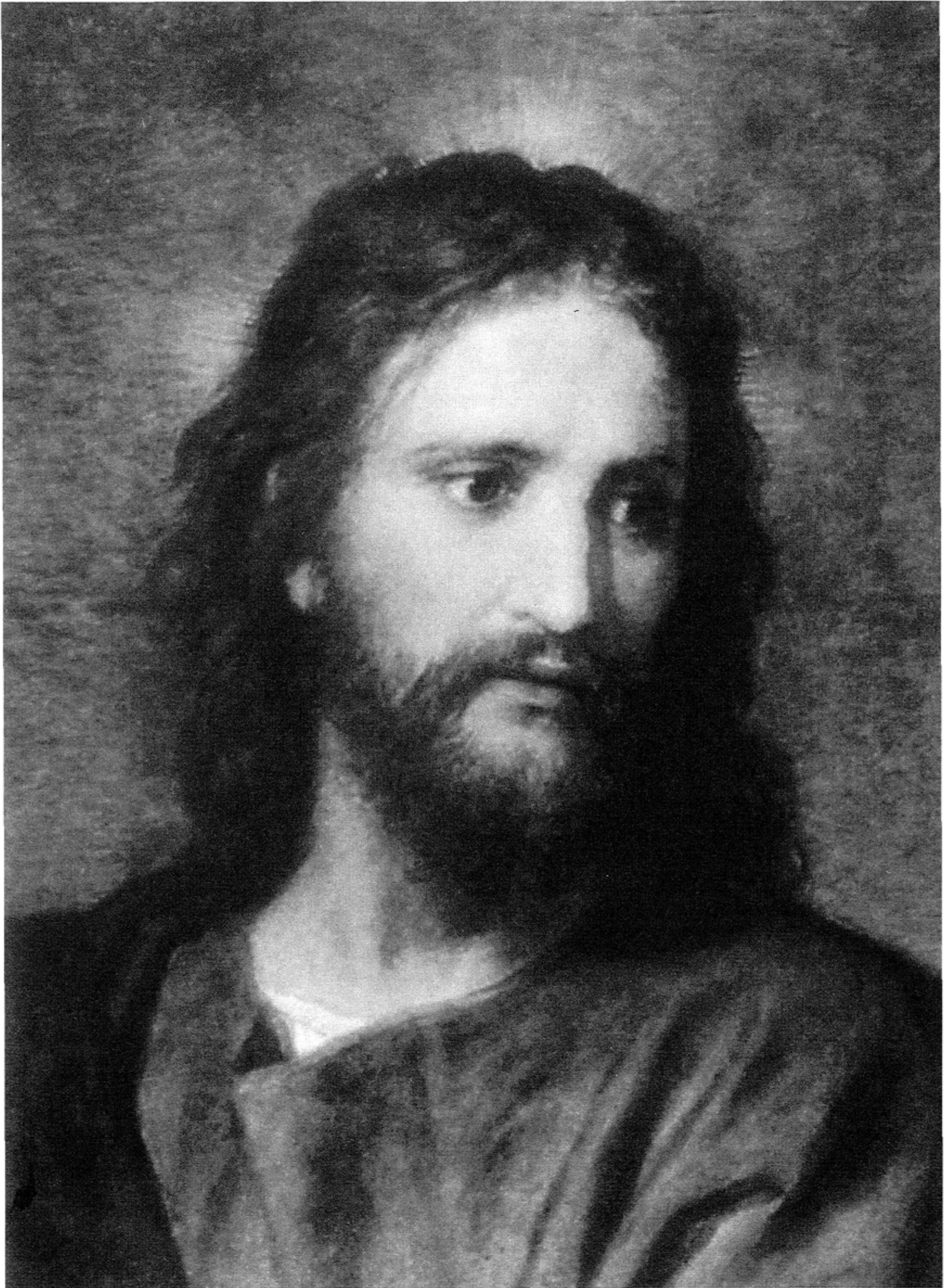
Nephi specifically points out there is no earthly means to capture this scene and others like it. But that does not keep us from trying. Once in a while, we get close enough to the reality that we can spiritually touch someone. As an artist, that is the highest achievement I can aspire to.

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James C. Christensen is a full-time artist nationally known as a painter of witty fantasy filled with detailed symbolism. For twenty-one years, he was a professor of art at Brigham Young University. He has published three books: *Journey of the Imagination: The Art of James C. Christensen*, with Renwick St. James (Trumbull, Conn.: Greenwich Workshop Press, 1994); *The Voyage of the Basset*, with Renwick St. James and Alan Dean Foster (New York: Artisan, 1996); and *Parables: And Other Teaching Stories*, with text by Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1999).

1. Gary Ernest Smith, "Christ's Likeness," copy in possession of BYU Studies.
2. There are many similar accounts. For one example, see Helen Hinckley Jones, "Sammie—Gift of God," *Ensign* 20 (October 1990): 65.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979–81), 4:125.
4. At least six of Bloch's paintings were published by the *Improvement Era* from 1957 to 1958: *The Wedding at Cana* (February 1957), *Jesus Cleansing the Temple* (March 1957), *Jesus with the Multitudes* (Sermon on the Mount; August 1957), *Healing of the Blind Man* (September 1957), *The Last Supper* (February 1958), and *Mary's Visit to Elisabeth* (cover, May 1958).





Heinrich Hofmann's head of Christ. Compare to plate 1, *Christ and the Rich Young Ruler*.



# Images of Christ in Latter-day Saint Visual Culture, 1900–1999

Noel A. Carmack

The motivating impact that visual images of Christ have on members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints cannot be overestimated. Such images often induce feelings of faith and devotion in responsive viewers. For example, Church member Lisa Gemperline of Kaysville, Utah, wrote to the *Ensign* saying:

Passing a local art gallery one day, I paused, struck by the beauty of a painting of Jesus Christ on display. My heart was touched as I looked at the face of the Savior, and I wished I had had the painting in my own home. Afterward, I found myself thinking about the impact that painting had had on me. I wanted those feelings to linger, to become an everyday occurrence in my life.<sup>1</sup>

A young female student who attached a small picture of Christ to her locker at school also wrote of the emotional response she felt when looking at the image: “There it would stay as my continual reminder to always stick up for what I believe in and to ‘stand for truth and righteousness.’”<sup>2</sup> A young man wrote of the influence that a picture of Christ hanging in his room had on his behavior: “When I awake in the morning, I look at that picture. Because of my testimony of the Savior, I consciously make a decision to honor his name during the day. Of course when I make mistakes, I look at that picture and wonder how I could have let him down.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to their motivational function, religious images serve as a tangible manifestation and affirmation of doctrine. Because of their powerful ability to communicate and validate ideas, visual media are readily accepted in the realm of popular religious devotion.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the importance of visual image making in enforcing religious ideologies and practices is broadly acknowledged by art historians and critics, who note that popular artistic representations of Christ often mirror a Christian group’s culture.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, one may examine a work of art as a cultural document, a visual text from which trends and patterns of belief can be deciphered. As David Morgan, professor of art history at Valparaiso University, states in his recent work on popular religious art, “Many popular images operate in tandem with an oral culture or printed text: devotional literature, Bible passages, hymns, prayers, and teaching guides.”<sup>6</sup> The relationship between culture, image, and text is indicated in this recommendation by historian Erwin Panofsky:

The art-historian will have to check what he thinks is the *intrinsic meaning* of the work, or group of works, to which he devotes his attention, against what



he thinks is the *intrinsic meaning* of as many other documents of civilization historically related to that work or group of works, as he can master: of documents bearing witness to the political, poetical, religious, philosophical, and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the making of religious images by Mormons has not, by any means, been void of reflected values, particularly in portrayals of Deity. Over the last century, the use of many religious images depicting Christ has been an effective didactic and inspirational mechanism of Latter-day Saint expression and of the formation of cultural identity. Such attempts at depicting Christ, for example, obviously strengthen the central LDS belief in the plurality and, indeed, the corporeal nature of the Godhead.<sup>8</sup> Such observations invite the thoughtful viewer to wonder about other, more subtle, questions. How have Mormons visually perceived Christ? Over time has the physiognomy of Christ changed in the art promoted by Mormons? What aspects of Mormon culture and beliefs do these images convey? These and many other questions guide the explorations pursued throughout this article.

### **Biblical Literalism and Higher Criticism**

Latter-day Saint visual perceptions of Christ throughout the last century were images born out of a form of biblical literalism.<sup>9</sup> Mormon literalism disregarded the skepticism of textual scholarship in favor of studies that supported the LDS canon of scripture. Consequently, official Latter-day Saint publications adopted images from a large body of Western art that substantiated Christ's ministry as a historical reality. In later decades of the twentieth century, Mormons continued to display a strong affection for historical realism, manifested by their choosing artists who work in a highly realistic manner. Contemporary renderings of Christ in Church periodicals—although diverse—were consistently naturalistic in approach, echoing the attention to the realism of fin-de-siecle religious art.<sup>10</sup>

To appreciate more fully Mormonism's choice of realistic visuals depicting Christ, one should look at the Church's concomitant response to higher biblical criticism during the period from about 1880 to 1930. As early as 1898, Church authorities began to seriously consider an authoritative stand in the debate about how the Bible should be viewed. Extensive discussions on man's origin and his relationship with God were passionately argued by LDS theologians like James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and William H. Chamberlin. Although they positioned themselves along a wide spectrum of polemical responses, their shared purpose was to harmonize the chasm between critical scholarship and religion.<sup>11</sup>



In refuting critics who cited differences and inconsistencies in the Gospel accounts, LDS scholars of that period asserted their allegiance to the texts while dismissing problematic parts as corruptions of an inspired work. Mormons shared a belief with evangelical Protestants in that they believed in the relative consistency of the biblical narrative. Above all, regardless of textual discrepancies, Latter-day Saint scholars maintained their faith in the King James Bible, since it affirmed the historicity and divinity of Christ. Conservative scholars such as Roberts, Talmage, Smith, J. Reuben Clark Jr., and, later, Bruce R. McConkie ardently defended the indisputability of the scriptures. To these LDS scholars, the scriptures were the word of God and were impermeable to higher textual criticism.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps no other work influenced the Mormon perception of Christ more than James E. Talmage's book *Jesus the Christ* (1915), which focused on Christ's antemortal existence, his ministry, and his godhood. A semi-official response to questions regarding the historicity of Christ—the book was written on assignment from the First Presidency—*Jesus the Christ* came on the heels of Albert Schweitzer's seminal book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), which challenged Victorian orthodoxy by demythologizing Jesus and representing him as a figure designed by rationalism. While Talmage borrowed concepts and methodology from Victorian biographers of Christ, he did not create an "aura of mystery surrounding the Savior." Rather, he described Christ as "a rational manipulator of eternal laws that were incomprehensible to man."<sup>13</sup> By framing Christ within a setting of natural laws, Talmage affirmed the LDS belief in Christ's literal corporeal appearance, a belief that concomitantly sustains the comprehensibility of Jesus. Talmage also emphasized that "Christ combined within His own person and nature the attributes of His mortal mother, and just as truly the attributes of His immortal Sire."<sup>14</sup> Confluent with this belief in the divine and mortal attributes of Jesus was the use of images of Christ that visually corroborated his bodily nature.

During this period of conflicting approaches to scriptural study, Christian art was characterized by a realistic manner that sustained the historicity of biblical characters and events. Given the interest in science and rationalism, Christian sentiment of that time was unresponsive to mysticism in religious art. The affection for highly realistic art, then, reinforced a literal view of the scriptures.

Evidently, for early-twentieth-century Mormons, most of the artists that best conveyed this literal approach to scriptural interpretation came from the German realist tradition. For example, Heinrich Hofmann's *Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane* (1890; fig. 1) often appeared in LDS periodicals and children's readers early in the century. Hofmann's prayerful Christ is shown kneeling at a large stone and wearing a tunic, which is spilling to the



ground. The illuminated profile of Christ is placed high on balance of his triangularly shaped form, giving weight and stability to the overall composition. Hofmann's painting *Christ and the Rich Young Ruler* (1899; plate 1) also captured the literal quality that Latter-day Saint scholars sought to portray in their New Testament scholarship. In this visual narrative, Hofmann has captured Christ and the young man in the critical point of their dialogue. Hofmann's realistic manner and his convincing use of costumery resemble a static photograph (a still), giving currency to the work.

Depicting Christ as an incarnate man with whom the worshipful viewer could identify, the paintings of other German and northern European artists such as Bernhard Plockhorst, Anton Dorph, Fritz von Uhde, and Herman Clementz embodied similar traits of realism. The unambiguous but charming quality of Plockhorst's *Good Shepherd* (ca. 1895; fig. 2) substantiated the historicity of Christ in the eyes of Latter-day Saint children when it was frequently used as a visual aid, a flannel-board cutout (fig. 3), and a *Children's Friend* illustration.

A Danish artist who has found respect among Latter-day Saints is Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834–90). The popularity of Bloch's work among Latter-day Saints is due in large measure to Doyle L. Green, managing editor of the Church's *Improvement Era* from 1950 to 1970. Green's series of readings on the life of Christ, serialized in the *Era* between 1956 and 1958, was published by Deseret Book as *He That Liveth* (1958). The book was illustrated with ten plates from Bloch's life-of-Christ series (plate 2, 1870s; plate 3, 1872). Green commented:

[Bloch's] fascination with detail, his powerful use of light and shadow, his dramatic animation and heroic vision, his accurate draftsmanship and the all but perfect structural qualities of his figures, combined with the skillful use of vivid color, give a *highly realistic* quality to his paintings. His buildings, trees and shrubs, clothing, general terrain, and even walls and rocks create a *remarkably accurate* impression of the Holy Land area. . . . These paintings of Carl Heinrich Bloch tell a story of the Savior that can be understood by all. It is hoped that they will bring much inspiration, joy, and understanding to homes and classrooms throughout the Church.<sup>15</sup>

Because of the paintings' "utility for Church publications," in 1990 representatives of the Church approached officials of the Frederiksborg Museum, where the paintings are housed. The managing editor of the *Ensign*, Jay M. Todd, remembers:

We desired to rephotograph the paintings and asked if it would be possible for the scenes to be taken from the walls to receive better photographic lighting. Museum officials accepted the request, concluding also that while they were down, the paintings should be cleaned to again make vivid colors that had been dimmed by a century of accumulating dust while on public display.<sup>16</sup>



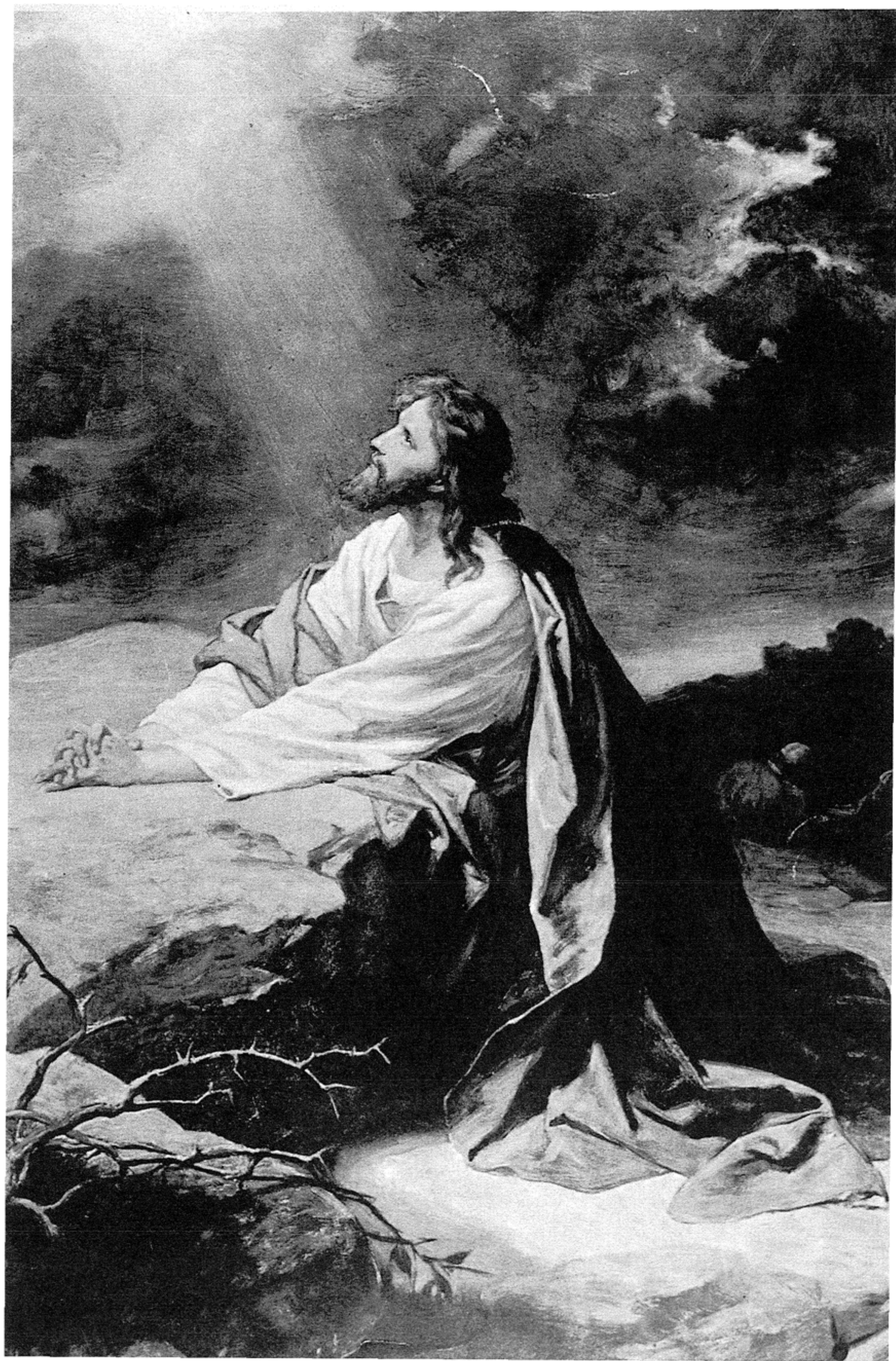


FIG. 1. *Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane*, by Heinrich Hofmann (1824–1911). Oil on canvas, 66" x 55", 1890. Riverside Church/House of Art, New York.



Another artist whose art has been prolifically reproduced in Latter-day Saint periodicals is James Jacques Tissot (1836–1902). Although he comes from the nineteenth-century tradition of French salon painters, his paintings of the life of Christ have been well received for their historical and cultural accuracy (plate 4, ca. 1880s).<sup>17</sup> Their appeal is due to what art critics have called *art pompier*, or Bourgeois Realism. These paintings are distinguished by a balance between technique and content, a visible interest in the narrative genre, and increased attention to detail. And while they depict sublime religious narratives, they are composed of naturalistic representations of beings and objects.<sup>18</sup> Between 1886 and 1897, Tissot visited the Holy Land, making sketches and photographic references. The result was his three-volume illustrated New Testament, *The Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ* (1899), which attempted to bring authenticity to the scriptural record. “Every work, no matter what, has its own ideal,” Tissot wrote. “The ideal of mine was truth, the truth of the life of Christ. To reproduce with fidelity the divine personality of Jesus, to make Him live again before the eyes of the spectators, to call up the very spirit which shone through His every act, and through all His noble teaching.”<sup>19</sup>

### The “True Likeness” of Christ

As a result of his extensive investigations into the Renaissance depictions of Christ, Victorian religionist Thomas Heaphy determined that artists used a “recognized” or “authenticated” type as a reference. The Renaissance artists, he discovered, “worked in accordance with certain specified information.”<sup>20</sup> Heaphy surmised:

These works afford sufficient evidence that the particular traits—such as the hair parted in the middle, flowing to the shoulders, and beginning to curl or wave from the ear downward—the thin beard, the hair upon the lip, and the oval face—were recognised as distinguishing characteristics of the true Likeness, even at that early period.<sup>21</sup>

Such information may have been supplied in the somatic profiles of Christ found in various Byzantine renderings, such as the apocryphal letter of Publius Lentulus, the Mandyion image, and the Turin Shroud accounts.<sup>22</sup> The varying texts of the Lentulus letter, for example, differ in their prefatory notes but are similar in the many details of Christ’s physical appearance:

[Christ was] a man in stature middling tall, and comely, having a reverend countenance, . . . having hair of the hue of an unripe hazel-nut and smooth almost down to his ears, but from the ears in curling locks somewhat darker and more shining, waving over (from) his shoulders; having a parting at the middle of the head according to the fashion of the Nazareans.<sup>23</sup>



FIG. 2. *The Good Shepherd*, by Bernhard Plockhorst, ca. 1895. From Cynthia Pearl Maus, *Christ and the Fine Arts*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 541.



FIG. 3. Photo illustration by Ralph T. Clark (1926–). Courtesy Ralph T. Clark.



The letter further described a man with a pleasant countenance, having “a face without wrinkle or any blemish” and “a full beard of the colour of his hair, not long, but a little forked at the chin; having an expression simple and mature, the eyes grey, glancing . . . and clear.”<sup>24</sup> Presbyterian clergyman and reformer Henry Ward Beecher subscribed to the description of Lentulus and in 1872 urged that, rather than present a “formidable being, terrible in holiness,” depictions of Jesus reveal the traits of “irresistibility” that made little children and mothers, the rich and poor, and the lettered follow him.<sup>25</sup> The Mandylion, or Image of Edessa, dating from the tenth century, was the impetus for an iconographic tradition of the Eastern Church, which featured a haloed head of Christ with a beard, a straight nose, and hair parted in the middle.<sup>26</sup> Later images appear to have been derived from the Mandylion, also called the *acheiropietos* (not made by human hands) type. The well-known Turin Shroud of the thirteenth century, believed to have been Christ’s burial cloth, also depicted Christ with a bifurcated beard and straight nose. This *acheiropietos* image type continued through the eighteenth century, as was documented in the painter’s manual or *Hermeneia* kept by the Greek monk, Dionysius of Fournia.<sup>27</sup>

Except for brief narratives of some modern visitations of Christ, such as the account of the First Vision, Mormon descriptions of Christ have been limited to general characterizations of his divine qualities and magnanimous nature. According to German convert Alexander Neibaur, Joseph Smith had simply described Christ as having a “light complexion” and “blue eyes.”<sup>28</sup> James Talmage never took up the subject of physical appearance, referring in his study only to Christ’s adolescent years as a time of development “spent in active effort, both physical and mental.”<sup>29</sup> Later in the work, though, Talmage observed that Jesus had a “submissive yet majestic demeanor” while standing in the presence of Pilate.<sup>30</sup> In 1877, Elder Orson F. Whitney received a sublime dream or vision wherein he witnessed the suffering Christ in Gethsemane, where Christ “was of noble stature and majestic mien—not at all the weak, effeminate being that some painters have portrayed; but the very God that he was and is, as meek and humble as a little child.”<sup>31</sup>

A subtle curiosity in the “true likeness” of Christ persisted through Mormon intellectualizing. But speculation on the matter fell short of describing Jesus’ face as more enigmatically perfect than that of his contemporaries. By 1900, Latter-day Saints had been introduced to an eighth-century descriptive sketch of Christ written by John of Damascus as well as to the apocryphal description attributed to Lentulus.<sup>32</sup> The letter of Lentulus, for example, was read in LDS general conference proceedings on three occasions between 1926 and 1957.<sup>33</sup> “Whether authentic or not I do not know,” said Spencer W. Kimball of the letter in April 1956. “But it may stir our imaginations.”<sup>34</sup>



Although they viewed Jesus as a model of mental and physical perfection, more conservative Latter-day Saints believed that Christ would not have appeared remarkably different than those around him. Such reasoning followed the scriptural passage that he would appear without “comeliness,” indeed having “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2). Bruce R. McConkie gave passing attention to the question of Christ’s likeness in the first installment of his multivolume *Messiah* series. In it, Elder McConkie reported:

We know very little about the personality, form, visage, and general appearance of the Lord Jesus. Whether he had long or short hair, was tall or short of stature, and a thousand other personal details, are all a matter of speculation and uncertainty. We suppose he was similar in appearance to other Abrahamic Orientals of his day, and that he was recognized by those who knew him and went unheeded in the crowds by those unacquainted with him.<sup>35</sup>

Although Mormon scholars have avoided taking an authoritative stance on Christ’s physical appearance, the subject of how the Savior has been depicted has been broached. In 1925, Janne M. Sjodahl, Church scholar and editor of the *Deseret News*, wrote that in the Gospels “the Evangelists have studiously avoided to draw any picture of the physical features of the Master, while they have placed before us a character, the divine features of which are unmistakable.”<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Sjodahl believed artistic representations of Christ’s lineaments historically varied, inspired by spurious descriptions of Christ’s visage like the Lentulus letter and the legendary Veil of Veronica.<sup>37</sup> “On the ground of these descriptions,” he noted, “arose a vast number of pictures of Christ which are divided into two classes: the *Salvator* pictures, with the expression of calm serenity and dignity, without the faintest mark of grief; and the *Ecce Homo* pictures of the suffering Savior with the crown of thorns.”<sup>38</sup> Sjodahl was quick to favor the noble qualities of the former of these two classes. Early Christian representations, he maintained, were associated with Christ’s state of humiliation and suffering, taking as their inspiration Isaiah’s description of the suffering Messiah: “He was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3).

In Sjodahl’s estimation, representations of Christ dating from the fourth century typically rendered him disrespectfully revolting and base. Constantinian and Gothic artists often depicted the suffering Christ with twisted limbs and an attenuated torso. Calling these base images “mean and repugnant,” Sjodahl called for a “higher order of spiritual beauty” in depictions of Christ, saying, “all the facts of his life speak convincingly of that strength, and endurance, and dignity, and electric influence, which none could have exercised without a large share of human, no less than of spiritual gifts.”<sup>39</sup>



During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Latter-day Saints avoided images like the Gothic *Andachtsbild*, or the morbid images of the passion, the crucified Christ, or pietà. Nor did they adopt stagnant images such as the great Pantocrator likeness of Byzantium.<sup>40</sup> Mormons adopted the more sentimental Lentulus type familiar to most Western Christians. This type has continued to be the basis of all Mormon depictions in the twentieth century. For example, after surveying the many artistic interpretations of Christ, along with the historical accounts, LDS artist Gary E. Smith concluded that “there is a special type which is persistent and we recognize as the Christ image.” Referring to the apparent type used by artists as the true image of Christ—a type explained by Sir Wyke Bayliss in his *Rex Regum*, Smith concluded that “the ‘Rex Regum’ builds a strong case for the image and is one which I, personally, drift toward believing.”<sup>41</sup> The tradition of following the Lentulus description can be seen, for example, in a portrait of Christ by C. Brosseron Chambers (fig. 4, n.d.) that was used in Church manuals for several decades. More recently, LDS artists have also followed this type, as can be seen in portraits by Harold T. (Dale) Kilbourn, Robert T. Barrett, and Del Parson.

### Racial Perspectives

No study of LDS visuals depicting Christ can adequately cover their selection, use, and dissemination without touching upon the subject of race. Images of Christ created by Latter-day Saints reveal their worldview of Christ’s Jewishness and thus their perceptions of Semitic physical attributes in general.

Latter-day Saints have generally believed in a fair-skinned Christ. Like their Protestant counterparts, Latter-day Saints have observed the scriptural description of Christ’s youthful forebear, King David, as “ruddy, and of a fair countenance” (1 Sam. 17:42). In fact, it is commonly held that the early Nephites, who came from Judea as did Christ, resembled Europeans in facial features and skin color. Referring to the Gentiles (Europeans), Nephi wrote that “they were white, and exceedingly fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain” (1 Ne. 13:15). A desire to portray cultural accuracy or realism appears to be a greater factor in choosing suitable “true likenesses” of Christ for Church publications than trying to capture the darker physical traits commonly associated with modern Mediterranean peoples. American Latter-day Saints, in light of their own descriptions of Christ, have perpetuated the traditional image of him as having a fair complexion.

George Reynolds, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy and the Deseret Sunday School Union Board, commented in a 1904 *Juvenile*



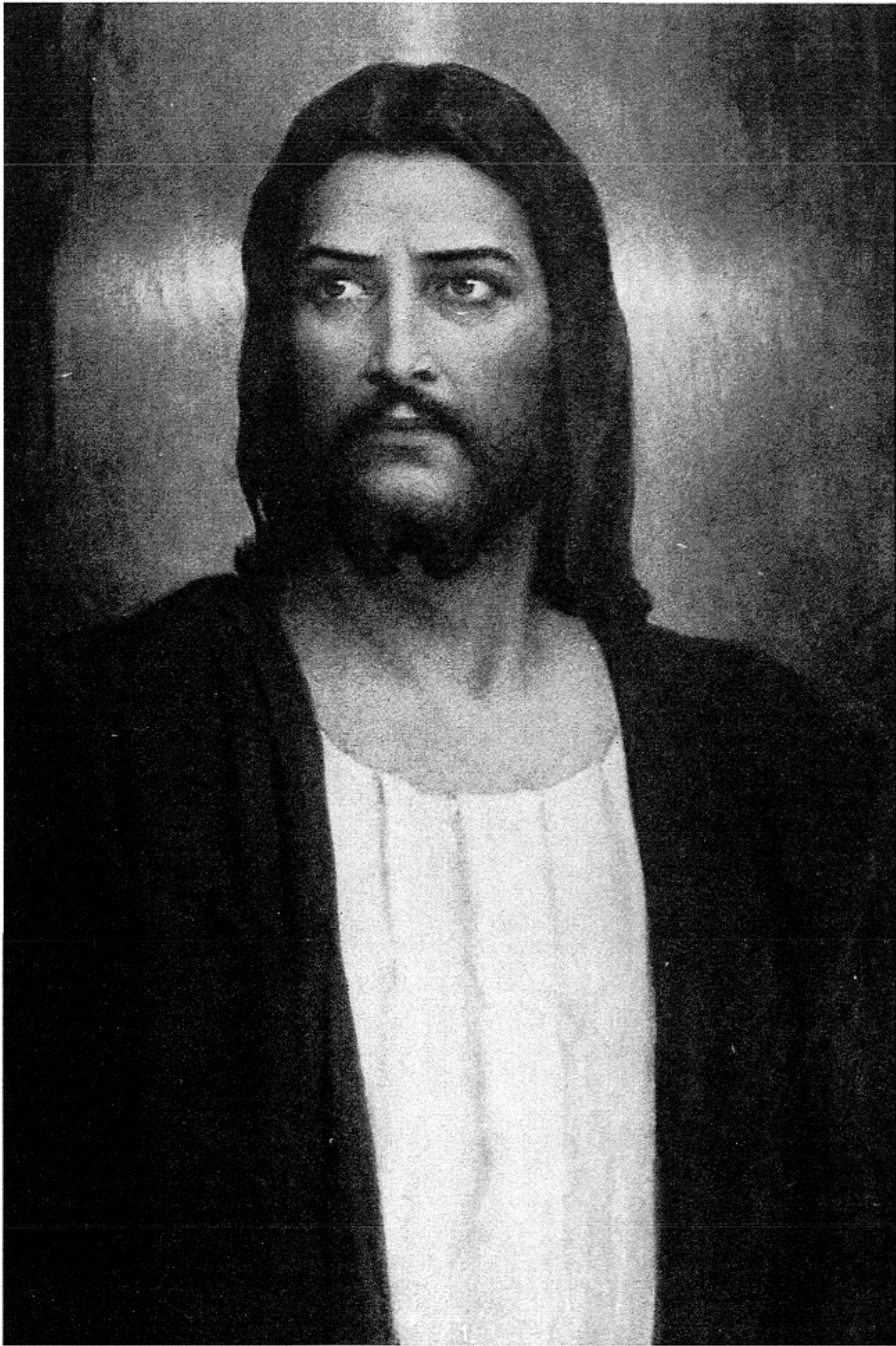


FIG. 4. *Jesus, the Christ*, by C. Bosseron Chambers (1883–?).  
Edward Gross Co., New York.

*Instructor* article on the personal appearance of Jesus, noting the misconceptions in past artistic representations. The old masters, he wrote, “painted Christ as a red-haired, bare-headed man marching through the streets of a German village, or seated by an Italian villa with the utmost complacency; they put stoga boots on the feet of the disciples and armed the Roman soldiers with blunderbusses.”<sup>42</sup> Disregarding the obvious European influence in the accompanying illustration, Reynolds did not object to Jesus’ Nordic or Germanic facial features but referred to the work as one of “the rather better class of the ordinary picture” even though it contained a number of the “foolish inaccuracies above referred to.”<sup>43</sup>



Bertel Thorvaldsen's *Christus* (1821; copy, fig. 5) was held up by Reynolds as "a very dignified example" of the conventional perception of the Christ figure in visual art.<sup>44</sup> The formal order of Thorvaldsen's work exemplifies the symmetry and balance admired by mainstream Church members. This high regard for Thorvaldsen's formal classicism coincided with some Mormon authors' regard for Germanic physical attributes.

Given that Jesus is the son of an "exceedingly fair and white" mother (1 Ne. 11:13), Mormons have continued to envision a fair-skinned Christ in their visual art. The persistence of this phenomenon can be seen in depictions of a fair-complexioned Christ in Church-commissioned paintings by Harry Anderson and in *Ensign* and *Children's Friend* illustrations by Barrett, Parson, and Gary Kapp (see, for example, plates 5–14).

### Christ's Image as Exemplar

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, American religious educators found that pictures were useful in teaching children moral values. One writer, Henry E. Jackson, stated that religious paintings "impress deeply on the mind and heart some great truth or Biblical scene which has made only a slight impression before." Jackson remarked that "whether we will or not, the child will visualize the stories he hears. He makes images of the characters and incidents of the Bible."<sup>45</sup> In 1922, Albert Edward Bailey, a professor of religious art and anthropology at Boston University, expressed a similar notion:

Jesus is not a myth, he was a man. If he was a man, he lived somewhere and at some time; he did things, he went to places, he talked and walked with men and women. Where did he live? What did he do? How did he look when he did it? and what did his companions look like? These are all legitimate questions in the mouths of boys and girls.

According to Bailey, the average religious picture does not answer these questions. However, he wrote, "The questions can be answered correctly by two types of pictures, one of which at least we shall have to classify as art—the work of certain nineteenth-century artists like Tissot, Hunt, Siemiradski, and others—and actual photographs."<sup>46</sup> Jackson concurred: "To render [a child] the best service, in this process [of visualization], only the best pictures ought to be put into his hands. Poor pictures will do more harm than good, for they will give false notions which must later be unlearned."<sup>47</sup>

In the production of educational material in nineteenth-century America, sectarian uses prevailed. Mormons themselves were known for their locally published children's readers, such as Edwin Parry's *Simple Bible Stories*, which were profusely illustrated with traditional engravings of biblical narratives.<sup>48</sup> By the early twentieth century, such readers had become canonized as an official component of the Church's Sunday School



and Primary programs. James Tissot's paintings of the life of Christ, for example, were first introduced to Latter-day Saints in 1908, when they were used to illustrate the Primary lessons in the *Children's Friend* of that year. Primary officers urged, "It is expected that these pictures will be used as much as possible in the lesson work, and assist in the aim of the lesson."<sup>49</sup> Later that year, the "Tissot Pictures" were recommended as a teaching aid to the lessons and were offered as a set of 120 pictures available at the *Friend* office for one dollar.<sup>50</sup>

William A. Morton, a Salt Lake City author of children's readers, wrote *The Life of Christ in Simple Language for Little Children* (1916), which contained reproductions of the ubiquitous works of Plockhorst, Hofmann, and others and added the Joseph Smith story illustrated with paintings by Lewis A. Ramsey.<sup>51</sup>

In 1922, the Sunday School Union published *Bible and Church History Stories*, illustrated by lithographic reproductions of paintings by Hofmann, Plockhorst, Rembrandt, Joshua Reynolds, and William Hunt.<sup>52</sup> Quarterly lesson bulletins published by the general board of the Primary Association from 1933 through 1936 contained the artwork of Plockhorst, Hofmann, and others, which was meant to accompany teaching lessons.

In 1946, Kenneth S. Bennion, a member of the Junior Department Committee for the Sunday Schools, issued his study manual, *The Life of Christ*, illustrated with forty-eight color plates showing events in Christ's ministry. The illustrations included work by Plockhorst, Hofmann, Otto Stemler (fig. 6, n.d.), Alexander Bida, Martin Feuerstein, Alf Rolfsen, and Paul Thumann. Seven years later, Franklin L. West, then Church commissioner of education, published his text, *Jesus, His Life and Teachings* (1953), which contained nearly all of the illustrations used by Bennion. A later edition of Bennion's manual (1957) was more diverse, including works by

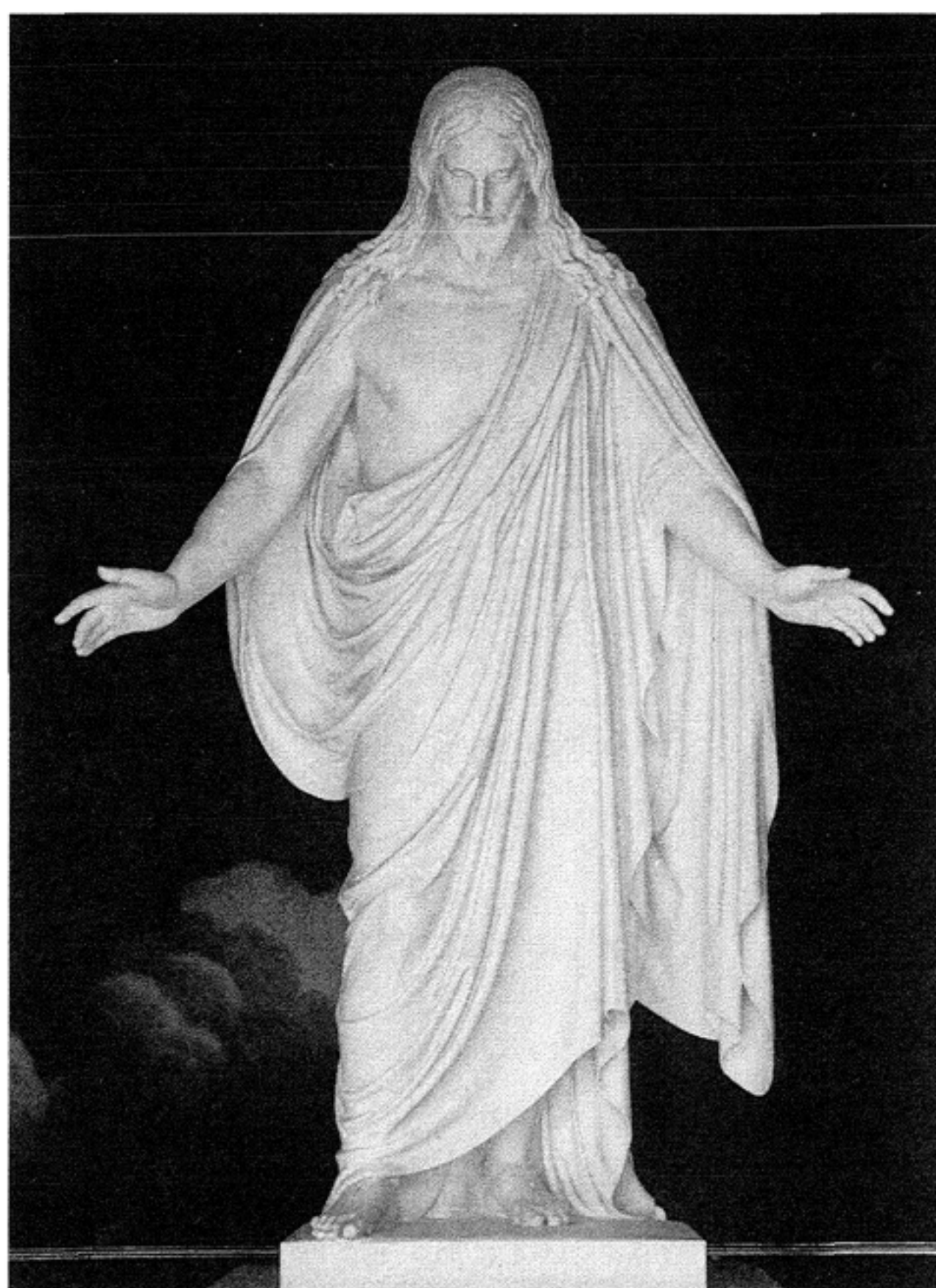


FIG. 5. *Christus*, original by Albert Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844). Marble, 11', 1828. This full-size copy, which stands in the North Visitors' Center at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, was made by Aldo Rebecchi about 1965. Courtesy LDS Church Visual Resources Library.



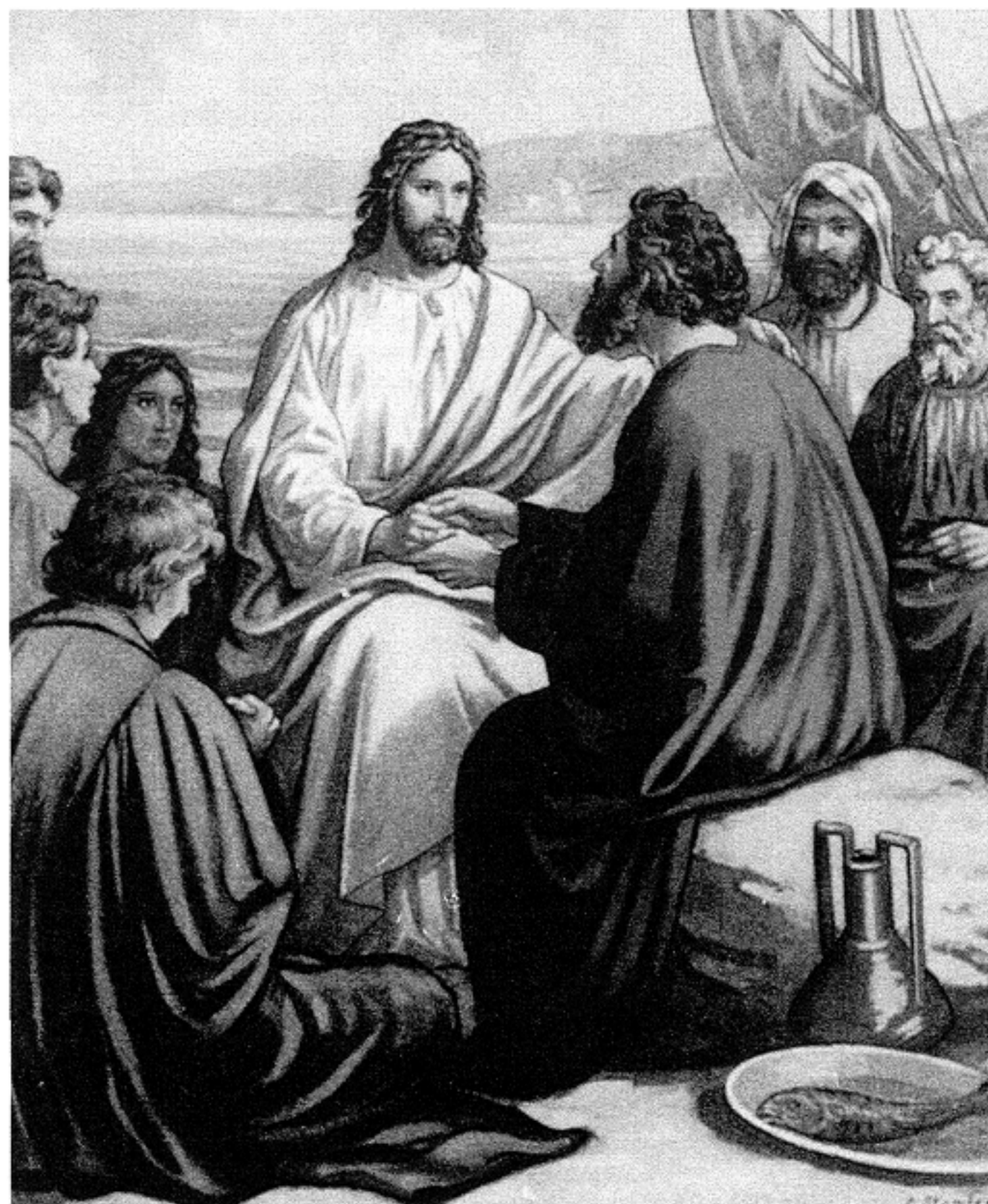


FIG. 6. *Jesus and Peter*, by Otto Stemler. From Kenneth Bennion's *Life of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1946), facing 120.

Rubens, Vogel, Vermeer, and Armitage, while adding images by two LDS-commissioned artists, Goff Dowding and Arnold Friberg (table 1). This edition indicates the beginnings of a trend toward using distinctively "Mormon" art.

Although images were initially considered supplemental to customary teaching methods, pictures became an integral part of LDS religious instruction as the perceptual effects of pictures became more widely known.<sup>53</sup> Latter-day Saint specialists in child development and education taught that, when properly selected, pictures "will materially determine

many of the moral qualities that may be developed in a child. For example, the pictures of great men and women may inspire a desire to become like them."<sup>54</sup> The use of pictures could impress upon the mind of children the reality of Christ's mortal mission. For example, in 1913, LDS artist J. Leo Fairbanks stressed the efficacy of picture study in Sunday School instruction:

It is through the physical that art is able to interpret our comprehension of what we feel, conceive, or see, and through the interpretation of this expression that later people gain the spiritual message. Art causes us to feel that Christ was a man, that He lived a physical existence, that He was mortal, sympathized with sinners, moved among beggars, helped the infirm, ate with publicans and counseled with human beings for their immediate as well as their future spiritual welfare. It is to art that we turn for help in seeing the reality of the facts of the religious teachings of this divine human.<sup>55</sup>

The increasing use of images in Church readers, teaching aids, and periodicals added a new dimension to gospel teaching. Young children could be sensitized to form characterizations of the subjects they were studying at church and at home.

In an attempt to teach character, some Latter-day Saints adopted the pseudoscientific manner of character appraisal called phrenology. In



**TABLE 1. Illustrations Used in Kenneth S. Bennion's  
*Life of Christ* (1950 Edition)**

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Title of Image</b>
Armitage, Edward	<i>The Remorse of Judas</i>
Barhydt, J. A.	<i>On the Road to Emmaus</i>
Bellini, Giovanni	<i>The Flight into Egypt</i>
Bolognese School	<i>Christ Healing the Blind</i>
Bolognese School	<i>Christ Raising the Son of the Widow of Nain</i>
Brown, Ford Madox	<i>Christ Washing Peter's Feet</i>
Ciseri, Antonio	<i>Behold the Man</i>
Cole, Thomas	<i>Expulsion from the Garden of Eden</i>
Crespi, G. M.	<i>The Marriage at Cana</i>
Dowding, Goff	<i>The Creation</i>
Friberg, Arnold	<i>The Wise Men from the East</i>
Harwood, James T.	<i>Come Follow Me</i>
Hofmann, Heinrich	<i>Christ and the Rich Young Ruler</i>
Hofmann, Heinrich	<i>Christ in the Garden of Gethesemane</i>
Hofmann, Heinrich	<i>Christ in the Temple</i>
Hofmann, Heinrich	<i>Come unto Me</i>
Hofmann, Heinrich	<i>The Sermon on the Mount</i>
Manchola, Juan	<i>The Good Samaritan</i>
Mastroianni	<i>No Room in the Inn</i>
Matania, Fortunio	<i>The Draught of the Fishes</i>
Monroy, Luis	<i>Christ Driving Out Them That Sold and Bought from the Temple</i>
Murillo	<i>The Return of the Prodigal Son</i>
Plockhorst, Bernhardt	<i>Christ's Entry into Jerusalem</i>
Plockhorst, Bernhardt	<i>The Good Shepherd</i>
Rolle, Henri Le	<i>Arrival of the Shepherds</i>
Rubens, Peter Paul	<i>Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene after His Resurrection</i>
Rubens, Peter Paul	<i>The Tribute Money</i>
Sieminadeski, H. S.	<i>The Twelve Chosen</i>
Tissot, J. James	<i>The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes</i>
Vermeer	<i>Christ in the House of Martha and Mary</i>
Vinci, Leonardo da	<i>The Last Supper</i>
Vogel, Hugo	<i>Jesus and the Children</i>
Zurbaran, Francisco de	<i>Crucifixion</i>



keeping with this fascination with phrenology and the related discipline of physiognomy, Latter-day Saint children were informed that character could be determined by closely examining a subject's facial attributes in photographs and pictures.<sup>56</sup> Hence, a person's lineaments could reveal desirable qualities consistent with individuals of high moral character.

In a popular Salt Lake City periodical for young people, *The Character Builder* (1902–40), phrenologists Nephi Y. Schofield and John T. Miller regularly contributed character delineations of prominent Latter-day Saint and other personalities.<sup>57</sup> Schofield discussed the possibility of delineating character from a photograph. Conceding that it poses some difficulty in obtaining accurate measurements for a thorough and complete reading, he nonetheless believed that a photograph “will furnish abundant material for much that is interesting and useful.” According to Schofield, the “organs that represent force” are primarily located to the side and back of the head and cannot be examined in a photograph or, presumably, any other two-dimensional image. The examiner is then obliged to rely upon “physiognomical signs” that can be seen from the front of the subject.<sup>58</sup> Supposedly, if children could apply this method of ascertaining higher character to photographic portraiture, they could also apply the method to paintings for determining the exemplary traits of Christ.

From about 1950 to 1955, course instructors were encouraged to use visuals supplied by the Sunday School Union or those printed in the *Instructor*, the official organ of the Sunday School. Articles published during this period emphasized the utility of appropriately selected pictures for building character recognition and memory in young students. Kenneth S. Bennion, member of the *Instructor* publication committee, regularly contributed articles that accompanied color pictures of Jesus and other biblical characters. Other articles spotlighted the use of pictures by ward Sunday School instructors.<sup>59</sup> One teacher trainer, Alta Miller, promoted the use of charts to help students focus their attention on important points in a lesson. “To build ideas of Jesus,” a picture was placed on what she called a “sensitivity chart.” Statements about the “characteristics of Jesus” such as “Courage without reservations” were printed near the picture (fig. 7).<sup>60</sup>

### Christ as the Ideal of Masculinity

As part of a larger effort to curb juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities for young people—both Mormon and Protestant—often set the boundaries of male gender roles.<sup>61</sup> Out of this effort to reform delinquent youth arose a progressive masculine ideal that could be attained through social-gospel programs. A crusade to promote physical and spiritual well-being through organized recreational activities came to be known as Muscular Christianity, a movement that swept urban America during the



1870s and '80s. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), perhaps the most influential of the youth organizations, promoted exercise, recreation, and education for "the development of the best type of virile Christian manhood."<sup>62</sup> Although the YMCA's foundational principles included mental and moral as well as physical efficiency, its supporters believed that "the full development of Christian character and sturdy manhood depends upon proper and adequate physical training."<sup>63</sup>

Early-twentieth-century speeches and articles by Latter-day Saint authorities often correlated ideal manhood in part with physical strength and stature. An *Improvement Era* article of 1904 admonished young men to aspire to physical as well as intellectual and spiritual perfection. In fact, its author claimed, "the physical must stand first. Without a good body, all the powers and faculties will be blighted." "The ideal young man, then, must be strong in body, and as near as possible physically perfect."<sup>64</sup> George Reynolds's *Juvenile Instructor* article of that same year stated that Christ had been universally represented by the master artists as a

somewhat effeminate and sentimental young man with long flowing locks, a weakling in body and with few traces on his face of the strength of character within. All this is wrong, Christ was not red-haired, nor effeminate, neither



FIG. 7. Photo illustration by Ray G. Jones, from "She Charts Her Lessons," *Instructor* 89 (May 1954): 134.



was he a dyspeptic, nor a dreamy sentimentalist; the Being who drove the money changers out of the Temple was no weakling. . . . He would be a vigorous, deep chested, broad shouldered man, with well cut features and above the medium height, with his bodily energies developed through a life of youthful labor in Joseph's carpenter shop at Nazareth.<sup>65</sup>

Health and well-being were part of the Church's program in teaching the young men practical religion. While the YMCA was exclusively serving its young evangelical Protestant membership, Church leaders adopted programs of recreation and health, which were implemented by the Church's Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), established as an auxiliary in December 1876, and the Boy Scouts of America, with which the Church affiliated in May 1913.<sup>66</sup> The athletic programs of the YMMIA, for example, were designed to provide wholesome leisure activities as a support to building testimony and character in young priesthood holders. YMMIA course manuals included lessons on the value of good health and caring for the body "machine." The 1909–10 manual, *The Making of the Man*, emphasized a balanced approach to physical, mental, and social efficiency in manhood. "Physical manhood," it affirmed, "consists in having a strong, symmetrical, well-trained body."<sup>67</sup>

In a series of lessons entitled "Health and Achievement," the 1922–23 senior manual stated that "the man who preserves his manhood, conserves his vigor, his spiritual power, is attractive. His eyes are clear, his mind alert, and his body erect. He is respected, admired and loved by all."<sup>68</sup> To be successful, the M Men, as they were called, should endeavor to maintain the highest standards of health as well as character. "Keep in mind what the 'M' stands for," the manual urged. "Manly men, Masculine men, Minute men, Mindful men, Mutual men, Merit men, Modern men, Modest men, Mighty men, and 'Mormon' men."<sup>69</sup>

In 1944, Levi Edgar Young, then President of the First Quorum of the Seventy, promoted this ideal physical condition as a significant trait of exemplary manhood. Quoting from Charles Eastman's *The Soul of the Indian* (1911), Young described the Native Americans' "fine conception of the importance of the body and its health and strength" as "supple, symmetrical, graceful, and enduring," a "high ideal of manly strength and beauty, the attainment of which depends upon strict temperance in eating, together with severe and persistent exercise." To this, Young added, "The perfect body was a part of Christ's glory."<sup>70</sup> In 1955, David S. King, then second assistant general superintendent in the YMMIA, encouraged the young men to armor themselves with noble qualities and build their physical strength as well as their moral values. Righteous living, self-conquest, and obedience to the laws of health were viewed as being among the high ideals of manhood and virility.<sup>71</sup>



King's ideals echoed the tone of Bruce Barton's best-selling book, *The Man Nobody Knows* (1924), in which Christ was portrayed as an outdoorsman, a sociable man, and an executive, one who called men from the lowest ranks and forged a perfect "business," a kingdom and organization that "conquered the world." In Barton's mind, Christ was not "a pale young man with flabby forearms and a sad expression" but was a man whose "muscles were so strong that when he drove the money-changers out, nobody dared to oppose him!"<sup>72</sup> According to Barton, "It requires only a little reading between the lines to be sure that almost all the painters have misled us. They have shown us a frail man, under-muscled, with a soft face—a woman's face covered by a beard—and a benign but baffled look, as though the problems of living were so grievous that death would be a welcome release."<sup>73</sup>

Another work that influenced Mormon perceptions of Christ was Harry Emerson Fosdick's *The Manhood of the Master* (1914). Citing specific examples of Jesus' magnanimous nature and virtuous qualities, Fosdick characterized Christ as a man perfectly balanced in his environment—social, even tempered, loyal, perseverant, and fearless—a man in whom both man and woman "should find their ideal."<sup>74</sup>

The impact of writers like Barton and Fosdick on Mormon concepts of Christ is immeasurable. Latter-day Saint educators followed virtually the same outline for lessons and character studies of Christ as those found in Barton and Fosdick and drew from Church-produced resource materials that portrayed Christ as the same successful role model and executive. For example, a series of manuals written by Bryant S. Hinckley for the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association from 1924 to 1927 focused on character-building and contained much of the corporate language of success used by both Barton and Fosdick.<sup>75</sup> Hinckley's *A Study of the Character and Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth* (1950), written as a course of study for the adult members of the Aaronic Priesthood, drew heavily on the writings of Barton and Fosdick. Hinckley's chapter topics closely follow those of Fosdick's *Manhood of the Master*. In fact, the chapter headings—such as "The Master's Joy," "The Master's Indignation," "The Master's Loyalty," "The Master's Measure of Values," "The Master's Sincerity," and "The Master's Fearlessness"—include virtually the same phrases as those used by Fosdick.<sup>76</sup>

The philosophy of social-gospel thinkers is as apparent in Latter-day Saint visual images as it was in youth instruction manuals. In keeping with the idealization of Christ, Mormons adopted the immensely popular *Head of Christ* painted by Warner Sallman in 1940 (fig. 8). Sallman's portrait was seen by many Americans as asexual or effeminate, the long flowing hair and the submissiveness of Christ's expression suggesting softer traits. But the artist intended the image to portray traits of manliness and male vigor.<sup>77</sup>



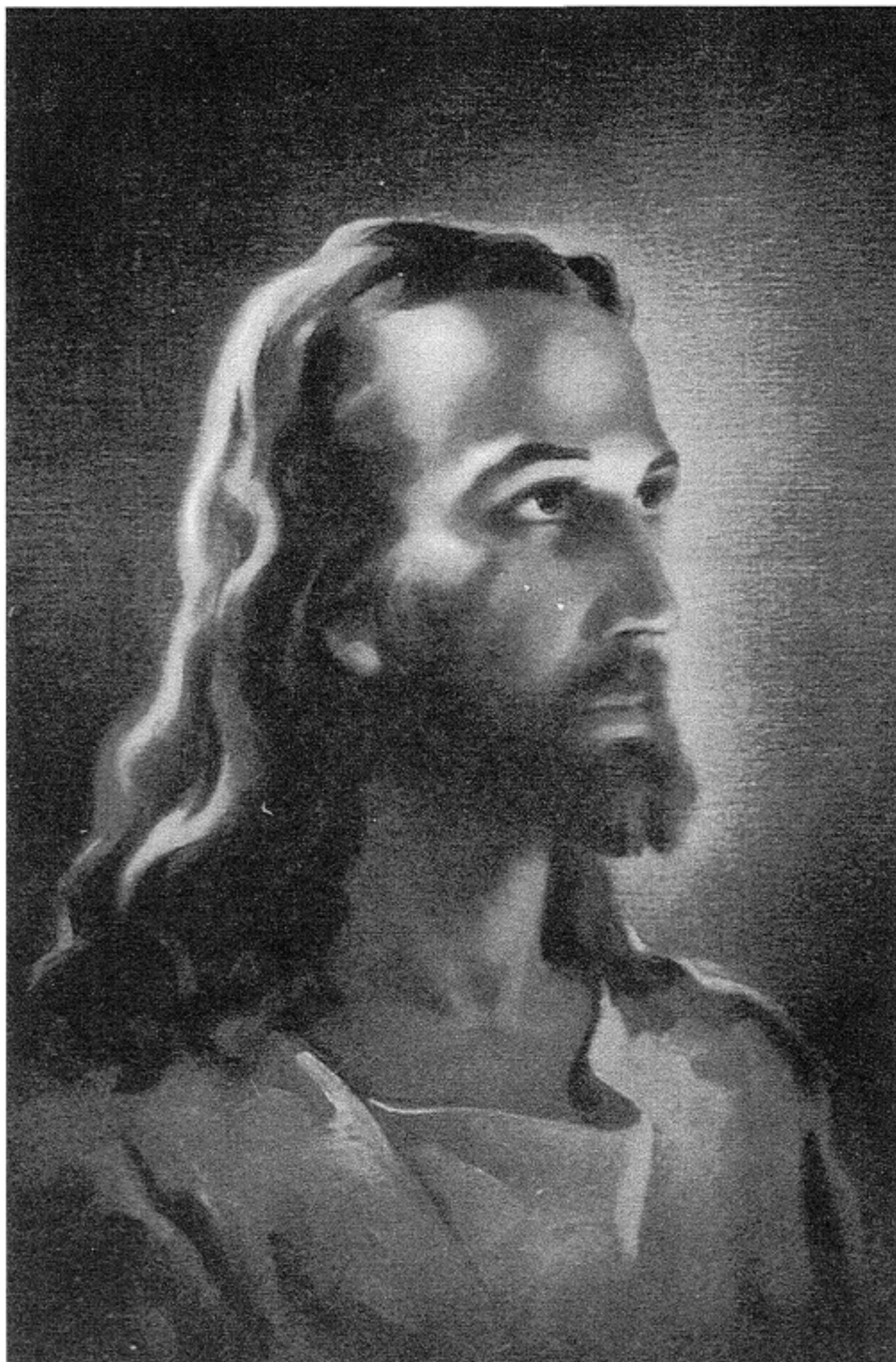


FIG. 8. *Head of Christ*, by Warner Sallman (1892–1968). Oil on canvas, 28¼" x 22½", 1940. © Warner Press, Inc., Anderson, Indiana. Used by permission.

Accordingly, other Americans viewed the wholesome, handsomely chiseled face and clear eyes as embodying the expected physical characteristics of the perfect man, Christ. To many Latter-day Saints, though, Sallman's painting not only represented the manliness described by Barton and Fosdick but also embodied a universally appealing attitude of supplication, an attitude fostered by Mormons as well as by other Christians.

Sallman's *Head of Christ* could often be seen in LDS homes hanging on the wall or displayed on the mantle. Its popular reception is also evident from its widespread use in ward meetinghouses and libraries. The picture was regularly used to decorate Church meetinghouse foyers, chapels, and class-

rooms. Sunday School and Primary instructors used the Sallman image to exemplify the ennobling qualities of Jesus that the painting was perceived as portraying. Two photographic visuals by Ralph T. Clark featured the Sallman *Head of Christ* to help teach prayer and reverence (figs. 9, 10).

By the late 1950s, Sallman's *Head of Christ* had entered the corpus of visuals that defined the image of Christ for Mormons (fig. 11). For example, a version of Sallman's Christ, completed in 1948 by a popular artist in Tahiti, Edgar Leeteg, was enjoyed by many Polynesian Church members during the time it hung in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple and later in the Papeete Tahiti Temple.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the *Head of Christ* and other Sallman paintings (fig. 12) were used on missionary calling cards and wallet-sized inspirational cards for LDS servicemen.





FIG. 9. Photo illustration for the Deseret Sunday School Union, by Ralph T. Clark (1926–). 1959. Courtesy Ralph T. Clark.

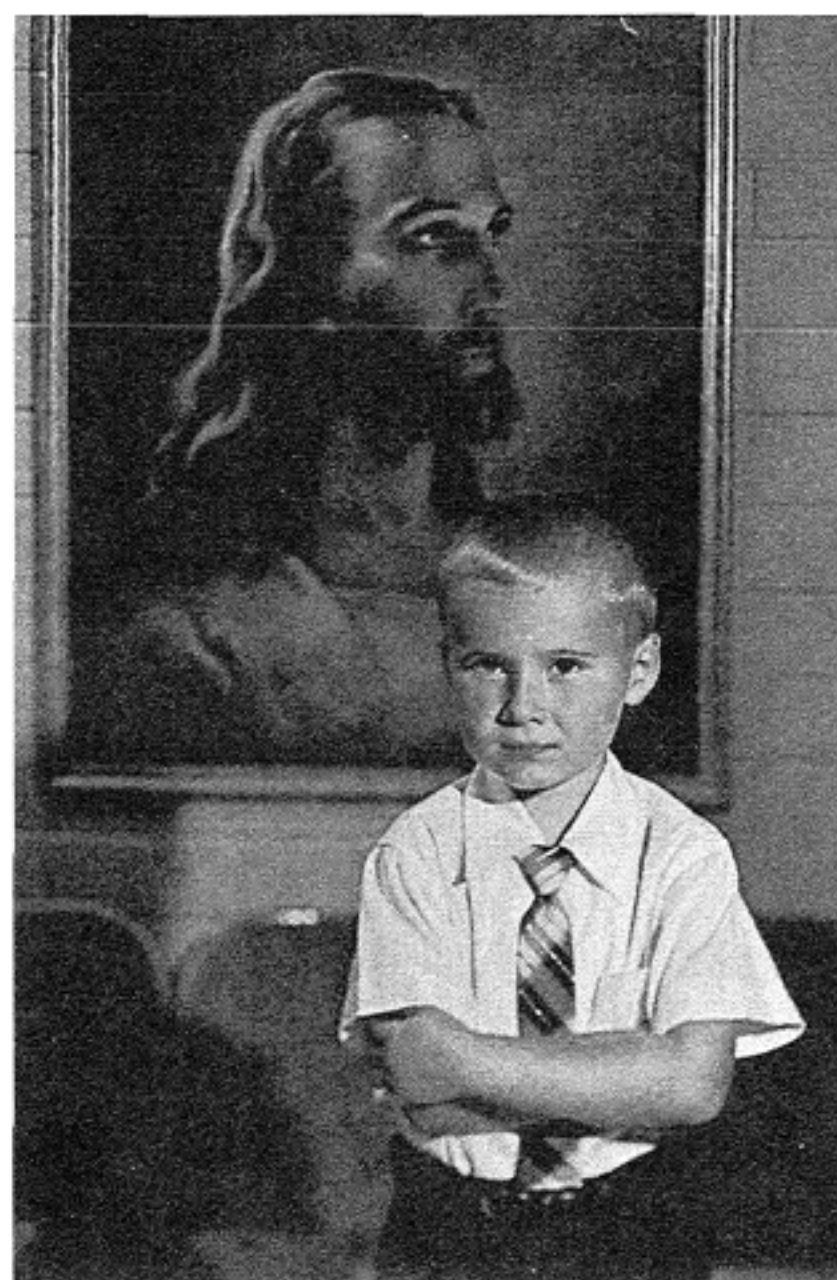


FIG. 10. Photo illustration for the Deseret Sunday School Union, by Ralph T. Clark (1926–). 1960. Courtesy Ralph T. Clark.



FIG. 11. William H. Bennett family. From *Improvement Era* 73 (May 1970): 13.





FIG. 12. *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, by Warner Sallman (1892–1968). Oil on canvas, 40" x 30", 1943. © Warner Press, Inc., Anderson, Indiana. Used by permission.

### Christ as a Man of Virtue, Integrity, and Sensitivity

In 1961, the editors of the *Improvement Era* introduced the Gospel in Art series, a program offering Church members the opportunity to purchase frameable reproductions of the works of LDS artist Arnold Friberg for hanging in their ward buildings and homes. The first painting in the series, *Peace Be Still* (1961), showed Jesus commanding the stormy elements to subside (Matt. 8; Mark 4). According to a *Church News* article, the painting would help to “instill a love of art” and encourage viewers to follow “in the Master’s footsteps of living the Gospel.”<sup>79</sup>

Friberg, known for his series of illustrations depicting square-jawed Royal Canadian Mounted Police, is regarded as a master artist who follows traditional academic methods of illustration to create monumental works of art. Friberg gained respect among Church members for his paintings of Book of Mormon scenes, which were commissioned by the Primary organization in 1952. Influenced as a child by Gustave Doré’s robust men and women of the Bible, Friberg’s artistic work shows an affinity for brawny, muscular forms—a symbolic feature that many viewers have come to recognize. Friberg has stated that his large, muscular characters are intended to physically portray the inward greatness of the men he depicts.<sup>80</sup>

In 1963, Friberg completed another painting for the Gospel in Art series. The painting, *Christ Appearing to the Nephites* (renamed *The Risen Lord*; plate 5), depicts a resurrected Christ standing in the midst of Nephite worshipers. Dressed in a luminous white robe, Christ stands with his hands outstretched and his tunic open to his waist, exposing the wound under his lowest left rib. His radiant trilaterally shaped form is positioned in an erect, dignified posture against a darkened background, emphasizing the strength of his presence. When the painting was advertised in the April 1965 *Improvement Era*, Friberg’s Christ was described as “a noble figure,” “both



manly and divine.” Church officials apparently disapproved of the bare-chested Christ, for the painting was never again advertised or used in Church publications.

Commenting on the painting, Friberg said:

In the absence of any known portraits of Christ, artists have pictured His face and figure in countless ways. I don’t believe that this multitude of interpretations especially bothers anyone, since artists are not painting a likeness, but an idea—a spiritual concept. . . . Jesus is neither a weakling nor a victim, but a commanding presence; one look at His eyes and men sacrificed everything to follow Him.<sup>81</sup>

Friberg may have been subtly referring to the Church’s disapproval of the painting when he continued, “In my Scriptural paintings I need not be concerned with involved theological controversies. Instead, I try to bring into reality the stories so often taught in Sunday school. . . . Through my paintings, I bear witness to the truth as I understand it.”<sup>82</sup>

Despite Friberg’s stand, the Church had become less inclined to idealize the physical virility of Christ, preferring instead to emphasize virtue and integrity as the measure of a perfect man. In 1964, Hugh B. Brown coined the phrase “consecrated manliness”—a phrase that would characterize the Mormon concept of manhood for the next three decades.<sup>83</sup> The qualities of athleticism and perfect health were minimized in favor of sensitivity, goodness, and virtue. Thus the Mormon male, though he was to be a sturdy patriarch, would primarily champion all that is virtuous.

Anthropologist David Knowlton has written that “Mormons avoid the androgynous imagery of Christ as a somewhat effeminate nurturer and mediator between us and the heavens. Rather, we focus on the Christ ascendant as ‘man’ the conqueror.”<sup>84</sup> Yet, judging by contemporary visual conceptions of Christ, the Mormon male is to invoke all His feminine nurturing qualities while manifesting all the demonstrable attributes that are typically considered masculine (authority, spiritual strength, resoluteness). If, as Fairbanks wrote, “it is going to take ‘Mormon’ artists to give the feeling and proper interpretation to ‘Mormon’ subjects,”<sup>85</sup> then the proliferation in the latter half of the twentieth century of Mormon works depicting Christ shows a similar objective in interpreting a “Mormon” Savior. More recent LDS portraits of Christ depict him as a strong, but passive, shepherd type, one who sits reflectively overlooking the Judean landscape (fig. 13, 1995).<sup>86</sup> The image of Christ as a wholesome man coincides with the Church’s policy regarding the portrayal of Deity in live performances. The *Church Handbook of Instructions* (1998) expressly states that “if the Savior is portrayed, it must be done with the utmost reverence and dignity. Only people of wholesome personal character should be considered for the part.”<sup>87</sup>





FIG. 13. Detail from *O Jerusalem*, by Greg Olsen (1958–). Oil on canvas, 50" x 36", 1995. Courtesy Greg Olsen, by arrangement with Mill Pond Press. Copyright © Greg Olsen.

### Correlation and the Mormon Visual Image of Christ

Between 1960 and 1965, Church leaders began to systematize priesthood programs under the broad plan of priesthood correlation. With renewed emphasis on organization within the areas of home teaching, missionary work, welfare, and genealogy came retrenchment in the production and dissemination of the Church's printed matter. Retrenchment was marked by a reassertion of doctrinal principles, economization, and



systemization. Artwork, audiovisual resources, and publications were created by a corps of graphics and media specialists working under the direction of correlation officials. This arrangement resulted in a more homogenized selection of didactic and inspirational artwork.

Instructors were encouraged to use the Church-approved pictures uniformly issued in teacher-training materials or produced by contracted printers such as Wheelwright Lithography Company, Providence Lithograph Company, and Standard Publishing Company. Commercially produced images to supplement lessons on Christ's ministry and other Bible stories were available in the CTR Pilot Picture Set, the Guide Patrol Teaching Aids, and the Top Pilot Picture series. These didactic images featured the illustrative work of non-Mormon artists such as Harold Copping, Griffith Foxley, Karl Godwin (fig. 14, n.d.), Hubbard Ortlip, and Elsie Anna Wood.<sup>88</sup>

In the years leading up to the Mormon Pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1964–65 and the 1968 Hemisfair in San Antonio, the Church commissioned artwork to better reflect its own Christ-centered mission.<sup>89</sup>

LDS artist Sidney E. King completed a twelve-part mural on the life of Christ, and a replica of Thorvaldsen's *Christus* was sculpted by Aldo Rebecchi (see fig. 5). Non-LDS illustrator John Scott was commissioned to paint a large mural depicting Christ's visit to the Americas. East Coast artists Kenneth Riley and Tom Lovell were hired to do several paintings depicting Book of Mormon scenes and events in Church history.<sup>90</sup>

Although Arnold Friberg was billed as the "finest illustrator in the Church," after the disapprobation of his *Risen Lord* he would not accept a commission to paint scenes of the life of Christ for the fair or the Gospel in Art program. On



FIG. 14. *Jesus Christ*, by Karl Godwin (1893–?). Providence Lithograph Co.



behalf of the Church, advertising agent Richard J. Marshall then approached Harry Anderson, a well-respected Seventh-day Adventist artist who had done work for the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Anderson took on the commission and over a sixteen-year period completed several paintings on the life of Christ for the Mormon Pavilion and for the North Visitors' Center in Salt Lake City.<sup>91</sup> LDS artist Grant Romney Clawson reproduced Anderson's work in twelve large-scale murals for display at the visitors' center and the Church Office Building.

Bruce R. McConkie commented that the Anderson murals serve "as an introduction to the Lord Jesus." "They deal with some of the crowning experiences of the mortal life of the Blessed One," Elder McConkie wrote, "and may be used by us as our initial response to His gracious invitation: 'Come . . . learn of me' (Matt. 11:28–29)."<sup>92</sup> When Anderson was asked what his intent was when creating his paintings, he reportedly said, "I look at Christ as very loving. He was loving. So loving that He gave His life for us, without any hesitation. This is what I like to represent."<sup>93</sup>

By the mid-1980s, Harry Anderson's paintings would define the modern LDS visual perception of Christ as a compassionate ministering servant. Anderson's works were perhaps some of the most reproduced and highly recognized depictions of Christ during that period (figs. 15, 1976, and 16, 1979 ; plate 6, 1973). Out of 373 images of Christ appearing in the *Ensign* from 1971 through 1985, 153 images (41 percent) were created by Harry Anderson or a reproducer (table 2).

Beginning in 1971, the official publications were changed to meet the needs of a growing Church. Church magazines such as the *Improvement Era*, the *Children's Friend*, and the *Instructor*

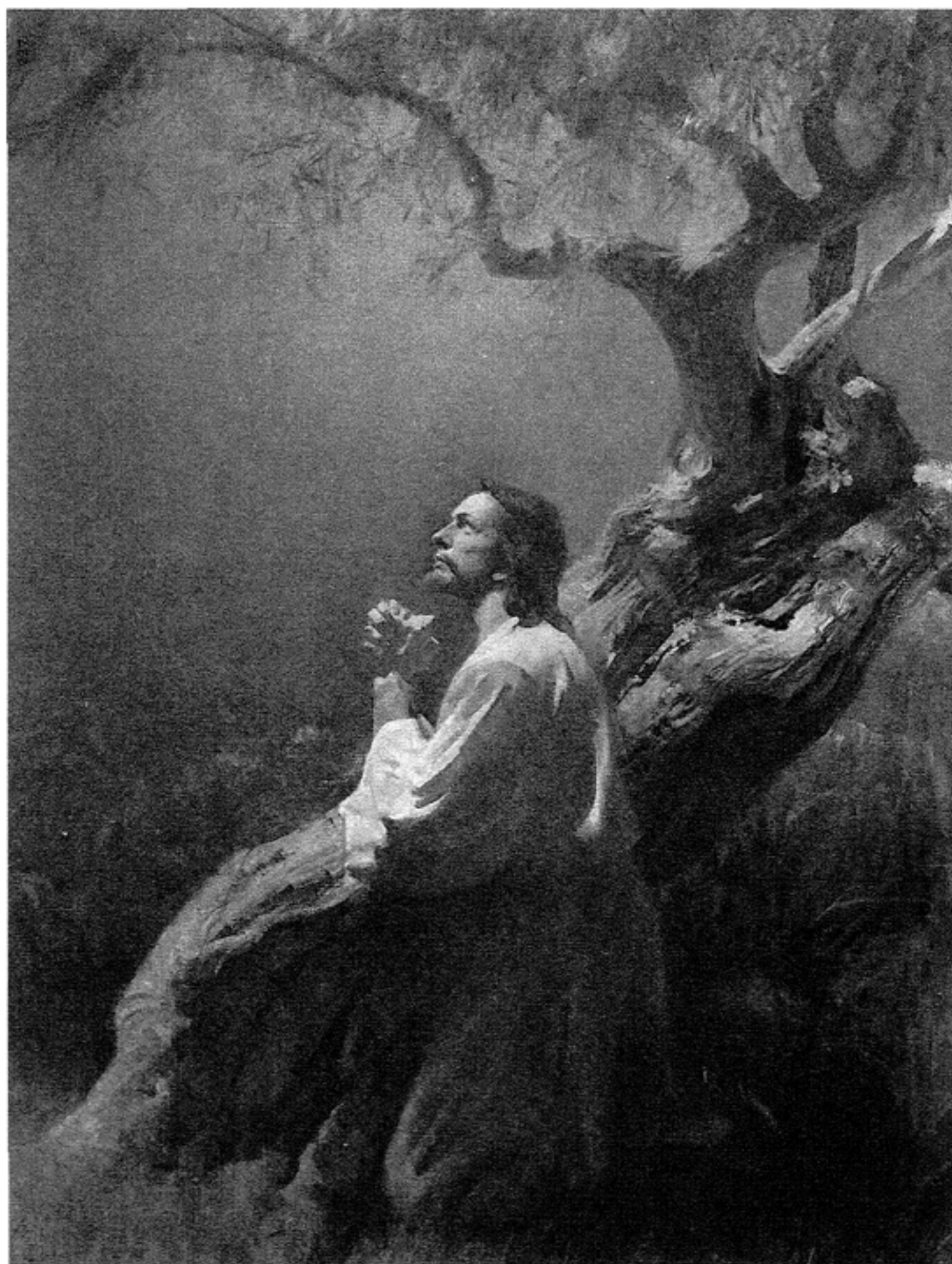


FIG. 15. *Christ in Gethsemane*, by Harry Anderson (1906–96). Oil on canvas, 41" x 44", ca. 1976. Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



were discontinued and replaced by slicker, more colorful magazines—the *Ensign* for adults, the *New Era* for young adults, and the *Friend* for Primary-age children. Taking advantage of the improved look of Church publications, *Ensign* editors reinstituted the Gospel in Art program, which had languished since 1965.<sup>94</sup> In an article accompanying the Gospel in Art prospectus, Church members were encouraged to use uplifting pictures to create a more spiritual atmosphere in the home. In the article, University of Utah art professor Ed Maryon concluded, “It stands to reason that if, for example, a beautiful print of Christ were in a home, thoughts would be turned to him more often.”<sup>95</sup>

Maryon observed that a lack of religious art among Church members was related to “the unavailability of fine prints and paintings. . . . Fortunately, quality ‘Mormon’ oriented art is becoming more available.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Church magazine editors were able to draw upon a host of non-LDS and LDS artists to achieve the aims of publication. Since the early 1970s, the *Ensign* and other Church magazines have regularly featured the work of Mormon artists who focus on Christ as their subject.

In recent decades, the visual depiction of Christ in printed Church materials has been largely by authoritative consensus—a system of review conducted by General Authorities assigned to the priesthood committees that oversee media production in its various forms.<sup>97</sup> In the early 1970s, the Church’s Internal and External Communications Departments supervised the use of art in magazines and related advertising media.<sup>98</sup> The Child Correlation Review Committee was instituted to review media and course

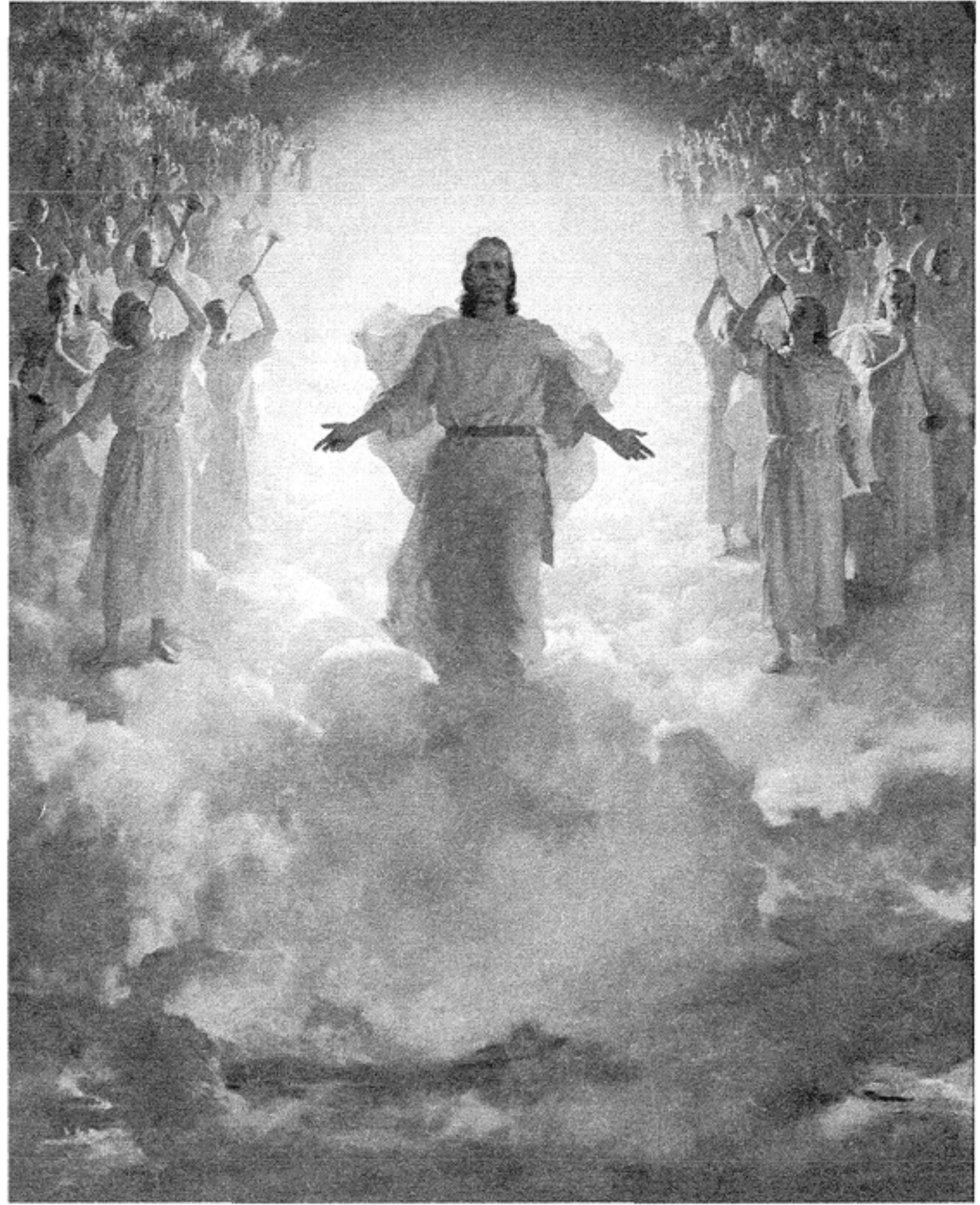


FIG. 16. *The Second Coming*, by Harry Anderson (1906–96). Oil on canvas, 120" x 79", 1979. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.



TABLE 2. Number and Composition of Images of Christ in the *Ensign*, 1971–1999\*

Year	Vol.	Birth/ Youth	Baptism	Teacher/ Leader	Servant/ Healer	Brooding Shepherd
1971	1	0	0	2	0	0
1972	2	1	2	9	0	0
1973	3	1	0	12	0	0
1974	4	5	2	24	4	1
1975	5	1	0	14	7	0
1976	6	1	0	4	4	0
1977	7	0	1	0	0	0
1978	8	0	1	7	1	0
1979	9	1	0	3	0	0
1980	10	2	0	1	2	0
1981	11	2	0	5	3	0
1982	12	2	1	6	1	1
1983	13	2	0	25	6	1
1984	14	0	1	3	5	0
1985	15	1	0	7	1	0
1986	16	3	0	8	7	1
1987	17	4	0	27	10	2
1988	18	1	1	14	9	0
1989	19	2	1	5	1	0
1990	20	1	0	6	0	2
1991	21	8	1	31	8	0
1992	22	5	0	16	7	4
1993	23	5	0	2	6	0
1994	24	5	4	23	11	3
1995	25	5	1	19	7	2
1996	26	3	0	13	3	6
1997	27	6	0	7	0	3
1998	28	3	2	16	7	4
1999	29	3	1	30	32	6
Total		73	19	339	142	36

\*Does not include sculpture, stained glass, textiles, other types of three-dimensional media, or actors/performers.



TABLE 2 (continued)

Year	Commanding Figure	Sufferer	Crucifixion	Resurrection	Portrait	Total
1971	0	0	1	2	0	5
1972	0	0	0	2	1	15
1973	0	3	0	4	5	25
1974	1	6	4	10	5	62
1975	0	3	3	3	1	32
1976	0	2	0	6	1	18
1977	0	0	3	3	1	8
1978	0	0	0	10	3	22
1979	0	1	1	2	0	8
1980	0	3	1	5	3	17
1981	0	2	1	3	8	24
1982	1	3	3	6	0	24
1983	1	5	1	10	8	59
1984	0	4	3	6	7	29
1985	0	4	0	6	6	25
1986	0	5	1	5	4	34
1987	1	4	2	11	10	71
1988	0	7	4	14	3	53
1989	1	4	0	10	8	32
1990	0	5	6	11	11	42
1991	3	7	7	9	6	80
1992	1	6	1	16	5	61
1993	4	6	0	17	15	55
1994	4	7	6	20	8	91
1995	6	9	4	14	19	86
1996	1	3	1	28	19	77
1997	0	4	3	24	13	60
1998	0	5	8	15	16	76
1999	4	8	4	14	17	119
Total	28	116	68	286	203	1310



materials produced for Latter-day Saint children.<sup>99</sup> Through the '80s and '90s, Church leaders supervised the selection of visual materials through the Church Curriculum Department and Priesthood Executive Councils. Church publications' staff and graphic artists choose from a file of approved visuals of Jesus Christ as well as from other scripturally based illustrations available at the Church's Visual Resources Library and Museum of Church History and Art.

A seeming effort to formulate a more distinctively "Mormon" representation of Christ has resulted in moderating the use of portraits that might be interpreted as unfamiliar or less than aesthetically tasteful to the Latter-day Saint viewer. For example, the portrait of Christ by non-LDS artist Chambers (see fig. 4) has rarely been used in Church publications since 1980, presumably because of the split beard and angry eyes. And while images produced by Tissot, Doré, Alexandre Bida, and William Henry Margetson are still being used, images by LDS artists such as Barrett, Parson, Kapp (plate 7, 1996), and Greg Olsen have appeared more regularly as *Ensign* covers, magazine vignettes, and instructional illustrations.<sup>100</sup> Other images by non-LDS artists—Hofmann, Anderson, Bloch, Wood, Cleveland Woodward, Griffith Foxley, Frances Hook (fig. 17, 1962), and Ralph P. Coleman—are frequently represented but often appear as cropped insets or as minor elements in larger illustrative visuals.<sup>101</sup>

Contemporary depictions of Christ by LDS artists are carefully rendered to closely align with the expectations of mainstream Church membership. For example, LDS artist Keith Edgington's 1994 version of *He Is Risen* has

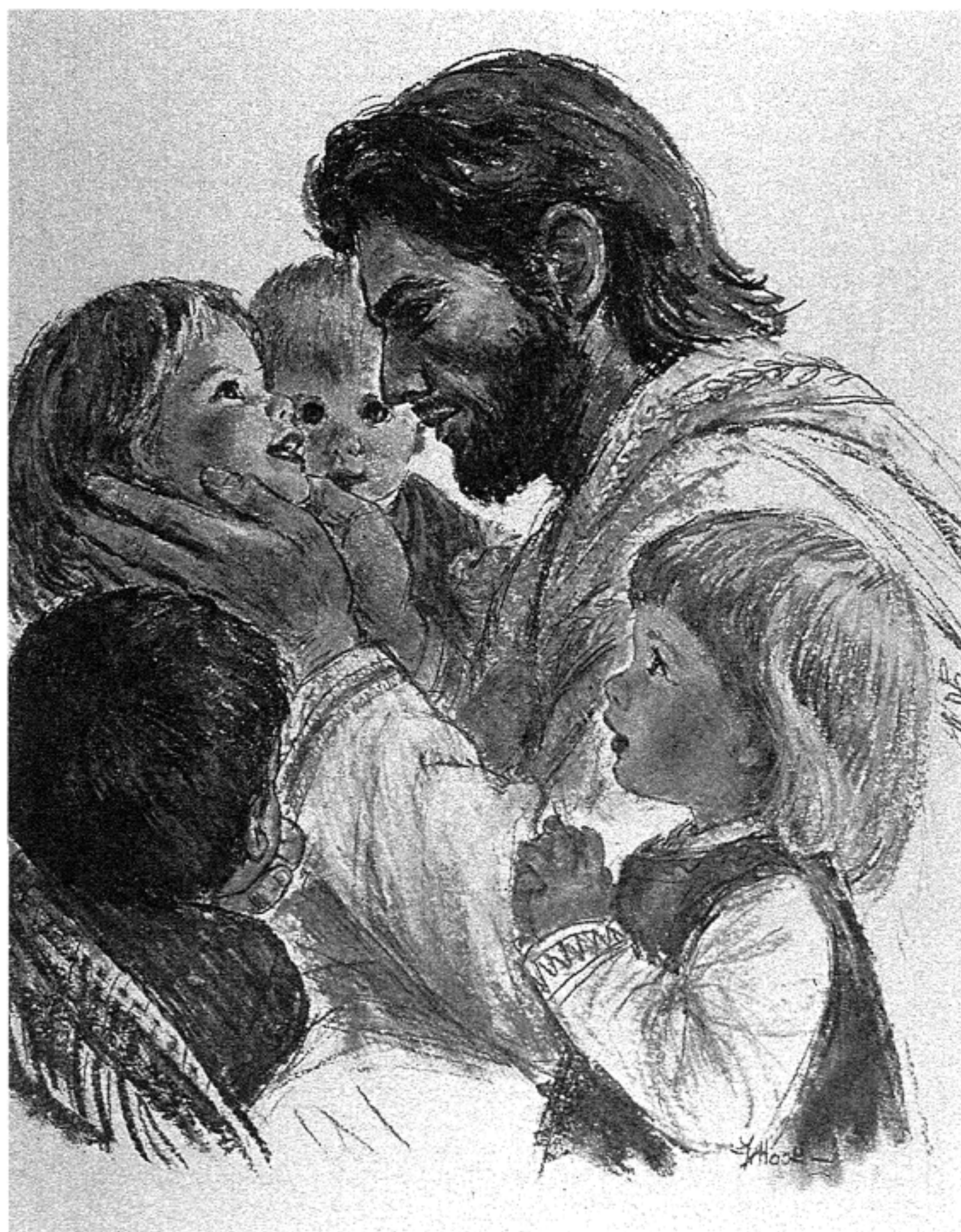


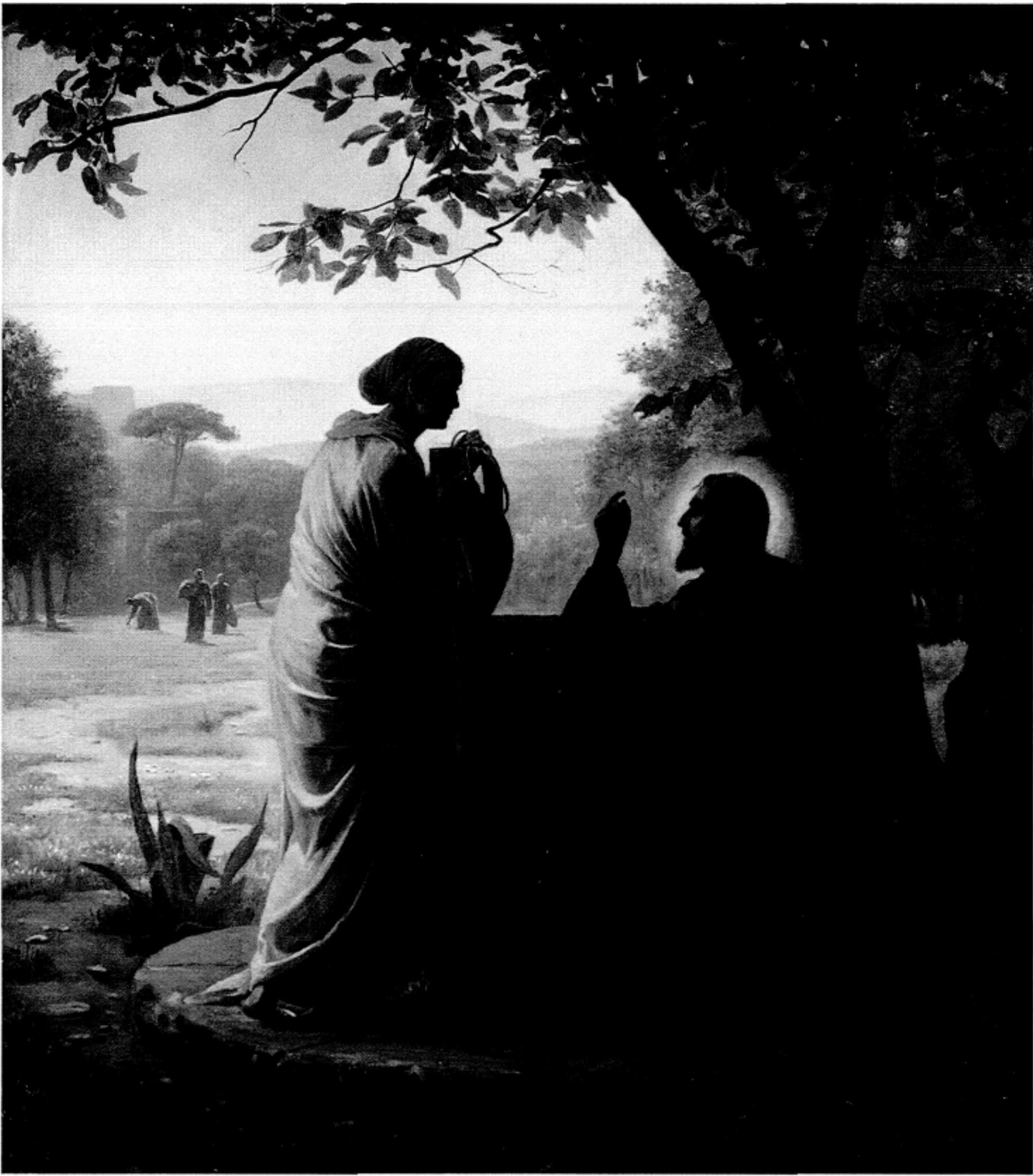
FIG. 17. *Christ and the Little Children*, by Frances Hook (1912–83). 1962. Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio.





PLATE 1 (above). *Christ and the Rich Young Ruler*, by Heinrich Hofmann (1824–1911). Oil on canvas, 1899. Riverside Church, New York/Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

PLATE 2 (right). *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*, by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834–90). Oil on 1/8" copperplate, 20" x 30", 1872. Museum of Church History and Art; The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle.





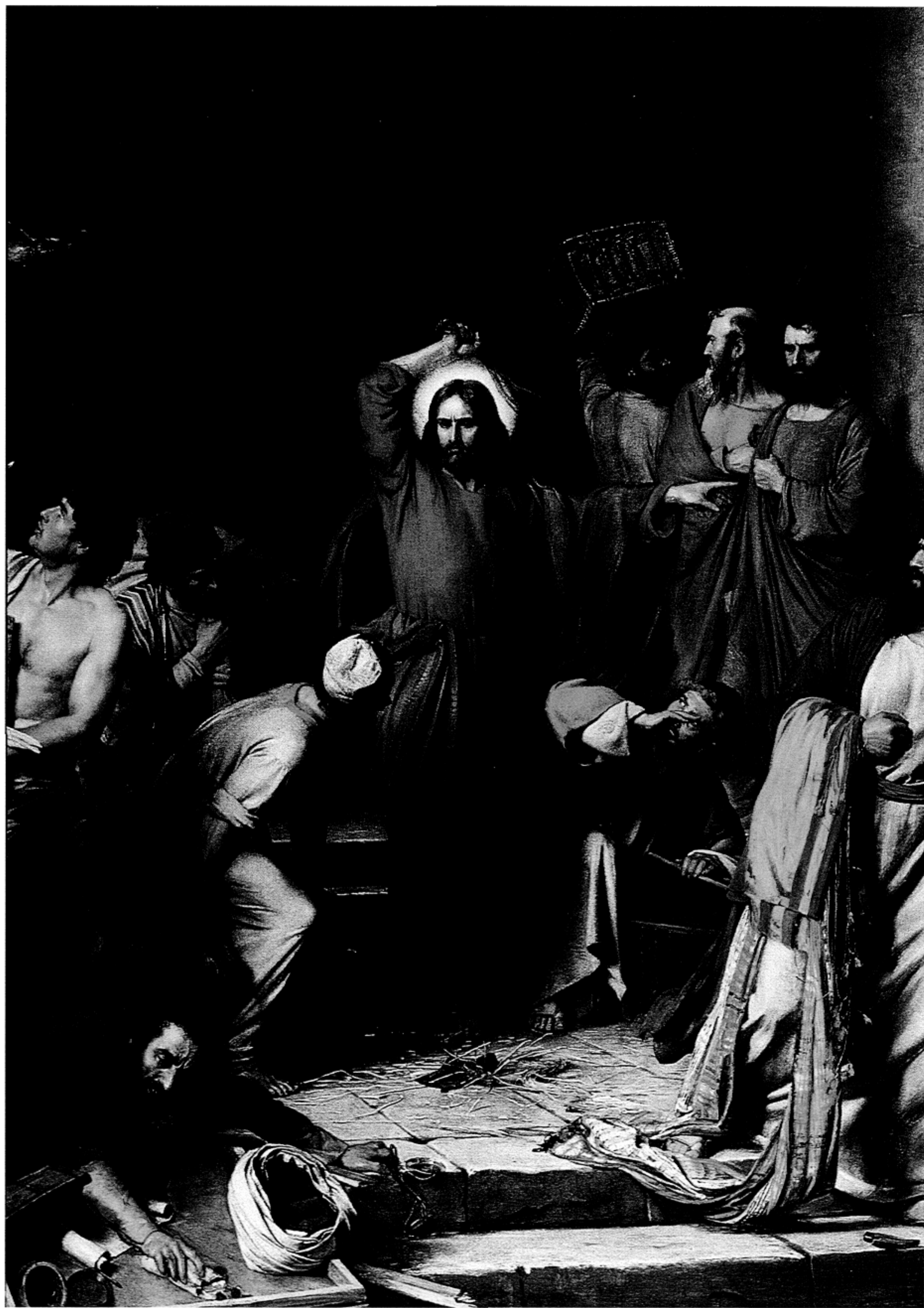


PLATE 3. *Christ Cleansing the Temple*, by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834–90). Oil on  $\frac{1}{8}$ " copperplate, approx. 20" x 30", ca. 1870s. Museum of Church History and Art; The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle.



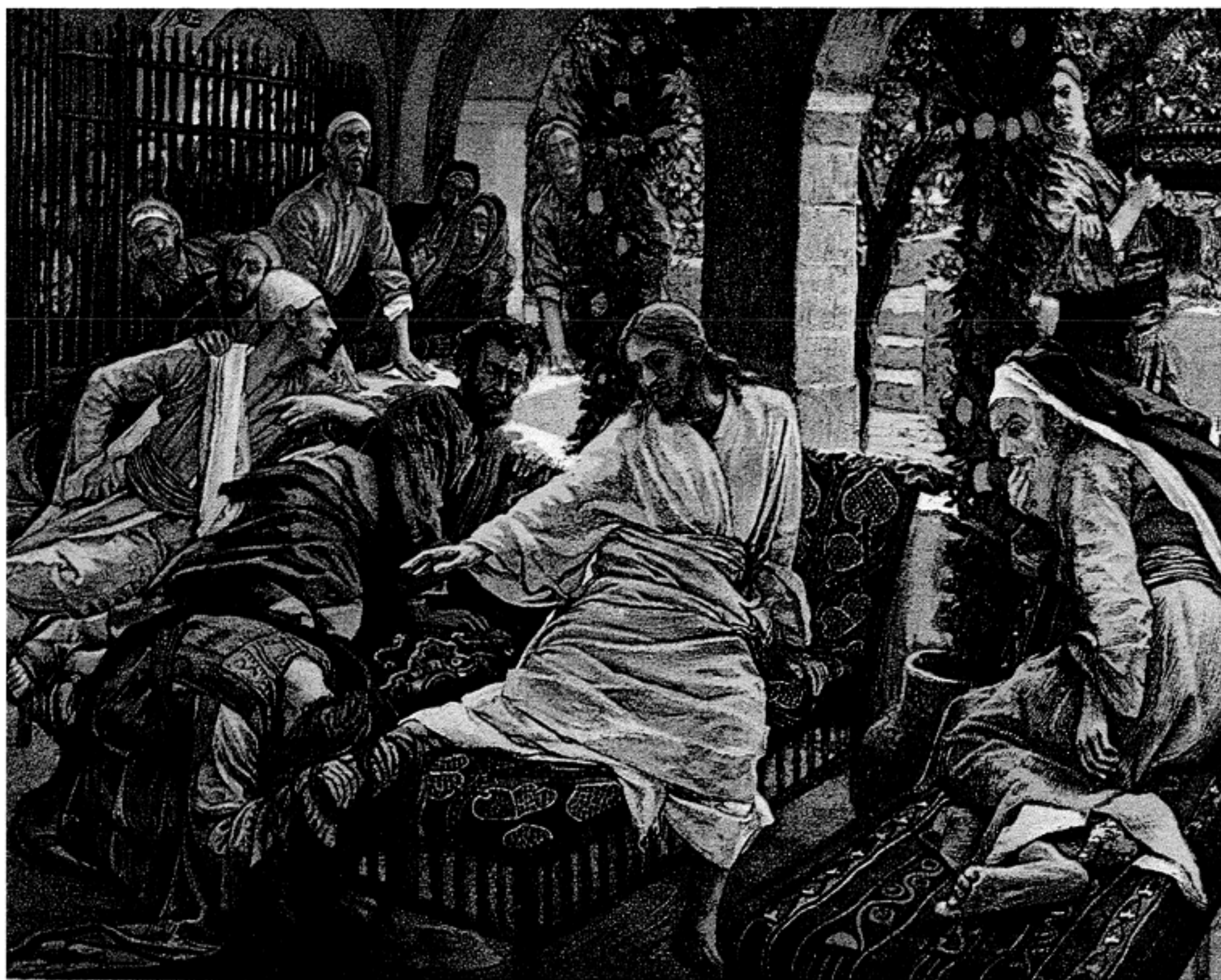


PLATE 4. *Mary Magdalene's Box of Very Precious Ointment* (also known as *A Woman Anointeth the Feet of Jesus*), by James Tissot (1836–1902). Watercolor on paper, ca. 1880s. From James Jacques Joseph Tissot, *The Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ: Three Hundred and Sixty-Five Compositions from the Four Gospels*, 3 vols. (1899; reprint, New York: McClure, 1900), 2:308.

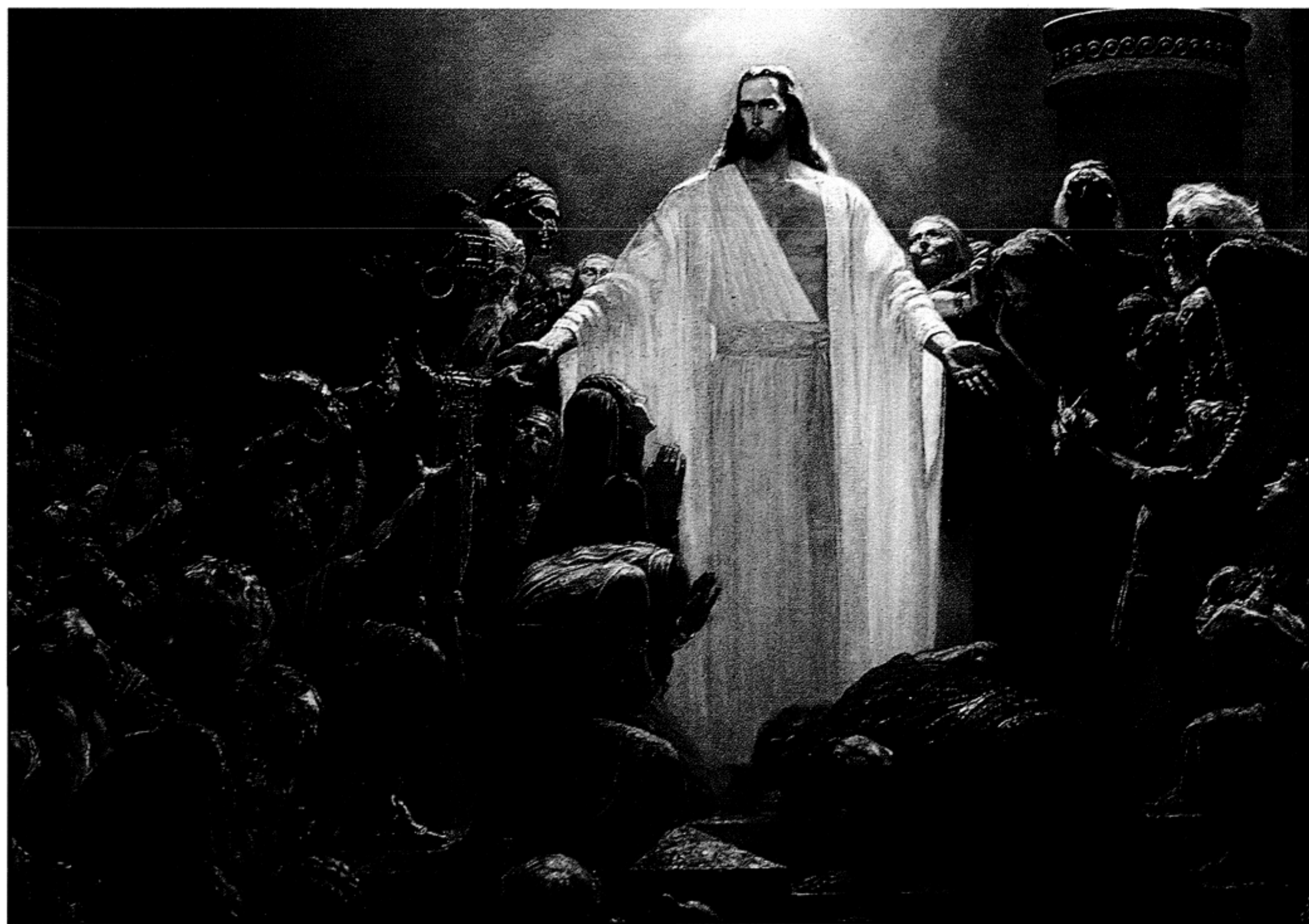


PLATE 5. *Christ Appearing to the Nephites* (renamed *The Risen Lord*), by Arnold Friberg (1913–). Oil on canvas, 44" x 62", 1963. Used by permission of Friberg Fine Art, Inc.





PLATE 6. *Go Ye and Teach All Nations*, by Harry Anderson (1906–96). Oil on canvas, 41" x 48", 1973. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

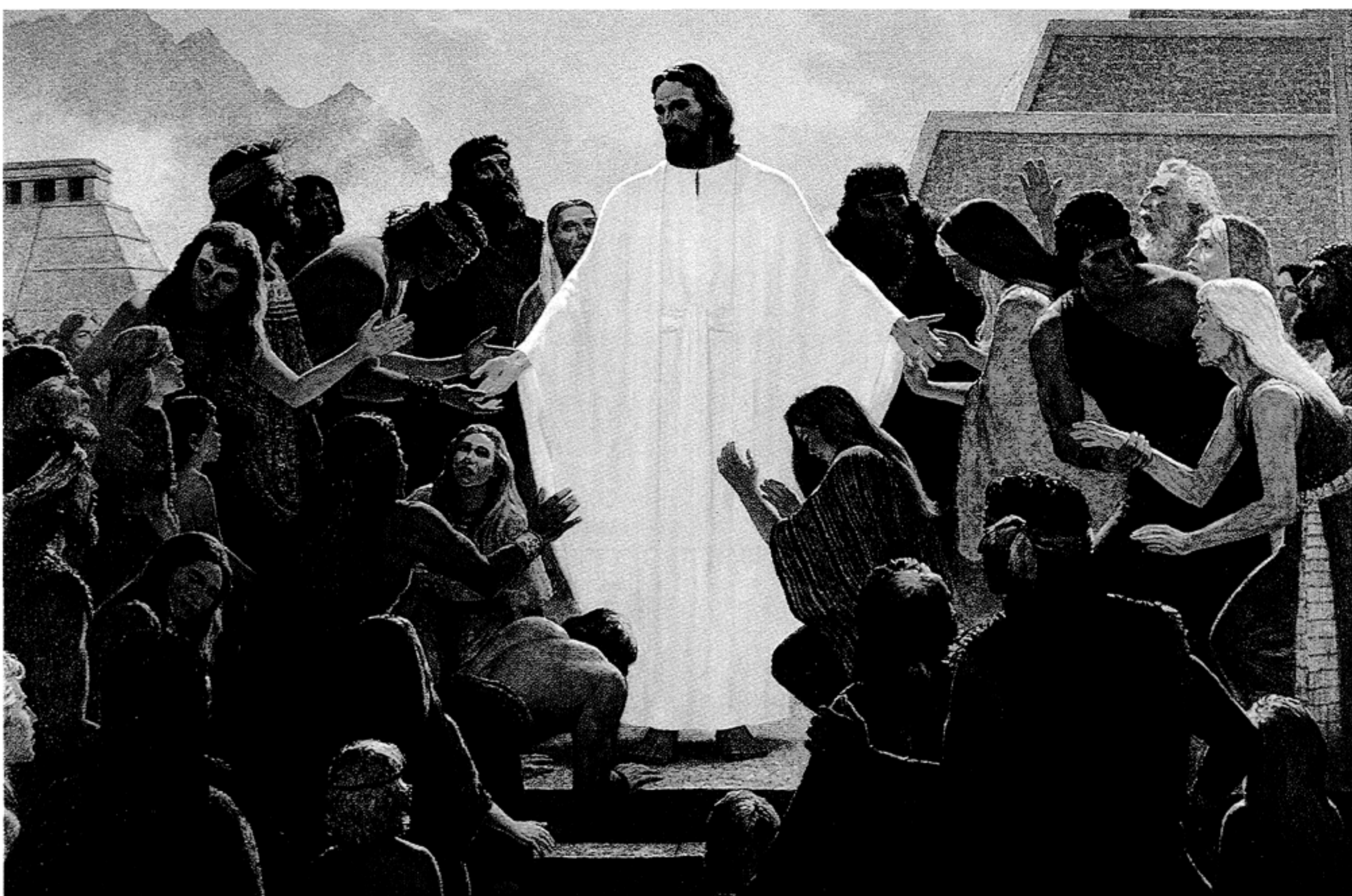


PLATE 7. *That Ye May Know*, by Gary Kapp (1942–). Oil on canvas, 60" x 48", 1996. Courtesy Gary Kapp.



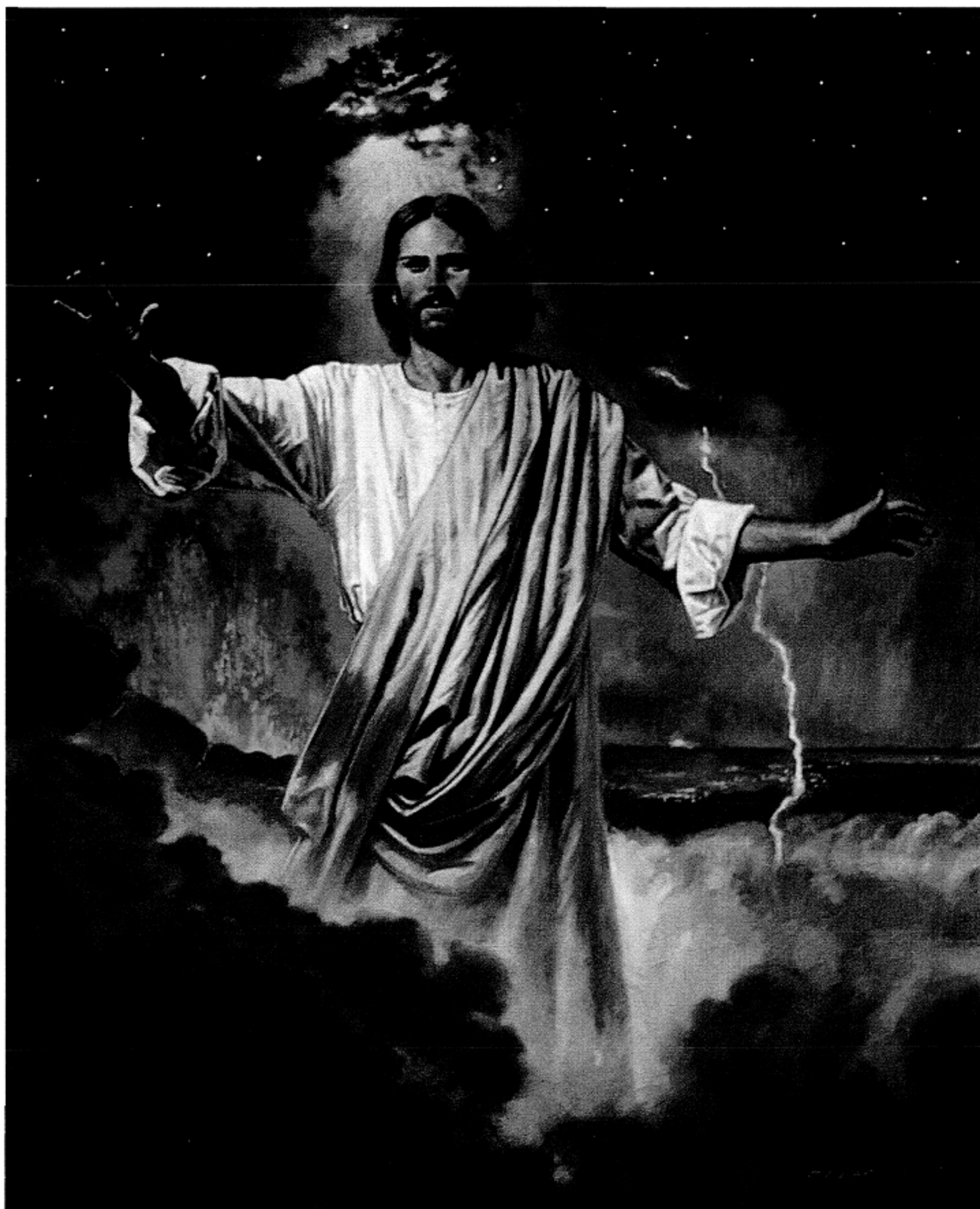
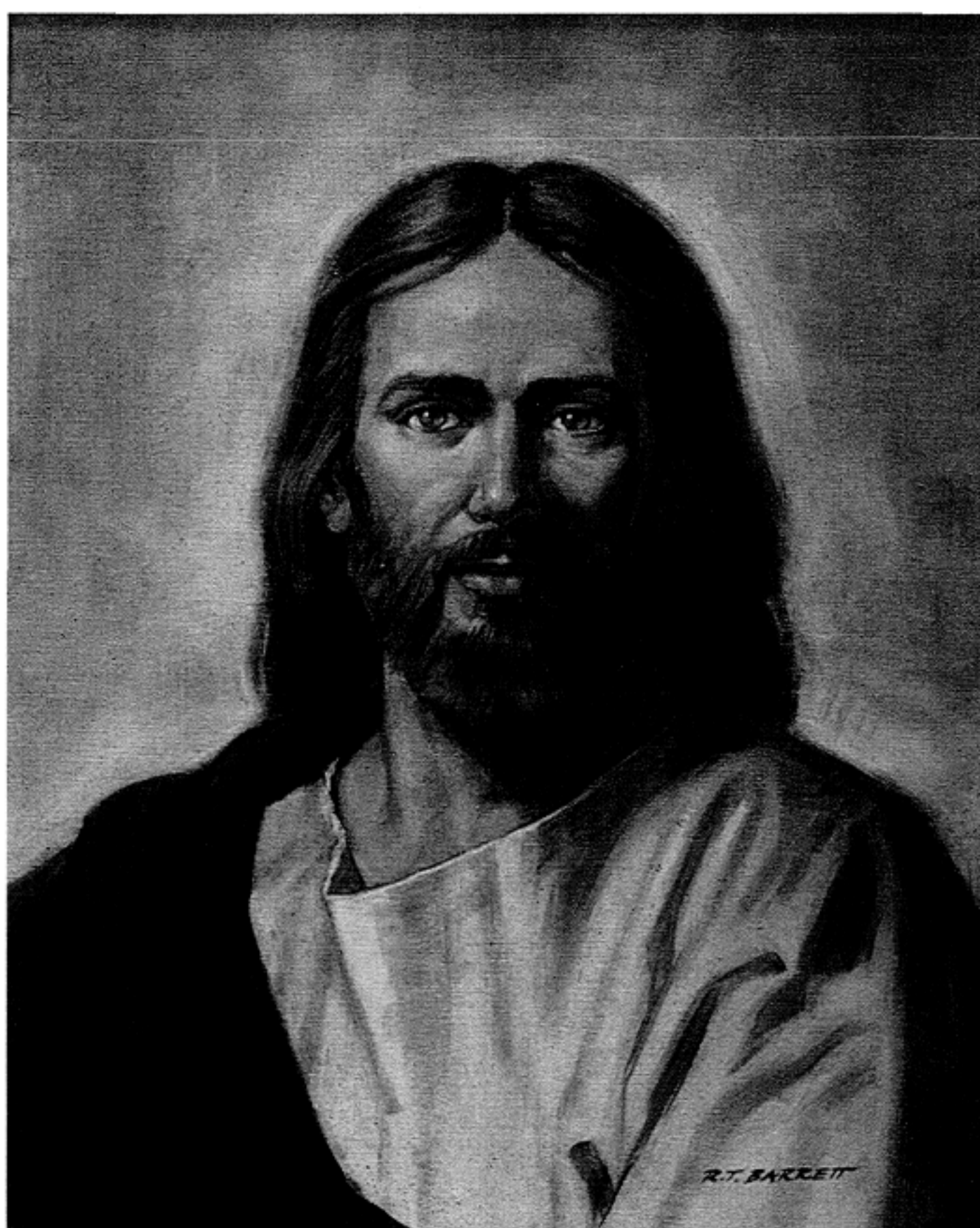


PLATE 8 (above). *Christ the Creator*, by Robert T. Barrett (1949–). Oil on canvas, 22" x 30", 1996. Courtesy Robert T. Barrett.

PLATE 9 (right). *Jesus of Nazareth*, by Robert T. Barrett (1949–). Oil on canvas, 18" x 24", 1992. © Deseret Book.





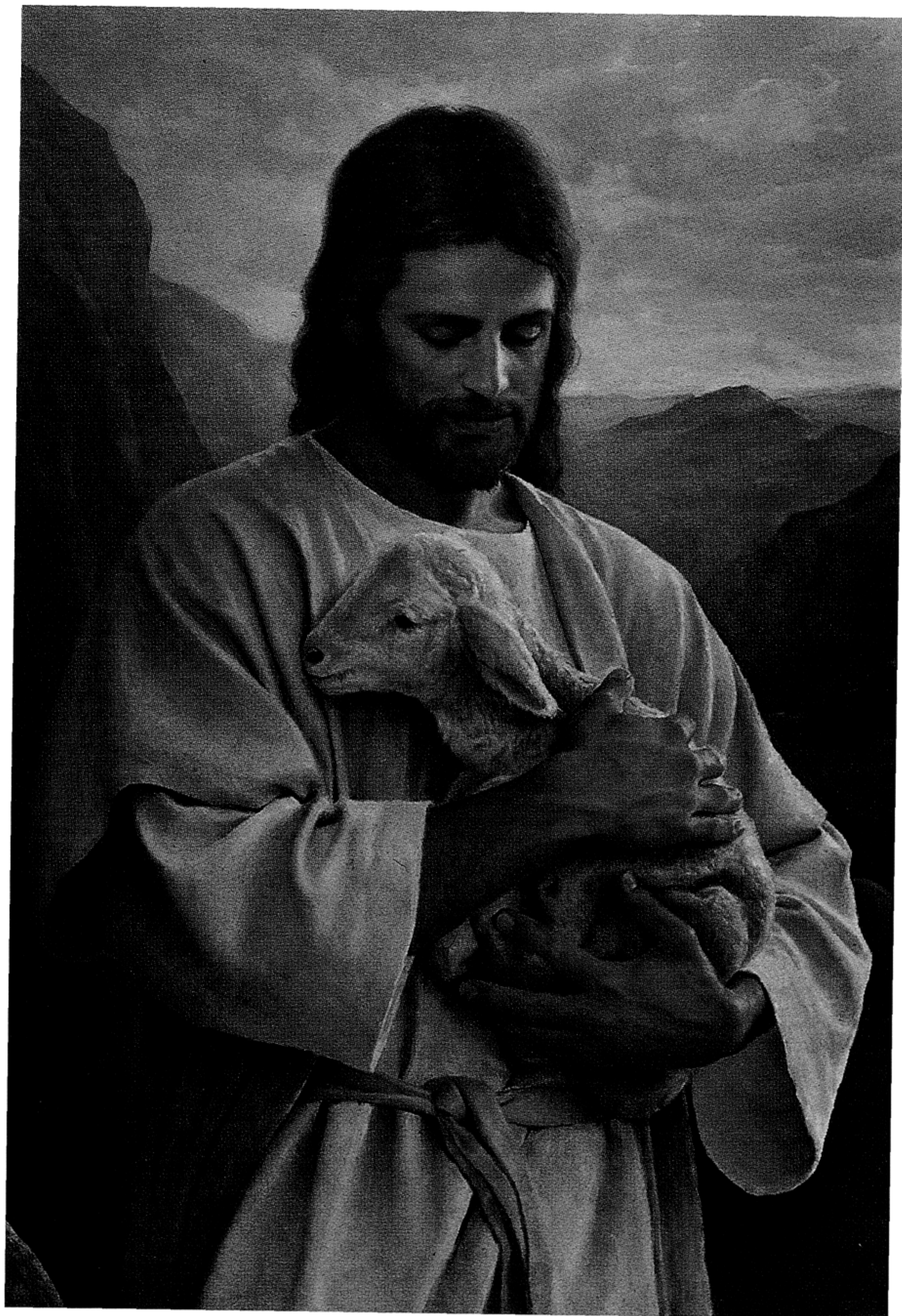


PLATE 10. *Lost Lamb*, by Del Parson (1948–). Oil on canvas, 40" x 30", 1998. Courtesy Del Parson.





PLATE 11. *Journey's End*, by Derek Hegsted (1965–). Oil on canvas, 24" x 30", 1994. Courtesy Derek Hegsted.





PLATE 12. *Christ in a Red Robe*, by Minerva Teichert (1888–1976). Oil on canvas, 71 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 47 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 1945. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.



noticeably changed from his original 1960 version of the painting, entitled *The Ascension of Christ*. Although both versions feature the centuries-old tradition of stigmata and halo, Eddington appears to have consciously employed visual devices in the latter version to downplay the somberness of Christ's death. The 1960 version, used for Church publications and tracts, includes the hill of Calvary and crosses on the horizon; in the 1994 version, painted for the Joseph Smith Memorial Building's Legacy Theater, the Calvary crosses were deleted.<sup>102</sup> Eddington's use of dark, drab blues in the original version allude to the Crucifixion, in contrast to the warm fiery colors of the newer *He Is Risen*, which emphasize the triumph of Christ overcoming death—a more potent event according to Latter-day Saint belief.

In recent years, Mormons have placed a greater emphasis on the Atonement by representing images of the Creation (plate 8, 1996), Resurrection, Ascension, and postmortal visitations of Christ. In contrast to the Catholic and Protestant focus on the symbolism of the cross, Mormon renderings of Christ avoid the imagery of Calvary and instead draw the viewer into a path of spiritual rectitude modeled, as much as is artistically possible, in the image of Christ.<sup>103</sup>

Even though the images used in official Church publications fall within certain traditional expectations, Church creative programs encourage broader cultural and ethnic approaches to depicting gospel-oriented subjects. As part of the Church's effort to embrace an increasingly diverse membership, since 1987 the Museum of Church History and Art has regularly sponsored an international LDS art competition, calling upon artists of all ethnic backgrounds. Participating artists have contributed a wide variety of images of Christ in their own expressive manner while assimilating recognizable traits that suggest the influence of or contact with the Anglo-American body of the Church. Submitted entries have been done in indigenous media such as batik and collage, and some of the art pieces include Native American or other ethnic motifs. But some submissions borrow from images by artists such as Anderson and Parson.<sup>104</sup>

Images of Christ approved by Church correlation appear to concentrate less on cultural authenticity and more on scriptural accuracy and the idealization of wholesome character. The more favored artistic depictions of Christ, such as Thorvaldsen's *Christus* (see fig. 5), suggest a more inviting posture, accentuated by thematic phrases like "Come unto Me" or "Come unto Him." Although the original was created by a non-LDS artist, the *Christus* embodies the appealing qualities of the all-powerful but sensitive and loving Savior who is sought by many Mormons. This entreating figure, a physical depiction of what theology professor Douglas J. Davies has characterized as the "proactive Christ of LDS faith,"<sup>105</sup> symbolizes the



Mormon identification with a Christ who acts decisively, controls events, and offers salvation to those who follow him. To advance this view of Christ, the open-armed *Christus* has been reproduced for many LDS temples throughout the world.

Since the inception of the Church's correlation efforts in the 1960s, the physiognomy of Christ as it is rendered by LDS artists such as Kapp, Olsen, Parson, Barrett, and Derek Hegsted has appeared closer in view, and the images attempt to connect more familiarly with the viewer. Built upon the studioliike portraiture of Sallman, these artists' illustrative depictions of Jesus often appear posed in formal studio settings or in familiar head-and-shoulder formats, much like framed photographic portraits. Unlike Sallman's three-quarter views with eyes directed away from the viewer, LDS artists have tended to fix the gaze directly at the viewer. Barrett's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1992; plate 9) is a representative example of this recent trend to draw the viewer into the subject's line of sight. Christ's penetrating gaze, his smile, and the casualness of his posture are pleasantly entreating and encourage an intimate response to the image.

Other portraits by Kapp, Parson (plate 10, 1998), and Hegsted (plate 11, 1994) encourage the same level of closeness. Several examples of their work show Christ and nearby subjects, most typically children, in the crook of his arm or in a warm embrace. These portraits have made the image of Christ as familiar as that of a family member or friend. This effect has been enhanced by framed posters and postcard images, which have popularized the visual image of Christ for a Mormon mass audience.

The visuals of Christ reproduced in Church magazines reveal an inclination toward images that are not troubling or disruptive to the viewer's sensibilities. Minor subjects are well groomed and neatly dressed in garb resembling fitted costumes. Figures are often carefully placed within a shallow depth of field, along the picture plane, so as to offer a more advantageous view of Christ and all the surrounding subjects and their facial expressions. Conspicuously avoided are any symbols and visual devices that would be associated with the traditions of the Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Protestant faiths. These elements, taken together, suggest a uniformity resulting from Church correlation's reviews of the images.

Artwork that is officially produced and disseminated is useful in gauging the Church's increased focus on Christ and the gospel-related images with which Church leaders hope members and outsiders will identify. An examination of the number and composition of images of Christ reproduced in the *Ensign* from 1971 through 1999 reveals that images selected for publication generally depict him as a teacher, leader, or resurrected being. Relatively few images depicted him as the victim of crucifixion. Nor was he depicted frequently as the awesome, commanding Jehovah of the Old



Testament. The sensitive, ministerial Christ familiar to most Latter-day Saints was depicted in an increasing degree toward the end of the twentieth century. Interestingly, for the entire year of 1971, only 5 images of Christ were reproduced in the magazine, in contrast to a total of 119 in 1999. Portraits have appeared more frequently since 1995, many of which have graced the front and inside covers. The predominant number of non-LDS-created images gradually diminished in the mid-1980s until LDS-created visuals dominated at the end of the century (fig. 18).

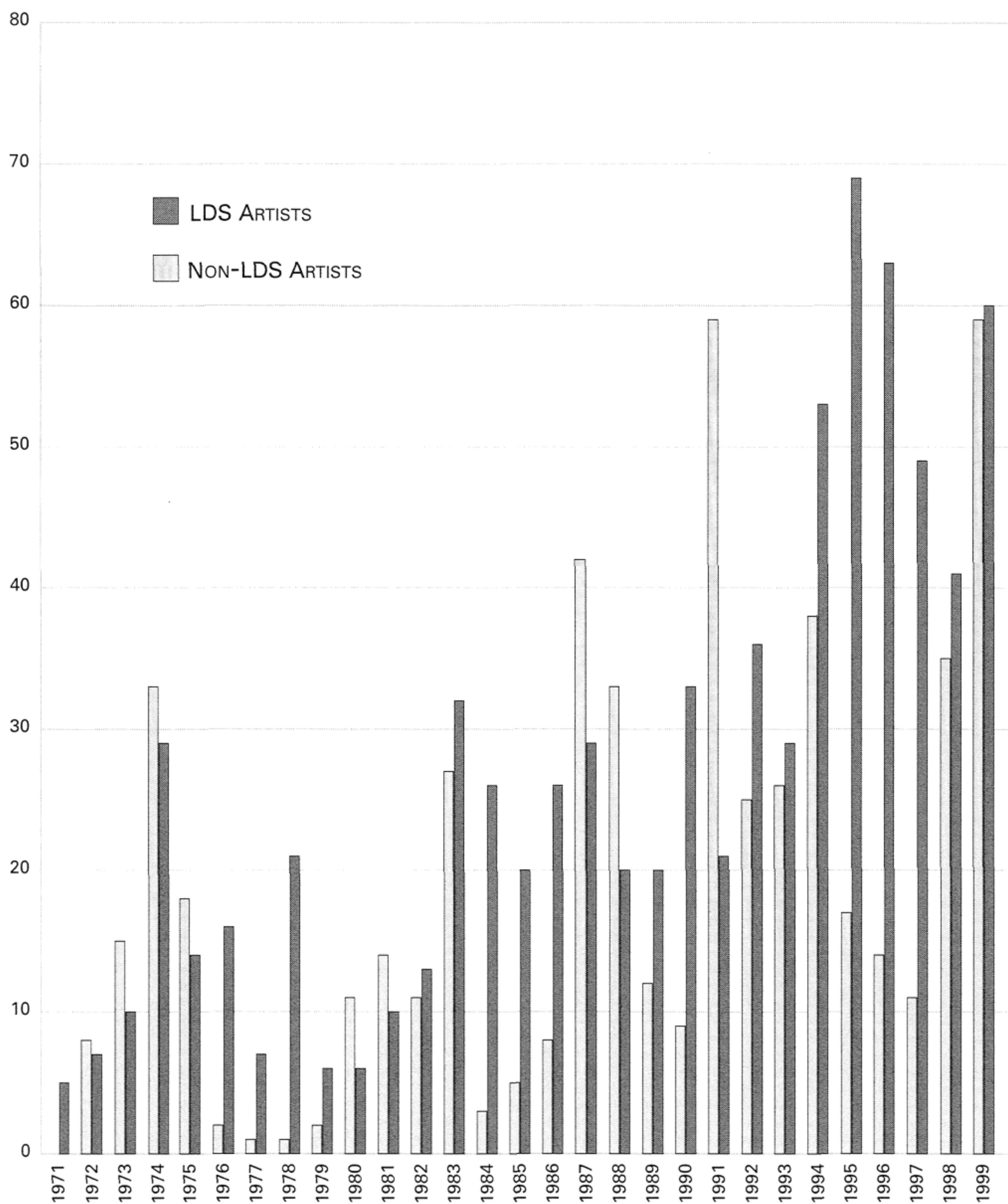
Other visual media often portray Christ in related ways. Representative of the turn-of-the-century official portrayals of Christ is a film shown at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building entitled *The Testaments: Of One Fold and One Shepherd*, which depicts the life of a fictional Book of Mormon character, with scenes of Christ's mortal life and His visit to the Americas. As in other Church-produced films, Christ is shown in various scenes of his ministry and among followers and children. Film director Kieth Merrill told the *Deseret News* that President Gordon B. Hinckley "gave specific direction about how the film should 'depict (Jesus Christ) in ways that (Christians) understand and in ways familiar to them.'" <sup>106</sup> In a recent online article, Merrill explained further, saying, "We were promised by blessing that we would find the right person to play the Savior." After screening several actors, Church convert Tomas Kofod of Denmark was chosen to fill the role. Merrill observed that "the images of classic Christian art, the paintings of Karl Bloch and the etchings of Gustave Dore came into my mind and became the inspiration for the visual depiction of Christ." <sup>107</sup> Film producers were then advised to use several paintings by Bloch, Hofmann, Tissot, Doré, Olsen, and Clark Kelly Price as image sources for scenes of Christ's life. According to Alisa Anglesey, a casting assistant, over ten scenes shot for the film were meant to directly re-create paintings and engravings by these artists. <sup>108</sup>

### **Del Parson's *Lord Jesus Christ***

A phenomenally popular portrait of Christ by Del Parson, entitled *The Lord Jesus Christ* (1983; fig. 19), has been described as "the most reproduced Latter-day Saint picture of Christ," replacing previously used images by Anderson and Sallman as better fitting "the Church's image of the Savior." <sup>109</sup> The painting, which first appeared in a spring 1984 issue of the *Ensign* magazine, is now displayed in many Latter-day Saint homes and LDS Church teaching materials. It features a head-and-shoulder portrait of Christ, who is dressed in a red robe and white tunic and is intimately gazing toward the viewer. A 1996 article in the *Salt Lake Tribune* stated, "This depiction of Christ has the potential to become at least as renowned as Warner Sallman's familiar 'Head of Christ' popularized throughout Christianity after World War II." <sup>110</sup>



FIG. 18. Created or Commissioned Images of Christ in the *Ensign*, 1971–1999





According to Parson's wife, Lynette, "Del's purpose in painting the Savior was to create an image in which the members of the Church could project their feelings of the Savior. He has been pleased that he seems to have succeeded in achieving that purpose."<sup>111</sup> A female LDS high-school student revealed how the Parson image reinforces her own perception of Deity: "He just looks so peaceful. I've seen this one so much that that's how I imagine him to look. The other pictures of Jesus don't look like him to me." She noted, "I see it a lot. . . . It's the picture hanging in my seminary room [in Utah, LDS seminary buildings are frequently constructed next to junior and senior high schools]. I also see it in kids' lockers at school. They put it there to remind them of Christ and to do what's right."<sup>112</sup>

The popularity of the painting has given rise to several legends regarding its conception and acceptance as the semiofficial Latter-day Saint portrait of Christ. One story deals with the painting's purportedly inspired conception. The common elements of the story are that Parson made repeated attempts to achieve an accurate depiction of Christ's physical appearance. In most versions of the story, these attempts at accuracy are under the direct guidance of Church leaders, often that of the General Authorities or the Church President. According to one informant, "they [the General Authorities] were working with him the entire time he was doing the painting."<sup>113</sup> And, not surprisingly, the leader or leaders proffer specific instructions with regard to Christ's physical features. Such an idea would not seem foreign to the believing Latter-day Saint. Mormon doctrine provides that "every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am" (D&C 93:1).

In another version of the story, the prophet corrects the artist by saying, "His eyes aren't brown, they're blue."<sup>114</sup> Such legends often reveal common threads of belief and values shared among the groups of individuals hearing them. For example, the preceding comment affirms the belief that LDS Apostles hold a priesthood office that carries "as a distinguishing function that of personal and special witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ" and that these witnesses know of "the divinity of the Savior by personal revelation."<sup>115</sup> The supposed correction is often interpreted as implying that Mormon leaders are, by the nature of their calling, privileged to have a personal, firsthand knowledge of Christ's physical attributes.

Unfortunately, religious stories labeled as legends are sometimes perceived as untrue and thus without merit. This perception, however, dismisses their value in expressing worldviews and popular belief. As folklorist Jan Brunvand has pointed out, "To say that such stories are legendary is not necessarily to say that they are of doubtful veracity, for folklore may be true as well as false. Thus, such a legend . . . may be believed, but



unprovable, or it may be supported by historical record.”<sup>116</sup> As Brunvand writes, legends’ “dissemination is largely oral and some of their motifs are traditional.”<sup>117</sup> The same can be said of Mormon legends. In the case of Parson’s painting of Christ, a number of Mormon cultural values are expressed in the legends that circulate regarding it.

Interestingly, Parson has admitted to doing several versions or initial sketches before the finished painting was approved. However, this commission was done under the direction of Warren Luke, art director of the Church Graphics Department. Parson did several (five to six) sketches, as he typically does, in pencil on brown craft paper.<sup>118</sup> His wife, Lynette, describes how the painting was conceived:

Del thought the best way to get a pleasing image of Christ was to find the perfect model. (Bearded men were pretty scarce near our home in Rexburg, Idaho.) At our stake conference he found a member of our stake who served as his first model. He sent in a couple of sketches of this model. The sketches were returned, asking him to try again.

He found his second model, (this time a bearded one) at the Rexburg Demolition Derby. This sketch was also returned. Our family visited the Eastern Idaho State Fair on Labor Day with the purpose of looking at people until we could locate a model. We found another bearded man whose eyes were most helpful in the next sketches.<sup>119</sup>

Curiously, a few specific revisions were asked of him. According to Lynette’s account, “Del started the painting, which took about 9 days. He sent it to the Church, and it was returned for 2 small changes: one eye made larger and the neckline raised.”<sup>120</sup> Although it may be assumed that the Church’s Correlation Executive Committee reviewed the painting in its various stages of completion, the artist does not know who approved the work in its final form.<sup>121</sup>

In another story and its variants, Parson or another individual gives an inspirational talk at a Mormon fireside or at a sacrament meeting. Parson’s painting of Christ is displayed, whereupon a young girl, having been through a near-death experience or having witnessed a parent’s death, recognizes the man in the portrait as the man who saved or comforted her.<sup>122</sup> Again, this story apparently serves to reaffirm the LDS belief in the physical nature of Christ and in modern-day visitations by otherworldly messengers or beings. It also seems to provide assurance that children in danger of physical harm are watched over by a loving, comforting Savior.

Some of the common elements of this story are, according to Del Parson, based on a factual occurrence. Parson did, in fact, speak to a fireside audience. By his recollection, it was a Relief Society fireside. In that fireside, he related several comforting experiences he feels were given by the Holy Ghost, experiences he had after his first wife was killed in a tragic



automobile accident. A related experience that Parson told was a story of a young girl who witnessed her mother brutally murdered by the girl's abusive father. Some time later, the girl was in a Primary gathering where an unspecified picture of Christ was displayed. The Primary teacher asked, "Does anyone know who this is?" The little girl immediately recognized the person in the picture as the man who came to comfort her at the moment her mother's life was taken by her father. Approximately two months after the fireside, Parson received a telephone call from an LDS bookstore in Idaho Falls. The proprietor asked for permission to

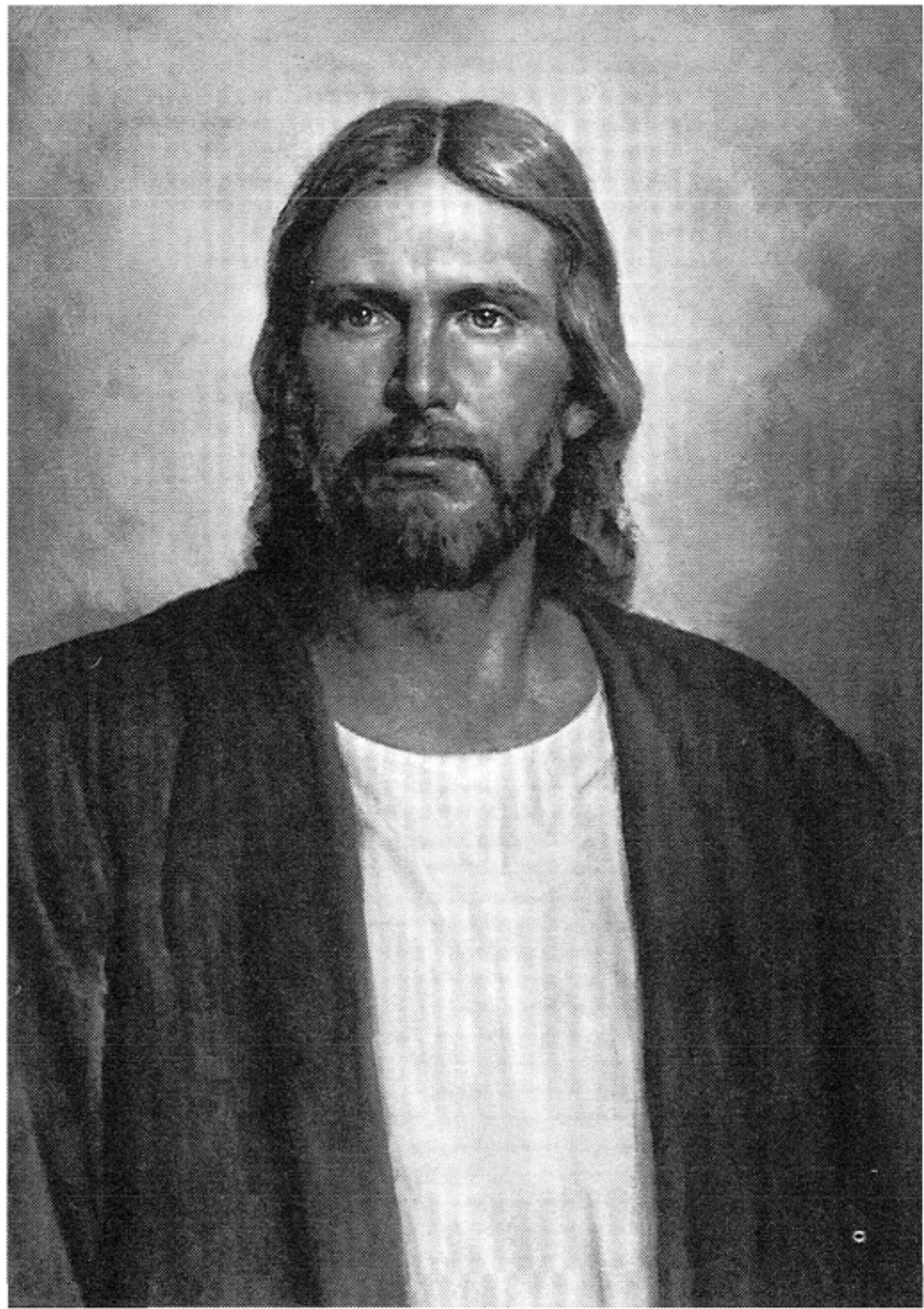


FIG. 19. *The Lord Jesus Christ*, by Del Parson (1948–). Oil on canvas, 28" x 20", 1983. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

distribute a written version of what Parson calls the popular stories being circulated and told as miraculous incidents related to *The Lord Jesus Christ*. In an attempt to stop or correct the story, Parson found that an individual who was present at the fireside correctly related Parson's talk, only to have it changed and modified in subsequent retellings.

Although certain key elements have been incorrectly linked, a number of the story's common components are still included in the legendary accounts: the young girl, the witness or experience of a fatal or near-fatal tragedy, the comforting visitation of Christ, and the girl's recognition of Christ upon seeing a painting of Him. These components, the successive stages in a sublime recognition pattern, serve, as stated before, to support Mormon belief in the corporeal nature of Christ and to support characteristic cycles of adversity or tragedy, miraculous intervention, and redemption or recognition often found in LDS scripture and teachings.

The other anecdotes told in relation to Parson's painting of Christ deal with the image as an inspirational object. In one case, the painting was used almost as a medium of prayer. Apparently, after suffering affliction, a



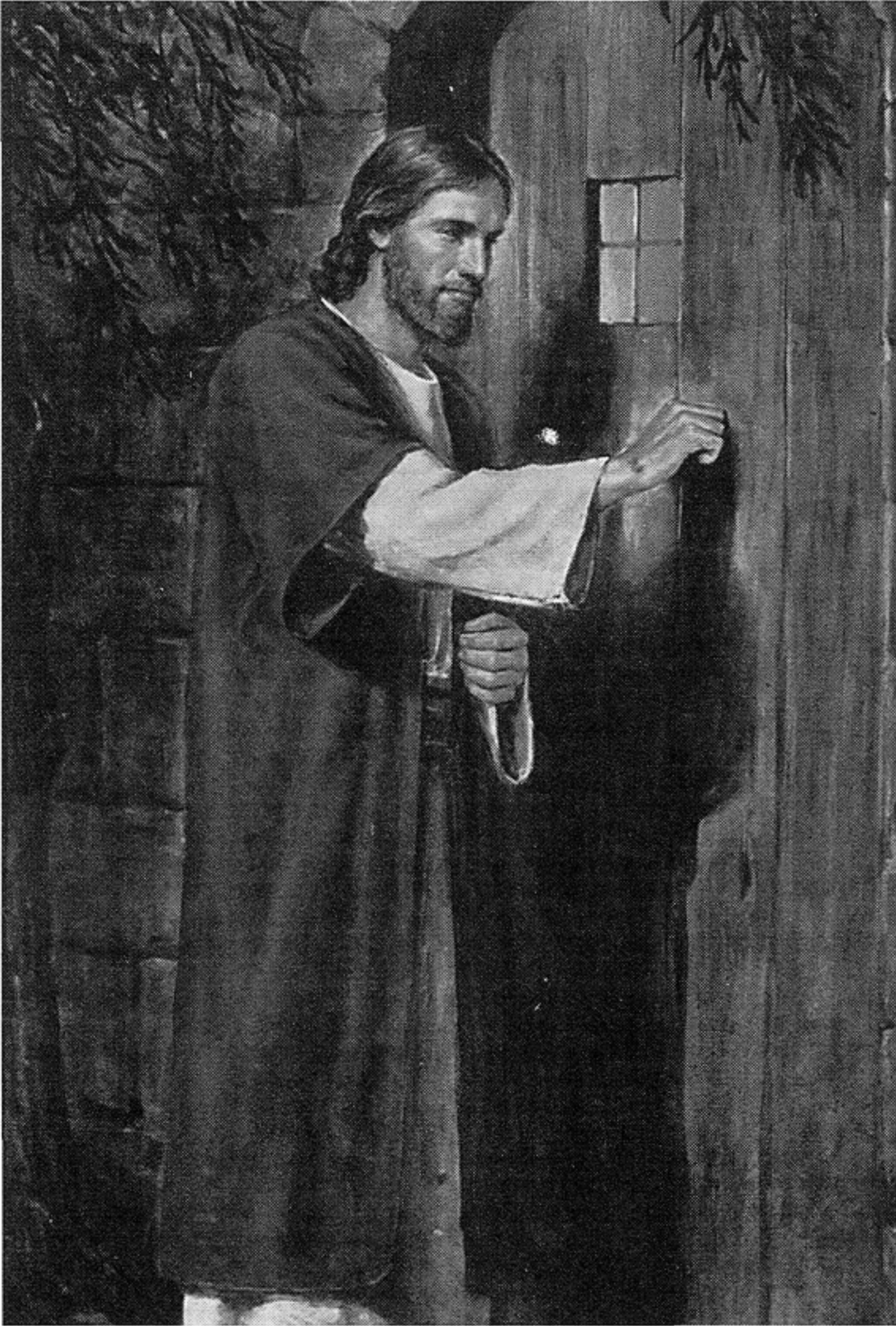


FIG. 20. *Jesus Knocking at the Door*, by Del Parson (1948–). Oil on canvas, 28" x 20", 1983. Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

woman “was looking at this picture and asking for comfort. And then the picture gave her comfort.”<sup>123</sup> Mormons would argue that images are not venerated as icons or devotional objects. In this story, however, the painting becomes, in a subliminal sense, a physical manifestation of Christ, the only tangible item within the woman’s visual range through which she could project her distress and receive comfort.

In another story, the painting is said to be figuratively divided in half. The left half, or “the wrong side,” stresses the “frowning” expression of Christ. Conversely, the

right side, or “good side,” is characterized by a happy Christ. That this story may have been told in a Mormon youth function is, in itself, revealing. One interpretation of this perceived semiotic device is that it underscores the Latter-day Saint call to members—particularly young people—to “Choose the Right.”<sup>124</sup>

When visual imbalance is seen where symmetry is expected, the viewer compensates by appropriating meaning to the visual infraction. This example of the perceived usage of a hidden visual device in Latter-day Saint art, although it was not the intent of the artist, is a meaningful sanction of Church-commissioned images.<sup>125</sup>

The favorable acceptance of Parson’s *Lord Jesus Christ* among grassroots LDS members resulted in several variations on the head-and-shoulders portrait. By placing the same head on a figure shown in different



situations, Parson has found success in disseminating a likeness for every occasion (fig. 20). Clearly, Parson's *Lord Jesus Christ* is now doing for Mormon visual culture what Sallman's *Head of Christ* did for members in earlier decades.

### Decorative Images of Christ

In response to the Church's growing consumer market, decorative images of Christ and of related gospel themes have achieved popularity at the grassroots level. Mass-produced posters, bookmarks, cards, and prints featuring the work of amateur as well as professional artists have culturally defined—and, in a behavioral sense, affected—Latter-day Saint home decoration and family religious practices. Frequently, the focus of Latter-day Saint living spaces is not traditional Catholic-type wall shrines and objects of devotion but rather framed posters and full-color prints. In addition to portraying traditional gospel themes, these popular images often illustrate Book of Mormon narratives and Christ's visit to the Americas, setting their image apart as identifiably Latter-day Saint.

The 1997 retrospective exhibit of LDS artist Minerva Teichert's colorful and energetic paintings of scenes from the Book of Mormon have reintroduced her vision of Christ to a younger generation of Church members. Two of her paintings, issued as frameable reproductions, have gained wide popularity in Latter-day Saint home decoration. The fine-art reproductions of Teichert's *Christ in the Red Robe* (1945; plate 12) and *Jesus at the Home of Mary and Martha* (1941; see fig. 1 in "What Think Ye of Christ?" in this issue) are representative of her painterly manner and are sold in some LDS bookstores, the Museum of Art (Brigham Young University), and Museum of Church History and Art (Salt Lake City) and through BYU's bookstore and merchandise catalogs.<sup>126</sup> The growing interest in fine-art interpretations such as these reveals a countertrend to the popularity of the illustrative, studioliike images and paintings reproduced in Church magazines.

More emblematic LDS art assimilates designs, slogans, and symbols from popular American culture, showing an affection for national voguish trends. Mormon bumper stickers and souvenirs have appropriated variations on the *pisciculi* or Christian fish symbol by replacing the Greek acrostic with Latter-day Saint slogans.<sup>127</sup> Casual clothing styles sold in the Mormon marketplace have imitated popular corporate and designer logos, including Calvin Klein, Hard Rock Cafe, Tommy Hilfiger, and Nike Corporation.<sup>128</sup> One of the most ascertainable purposes these images serve is the inculcation of Latter-day Saint viewers with visual devices that support Mormon masculine and feminine ideals.<sup>129</sup>



## Conclusion

Over the last century, the visual image of Christ, as seen by Latter-day Saints, has been an integral part of larger currents of belief and doctrine. The various ways in which these images have been used reflect LDS world-views on biblical literalism, race, masculinity, athleticism, and family worship practices. A persistent affinity with a highly realistic manner of depicting Christ has coincided with the Church's literal approach to the scriptures, along with a belief in the historicity of Jesus' life and ministry. Moreover, these images function in tandem with official discourse, published manuals, and Church teaching methods. Courses of study on character-building have included the supplementary use of such images as visual affirmations of Christ's physiognomy, manhood, and magnanimity.

Perhaps even more revealing is these images' increasing importance within the Church. In the mid-1960s, a noticeable shift toward more Church-commissioned likenesses of Christ came in preparation for the 1964–65 Mormon Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. Since that time, Church correlation efforts have to some extent homogenized such artwork in Church publications. These portraits and narrative paintings call for a more intimate visual connection with a kinder, more wholesome Savior. During the 1980s and '90s, Church members witnessed an astounding increase in the number of Christ-centered visuals in Church magazines. By and large, Church members are seeing a larger number of prominent images of Christ as the "consecrated," visualization of ideal manhood. At the same time, new, trimmed-down media resources for home decoration, family worship, and Church education codify the last three decades' shifts toward retrenchment.

The truly Mormon image of Christ may lie in what the individual LDS viewer perceives the image should be like. Even though measuring viewer response is difficult, at least some LDS viewers have shown approval of these images through their devotional behavior and by their own written testimonials. In addition, the impact of LDS visuals that confirm personal expectations of Jesus Christ contributes to the Church's visual-image-making mechanisms. And an ever-increasing number of LDS bookstores and independent marketing groups that merchandise Mormon-related media products will likely propagate further the Latter-day Saint visual perception of Christ. However, the ultimate Mormon visual likeness of Christ will be determined by the reception given by the new century's believing Church members.

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2. Trisha Parry, "Picture This," *New Era* 24 (September 1994): 26–27.
3. Ronan Head, "Picture Perfect," *New Era* 25 (May 1995): 14–15.
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5. See Regenerus Steensma, "The Image of Christ as a Mirror of Culture," *Arts: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies* 8 (1995): 29–31.
6. Morgan, *Visual Piety*, 122.
7. Erwin Panofsky, "Introductory," in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 16.
8. See, for example, a possible philosophical dialogue on this question between Mormons, Catholics, and Protestants in Truman G. Madsen, "Can God Be Pictured?" *BYU Studies* 8 (winter 1968): 113–25. On a physical description of Jesus Christ, see Richard L. Anderson, "Questions Frequent in Quest for Description of the Savior," *Church News*, December 22, 1973, 6; Paul James Toscano and Gary Smith, "Seek the Face of the Lord," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1973, photocopy in author's possession; Roger L. Hiatt, "A Portrait in Words of the Savior," *Church News*, December 16, 1984, 8–9; and Sterling W. Sill, "Have You Ever Seen the Lord?" *Ensign* 17 (June 1987): 34–35.
9. See Morgan, *Visual Piety*, 2–5, 124. See also Ljubica D. Popovich, "Popular American Biblical Imagery: Sources and Manifestations," in *The Bible and Popular Culture in America*, ed. Allene Stuart Phy (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 193–233.
10. See Albert Edward Bailey, *The Gospel in Art* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1936); Albert Edward Bailey, *Christ and His Gospel in Recent Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948); Cynthia Pearl Maus, *Christ and the Fine Arts*, rev. and enl. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959); and Jan Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Illustrated Jesus through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
11. See Duane Jeffrey, "Seers, Savants, and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (autumn–winter 1974): 41–75; Richard Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum: Mormon Reactions to the Darwinist Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 33–59; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 272–88; and Philip L. Barlow, "The Mormon Response to Higher Criticism," in *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New



York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 103–47. On Mormonism’s rationalistic concept of God, see B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1903), especially 22–26, 91–98.

12. See Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, 109–46, 223.

13. Malcolm R. Thorp, “James E. Talmage and the Tradition of Victorian Lives of Jesus,” *Sunstone* 12 (January 1988): 11. See also Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 279–80; and Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, 136–37.

14. James E. Talmage, *The Essential James E. Talmage*, ed. James P. Harris (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 136–37. See also xxvii–xxviii, 135–41.

15. Doyle L. Green, “The Life of Jesus in Pictures,” *Improvement Era* 65 (November 1962): 820; italics added.

16. Jay M. Todd, “The Life of Christ Painted by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834–90),” *Ensign* 21 (January 1991): 30.

17. See Robert Sherard, “James Tissot and His Life of Christ,” *Magazine of Art* 18 (1895): 1–8; Cleveland Moffett, “J. J. Tissot and His Paintings of the Life of Christ,” *McClure’s Magazine* 12 (March 1899): 386–96. See also Michael Wentworth, *James Tissot* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 174–97.

18. See Aleska Čelebonović, *Some Call It Kitsch: Masterpieces of Bourgeois Realism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1974). See also Richard Egenter, *The Desecration of Christ*, trans. Edward Quinn, ed. Nicolette Gray (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1967).

19. J. James Tissot, *The Life of Our Savior Jesus Christ*, 3 vols. (1899; reprint, n.p.: St. Hubert Guild, 1900), 1:x.

20. Thomas Heaphy, *The Likeness of Christ: Being an Inquiry into the Verisimilitude of the Received Likeness of Our Blessed Lord* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1886), 6, 22–23, 31–32, 48.

21. Heaphy, *The Likeness of Christ*, 23.

22. The apocryphal letter of First Consul Publius Lentulus to Caesar Tiberius is believed to have been written in the thirteenth century, many versions of which gave currency to painter’s manuals containing descriptions of the personal appearance of Jesus.

23. This should probably read “Nazarite.”

24. Letter of Lentulus, in Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 477–78. For a discussion of this and other descriptions of Christ, see Frederic W. Farrar, “Traditional Description of the Appearance of Our Lord,” in *The Life of Christ* (1874; reprint, Portland, Ore.: Fountain Publications, 1972), 684. See also Philip Schaff, “Personal Appearance of Jesus,” in *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952), 1:167–70.

25. Henry Ward Beecher, “Jesus, His Personal Appearance,” in *The Life of Jesus Christ* (New York: J. B. Ford, 1872), 134–55. See Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ as Represented in Art* (New York: Macmillan, 1894); Anna Jameson and Elizabeth R. “Lady” Eastlake, *The History of Our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art: With That of His Types . . .*, 2 vols., 3d ed. (London: Longman, Green, 1872).

26. According to an early account, dated about A.D. 945, a disciple of Christ named Thaddaeus or Addai traveled to Edessa for the purpose of healing the diseased monarch, Abgar. Before entering the king’s throne room, Thaddaeus placed the Mandyion cloth, imprinted with the face of Christ, on his forehead as a sign. Upon seeing the image, Abgar was miraculously healed.

27. Dionysius was well aware of the story of the Image of Edessa. See Dionysius of Fournia, *The ‘Painter’s Manual’ of Dionysius of Fournia*, tr. Paul Hetherington (London: The Sagittarius Press, 1974; rev. ed., 1981), 4. The synopsis on the cover of the 1988 edition states that the manual was compiled on Mount Athos from 1730–1734 “from ancient and contemporary sources” and is “among the oldest of the extant ‘Greek-style’



narrative patternbooks and instruction texts. A classic ‘hermeneia’ (literally ‘interpretation’ or ‘expounding’), this oversize, small-print work includes introductory sections on icon painting techniques and describes hundreds of figures of saints, Old and New Testament events, parables, feast days, decoration of churches, etc.” The hermeneia was first generally known in Europe by the French translation of 1845. A partial English translation was first published in 1891.

On the Shroud of Turin, see Ian Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin: The Burial Cloth of Jesus Christ?* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), esp. 78–92; and Daniel C. Scavone, “The Turin Shroud from 1200 to 1400,” in *Alpha to Omega: Studies in Honor of George John Szemler on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. W. J. Cherf (Chicago: Ares, 1993), 187–225.

28. Alexander Neibaur, Journal, May 24, 1844, in *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volume 1: Autobiographical and Historical Writings*, ed. Dean C. Jesse (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 461; original in Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. John Murdock and Anson Call also claimed to have visions of Christ, both describing him as having blue eyes. According to Call’s account, Christ had “light and beautiful skin with large blue eyes, a very full forehead with his hair considerably back, parted upon top of his head and reaching below his ears of a flaxen colour with occasionally a grey hair which astonished me much in consequence of his age, broad across the shoulders with brown clothes. I thought him the most perfect formed man I had ever seen.” “The Life and Record of Anson Call,” typescript, 53–54, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. See John Murdock, Journal, typescript, 13, Perry Special Collections; and “Records of Early Church Families,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 28 (April 1937): 61.

29. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures Both Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1915), 117.

30. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 633.

31. Orson F. Whitney, *Through Memory’s Halls: The Life Story of Orson F. Whitney as Told by Himself* (Independence, Mo.: By the author, 1930), 82–83.

32. “Personal Appearance of Jesus,” *Improvement Era* 1 (September 1898): 820–25. The John of Damascus description stated that “He was beautiful and strikingly tall, with fair and slightly curling locks, on which no hand but his mother’s had ever passed, with dark eyebrows, an oval countenance, a pale and olive complexion, bright eyes, an attitude slightly stooping, and a look expressive of patience, nobility, and wisdom.” “Personal Appearance of Jesus,” 821.

33. Rudger Clawson, “A Description of the Savior,” *Conference Report*, April 1927, 77; “Physical Appearance of Christ,” *Conference Report*, April 1949, 151; Spencer W. Kimball, “Description of Christ,” *Conference Report*, April 1956, 118–19.

34. Kimball, “Description of Christ,” 119.

35. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 476.

36. J. M. Sjodahl, “Supposed Likeness of Our Lord,” *Improvement Era* 28 (January 1925): 252. This article was followed by J. M. Sjodahl, “The Great Chalice of Antioch or ‘Holy Grail,’” *Improvement Era* 28 (March 1925): 407–11. See also “The Savior,” *Contributor* 1 (September 1880): 275; W. J., “Our Savior,” *Juvenile Instructor* 17 (November 1, 1882): 326–27; “Personal Description of Jesus Christ—His Death Warrant,” *Juvenile Instructor* 46 (January 1911): 13–14.

37. The veil, according to legend, was given to Jesus by Veronica as he bore his cross to Calvary. When he returned the veil to Veronica, his image was miraculously imprinted on the fabric.



38. [J. M. Sjodahl], "Personal Appearance of Jesus," *Improvement Era* 1 (September 1898): 820–25.

39. [Sjodahl], "Personal Appearance of Jesus," 824.

40. The Pantocrator (all-sovereign ruler of all) is an iconographic image of Christ that appeared in Byzantine churches dating from the sixth century. Post-Iconoclastic frescos and mosaics found in Greece, Sicily, and southern Italy show the Christ Pantocrator as a judge who is bearded and long-haired and often has his right hand raised or pointing to the Gospel in his left hand. Typically behind his head is a cruciform halo.

41. Gary E. Smith, "Christ's Likeness," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1973, conclusion, p. 1; photocopy in author's possession; Sir Wyke Bayliss, *Rex Regum: A Painter's Study of the Likeness of Christ from the Time of the Apostles to the Present Day* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905).

42. George Reynolds, "The Personal Appearance of the Savior," *Juvenile Instructor* 39 (August 15, 1904): 497–500.

43. Reynolds, "The Personal Appearance of the Savior," 498. The image was titled *Christ Blessing Little Children*. No artist was identified.

44. Reynolds, "The Personal Appearance of the Savior," 500. See also Luise Sheridan, "Bertel Thorvaldsen: Creator of the Christus," *Improvement Era* 67 (April 1964): 272–75, 307; Florence S. Jacobsen, "Christus Statue," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:273–74; and Richard G. Oman, "'Ye Shall See the Heavens Open': Portrayal of the Divine and the Angelic in Latter-day Saint Art," *BYU Studies* 35 (1995–96): 121–23. For more on the historical background of the original *Christus*, see Anne-Mette Gravgaard and Eva Henschen, *On the Statue of Christ by Thorvaldsen* (Copenhagen: The Thorvaldsen Museum and the Church of Our Lady, 1997).

45. Henry E. Jackson, *Great Pictures as Moral Teachers* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1910), 21, 17.

46. Albert Edward Bailey, *The Use of Art in Religious Education* (New York: Abingdon, 1922), 60. See also Bailey, *Gospel in Art*, 26–33.

47. Jackson, *Great Pictures as Moral Teachers*, 17.

48. Ruth Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 47, 92. See Edwin Francis Parry, *Simple Bible Stories, Illustrated* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1891); E. F. Parry, *Simple Bible Stories No. 2., Illustrated* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1891). Another reader was Osborne J. P. Widtsoe's *What Jesus Taught* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School, 1918).

49. "Our Purpose for 1908," *Children's Friend* 7 (January 1908): 27.

50. "Second Grade," *Children's Friend* 7 (December 1908): 512.

51. William A. Morton, *The Life of Christ in Simple Language for Little Children* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1916), 16–22.

52. *Bible and Church History Stories for the Primary Department of the Sunday School* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1922).

53. See Olive L. Derbidge, "Suggestive Lessons," in *Minutes of a Special Conference of the Primary Associations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Held in Salt Lake City, Wednesday, June 13th, 1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1900), 16–22.

54. *Parent and Child: A Series of Essays and Lessons for Use in the Parents' Department of the Latter-day Saints Sunday Schools*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1908), 1:74; Charles B. Felt, William A. Morton, Dorothy Bowman, and Amy Bowman, "The Use of Pictures," *Juvenile Instructor* 46 (December 1911): 731; J. Leo Fairbanks, "Picture Study in the Sunday Schools," *Juvenile Instructor* 48 (January 1913): 3–5; Grace Zenor-Robertson, "Studying Pictures," *Juvenile Instructor* 48 (February 1913): 68.



55. J. Leo Fairbanks, "Picture Study in the Sunday Schools," 4. See also "Moving Pictures as Helps to Bible Study," *Juvenile Instructor* 48 (September 1913): 584–88.

56. N. Y. Schofield, "Can Character Be Delineated from a Photograph?" *Juvenile Instructor* 37 (February 1, 1902): 86–89; N. Y. S[chofield], "The Prophet Joseph Smith: A Sketch from a Scientific Standpoint," *Juvenile Instructor* 37 (May 1, 1902): 257–61, 307–10. For more on Latter-day Saint interest in phrenology, see Davis Bitton and Gary L. Bunker, "Phrenology among the Mormons," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9 (spring 1974): 42–61. See also Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures*, 275–86.

57. See the monthly columns "Human Nature, Moral and Physical Training" and "Human Nature Department" in the *Character Builder*. On delineating character from reading the human face, see, for example, A. E. Willis, "The Human Face," *Character Builder* 18 (June 1905): 202–4. See also E. H. Gombrich, "The Mask and the Face: The Perception of Physiognomic Likeness in Life and in Art," in *Art, Perception, and Reality*, ed. E. H. Gombrich, Julian Hochberg, and Max Black (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972), 1–46.

58. Schofield, "Can Character Be Delineated from a Photograph?" 86, 88. On applying the phrenological method to works of art, see Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), especially 151–211; and David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures*, 275–86.

59. For several examples, see Kenneth S. Bennion, "Teach with Pictures," *Instructor* 86 (January 1951): 16; Kenneth S. Bennion, "Great Pictures That Teach Great Lessons," *Instructor* 86 (November 1951): 336; Kenneth S. Bennion, "Let Your Pupils See as Well as Hear the Lessons," *Instructor* 87 (February 1952): 48, 56; Kenneth S. Bennion, "Picture-Windows for Your Classroom," *Instructor* 87 (May 1952): 112; Kenneth S. Bennion, "Pictures—That We May Understand," *Instructor* 87 (June 1952): 176, 188; Kenneth S. Bennion, "Artists Help Teach Great Lessons," *Instructor* 87 (July 1952): 208, 210; Marion G. Merkley, "Using Pictures in Teaching," *Instructor* 87 (September 1952): 266, 270; Kenneth S. Bennion, "Pictures Help Our Pupils to Understand," *Instructor* 87 (November 1952): 336; Margaret Ipson, "Use Appropriate Pictures," *Instructor* 87 (December 1952): 367; and Marion G. Merkley, "Live according to His Standards," *Instructor* 88 (September 1953): 268–69.

60. Hazel W. Lewis, "She 'Charts' Her Lessons," *Instructor* 89 (May 1954): 134–36.

61. See, for example, Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon, 1983). Also see Erika Doss, "Making a 'Virile, Manly Christ': The Cultural Origins and Meanings of Warner Sallman's Religious Imagery," in *Icons of American Protestantism: The Art of Warner Sallman*, ed. David Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 61–94; and Susan Curtis, "The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 67–78. For works on the history of masculinity in Victorian and early twentieth-century America, see Joe L. Dubbert, *A Man's Place: Masculinity in Transition* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979); Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980); Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Culture and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987); Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Peter N. Stearns, *Be a Man! Males in Modern Society*, 2d ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution:*



*Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

62. Physical Directors' Society of the Young Men's Christian Associations of North America, *Physical Education in the Young Men's Christian Association of North America* (New York: Association Press, 1914), 12.

63. Physical Directors' Society, *Physical Education*, 12–13. See William H. Ball, "The Administration of Athletics in the Young Men's Christian Association," *American Physical Education Review* 16 (January 1911): 12–22; Millicent Hosmer, "The Development of Morality through Physical Education," *American Physical Education Review* 19 (October 1914): 520–27; George J. Fisher, "How May We Secure Character and Spiritual Values through the Activities of the Physical Department," *Physical Training* 13 (June 1916): 254–263; Guy Lewis, "The Muscular Christianity Movement," *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation* 37 (May 1966): 27–28, 42; Elmer L. Johnson, *The History of YMCA Physical Education* (Chicago: Association Press, 1979); and Clifford Putney, "From Character to Body Building: The YMCA and the Suburban Metropolis, 1950–1980," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 231–49. See also David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870–1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); and Moore, *Selling God*, 112–16, 211–16.

64. "Talks to Young Men. VI. The Ideal Young Man," *Improvement Era* 7 (April 1904): 455. For more on the physical fitness programs of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), see Leon M. Strong, "A History of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, 1875–1938" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1939); and Scott Kenney, "The Mutual Improvement Association: A Preliminary History, 1900–1950," *Task Papers in LDS History*, no. 6 (January 1976); Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 140–46; and Richard Ian Kimball, "Making the Most of Leisure: Depression, Recreation, and the *Improvement Era*," *Journal of Mormon History* 24 (fall 1998): 182–206, especially 186–87.

65. Reynolds, "Personal Appearance of the Savior," 497–500; quote on 498–99.

66. See R. Laurence Moore, "Learning to Play: The Mormon Way and the Way of Other Americans," *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 89–106, especially 101–4; and Davis Bitton, "Zion's Rowdies: Growing Up on the Mormon Frontier," in *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 54–68.

67. Charles E. Mitchener and Mark E. Hurst, "Young Men," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1614–15; Strong, "A History of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association," 131–43; Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, *Manual, 1909–10; Subject: The Making of the Man*, no. 13 (Salt Lake City: General Board of Y.M.M.I.A., 1909), 34.

68. Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, *Senior Manual, 1922–23; Subject: Health and Achievement (Book I—Achievement Series)*, no. 25 (Salt Lake City: General Board of Y.M.M.I.A., 1922), 96.

69. Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, *Senior Manual*, 102.

70. Levi Edgar Young, "Thou Hast Made Us to Incline to Thee," *Improvement Era* 47 (July 1944): 426–27, 470–71.

71. David S. King, "... Keep Fit. Be a Man," *Improvement Era* 58 (May 1955): 304–5, 334, 336.



72. Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1924), ii, iv. See also Leo P. Ribuffo, "Jesus Christ as Business Statesman: Bruce Barton and the Selling of Corporate Capitalism," *American Quarterly* 33 (summer 1981): 206–31; and Edrene S. Montgomery, "Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows*: A Popular Advertising Illusion," *Journal of Popular Culture* 19 (winter 1985): 21–34.

73. Barton, *Man Nobody Knows*, 42–43.

74. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Manhood of the Master* (New York: Association Press, 1914), 173.

75. See Bryant S. Hinckley, *Manual for Advanced Junior Classes, 1927–28; Some Essentials of Character*, Book 1 of the Character-Building Series (Salt Lake City: General Board of Y.M.M.I.A. 1927); and Bryant S. Hinckley, *Advanced Junior Manual; Religion a Vital Factor in Character Building*, Book 3 of the Character-Building Series (Salt Lake City: General Board of Y.M.M.I.A., 1926).

76. In addition to its similarities in organization and content, Hinckley's work included passages from the Barton and Fosdick books. See Bryant S. Hinckley, *A Study of the Character and Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth: A Course Study for the Adult Members of the Aaronic Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Presiding Bishopric, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1950), 20, 55, 89, 101, 159–61.

77. See Dorothy C. Haskin, "The Man Who Painted a Manly Head of Christ," in *Christians You Would Like to Know* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1954), 65–72. See also Howard W. Ellis, *Story of Sallman's "Head of Christ"* (Indianapolis: Kriebel and Bates, 1944); Jack R. Lundbom, *Master Painter: Warner E. Sallman* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1999); and various articles in Morgan, *Icons of American Protestantism*.

78. See S. George Ellsworth and Kathleen C. Perrin, "The Homecoming," in *Seasons of Faith and Courage: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in French Polynesia; A Sesquicentennial History, 1843–1993* (Salt Lake City: Yves R. Perrin, 1994), 373–79.

79. "The New Era Gospel-in-Art Program!" *Improvement Era* 64 (November 1961): 850–51; "Era Officials Present Church Leader with Painting," *Church News*, December 23, 1961, 3.

80. Friberg's Book of Mormon paintings were created at the request of Primary General President Adele Cannon Howells and were completed in 1962. They were intended to provide children with visuals of heroic figures on which they could pattern their lives. Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 121. According to Friberg, he intended to paint "more the interior of the man. Not every man who has been a prophet has been a large man but that fulfills pictorially what you feel he must have been." Arnold Friberg, interview by Margot J. Butler, June 3, 1986, transcription, 13; copy in possession of the author. Friberg's art also includes paintings on the Ten Commandments, the royal family, the prayer at Valley Forge, and western subjects.

81. Ted Schwarz, *Arnold Friberg: The Passion of a Modern Master* (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland, 1985), 142. See the advertisement "A Superb New Gospel-in-Art Masterpiece!" *Improvement Era* 68 (April 1965): inside back cover. The painting is now entitled *The Risen Lord*.

82. Schwarz, *Arnold Friberg*, 142.

83. Hugh B. Brown, "Consecrated Manliness," *Conference Report*, April 1964, 55.

84. David Knowlton, "On Mormon Masculinity," *Sunstone* 16 (August 1992): 19–31. See also Respice Finem [pseud.], "The Style and the Man," *Contributor* 6 (November 1884): 45–50; Simplex [pseud.], "Ideal Manhood," *Contributor* 17 (November 1895): 18–23; (December 1895): 89–94; (January 1896): 185–189; (February 1896):



212–16; “The Relation of a Man’s Physical Condition to His Earning Ability,” *Juvenile Instructor* 37 (October 15, 1902): 616–17; Francis M. Lyman, “Manhood,” *Improvement Era* 7 (January 1904): 175–78; Joseph A. Ward, “Manliness,” *Improvement Era* 8 (1905): 296–98; Lloyd O. Ivie, “The Superior Man,” *Improvement Era* 22 (May 1919): 600–602; H. Bartley Heiner, “God’s Masterpiece,” *Improvement Era* 29 (October 1926): 1178–79; Sterling W. Sill, “What about the Man?” *Improvement Era* 65 (December 1962): 920–23; and David O. McKay, “Man . . . the Jewel of God,” *Improvement Era* 72 (December 1969): 29–31.

85. J. Leo Fairbanks, “Moroni Showing the Plates to Joseph,” *Instructor* 65 (February 1930): frontispiece.

86. See Greg Olsen, *Expressions of Faith: Art by Greg Olsen* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1999).

87. “Portrayal of Deity,” in *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 279.

88. See Deseret Sunday School Union, *Pictorial Teaching Aids in the Instructor* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1970).

89. Bernard P. Brockbank, “The Church at the New York World’s Fair,” *Improvement Era* 67 (April 1964): 279–81, 284–89; Nelson Wadsworth, “Influence of Mormon Pavilion Felt around the Globe,” *Church News*, December 26, 1964, 6–7; Richard J. Marshall, “The New York World’s Fair—a Final Report,” *Improvement Era* 68 (December 1965): 1170; Brent L. Top, “Legacy of the Mormon Pavilion,” *Ensign* 19 (October 1989): 22–28; and Brent L. Top, “The Miracle of the Mormon Pavilion: The Church at the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: New York*, ed. Larry C. Porter, Milton V. Backman Jr., and Susan Easton Black (Provo: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1992), 235–56.

90. See “The LDS Scene: Hemisfair Painting,” *Improvement Era* 70 (October 1967): 20; Don LeFevre, “The Mormon Pavilion at Hemisfair ’68,” *Improvement Era* 71 (April 1968): 22–24; Joseph Lundstrom, “New Mural for Visitors’ Center,” *Church News*, October 5, 1968, 4; “On the Cover,” *Improvement Era* 72 (October 1969): 1; Richard J. Marshall, “Moroni,” *Improvement Era* 72 (October 1969): 18–20; Richard J. Marshall, “The Visitation of John the Baptist,” *Improvement Era* 73 (June 1970): 9–10; Susan Hallsten McGarry, *West of Camelot: The Historical Paintings of Kenneth Riley* (Tucson: Settlers West Galleries, 1993), 86; and Don Hedgpeth and Walt Reed, *The Art of Tom Lovell: An Invitation to History* (Trumbull, Conn.: Greenwich Workshop, 1993), 138.

91. Richard J. Marshall, telephone conversation with the author, January 10, 2000. See also Nelson Wadsworth, “I Have Chosen and Ordained You . . .,” *Instructor* 100 (February 1965): 46–47; and Raymond H. Woolsey and Ruth Anderson, *Harry Anderson: The Man Behind the Paintings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), 119–23; and “Artists Painted with Single Purpose,” *Church News*, March 18, 1978, 6. For examples of Anderson’s work, see “The Land Jesus Knew: Part 1,” *Ensign* 12 (December 1982): 31–48; “Part 2,” *Ensign* 13 (January 1983): 33–50; “Part 3,” *Ensign* 13 (February 1983): 33–46; “Part 4,” *Ensign* 13 (April 1983): 32–48; and “Part 5,” *Ensign* 13 (June 1983): 34–42.

92. Bruce R. McConkie, “Murals in Visitors Center Portray Life, Ministry of Savior,” *Church News*, March 18, 1978, 7. See also “Mural for New Church Building,” *Ensign* 3 (August 1973): 80.

93. “Artists Painted with Single Purpose,” 6.

94. “Announcing the Ensign Gospel-in-Art Program,” *Ensign* 3 (December 1973): 45.

95. Ed Maryon, “Look at Your Walls. What Do You See?” *Ensign* 3 (December 1973): 46–48.



96. Maryon, "Look at Your Walls," 47.
97. Armand L. Mauss, "Refuge and Retrenchment: The Mormon Quest for Identity," in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 24–42. See also Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 102–22.
98. "Presenting the Church's Image: A Conversation with Wendell J. Ashton," *Ensign* 3 (May 1973): 50–52; "Marketing the Mormon Image: An Interview with Wendell J. Ashton," *Dialogue* 10 (spring 1977): 15–20. See also *Taking Our Message to the Media* (Salt Lake City: External Communications Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973).
99. Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The Church and Children," *Ensign* 8 (April 1978): 6–13.
100. Research notes taken by the author at the LDS Visual Resources Library, Salt Lake City.
101. This can be seen by observing published illustrations of Christ in Church magazines and by examining visual media available through Salt Lake Distribution Center catalogs dated between 1980 and 1999.
102. See cover, *Instructor* (April 1960); and "New Oil Painting of the Savior Adorns Legacy Theater Lobby; Portrait Illustrates That Christ Overcame the World," *Church News*, April 23, 1994, 3, 11.
103. For a discussion of Mormon appropriations of obedience and salvation in art, see Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace and Glory* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 44–46.
104. See Richard G. Oman, "Twentieth-Century International Folk Art," in Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis, *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 165–96. For related material on diversity in Latter-day Saint art, see Richard G. Oman, "Divergent Cultures and Gospel Brotherhood," in *Arts and Inspiration: Mormon Perspectives*, ed. Steven P. Sondrup (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 69–74; "Diversity, Faith Mark Art Exhibit," *Church News*, November 26, 1988, 8–10; R. Scott Lloyd, "Faith Expressed in Variety of Art Forms," *Church News*, November 17, 1990, 3; John K. Carmack, "Unity in Diversity," *Ensign* 21 (March 1991): 6–9; and R. Scott Lloyd, "Art Exhibition Reflects Faith, Diverse Cultures of LDS Artists," *Church News*, April 6, 1991, 8–9; and Richard G. Oman, "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: A Cross-Cultural Perspective in Contemporary Latter-day Saint Art," *BYU Studies* 32, no. 4 (1992): 5–34.
105. See Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, 45–46.
106. Carrie A. Moore, "'One Fold, One Shepherd,'" *Deseret News*, March 20, 2000, B1.
107. Kieth Merrill, "Behind the Scenes with the Director of *Testaments*," *Meridian: The Place Where Latter-day Saints Gather* ([www.meridianmagazine.com/arts/000317testament.html](http://www.meridianmagazine.com/arts/000317testament.html), September 15, 2000).
108. Alisa Anglesey, telephone conversation with author, June 12, 2000. Anglesey said that the images were used in the film to depict Christ in ways that non-LDS, as well as LDS, viewers would already be familiar. Ten images recreated in the film include (in this order) Dore's *Nativity*, Olsen's painting of Christ in the synagogue at Nazareth, Bloch's painting of Christ with little children, Bloch's painting of Christ healing the blind man, Clark Kelley Price's image of Christ healing a man sick with palsy, Tissot's painting of Christ healing at Capernaum, Bloch's painting of Christ healing at the pool of Bethesda, Dore's painting of the resurrection of Lazarus, Bloch's painting of the sermon on the mount, and Dore's image of Christ being nailed to the cross.



109. Oman and Davis, *Images of Faith*, 136.
110. Frank McEntire, "Images of Jesus: Depictions of Christ Reveal Diversity of Religious Thought; Diverse Images of Jesus Christ," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 22, 1996, D1.
111. Lynette Parson, untitled manuscript [n.p., n.d.], copy in author's possession.
112. McEntire, "Images of Jesus," D2.
113. Sarah Adams, item 3. The informant item numbers refer to tape-recorded interviews conducted in April and May 1996 by the author. The cassette tape is deposited in the Fife Folklore Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah (hereafter cited as Fife Folklore Archives).
114. Jeremy Snow, item 1, Fife Folklore Archives.
115. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 227; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 46.
116. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 107.
117. Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore*, 107.
118. Del Parson, telephone conversation with the author, May 17, 1996; Steve Moser, "A World-Wide Influence," [Ricks College] *Summit* 6 (spring 1993): 8–9.
119. Lynette Parson, untitled manuscript.
120. Lynette Parson, untitled manuscript. This was supported by Del Parson's communication to the author. Another account states, "Each time the sketch was returned by the Church's Correlation Committee with detailed instructions: eyes too narrow; more shoulder; more intensity; a little bit older; more masculinity; no fork in the beard, etc." Moser, "World-Wide Influence," 8. See also McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 189–93.
121. Parson, telephone conversation.
122. Sarah Adams, item 2; Janette Watts, item 9; Rebecca Lindsay, item 11; Fife Folklore Archives; Moser, "World-Wide Influence," 8.
123. Naomi Powell, item 6, Fife Folklore Archives.
124. Rebecca Lindsay, item 12, Fife Folklore Archives.
125. For a discussion of visual balance, see Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 1–26.
126. Many members have also purchased a copy of *Look to Your Children* (1956), believing it to be an image of Christ ministering to the Lamanite and Nephite children. Teichert, however, intended it to be one of the angels rather than the Savior. John W. Welch and Doris R. Dant, *The Book of Mormon Paintings of Minerva Teichert* (Provo: BYU Studies; Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1997), 146, 166. See *BYU Creative Works Catalog* (1999), 16.
127. The acrostic symbol IXΘΥΣ (ICHTHYS), the Greek word for "fish," represents the initial letters of one of the Lord's titles: Iesous CHristos THEou Yios Soter (Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior).
128. See, for example, Latter-Day Specialties Online at [www.10n1.net/valor](http://www.10n1.net/valor); and the Missionary Emporium online store at <http://store.missionaryemporium.com/webstore/frontpage>, September 15, 2000.
129. See, for example, Jane K. Riess, "Stripling Warriors Choose the Right: The Cultural Engagements of Contemporary Mormon Kitsch," *Sunstone* 22 (June 1999): 36–47.



# **“What Think Ye of Christ?”**

## **An Art Historian’s Perspective**

Richard G. Oman

In “Images of Christ,” Noel Carmack has performed a real service on several fronts. In my response, I would like to suggest some modifications to his comments and, more importantly, discuss some features that I believe a great painting of Christ must have if it is to produce a spiritual change in the lives of its viewers.

### **The Long Tradition of Realism in Religious Art**

In discussions of contemporary religious art, one of the problems that can occur involves couching the issue only in the present and recent past. For example, I am skeptical of Noel Carmack’s idea that realism in religious art is a late nineteenth-century phenomenon chosen to reinforce a literal view of scriptures. By ignoring the broad context of Western religious art, Carmack misses the centuries of a realistic tradition beginning with the vast corpus of the entire Renaissance, especially the northern German Renaissance and the Flemish Renaissance (much less the Baroque). Rubens (1577–1640) and Poussin (1594–1665) paid keen attention to a body’s underlying muscular structure. In a Dürer (1471–1528) painting, you can determine the specific kind of grass he depicts, and you can ascertain which kind of fir tree a figure is leaning against.

While there has been some mysticism in religious art, the vast sweep of religious art in Western civilization for five hundred years has not been particularly mystical. Thus during that time, most images of Christ have been quite realistic. For mysticism, you would have to look at the Byzantine period, which begins almost a thousand years before the Renaissance, or at the twentieth century, when nonrealistic religious art became more pervasive than at earlier times. So the idea of highly realistic art is neither a modern nor a nineteenth-century creation.

### **The Disenfranchisement of Realistic Narrative**

Most twentieth-century art criticism is rather hostile toward realism. The emphasis has been on abstract expressionism and its various cousins. In the history of art, almost invariably one style battles against another



style and attempts to disenfranchise it. For example, the Renaissance invented the word *Gothic* for Gothic art. That happened to be the competing art form that the Renaissance was battling, so the proponents of the Renaissance gave it a pejorative term to disenfranchise it. They were reviving Greco-Roman antiquity, and they had to justify why it needed to be revived. Their response was that it had been beaten down. And who did it? All those nasty Goths. The worst possible term that you could apply to something was *Gothic*.

In the twentieth century, *Bourgeois*<sup>1</sup> was one of the words used to disenfranchise realism because European intellectuals saw things bourgeois as coming from a degenerate culture. Words like *kitsch* and *illustration*—“That is not real art; it is illustration”—also disenfranchise realism. What is illustration? It tells stories with images that are readily understandable. But if you throw out storytelling by disenfranchising it, logically you must throw out much of the Renaissance.

### **LDS Fondness for Classically Trained Artists**

Carmack points out the efforts made by Doyle Green, a managing editor of the *Improvement Era*, to bring Bloch to the attention of the Latter-day Saints. It might be useful to delineate in more detail why Green might have been drawn to Bloch. There are some issues at work here other than those mentioned by Carmack. One is that Bloch was a classically trained artist. He did not adopt the principles of abstraction that started to creep in during the latter part of the nineteenth century with some of the more “mystical” religious painters such as Munch (1863–1944)—a fellow Scandinavian—and Ensor (1860–1949). Bloch’s composition utilized many features from the Italian Renaissance and borrowed the treatment of light and shadow from the Baroque period. Additionally, as a Protestant, Bloch did not bring to his art a lot of the Catholic iconographic features. Because he was a classical artist, which carried a lot of prestige within the LDS Church, and in his paintings he did not incorporate halos and wings, Latter-day Saints could feel comfortable with his work.

It is not coincidental that the Christus plays such a prominent role in Mormon representations of Christ. Once again, the artist is a Scandinavian. Once again he is somebody who is strongly trained in the classical tradition. However, although Latter-day Saints have had immense respect for the Renaissance, there has always been a rearguard reaction of “the Catholics are doing this sort of thing.” With the works of these two Scandinavians, Mormons could have all the benefits of the Renaissance without the Catholic influence. So they flocked to these works.



## **LDS Impressionism: Are Mormons Really in Lockstep with Protestant Realism?**

One of the things that makes the history of Mormon religious art somewhat distinctive from the general direction that Carmack projects in his article is that Latter-day Saints have a strong tradition of religious art springing from impressionism. In other cultures, this style has not generated much religious art. The fact that Mormons have done so much in a style that is almost exclusively associated with secular subjects deserves a little comment. And it certainly breaks us out of the stereotype of simply being in lockstep with the tight realism of fundamentalist Protestants.

In the context of tight realism, Carmack notes that a book for children on the life of Christ includes Lewis Ramsey’s paintings of the Joseph Smith story. Ramsey is a painter who was trained primarily in impressionism; many of his works of art are highly impressionistic rather than tightly realistic, especially the paintings he did of the First Vision and of Moroni delivering the gold plates.<sup>2</sup> The “O My Father” series by LDS artist John Hafen<sup>3</sup> and the commissioned work of people such as J. T. Harwood (plate 1) are also impressionistic. One person whom Carmack quotes fairly extensively is J. Leo Fairbanks, who had a significant position in the formal structure of the Church itself (he was on the general board of the Sunday School). As a painter, he did a lot of work for the Church. But once again, J. Leo Fairbanks painted quite loosely and was not particularly realistic, a fact which opens the door to a reevaluation of our images of Christ. In other words, the works of LDS artists do not precisely match those of fundamentalist Protestants. LDS artwork is more complex. The works of Minerva Teichert (fig. 1) and some of the art pieces by international artists are evidence that we have not had the imperative to go down the path of a tight religious sanction as, for instance, the Greek Orthodox Church has with their icons.

The difficulty in pigeonholing the Mormon artistic experience as it relates to Christ, I think, reflects one of the strengths of the Church. The flexibility inherent within our tradition is one reason why we are able to deal with a certain amount of visual pluralism, which in turn makes internationalizing the Church an easier process. Without that level of pluralism, one would expect Mormonism to be caught in a straightjacket where it would not be able to adapt very well outside the confines of Western civilization. But the truth is that much of our recent flourishing is happening outside of Western culture.

## **Open-Endedness: Drawing Out Viewers’ Spirituality**

One of the challenges we face in depicting Christ is going too far off the edge in either abstraction or realism. If we move toward abstraction, we have



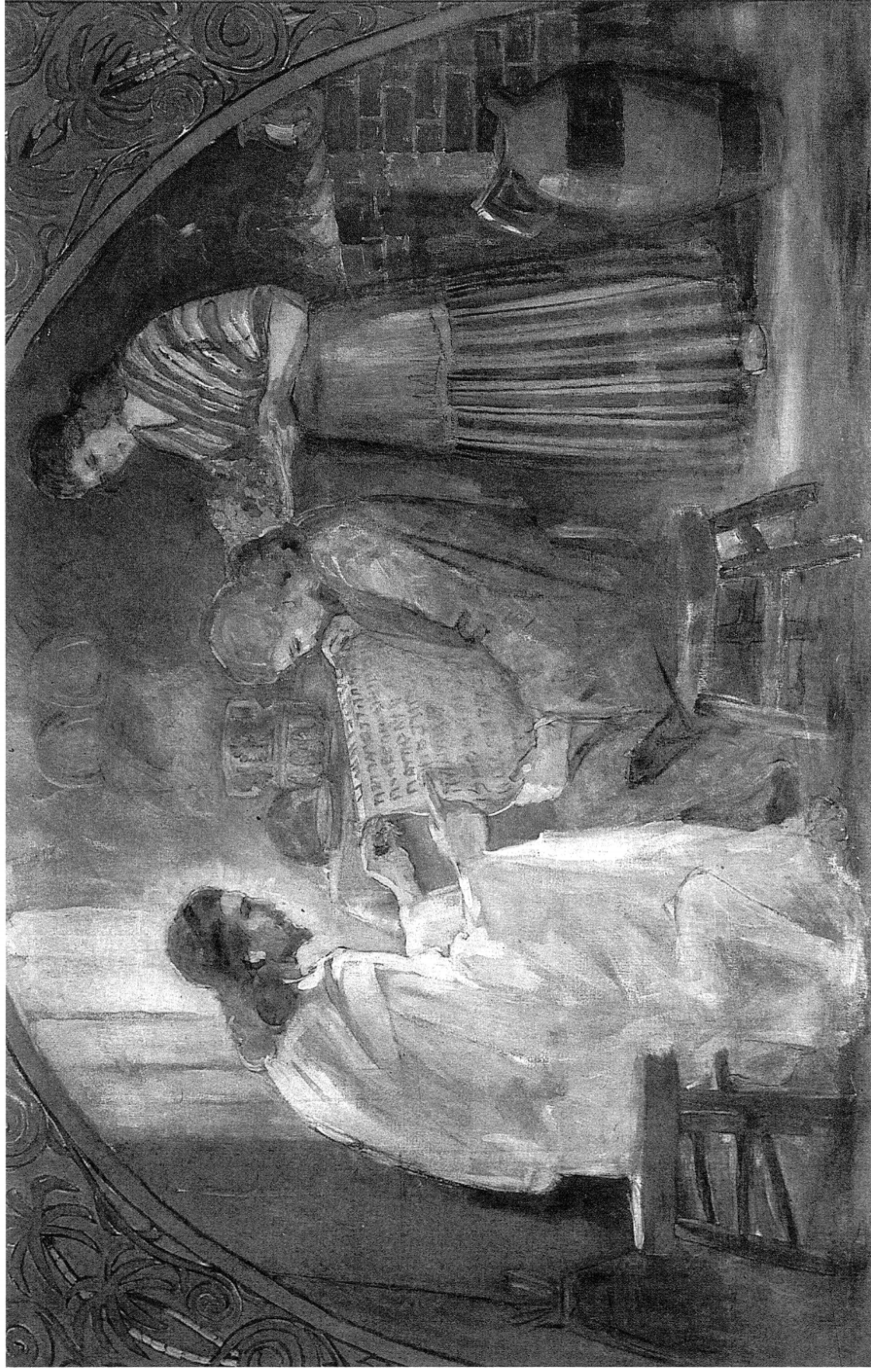


FIG. 1. Minerva Teichert (1888–1976), *Jesus at the Home of Mary and Martha*. Oil on canvas, 36" x 48", 1941. Courtesy Museum of Art, Brigham Young University.





PLATE 1. James T. Harwood (1860–1940), *Come Follow Me*. 1922, Oil on canvas, 51" x 41 ½".  
Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.





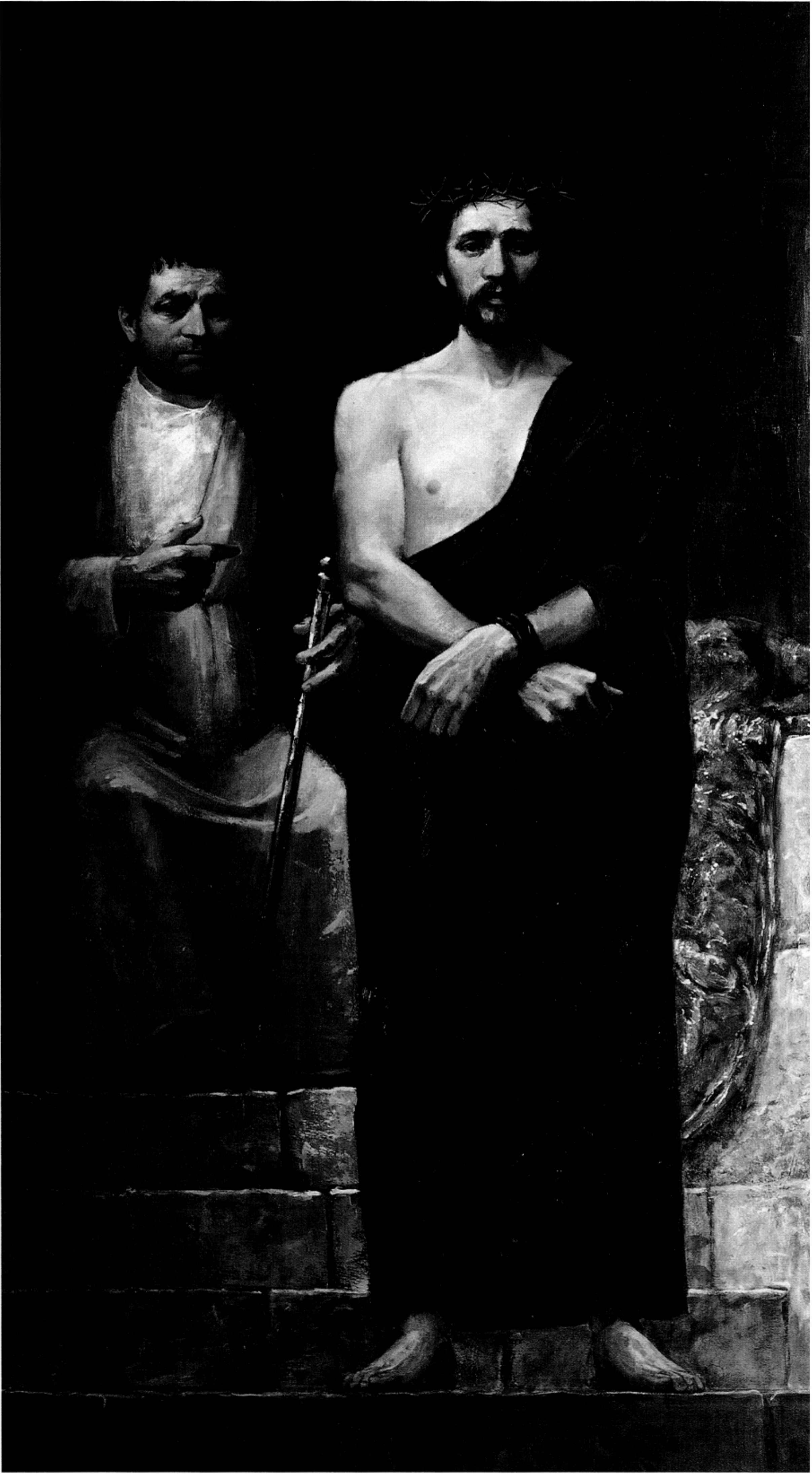


PLATE 2 (left). Walter Rane (1949–), *“He Anointed the Eyes of the Blind Man.”* 1999, Oil on paper, 34  $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 20". Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

PLATE 3 (below). Walter Rane (1949–), *And the Child Grew.* 1990, Oil on canvas, 32  $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 22". Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.









the potential of sliding down the slippery slope to disembodiment of God—to removing him from a historical context and from the tangible, physical body that he acquired here on earth. Such attempts can become quasi-agnostic and turn God into an idea or a strange mixture of pantheism. Carmack's point that realism has been an attempt to avoid that direction is a good one.

But realism also has its potential problems. One of those problems is that realism can focus the viewers on the trivial instead of on the transcendent. For example, if the key element in realism is tight detail, we sometimes can become seduced into thinking that if we just know exactly what the bridge of the Savior's nose was like or whether his eyebrows were bushy or medium or thin then we will somehow know Christ better. We expect that we would somehow be able to pick him out if he were walking down the street.

What is distinctive about Christ is not his physical appearance but his spiritual power. The question then arises, How does an artist communicate spiritual power? The best-kept secret for most artists is that one of the strongest ways in art to communicate such power is to appeal to the knowledge and experiences of the viewer. Once an image has sufficient form to clearly communicate that Latter-day Saints really do believe that Christ was a historical figure, that he did come to earth, that he did have a body, that this body was real and not just some sort of metaphysical manifestation, then the challenge is to communicate the Savior's spirituality by accessing the inherent spirituality of the viewer. The best way to do so is to let the viewer be involved in the creation of the work of art.

Drawing out viewers' spirituality is an intriguing undertaking. I find when I look at a Rembrandt painting that it continues to invite viewer involvement even after four centuries. This is how Rembrandt does it: He understood that the aspect of a person that tells the most about spirituality and emotions is the face and in the face, the eyes and the corners of the mouth. Notice that when people feel embarrassed they tend to look down or they tend to put their hand over their mouth because they feel emotionally naked and vulnerable. When Rembrandt did a portrait or when he painted Christ (fig. 2), he would often place the eyes and the corners of the mouth in shadow, thereby forcing viewers to fill in what is in the shadow, to bring everything they know about Christ to the image. But more importantly, the viewers bring everything they feel about Christ based on their personal experiences with him. Because how they feel about the subject is part of the visual creation, the viewers read what Rembrandt put there plus what they just inserted. In doing so, they are involved in creating that work.

Rembrandt understood that sometimes less detail is more spiritual power. In a somewhat different fashion, Walter Rane, a contemporary Latter-day Saint artist, applies the same principle to his own paintings of





FIG. 2. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), *Head of Christ*. Oil on canvas, 13½" x 16¾". Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917.

the Savior. In *He Anointed the Eyes of the Blind Man* (plate 2), Rane eliminated extraneous details to help us focus on both the Savior's power and the man's great faith. When we look at Rane's treatment of the Savior's lower body, we realize how that simplification increases the healing's impact on the viewer—the energy of the painting flows from the face of the Savior down through his hands to the face, torso, and hands of the blind man.



If every detail is tightly filled in by the artist, there is little space for interplay between the image and the viewers' own spiritual experiences; the range of spiritual response is then conditioned by what can be put down with a paintbrush on a piece of canvas. Even for the best of artists, there is a limit to how far they can go with purely physical means. On the other hand, leaving the image a little open-ended, as in those small areas of the eyes and mouth, provides a place for the viewer to look at the painting and become involved. It is that connectedness with the Savior in art where the great power comes. The prophet Nephi says we should liken the scriptures unto ourselves (1 Ne. 19:23). In other words, drawing an intimate connection between our lives and the scriptures is an imperative in terms of spiritual understanding and change. Likewise, the power of an open-ended image of Christ is that it brings us to actively ask ourselves about our spiritual relationship with Christ and about the spiritual quality of our own life.

It may seem a little risky to leave a painting open-ended, but I believe that Latter-day Saints participate in an analogous activity during fast and testimony meeting. It is a very open-ended meeting; anyone can stand up and say anything he or she wants. A strange testimony may be borne occasionally, but generally, of all the ward meetings, this one is the spiritual highlight of a month. As Latter-day Saints, we firmly believe that the Spirit can speak through us, that we can hear the Spirit, but that we do not dictate to the Spirit. That kind of open-endedness is a little like the open-endedness of a Rembrandt painting of Christ. Reflecting upon such a painting is a way for viewers to bear their testimonies to themselves even if they do not say anything to anyone else.

### **Religious Art as a Spiritual Barometer: "What Think Ye of Christ?"**

Thinking of Christ should inspire us to be better people. As President Hinckley is fond of saying, "[The gospel should] make bad men good and good men better."<sup>4</sup> Part of that process is taking spiritual stock of our own lives, asking ourselves how we are doing in following the gospel, how we are doing in keeping our covenants. By almost forcing viewers to ask those questions of themselves, a superbly painted image of the Savior that leaves some room for personal involvement can serve as a personal spiritual barometer. It becomes possible for viewers to make a spiritual declaration, to answer the powerful question that Elder Bruce R. McConkie asked over and over, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matt. 22:42).<sup>5</sup>

This question is suggested in a Marcus Vincent painting of Christ and Pontius Pilate (plate 4). The two are standing high up, and Christ is being presented to the populace in Jerusalem. Standing somewhat behind Christ, Pilate has a very puzzled look. He is not sure who this man is, but he knows Jesus is no ordinary mortal. One of the brilliant choices Vincent makes in this painting is not to include the crowd. The figures of Christ and Pontius



Pilate are moved right up to the surface plane of the painting. The crowd—all who look at this painting—stand and look on. What Vincent has done is to say, “Well, what do you think of Christ? How are you going to vote? Thumbs up or thumbs down?” To the extent that this artist gives us the opportunity to be engaged in a spiritual accounting of our own lives, he has done a wonderful service to each of us.

### **Spiritual Intimacy**

One of the challenges we all have is developing, in a visual way, an intimate, spiritual relationship with the Savior. Sometimes artists think that if they just zoom the camera in closer instead of showing Christ on a distant hillside that somehow the connection with viewers will be tighter, the intimacy more profound. Or they believe that this relationship will come if only they can have him standing full figure in the art, or maybe if they do a portrait of Christ from the waist up, or better yet if they just zoom in on the face of Christ. One of the ways that artists elicit a greater level of intimacy is not with the zoom lens but with a personal involvement between the art and viewers because then the viewers must ask themselves what they think of Christ. Ultimately that is the question of true intimacy. For example, because we know our family, answering what we think of our spouses or of our children evokes an intimacy that far transcends the intimacy a photographer might achieve with a total stranger in a studio.

Again, sometimes less is more. This principle involves more than making the face of Christ take a bigger percentage of the canvas of the painting. It requires designing areas of interpretation and entrée to leave at least some space for viewers to look at and be involved in that creation and, in the process, achieve intimacy. It is that intimacy, springing from the spiritual connectedness viewers feel with the subject of the image, that opens us up to sensing the Lord’s power.

### **The Shadows of Religious Experience**

Sometimes Mormons feel uncomfortable associating darkness and shadow with the Savior. We think, “Well, Christ is about light and truth,” and indeed he is. But there is a difference between art whose intention is to sow seeds of doubt or despair and art that with some darkness communicates the profound truths of the Lord with such power that it motivates viewers to become better.

Darkness and shadows are sometimes more than metaphorical. Some of the greatest experiences in the spiritual history of the earth occurred during times of great trial and tribulation, of darkness. Christ’s most significant hour was not when he held the little children on his lap but when he



was in the Garden of Gethsamene atoning for our sins—a time of such difficulty that he bled from every pore. Joseph Smith’s sufferings in Liberty Jail resulted in some of the most profoundly moving and spiritually insightful sections in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>6</sup> The Saints’ challenges and sacrifices as they crossed the plains and settled in an incredibly inhospitable environment gave rise to some of the most inspiring experiences of Church history.

It seems to me, then, if artists focus only on bright, cheerful, well-lit, tightly detailed images of Christ, they may trivialize to an extent the richness and depth of the spiritual experiences that the Savior had in mortality and that we can have, in turn, with him. Great religious art does not always bring a sense of peace. Sometimes it causes us to be uncomfortable—and should unless we are ready to be translated—when we ask ourselves, “What think ye of Christ?” and, “How is that belief reflected in my actions?” Shadows are the very areas of creative opportunity, the places where the artist allows us to participate in the creation of the painting (examine, for example, the cover of this issue of *BYU Studies*). Sometimes those places cause us to squirm. That is the nature of spiritual analysis. It is that lack of comfort, that moving out of what can sometimes be smugness, which drives us to higher levels of spiritual growth. Art that causes us to examine our own level of spirituality and calls us to a higher plane is religious art at its best.

### Advice to LDS Artists

Having surveyed much of the art within the Church during my career, I want to say two things to LDS artists painting the Savior: first, develop your skills so that your ability is worthy of your subject, and second, have faith. Have faith not only in the Savior but also in your audience. Let them be involved in part of the creative process, and your work will speak with much more power. There is a reason that after four hundred years Rembrandt is still revered as one of the greatest artists that ever lived—he created works of art that take advantage of the creative and spiritual power of every viewer who looks at one of his pieces.

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1. Carmack uses this term in his discussion of James Tissot's work.
2. *Angel Moroni Delivers the Gold Plates to Joseph Smith on Hill Cumorah* is reproduced in Richard G. Oman, "'Ye Shall See the Heavens Open': Portrayal of the Divine and the Angelic in Latter-day Saint Art," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 113–41; see plate 7.
3. The "O My Father" series was reproduced in Dawn Pheysey, "Testimony in Art: John Hafen's Illustrations for 'O My Father,'" *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996): 59–82.
4. See, for example, "Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign* 26 (August 1996): 60.
5. "Elder Bruce R. McConkie," in *One Hundred Nineteenth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948).
6. See "Revelations in Context: Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail, March 20, 1839," in this issue of *BYU Studies*.



# “That’s How I Imagine He Looks”

## The Perspective of a Professor of Religion

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

“Images of Christ in Latter-day Saint Visual Culture” by Noel Carmack offers an outline of the history of the Latter-day Saint use of images depicting Christ, pointing out influences and tensions that Carmack argues directed the choice of these images from 1890 to 1999. My own approach to this historical pattern is a simpler one: the selection of images of Christ by most Latter-day Saints today is influenced more than anything else by the Saints’ cultural background, which determines how they think Jesus would look; and the proliferation of these images is largely an economic issue and a result of a visually oriented culture rather than the consequence of a focused effort by leaders to project a certain image.

### The True Likeness of Christ

Regarding a true likeness of Christ, the old apocryphal letters that purportedly gave a physical description of Jesus have long since been recognized as inauthentic. Carmack suggests there was a time between 1926 and 1957 when a few people in the Church may have taken these descriptions seriously. Today you probably would not find an informed person quoting those descriptions as anything but an example of fanciful imagination.

As Carmack points out quite clearly, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, Elder James E. Talmage, and other LDS scholars of the life of Christ avoided providing a physical description of Jesus. I disagree, however, that the New Testament writers also “studiously avoided” describing the physical features of the Master. While one can only speculate on this issue, I still suspect it simply never dawned on them to try writing a description. Writers presuppose that certain parts of a culture will be assumed by the reader, and the New Testament writers probably were not envisioning readers thousands of years in the future. I cannot imagine that Mark, Luke, Matthew, or John ever thought that readers in the year 2000 would be saying, “I wish you would have told me his height, the length of his hair, the color of his eyes, and the color of his beard—if he had one.” They probably just never thought about it.



### **The Influence of Individuals' Backgrounds upon Acceptability**

"In the absence of any known portraits of Christ," Carmack quotes artist Arnold Friberg as saying, "artists have pictured His face and figure in countless ways" (41). Up to a point, this multitude of interpretations does not seem to perturb anyone, since these artists are painting, not the likeness, but an idea—a spiritual concept. For example, an artist might try to portray that Jesus is a commanding presence; the viewer looks in his eyes and then sacrifices everything to follow him.

Furthermore, we each invent our own acceptable version of Jesus. Because there is no known legitimate description of him, we all have to make up what we think he would look like and how he would act. Each individual brings to this process a personal religious, educational, and cultural background. This background, especially the cultural aspects, determines the nature of our own mental images and plays a large role in our response to others' visual images of him. Therefore, some viewers might like a painting of Christ and react positively because that particular image basically fulfills their expectation of what Christ is like. Other viewers with different backgrounds might either reject or be disturbed by that same image, feeling that the artist has crossed over a line.

A related discussion is currently going on in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Ronald Romig, an RLDS historian, has published a daguerreotype that he thinks is an image of Joseph Smith. Latter-day Saint reaction by and large has been to reject it because the daguerreotype does not look like the paintings of the Prophet we are accustomed to seeing. I do not really know if it is or is not Joseph Smith, but I do question whether we would be able to accept it as Joseph even if we had strong proof that it is authentic. I suspect that, because we have built up a certain image of what Joseph Smith looked like, any discovery in the future almost has to match that image for us to feel comfortable with it.

In the same way, Latter-day Saints would not accept a portrait of Christ if it departed too much from their perception of what Christ must look like. As a minor example, those who have had experience living or traveling in the Middle East might wonder at an image of the man Jesus dressed in clean, white clothing. Could a person dressed in white walk through dusty lanes and not get dirty? Those who have not had that experience might not question white robes as typical clothing.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, as Carmack notes, Latter-day Saints avoided graphic images of the crucified Christ for their private devotion. However, I do not think the avoidance was purposeful. Basically, nineteenth-century LDS converts came out of a Protestant tradition. Only in the second half of the twentieth century have large numbers of LDS converts come out of a Catholic tradition. The Protestant



reaction against the Catholic Church at the time of Martin Luther was to eliminate some of what we might call the more morbid images of Christ—the cross remained, but the crucified Christ was removed from the cross, identifying the worshiper as a Protestant rather than a Catholic. Mormonism was born in a Protestant tradition in New England and in upstate New York. Latter-day Saints may have avoided images of the crucifix simply because it was part of their culture to do so.

### **Cultural Issues: Let Jesus Be Jesus**

Throughout time and in many cultures, deity has been portrayed as the manifestation of that culture’s view of physical and mental perfection. The same is true of images of Jesus. Carmack has provided an interesting discussion revealing the subtle tension between the idea of Jesus as a model of mental and physical perfection and the idea expressed in Isaiah 53:2 that “when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” This passage raises some intriguing issues. Most of us do not think critically about our reactions to an image of Christ. For example, which does a particular painting depict—the resurrected Christ or the mortal Christ? More likely, we blend both and assume that the way Jesus looked when he appeared to Joseph Smith and to the disciples after the Resurrection was the way he looked in his mortal life. We have a popular view based on our culture and our society. Only when we stop to ask questions and to think about issues such as those raised in Isaiah 53 do we begin to adjust our thinking.

As I have talked with students during my almost fifteen years of teaching the scriptures in university settings and in the Jerusalem Center, I have realized that we must consider Isaiah’s meaning. If the mortal man Jesus walked into the room, would you know by his appearance that he is Jesus? Would all the people who encountered Christ in his mortal life have seen immediately that there was a unique presence about him apart from his physical appearance? Or did only those who were spiritually attuned feel his compelling power? Did some people find out later who he was and only then say, “Oh yes, I can see that”?

I have often heard students say, “Jesus would not do that,” or, “I cannot imagine him saying that”—particularly when we talk about the nuances of certain Greek phrases in the New Testament or talk about the historical and cultural background. North American students have a hard time grasping that the Jesus described in the four Gospels cannot be easily understood in the context of a middle-class North American culture.

Several episodes come immediately to mind. Often modern readers postulate that a “perfect being” could not use hyperbole or sarcasm. Some



students who hold this position picture Jesus as a sweet animal lover who was never direct nor confrontational. Nothing could be further from the reality. The Gospels are clear that he often struck out against self-righteousness, harshly rebuking both individuals and groups. In John 5, Jesus confronts a group of Jewish leaders (the usual meaning of John's "the Jews") and states, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life" (John 5:29). Jesus' use of sarcasm and irony is strong here. The *Amplified Bible* captures the flavor of this statement: "You search and investigate and pore over the Scriptures diligently, because you suppose and trust that you have eternal life through them."<sup>1</sup> Jesus, in this instance, is deriding the leaders' mistaken belief that one can find eternal life in the words of dead prophets preserved on the hides of dead animals rather than understanding that the scriptures testify of the living Jesus and should lead their readers to accept him as the Son of God.

A second example is found in Luke 15:1–7. In this pericope, Jesus reproves the Pharisees and scribes with a parable dripping with sarcasm and concludes, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). The point is that the Pharisees and scribes think they are righteous and do not need to repent and therefore reject the forgiveness Jesus offers publicans and sinners.<sup>2</sup>

Mark 10:23–25 contains another example of the problems confronting a modern reader who is unprepared to accept Jesus as portrayed by the first-century authors of the Gospels and settles instead for "Jesus-as-I-imagine-him-to-be." My students often repeat things they have heard about the "needle's eye" when discussing this pericope. Either they note that the passage refers to a mountain pass, called the needle's eye, which camels can barely squeeze through if they are not fully loaded, or, more often than not, they tell about a special gate in the ancient wall of Jerusalem through which a camel could pass on its knees without saddle or goods. These are defenseless and misguided attempts to take the sting out of the aphorism and rob Jesus' words of their edge. The disciples are "astonished" at Jesus' words because they know of no caravan pass or special gate (see Mark 10:26). Only in the recent past have commentators proposed such an interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

The fact is that when confronted with Jesus as portrayed in the text without forced interpretations, our cultural views and preconceived ideas are often found hollow and wanting. We are separated by two thousand years of not only history but also cultural and religious development. I try to suggest to my students that they let Jesus be Jesus—if something needs to change, it is probably their view of him.



## **Ethnicity: Christ Is beyond Race**

Since the majority of Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century and through the twentieth century have been western Europeans or descendants of western Europeans and since Church leaders, with some exceptions, have been from northern European backgrounds—Great Britain and Scandinavia—the images of Christ in Latter-day Saint visual culture need to be seen in the larger context of these cultures. We paint Jesus as we think he would look—so he looks like us. Doing this is natural. I feel comfortable with myself, so I paint him my height or that of someone I know; I may paint his hair the color of my hair, his eyes the color of mine. In most of our newer art, Christ looks as if he came from Northern Europe. I think we need to be careful in drawing conclusions about this phenomenon: we cannot tell if a depiction of Christ with northern European racial features is the artist’s conscious choice based on belief or if it is related simply to the artist’s ethnic culture and time.

Nevertheless, too much is made of the notion that the Book of Mormon says that Jesus looked like the gentile Europeans—a European from southern Italy may be much darker skinned than someone from northern Italy who, in turn, would look different from a Scandinavian. Additionally, all the terms describing the gentile Europeans in LDS scriptures are relative—Nephi wrote that they were “white” and “fair” like his people (Jews) were before they were slain. What seemed white or fair to Nephi might be different from what seems white or fair to someone from Scandinavia.

Of course, another important concept must enter in—the idea that the resurrected Christ is probably beyond race. As is his resurrected Father, he is neither European, Asian, nor African. Paul states that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Humankind came from one divine source before there was race. Racial differences that humans tend to emphasize may be, in reality, only superficial and a result of mortality (the Fall).

## **Economic Influences and the Increased Demand for Art**

In 1971, a shift in the LDS culture occurred. Some of the official publications of the Church were discontinued and the look of the new publications was changed. More and better reproductions of art are now incorporated, providing a significant outlet for religious art. Carmack mentions that in the entire year of 1971, only five images of Christ were reproduced in the *Ensign* in contrast to a total of 119 in 1999. I believe portraits have appeared more frequently since 1985 in part because the Church has grown, providing a larger base of people interested in purchasing religious art. Members have more buying power, and they like the art they see in the Church



publications. This demand produces more artists. They like Gary Anderson's pieces. That means he is going to be successful. The vote is at the cash register.

Carmack also suggests that there is a growing interest in the fine arts among LDS people. I think sophisticated LDS people who have either been trained or exposed to fine art have always been attracted to it. Therefore, the trend might be simply numerical—the growing interest in fine art may simply represent the growing number of members of the Church. It would be interesting to see more data.

One aspect of the increased demand for visual images of Christ that Carmack mentions I concur with: the claims of would-be critics that Mormons are not Christians have forced us to reexamine the public image we project. We have always known we are Christians, with Christ at the center of our beliefs, but we seem to have done a poor job of letting others know that. As a result, we have taken specific steps to ensure that people understand our Christianity. Just as the logo of the Church was changed to emphasize the name of Christ by increasing the size of the letters, we have in fact tried to project our belief in Christ by displaying more visual images of him in our homes and meetinghouses, thus increasing the demand for more art.

During the pioneer period, Latter-day Saints could not afford the luxury of art. Members of the Church in North America are richer today. I can buy things to put on my wall that nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints could not. Newspapers from the 1870s carry advertisements for prints of Brigham Young's likeness. Relatively few prints were purchased, perhaps not from lack of interest but from lack of means. If forced to choose between a loaf of bread and a painting, most people in pioneer Utah would have picked the bread. We have to be careful when we compare the nineteenth-century Church with its limited number of members and limited resources with the modern Church with millions of members, many of whom have surplus resources to purchase items that seemed out of reach to a generation born a hundred years ago.

When money becomes more available, we purchase more art. The art also becomes more a part of our religious instruction because it is readily available. We have more pictures, we use them more, our manuals are better, paper quality is better, we can afford colored prints—we are able to do things that we could not have done a hundred years ago. The popularity of the Gospel-in-Art series was probably just part of this natural economic development rather than a specific effort to accomplish a certain end. As money became more available for religious images, artists were able to provide more art.

The increase in the demand for visual images of Christ might spring not only from economic development, but also from our increasingly



visual culture. In the first century, Jews had an aversion to portraying human images. The earliest Christians, among whom were a significant number of Jews, would not have felt the desire for a physical image of Christ. It would take a new generation of Christians who did not come out of that background to begin to depict images for devotional worship. These images begin to appear in the catacombs only in the third and fourth centuries. Today we are bombarded with visual images in newspapers, magazines, billboards, movies, and particularly television. The faces of political figures, sports heroes, and media stars are all part of our everyday lives and decorate the rooms of our young people. We surround ourselves with the images of those who represent that which is important in our lives.

### **Art as a Didactic Tool**

Art may be "an effective didactic and inspirational mechanism" (20) in reinforcing and strengthening LDS belief in the plurality and corporeal nature of the Godhead, as Carmack asserts. However, art does not seem to create such beliefs. While going through museums in Moscow just before the fall of the Soviet Union, I was struck by the fact that there was so much religious art. My guide was not a Christian, did not own a Bible, and had never gone to Sunday School, yet she knew the stories of the Bible as well as if not better than the average American knows them. When I asked her how she became so familiar with the stories, she said, "Russian kids are exposed to the museums, so we see the art."

Here was a person who had been exposed to the art and knew the stories but did not assume, because of that art, that God exists, that Jesus is separate and distinct from God, and that the Father and the Son have corporeal natures. People may see religious art and not see or accept the theological interpretations in it. I do not think a Protestant or Catholic would look at a painting of the resurrected, embodied Christ and suddenly assume that the three members of the Godhead are separate beings and that God has a body.

Carmack argues that the Latter-day Saint visual perception of Christ throughout the last century was born out of a form of biblical literalism and that "Mormon literalism disregarded the skepticism of textual scholarship. . . . Consequently, official Latter-day Saint publications adopted images from a large body of Western art that substantiated Christ's ministry as a historical reality" (20). Carmack has carefully documented which images were selected for publication, but I am not convinced that officialdom chose these images specifically to support biblical literalism. Certainly there have been LDS scholars interested in these issues, but I think the vast majority of Saints and those who were reproducing art for LDS audiences were simply part of a larger culture—Mormons have shared with evangelical



Protestants and many faithful, conservative Catholics a belief in the relative consistency of the biblical narrative. From the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century, Catholics, Protestants, and Mormons basically could not be segregated on the issue of literal interpretation of biblical text. They all accepted the consistency of the Bible and believed it was the word of God.

As part of this culture, Mormons use art to portray Christ in a real rather than a symbolic way. They believe the Bible stories; they depict the stories. For example, the painting *Christ and the Rich Young Ruler* has been reproduced numerous times. But it has hung on walls in seminaries and in church buildings more because people liked it, not because they wanted to declare their belief in the historical reality and literal divinity of Christ.

## Conclusion

Images of Christ—what we think Jesus would look like, what he would wear, or how he would act—reflect more than anything else our general western culture. One young woman is quoted by Carmack as saying of a particular image of Christ, “I’ve seen this one so much that that’s how I imagine him to look” (61). I believe that people generally do choose images of Christ that they are familiar with because of their culture and experiences. If one were to talk with this young woman, read some scriptures with her, and read about antiquity, she might have a different response to a visual image of Christ—a more complex view of things. What we bring to the image basically will determine how we react to the image. Within the Church, then, the distribution and proliferation of images of Christ become primarily a matter of economics and the expectations inherent in a visual culture.

Because Christianity has had a long history of depicting images of Jesus Christ, Christian art can be discussed in terms of development, styles, and popular trends. Mormon culture, however, has existed less than two hundred years, and Mormon art much less than that. The Church is just emerging from the dominance of North American, Western European culture. The real issues involved in LDS choices of images of the Savior might be apparent only after we have a longer history ourselves. Five hundred years from now, we could look back and realize that not much change occurred in our first one hundred or one hundred fifty years. It will be intriguing to see what happens.

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1. John 5:39, from the *Amplified Bible*, in *The Precise Parallel New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 504.

2. See Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 277–78.

3. See Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 315.



## Explanation

I run in autumn  
as the chlorophyll runs  
from green leaves.  
I run in autumn  
to sweat the springtime  
out of my blood  
because if I do not  
it will burn my cold veins  
when winter comes.

(I run in spring  
because there is something  
running just ahead of me.  
Always I stop before I am tired  
so that I will not quite catch it

(In summer I run below the heat  
like a drumbeat on a hot night.  
I run silver and gold as the moon.  
Dark bees hover by my head,  
smelling the nectar in my blood

(In winter I run to hold the universe together.  
I am the only movement,  
dark against the Immensity of white,  
a screen saver on the world's computer.  
I run to make one whisper  
in the silence

—Marilyn Nelson



# The World at Its Gravest and Best

Nancy Hanks Baird

On the edge of a western city, a canyon fissures up along a river and eventually opens into a succession of frozen peaks that rise to the east. I run in these mountains, this canyon, almost every day. The canyon is not particularly beautiful as it leaves the smoking city streets—the trees are cracked and common, and the yellow stone pocked and shaled, as though its confidence were shaken being so close to the grittiness of the city. But as it twists and rises, the canyon hardens in strength and mystery—the river lays down ice, trees thicken and whistle, living things rustle beneath the snow and brush. Some mornings I have seen herds of elk. Having threaded their way through the eastern pass, they tip over the lip of the canyon, driving the deer before them—grandeur and sweetness moving silently in the bitter air. This is where I come, where I have always come, to be alone, to learn to wait for grace, and to worship.

In this mountain place, I am learning; learning that deer never speak—that you must follow the quick blackness of their eyes, the scrape of rock and dusky ripple of leg as they leap the river, to hear what they are saying. The deer are cautious and curious, but I have seen and been awed by their disdain for fear. One morning a mountain lion paced the road—hungry, looking for something to kill. Down in the orchard, where the road flattens, not far from the lion, the deer coolly snuffed under the leaves. They were unafraid, their mouths full of peaches, their eyes soft with pleasure.

I am learning to listen to the ripples of thought in the silence, and to the wind. When the wind rests in these mountains, the silence in the winter canyon is brittle and secret. Beneath the snow layers, I know there is life quivering, but on the road by the water, the quiet is profound; there is only a crackling of river ice, a breathing in the trees, the slap of my shoes. It is a solitary place, a natural room emptied of softness; in its winter harshness, it is clean and uncorrupted, a room of truth and nakedness.

But when the wind moves in the tunnel of rock, it is merciless—too often full of ice and anger. The wind claps the mountain oak against the yellow walls, whips the river, roars as a hundred freight trains. When you run through the door of such an engine, your body is lifted and flung as loosened sheet metal, your knees stiff, shoes banging against themselves. I have thrown up my arms these mornings and exulted to the voice in the tumult: I hear you! And the earth wakes, it bellows, and we are hurtled, pushed together, undone by the wind.





The world is full of such summons to praise. “The whole earth is full of his glory,” cried Isaiah’s seraphim (Isa. 6:3). “Holy! Holy! Holy!” shouted William Blake on seeing a sunrise.<sup>1</sup> In these unearthly moments, we hear the Creator’s voice as a crackling in the wild oak, a “going in the . . . mulberry trees” (2 Sam. 5:24). We see his mind in the simple weeds, swinging and stiff with gold, in the intricate wings of a common dragonfly fallen to the pavement, for nothing is too small or insignificant to be ravishingly beautiful. These pieces of his kingdom race by us like jet streams, there for anyone to notice.

And the wisdom, the awe of his kingdom whispers from our blood. For who can tell the power of ancient voices that runs in our veins? Is there a race memory, an often unrecognized, but powerful, genetic knowledge by which we are all connected? I have always felt the deep primitivism of ancient Judaism thundering inside me. But only recently have I woken to my connection with the clans of Scotland to which I belong through birth and to which I have joined through marriage—like two knife cuts bleeding wrist to wrist. If I were to seek an explanation for my nature, perhaps these connections of blood are reason enough for a willful, melancholy spirit, a combative manner, and hunger for freedom. And for a passion for movement and worship.



The Highland clans of Scotland were known through the centuries for their fierceness, bravery, and unyielding spirit. Even the lowest clansman knew in his heart he had as much right to sit at his chief’s table as any laird (lord). Both common man and ruler were bound by loyalties and obligations of respect. When the clansman was needed to fight for his chief, he was ready; when the common man needed help or revenge, his chief was bound to defend him. Every Scot with every breath valued freedom more highly than peace and wealth.

Do all people need freedom blowing like a silver horn inside them? Does everyone flinch at authority and want to tear into battle at the slightest provocation?

I do not believe my father studied the Scottish way. It is, however, the truth that he has lived by, borne on his back, suffered for—still suffers for. He is a fighter: fierce, unyielding, without fear. He has tried to defend the weak—has sat at the table of the laird and withered the arrogance of the



impudent and the imprudent with the power of his spirit. For this he has drawn love and enemies. I have never known a kinder heart nor more healing hands, but his Highland battle cries are still gathering troops.

Helen Duff was his grandmother, my great-grandmother. In Glasgow she joined the American Mormon church, foreign to her parents, and kept it secret, knowing they would not approve. When she married, she revealed her membership in the new church and was grimly cut away by her family. Helen was beautiful, beloved, and proud; she was as unyielding as her parents. Soon after marrying, she left Scotland—to return only once. In her fifties—small, brown-haired, wearing lace and wool—she returned to Aberdeen. Leaving her trunk in the rented buggy at the end of the lane, she walked through the mud and ruts to her childhood home. Her father, past ninety, his white hair blowing in the wind, stood at the corner of the pasture, looking away from her. When she approached him with her fierce courage and said, “Father,” he turned, and the heather slid by, the sky unfolded and opened, and the words flew with blessing from his lips, “Oh, Ellen, my Ellen.”

The thought of these two proud people reconciling their broken hearts has been a gift to me, a window of grace from the past, a connection of devotion. These windows, or radiant moments in a life, when the sky spills undeserved blessings, are rare. They do happen, but they are never what you listen for or think to praise.

Out running in the canyon one Christmas, I was stopped by a morning friend and his Rottweiler. People who go out regularly, usually in the morning hours, know the camaraderie that grows between inmates of the earth at such times. I barely know this man, but we are intimates of dust and sky and of the beginnings of many days. As usual, his dog murmured loudly in recognition and gave me his nose. This quiet morning as light drew the darkness, my friend put into my hands a small, velvet drawstring bag—soft and black, containing a circlet of silver, light as leaves. “It is nothing,” he said. “Because we are friends.” Should I accept such gifts? Oh yes! Because moments like these are rare—they are gifts of grace, unexpected, often undeserved, containing seeds of joy.

There are other blessings I have received on these mornings, different gifts of grace. I have, on occasion, been given the gift of a day of clarity. For one day, I have stood anchored in the middle of the universe, felt it shift and pour light into me until I was weighted down as with stones of fire. This is the gift of sight, and it does not come accompanied only by beauty, for I have often seen death on the mountain roads, unexplained, irrational—a severed doe’s foot; a headless rattler; a deer left to die, its soul in its eyes. I have many times brought rage and grief to the canyon and spilled them there. At such junctures of beauty and pain, the world is at its gravest



and best: wrenching, halfway between matter and spirit. What can one do at these times but rise in battle or worship? What else is there to do?

This morning a late winter storm slid across the western sky—a thick, growing blackness boiling down from the north. Steaming clouds full of gloom and water emptied on the city for hours, as if choosing to rid themselves of some disease. My runs in the mountains have always come with a jumbled torrent of astonishment, self-knowledge, and memory. I have often brooded over my Jewish heart, my Scottish blood. Today in the storm, I thought of David, king of Judah.



David, his mind festering with the murder of Uriah, tried through his great gifts of music and worship to empty the dregs of corruption and misery out of his heart. When still a boy, he had gifted Saul with Goliath's bloody head, hung dripping by the hair from his simple leather belt. David had stood upon the still-heaving chest, taking the head with the giant's own jeweled sword. His victory had come from utter fearlessness, a blessing bestowed for being willing to believe. I do not forget the blood on David's sword; this he paid for with the lives of his sons, with deception and murder in his house, with the honor of building the temple withdrawn. What I remember most is David bringing home the ark.

He was determined to return it to Jerusalem, the City of David, the seat of kings. There was a false start. The oxen carrying the precious burden stumbled, Uzzah put out his hand to save the ark and was struck dead for this presumption. David, awestruck and terrified, paused for months, then resumed the journey. He brought the ark to the gates—brought home the small, golden room of holiness and thunder carried by the priests. When they saw it, the people sang, played their harps and pipes, blew their trumpets. And David danced. Like any Scottish laird, he shed his clothes, leapt and laughed, and in that incredible scene, whirled in wild, ancient glory.

In the palace rooms above the gate, David's wife sat watching as he worshipped. What bitterness, what coldness propelled her to despise and taunt him from her window. But her scorn rolled off his back like beads of sweat in Judah's sun. She would not receive the coals of glory laid across her lips. And so she lost her place.

David knew all about the contradictions of life—how to love and murder on the same day, how to grieve and worship in the same breath. He did not need his wife's approval, did not need the refuge of a canyon or a room to reveal his inner devotion and joy. But here is a story of another worship room.



In a field outside of Newburg, Scotland, the remains of the Cross Macduff stand on the Ochil Hills. This Celtic cross once marked the north-west boundary of the ancient “kingdom” of Fife, clan home of Macduff, thane of Fife. The cross was a “girth,” a sanctuary, or place of refuge from trouble, ordained and protected by charter of the king of Scotland. Macduff, to whom the cross was given, helped overthrow MacBeth, bringing Malcolm to the throne of Scotland. Malcolm rewarded Macduff with the cross and thus with sanctuary, an ancient law of the Jews and other Middle Eastern tribes. Anyone related to Macduff to the ninth degree could flee here to receive refuge from the law if they had been found guilty of unpremeditated slaughter. After coming, if they then washed nine times for ablution (there are springs nearby) and gave “nine kye an’ a colpendach” (nine cows plus a cow that has not been calved), they could go free.<sup>2</sup>

Only the base of this ancient cross remains, but it is enough; one can see how it would have risen on its high hill, majestic, stark, its carved face looking east. An inscription on the cross at one time read:

An altar for those whom law pursues, a hall for those whom strife pursues to thee this paction becomes a harbour. But there is hope only when the murder has been committed by those born of my grandson. I free the accused, a fine of a thousand drachmas from his lands. On account of Magridin and his offering take once for all the cleansing of my heirs beneath this stone filled with water.<sup>3</sup>

This is the fierce tale told about the cross: the lairds of Pitarrow, Mathers, Arbuthnot, and Lauriston were fleeing for the cross, the bagpipes wailing. It was 1412, the rivers Tay and Earn lay behind them; the Cairngorm and Grampian Mountains rose ahead like judges. A certain Sir John Melville of Glenbervie had been their sheriff in the country, a man who “bore his faculties harshly.”<sup>4</sup> He had become an irritating problem for the lairds and for the king. In a foolish moment, the king is said to have remarked, “Sorrow gin the Sheriff wer sodden and supped in broo!” Heeding his suggestion, the four lairds lured the sheriff to a hill under pretense of hunting with him. They heated water in a caldron over a fire and then boiled the annoying sheriff in the pot. After he was cooked (or “sodden,” as the king said), the barons drank the soup (the “broo”), then ran for refuge to the cross.<sup>5</sup>



The world is a troublesome place. No doubt the sheriff wanted to live. And who deserves such a death? But there on a cold hill, in a ferocious land, stands a token of power, a “hall for those whom strife pursues,” a monument



of mercy, even for the wicked. What more can we hope for in our blind passage on this beautiful, but fearsome, earth than to find a place of refuge and then leap in praise? The canyon where I run is my girth and glass through which I strain to see; my worship room, my manuscript of grace. The moving water and melting trees, the silence full of ancient voices have become my absolution and wealth. When the deer step from behind the blasted trees and fix me with their sober, fathomless eyes, my wits fail me; I hover between earth and heaven.

It is said that the one thing for which the devil has the most regret in his frozen banishment is the trumpets—Judah's horns blazing from the temple, Israel's melancholy, joyful trumpets! Perhaps. I rather think it is the bagpipes, the intoxicating suspension of air between sound and silence; the cry of battle, the call to worship.

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1. Yitta Halberstam and Judith Leventhal, *Small Miracles: Extraordinary Coincidences from Everyday Life* (Holbrook, Mass.: Adams Media Corporation, 1997), x.
2. Jim Wotherspoon, "The Sanctuary of Macduff Cross," *The Highlander: The Magazine of Scottish Heritage* 34, no. 3 (May/June 1996): 33–35.
3. Wotherspoon, "The Sanctuary of Macduff Cross," 33.
4. Sir Walter Scott, quoted in Wotherspoon, "The Sanctuary of Macduff Cross," 34.
5. Wotherspoon, "The Sanctuary of Macduff Cross," 35.



# Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith's Understanding of Genesis 1:1

Kevin L. Barney

Joseph Smith spent Sunday afternoon, April 7, 1844, in a grove behind the Nauvoo Temple. There he gave a funeral sermon, which lasted for over two hours, dedicated to a loyal friend named King Follett, who had been crushed by a bucket of rocks while repairing a well.<sup>1</sup> Known today as the King Follett Discourse and widely believed to be the Prophet's greatest sermon,<sup>2</sup> this address was Joseph's most cogent and forceful presentation of his Nauvoo doctrine on the nature of God, including the ideas of a plurality of Gods and the potential of man to become as God.<sup>3</sup> Several times in the first part of the discourse, Joseph expressed his intention to "go back to the beginning" in searching out the nature of God, and a little before midway through the sermon, he undertook a commentary on the first few words of the Hebrew Bible in support of the speech's doctrinal positions.

The Prophet's treatment of the Hebrew has been the subject of much discussion and is a matter of considerable interest, especially among those interested in Hebrew. I have examined elsewhere the linguistic details of the Prophet's commentary, as far as it can be reconstructed from the reports and minutes of that discourse.<sup>4</sup> Beyond Joseph's specific linguistic understanding of the Hebrew text, however, are certain key ideas he derived from his encounter with that text. Revelation often results after wrestling with ideas, and Joseph's struggle with the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 seems to have yielded six concepts, which he expressed either in the King Follett Discourse or in a parallel discourse he gave on June 16, 1844.<sup>5</sup> These six concepts may be summarized as follows:

1. The creation was effected, not "out of nothing," but from preexisting matter.
2. In the very beginning, there was a plurality of Gods.
3. Among this plurality, there was a head God (or there were head Gods).
4. These Gods met in a grand council.
5. These Gods in council appointed one God over us.
6. The idea of a plurality of Gods, which is most easily seen "at the beginning," is found throughout the Bible.



When propounded in 1844, each of these six ideas was no doubt considered unusual or unorthodox by those of other religious traditions (as well as by certain Latter-day Saints and former Latter-day Saints),<sup>6</sup> and some people would certainly consider these doctrines no less theologically heterodox today. Yet the first five concepts are widely acknowledged by current biblical scholars to be accurate expressions of religious belief among the Hebrews during the time of the patriarchs. The sixth concept, while still representing a minority view, has also received strong scholarly support in recent decades. This article reviews the writings of a wide array of Old Testament commentators with reference to each of these six points.

### Creation as Organization

*Now, I ask all the learned men who hear me, why the learned doctors who are preaching salvation say that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. They account it blasphemy to contradict the idea. If you tell them that God made the world out of something, they will call you a fool. The reason is that they are unlearned but I am learned and know more than all the world put together—the Holy Ghost does, anyhow. If the Holy Ghost in me comprehends more than all the world, I will associate myself with it.*

*You ask them why, and they say, “Doesn’t the Bible say He created the world?” And they infer that it must be out of nothing. The word create came from the word BARA, but it doesn’t mean so. What does BARA mean? It means to organize; the same as a man would organize and use things to build a ship. Hence, we infer that God Himself had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter—which is element and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time He had. The pure principles of element are principles that never can be destroyed. They may be organized and reorganized, but not destroyed. Nothing can be destroyed. They never can have a beginning or an ending; they exist eternally.<sup>7</sup>*

On lexical grounds, Joseph Smith understood *bārāʾ*, the second word of Hebrew Genesis 1:1 (translated “created” in the King James Version), as meaning “to organize,” and a good argument can be made that this interpretation is correct. This Hebrew word, which in the Bible is used only in the context of describing divine activity, occurs forty-nine times in the Old Testament (thirty-eight as an active verb, ten as a passive verb, and once as a nominal form). The verb seems to be used in the sense of shaping or fashioning (as by cutting)<sup>8</sup> and is often paired synonymously with the verbs *yāsar*, “to form,” and *ʿāśāh*, “to do, make,”<sup>9</sup> verbs that are indicative of an anthropomorphic conception of creative activity comparable to the craftsmanship of artisans. The Hebrew root *brʾ* seems to have had the original meaning “to separate, divide,”<sup>10</sup> which is a fitting description of the creative activity of Genesis 1, where God separates the light from the



darkness, the day from the night, the heaven from the earth, the waters above the firmament from the waters beneath the firmament, and so on. That is, God *organizes* preexisting chaos by a process of separating, dividing, and thereby providing differentiation, perceptibility, and order.

Because of later theological dogmas and imperatives concerning the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, “creation from nothing,” some will always reject this lexical argument; indeed, there is no way on strictly lexical grounds to prove, at least in the context of the creation of the cosmic powers, that *bārāʾ* cannot mean “to create from nothing.” Recent scholarship has shown, however, that such an interpretation of Genesis 1:1 is unsuitable, if not untenable, for both grammatical and historical reasons.

The grammatical structure of the Hebrew in Genesis 1:1 forecloses the possibility that *bārāʾ* could refer to creation from nothing in that passage. The KJV renders *bərēʾšīt* (the first word of Hebrew Genesis 1:1) as “in the beginning,” but the word *rēʾšīt* is actually a construct (or genitival) form and means “beginning of,” as in Genesis 49:3: *wərēʾšīt ʾōnī*, “and the beginning of my strength.” Indeed, in the early middle ages, Rashi (*Rabbi Shlomo* son of Yitzhaq) had given the correct interpretation:

But if you are going to interpret this passage in its plain sense, interpret it thus: At the beginning of the creation of heaven and earth, when the earth was (or the earth being) unformed and void . . . God said, “Let there be light.” For the passage does not intend to teach the order of creation, to say that these [namely, the heaven and the earth] came first; because if it had intended to teach this, it would have been necessary to use the form *bərīʾšôná* “(In the beginning or At first) He created the heaven,” etc., since there is no instance of the form *rēʾšīt* in Scripture which is not in construct with the word following it.<sup>11</sup>

Modern grammarians have labeled a construct noun followed by a verb an “asyndetic relative clause.”<sup>12</sup> In contrast with the KJV rendering, the word *bərēʾšīt* introduces not an absolute prepositional phrase but a temporal clause.<sup>13</sup> The sense of Genesis 1:1–3 is as follows:

Verse 1 (protasis):	By way of beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,
Verse 2 (circumstantial clause):	the world at that time being a formless waste [description of primordial chaos],
Verse 3 (apodosis):	God said, “Let there be light.” <sup>14</sup>

Thus, the *first* creative act was not the creation of heaven and earth but the creation of light. Nothing is said of the creation of primordial chaos, which already existed.



This interpretation of the structure of Genesis 1:1–3 has become the predominant scholarly understanding.<sup>15</sup> Even a source as theologically conservative as J. R. Dummelow's *Commentary on the Holy Bible* agrees with this analysis in rendering Genesis 1:1–3 into English:

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth—now the earth was waste and void, and darkness was over the deep, and the spirit of God was brooding over the waters—then God said: Let there be light.

Dummelow explains that “on this rendering ‘Creation’ is not ‘out of nothing,’ but out of pre-existing chaos.”<sup>16</sup> This interpretation is supported not only by internal considerations of syntax but also by the fact that both the parallel creation account in Genesis 2:4b–7 and *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation epic, exhibit the same trifold structure: (i) dependent temporal clause + (ii) circumstantial clause + (iii) main clause.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Hebrew grammar strongly supports Joseph Smith's view in a way that lexical considerations alone could not.

As a historical matter, nearly all recent studies have concluded that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is not native to Judaism, is nowhere attested in the Hebrew Bible, and probably arose in Christianity in the second century A.D. in the course of that religion's fierce battle with Gnosticism. Many of these studies contend that the doctrine came into Judaism at the beginning of the Middle Ages (and even then never really succeeding in establishing itself as the accepted Jewish doctrine of creation).<sup>18</sup> The historian's perspective on this issue may perhaps be seen best in a scholarly debate on this subject between Professors David Winston and Jonathan Goldstein.<sup>19</sup>

In the past, some scholars had understood passages such as Wisdom of Solomon 11:17, where the author speaks of God's “all-powerful hand which created the world out of formless matter,” as having been influenced by Greek philosophy, since the Jews of that time were assumed to have believed in creation from nothing.<sup>20</sup> Winston carefully reviews the evidence and establishes that passages such as the one from Wisdom of Solomon quoted above are in fact consistent with Jewish thought at the time regarding primordial formless matter. In fact, the first explicit formulations of *creatio ex nihilo* do not appear until the end of the second century, in the works of the Christian writers Tatian and Theophilus.<sup>21</sup>

In rabbinic literature, what seems to be the first explicit reference to *creatio ex nihilo* appears in a dialogue attributed to Rabban Gamaliel II and a philosopher in the late first century after Christ. Winston demonstrates, however, that this reference is really nothing more than a rejection of the Gnostic view that insisted on multiple creative powers. The argument was not that God created the world out of nothing but that the primordial elements (such as wind, water, and the primeval deep) were not themselves powers that assisted God in the process.<sup>22</sup> Like similar ideas in some of the



later Christian literature, this position was nothing more than a response to Gnostic polemics about the creation. The concept of *creatio ex nihilo* was missing not only from the Hebrew Bible and from Jewish-Hellenistic literature but also from rabbinic literature, where the more common view of creation was organization out of primordial matter. The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* eventually appeared in Jewish philosophical and religious literature at a late date, having been influenced by Christian-Muslim thought.<sup>23</sup>

Goldstein disagrees with Winston's reading of the statement by Rabban Gamaliel II, seeing it rather as an explicit expression of *creatio ex nihilo*. In Goldstein's view, that doctrine arose, not in the context of anti-Gnostic polemics, but rather in the context of polemics concerning what Goldstein refers to as the "extreme" view of bodily resurrection (meaning that humans will be resurrected, not just with a physical body, but with the same physical body they possess in this life). Goldstein suggests that the development of *creatio ex nihilo* was a response to what he calls the "two-body paradox."<sup>24</sup> Elements from a deceased body could be ingested by another person (as by being absorbed through the soil in a plant and turned into food, or as by "matter [being] vaporized by fire from a martyr's body . . . [and then] inhaled . . . by other human bodies"). Objections to the idea of extreme bodily resurrection could have been answered with the claim that an omnipotent God could create the resurrected body *ex nihilo*, if necessary, just as he originally created all matter.<sup>25</sup>

Winston's reply to Goldstein, however, argues that there is no evidence that the supposed two-body paradox was known in the early centuries of Christianity or had any influence on the development of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Although Tatian had spoken of the body being resurrected from nothingness, Tatian meant *relative* nothingness, not complete absence of existence. Tatian had argued that, just as a complete human body may spring from but a small drop of semen, so a resurrected body may come forth from the elemental "seeds" of that body buried in the earth. God was seen as having power to resurrect the body without reference to *ex nihilo* creation.<sup>26</sup>

In his response, Goldstein "recanted" much of his earlier argument, acknowledging that he had misread some of the patristic and rabbinic literature. He continued, however, to affirm (*contra* Winston) that Rabban Gamaliel II had indeed unambiguously expressed that the world was created *ex nihilo*.<sup>27</sup>

For present purposes, it does not make much difference whether Rabban Gamaliel II expressed a view favoring *creatio ex nihilo* at the end of the first century after Christ (Goldstein) or whether the first unambiguous Jewish expressions of that doctrine date back only to the ninth and tenth centuries (Winston), or whether *creatio ex nihilo* first arose in polemical arguments involving the Gnostic view of creation (Winston) or the



extreme view of bodily resurrection (Goldstein). What is significant for our purposes are the contours of this debate; there is no serious argument that *creatio ex nihilo* was a biblical doctrine. In fact, the more conservative Goldstein expressly acknowledges that, rather than expressing *creatio ex nihilo*, “Jewish exegetes and philosophers knew that the words of Genesis 1:1–2 could as easily (and even more easily) be interpreted to mean that God created the world from pre-existent matter.”<sup>28</sup> From this debate, we can see that the historical evidence strongly favors Joseph Smith’s rejection of *creatio ex nihilo* in his reading of Genesis 1:1.

### A Plurality of Divine Beings

*In the very beginning there is a plurality of Gods—beyond the power of refutation.*<sup>29</sup>

It can scarcely be doubted today that the earliest Hebrew conception of God was pluralistic. The evidence for this position is extensive,<sup>30</sup> and it is a position widely,<sup>31</sup> if not universally, held by contemporary scholars. This does not mean that scholars fully understand or agree on important issues concerning the nature of this early pluralism; questions abound regarding its meaning for the Hebrews, its source (that is, Mesopotamian versus Canaanite influences), and the manner in which it evolved toward universal monotheism and the era when this monotheism superseded it (and whether it was ever fully superseded). These are “hot” topics in the world of biblical scholarship, and they still await a fully convincing analysis and synthesis.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the basic concept that the ancient Hebrews of the patriarchal age believed in a plurality of Gods has become an essentially accepted idea in scholarship today.

The King Follet Discourse supports the idea of a plurality of Gods. As indicated by the Prophet’s June 16, 1844, discourse, the two principal rational evidences from which Joseph derived this view were the plural form of the word *ʾēlōhîm* and the plural syntax of Genesis 1:26.<sup>33</sup> There is now scholarly support for both positions, although these positions remain controversial.

Linguists have been unable to agree on the origins or significance of the plural form *ʾēlōhîm*. Etymologically, *ʾēlōhîm* is often assumed to be a plural of *ʾēl* as expanded by an intermediate *hē* (perhaps reflecting Aramaic influence); the Hebrew form *ʾēlōah* (attested mainly in poetry) would then be a late singular derived backwards from the plural *ʾēlōhîm*.<sup>34</sup> Even if correct, however, this etymology offers little insight into how or why the plural form came to be used with a singular meaning when referring to the God of Israel. One possibility is that the singular use of *ʾēlōhîm* evolved as Hebrew theology moved from pluralism to monotheism, an argument that is resisted by more conservative scholars.<sup>35</sup> A close examination of the textual evidence suggests a somewhat more complicated



picture. Although the predominant use of *ʾēlōhîm* in the Hebrew canon today treats this word as a singular referring to the God of Israel, its use as a plural referring to the gods of other nations is also widely attested. Intriguingly, the use of *ʾēlōhîm* as a singular referring to a foreign god has also been preserved in the Hebrew Bible, and parallel usage involving the Akkadian word *ilanu* has been documented.<sup>36</sup> It appears that, from the very beginning, the word *ʾēlōhîm* had the capacity to be used as a plural or as a singular, as required by the context of the passage, irrespective of the identity of the God or Gods in question. Once one acknowledges the existence of an ancient Hebrew pantheon, it becomes likely that *ʾēlōhîm* was used at times in the plural to refer to the Gods of that pantheon. In fact, in a number of Old Testament passages, the word *ʾēlōhîm* originally appears to have had a plural force (even if the tradition that preserved that plural understood the word in a singular sense).

The ambiguity inherent in the possible singular or plural uses of the word *ʾēlōhîm* is captured by Gerald Cooke's use of parentheses in the title of his article "The Sons of (the) God(s)."<sup>37</sup> Cooke begins his study by stating that "any serious investigation of conceptions of God in the Old Testament must deal with recurrent references which suggest a pluralistic conception of deity."<sup>38</sup> After a careful review of many such passages, he asks whether they reflect "a purely literary form which was taken over by Israel, or [whether they are] an element of the living pattern of Israelite faith?"<sup>39</sup> and concludes that the latter is the more likely alternative. Perhaps the most succinct statement of the ambiguity inherent in the word *ʾēlōhîm* was offered by the German theologian Ludwig Köhler, who wrote that "God is called in Hebrew [*ʾēlōhîm*] but [*ʾēlōhîm*] means not only God, it means also a God, the God, Gods and the Gods."<sup>40</sup> These quotations illustrate that, although by no means universal, there is now scholarly support for relating the plural form *ʾēlōhîm* to ancient Hebrew pluralism, just as Joseph Smith did.

As for the plural syntax of Genesis 1:26, the possible explanations may be grouped into five categories, only two of which are taken seriously by most scholars today.<sup>41</sup> The first of these two theories (and the one for which Joseph argued) is that a literal plural is involved:

It is natural to suspect, as some have, that the plural form in which God speaks is due to a reminiscence of an originally polytheistic source which the Priestly author [referred to by text critics as "P"] used or at least on which he modeled his story. In the creation myths with which both P and his readers were undoubtedly familiar counsel among the gods before their important undertakings was a fairly routine procedure.<sup>42</sup>

The perceived problem with this approach is that the perspective of P was profoundly monotheistic and he would scarcely have allowed a literal plural to slip through his editing and become embedded in his text. The



principal alternative theory, therefore, is that the plural is a plural of deliberation, used rhetorically (such as the modern English examples of an individual deliberating with himself as in “Let’s do it!” or “What shall we do?”).

Arguments from an editorial perspective are always rather slippery; they assume that we fully understand the editorial stance of a redactor and that the redactor made no editorial mistakes (a proposition for which there are numerous counterexamples in the Old Testament text). Nevertheless, I am willing to assume for present purposes that P (who is presumed to have lived and worked around the time of the Exile) would have understood this verse in monotheistic terms. The commentators are concerned with what this verse meant to P; in contrast, Joseph’s treatment is concerned with what this verse meant originally (that is, in the earlier Israelite creation narrative from which P derived it). Westermann acknowledges that, although P could not have intended it so, “the idea of a heavenly court may well be in the background.”<sup>43</sup> The parallel expression in Genesis 3:22 suggests that in their original setting these words probably had a plural meaning: “man has become like one of us [*kəʾaḥaḍ mīmmennû*].” In this passage the use of the word “one” is inconsistent with a merely rhetorical plural.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Joseph’s interpretation matches one of the two principal explanations of the plural forms in Genesis 1:26. Further, going behind P to the earlier sources, most scholars would agree that the plural is to be taken literally.

### A Supreme God at the Head

*The [head one][heads] of the Gods brought forth the Gods.*<sup>45</sup>

One can argue that the existence of a pantheon implies the presence of a supreme God who rules the pantheon. Joseph described this deity as the “head one [*rōʾš*] of the Gods.” In the case of the early Hebrew pantheon, that God was referred to variously as El, Elohim, or El Elyon (or El combined with other epithets).<sup>46</sup> El Elyon was the name of the God worshiped by Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18–20. This name can be interpreted in various ways: “God Most High,” “El the Highest One,” “El who is Elyon,” or “the God Elyon.” Ugaritic parallels suggest that the most likely interpretation is the second one, that of a proper name followed by a description. The association of the epithet Elyon with El, the Father of the Gods, is intriguing because the basic meaning of Elyon is “most high” or “highest” (Greek *hypsistos*), which is also a meaning of the word *rōʾš* (derived symbolically from the head being the highest part of the body). The Hebrew expression *rōʾš haʾēlōhîm* could be rendered “the head one of the Gods,” but it could just as easily be translated “the highest one of the Gods” or “God Most High.” Thus, not only did the Hebrew pantheon have a head



or supreme God, but one of his principal epithets is essentially a synonym of the word Joseph chose to represent that God.

Joseph's discourses are somewhat ambiguous as to whether there was one head God or multiple heads of the Gods. Theologically, Joseph seems to have preferred the idea of a single head God (this being the idea he expressed in the King Follett Discourse), but his reading of the Hebrew may have raised the possibility of multiple heads of the Gods, which he expressed almost as an aside in his June 16, 1844, discourse. The idea of multiple heads of the Gods does have a parallel with scholarly reconstruction of the ancient Hebrew pantheon. That pantheon appears to have consisted of an extensive body of unnamed, generic Gods, and a small number of named, major Gods (including El and Yahweh). Thus, reference to "the heads of the Gods" could be understood as referring in a similar sense to the major Gods of the pantheon.<sup>47</sup>

### The Premortal Council in Heaven

*Thus the head God brought forth the Gods in the grand council.*<sup>48</sup>

That Joseph should have described the Gods as meeting in a "grand council" seems unusually prescient. The idea of the divine council or council of the Gods is widely acknowledged by scholars today, but the seminal study of this concept did not appear until one hundred years after the King Follett Discourse.<sup>49</sup>

The character of the divine council as it was understood among the Israelites evolved over the course of time in two important respects. First, with the ascendancy of Yahwism, the nature of the council moved from being a council of the Gods to being merely an assembly of Yahweh surrounded by his attendant angels. These angels became increasingly generic until they eventually lost their one-time function of counseling God, serving only the ornamental function of worshiping Yahweh.

Second was the unique role the council would come to play in the ministry of the prophets of Israel. The prophets would be brought by vision into the presence of the divine council, where they would see the Lord seated upon his throne in the heavenly temple, surrounded by his divine counselors. The prophets would be allowed to witness and participate in the deliberations of the council. When a decision had been reached, the prophets would return from this vision and report the decree of the council to the people, usually in the very words they had heard in vision. This pattern is particularly evident when a prophet received his prophetic calling, and LDS scholars have identified a similar pattern in the prophetic commissions of Lehi in the Book of Mormon<sup>50</sup> and Enoch in the Book of Moses.<sup>51</sup>



Older Hebrew literature, however, retains the original conception of a council of the Gods. This can best be illustrated by certain passages from the Psalms (pertinent references to the council and its members are identified in Hebrew):

Ascribe to the LORD [YHWH], O heavenly beings [*bənê ʿēlīm*; lit. “sons of Gods”], ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (RSV Psalm 29:1)

God [*ʾēlōhīm*] has taken his place in the divine council [*baʿādaṭ-ʾēl*]; in the midst of the gods [*ʾēlōhīm*] he holds judgment. . . . I say, “You are gods [*ʾēl-ohīm*], sons of the Most High [*bənê ʿelyôn*], all of you.” (RSV Psalm 82:1, 6)

Let the heavens praise thy wonders, O LORD [YHWH], thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones [*bîqḥāl qəḏōšīm*]! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD [YHWH]? Who among the heavenly beings [*bənê ʿēlīm*] is like the LORD [YHWH], a God [*ʾēl*] feared in the council of the holy ones [*sôd qəḏōšīm*], great and terrible above all that are round about him? O LORD God of hosts [YHWH *ʾēlōhê ṣəbāʾôṭ*], who is mighty as thou art, O LORD [YHWH], with thy faithfulness round about thee? (RSV Psalm 89:5–8)

The concept of the divine council is certainly present in the KJV Old Testament, but since the King James translators did not know of the concept, their translation largely obscures it. Compare, for instance, the clear RSV rendering of *baʿādaṭ-ʾēl* in Psalm 82:1: “in the divine council,” with the obscure translation of the KJV: “in the congregation of the mighty.” In fact, the word “council” makes only one appearance in the KJV Old Testament, in Psalm 68:27, and in that verse, the word quite clearly does *not* refer to the divine council. That Joseph should have seen (a century before scholarly discussion began on the subject) that the Gods met in a “grand council” demonstrates, at the very least, an unusual perceptiveness.

## A God Appointed over This World

*The heads of the Gods appointed one God for us.*<sup>52</sup>

Joseph’s notion of the Gods appointing one God over us appears to be supported by an archaic, fossilized bit of scripture that has been preserved in Deuteronomy 32:8–9 (the following translation is from the Revised Standard Version):

When the Most High [*ʿelyôn*] gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God [*bənê ʾēlōhīm*]. For the LORD’S [YHWH] portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

The KJV at the end of verse 8 reads “sons of Israel,” following the Masoretic Text, but current scholars uniformly accept the reading reflected in the RSV, “sons of God,” which is supported both by the Septuagint and by the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>53</sup>



Scholars are divided into two camps concerning the interpretation of these verses. One position interprets this passage as predating the conflation (or attempted conflation) of El and Yahweh into a single deity. In this view, El assigns one of his sons to each of the nations, assigning his son Yahweh to Israel.<sup>54</sup> The other position interprets this passage as it would have been understood following the convergence, with Yahweh (=Elyon) assigning other Gods to other nations but retaining Israel for himself.<sup>55</sup> This second position is, once again, essentially an argument from editorial perspective. Although the Deuteronomist may have understood and preserved the passage in the latter sense, in its earlier setting it seems more likely to have been understood in the preconvergence sense. Although the former interpretation more closely parallels Joseph's view, both interpretations involve the divine council assigning individual Gods to different peoples.

### A Continuous Conception of God

*It is a great subject I am dwelling on—the word Eloheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro.*<sup>56</sup>

As we have seen, contemporary scholars acknowledge that the earliest Hebrew conception of God was pluralistic. The scholarly orthodoxy, however, has been that at some point in time (scholars differ concerning when) El and Yahweh were merged into a single God (often referred to as Yahweh Elohim, “the LORD God”) and that this merger was profoundly and completely effected. Joseph's assertion that early Hebrew pluralism had a continuity throughout the Bible is inconsistent with this view.

Over the past twenty years, however, a different scholarly perspective has begun to emerge, culminating in the publication of an important study by Margaret Barker entitled *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*.<sup>57</sup> This perspective has been heavily influenced by several book-length studies preceding Barker's, such as Alan F. Segal's *Two Powers in Heaven*, Jarl Fossum's *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, and Larry W. Hurtado's *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*,<sup>58</sup> and numerous articles, including Peter Hayman's “Monotheism—a Misused Word in Jewish Studies?”<sup>59</sup> In fact, this new approach has garnered sufficient adherents to have been given a name: the new “religionsgeschichtliche Schule.”<sup>60</sup>

The basic idea behind this new approach is that the attempted fusion of El and Yahweh was undertaken by a small coterie of priests and scribes representing a minority viewpoint, a group that has been called “the Yahweh Alone Party.”<sup>61</sup> Much of today's Old Testament either assumes this identification as accomplished fact or is consciously devoted to the effort to sustain this identification, as in the formula *YHWH hū ha'elōhîm*



(“Yahweh, he is God” or, more pointedly, “Yahweh, he is Elohim”), which appears several times in the Old Testament. The new approach, however, argues that the effort to equate El and Yahweh did not fully take; that in much of popular religion these two Gods (or other divine entities derived from their memory) retained their separate identities. This view draws considerable support from the longstanding Hebrew notion of God in concert with an extensive underlying pluralism (as reflected, for instance, in the Hosts of Heaven, the Holy Ones, the Angels, or the Watchers) combined with a persistent overarching dualism “in which two divine entities are presupposed: one the supreme creator God, the other his vizier or prime minister, or some other spiritual agency, who really ‘runs the show,’ or at least provides the point of contact between God and humanity.”<sup>62</sup>

The evidence supporting this newly emerging picture of the nature of God derives from many different sources that span the centuries. In fact, one of the reasons that this picture of early Israelite theology is only now emerging is that the evidence comes from so many disparate sources, with which no one scholar is completely conversant. For instance, Barker begins her study by going back to the beginning and working forward in time through the sources,<sup>63</sup> while Hayman reaches remarkably similar conclusions based in the first instance on his study of *Sefer Yeşira*,<sup>64</sup> which dates between A.D. 200 and 800. Most interestingly, this scholarship appears to have answered a longstanding problem of New Testament studies: How was it possible that the Jewish-Christians in the early church were able to acknowledge Jesus as divine? If, as many believe, the Jews of that era held to an iron-clad monotheism, such a result would have been very problematic. If, however, the pluralistic/dualistic elements of historic Hebrew theology had a continued vitality until and beyond the Christian era, then it becomes more understandable how the earliest Jewish-Christians were able to worship both the Father and the Son as readily as they did.

It is one thing for scholars today to identify the persistence of ancient Hebrew pluralism and to write papers and books on the subject (each building on the work of earlier scholars). It is quite another thing for Joseph Smith to have made these claims, against his own earlier pietistic preconceptions of monotheism and without any discernible support from the learned of the day, and to have committed the Church to this position as a principle of doctrine. *That* no scholar ever did. It was a course bespeaking a profound, serene, authoritative confidence that the position he outlined in the King Follett Discourse was true. Although he had discerned certain rational indications in the KJV text supporting this position, his confidence in that position could have derived only from his sense that it had been revealed to him spiritually.



In conclusion, we have seen that there is now scholarly support for the concepts Joseph derived from his reconstruction of Hebrew Genesis 1:1, namely, his rejection of *creatio ex nihilo*, the ancient conception of a plurality of Gods, the idea of a head God among that plurality, the council of the Gods, the appointment by the Gods of a single God over us, and the continuity of ancient Hebrew pluralism across biblical eras. That Joseph should have articulated these ideas so well and so forcefully in the middle of the nineteenth century is, in my view, nothing short of remarkable.

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1. For the sermon's historical background, see Donald Q. Cannon, "The King Follett Discourse: Joseph Smith's Greatest Sermon in Historical Perspective," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 179–92.

2. See the assessments cited in Cannon, "Historical Perspective," 179 n. 1. More recently, Harold Bloom has called the discourse "one of the truly remarkable sermons ever preached in America" and "the furthest frontier of Smith's prophecy before his martyrdom." Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 95, 124. See also the respectful contemplation of the sermon in Jacob Neusner, "Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 7–30.

3. My emphasis in this article is on certain concepts the Prophet Joseph Smith derived from his interpretation of the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1. For a fuller consideration of the doctrinal content of the sermon, see Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 209–25.

4. Kevin L. Barney, "Joseph Smith's Emendation of Hebrew Genesis 1:1," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30 (winter 1997): 103–35.

5. For the original manuscript reports of these discourses, see Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center and Bookcraft, 1980), 340–62 and 378–83. See also Donald Q. Cannon and Larry E. Dahl, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse: A Six Column Comparison of Original Notes and Amalgamations* (n.p., 1983).

6. The second of these concepts contributed to the circumstances leading up to the Prophet's martyrdom; see "Preamble," *Nauvoo Expositor* 1 (June 7, 1844): 2, column 2.

7. Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 203.

8. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906; reprint, Boston, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 135.

9. For citations, see Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974–98), 2:246.

10. Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary*, 2:245.

11. As quoted in Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Plain Meaning of Genesis 1:1–3," *Biblical Archaeologist* 46 (December 1983): 208, brackets in original.



12. Gary Anderson, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (January 1990): 21.

13. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 912.

14. This translation generally follows E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible, Genesis*, vol. 1 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 3, except that in verse 1 I have replaced "when God set about" with the more literal rendering "by way of beginning," as is suggested by Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1970), 542 n. 3.

15. This view is briefly explained in Keith Norman, "Ex Nihilo: The Development of the Doctrines of God and Creation in Early Christianity," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (1977): 295–96, which is primarily concerned with relating the emerging doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation with the development of the understanding of God in philosophy. In addition to the works and translations cited by Norman, supporters of this approach include H. Ewald, E. Schrader, K. Budde, J. M. P. Smith, W. F. Albright, O. Eissfeldt, R. Dussaud, P. Humbert, S. Herrmann, H. M. Orlinsky, C. A. Simpson, E. A. Speiser, N. A. Sarna, W. R. Lane, and J. B. Bauer. For citations, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1—a Critical Look," *Bible Translator* 22 (October 1971): 157 n. 16.

Despite these writings, a vocal minority, including Hasel, G. von Rad, U. Cassuto, C. Westermann, D. Kidner, E. Maly, G. Henton Davies, and Edward J. Young continues to argue that Genesis 1:1 should be taken as a main clause. For the argument, see Hasel, "Recent Translations," 154–67; Edward J. Young, "The Relation of the First Verse of Genesis One to Verses Two and Three," *Westminster Theological Journal* 21 (May 1959): 133–46; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 93–98. Although these arguments are made on rational grounds, a strong theological motivation (protection of the notion of absolute creation) underlies most of them, as expressed by von Rad: "We do not follow the old conjecture that v.1 is not to be understood as an independent sentence but as the introductory clause to v.2 or even to v.3. Syntactically perhaps both translations are possible, not theologically." Quoted in Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 96.

Even if the minority position were correct, however, it would not necessarily follow that Genesis 1:1 describes a creation from nothing. In fact, Westermann argues that Genesis 1:1 should be taken as a main clause, but he then denies that *bārā'* has reference to creation from nothing on lexical grounds (just as Joseph did in 1844). Further, even if it could successfully be demonstrated that Genesis 1:1 were not only a main clause but also a description of *creatio ex nihilo*, most scholars would have to acknowledge that this very probably would have been a theological innovation of P, the putative author of Genesis 1:1–2:4a under the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis (assuming, for the sake of argument, that hypothesis to have a basis in reality). Joseph Smith cares nothing for P's meaning; his intention is rather to go back to the *beginning*. It is widely believed that the parallel account of J, beginning in Genesis 2:4b, which contains no hint of *creatio ex nihilo*, was written several centuries earlier than the relatively late P account. Therefore, Joseph's position on this issue is sustained in either event.

16. J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1909; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1933), 3.

17. Speiser, *Genesis*, 12.

18. For instance, see Anderson, "Interpretation of Genesis 1:1," 22; and Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—a Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42, no. 1 (1991): 1–15.

19. At the time of publication of these articles, David Winston was a professor of history at the University of Iowa, and Jonathan A. Goldstein was a professor of



Hellenistic and Judaic studies at the Graduate Theological Union. See David Winston, "The Book of Wisdom's Theory of Cosmogony," *History of Religions* 11, no. 2 (1971): 185–202; Jonathan A. Goldstein, "The Origins of the Doctrine of Creation Ex Nihilo," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35, no. 2 (1984): 127–35; David Winston, "Creation Ex Nihilo Revisited: A Reply to J. Goldstein," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37, no. 1 (1986): 88–91; and Jonathan Goldstein, "Creation Ex Nihilo: Recantations and Restatements," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38, no. 2 (1987): 187–94.

20. Winston, "Theory of Cosmogony," 185.

21. Winston, "Theory of Cosmogony," 191–92 n. 21.

22. Winston, "Theory of Cosmogony," 187–89, discussing *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:9.

23. Winston, "Theory of Cosmogony," 199.

24. Goldstein, "Recantations and Restatements," 190.

25. Goldstein, "Origin of the Doctrine of Creation Ex Nihilo," 129.

26. Winston, "Reply to J. Goldstein," 89.

27. Goldstein, "Recantations and Restatements," 188.

28. Goldstein, "Recantations and Restatements," 187.

29. From Thomas Bullock's manuscript report of Joseph's June 16, 1844, discourse, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379.

30. See, in general, Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

31. Many scholars see an early pluralism evolving over time by the convergence of some Gods and the differentiation of others into monolatry, with monotheism itself arising only during the exile. Baruch Halpern, "'Brisker Pipes Than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 77–115; Lowell K. Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana V. Edelman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 40; and for additional citations, see Smith, *Early History of God*, 159–60 nn. 35 and 37. The more conservative approach sees monotheism as being established much earlier, in the Mosaic age. Yet even this approach assumes a prior pluralism. For instance, William Foxwell Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (London: Athlone, 1968). Albright was an influential supporter of the conservative view and on page 134 casually refers to "the old Hebrew gods." Even the religiously conservative Roland Kenneth Harrison, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 396, acknowledges that patriarchal theology was pluralistic.

32. See David Noel Freedman's review of *The Early History of God* in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 4 (1991): 693–98.

33. In that discourse, Joseph is recorded as having said:

If we pursue the Heb further—it reads The Head one of Gods said let us make man in our image. I once asked a learned Jew once—if the Heb. language compels us to render all words ending in heam in the plural—why not render the first plural—he replied it would ruin the Bible—he acknowledged I was right. (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379)

34. Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary*, 1:273.

35. So argues Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 398: "Insofar as plural forms occurred in Hebrew names for God or in titles relating to the Godhead, they were not so much vestigial remains of an earlier stage of polytheism as grammatical structures designed to emphasize the majesty of the God who was being described."



36. See *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 2:413. For ʾēlōhîm as a singular reference to a foreign god, see Judges 11:24 (Chemosh), 1 Kings 11:5 (Ashtoreth), and 2 Kings 1:2 (Baal-zebub of Ekron).

37. Gerald Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76 (1964): 22–47.

38. Cooke, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 22.

39. Cooke, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 45.

40. Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 36.

41. For general overviews of the explanations, see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 144–45; and Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 53–54. The three widely discounted theories are (1) the dogmatic assertion that the plural is an expression of the Trinity, (2) the notion that the plural was used to avoid the idea of any immediate resemblance of humans to God (labelled by Westermann as "highly questionable theologically"), and (3) Speiser's argument that the plural forms are simply used in grammatical agreement with the plural ʾēlōhîm and should, like ʾēlōhîm, be given a singular meaning (an idea which ignores actual Hebrew usage elsewhere in the Old Testament and which Speiser's fellow Catholic Vawter rejects out of hand).

42. Vawter, *On Genesis*, 53–54.

43. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 145.

44. Cooke, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 23.

45. The singular is attested in each of the four manuscript reports (Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton) of the King Follett Discourse; see Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 341, 345, 351, and 358. For the plural, see Thomas Bullock's report of the Prophet's June 16, 1844, discourse, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379.

46. See in general Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary*, 1:242–61. Other El epithets include El Olam (Everlasting God) and El Shaddai (God Almighty).

47. Compare the Akkadian expression *ilāni elūti*, "the highest gods," as described in relation to the epithet Elyon in John Van Seters, "The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis," *Biblica* 61 (April 1980): 228.

48. Joseph 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), 6:307–8.

49. H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 45 (April 1944): 151–57. Further studies include Frank Moore Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (1953): 274–77; Edwin C. Kingsbury, "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 2 (1964): 279–86; Patrick D. Miller Jr., "The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (January 1968): 100–107; N. L. A. Tidwell, "Wāʾōmar (Zech. 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah's Fourth Vision," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (September 1975): 343–55; E. Theodore Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980).

50. See Blake Thomas Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," *BYU Studies* 26 no. 3 (1986): 67–95; and John W. Welch, "The Calling of a Prophet," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 35–54.

51. Stephen D. Ricks, "The Narrative Call Pattern in the Prophetic Commission of Enoch (Moses 6)," *BYU Studies* 26 (fall 1986): 97–105. On the relevance of the divine



council to the premortal existence, see Joseph F. McConkie, "Premortal Existence, Foreordinations and Heavenly Councils," in C. Wilfred Griggs, ed., *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986), 173–98.

52. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379.

53. The reading "sons of God" is attested in two fragments from Qumran: 4QDeut<sup>j</sup> and 4QDeut<sup>q</sup>. See Patrick W. Skehan, "A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses' (Deut. 32) from Qumran," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 136 (December 1954): 12–15; Patrick W. Skehan, "Qumran and the Present State of Old Testament Text Studies: The Masoretic Text," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959): 21; and Julie Duncan's definitive edition in *Qumran Cave 4–IX: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert 14, ed. Eugene Ulrich (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 90. Although many Septuagint manuscripts read "angels of God," which represents an alternate attempt to soften the original reading, the oldest Greek witness to Deuteronomy, P. Fuad 266 (Rahlfs 848), reads "sons" rather than "angels." John W. Wevers, the editor for the Deuteronomy volume of the Göttingen edition of the Septuagint, regards the reading "sons of God" as assured. See John W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 513. For additional evidence supporting this reading, see Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy* 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 157.

54. See, for example, Otto Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1956): 25–37. Note that in the Ras Shamra tablets El is said to have seventy sons, and in Hebrew tradition there were seventy nations (see Gen. 10). This explains the late scribal attempt to replace "sons of God" with "sons of Israel," because in Hebrew tradition the sons of Israel also numbered seventy (see Exod. 1:5).

55. This is the position of the Albright school; see Mullen, *Divine Council*, 204. As Mullen explains, Albright had argued that Elyon should be read as equivalent to Yahweh here on grounds of distant parallelism; for citations regarding the concept of distant parallelism, see Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4 (fall 1995): 32.

56. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 379.

57. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992). Awareness by LDS scholars of the significance of Barker's study is reflected, for instance, in Daniel C. Peterson, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 2 (1995): 101; Martin S. Tanner, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 2 (1995): 34–36; and Bryan J. Thomas, in *FARMS Review of Books* 8, no. 1 (1996): 39.

58. Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985); Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

59. This was Hayman's presidential address to the British Association for Jewish Studies, given at Edinburgh on August 21, 1990, and provides an excellent, concise overview of this new approach.

60. Or the new "History of Religions School." The name was coined by Martin Hengel; see Jarl Fossum, review of *Great Angel*, by Margaret Barker, *Journal of Theological Studies* 45 (April 1994): 187.

61. Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 23.



62. Hayman, "Monotheism," 2.

63. *The Great Angel* is essentially a sequel to Barker's prior book *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987), which first led her to the ideas articulated in *The Great Angel*. In the King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith explained that his procedure was (similarly) to go back to the beginning and then work his way forward:

In the first place I wish to go back to the beginning of creation. There is the starting point in order to know and be fully acquainted with the mind, purposes, decrees, and ordinations of the great Elohim that sits in the heavens. For us to take up beginning at the creation it is necessary *for us* to understand something of God Himself in the beginning. If we start right, it is very easy for us to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, *we may go wrong, and* it is a hard matter to get right. (Larson, "Newly Amalgamated Text," 199)

64. Hayman, "Monotheism," 2.



# Revelations in Context

## Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail, March 20, 1839

Dean C. Jessee and John W. Welch

While Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Liberty Jail from December 1, 1838, to April 6, 1839, he wrote or dictated eight surviving letters. Four were addressed to Emma, his wife, and all of them display the sterling character of the Prophet Joseph under trials of the most extreme conditions imaginable. His letter of March 20, 1839, directed to “the church of Latter-day saints at Quincy Illinois and scattered abroad and to Bishop Partridge in particular,” is one of the most revealing and most significant letters ever written by a prophet of God in the dispensation of the fullness of times. Embedded in this lengthy letter, which was written in two parts on twenty-nine sheets of paper, are the words now contained in sections 121–23 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Reading the words of those revelations in their original context certainly enhances and heightens the impressive spiritual messages of those texts.

Dean Jessee published this important document in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (1984).<sup>1</sup> Deseret Book Company and the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History have now combined their energies to produce a revised and corrected edition of this volume which will be off the press in the near future. Comments about the historical background of this letter can be found in that new volume.

Below is reproduced the entire text of this two-part letter. It has been transcribed literally, with spellings preserved as well as many other manuscript features, some of which are understandably rough, given the circumstances under which this epistle was drafted. The manuscript was written by Alexander McRae and Caleb Baldwin, who acted as scribes for Joseph Smith. In the typesetting below, Joseph's handwritten corrections appear in bold-faced type.

The manuscript has been segregated into two type sizes. The larger size is used to typeset all of the portions of this letter not found in the Doctrine and Covenants; the smaller size in block quotes displays the portions of the letter now found in sections 121–23. This format readily reveals the sequential context in which the scriptural words originally appeared in the epistle.

Before and after the six blocks of text which were taken from this letter to comprise the words of sections 121–23 are seven units of text that lead up



to and away from the canonized passages. In each case, these seven units add to our understandings of and sensitivities toward the meanings of the scriptures, as is highlighted in the new introductory analysis and additional commentary that follows.

## Unit 1

The first of these noncanonical units introduces the letter in a high scriptural style which accentuates the contrast between sacred knowledge, virtue, and fellowship on the one hand and horrendous evil, suffering, and atrocity on the other hand. Phrases such as “prisoner for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake” and “nothing therefore can separate us from the love of God” position Joseph in the apostolic tradition of Paul, who likewise suffered as a prisoner for Christ (Eph. 3:1; Philem. 1:1) and endured inseparable from the love of God (Rom. 8:35, 39). Joseph Smith’s tender love for his friends and his magnanimous quest and request that knowledge and virtue be multiplied upon the Saints are astonishing when juxtaposed against the jarring and shocking articulation of the wrongs he and the Saints had suffered. After reading Joseph’s bill of particulars against his captors and seeing his willingness to turn the demands of justice over to God for divine judgment, readers should be doubly impressed by the statement, “True it must needs be that offences come, but WO! to them by whom they come,” a scripture taken from words of Christ in the New Testament (Matt. 18:7), which leads directly into what is now the beginning of section 121, “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?” The Prophet’s plaintive plea does not come out of nowhere. It grows out of extraordinary faith, hope, and love, as well as extreme affliction and injustice. The Prophet’s soul-rending petition then provides the text for the first six verses of section 121.

## Unit 2

Between Doctrine and Covenants 121:6 and 7 originally stood a lengthy section that began by reflecting on the signs of the times and with the gushing of emotion as “the flood gates of [the prisoners’] harts [had been] hoisted” as the efforts of the Prophet and his companions had been frustrated at every turn. The promise of peace that eventually comes in 121:7, “my son, peace be unto thy soul,” was not received without first wading through unimaginable grief poured out through the torrent of misfortune reported in this unit 2. Although he knew that the time would indeed come when “God will have our oppressors in derision,” Joseph’s confidence was still tested in the extreme. His lawyers were unfaithful, swayed by public opinion. Government officials were treacherous. These



men receive a scathing denunciation. An escape attempt by the prisoners had been frustrated, and their *pro se* self-representation in court had proven ineffectual. Nevertheless, Joseph was filled with a hope of better things; his mind turned towards home, finding consolation particularly in supporting words from friends. His description of the power of a friendly voice that dispels all grief “with a vivacity of lightning” is classic. Healed by the loving voice of a friend, enmity departed from the Prophet’s soul; his heart became “sufficiently contrite,” and only then could “the voice of inspiration” steal along and whisper the reassuring peaceful text that begins in Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.

### Unit 3

Following Doctrine and Covenants 121:25 originally stood a third unit of text, a lengthy section explaining first that God “would have a tried people” and then giving counsel with respect to the management of Church affairs and properties. This unit begins by somberly assuring the Saints that the trial of their faith would be “equal to that of Abraham.” These Abrahamic allusions are rich and powerful. Perhaps Abraham’s faithfulness in paying tithes and dividing his property generously with his brother Lot led the Prophet to move from the sublime image of the sacrifice of Isaac to a discussion of the management of the mundane affairs of the household of God. The great patriarch Abraham could well serve as a model for the Saints as they sought a new location for settlement and as they tried to conduct their necessary business in righteousness and humility. In this segment of the letter, the Prophet Joseph instructs the Church regarding conferences, councils, the avoidance of undue influence through pride, “foul speeches,” flattery, or any conduct that would diminish the soul of man, for a soul “unto salvation must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search in to and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss” before Church meetings and conversations can be worthy of those “dignified Characters of the Chosen of God.” Only upon such conditions, while bearing with those who feel themselves less worthy, serving all people, “both high and low rich and poor,” with honesty and meekness, can the body of the Saints prepare the way for the blessing of the Lord. “If you do these things, and exercise fervent prayer, and faith,” the Prophet assured the Saints, then one can receive the beautiful promise that is articulated beginning in Doctrine and Covenants 121:26, “God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit.”

### Unit 4

Between Doctrine and Covenants 121:32 and 33 is found a short unit that tells the Saints what holds them back from the marvelous blessings



promised in the intervening scriptural text. Briefly mentioned are the problems of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry. Like a mountain cloud-burst, however, violently cleansing the valleys and hills, the flood of refining trials will purify the body of the Church to be again “as clear as cristal and as pure as snow.” Following this vivid interlude, the absence of which a textual critic could hardly have even suspected without the full original in hand, comes the familiar query, “How long can rolling waters remain impure?” (D&C 121:33).

## Unit 5

The next unit in the letter commences at the end of what is now verse 33 and runs through the end of part one and on into part two of the letter itself. It first heaps imprecations upon the governor of Missouri, Lilburn Boggs, but then its message shifts quickly to deliver the Prophet Joseph Smith’s powerful testimony of the truthfulness of Mormonism. He fervently attests that “it was by [God’s] voice that we were called to a dispensation of his gospel.” He testifies of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. He then closes with intimate remembrances and soothing consolations, ending the first half of the letter, as Paul concluded his letters, with personal words of greeting and love, punctuated with a block of signatures.

The composition of unit 5 continued after the arrival of a letter from Bishop Edward Partridge. Never were words more gratefully received. A prospect of land in Iowa seemed to be “a whispering that the angels of heaven” had sent forth. Greatly heartened that the murders at Haun’s Mill and the death of Apostle David W. Patten would be vindicated and prove efficacious, the Prophet gave practical instructions that general conferences of the Church should be conducted with great “care and propriety” and that land dealings must be carefully transacted, especially to avoid all forms of self-aggrandizement. Worries, especially that high-mindedness might lead those in power to neglect bearing “the infermities of the weak,” led Joseph directly into the penetrating discussion that begins, “Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?” (D&C 121:34).

Interestingly, the original letter contains no break between what is now the end of section 121 and the beginning of section 122. This contiguity notably raises some interesting interpretive possibilities. At the end of section 121, several sublime promises are extended to those who properly maintain influence and power by virtue of correct application of the priesthood principles: “Thy confidence [shall] wax strong, . . . thy scepter an unchanging scepter, . . . thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, . . . it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46). These blessings appear to be extended to all who follow the counsel of the preceding verses, which clearly seem to set forth general principles that apply to all holders



of power. Without interruption, the text of the letter then continues, “The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name,” speaking in terms that one might think applied specifically to Joseph Smith. Especially when the tribulations that are mentioned—such as enemies tearing a six-year-old child from the arms of his father (D&C 122:6)—allude directly to the suffering of Joseph Smith, it appears that the intent of the text has shifted to addressing Joseph Smith alone. The climax of this passage, “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience” (D&C 122:7), would however seem to have shifted back to a more general promise applicable to all who endure suffering and are sustained in the atoning depths of the Son of Man. The continuity of these passages, blending in and out of each other, raises the interesting possibility, however, that all of the second person pronouns in this text (*thee, thy, thou*) might refer both to Joseph Smith or Bishop Partridge as well as to all righteous Saints.

## Unit 6

The assurance that “thy years shall not be numbered less” (D&C 122:9) leads into unit 6 of the letter, in which the Prophet turns attention to the gathering of the Saints and the conferences soon to be convened. Knowing that God will stand by his Saints forever and ever reassures the Prophet of his continuing leadership. Shifting from the most penetrating concerns about evil and suffering, having just reached bottom and learned that “all these things shall give thee experience and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7), the Prophet commences to give instructions concerning the business at hand, about cautiously avoiding the formation of large stock companies and not using financial tools and institutions without taking the appropriate time and having the necessary experience to prevent the reoccurrence of problems such as the Saints in Kirtland had previously encountered.

## Unit 7

This practical advice flows directly into what is now section 123:1–17, instructing members of the Church to gather affidavits concerning the injuries they had suffered in Missouri. But that is not the end of the advice the Prophet gives to the Saints at that time. Unit 7 then counsels the Saints to avoid entering into worldly arrangements that carry with them covenants, oaths, and penalties enforced by secrecy. Prudent guidance is given on how the Saints should interact and deal with people of other faiths: “Our religion is between us and our God their religion is between them and their God”; nevertheless, a tie exists between the Saints and their God that enables them to conduct themselves “with grater liberality to word all others” than the others exercise toward one another. This elevated



counsel applies not only to relationships between individual members of the Church and others in society but also to the behavior of the Latter-day Saints with respect to governments. Here Joseph Smith strongly affirms his support for the Constitution of the United States as “a glorious standard” that protects all individuals equally in their “indefeasible rights” to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

The letter then ends with a strong proclamation to the world that Latter-day Saints will hold on “untill death” to seven truths. This is the only known document in which Joseph Smith bears his personal testimony of these truths so directly. Reading these words gives listeners today a feeling for the way it must have sounded when the Prophet bore his own testimony. Joseph testifies: “God is true,” “the constitution of the united States is true,” “the Bible is true,” “the book of mormon is true,” “the book of covenants is true,” “Christ is true,” and “the ministering of angels sent from God is true.” Indeed, this testimony energizes all sections of this letter.

### Early Publication History

Choice segments of this two-part letter were included in the Doctrine and Covenants for the first time in 1876. It remains unknown, however, what criteria Elder Orson Pratt and his Brethren used “to determine which portions of these letters were to be included,”<sup>2</sup> thereby leading to the canonization of those choice selections from among these many inspired and inspiring words.

These texts were first published during Joseph Smith’s lifetime in *Times and Seasons* in May and July of 1840,<sup>3</sup> with some passages being shortened and others reworded. Those changes spawned unwitting criticism from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1896, erroneously blaming the Salt Lake–based Church of changing the words of the Prophet after his death when a different version of these texts was published in the *Millennial Star* in 1855.<sup>4</sup> In response to this criticism, Church Historian Franklin D. Richards correctly indicated that the challenged matter in the latter publication was drawn, virtually unedited, by the *Deseret News* in 1854<sup>5</sup> from the 1840s Manuscript History of the Church, which had quoted the original 1839 letter as written by Joseph Smith.<sup>6</sup> The full text of these letters has been published in the *History of the Church* from 1905 to the present.<sup>7</sup>

The 1854 publication of these materials in the *Deseret News* may have contributed, however, in a small way to the final selection of segments that were eventually included in the 1879 Doctrine and Covenants. Consistent with the paragraphing first introduced by the 1854 publication, all seven sections of text included in Doctrine and Covenants 121–23 end where paragraphs in the 1854 typesetting end, and except for the Doctrine and Covenants texts following units 2 and 3, all begin where paragraphs begin.



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Any deviations between this printing and the 2001 edition of *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* are inadvertant.

1. Dean C. Jessee, comp., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 388–407. For a discussion of the letter’s previous publications, see below.

2. Robert J. Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1974), 1567.

3. *Times and Seasons* 1 (May 1840): 99–104; (July 1840): 131–34. The second part of the March 20, 1839, letter was reprinted twice from this source in *Millennial Star* 1 (December 1840): 193–97; 5 (October 1844): 69–72.

4. *Millennial Star* 17 (January 27, 1855): 52–56; (February 10, 1855): 84–88. *The Saints’ Herald* 43 (June 3, 1896): 354–59. The *Herald* contrasted “the kind and Christlike spirit” of the *Times and Seasons* version with “the boasting, railing spirit of the other” and noted that the *Times and Seasons* made “no mention” of a plurality of Gods whereas the version appearing in the *Millennial Star* referred to “the council of the Eternal God of all other Gods.” The *Millennial Star* version is, however, much closer to the original, which contains the questioned phrase now found in D&C 121:32.

5. *Deseret News [Weekly]*, January 26, 1854, 1; February 2, 1854, 1. The *Deseret News* may have quoted the first part of the letter from the Manuscript History of the Church, book C-1, pages 900–906, but the second part of the letter was not copied into that part of the history when it was compiled in 1845.

6. *Deseret Evening News*, June 27, 1896, 4. Church Historian Franklin D. Richards believed that the editorial changes to the original letter as it appeared in *Times and Seasons* had been made honorably by editors Ebenezer Robinson and Don Carlos Smith with the “full sanction of Joseph Smith.” He attributed the differences between the original letter and the version published in the *Times and Seasons* to space constraints in the newspaper and to the editors’ “prudence” in withholding potentially controversial statements and teachings from the general public because of prejudices.

7. Joseph 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), 3:288–305. Elder Roberts utilized the *Millennial Star* version, following both of its parts and its paragraphing quite precisely, although dropping the first signature block at the end of the first part.



## Joseph Smith's March 20, 1839, Letter

Liberty Jail Clay County Mo

March 20th 1839.

**unit 1)** To the church of Latterday saints at Quincy Illinois and scattered abroad and to Bishop Partridge in particular. your humble servant Joseph Smith Jr prisoner for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the saints taken and held by the power of mobocracy under the exterminating reign of his excellency the Governor Lilburn W. Boggs in company with his fellow prisoners and beloved Brethren Caleb Baldwin Lymon Wight Hiram Smith and Alexander McRae send unto you all greeting. May the grace of God the father and of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ rest upon you all and abide with you for ever. May knowledge be multiplied unto you by the meorcy of God. And may faith and virtue and knowledge and temperance and patiance and Godliness and Brotherly kindness and charity be in you and abound that you may not be baron in anything nor unfrutefull. Forasmuch as we know that the most of you are well acquainted with the rongs and the high toned injustice and cruelty that is practiced upon us whereas we have been taken prisoners charged falsly with evry kind of evil and thrown into prison inclosed with strong walls surrounded with a strong guard who continually watch day and knight as indefatigable as the devil is in tempting and laying snayers for the people of God. Therefore dearly and beloved Brethren we are the more ready and willing to lay ~~clam~~ claim to your fellowship and love. For our curc= [p. 1] umstances are calculated to awaken our spirits to a sacred remembrance of evry thing and we think that yours are also and that nothing therefore can seperate us from the love of God. and fellowship one with another and that evry species of wickedness and cruelty practised upon us will only tend to bind our harts together and seal them together in love we have no need to say to you that we are held in bonds without cause neither is it needfull that you say unto us we are driven from our homes and smitten without cause we mutually understand that if the inhabitance of the state of Missouri had let the saints alone and had been as desirable of peace as they ware there would have been nothing but peace and quiatude in this <state> unto this day we should not have been in this hell surrounded with demonds if not those who are damned, they are those who shall be damned and where we are compeled to hear nothing but blasphemos oaths and witness a scen of blasphemy and drunkenness and hypocrisy and debaucheries of evry description. And again the cries of orphans and widdows would <not> have assended up to God. the blood of inocent women and children yea and of men also would not have cried to God against them <it> would <not> have stained the soyl of Missouri. but oh! the unrelenting hand the inhumanity and murderous



disposition of this people it shocks all nature it beggers and defies all discription. it is a tail of [p. 2] wo a lamentable tail yea a sorrifull tail too much to tell too much for contemplation too much to think of for a moment too much for human beings it cannot be found among the hethans it cannot be found among the nations where Kings and tyrants are inthroned it cannot be found among the savages of the wilderness yea and I think it cannot be found among the wild and ferocious beasts of the forist that a man should be mangled for sport women be ~~violated~~ <robed> of all that they have their last morsel for subsistance and then be violated to gratify the hell[i]sh desires of the mob and finally left to perish with their helpless of[f]spring clinging around their necks but this is not all after a man is dead he must be dug up from his grave and mangled to peaces for no other purpose than to gratify their spleen against the religeon of god. They practise <these> things upon the saints who have done them no rong who are inocent and virtuous who loved the Lord their god and were willing to forsaik all things for ~~his~~ <Christ> sake these things are awfull to relait but they are verily true it must needs bee that offences come, but WO! to them by whom they come.

O God where art thou and where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place how long shall thy hand be stayed and thine eye yea thy pure eye behold from ~~from~~ the eteernal heavens the rongs of thy people and of thy servants [p. 3] and thine ear be penetrated with their c[r]yes yea O Lord how long shall they suffer these rongs and unlawfull oppressions before thine hart shall be softened towards them and thy bowels be moved with compassion to-words them. O Lord God almighty maker of heaven earth and seas and of all things that in them is and who controleth and subjecteth the devil and the dark and benig[h]ted dominion of shayole. Streach forth thy hand let thine eye pierce let thy pavilion be taken up let thy hiding place no longer be covered let thine ear be inclined let thine hart be softened and thy bowels moved with compassion toward us let thine anger be kindle[d] against our enemis and in the fury of thine hart with thy sword avenge us of our rongs remember thy suffering saint[s] oh our God and thy servants will rejoyce in thy name for ever.  
[D&C 121:1–6]

- unit 2)** Dearly and beloved Brethr[en] we see that peralas times have come as was testified of we may look then with most purfect assurance for the roling in of all those things that have been written and with more confidence than ever before lift up our eyes to the luminary of day and say in our harts soon thou wilt vail thy blushing face he that said let there be light, and there was light hath spoken this word, and again thou moon thou dimmer light thou luminary of night shall ~~truru~~ <turn> to blood we see that evry thing is fulfilling and the time shall soon come when the son of man shall [p. 4] desend in the clouds of <heaven.> our harts do not shrink neither are our spirits altogether broken at the grievous yoak which is put upon us. We know that God will have our oppressors in derision that he ~~laf~~ <will laugh> at their calamity and mock when their fear comith oh that we could be with you Brethren and unbosome our feeling to you we would tell [you] that we should have been at



<liberated> the time Elder Rigdon was on the writ of habeas corpus had not our own lawyers interpreted the law contrary to what it reads against <us> which prevented us from introducing our evidence before the mock court,<sup>1</sup> they have done us much harm <from> the begining they have of late acknowledged that the law was misconstrewed and tantalised our feelings with it and have intirally forsaken us and have forfeited their oaths and their bonds and we have a come back on them for they are co-workers with the mob. As nigh as we can learn the publick mind has been for a long time turning in our favor and the majority is now friendly and the lawyers can no longer browbeat us by saying that this or that is a matter of publick oppinion for publick oppinion is not willing to brook it for it is begining to look with feelings of indignation against our oppresors and to say that the mormons were not in the fault in the least we think that truth honor and virtue and inocence will eventually come out tryumphant we should have taken a habeas corpus before the high Judge and escaped [p. 5] the mob in a summary way but unfortunatly for us the timber of the wall being verry hard our auger handles gave out and hindered us longer than we expected we applied to a friend and a verry slight uncautious act gave rise to some suspition and before we could fully succeed our plan was discovered we had evry thing in readiness but the last stone and we could have made our escape in one minute and should have succeeded admirably had it not been for a little imprudence or over anxiety on the part of our friend. The sheriff and jailor did not blame us for our attempt it was a fine breach and cost the county a round sum<sup>2</sup> but publick oppinion says that we ought to have been permitted to have made our escape that then the disgrace would have been on us but now it must come on the state. that there cannot be any charge sustained against us and that the conduct of the mob, the murders committed at hawns mill,<sup>3</sup> and the exterminating order of the Governor, and the one sided rascally proceedings of the Legislature has damned the state of Missouri to all eternity I would just name also that Genl Atchison has proved himself to be as contemptible as any of them we have tryed for a long time to get our lawyers to

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1. Reference is made to the January hearing at Liberty in which Sidney Rigdon obtained his freedom.

2. Joseph refers to their second unsuccessful jailbreak attempt of March 4.

3. Haun's Mill, a tiny Latter-day Saint community on Shoal Creek in Caldwell County, was attacked on October 30, 1838, by a large number of Missouri state militia under the command of Colonel Thomas Jennings. The attack, which left seventeen members of the community dead, was marked by acts of vicious cruelty. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965) 1:480–83.



draw us some petitions to the supream Judges of this state. but they uterly refused we have examined the law and drawn the petitions ourselvs and have obtained abundance of proof to counter act all the testimony [p. 6] that was against us, so that if the supream Judge dose <not grant> us our liberty he has got to act without cause contrary to honor evidence law or justice sheerly to please the devil but we hope better things and trust that before many days God will so order our case that we shall be set at liberty and take up our habitation with the saints we received some letters last evening one from Emma one from Don C. Smith and one from Bishop Partridge all breathing a kind and consoling spirit we were much gratified with there contence we had been a long time withou<t> information and when we read those letters they were to our <souls> ~~soles~~ as the gentle air, <is> refreshing but our joy was mingled with greaf because of the suffering of the poor and much injured saints and we need not say to you that the flood gates of our harts were hoisted and our eyes were a fountain of tears but those who have not been inclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation can have but a little ideah how sweet [sweet] the voice of a friend is one token of friendship from any sorce whatever a wakens and calles into action evry simpathectick feeling it brings up in an instant evry thing that is pased it sesses [siezes] the presant with a vivacity of lightning it grasps after the future with the fea<r>ness of a tiger it rhetrogrades from one thing to an other untill finally all enmity malice and hatred and past diferances misunderstandings and mis= [p. 7] managements be slain victoms at the feet of hope and when the hart is sufficiently contrite ~~and~~ <then> the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers

my son peace be unto thy soal thine advirsity and thy afflictions shall be but a small moment and then if thou indure it well God shall exalt the[e] on high thou shalt tryumph over all thy foes thy friends do stand by the[e] and they shall hail the[e] agai<n> with warm harts and friendly hands thou art not yet as Job thy friends do not contend again[st] the[e] neither charge the[e] with transgreion as they did Job and they <who> do ~~the w~~ charge the[e] with transgreion there hope shall be blasted and there prospects shall melt away as the hory frost melteth before the burning rays of the rising sun and also that God hath set to his hand and seal to change the times and season<s> and to blind their minds that they may not understand his marvilos workings that he may prove them also and take them in there own craftiness also because their harts are corrupt and the thing which they are willing to bring upon others and love to have others suffer may come upon them <selvs> to the verry utmost that they may be disappointed also and their hopes may be cut off and not many years hence that they and their pasterity shall be swept from under heaven saith God that not one of them [p. 8] is left to stand by the wall cursed are all those that shall lift up the heal against mine anointed saith the Lord and cry they have sined when they have not sined before me saith the Lord but have done that which was meat in min<e> eyes and which I commanded them but those who cry transgresion do it becaus they are the servants of sin



and are the children of disobedience themselvs and those who swear false against my servants that they might bring them unto bondage and death. Wo unto them because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house their basket shall not be full their houses and their barnes shall famish and they themselvs shall be dispised by those that flattered them they shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation it had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks and they drownd in the depth of the see wo unto all those that discomfort my people and drive and murder and testify against them saith the Lord of host[s] a generation of viper[s] shall not escape the damnation of hell behold mine eye seeth and knoweth all their works and I have in reserve a swift judgement in the season thereof for them all for there is a time appointed ~~for~~ <to> evry man [p. 9] according ~~their~~ <as his> work shall be [D&C 121:7–25]

**unit 3)** and now beloved Brethren we say unto [you] that in asmuch as ~~good~~ <God> hath said that he would have a tried people that he would purge them as gold now we think that this time he has chosen his own crusible wherein we have been tryed and we think if we get through with any degree of safty and shall have kept the faith that it will be a sign to this generation altogether sufficient to leave them without excuse and we think also that it will be a tryal of our faith equal to that of Abraham and that the ansionts [ancients] will not have were off [whereof] to bost over us in the day of judgment as being called to pass through heavier afflictions that we may hold an even waight in the balances with them but now after having suffered so grate a sacrifis and having passed through so grate a seane of sorrow we trust that a Ram may be caught in the thicket speedily to releave the sons and daughters of Abraham from their ~~grate~~ <great> anxiety and to light up the lamp of salvation upon their countinances that they may hold ~~up~~ <on> now after having gone so far unto everlasting life. Now brethren conserning the places for the location of the saints we cannot counsyl you as we could if we were presant with you and <as> to the ~~thi~~ things that ware writen heartofore we did not concider them any thing verry binding therfore we now say once for all that we think it most proper that the general affairs of the church which are nessisary [p. 10] to be concidered while your humble servant remains in bondage s[h]ould be transacted by a general conferance of the most faithfull and the most respectable of the authorities of the church and a minute of those transactions may be kept and fo[r]warded from time to time to your humble servant and if there should be any corrections by the word ~~of the word of~~ the Lord they shall be f[r]eely transmitted and your humble servant will approve all ~~the~~ things what soever is acceptable unto God if any thing should have been sejusted [suggested] by us or any names mentioned expt by commandment or thus saith the Lord we do not concider it binding. therefore our harts shall not be greaved if diferant arraingments should be entered into nevertheless we would sejest the propriety of being awar of an aspiring spirit which spirit has



oftentim<es> urged men fo[r]wards to make foul speaches and influaance the church ~~and~~ to reject milder councils and has eventually <been> ~~by~~ the means of bringing much death and sorrow upon the church we would say be awar of pride also for well and truly hath the wise man s[a]id that pride goeth before distruction and a haughty spirit before a fall/<sup>4</sup> and Again outward appearance is not always a Criterean for us to Judge our fellow man but the lips betray the haughty and over baring imm[a]ginations of the heart, by his words ~~by~~ <and> his deeds let him be scan<e>d [p. 11] flaterly [flattery] also is a deadly poison a frank an[d] open Rebuke provoketh a good man to Emulation and in the hour of trouble he will be your best friend, but on the other hand it will draw out all the corruption of a corrupt heart And lying and the poison of asps shall be under their tongues and they do cause the pure in heart to be cast in to prison because they want them out of thare way, A fanciful and flowely [flowery] and heated imagination be aware of be cause the things of God Are of deep import and time and expeariance and carful and pondurous and solom though[ts] can only find them out. thy mind O Man, if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation must streach as high as the utmost Heavens, and sear[c]h in to and contemplate the ~~loest~~ <lowest> conside[r]ations of the darkest abyss, and Expand upon the broad considerations of Eternal Expanse, he must commune with God. how much more dignifide and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain immaginations of the human heart, none but fools, will trifful, with the souls of men, how vane and trifling, have been our spirits, our Conferencs our Coun[c]ils our ~~private~~ Meetings our pri[v]ate as well as public Conversations to low to mean to vulgar [p. 12] to condecending, for the dignifide Characters of the Cald and Chosen of God, according to the purposes of his ~~word~~ will from befo[re] the foundation of the world. to hold the keys of the mistres [mysteries] of those things that have been kept hid from the foundation untill now, ~~for~~ <of> which som have tasted a little and which many of them are to be pored down from heaven upon the heads of babes, yea the weak obscure and dispizable ones of this earth. therefore We beseath of you bretheren that <you bear> ~~bare~~ with those [w]ho do not feel themselves more worthey than yourselves, while we Exort one another, to a reffermation, with one an[d] all. both old and young. teachers and taugh[t] both high and low rich and poor bond and free Male and female. Let honesty and sobriety, and cander and solemnity, and virtue, and pureness, and meekness, and simplisity, Crown our heads in every place, and in fine becum as little Children without mallice guile or ~~high~~

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4. Excerpt for this segment of the manuscript to the end of page 13, written by Caleb Baldwin, the entire March 20 letter, with its continuation, is in the handwriting of Alexander McRae.



~~poekrichy~~ Hypokrisy: and now Bretheren after your tribulations if you do these things, and exercise fervent prayer, and faith in the sight of God

Always he shall give unto you knowledge/ [p. 13] by his holy spirit yea by the unspeakable gift of the holy-Ghost that has not been revealed since the world was untill now which our fathers have wated with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times which their minds were pointed to by the Angels as held in reserve for the fullness of their glory a time to come in the which nothing shall be with held whither there be one god or many gods they shall be manifest all thrones and dominions principalities and powers shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have indured valiently for the gospel of Jesus Christ and also if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas or to the dry land or to the sun moon or starrs all the times of their revolutions all their appointed days month[s] and years and all the Days of their days, months and years, and all their glories laws and set times shall be reveald in the days of the dispensation of the fullness of times according to that which was ordained in the midst of the councyl of the eternal God of all other Gods before this world was that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof ~~when~~ <when> evry man shall enter into his eternal presants and into his imortal rest [D&C 121:26–32]

- unit 4)** but I beg leave to say unto you Brethren that ignorance supe[r]stition and bigotry placing itself where it ought not is often times in the way of the prosperity of this church [p. 14] like the torant of rain from the mountains that floods the most pure and christle stream with mire and dirt and filthyness and obscures evry thing that was clear before and all hurls along in one general deluge but time tethers <**wethers**> tide and notwithstanding we are roled in for the time being by the mire of the flood the next surge peradventure as time roles on may bring us to the fountain as clear as cristal and as pure as snow while all the filthiness flood wood and rubbish is left is left and purged out by the way.

How long can rowling watters remain impure what power shall stay the heavens as well might man streach forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri River in its dicread cours or to turne it up stream as to hinder the Almighty from pooring down knoledge from <heaven> upon the heads of the Latter day saints [D&C 121:33]

- unit 5)** what is Boggs or his murderous party but wimbling willows upon the shore to catch the flood wood as well might we argue that watter is not watter because the the mountain torants send down mire and riles the cristle stream altho afterwords ren<d>ers it more pure than before or that fire is not fire because it is of a quenchable nature by pooring on the flood, as to say that our cause is down because runegadoes lyers preasts theavs and murderers who are all alike tenatious of their crafts and creeds have poord [p. 15] down from their spiritual wickednes in high places and from their strong holds of the divi[ne] a flud of dirt and mire and filthiness and vomit upon our heads no God forbid hell may poor forth its rage like the burning lavy of mount vesuvias or of Etna or of the most terrible of the burning mountains and yet shall mormonism stand. watter, fire, truth, and god are all the same truth is



[as] mormonism God is the author of it he is our shield it is by him we received our birth, it was by his voice that we were called to a dispensation of his gospel in the begining of the fullness of times it was by him we received the book of mormon and it was by him that we remain unto this day and by him we shall remain if it shall be for our glory and in his almighty name we are determined to indure tribulation as good soldiers unto the end but brethren we shall continue to offer further reflections in our next epistle you will learn by the time you have read this and if you do not learn it you may learn it that walls and <iron> doors <and screaming hinges> ~~is only calcu~~ and half scard to death Guards and jailors grining like some damned spirit lest an inocent man should make his escape to bring to light the damnible deeds of a murderous mob is cal[c]ulated in its verry nature to make the sole of an honest man feel stronger than the powers of hell. But we must bring our epistle to a close [p. 16]. we send our respects to Fathers, Mothers, wives, and children, Brothers, and Sisters. we hold them in the most sacred remembrance ~~I send this epistle to Emma that she may have the first perusal of it~~ we feel to inquire after Elder Rigdon if he has not forgotten us it has not been signified to us by his ~~pen~~ scrawl. Brother George W Robinson also and Elder Cahoon we remember him but would like to jog his memory a little on the fable of the [bear] and the two friends who mutually agreed to stand by each other and prehaps it would not be amis to mention Unkle John<sup>5</sup> and various others, a word of consolation and a blessing would not come amiss from any body while we are being so closly whispered by the Bair but we feel to excuse evry body and evry thing. Yea the more readily when we contemplate that we are in the hands of a wors[e] than a Bair for the Bair would not pray upon a dead carcus. Our respects and love and fellowship to all the virtious saints we are your Brethren and fellow sufferers and prisoners of Jesus Christ for the gospels sake and for the hope of glory which is in us. Amen.

**Joseph Smith Jr**

Hyrum Smith

Lyman Wight

Caleb Baldwin

Alexander McRae. [p. 17]

Continued to the church of Latter-day-saints.

We continue to offer further reflections to Bishop Partridge and to the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-saints whom we love with ferveant love and do allways bear them in mind in all our prayers to the throne of God. It

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5. In June 1838, Reynolds Cahoon was named first counselor and John Smith president of a stake organized at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri. Joseph 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), 3:38.



still seems to bear heavily in our minds that the church would do well to secure to themselves the contract of the Land which is proposed to them by Mr Isaac Galland. and <to> cultivate the friendly feelings of that gentleman in as much as <he> he shall proove himself to be a man of honor and a friend to humanity. We really think that his letter breaths that kind of spirit if we can judge correctly. and Isaac Van Allen Esqr. the attorney General of Iowa Territory that peradventure such men may be wrought upon by the providence of God to do good unto his people. Governor Lucas also. We sejust [suggest] the ideah of praying fervently for all men who manifest any degree of sympothy for the suffering children of God. ~~we~~ We think that peradventure the United States survayer <of the Iowa Territory> may be of grate benefeit to the church if it be the will of God <to this end> if ritiousness should be manifested as the girdle of our loin<s> It seems to be deeply impressed upon our minds that the saints ought to lay hold of evry door that shall seem to be opened for ~~the saints~~ <unto them> to obtain foot ~~hol~~ hold on the Earth and be a making all the preperations that is within the power of posibles for the terrible storms that are now gethering in the heavens with darkness and gloominess and thick darkness as spoken of by the prophets who [p. 1] cannot be now of a long time lingering. For there seems to be a whispering that the angels <of he<a>ven> who have been intrusted with the council of these matters for the last days have taken council together and among the rest of the general affairs that have to be trasnsacted in there hono[r]able council <they> have taken cognisance of the testimony of those who were murdered at Hawns mills and also those who were martered ~~wi~~ with D. W. Patten. and <else where and> have pased some desisions peradventure in favor of <the saints and> those who were called to suffer without cause. These desisions will be made known in there time and <they will> ~~shal~~ take into concideration all those things that offend. We have a fervant desire that in your general conferances that evry thing should be discused with a grate deal of care and propriety lest you grieve the holy spirit which shall be poured out at all times upon your heads when you are exercised with those principals of ritiousness that are agreeable to the mind of God. and are properly affected one toward another and are carefull by all means to remember those who are in bondage and in heaviness and in deep aflection for your sakes and if there are any among you who aspire after their own aggrandisement and seek their own oppulance while their brethren are groning in poverty and are under sore trials and temptations they cannot be benefeited by the intersestions of the holy spirit which maketh intersestion for us day and knight <with gronings that cannot be uttered>. We ought at all times to be verry carefull that such highmindedness never have place in our harts but condesend to men of low estate [p. 2] and with all long suffering bare the infermities of the weak.



Behold there are many called but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world and aspire to the honors of men that they do not learn this one lesson. that the rights of priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven and that the powers of heaven cannot be controled nor handled only upon the principals of righteousness that they may be conferred upon us it is tru[e] but when we undertake to cover our sins ~~to~~ or to gratify our pride or vaine ambition or to exercise controle or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men in any degree of unritiousness behold the heavens with draw themselves the spirit of the Lord is grieved and when it has withdrawn amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man behold <ere> he is aware ~~he is aware~~ he is left unto himself to kick against the pricks to persecute the saints and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experiance that it is the nature and disposition of almos<t> all men as soon as they get a little authority as they suppose they will imediatly begin to exercise unritious dominion hence many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion by long suffering, by gentleness and meekness and by love unfaigned, by kindness [p. 3] by pure kno<w>ledge which shall g<e>rately enlarge the soul without highpocracy and without guile reproving ~~by~~ betimes with ~~shar~~ sharpness when moved upon by the holy ghost and then sho<w>ing forth afterwords an increas of love to ward him whom thou hast reproved lest he esteem the[e] to be his enemy that he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death thy bowells also being full of charity to ward all men and to the household of faith and virtue garnish thy thoughts unseasingly then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presants of God and the doctrines of the priesthood destell upon thy soul as the dewes from heaven the Holy Ghost shall be thy constan<t> companion and thy septer an unchanging septer of ritiousness and truth and thy dominion shall be an everlasting <dominion> and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee for eve[r] and ever the ends of the Earth shall inquire after thy name and fools shall have thee in derision and hell shall rage against thee while the pure in heart and the wise and the noble and the virtuous shall seek council and authority and blesings constantly from under thy hand and thy people shall never be turned against <thee> by the testimony of traters and altho<ugh> their influence shall cast the[e] into trouble and into barrs and walls thou shalt be had in honor and but for a small moment and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thine enemies than the fierce<sup>6</sup> Lion because of thy ritiousness and thy God shall stand by the[e] for ever [p. 4] and ever. If thou art called to pass through tribulation if thou art in perel among false brethren if thou art in perel amongst robbers if thou art in peral by land or by sea if thou art accused with all maner of false accusations if thine enemies fall upon the[e] if they tear the[e] from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear the[e] from the bosom of thy wife and of thine off springs and thine elder ~~one~~ <son> altho<ugh> but six years

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6. "Fierce" written over "fearce."



of age shall cling to thy garment and shall say my father O<sup>7</sup> my father why cant you stay with us o my father what are the men agoing to do with you and if then he shall be thrust from the[e] by the sword and thou be draged to prison and thine enemies prowle around the[e] like wolves for blood of the Lamb and if thou shouldest be cast into the pit and or into the hand of murderers and the sentance of death passed upon <thee> if thou be cast into the deep if the bilowing surge conspire against thee if the fearse wind become thine enemy if the heavens gether blackness and all the elements combine to hedge up thy way and above all if the verry jaws of hell shall gap open her mouth wide after thee know thou my son that all these things shall give thee experiance <**and shall be for thy good**> The son of man hath descended below them all art thou gr<e>ater than he <**therefore**> hold on thy way and the priesthood shall remain with thee <**for**> their bounds are set they cannot pass thy days [p. 5] are known and thy years shall not be numbered less therefore fear not what man can do for God shall be with you for ever and ever [D&C 121:34–122:9]

- unit 6)** <**now Brotheren**> I would sejest for the concideration of the co<n>ferance of its being carefully and wisely understood by the council or conference that our brethren scattered abroad ~~that~~ <who> understand the spirit of the gethering that they fall into the places of refuge and safty that God shall open unto them between Kirtland and Far West Those from the East and from the West and from far countries let them fall in some where between those <two> bounderies in the most safe and quiet places they can find and let this be the presant understanding untill God shall open a more effectual door for us for further conciderations. And again we <further> sejest for the concideration of the council that there be no organizations of large bodies upon common ~~sto~~ stock princepals <**in property**> or of large companies of firms ~~firm~~ untill the Lord shall signify it in a proper maner as it opens such a dredfull field for the avericious and the indolent and corrupt hearted to pray upon the inocent <**and virtuous and honest**> we have reason to believe that many things were introduced among the saints before God had signified the times and notwithstanding the principles and plans may have been good <~~innocent and virtitous~~> yet aspiring men or in other words men who had not the substance of Godliness about them perhaps undertook to handle edge tools children you know are fond of tools while they are not yet able to use them. Time and experiance however is the only safe remidy against such ~~people~~ evils there are many teachers but perhaps not many fathers there are times coming when God will signify many things which are expediant [p. 6] for the well being of the saints but the times have not yet come but will come as fast as there can be found place and reception for them

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7. Capital “O” written over small “o.”




And again we would ~~sejest~~ <suggest> for your concideration the propriety of all the saints gethering up a knoledge of all the facts and sufferings and abuses put upon them by the people of this state and also of all the property and amount of damages which they have sustained both of character <&> personal injuries as well as real property and also the names of all persons that have had a hand in their oppressions as far as they can get hold of them and find them out. And perhaps a committe can be appointed to find out these things and to take statements and affidafeits and also to gether up the libilous publications that are a float and all that are in the magazines and in the Insi-clopedias and all the libillious histories that are published and that are writing and by whom and present the whole concatination of diabolicality rascality and nefarious and murderous impositions that have been practiced upon this people that we may not only publish to all the world but present them to the heads of the government in all there dark <and hellish> hugh as the last effort which is enjoined on us by our heavenly father before we can fully and completely claim that promise which ~~she~~ shall call him forth from his hiding place and also that the whole nation may be left without excuse before he can ~~let fall that which the~~ send forth the power of his mighty arme it is an imperios duty that [p. 7] we owe to God to angels with whom we shall be braught to stand and also to ourselves to our wives and our children who have been made to bow down with greaf sorrow and care under the most damning hand of murder tyronny and appression supported and urged on and upheld by the influance of that spirit which hath so strongly rivited the creeds of the fathers who have inhereted lies upon ~~their~~ <the harts of the> children and filled the world with confusion and has been growing stronger and stronger and is now the verry main spring of all corruption <~~the corrup-tion~~ in <the> world.> and the whole Earth grones under the wait of its iniquity. It is an iron yok it is a strong band they are the verry hand cuffs and chains and shackles and <fetters> of hell therefore it is an imperious duty that we owe not only to our own wives and children but to the widdow and fatherless whose husbands and fathers have been murdered under its iron hand which dark and blackning deeds are enough to make hell itse<l>f shudder and to stand aghas[t] and pail and the hands of the verry devile ~~palsy~~ <tremble> and palsy and also it is an imperious duty that we owe to all the rising generation and to all the pure in heart which there are many yet on the Earth among all sects parties and denominations who are blinded by the suttle craftiness of men where by they ly in wait to decieve and only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it therefore that we should waist and ware out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness where in we kno<w> them and they are truly manifest from heaven. These should then be [p. 8] attended to with greate earnestness Let no man count them as small things for there is much which lieth in futurity petaining to the saints which depends upon these things you know brethren that a verry large ship is benefeited verry much by a verry small helm in the time of a storme by being kept work ways with the wind and the waves therefore dearly beloved brethren let us chearfully do all things that layeth in our power and then may we stand still with the utmost asurance to see the salvation of God and for his arm to be revealed. [D&C 123:1–17]

- unit 7)** And again I would further sejest the impropriety of the organization of bands or companies by covenant or oaths by penalties or secrecies but let the time past of our experiance and suferings by the wickedness of Doctor Avard



suffise and let our covenant be that of the everlasting covenant as is contained in the Holy writ. and the things that God hath revealed unto us. Pure friendship always becomes weakened the verry moment you undertake to make it stronger by penal oaths and secrecy. Your humble servant or servants intend from hence forth to disap<p>robate ev<e>ry thing that is not in accordance with the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and is not of a bold and frank and an upright nature they will not hold their peace as in times past when they see iniquity begining to rear its head for fear of traitors or the consequences that shall flow by reproving those who creap in unawairs that they may get something to destroy the flock we believe that the experience of the saints in times past has been sufficient that they will from henceforth be always ready to obey the truth without having mens persons in admi= [p. 9] ration because of advantage it is expediant that we should be awair of such things. and we ought always to be awair of those prejudices which sometimes so strongly presented themselves and are so congenial to human nature against our neighbors friends and bretheren of the world who choose to differ with us in opinion and in matters of faith. Our religeon is betwean us and our God their religeon is betwean them and their God there is a tie ~~which belongs~~ from God that should be exercised to wards those of our faith who walk uprightly which is peculiar to itself but it is without prejudice but gives scope to the mind which inables us to conduct ourselves with grater liberality to word all others <that are not of our faith> than what they exercise to wards one another these principal[s] approximate nearer to the mind of God because it is like God or God like There is a principal also which we are bound to be exercised with that is in common with all men such as governments and laws and regulations in the civil conserns of life this principal garentees to all parties sects and demominations and clases of religeon equal ~~and~~ ~~[-]~~ coherent [and] indefeasible rights they are things that pertain to this life therefore all are alike interested they make our responcibilities <things> one toward another in matters of corruptable <things> while the former principals do not distroy the latter but bind us stronger and make our responcibilities not only one to another but unto God also hence we say that the constitution of the Unit[ed] States is a glorious standard it is founded [in] the wisdom of God it is a heavenly banner it is to all those who are priviledged with the sweats of its liberty like the cooling shades and refresh= [p. 10] ing watters of a greate rock in a thirsty and a weary land it is like a gr<e>ate tree under whose branches men from evry clime can be shielded from the burning raies of an inclemant sun. We bretheren are deprived of the protection of this glorious principal by the cruelty of the cruele by those who only look for the time being for pasterage like the beasts <of the field only to fill them<selves>> and forget that the mormons as well as the pr[e]sbitareans and those of evry other class and discription have equal rights to ~~pluck~~



<partake of> the fruit of the great tree of our national liberty but notwithstanding we see what we see and we feel what [we] feel and know what we know yet that fruit is no les presious and delisious to our taist we cannot be weaned from the milk nether can we be drawn from the breast neither will we deny our relegeon because of the hand of oppresion but we will hold on untill death we say that God is true that the constitution of the united States is [true]<sup>8</sup> that the Bible is true that the book of [mor]m[on] is true that the book of covenants [is] tru[e] that Christ is true that the ministering [angels sen]t forth from God are true and [that we know] that we have an house not made [with hands] eternal in the heavens, whose [builder and m]aker is God a consolation [which our opp]resers cannot feel when for[tune, or fate, sh]all lay its iron hand on them [as it has on us] now we ask what is man [remember breth]ren that time and chance hape[neth to all men] we shall continue our reflect[i]ons in our nex]t We subscribe ourselves your sin[cere friends and] bretherin in the bonds of the ever= [p. 11] lasting gospel prisoners of Jesus Christ for the sake of the gospel and the saints. we pronounce the blesing of heaven upon the heads of the  the saints who seek to serve God with an undevid[ed] heart <in the name of Jesus Christ> Amen.

**Joseph Smith Jr,**  
 Hyrum Smith  
 Lyman Wight  
 Caleb Baldwin  
 Alexander McRae.  
 Mrs Emma Smith  
 Quincy Ill

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8. A portion of page 11 has disintegrated. The restoration of the missing text comes from an extant copy of the second part (continuation) of the letter. The copy was written by Alexander McRae and signed by the five occupants of the jail.



## Three Women in Church

Two teenage girls sit side by side.  
Behind them, an older woman,  
Hands age-spotted and wrinkled,  
Slowly smooths the long soft hair of one girl.  
Long-fingered slow caresses.  
The girl rests her head on her friend's sweated shoulder.  
The older woman strokes the finely intertwined hair.  
Soon she has braided the strands of the girls' hair  
Together;  
Wrapped around and around, in and out, tightly fitted.  
All in the brightly-lit, hardwood-pewed, stone-walled chapel.

—Ken Haubrock

This poem won first place in the BYU Studies 1999 poetry contest.



# The Campaign and the Kingdom

## The Activities of the Electioneers in Joseph Smith's Presidential Campaign

Margaret C. Robertson

In 1844, Joseph Smith, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ran for president of the United States. At the April 1844 LDS general conference, a call was made for volunteers to “electioneer for Joseph to be the next President,” as Heber C. Kimball put it.<sup>1</sup> Immediately, 244 elders volunteered. By the time the list of names was recorded in the records of the Church a week later, the number approached 340. Even more elders eventually volunteered or were called to take up the cause.<sup>2</sup> As part of the campaign, the Quorum of the Twelve scheduled public political conferences in each state. These conferences were to be attended by members of the Twelve and the electioneers during the campaign.<sup>3</sup>

The electioneers prepared to leave as soon as possible. Wilford Woodruff and Franklin D. Richards did all in their power to finish their red-brick homes before they left so they could, in good conscience, leave their families.<sup>4</sup> Heber C. Kimball left for his mission worried about his wife, Vilate, who seemed to be getting ill; he later learned that she was pregnant.<sup>5</sup> Abraham Smoot's wife boarded the steamship *Osprey* with him, accompanied him to his berth, and then bid him a sad farewell.<sup>6</sup> Moses Tracy asked if he could take his wife, Nancy. The Prophet told him that not only could Tracy take her but that she would “prove a blessing to him.” Indeed, it was she who wrote an account of their trip, without which we would know nothing of his mission.<sup>7</sup> Some of the electioneers knew politics; others, such as Heber C. Kimball, had no interest in politics—he said politics gave



**Heber C. Kimball**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



him about as much pleasure as sectarian Christendom.<sup>8</sup> These electioneers ranged from the most able and practiced spokesmen and leaders in the Church, such as the Twelve Apostles, to people like Henry Boyle, who had never spoken in public, and Alfred Boaz Lambson, who had been a member of the Church for five days when he volunteered to campaign for the prophet of his recently found faith.<sup>9</sup>

Much has been written concerning Joseph Smith's candidacy, his intentions, and his expectations of winning. Several different schools of thought have emerged. Some historians have portrayed him as an imperialist who desired to take over the world<sup>10</sup> or as a near madman who, as Fawn Brodie says, was "fully intoxicated with power and drunk with visions of empire and apocalyptic glory."<sup>11</sup> Many LDS historians, on the other hand, emphasize a different set of reasons for Joseph Smith's candidacy: first, to give the Saints a candidate they felt they could support in good conscience; second, to avoid a political party fiasco in Illinois (the Mormons held the balance of power between Whigs and Democrats); third, to publicize the Mormon cause and thus help Church members obtain redress for their lost property in Missouri; and, fourth, to bring the tenets of the Church and the political ideas of its prophet to the attention of the nation.<sup>12</sup> These historians rely on Joseph's statements concerning his candidacy<sup>13</sup> and believe or at least raise the possibility that he did not seriously expect to win. For instance, James B. Allen concludes that the Prophet "may not have seriously believed he could win a national election, but he was serious about putting his views before the nation as positively as possible."<sup>14</sup>

Another interpretation views Joseph Smith's candidacy as a serious attempt to establish the Kingdom of God in the United States. Often relying heavily on the statements of George Miller, a member of the Council of Fifty,<sup>15</sup> these historians claim that Joseph Smith and his followers expected he could win the election. In the wake of his victory, the Prophet would lead God's government on earth, the political Kingdom of God, in anticipation of Christ's imminent return.<sup>16</sup>

Despite all that has been written on the Prophet's candidacy, the electioneers themselves have been almost completely ignored.<sup>17</sup> Some historians have seen the sheer number of electioneers as *prima facie* evidence that Joseph seriously believed he could become president. For example, Klaus Hansen asks, "If Smith had not believed his election in 1844 to be a possibility, why did he enlist the entire manpower of the church in a quixotic venture?"<sup>18</sup> In this essay, I have not attempted to prove whether the electioneers deemed their prophet's campaign viable. Rather, I have examined the available journals and autobiographies of the campaigners in an attempt to illuminate some of the possible reasons for and effects of the campaign. Furthermore, I will analyze some of the electioneer's activities

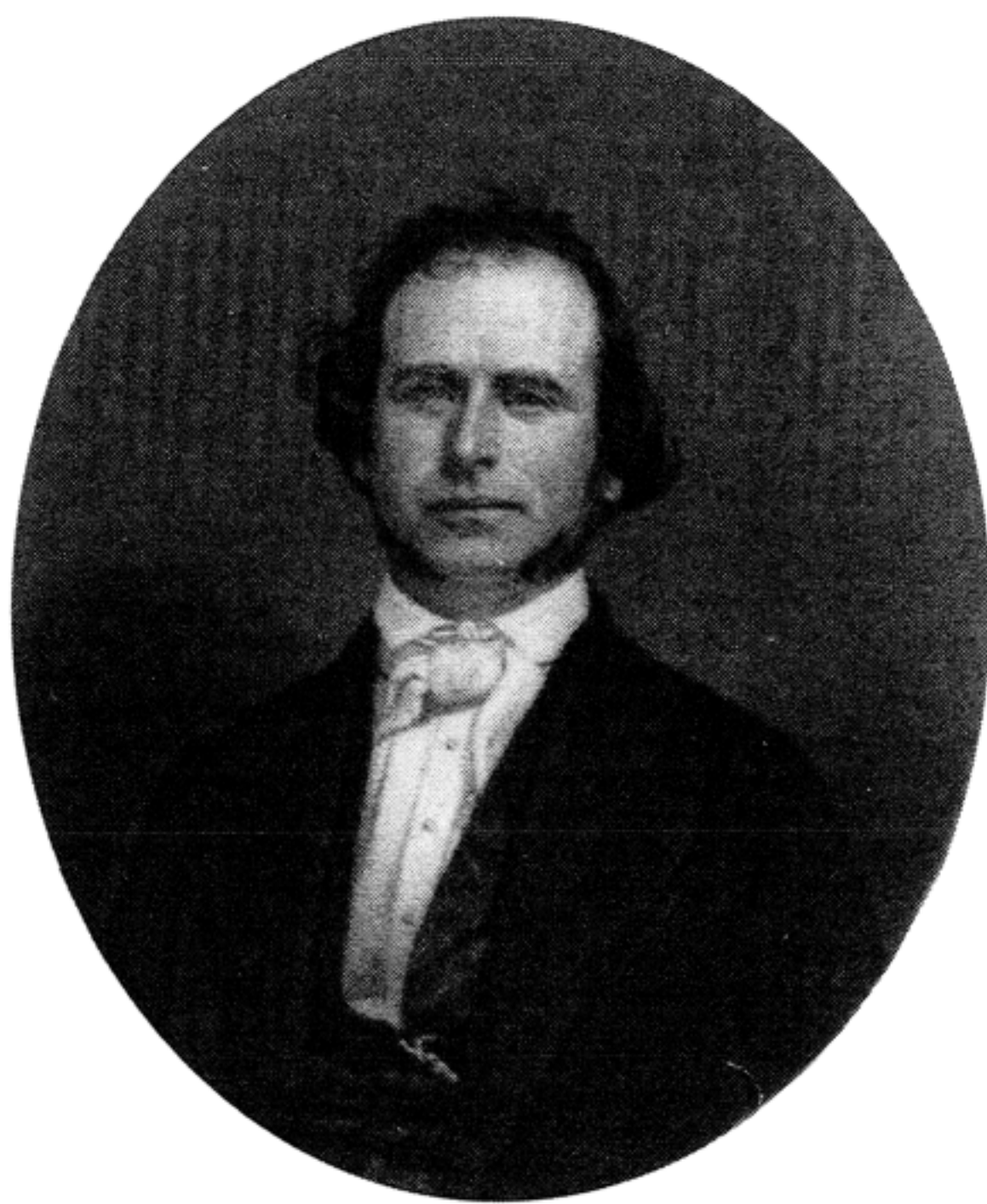


including their campaigning efforts, their proselytizing activities, the proceedings of the conferences they held, and their work among the branches of the Church. I will also discuss an inadvertent effect of the campaign: the Twelve were protected from the mob violence that took the lives of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. While many of the electioneers gave political addresses and distributed copies of Joseph Smith's platform, in the main, their activities did more to strengthen the Church than to present the Prophet to the nation as a presidential candidate.

### Campaigning Efforts

One of the purposes of the campaign made plain by the activities of the electioneers was to put forward their prophet as a candidate for the presidency of the United States.<sup>19</sup> The electioneers held political conferences and made an effort to present and distribute Joseph's platform, which was published in the pamphlet *Views of the Power and Policy of the Government of the United States* (hereafter called *Views*).<sup>20</sup> This platform included such measures as abolition through the federal government purchasing slaves with the revenue from the sale of public lands;<sup>21</sup> prison reform;<sup>22</sup> unity as a nation;<sup>23</sup> a national bank;<sup>24</sup> the annexation of Texas, California, and Oregon;<sup>25</sup> and the expansion of federal power.<sup>26</sup>

Many of the electioneers did a great deal to promote the candidacy of Joseph Smith. Lorenzo Snow claimed the honor of giving "the 1st political lecture that was ever delivered [to] the world in favor of Joseph for the Presidency," a lecture he delivered on the steamer *Osprey* while en route to Ohio the day after the April 1844 conference.<sup>27</sup> Ezra T. Benson and Norton Jacob reported that they appointed delegates to go to their respective state conventions in New Jersey and Michigan. On July 1, 1844, at the state convention in Boston, Brigham Young "appointed delegates to the Baltimore national convention."<sup>28</sup> John D. Lee and Franklin D. Richards both reported holding informal "elections" on a steamship as they left Nauvoo to electioneer. In both cases, Joseph Smith received the most votes, but since the boats were largely filled with elders leaving on



**Ezra T. Benson**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



missions, the results are neither surprising nor representative. Still this incident shows the electioneers' excitement in campaigning for their prophet.<sup>29</sup>

The electioneers concentrated their political work on distributing and presenting Joseph Smith's *Views* in public and private meetings. James Burgess recorded reading *Views* both to congregations of Saints and the general public. Wilford Woodruff, Edson Barney, George Miller, and Joseph Holbrook did likewise.<sup>30</sup> Norton Jacob usually preceded his companion's political speeches by reading *Views* aloud. On one occasion, Alfred Cordon discussed religion in general with a family, explained to them the principles and doctrine of Christ, and then read *Views*.<sup>31</sup> David Pettegrew claimed "good success" as he read *Views* to the people, for "it was so far beyond anything they had heard before that it took with the people surprisingly."<sup>32</sup> W. R. R. Stowell told of reading *Views* to a very old gentleman who claimed to have served under George Washington in the Continental Army. When Stowell finished reading, the old man said it sounded like the views General Washington had held.<sup>33</sup> William Watkins, though he served in the slave state of Kentucky, found that Smith's solution to the slavery problem, as stated in *Views*, was well received.<sup>34</sup> James Burgess and Alfred Cordon read *Views* to a Mr. Willows, who said that the ideas of Joseph Smith "were the best he had ever heard."<sup>35</sup> Joseph Holbrook similarly reported an acceptance of the ideas in *Views* but added that the people still had their reservations because they "didn't know so much about 'Your Mormon Prophet for president.'"<sup>36</sup> Despite setbacks such as this, the electioneers recorded that *Views* was generally considered an impressive document.

Many electioneers published and distributed copies of *Views*. Jacob Hamblin "surculated the vews of Joseph th[e] p[r]ophet."<sup>37</sup> Before leaving for New Jersey, John Horner had one thousand copies of *Views* printed in Nauvoo. Other elders had the pamphlet printed after arriving in their assigned areas. For example, Lorenzo Snow had four thousand copies printed in Ohio; Charles C. Rich, who was assigned to campaign in Michigan, had five thousand printed; and Abraham Smoot ordered three thousand from a printer in Tennessee before a man insisted that it was illegal in that state to print a pamphlet that supported abolition. Smoot paid for the pamphlets but never mentioned receiving them. Also in Tennessee, James Holt contracted to have five hundred pamphlets printed, yet when he went to pick them up, the printer explained that he had lent Holt's copy to various interested people in the community, one of whom, unfortunately, had lost it.<sup>38</sup>

Presenting the Mormon prophet's *Views* sometimes caused conflict between the electioneers and some citizens. One conference in Tennessee and one in Boston were interrupted by mobs. Some historians have concluded almost exclusively on the basis of this evidence that Mormon



campaigners were rather rowdy and specialized in picking fights.<sup>39</sup> Historian George Gayler goes so far as to claim that Joseph Smith's death saved the United States from the bloodiest campaign this nation had ever known.<sup>40</sup> In reality, the two aforementioned conferences are the only two I discovered in the electioneers' journals in which anything approaching a brawl took place, and in both cases outsiders stormed the meeting through no apparent fault of the Mormons. Of course, there were other times, not at conferences, when the campaigners got into trouble or faced persecution. George A. Smith apparently said something in a political meeting that upset some people. There "was some prospect of fighting," Wilford Woodruff wrote, "but with soft words we turned away wrath & returned home in peace."<sup>41</sup> On the whole, the electioneers did not record a violent or rowdy campaign. The electioneers experienced some violent incidents, but these problems do not appear to come from the electioneers being rowdy or picking fights. Rather, they stemmed from the dedication and determination that the electioneers felt for the cause.

The electioneers faced additional physical challenges. William Lampard Watkins, at age seventeen the youngest electioneer, left Nauvoo for Kentucky to begin campaigning alone because his companion took too long preparing for the journey. Just outside nearby Warsaw, Watkins accepted a ride by a man in a wagon. In response to an inquiry, Watkins told the man he was campaigning for Joseph Smith. The man became very angry and declared that Smith would never become president and, if he did, he would be killed. Fortunately, the driver soon calmed down, and Watkins continued the ride to Warsaw. Soon thereafter, his leg brace, which enabled him to walk, broke, and he spent a week obtaining a suitable replacement. Watkins later became lost in the woods and traveled for some time in the wrong direction.<sup>42</sup>

James Burgess and Alfred Cordon faced similar difficulties. Caught in a rainstorm near McComb, Ohio, they came to a house where they were invited in. Upon explaining their business, Mr. Thompson, the man of the house, said he was opposed to the Mormons and "would not mind shooting Joe Smith." He said he knew a man who lived nearby who would shoot Smith if he were elected. Burgess and Cordon left because, as Burgess wrote, "the conversation was not pleasing to us, no more than it gives us to see the wickedness of man."<sup>43</sup> After leaving Nauvoo on May 4, 1844, they walked almost the entire way to Vermont, often through "many sloughs and creeks which made it very uncomfortable." They, like all the electioneers, went without purse or scrip, which meant they often went hungry, being denied food and shelter repeatedly because they were Mormon elders. Burgess became ill a few times from such conditions. Over two months after they began their journey, Cordon and Burgess reached Vermont on July 19, 1844,



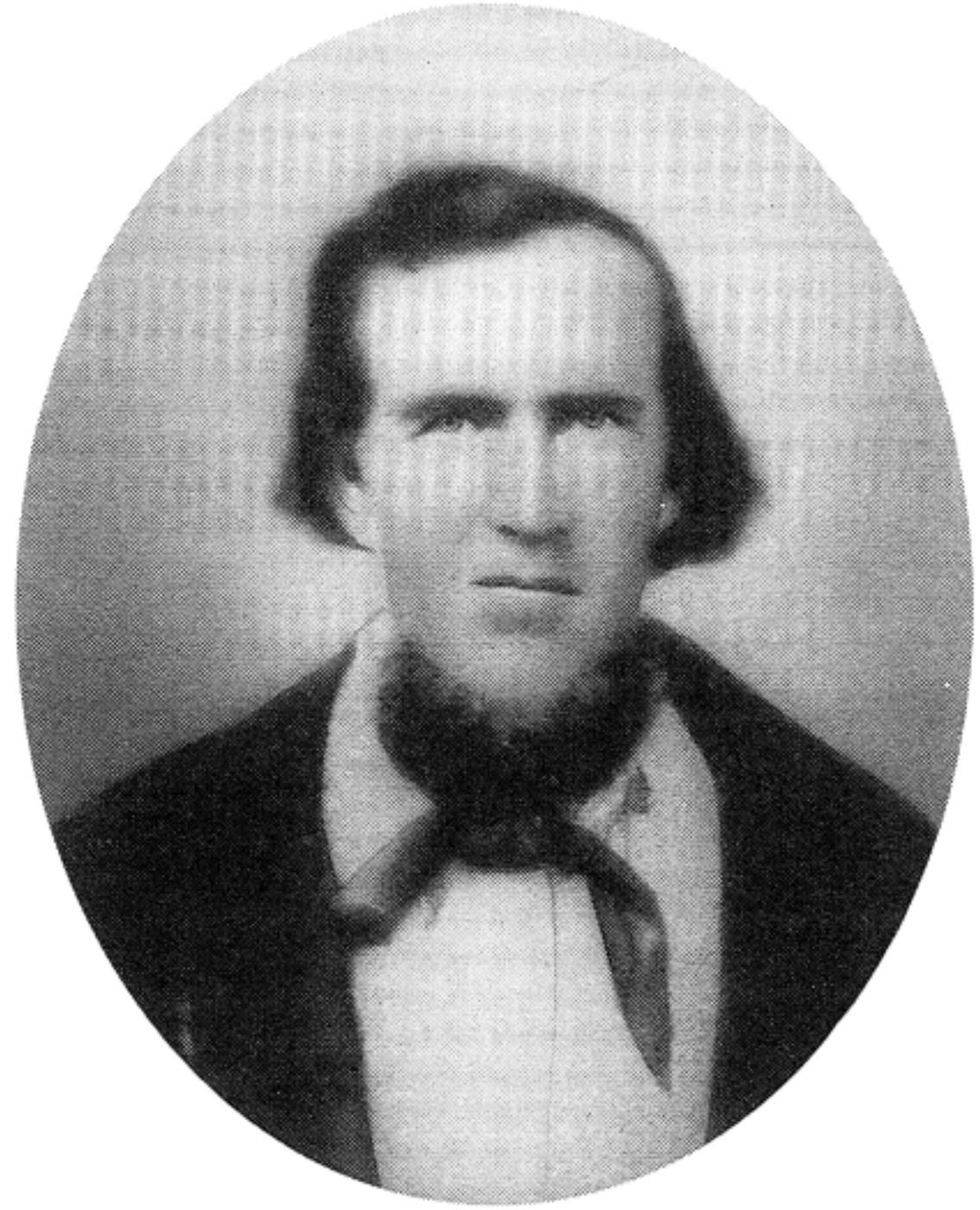
twenty-two days after their presidential candidate and prophet had been killed.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to hunger, fatigue, and illness, the electioneers often faced malicious hazards. When Elders Terry and Nixon tried to campaign, the people threw tobacco at them, took their copy of *Views*, and tore it up.<sup>45</sup> Levi Jackman and Enoch Burns also had things thrown at them. They were even hit with a board and whipped with a black snake whip.<sup>46</sup> Jacob Hamblin and his companion were told that if they did not leave they would be tarred and feathered; yet, said Hamblin, “we Still travailld about throu the diferant Townes preaching whare ever we could get the chance.”<sup>47</sup> And in an unspecified “very wicked place,” the people did not merely threaten Elder McGin; they tarred and feathered him.<sup>48</sup>

In summary, the electioneers did campaign. They held political meetings, and some even had electors appointed for their respective states. The bulk of their campaigning effort involved presenting the Prophet’s *Views* to the citizenry of the United States, who on the whole seemed impressed and pleased with this platform. On the other hand, many of the elders did have difficulty campaigning and were sometimes severely opposed. Yet the electioneers went on in their cause, campaigned for Joseph Smith, and, as will be shown, did a great deal to strengthen the Church.

### Proselytizing Activities

The electioneers did much more than merely campaign for Joseph Smith: one of the purposes of the candidacy, which becomes obvious from the journals of the campaigners, was to proselytize. By their own accounts, campaigning seemed secondary in comparison to the amount of time they devoted to preaching. For example, William Wommack Riley, who was called to Tennessee, kept a day-by-day account of his activities. Of the forty-two sermons he recorded preaching, only one, an address given on June 22, was “politickal”; it was followed by a debate the next day. The rest of his sermons were religious, twenty-five of them being on the first principles of the gospel. Riley also delivered sermons about the Book of



**Jacob Hamblin**, date unknown. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



Mormon, prophecy, the Resurrection, the kingdom of God, and the commandments. Other times he expounded on a chapter of Galatians, Luke, Jude, John, or Isaiah.<sup>49</sup>

Stephen Post, who was called to campaign in New York, also preached from the scriptures. He gave discourses on 1 Peter 1:2, Romans 11:25–27, Micah 4:1–2, Matthew 1:21, Mark 1:15, John 7:16–17, Revelation 14:16, and Hebrews 8.<sup>50</sup> While presiding over the mission in Tennessee, Abraham O. Smoot frequently preached on topics such as the Resurrection, eternal judgment, and the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.<sup>51</sup> Smoot also held and attended the conferences set up by the Twelve. Although at one conference he read *Views* and appointed an elector for the state,<sup>52</sup> the majority of these meetings were spent preaching doctrine. At a conference on June 8, Smoot concluded the meeting by asking for baptismal candidates; one volunteered that day and five the next. In all, Smoot baptized thirteen people on his three-month mission.<sup>53</sup>

John D. Lee, who presided over the Kentucky mission, preached “boath in Public and private allmost incesantly.”<sup>54</sup> He recorded preaching about fifty sermons between May 28 and August 20 on subjects such as the origin and authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the discerning of spirits, priesthood authority, faith and baptism, the apostasy, the power of God, the doctrine of Christ, the Restoration, Christ’s millennial reign, and spiritual gifts and charity. Though Lee did attempt to have *Views* printed at one point during his mission, he never mentioned delivering a political speech. While on his mission, he baptized six people.<sup>55</sup>

Charles C. Rich recorded holding ten political meetings on his mission, yet he still proselytized fifteen other times and visited branches on twelve occasions, baptizing twenty people on his mission.<sup>56</sup> “I preached,” Orson Pratt wrote, “and baptized a few.”<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Chapman Duncan summed up his political mission to Virginia as “I preached considerable that summer only baptized two ladies and two gentlemen.”<sup>58</sup> Also, Franklin D. Richards preached and held sacrament meetings and prayer meetings regularly. On his mission, he baptized thirteen people, three of



**Orson Pratt**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



whom he had dreamt he would baptize.<sup>59</sup> Even George Miller, who is often cited for his zeal for the political Kingdom of God, described his activities as preaching and campaigning alternately.<sup>60</sup>

Alfred Cordon and James Burgess preached steadily, seizing every opportunity to share the gospel. For example, one day during the hay-making season, it began to rain, and since one can make hay only while the sun shines, Cordon and Burgess went around the neighborhood inviting all of the unoccupied farmers to a meeting at three o'clock that afternoon. A large group assembled, and Cordon and Burgess preached "to some length on the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."<sup>61</sup> David Pettegrew and George P. Dykes, each in his own account, wrote of preaching "faith and repentance and baptism."<sup>62</sup> By preaching so much, the elders not only presented the gospel and baptized new members<sup>63</sup> but in many areas also "seamd to remove a great deal of prejudice," as Jacob Hamblin said of his mission.<sup>64</sup>

One method by which the elders proselytized was a result of their traveling without purse or scrip; they lodged with many people—Mormons, non-Mormons, and part-member families—who allowed the elders to discuss religion in their homes. Nearly every journal entry written by Burgess and Cordon begins or ends by naming the individual or family with whom they stayed. Burgess held lengthy conversations on the topic of Mormonism with almost all his hosts, including a Methodist preacher and a German family that spoke only a little English.<sup>65</sup> In one instance, Burgess "had much conversation on the principles of the gospel got them in great favor with our principles."<sup>66</sup> Alfred Cordon wrote of an anti-Mormon with whom they stayed: they talked with her until midnight "and removed considerable prejudice from her mind."<sup>67</sup> Once when Levi Jackman and his companion were out in a heavy rain, a family invited them into their home after the elders had been turned down three times by others. The two electioneers talked to the family "freely about our faith."<sup>68</sup>

Because the electioneers often served in their native states, many of them had the opportunity to visit their families and teach them about LDS beliefs; for some, this would be the last time they would see their families because of the forthcoming Mormon migration to the Great Basin. While staying with his family in Kentucky, Daniel D. Hunt baptized twenty-three people, most of whom were his relatives.<sup>69</sup> When James Holt arrived at his father's home, his father would not shake hands with Elder Holt's companion. Holt told his father that if he could not treat his companion as a gentleman they would go elsewhere. His father tearfully called them back, and Holt visited with his relatives, "teaching them the principles of the Gospel, when they gave me an opportunity."<sup>70</sup> Before going to his assigned state of Maryland, Jacob Hamblin traveled to Wisconsin to see "if I could convince some of my Father's folks of the gospel." He found his family planning their



move to Nauvoo to join the Saints; Hamblin's brother-in-law had already been baptized and his father "was a believing."<sup>71</sup> Chapman Duncan went to see his "kinsfolks and warn them as I supposed for the last time." Although he stayed with his family through 1845, he left them "unbelieving as to our doctrine."<sup>72</sup>

When Henry G. Boyle joined the Church in 1843, his parents told him that he would have to give up Mormonism or leave their house. They fully expected he would renounce his religion, but Boyle surprised them by gathering a few articles of clothing, tying them in a kerchief, and leaving his "once beloved home."<sup>73</sup> While on his mission, Boyle returned to his hometown. Upon hearing that he was in town, his parents sent for him to come stay with them. They apologized for their harsh opposition and admitted they had been wrong. Though they did not join the Church, the breach between parents and son was substantially healed. Boyle and his companion, Seabert C. Shelton, stayed with Boyle's parents the entire time they served in the area. Boyle and Shelton then traveled 150 miles to Tazewell County, where they visited Shelton's relatives. While there, Boyle dreamt he was preaching to some of his relatives who lived about sixty miles away. He recounted his dream to Shelton, and they traveled to the home of Boyle's great-uncle McClanahan, who had a family of six children. Boyle determined that he would preach the gospel to them, and if they believed and joined, he wrote, "they may be more happy and more inteligent or if they reject the testimony that I will bear to them, [they] will be left in their ignorance and be condem[n]ed." Uncle McClanahan allowed them to use his house for preaching, which they did for a month, and though McClanahan, his children, and their cousin showed great interest in Mormonism, Shelton and Boyle had to leave for a conference before anyone was baptized.<sup>74</sup>

Other electioneers invited their wives to join them as they electioneered and visited family. Heber C. Kimball had planned to send for his wife, Vilate, primarily so they could be together but also so she could visit her sister and brother-in-law, Nathaniel, with whom Kimball stayed for a time.<sup>75</sup> Because Moses Tracy's wife, Nancy, had not seen any of her family for ten years, Moses took her with him to New York for the express purpose of visiting both of their families. While staying with each family, she and Moses taught them the gospel, but none of them were baptized. Nancy tried to convert her brother, Albert, who came from Canada to see her after learning she was home, "but he was satisfied with his religion and would not listen to the message we had to bear." He returned to Canada, and though they corresponded, Nancy never saw him again.<sup>76</sup>

W. R. R. Stowell had success preaching to his family—not only were they baptized, but they also decided to move with him to Nauvoo. They even wrote "Nauvoo" on both sides of their wagon cover. When Stowell



received news of the Martyrdom, he was saddened. But “the spirit of gathering with the Saints and sharing their fortunes whatever they might be,” he wrote, “was still upon me and I continued to labor diligently in preparing for the journey to Nauvoo.” Despite Joseph’s death, Stowell was happy to lead his family to the city of the Saints on the Mississippi. David Pettegrew visited not only his “relations in Vermont and New Hampshire” but also, as he later wrote, “the graves of my father and mother. I had grave stones put over their graves on the 8th day of July, 1844.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Wilford Woodruff visited with his wife’s parents on his mission and during his return journey stopped at his father’s home (who was LDS), following a prompting of the Spirit. Woodruff recorded:

I lade my hands upon my Father Aphek[’s] head. . . . I ordained My father Aphek Woodruff unto the office of an high Priest and Patriarch after the order of Melchizedeck. I sealed him up unto eternal life. I placed upon his head the seals of the covenant.

When all was oer [over] it was right, my soul was satisfied. I had accomplished what my soul longed after.

After his parents went to bed, Woodruff prayed for them and felt a marvelous spirit. The next day “a peculier Charm was thrown around my soul as I left the threshold of my fathers house, having the confidence that if I never see my father in the flesh again I shall meet him in the first resurrection.”<sup>78</sup>

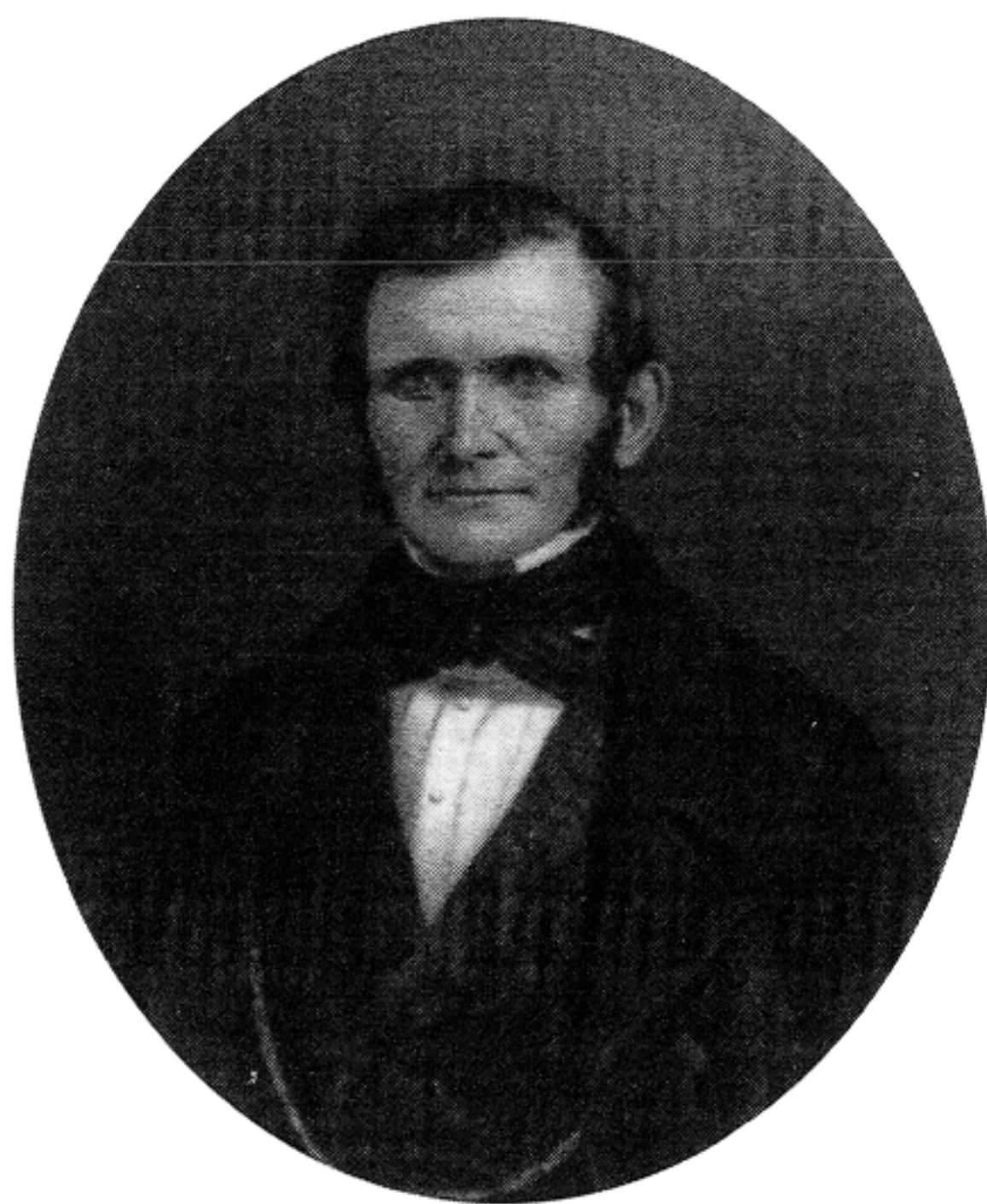
Another evidence that electioneering was a proselytizing opportunity as well as a political mission is that many elders did not end their mission upon Joseph Smith’s martyrdom. Had the mission been primarily or merely political, it would have died with the candidate. Before the Martyrdom, Alfred Cordon and James Burgess read *Views* to people and spoke of politics; afterward they continued to preach the principles of the gospel one to three times a day. They did not start home for Nauvoo until April 29, 1845, ten months after the Martyrdom.<sup>79</sup> John M. Horner specifically noted that, while the Prophet’s death did end the campaign, it did not end the electioneers’ mission. He and other elders continued to hold branch meetings and preach in New Jersey and Pennsylvania until February 1846, at which time Horner sailed with other Saints to California aboard the ship *Brooklyn*.<sup>80</sup> After mourning Joseph Smith’s martyrdom, Stephen Post wrote in his journal, “May the work of the Almighty roll on till the earth is filled with his knowledge. The Lord said he would move the cause of Zion for good & surely he has done it & thousands are rejoicing in the everlasting covenant. . . . Let the saints be filled with joy tho they mourn their loss for a little season.” Understanding that the work would continue, Post stayed on his mission to preach and in February 1845 joined with some elders who had also been sent on a mission.<sup>81</sup>

William W. Riley said nothing of the Martyrdom in his daily journal until recounting a sermon he delivered on July 7, 1844, in which he “spoke



of the Percution of Mo. and Illinois and the death of Joseph and Hiram Smith and the progress of the Kingdom of god.” Riley mentioned his leaders’ deaths almost casually, as if they did not affect his mission at all, and he continued regular preaching through September 15, 1844.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, Henry G. Boyle stayed on his mission until April 1845, ten months after the Prophet’s death.<sup>83</sup> When John D. Lee learned of the Martyrdom, he prayed and reported having a vision of Joseph’s martyrdom and receiving instruction from an angel.<sup>84</sup> Starting the very next day, Lee continued his preaching until he received word that he was to return home.<sup>85</sup> Charles C. Rich

began his journey home immediately after hearing of the Martyrdom but preached along the way.<sup>86</sup> David Pettegrew similarly decided to return to Nauvoo immediately but first visited all the people he could, “bearing tes-



**Wilford Woodruff**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

timony to what we verily knew and believed.” He and his companion then started for home, “lifting up our voices by the way.”<sup>87</sup>

Joseph Smith’s 1844 campaign for the presidency thus proved to be a great proselytizing movement. The electioneers preached nearly daily, mostly on the basic doctrines of the Church. Moreover, this emphasis was in accordance with the instructions given to them in the April conference, where they were told to preach the first principles of the gospel.<sup>88</sup> The elders also preached to the families they stayed with and, significantly, proselytized among their own families—sometimes converting them and sometimes bidding them a final farewell. Most of



**Charles C. Rich**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



the elders who kept journals recorded baptizing between four and twenty people during their summer missions. While the Martyrdom was devastating to elders such as Lorenzo Snow and Abraham Smoot,<sup>89</sup> many of the electioneers continued their missions after the death of their candidate. The Twelve, of course, returned home immediately, and most of the elders were soon after called home to work on the temple and fill other duties.

### **Proceedings of the Conferences and Other Work among the Branches**

The political conferences set up by the Twelve, like the fact that there were a large number of electioneers, have often been used by historians as evidence of the seriousness of Joseph Smith's candidacy. However, these conferences, like the work of the electioneers, have not been examined sufficiently. Because these conferences were the principal means by which the campaign was to be carried out, their proceedings are a valuable key to understanding the nature and purpose of the campaign. At each of the conferences, the branches of the Church in that area were accounted for, though some of these branches had very few members. At some conferences, up to ten branches were represented, and the numbers of elders, priests, teachers, and deacons in each were ascertained. Although the number of members attending from each of these small branches may seem insignificant, the combined number of members was significant. For instance, the number of members attending the three conferences recorded in George A. Smith's journal totaled 350.<sup>90</sup> At the conferences, some members were ordained to offices in the priesthood. Brigham Young recorded that he ordained "28 to the office of elder" at one conference alone.<sup>91</sup> Conference attendees were instructed, usually by a member of the Twelve or by a presiding elder, to teach the first principles of the gospel rather than delve into mysteries. Also, presiding elders (branch presidents) were called and set apart over many of the branches. Thus the campaign provided a way to organize and account for the many branches of the Church scattered across the United States.

The minutes of the political conferences are largely indistinguishable from the minutes of contemporaneous area conferences in England and Canada. During the Sunday session of each of these conferences, the sacrament was administered to the Saints, and members of the Twelve or the electioneers spoke on such topics as the first principles of the gospel, the Atonement, revelation, living prophets, obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, the Resurrection, the new and everlasting covenant, charity, and baptism for the dead. Interested nonmember citizens also attended these conferences. James Burgess and Alfred Cordon "placarded the city with some written handbills" to advertise the Chicago conference to the general public for the following Saturday and Sunday (May 25 and 26).

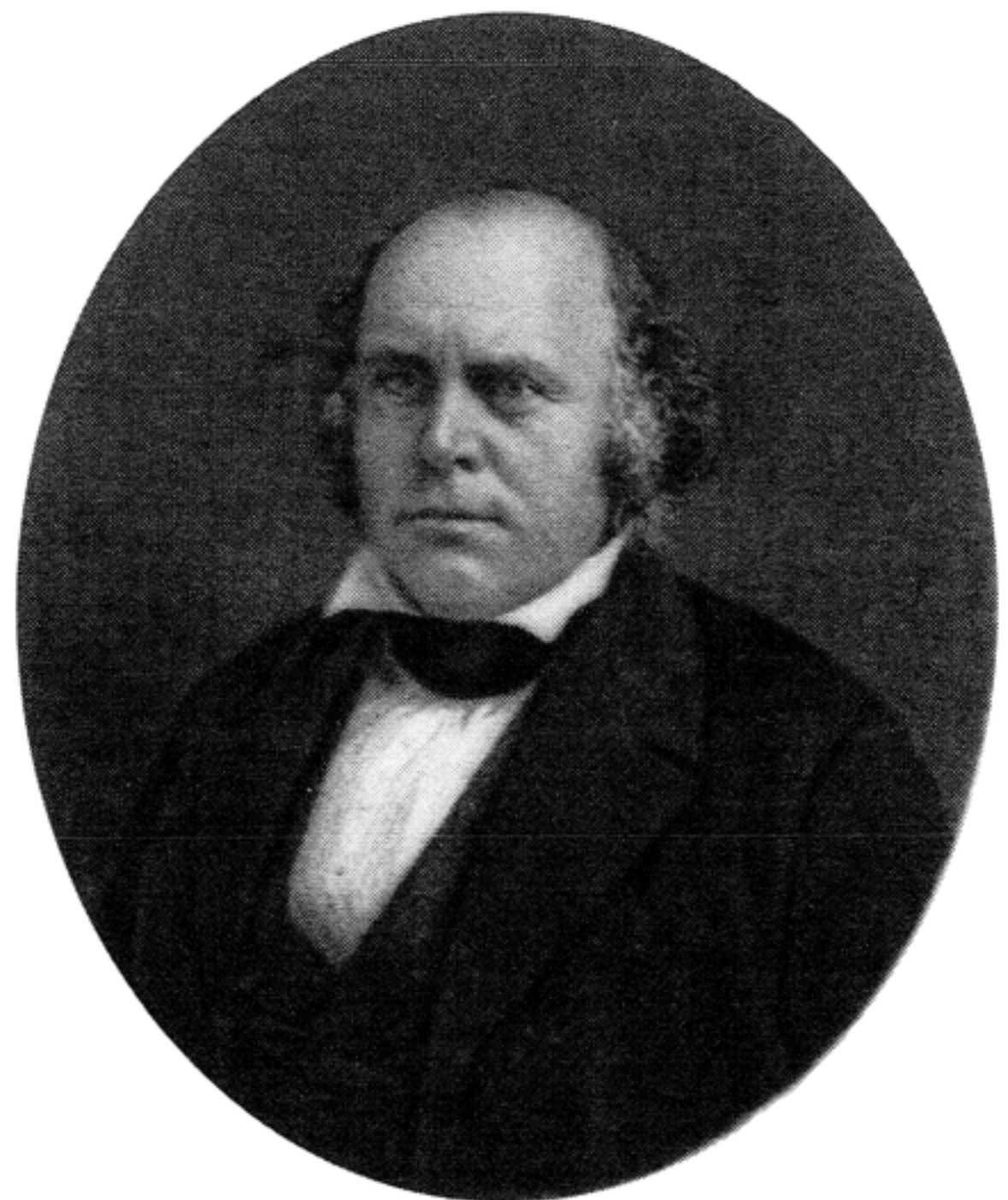


This particular conference was opened on Saturday by the singing of “The Spirit of God.” Representation of the branches was then called for—only twenty-two members attended, including four elders, three priests, and one deacon. The electioneers then preached over the next two days on the first principles of the gospel, the latter-day work of the Lord, the Resurrection, and work for the dead as taught in Isaiah 61:1–3.<sup>92</sup>

To some extent, these were political conferences, and sometimes *Views* was read or other campaigning was done. For example, at the Chicago conference held by Burgess and Cordon, Cordon alluded to Smith’s candidacy in his talk on the Resurrection, and at a meeting separate from the conference, Elders Terry and Nixon presented *Views* to a group of citizens.<sup>93</sup> James Harvey Glines reported that Brigham Young, Lyman Wight, and George B. Wallace spoke at the Boston conference “on the election of Joseph Smith the prophet to the Presidential chair of the Union and also upon the powers and policy of the government of the United States of America [*Views*]. Considerable excitement prevailed throughout the city, very many people were favorably inclined to vote for our candidate for President of the United States.”<sup>94</sup>

Yet most of the time in these conferences was dedicated to preaching to the members and proselytizing. It was at one of these conferences, in fact, that Abraham Smoot called for all who desired to be baptized to receive that ordinance. The day after the Pleasant Valley conference, Wilford Woodruff baptized two people,<sup>95</sup> and Alfred Cordon recorded eight baptized during another conference.<sup>96</sup> Not only did this preaching by the elders and the Twelve bring new members into the Church, it also strengthened the testimonies of the members of these little branches.

The conferences were also used as a forum to curb apostasy. As mentioned, at the conferences the Twelve warned the Saints and electioneers against delving into or teaching mysteries, admonishing their audiences to focus on the first principles of the gospel. Relying on these basic principles would give the Saints a measuring rod to determine the truthfulness of any pronounced doctrine. Some Saints, however, did not heed the Twelve’s advice. George A. Smith announced at the Kalamazoo conference that Samuel



**George A. Smith**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



Parker, one of the electioneers, had been teaching mysteries “that never entered into the mind of God, or the authorities of the church” and made plain Parker’s apostasy to all the members who might have believed him.<sup>97</sup>

More often, the electioneers themselves helped curb apostasy that had arisen, as some elders and members in these isolated branches were teaching false doctrine. James Burgess dealt with some apostate members during the Chicago conference. After discussing the local apostasy in an early session of the conference, elders were sent to talk with each of the members in question. When these members were unwilling to comply, they were disfellowshipped in the next session of the conference.<sup>98</sup>

Crandell Dunn wrote of a meeting at which three elders and one sister were “cut off” due to apostasy. At another meeting, Dunn made plain to the Saints the folly of an Elder Savage, who spoke in tongues and said that if Joseph Smith was dead then there “was no truth in Mormonism.” Dunn explained to the people that, while the gift of tongues was indeed a real gift when used correctly, Savage had spoken falsely; he had been overly anxious that Joseph and Hyrum Smith should still be alive. Dunn told the Saints it was an “unwise speech,” for which Elder Savage alone “was to blame.”<sup>99</sup> Nancy Tracy wrote that her husband stayed on his mission after the Martyrdom, during which time as a seventy he “had authority to make some things right that were not altogether in order in the branch” of the Church at Ellisburg, New York, where his father’s family lived.<sup>100</sup>

On August 1, 1844, Norton Jacob dealt with greater apostasy. James J. Strang and Aaron Smith arrived at the conference in Florence, Michigan, and claimed that they had received a letter written by Joseph Smith and sent just before he died. The letter purportedly said they were to gather the Saints to Wisconsin. While some of the members might have believed Strang and Smith, Jacob was able to point out all the mistakes in the letter that proved it was a “base forgery.” He noted that it was written “throughout in PRINTED characters,” that the postmark was the wrong color, and the contents were “altogether bombastic, unlike the work of God and dishonorable to the name of Joseph Smith whose signature it bore in a hand he never wrote.” The conference sent Aaron Smith and James Strang to Nauvoo, “where was the proper authority to decide upon their pretensions.”<sup>101</sup>

While building up branches may seem less monumental than securing Smith’s candidacy for president, the elders seemed to consider this strengthening very important. Because they were traveling without purse or scrip, the electioneers were eager to find LDS members to take them in. The members equally needed to meet with leaders of the Church, especially after Joseph Smith’s martyrdom. On July 13, Brigham Young recorded that “the brethren were glad to see us.”<sup>102</sup> Wilford Woodruff attended a meeting on July 11 with the Saints in Boston, explaining, “They felt to mourn their loss of the prophet and patriarch of the Church, yet they were strengthened



in the faith.”<sup>103</sup> At Joseph’s death, these outlying branches of the Church could have easily fallen away had the elders and the Twelve not been there testifying to them.

Fortunately, the elders spent a fair amount of time working with and strengthening branches. For example, Charles C. Rich visited branches on twelve occasions.<sup>104</sup> Alfred Cordon and James Burgess visited a small branch of fifteen members in Chicago on May 21. In Canada three weeks later, the two discovered a branch with just six members. Cordon wrote, “The verry countenances of them did me good.” He preached to them, and “the saints rejoiced very much.” On July 11, Cordon located another branch of fifteen members at German Flatts, New York. They stayed with these members for several days, held five meetings and “had good seasons . . . [in which their] souls rejoiced.”<sup>105</sup> Burgess then traveled through New Hampshire alone to look for scattered branches. He found one in Gillsom and one in Walpole, but Elders Adams and Twist were already among them.<sup>106</sup> Finding a branch of six members, Levi Jackman stopped and preached to them for several days.<sup>107</sup> Erastus Snow wrote of visiting the branches in New Hampshire and Vermont, including the Saints “in Woodstock, Northfield, Danville, St. Johnsbury . . . & Lyndon all the churches [branches] I could hear of in the state except some scatering members.”<sup>108</sup> At the request of another elder, Jacob Hamblin visited the Thomas Town branch and a “small branch of the Church in Lightersburg.”<sup>109</sup> David Pettegrew said they visited “churches [branches] by the way, exhorting them to diligence and faithfulness, baptizing many who desired to renew their covenants . . . through New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.”<sup>110</sup>

Through personal love and care, the electioneers also strengthened individual members. Franklin D. Richards administered to several ill Saints, including a Sister Amey, who was immediately healed. He also blessed a man who had sore eyes and a woman who had a hurt ear. One member, named David Fox, who had a child that was near death asked Richards to stay with him. Even though Richards had planned to leave that area immediately, he stayed with the family and preached the funeral sermon.<sup>111</sup>



**Franklin D. Richards**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



The electioneers also showed love by answering individuals' concerns and traveling out of the way to visit with members. For example, one night Crandell Dunn stayed with a brother named Bartholomew, who asked some "hard questions."<sup>112</sup> Once, after Elder Burgess preached to a large group of people, a member reported to him that a few Saints three miles away wanted someone to come teach them. Burgess complied with their request.<sup>113</sup> While Enoch Burns claimed he did not accomplish much on his mission—he and his companion held only one meeting—they were able to visit "some scattering saints."<sup>114</sup> In visiting and helping these Saints, the electioneers did in fact do a great work, that of strengthening the Church and its branches by strengthening the members.

Members in outlying areas were also strengthened through their association with the Quorum of the Twelve. Because the conferences were usually attended by one or more of the Twelve, the electioneering elders and the Saints across the nation heard the Apostles testify concerning the gospel. Franklin D. Richards traveled with Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, learning much from them; Elder Crandell Dunn traveled and preached with George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff. During the conferences, the Twelve ordained men to the priesthood and gave people blessings. James Glines, for example, attended the Boston conference, where seven members of the Twelve participated. Afterward, Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde ordained Glines an elder, and Brigham Young called him on a mission.<sup>115</sup> Wilford Woodruff found a branch that an Elder Sarine had built up, but Sarine had recently been seriously injured when a horse kicked him in the face. Elder Woodruff not only administered to him but stayed with him through the night to comfort him.<sup>116</sup> Such personal care would not be soon forgotten.

Due to isolation and shock over the Martyrdom, these Saints might have concluded that the Church had died with the prophet. However, at the political conferences set up by the Twelve, branches of the Church were organized and accounted for. The members of these branches, as well as interested citizens, were then instructed by the electioneering elders and members of the Twelve in the principles of the gospel. Members of the Church were often ordained to new offices, and nonmembers joined with the Saints through baptism. The elders' work among the branches also included seeking out and preaching to small or isolated branches. They curbed apostasy in these far-off branches of the Church and cared for the individual needs of the Saints. Through the conferences, the Saints across the nation and the campaign missionaries heard the Twelve testify, learning much from them and coming to know them. Thus members of these branches had their testimonies rekindled by Apostles and missionaries just at the time of Joseph Smith's death, which undoubtedly prevented many from drifting away from the Church.<sup>117</sup>



## Protecting the Twelve

In the attempt to determine the purposes for and effects of the campaign, another result of the campaign has become apparent, one that seems unintentional and yet visionary. Wilford Woodruff later said that Joseph Smith told him before he left on his campaigning mission, “Brother Woodruff, I want you to go, and if you do not you will die.”<sup>118</sup> Was there really that much danger in Nauvoo? At least two of the electioneers who traveled home to Nauvoo via Carthage ran into mobs who sought their lives. When W. R. R. Stowell stopped near Carthage to buy some hay, he was surrounded by several bystanders who recounted to him what had been done to Joseph and Hyrum Smith. They asked if he was afraid, and he said he was not, for he had as much right to travel the public roads as anyone. He then asked the mob if they would sell him some hay. His frankness apparently prevented them from doing anything dastardly.<sup>119</sup>

Lorenzo Snow had a similar experience while passing close to Carthage on his way home. Traveling up a hill in his buggy, he saw a dozen men waiting in the road with bowie knives and guns. His buggy hit a large rock, and he shouted “Boys! Why in hell don’t you repair this road!” “He is one of us,” one of the men said to another. “He is all right, let him pass.” Lorenzo Snow was carrying some money with him for some Saints in Nauvoo. He wrote of this experience, “How far my uncouth and undignified expression went as security for their money, must be left to conjecture.”<sup>120</sup> While such incidents demonstrate the danger that the Saints in Nauvoo were in, the particular danger fac-



**Lorenzo Snow**, steel engraving, 1853, Frederick H. Piercy. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

ing the Twelve emerges in a letter written on June 30, 1844, from Vilate Kimball to her husband, Heber C. After relating some of the events surrounding the Martyrdom, Vilate asked where the bloodshed would end, for Nauvoo was still being harassed by mobs. Her main concern was William Law, because, she wrote, he “says he wants nine more [Apostles], that was in his quorum. Sometimes I am afraid he will get them. I have no



doubt but you are one.” Vilate believed that the mob wanted to kill specific members of the Twelve in addition to Joseph and Hyrum Smith, although they were the principal two. She wrote that she had “no doubt but [Heber’s] life will be sought.” She was sorry he had been called back to Nauvoo and prayed that “the Lord [would] give [him] wisdom, to escape their hands.”<sup>121</sup>

Vilate’s apprehensions seem even more valid in light of the circumstances of the Martyrdom. For who were at Carthage Jail with Joseph and Hyrum—all the members of the Twelve and First Presidency who were not on missions in the East. In another letter written a few days before the Martyrdom, Vilate told her husband of the Smiths being taken to Carthage. Though worried about them, she confided to her husband, “If you were here, you would be sure to be in their midst. Thiss would increase my anxiety of cors.”<sup>122</sup> In faraway places such as Boston, the members of the Twelve were out of the reach of the Carthage mob. Whether the mob would have killed any of them or not, the Twelve’s Illinois enemies never had the opportunity because of the campaign. The keys of the kingdom, given to the Twelve by Joseph Smith, were not lost, and Brigham Young in particular was preserved to lead the Church for the next thirty years.

### **Conclusion: The Campaign and the Kingdom**

The number of electioneers and the “political” conferences called by the Twelve in 1844 have been repeatedly used as evidence that Joseph Smith fully expected to obtain the presidential chair and that the electioneers’ purpose therefore was to ensure this outcome. But as has been demonstrated, the electioneers did not focus primarily on Joseph Smith’s candidacy, for most of their political rallies were not fundamentally political.

So the question remains: Was the campaign merely a stratagem or a ploy to proselytize and organize the branches of the Church, or was Joseph seriously seeking the presidential chair? To a certain extent, Joseph Smith must have been running for office; otherwise, he would not have made the effort to write *Views*. In addition, the electioneers did some legitimate campaigning, mainly through publishing and publicizing the Prophet’s platform, which gave serious and rational solutions to major problems of the nation in Joseph’s day.<sup>123</sup> The electioneers presented these solutions to the people of the United States as the *Views* of a prophet and the only man they felt they could trust in politics. As William Hyde declared, “Our object was to vote for a man whom we knew to be our friend—As we had proven many and found them faith less, and untrue to their trust—and in all respects unworthy of our confidence and the confidence of all good men.”<sup>124</sup> The electioneers knew Joseph to be a good and moral leader who would not betray them or other citizens of the United States. Presenting his



Views and his name to the people of the United States is evidence neither that the Prophet was a megalomaniac nor that he was grasping for power or secretly planning to take over the government. It is evidence merely that he was running for president.

Yet the journals of the electioneers provide evidence that the campaign accomplished much more than presenting the Prophet to the nation. In fact, the campaign is more significant than historians have previously supposed, for they have overlooked the point that, while comparatively little was done by the electioneers to secure Joseph's presidency or to set up the political Kingdom of God as the new United States government, the electioneers, in a very real sense, did build up the ecclesiastical kingdom of God. Rather than elect their beloved Prophet to the presidency, they built the kingdom by teaching the gospel in every state in the nation, by gathering and caring for the Saints and their own families, and by strengthening and organizing the scattered branches and keeping them from falling away at the death of their Prophet and candidate.



**Brigham Young**, ca. 1846, as the young prophet of the LDS Church. Daguerreotype, image reversed, attributed to Lucian R. Foster.

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1. Joseph 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), 6:325 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). Throughout this paper, I will be using the original spelling of the electioneers and authors.



2. The list was printed in "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois," *Times and Seasons* 5 (April 15, 1844): 504–6. The journals of some people on this list, such as William McIntyre and Israel Barlow, suggest that they never filled their electioneer missions. However, the journals of other electioneers mention the names of at least fifty additional electioneers not named in the list published in the *Times and Seasons*. This raises the total number of electioneers to about four hundred. This number does not include the members of the Quorum of the Twelve who campaigned for the Prophet as they presided over conferences in the eastern states. Two Apostles remained in Nauvoo—Willard Richards to serve as Joseph Smith's secretary and John Taylor to edit local newspapers. See the appendix below for the complete list.

3. For a list of these conferences, see *History of the Church*, 6:334–35.

4. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, April 17, 1844, typescript, Richards Family Collection, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives); Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, typescript, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 2:393 (April 29, 30; May 1, 2, 3, 1844).

5. In June 1844, Vilate wrote Heber, "My health is very poor, my stomach loaths almost everything. I am so sick and faint that I cannot set up a good deal of the time. There is a cause for this, which cause you will no doubt rejoice in. A hint to you is sufficient." This letter was dated June 9 but contained information written as late as June 24. On January 29, 1845, seven and a half months after she wrote this letter, Vilate gave birth to their son Brigham Willard Kimball. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 9, 1844, Heber C. Kimball Family Organization, LDS Church Archives; Susan Easton Black, *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 26:626.

6. Abraham O. Smoot, Journal, May 7, 1844, photocopy of holograph, Abraham O. Smoot Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

7. Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, *Reminiscences and Diary*, typescript, 27, Heber C. Kimball Family Organization, LDS Church Archives.

8. Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, June 4, 1844, microfilm of holograph, Heber Chase Kimball Collection, LDS Church Archives. In the same letter, Heber C. Kimball also commented that politics "is like the sectarian religion part true and part not true but little more not true than true."

9. Henry G. Boyle, *Autobiography and Diary*, typescript, 6, Perry Special Collections. Alfred Lambson was baptized on April 4, 1844. "Alfred Boaz Lambson," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 6 (July 1915): 145–48. Most of the elders volunteered for missions on April 9. Lambson may have volunteered that week, but his name appears on the list of electioneers printed in the *Times and Seasons* on April 15, 1844.

10. See Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847*, 2 vols. (1854; reprint, Chicago: Lakeside, 1946), 2:157; Eduard Meyer, "The Origin and History of the Mormons: With Reflections on the Beginnings of Islam and Christianity," trans. Heinz F. Rahde and Eugene Seaich, 123–25, typescript, BYU Special Collections; Bruce Kinney, *Mormonism: The Islam of America* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912); T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 147; Henry Mayhew, *History of the Mormons; or, Latter-day Saints. With Memoirs of the Life and Death of Joseph Smith, the "American Mahomet"* (Auburn, N.Y.: Derby and Miller, 1852), 163–67.

11. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 354. See also I. Woodbridge Riley, *The Founder of Mormonism: A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr.* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1902).



12. See James B. Allen, *Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 101–3; Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 121; John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1951), 217–19; George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1888; reprint, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 468–76; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 293–94; Preston Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944), 494–97; B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965); B. H. Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1900), 250–54; Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 315–18; Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration*, rev. ed. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973), 572–79; E. Cecil McGavin, *Nauvoo the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1946), 61–67; Carter Eldredge Grant, *The Kingdom of God Restored* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955), 299; and William E. Berrett, *The Restored Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 178–79. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard in *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* and G. Homer Durham in *Joseph Smith: Prophet-Statesman* also discuss the Council of Fifty and Joseph Smith's desire to build up the Kingdom of God. Durham points out that Joseph's "constant effort [not just when he was running for president], in his own mind, was to influence the world of men towards an ideal of the kingdom of God," which would "replace war and misery with peace and happiness." Durham concludes that this approach offered something that "men of all faiths and party convictions" could learn from the Prophet. Allen and Leonard claim that Joseph "offered himself as a candidate on his personal merits as an involved citizen and not as a religious leader," that his desire was "to unite factions under an inspired government ruled by good men," and that the "elders of Israel" were campaigning "to win converts to the idea that the nation's strength lay in unity." G. Homer Durham, *Joseph Smith: Prophet-Statesman* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1944), ix–x; James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 189–90.

13. G. Homer Durham's *Joseph Smith: Prophet-Statesman* is one of the best studies on Joseph Smith's candidacy and platform. Not only does Durham provide insightful commentary on the contemporary documents and statements concerning Joseph's campaign, but he also reproduces, in their entirety, many of these documents, creating a collection of primary sources dealing with the candidacy. These documents include *Views of the Power and Policy of the Government of the United States* (hereafter cited as *Views*), lengthy quotes from the *Times and Seasons* and the *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith's rationale for running, his understanding of the Texas and slavery questions, and the campaign resolutions made at the Illinois State Convention of May 1844. Importantly, Durham includes Joseph's "Reply to Mr. Blair"—a defense of *Views*; as Durham points out, it "is the prophet's own commentary on the 'Views'" and "should be read and understood accordingly." See Durham, *Joseph Smith: Prophet-Statesman*, 144–83, quote on 173.

14. For a brief, yet accurate, discussion of the evidence concerning whether Joseph Smith was serious in his campaign and expected to win, see James B. Allen, "Was Joseph Smith a Serious Candidate for the Presidency of the United States, or Was He Only Attempting to Publicize Gospel Views on Public Issues?" *Ensign* 3 (September 1973): 21–22.

15. Throughout the paper, I will use the phrase "Kingdom of God," with an uppercase *K* to refer to the political entity that the Council of Fifty represented as God's



government on earth. When the *k* is lower case, “kingdom of God” will be used as it is in the scriptures, meaning the Church or work of God without political connotations. The Council of Fifty was a conglomerate of Church members, leaders, and nonmembers who served as the nucleus of the Kingdom. Many historians have written about the responsibilities and purposes of the Council of Fifty and of its relationship to the Kingdom of God. In this paper, I will not discuss the Council of Fifty or statements made concerning Joseph Smith’s candidacy outside of those pertaining to electioneering. My focus is on the *activities* of the electioneers, to see what they actually did and said. For an excellent treatise on the Kingdom of God, see Edward G. Thompson, “A Study of the Political Involvements in the Career of Joseph Smith” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), 45–69. Other studies include D. Michael Quinn, “The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (1980): 163–97; and Andrew F. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven began on Earth’: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (1980): 253–80.

16. For instance, Klaus Hansen argues, “Was it unreasonable for a man who knew that he was carrying out the will of the Lord to believe that God could establish the kingdom in Nauvoo, if He wished, by causing Joseph Smith to be elected President of the United States? . . . The vigor with which the prophet threw himself and the entire church into the campaign belies his own casual remarks disavowing any serious political intentions.” Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest of Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 74–82, quotes on 77 and 79. For similar views, see Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 196–207; Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 137–41; Robert Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 299–302; and Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 372–78. D. Michael Quinn’s interpretation differs slightly. While he argues that “all Mormons in the first half of 1844 took Smith’s presidential campaign very seriously,” he concludes that some, including John S. Fullmer, Heber C. Kimball, and Joseph Smith himself, “hoped to see the Prophet in the White House after another election.” D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 105–41, quote on 135–36. A comparison of Quinn’s conclusions in his 1980 *BYU Studies* article, cited in the previous endnote, and in his 1994 book, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, reveals a distinct interpretive shift. For example, Quinn moves from stating that the Council of Fifty was primarily symbolic and premillennial with some appropriate political functions to declaring Joseph intended a subversive political realization of the Kingdom of God.

17. Other recent studies spend little time analyzing campaign activities and instead concentrate on *Views* to interpret Joseph Smith’s candidacy. Some historians and political scientists, such as Richard Poll, Martin Hickman, and J. Keith Melville relate *Views* to political theory and activity both in Joseph Smith’s time and in the present. Poll establishes a historical context for *Views*, briefly relating the document to American political culture in the 1840s. Hickman and Melville show what there is to learn from Joseph Smith’s political thought, which they generally portray as relevant to contemporary issues. They characterize Joseph Smith as a freedom-loving man who desired a more righteous government, free from corrupt policies and politicians. See Richard D. Poll, “Joseph Smith and the Presidency, 1844,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (autumn 1968): 17–21; Martin B. Hickman, “The Political Legacy of Joseph Smith,” *Dialogue* 3 (autumn 1968): 22–36; J. Keith Melville, “Joseph Smith,



the Constitution, and Individual Liberties,” *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (1988): 65–74. See also Arnold K. Garr, “Joseph Smith: Candidate for President of the United States,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History*, ed. H. Dean Garrett (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1995), 151–68.

18. Hansen, *Quest for Empire*, 78–79.

19. The major candidates for president in 1844 were Henry Clay (Whig Party), dark-horse candidate James K. Polk (Democratic Party), and James G. Birney (Liberty Party). On November 4, 1843, Joseph Smith sent letters to several potential candidates in the 1844 election, namely John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass, Richard M. Johnson, Henry Clay, and Martin Van Buren. He asked each of them what their course relating to the redress of the Latter-day Saints would be if elected. Cass, Clay, and Calhoun responded, but none offered the kind of response that Joseph Smith had hoped for. Cass’s reply is not in the *History of the Church*, and I have not found it, nor any reference to it except a brief mention that Joseph received a response from the politician. It would appear that Cass was not planning on helping the Latter-day Saints. Calhoun’s response argues for the states’ rights doctrines of the day (not considered helpful to the Latter-day Saints) and has a condescending tone as his “candor compels” him to reply to Joseph Smith. Clay replied that he would make no promises to anyone before ascending the presidential chair. “Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith and Hon. J. C. Calhoun,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (January 1, 1844): 393–96; “Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844): 544–48; reprinted in *History of the Church*, 6:64–65, 144, 155–60. Electioneer Henry William Bigler recorded using the Clay, Calhoun, and Smith correspondence in his electioneering and wrote that “there were those who read the Prophet’s Views and the correspondence between him and Clay who said they would vote for Joseph Smith [rather] than for Clay or for Polk.” Henry William Bigler, *Journal*, 32, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

20. Joseph Smith, *General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* (Nauvoo, Ill.: John Taylor, 1844). The ideas and solutions offered in Joseph Smith’s platform were not new to politics. Richard Poll argues that Joseph’s platform was “an intriguing blend of *ante-bellum* political rhetoric, Whig economic doctrines, Democratic expansionism, abolitionism, and the original and wide-range constitutional and political ideas of Joseph Smith.” Poll, “Joseph Smith and the Presidency,” 21. However, Joseph Smith did not merely grasp at current winds of political doctrine floating around him to construct his platform; rather his platform represents the political ideals of a religious leader based on his own experience and beliefs. See notes 21–26 below.

21. The Prophet was not an abolitionist in the strictest sense. He felt slavery was not right and saw the need to abolish slavery to preserve the nation, but he also realized the need to save the economy of the South. He planned to resolve that tension by purchasing slaves with money raised through the sale of public lands and saved through the reduction in the pay and size of Congress. The Prophet’s idea of gradual emancipation resembled approaches advocated by most opponents to slavery prior to 1830. However, by 1844, when Joseph Smith promoted this view, leaders in the antislavery movement had endorsed immediate emancipation, rejecting gradualist schemes. But Joseph refused to take the extreme abolitionist point of view of his day. Unlike William Lloyd Garrison, Joseph did not see the South as a great evil empire but believed that “the southern people are hospitable and noble: they will help to rid so *free* a country of every vestige of slavery, when ever they are assured of an equivalent for their property.” See Joseph Smith, “Gen. Smith’s Views of the Government and Policy of the United



States,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (May 15, 1844): 528–33, quote on 533; Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815–1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 77–100.

22. Unlike many genteel reformers who worked to transform the American penal system, Joseph Smith spoke from firsthand experience. He had spent a fair amount of time in jail on false charges and knew of the deplorable conditions of prisons of his day. He suggested that for small crimes, “infraction[s] . . . of some otherwise statute,” people not be incarcerated in dungeonlike prisons. As for those who committed more serious crimes, Joseph said in *Views*, “Advise your legislators when they make laws for larceny, burglary or any felony, to make the penalty applicable to work upon the roads, public works, or any place where the culprit can be taught more wisdom and more virtue; and become more enlightened.” He hoped that even those criminals charged with serious crimes would be treated with greater justice and charity. He wrote in *Views*, “Let the penitentiaries be turned into seminaries of learning, where intelligence, like the angels of heaven, would banish such fragments of barbarism.” Smith, *Views*, 3, 6, 7; see Walters, *American Reformers*, 194–206.

23. Joseph Smith states in *Views*, “Unity is power, and when I reflect on the importance of it to the stability of all governments, I am astounded at the silly moves of persons and parties, to foment discord in order to ride into power on the current of popular excitement.” Joseph Smith was not a fan of political parties. He felt and had seen that they inspired discord and caused people to vote for a particular party rather than for a good leader of the nation. He sought for unity as a nation and morality among politicians. In *Views*, Joseph quotes Washington, who hoped that “no separate views or party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye [so] . . . the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable . . . principles of private morality.” Smith, *Views*, 3. While many of Joseph’s contemporaries shared his (and Washington’s) distrust of political parties and considered “political partisanship as the antithesis of political morality,” Joseph Smith’s personal experience and religious beliefs again shed light on his resentment of party politics. First, he and his followers believed in building Zion, where all people were equal and united and were of one heart and one mind (Moses 7:18). Zion was in stark contrast to the animosities raised in people by political parties. Second, in Missouri and Illinois, the Mormons had several political conflicts with their non-LDS neighbors, which contributed to the eventual expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri (and later from Illinois). In Illinois, Joseph constantly sought political help in gaining redress for the Missouri expulsion but received none. Yet at the same time, disingenuous political suitors constantly courted him to win the vote of the Mormon people. In 1841, Joseph declared to these suitors that the Saints did not endorse a particular party: “We care not a fig for Whig or Democrat: they are both alike to us.” Both parties continued to court the Mormon vote, but neither party sought to help the Saints. This political game undoubtedly reinforced Joseph’s distrust of political parties. See Joseph Smith, “State Gubernatorial Convention, City of Nauvoo, Illinois, December 20th, A.D. 1841,” *Times and Seasons* 3 (January 1, 1842): 651; Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 6–7, 11–12, quote on 11.

24. A national bank was not a new idea in politics. Joseph Smith not only felt this was important but had firsthand experience in bank failures (with the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company) and so was familiar with the problems caused by the lack of a central banking system. See Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 132–71, 196–97.

25. Joseph Smith was clearly an expansionist in 1844. Interestingly, he was beginning at this same time to teach that the whole of America, North and South, is Zion. Again, he may have seen expansionism in a different light than most of the expansionists of his time, who merely saw expansionism as the fulfillment of the United States’



continental destiny. *History of the Church*, 6:318–19; Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 229–30; William R. Brock, *Parties and Political Conscience: American Dilemmas, 1840–1850* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1979), 154–56.

26. This part of Joseph Smith's platform stems from his inability to obtain any redress or help for the Saints who had been removed from their lands and homes by the state of Missouri. The federal government had not intervened, claiming that only the states had the power to get involved. Joseph's proposal was largely fulfilled in 1868 with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, which promised, "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law."

27. Lorenzo Snow, Journal, 48, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

28. See Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844*, ed. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 170; Norton Jacob, Reminiscence and Journal, 7, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; and [Ezra Taft Benson], "Ezra Taft Benson, I: An Autobiography," *Instructor* 80 (May 1945): 214.

29. The voting breakdown in the Richards poll was Smith, sixty-three male and four female; Clay, twenty-seven male and six female; Van Buren, thirteen male and two female; Cass, one male; Birney, two male; Johnson and Calhoun, no votes. Richards, Journal, May 21, 1844. The results of the John D. Lee poll were Smith, sixty-four; Clay, forty-six; Van Buren, twenty-four. John D. Lee, Journal, May 28, 1844, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

30. See, for example, James Burgess, Journals, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; Woodruff, *Journal*; [Edson Barney], "Biographical Sketch of Edson Barney," typescript, Mormon Biographical Sketches Collection, LDS Church Archives; George Miller, "De Tal Palo Tal Astilla," ed. H. W. Mills, *Historical Society of Southern California* 10, no. 3 (1917): 86–174; Joseph Holbrook, "The Life of Joseph Holbrook 1806–1871," typescript, Perry Special Collections.

31. Alfred Cordon, Journal, June 4, 1844, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

32. David Pettegrew, "A History of David Pettegrew," 117, typescript, Perry Special Collections.

33. James Little, "A Biographical Sketch of William Rufus Rogers Stowell," 33, typescript, Perry Special Collections.

34. William Lampard Watkins, "History of William Lampard Watkins," 3, typescript, Perry Special Collections.

35. Burgess, Journals, May 7, 1844; Cordon, Journal, May 7, 1844.

36. Holbrook, "Life of Joseph Holbrook," 60.

37. Jacob Hamblin, Journals, 7, typescript, Perry Special Collections.

38. See John M. Horner, "Adventures of a Pioneer," *Improvement Era* 7 (May 1904): 514; Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 79, quoting from Lorenzo Snow's journal; Charles C. Rich, Journal, June 20, 1844, microfilm of holograph, Charles Coulson Rich Collection, LDS Church Archives; Smoot, Journal, May 29, June 4, 14, 1844; and James Holt, "The Reminiscences of James Holt: A Narrative of the Emmett Company," ed. Dale Morgan, *Utah Historical Quarterly* 23 (January 1955): 18–19.

39. See William A. Linn, *The Story of the Mormons* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 254–55. Kenneth Godfrey interprets the campaign as one of the factors that brought about Mormon and non-Mormon conflict. He cites the mobs' interruption of conferences in Tennessee and Boston and relates a few stories from electioneers about the



conflict from and lack of support for the campaign, yet these tend to be inaccurate. For example, he argues that the campaign was a cause of conflict soon after the candidacy was announced, “as early as March 3, 1844,” citing a story from James Burgess’s journal, which actually occurred in May 1844. Godfrey also tells of the lack of support or interest at the New York conference, citing George A. Smith’s journal on May 31, 1844, as saying that only seventy people attended and most of them left early. Godfrey concludes that “the elders reported that there was little interest in the Prophet’s candidacy in the nation’s largest city [New York City].” However, George A. Smith was *not* in New York City on May 31, 1844, but was at a conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Additionally, rather than a lack of interest in the campaign, Smith reported a very favorable reception, saying, “A good feeling prevailed among the congregation; they gave good attention and seemed much pleased.” As for the New York conference, it was scheduled for August 17 and 18, 1844. The Twelve, including George A. Smith, were back in Nauvoo, and if a conference was held, it would not have been an electioneering conference because Joseph Smith had been dead for two months. See Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, 1839–1846” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1967), 66–69; Burgess, Journals, May 7, 1844; George A. Smith, “My Journal,” ed. Alice Merrill Horne, *Instructor* 83 (June 1948): 280; and *History of the Church*, 6:334.

40. George R. Gayler, “The Mormons and Politics in Illinois, 1839–1844,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 49 (spring 1956): 65.

41. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:400 (May 20, 1844).

42. Watkins, “History of William Lampard Watkins,” 2–3.

43. Burgess, Journals, May 7, 1844.

44. Burgess, Journals, May 12, 1844; Cordon, *Journal*, July 19, 1844.

45. Burgess, Journals, May 26, 1844.

46. Levi Jackman, “A Short Sketch of the Life of Levi Jackman, 1797–1876,” 21, typescript, Perry Special Collections.

47. Hamblin, Journals, 7.

48. Elder McGin may or may not have been an electioneer; Burgess, who records this event, did not expound. See Burgess, Journals, June 17, 1844.

49. William W. Riley, *Journal*, entries for 1844, LDS Church Archives.

50. See, for example, Stephen Post, *Journal*, May 7, June 23, 25–26, October 27, 1844, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

51. See, for example, Smoot, *Journal*, May 26, June 9, 15, 20, 23, 28, 1844. These discourses covered a great range of doctrinal subjects far removed from political concerns. One night at Thompson Creek, Tennessee, Smoot preached at “Sister Murphys” on “making our calling & election shure through faith on Jesus name.” Smoot, *Journal*, May 16, 1844.

52. A. O. Smoot, “Minutes of a General Conference of the Elders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, held in Dresden, Weakly County, Tennessee, May 25th, 1844,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (July 1, 1844): 574. Smoot presided over the Dresden Tennessee Conference.

53. Smoot, *Journal*, June 8–9, 1844.

54. Lee, *Journal*, July 12, 1844.

55. Lee, *Journal*, May 28–August 20, 1844.

56. Rich, *Journal*, entries for May 11–June 28, 1844.

57. Orson Pratt, “History of Orson Pratt,” *Millennial Star* 27 (February 11, 1865): 88.

58. Chapman Duncan, “Biography of Chapman Duncan, 1812–1900,” 10, typescript, Perry Special Collections.



59. Richards, Journal, July 4–October 1, 1844.

60. George Miller's statements concerning the candidacy have been used, particularly by revisionist Mormon historians, as evidence that Joseph Smith secretly expected to win the election and then planned to establish the Kingdom of God in the United States in anticipation of Christ's Second Coming (see n. 16 for historiographical discussion). Although Miller interpreted Joseph's campaign that way, there is little evidence that the Prophet shared that belief, and subsequent events strongly suggest that Miller's enthusiasm for a Kingdom of God was at variance with that of the rest of the Church leadership. After Joseph Smith's death, George Miller left the Church in 1847 to join Lyman Wight in the building of Wight's Texas empire. In 1850, Miller moved to Beaver Island, Michigan, to join James J. Strang, who had anointed himself king and claimed to have set up the Kingdom of God on earth. However, this kingdom was short-lived; Strang died in 1856. The course that George Miller followed after Joseph Smith's death, in contrast to that followed by Brigham Young and the Twelve, evidences that Miller probably left the Church, at least partially, over the very issue of the political Kingdom of God. But even more surprising is that George Miller's journal exists only through 1843. What historians have quoted as evidence of Joseph Smith's "secret" intentions was not written by Miller at the time of Joseph's campaign. It was written in 1855 in a letter from Miller in St. James, Michigan, to his brother, partially to justify Miller and Strang's position. Miller attempted to substantiate that Joseph tried to do what he and Strang were then doing and so portrayed the Prophet as trying to set up the Kingdom of God with a king in the United States. It seems clear that Miller justified his own position, rather than objectively reflecting on what Joseph had said to him ten years earlier. See George Miller, "De Tal Palo Tal Astilla," 133–34; and *Church History in the Fullness of Times* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 294–95, 306.

61. Burgess, Journals, July 25, 1844.

62. David Pettegrew said they lifted "up our voices in every place where we had opportunity, in the midst of the people, proclaiming repentance and baptism for remission of sin, and laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit." Pettegrew is quoting a letter he wrote to the *Times and Seasons*. Pettegrew, "History," 51; George P. Dykes, Letter to Editor, *Times and Seasons* 5 (July 15, 1844): 583–84. The letter to the editor from George Dykes concerning his mission was written on May 21, 1844.

63. Other elders, whom I did not mention above, also wrote of baptizing. For example, William Hyde (Vermont) baptized three people, Henry Boyle baptized four people, and Norton Jacob baptized at least eight people. William Hyde, Journal, June 23 and July 1, 1844, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; Boyle, Autobiography and Diary, 7–10; Jacob, Reminiscence and Journal, 8.

64. Hamblin, Journals, 7.

65. Burgess, Journals, May 18 and June 11, 1844.

66. Burgess, Journals, July 8, 1844.

67. Cordon, Journal, May 31, 1844.

68. Jackman, "Short Sketch," 23.

69. Daniel D. Hunt, Journal, typescript, [1], LDS Church Archives.

70. Holt, "Reminiscences," 18.

71. Hamblin, Journals, 6.

72. Duncan, "Biography," 10.

73. Boyle, Autobiography and Diary, 3–4.

74. Boyle, Autobiography and Diary, 5–8.

75. See Richards, Journal, August 16, 1844; Jacob, Reminiscence and Journal, 7; Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 9, 1844.



76. Tracy, *Reminiscences and Diary*, 27–28.
77. Pettegrew, “History,” 35.
78. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:429–30 (July 22–23, 1844).
79. Cordon, *Journal*, April 29, 1845.
80. Horner, “Pioneer,” 515.
81. Post, *Journal*, July 28, 1844; February 23, 1845.
82. Riley, *Journal*, July 7 and September 15, 1844.
83. Boyle, *Autobiography and Diary*, 10.

84. Lee wrote that an angel came to him, at which time he saw the Martyrdom in vision and was told that like Christ, Joseph Smith was killed when people thought he would take over the country or kingdom he lived in, but that through his death he would gain greater dominion and that the Church would continue with the Apostles. Lee wrote that he was told that he should await his endowment on high as did the Apostles of old. Lee, *Journal*, July 1844.

85. Often *Mormonism Unveiled* (written by Lee in 1881 after he was excommunicated and sentenced to be executed for the Mountain Meadows Massacre) is quoted concerning Lee’s mission and his embarrassment over electioneering. Such embarrassment is not reflected at all in his original journal of 1844. Lee added in *Mormonism Unveiled* that the angel told him to await the real leader of the Church. He reported being at the August 8, 1844, meeting in Nauvoo, where, he claimed, Brigham Young imitated the Prophet. Lee said many people, including himself, were deceived into thinking that the mantle of the Prophet had fallen on the “usurper” Brigham Young. Contrary to the claims of *Mormonism Unveiled*, Lee’s daily journal for 1844 shows he was not even in Nauvoo for the August 8 meeting. He baptized three new members in Kentucky on August 8 and returned to Nauvoo on August 20. Compare Lee, *Journal*, August 3 and 20, 1844; and John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis: N. D. Thompson, 1881), 151–55.

86. Rich, *Journal*, July 14 and 15, 1844.

87. Pettegrew, “History,” 53.

88. Brigham Young, Hyrum Smith, and Heber C. Kimball all instructed the elders to teach the first principles of the gospel on their campaigning missions. See *History of the Church*, 6:321–26.

89. Abraham Smoot wrote in his journal on learning of the Martyrdom:

Great God indow me with Christian fortitude for all my forebodings & fears are more than realized. . . . Can it be so, O, Father & thy will be done if so . . . cause my heartfelt grief to cease. . . . How long O Father, How long wilt thou hear the cries of the blood of innocence even from ritious Able [righteous Abel] down to thy Prophets and seer our brethern Joseph & Hyrum. . . . Awak[e] O arm of God awake is the preays of thy servent & avenge the blood of inocence on thine enemy O lord send fourth the ancient of day[s] that thy saints may possess the Kingdom in peace that thy enomys no longer trample over Isreal but that thy wark may be cut short in ritiousness for thy ser[vants and] elects sake. Even so father let it bee is my most fervent Preayr to isreal’s God in the name of Jesus Christ. Even so father Let it be, Amen. (Smoot, *Journal*, July 12, 1844)

Lorenzo Snow, after hearing of the Martyrdom, was upset at the government for not protecting Joseph Smith. He wrote, “I ask this Mobocratic Government if it expects my hand, my heart, and my tongue are going to be hushed in silence by their damnible and worse than savage deeds!” Lorenzo Snow, *Journal*, July 19, 1844.



90. Smith, "My Journal," 279, 322–24.

91. Young, *Manuscript History*, 170.

92. Cordon's talk proclaimed Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the Restoration and also related gospel themes to two of the planks of Joseph Smith's platform: prison reform and gradual abolition. From Burgess's and Cordon's notes it is apparent that the majority of the conference was spent in ecclesiastical affairs, but Cordon dedicated some time to political campaigning. Burgess, *Journals*, May 26, 1844; Cordon, *Journal*, May 25–26, 1844.

93. Cordon, *Journal*, May 25–26, 1844; Burgess, *Journals*, May 26, 1844.

94. James Harvey Glines, *Reminiscences and Diary*, 39, LDS Church Archives.

95. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:410 (June 10, 1844).

96. Cordon, *Journal*, June 30, 1844.

97. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 5 (July 15, 1844): 580.

98. Burgess, *Journals*, May 25, 1844.

99. Crandell Dunn, *Journal*, July 21, 1844, LDS Church Archives.

100. Tracy, *Reminiscences and Diary*, 30.

101. Neither James Strang nor Joseph Smith went to Nauvoo as instructed. Rather, they continued east in search of followers. This incident is interesting, in that it concerns George Miller as well. In recounting what Joseph Smith and the electioneers did and intended by the campaign, George Miller in his 1855 letter advocated Strang's ideas about the Kingdom of God. Did any of the electioneers ever comment on these ideas? Through Norton Jacob we learn they did. They ran into Strang, and rather than sympathizing with his notions of establishing the Kingdom of God, they detected him as an apostate and sent him to Nauvoo to be dealt with by the Brethren. Clearly, Miller's statements in 1855, by reflecting the ideas of Strang, are not in accordance with what the electioneers felt in 1844. It is therefore unlikely that Miller's statements concerning the candidacy represent the purposes of the campaign as understood by the electioneers or the Brethren at Nauvoo (at least as the Brethren and their purposes were understood by these electioneers). Jacob, *Reminiscence and Journal*, 7–8.

102. Young, *Manuscript History*, 170.

103. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:421 (July 11, 1844).

104. Rich, *Journal*, June 14, 1844.

105. Cordon, *Journal*, June 14 and July 11, 1844.

106. Cordon, *Journal*, September 4, 1844.

107. Jackman, "Short Sketch," 24–25.

108. Erastus Snow, "Erastus Snow Sketch Book," 88–89, Perry Special Collections.

109. Hamblin, *Journals*, 7; James A. Little, *Jacob Hamblin: A Narrative of His Personal Experience, as a Frontiersman, Missionary to the Indians and Explorer*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 18. Jacob Hamblin dictated this narrative to Little in 1881.

110. Pettegrew, "History," 53.

111. Richards, *Journal*, July 5–August 3, 1844.

112. Dunn, *Journal*, June 27, 1844.

113. Burgess, *Journals*, June 9, 1844.

114. Enoch Burns, *Autobiography*, in Henrietta Elizabeth Crombie Williams, *Autobiography*, 60, typescript, Perry Special Collections.

115. Glines, *Reminiscences and Diary*, 39.

116. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:410 (June 11, 1844).

117. These scattered members of the Church probably did not attend the August 8, 1844, meeting in Nauvoo that confirmed who would lead the Church. It is likely that this acquaintance and familiarity with the members of the Twelve coupled with the Twelve's



testimonies prepared these Saints for the outcome of that meeting and probably made it easier for some, if not many, of them to follow the Twelve after Joseph Smith's death.

118. Quoted in Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff—His Life and Labors* (1909; reprint, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 204.

119. Little, "Biographical Sketch," 36. For a summary of the dangers in Nauvoo at this time, see John E. Hallwas and Roger D. Launius, eds., *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995).

120. Lorenzo Snow, Journal, quoted in Smith, *Biography and Family Record*, 83.

121. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 30, 1844, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

122. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 9, 1844.

123. G. Homer Durham speculates that the circulation and presentation of Joseph Smith's *Views* to the American people may have affected the election of Polk over Clay. While there is no way to prove whether or not that was the case, the circumstances of the election cited by Durham are interesting to consider. See Durham, *Joseph Smith: Prophet-Statesman*, 203–5.

124. Hyde, Journal, July 1, 1844.



## Appendix: The Electioneers<sup>1</sup>

? = Called on a mission in 1844; could have electioneered or served in previously called mission.

Adams, Charles A.—New Hampshire  
Allen, Daniel—Illinois  
Allen, O. M.—Missouri  
Anderson, Miles—Georgia  
Anderson, Richard  
Andrus, Milo—Ohio  
Angus, John O.—Kentucky  
Ashby, Nathaniel—Massachusetts  
Babbitt, Loren—Ohio  
Bacon, Samuel P.—New York  
Barlow, Israel—New Hampshire  
Barnes, H. W.—Illinois  
Barney, Edson—Ohio  
Barrus, Ethan—Mississippi  
Bartlett, Milton F. —Massachusetts  
Bates, Archibald—New York  
Bates, Marcellus—New York  
Bathrick, Almon—Illinois  
Batson, William—Ohio  
Beebe, Isaac—Georgia  
Bell, Alfred—Tennessee  
Bennett, Hiram—New York  
Benson, Ezra T.—New Jersey  
Bent, Samuel—Michigan  
Bentley, Gregory—New York  
Betts, John F.—Virginia  
Bigler, Henry William  
Blanchard, John R.—Massachusetts  
Bosworth, J. B.—Louisiana  
Boyle, Henry Green—Virginia  
Boynton, A. D.—New Hampshire  
Brady, L. A.  
Brandon, G. W.—Alabama  
Brandon, T. J.—Alabama  
Briggs, S. H. —Wisconsin Territory  
Brooks, L.—Ohio  
Brothers, W.—Ohio  
Brown, Alfred—Ohio  
Burgess, James—Vermont  
Burnham, Jacob L.—Illinois  
Burns, Enoch  
Burton, Issac—New Hampshire  
Butler, L. D.—Alabama  
Butterfield, J.—Maine

Buys, H. D.—Tennessee  
Buzzard, P. H.—Illinois  
Candland, David—Illinois  
Carlin, Edward—Indiana  
Carpenter, S. E.—Georgia  
Carroll, J.—Ohio  
Carter, Dominicus—Vermont  
Carter, S.—Ohio  
Casper, J. A.—Ohio  
Castell, J. J.—Tennessee  
Chamberlain, G.—Pennsylvania  
Chase, Darwin—Arkansas  
Chase, John D.—Vermont  
Chase, Isaac—New York  
Childs, Nathaniel—Ohio  
Clapp, B. L.—Alabama  
Clark, William O.—Illinois  
Clough, David, Sr.—New Hampshire  
Cole, J. M.—Pennsylvania  
Coltrin, Graham—Michigan  
Coltrin, Zebedee—Michigan  
Condit, A. W.—Ohio  
Cook, Henry L.—New York  
Cooley, Alvin—New Hampshire  
Coon, L. T.—Tennessee  
Cooper, John—Ohio  
Coray, Howard—Illinois  
Coray, William—Missouri  
Cordon, Alfred—Vermont  
Cornish, Denman—Vermont  
Couthouse, John  
Crouse, G. W.—Pennsylvania  
Curtis, Jeremiah—Michigan  
Curtis, Joseph—Michigan  
Cutler, William L.  
Davis, Amos—Tennessee  
Davis, E. H.—Connecticut  
Dayton, Hiram—Ohio  
Dayton, Lysander—Ohio  
Dean, Henry—Pennsylvania  
Dobson, Thomas—Illinois  
Downing, James—Pennsylvania  
Dryer, William W.—New York  
Duel, O. M.—New York  
Duke, Jonathan O.—Delaware  
Duncan, Chapman—Virginia  
Duncan, John—Pennsylvania  
Duncan, W. A.—Illinois



- Dunn, Crandell  
 Dunn, Simeon A.—New York  
 Dunn, Thomas—Michigan  
 Dykes, G. P.—Indiana  
 Eames, Ellis—New York  
 Edwards, F. M.—Indiana  
 Edwards, Thomas—Kentucky  
 Egan, Howard—New Hampshire  
 Eldredge, Horace S.—New York  
 Elliott, Bradford W.—New York  
 Elliott, Henry—Indiana  
 Ellsworth, Edmund—New York  
 Elsworth, B. C.—New York  
 Emell, John M.—South Carolina  
 Emmett, J. M.—Ohio  
 Evans, David—Virginia  
 Ewell, Pleasant—Virginia  
 Farlin, Orrin D.—Pennsylvania  
 Farnham, A. A.—New York  
 Farr, A. F.—Indiana  
 Felshaw, William—New York  
 Fife, Peter—Virginia  
 Fisher, Daniel—New York  
 ?Fleming, Josiah  
 Folsom, W. H.—Ohio  
 Foote, Timothy B.—New York  
 Foster, J. H.—Ohio  
 Foster, L.  
 Foster, Solon—New York  
 Fowler, George W.—New York  
 Frost, Samuel B.—Kentucky  
 Fuller, Thomas—New York  
 Fulmer, David  
 Fulmer, John L.—Tennessee  
 Gardner, Daniel W.—Massachusetts  
 Gardner, Morgan L.—Georgia  
 Gillett, Truman—New York  
 Gillibrand, Robert  
 Glaefke, A. J.—Pennsylvania  
 Glines, James Harvey  
 Goldsmith, G. D.—New York  
 Gould, John—Illinois  
 Graham, James—Illinois  
 Grant, Jedediah M.  
 Green, Harvey—Michigan  
 Gribble, William—Michigan  
 Griffith, Richard—Pennsylvania  
 Groves, E. H.—Illinois  
 Gurley, Zenus H.—Illinois  
 Guyman, Thomas—North Carolina  
 Haight, William—Vermont  
 Hale, Jonathan H.—Maine  
 ?Hall, Alfred  
 Hall, Lyman—New York  
 Hamblin, Jacob—Maryland  
 Hamilton, Robert—Virginia  
 Hammond, John—Illinois  
 Hampton, J.—Tennessee  
 Hancock, Levi W.—Vermont  
 Hanks, A.  
 Harding, A. M.—Vermont  
 Hardy, Zachariah—Illinois  
 Hatch, Jeremiah—Vermont  
 Hatwood, Elder—Connecticut  
 Heath, S.  
 Herriman, Henry—Maine  
 Hess, Thomas—Pennsylvania  
 Heywood, J. L.  
 Hickerson, G. W.—Illinois  
 Higginbottom, W. E.—Virginia  
 Hodges, Amos—Vermont  
 Hoit, Timothy S.—Illinois  
 Holbrook, Chandler—New York  
 Holbrook, Joseph—Kentucky  
 Holmes, M.  
 Holt, James—Tennessee  
 Holt, John—North Carolina  
 Hopkins, Charles—Indiana  
 Horner, John—New Jersey  
 Houston, Isaac—Vermont  
 Houston, John—North Carolina  
 Hovey, Orlando D.—Massachusetts  
 Hoyt, Homer C.—New York  
 Hoyt, Samuel P.—Massachusetts  
 Hubbard, C. W.—Michigan  
 Hunt, D. D.—Kentucky  
 Hunt, Jefferson—Illinois  
 Hutchins, S. P.—Ohio  
 Hyde, William—Vermont  
 Jackman, Levi—Illinois  
 Jacob, Norton—Michigan  
 Jacobs, H. B.—Tennessee  
 Johnson, Jesse—Ohio  
 Jones, David—Ohio  
 Jones, John—Delaware  
 Jones, John—Indiana  
 Jordan, William H.—Missouri  
 Judah, David—Illinois  
 Kelly, John—Louisiana  
 Kelting, J. A.—Tennessee  
 Kendall, L. N.—Michigan  
 Kershner, D. J.—Illinois  
 King, Joseph—Virginia  
 ?Kinnamen, Elder  
 Lamb, Abel—Illinois  
 Lambson, Alfred B.—Virginia



- Lamoreaux, A. L.—Indiana  
Langley, G. W.—Tennessee  
Laurence, John—Illinois  
Leavitt, N.—Illinois  
Leavitt, Nathaniel—Arkansas  
LeBaron, Alonzo—South Carolina  
?Lee, E.  
Lee, John D.—Kentucky  
Lemon, Washington—Indiana  
Lewis, Clark—Ohio  
Lewis, David—Illinois  
Littlefield, L. O.—Ohio  
Lloyd, George—Massachusetts  
Lovelace [Loveless], John—Ohio  
Loveland, Daniel—Massachusetts  
Lowry, John—Missouri  
Lyman, Amasa—Indiana  
Lyman, William D.—South Carolina  
Mack, Chilion—New Hampshire  
Mackey, John—Indiana  
?Mallory, Lemuel  
Markham, Stephen—Illinois  
Martindale, William—Indiana  
McArthur, Duncan—Illinois  
?McGin, Elder  
McIntosh, J. A.—Arkansas  
McIntyre, William P.—Pennsylvania  
McKeown, Marcellus—New York  
McRae A.—North Carolina  
McTaggart, Thomas—Rhode Island  
Mikesell, Garrett W.—Kentucky  
Mikesell, Hiram W.—Kentucky  
Miles, Elder  
Miller, Bethuel—New Hampshire  
Miller, George—Kentucky  
Moffitt, Armstead—Tennessee  
Moon, John—Maine  
Moore, Lorenzo—Louisiana  
Morley, Harley—New Hampshire  
Morris, Jacob—Ohio  
Morse, Justus—Delaware  
Mott, Hiram—Illinois  
Mouer, Henry—Pennsylvania  
Mount, Joseph—Tennessee  
Mulliner, S.—Illinois  
Myers, John—Maryland  
Nelson, James—Illinois  
Nelson, William—Louisiana  
Newberry, James—Indiana  
Newland, William—New York  
Newman, Elijah—Ohio  
Nichols, John—Ohio  
Nickerson, A. C.  
Nickerson, F.  
Nickerson, L. S.  
Nikon [Nixon?], Elder—Illinois  
Noble, Joseph P.—New York  
Norris, Patrick—Maryland  
Nyman, Hyrum—Pennsylvania  
Olmstead, H.—Illinois  
Ott, Frederick—Indiana  
Owens, Horace B.—Kentucky  
?Pace, James—Arkansas  
Pack, John—New Jersey  
Palmer, Abraham—Indiana  
Park, James—Virginia  
Parker, Samuel—Michigan  
Parshall, William H.—New York  
Penn, G.—Tennessee  
Perkins, A. H.—Missouri  
Perry, Josiah—Vermont  
Pettigrew, David—New York  
Pew, George—Louisiana  
Phelps, J. R. G.—New York  
Phelps, Morris—Illinois  
Phippin, James W.—New York  
Pierson, E. D.—Massachusetts  
Porter, Jared—Ohio  
Porter, Nathan—Ohio  
Post, Stephen—New York  
Powers, J. M.—Ohio  
Pratt, William D.—New York  
Rainey, D. P.—Tennessee  
Razor, Aaron—North Carolina  
Redfield, D. H.—New York  
Reed, Calvin—New Hampshire  
Reed, Elijah—New York  
Reid, John H.—Kentucky  
Rich, Charles C.—Michigan  
Richards, Franklin D.—Indiana  
Richards, S. W.—Indiana  
Riley, W. W.—Tennessee  
Riser, G. C.—Ohio  
Riser, J. J.—Ohio  
Roberts, John W.—Ohio  
Rogers, D. H.—Kentucky  
Rose, Joseph—Ohio  
Rule, William G.—Missouri  
Sanderson, James—North Carolina  
Sasnett, J. J.—Tennessee  
Savage, Bro.—Michigan  
Savage, David—Michigan  
Savage, William—Michigan  
Seabury, William—Rhode Island  
Shearer, Daniel—New York  
Sheets, Elijah F.



- Shelton, Seabert C.—Virginia  
 Shoemaker, Jacob—Pennsylvania  
 Simmons, A. A.—Arkansas  
 Smith, Jackson—Tennessee  
 Smith, John G.—Indiana  
 Smith, Moses  
 Smith, Warren—Tennessee  
 Smith, William—South Carolina  
 Smoot, Abraham O.—Tennessee  
 ?Snider, George—Illinois  
 Snow, Charles—Vermont  
 Snow, Erastus—Vermont  
 Snow, James C.—Vermont  
 Snow, Lorenzo—Ohio  
 Snow, W.—New Hampshire  
 Snow, Warren—Delaware  
 Snow, Warren—Vermont  
 Snow, William—Indiana  
 Sparks, Quartus S.—Connecticut  
 Spencer, Daniel—Massachusetts  
 Sprague, R. C.—Michigan  
 Spry, Charles—Kentucky  
 Stewart, Levi—Illinois  
 Stewart, U. V.—Indiana  
 Stoddard, Lyman—Maryland  
 Stoddard, S. B.—Maine  
 Stow, Milton—Ohio  
 Stowell, William R. R.—New York  
 Strong, Ezra—Ohio  
 Strong, Reuben W.—Michigan  
 Tanner, John—New York  
 Tanner, Martin H.—New York  
 Tanner, Nathan—Indiana  
 Terry, Jacob E.—Illinois  
 Thayer, Ezra  
 Thompson, Charles—New York  
 Titus, Martin—Vermont  
 Toughs. *See* Tufts.  
 Tracy, Moses—New York  
 Tracy, Nancy Naomi—with husband,  
     Moses  
 Truly, Ekells—South Carolina  
 Tufts [Toughs], Elbridge—Maine  
 Tulley, Allen—Ohio  
 Twiss, John S.—New Hampshire  
 Tyler, Daniel—Mississippi  
 Vance, John—Illinois  
 Vance, W. P.—Tennessee  
 ?Van Deuzen, Increase—Michigan  
 Van Natta, J. H.—New York  
 ?Venusthrom, James M.  
 Vincent, Ezra—Ohio  
 Wait, Allen—New York  
 Walker, J. B.—Mississippi  
 Wandell, C. W.—New York  
 Warner, Charles—Pennsylvania  
 Warner, Salmon—Indiana  
 Watkins, William—Kentucky  
 Watt, George—North Carolina  
 Watt, George D.—Virginia  
 Webb, E. M.  
 Webb, P.—Michigan  
 ?Wells, Elder  
 Welton, M. B.—Kentucky  
 West, Nathan A.—Illinois  
 Wheelock, C. H.—New York  
 Whipple, Edson—Pennsylvania  
 White, Samuel—New York  
 Whitney, A. W.—Virginia  
 Wilbur, Melvin—Rhode Island  
 Willard, Stephen D.—Michigan  
 Wilkes, Ira—Michigan  
 Wilson, B. W.—Ohio  
 Wilson, H. H.—Louisiana  
 Winchester, B.—Virginia  
 Winchester, Stephen—Pennsylvania  
 Woodbury, Joseph J.—Massachusetts  
 Woodbury, W. H.—Massachusetts  
 Yearsley, David D.—Pennsylvania  
 Young, A. D.—Tennessee  
 Young, Alfonzo—Tennessee  
 ?Young, Joseph  
 Young, L. D.—Indiana  
 Young, P. H.—Ohio  
 Younger, Joseph—Tennessee  
 Zundall, Jacob—Pennsylvania

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1. Listed in Margaret Robertson, “The Campaign and the Kingdom: The Activities of the Electioneers in Joseph Smith’s Presidential Campaign” (honor’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1998), appendix, where sources for these names can also be found.



# Book Reviews

JOHN L. SORENSON. *Mormon's Map*. Provo: FARMS, 2000. ix; 154 pp. Maps, notes, index. \$9.95.

Reviewed by Martin H. Raish

I have tremendous respect for the many Book of Mormon studies John Sorenson has previously written. Having been privileged to work with him on some of these, I know he is a careful researcher who meticulously supports his positions with appropriate and important evidences. So I anticipated that *Mormon's Map* would be up to the standards I expect from him and FARMS. I was not disappointed.

*Mormon's Map* carefully and concisely accomplishes what it sets out to do: to help readers “gain a better understanding of Book of Mormon geography and the benefits associated with that [understanding]” (8). The map, though admittedly tentative, offers three “services” to readers of the Book of Mormon: to provide “a model that we can apply to stories from the record to check their consistency and perhaps shed new light on factors they involved that had not occurred to us before”; to “discern new questions about geography—that is, see gaps in our knowledge for which we might seek answers by consulting Mormon’s text anew”; and to summarize a set of criteria “against which to evaluate proposals for where in the external world Nephite lands were located” (127).

The book is organized around a series of questions, beginning with “Does geography in the Book of Mormon matter?” (2). Sorenson supplies an inspiring answer—that such knowledge can enhance our understanding and appreciation of the Nephites and their sacred record as well as enable us to “lift up [our] hearts and rejoice” by “penetrating as thoroughly as possible what was in the hearts and minds of the scripture makers at the time they wrote” (2).

In setting out to discover “the map in Mormon’s mind” (12), Sorenson first spells out five assumptions on which his efforts are based:

1. “the expressions ‘up,’ ‘down,’ and ‘over,’ when used in a geographical context, refer to elevation” (13);
2. “nature worked the same anciently as it does today. . . . A river implies the presence of a corresponding drainage basin” (13);
3. “ideas in the record will not necessarily be familiar or clear to us” (13);



4. “Book of Mormon terminology will not necessarily be clear to us, even in translation” (13);
5. when faced with competing explanations for a particular problem, we ought to seek the simpler one.

The remaining one hundred pages of the book deal with half a dozen aspects of the problem Sorenson addresses: the overall configuration of the land, the surface of the land, distances and directions, the Nephites’ environment and the ways they exploited it, civilization, and historical geography. For each chapter, Sorenson asks pointed questions, the sort we can imagine asking Mormon in person if we could, such as “What was the nature of the ‘narrow neck of land’?” (20) and “Where were the people of Zarahemla, or Mulekites, located before Mosiah<sub>1</sub>’s arrival among them?” (109). To each he presents short but thoroughly documented answers.

This documentation includes hundreds of references to scriptures and half a hundred citations to scholarly works in religion, anthropology, and history. Several of these are to earlier publications by Sorenson that contain still additional citations.<sup>1</sup> Together, these references provide persuasive support for his proposed locations of physical features, cities, and events. The book is further enhanced by seventeen smaller maps that clarify some of the more complicated or little understood events and issues, such as “The Amlicite Conflict” (63) and the “Possible Distribution of Cities Destroyed according to 3 Nephi 8–9” (119).

This is not to say that everything is clear and fits flawlessly together or that I agree with all of Sorenson’s conclusions. But for the overall scheme and most of the specifics, I find his arguments compelling. Where doubts remain, these are almost always because we lack essential information in the record.

Serendipitously, within a week or two of buying my copy of *Mormon’s Map*, I also discovered three fairly new books that tried to connect the Book of Mormon to the physical world.<sup>2</sup> It was instructive to read these and compare their criteria with those that Sorenson presented. One of these books, for example, has the River Sidon flowing to the south, toward the Land of Nephi,<sup>3</sup> rather than away from it to the north, as Sorenson concluded it must. I agree with Sorenson—such an arrangement is simply not justified by the ancient text.

Furthermore, this other author claims that the three references in the Book of Mormon to a “narrow neck of land” (Alma 22:32, Alma 65:3, Ether 10:20) refer to three distinct physical features, while Sorenson considers them all to be descriptions of the same element. Which is the correct understanding? I will leave you to decide, urging you to read *Mormon’s Map* slowly and carefully, to study the maps, and to reread the pertinent passages in the scriptures. It will be worth the effort.



However, I must remind you that trying to fit Mormon's map into the real world is but the third of the three "services" the map "can furnish" (127). Sorenson's more important goal is to help us better understand and appreciate the stories and people of the sacred text. I will close with an example of how this worked for me. Shortly after reading the explanation that the city of Nephi (or Lehi-Nephi) was higher in elevation than Zarahemla (32–33), I was reading Mosiah 7:1–4 and noticed how these verses consistently speak of people from Zarahemla traveling "up" to Nephi (see also Omni 1:13, where the people of Nephi originally fled "down" to the land of Zarahemla). I was reminded of the same relationship between Jerusalem and Jericho, the latter city being more than three thousand feet lower in elevation than the first, and the story of "a certain man [who] went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves" (see Luke 10:30). Having traveled the steep highway between these two cities, I can better appreciate this parable of the Good Samaritan and his experiences as he traveled "down" to Jericho.

Similarly, knowing that the people of the Book of Mormon also traveled up, down, over, and across in a world as real as that of the Bible can help us more fully "liken the concrete problems of the prophets' lives—their dilemmas and how they were delivered from them—to those we feel in our own lives" (3). *Mormon's Map* is an excellent aid to discovering "how God's dealings with them can be applied to our relationship with him" (3).

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1. For example, John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo: FARMS, 1992).

2. Jerry L. Ainsworth, *The Lives and Travels of Mormon and Moroni* (n.p.: Peace-Makers Publishing, 2000); Blaine M. Yorgason, Bruce W. Warren, and Harold Brown, *New Evidences of Christ in Ancient America* (Provo, Utah: Book of Mormon Research Foundation and Stratford Books, 1999); Paul Hedengren, *The Land of Lehi: Further Evidence for the Book of Mormon*, Version 2.2.55 (Provo: Tepran, 1999).

3. Hedengren, *The Land of Lehi*, 51–60.



DAVID L. BIGLER. *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998. 411 pp. Paperback, \$21.95. Hardback version available: Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark, \$39.50.

Reviewed by Paul H. Peterson

It can never be said that Will Bagley, editor of a distinguished series on the American West, and David L. Bigler, author of *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896*, are guilty of false advertising. In Bagley's preface to *Forgotten Kingdom*, he tells us (or warns us—in the case of Latter-day Saint readers) that Bigler is writing from an American rather than an LDS perspective. Bagley claims that the book is original (likely referring to some of Bigler's eye-popping conclusions) and that it will challenge the cherished beliefs of some readers (likely referring to LDS readers).

In his introduction, Bigler further elaborates on these claims. Unfairly, he implies that Mormons in the West have ended up being the proverbial quintessential Americans, while the true patriots, the gentile appointees and their friends, who busted their backsides to inculcate American principles in a people hopelessly mired in an anti-Union theocracy, have largely been forgotten. In rectifying this injustice, Bigler hopes to help Gentiles who have recently moved to Mormon country better understand how Latter-day Saints, admittedly decent and hardworking but sometimes suspicious and exclusive, came to be what they are. Claiming more than he should, Bigler notes that his is the only volume around “that looks at the theocratic period . . . as a whole in such a balanced way that a newcomer from Peoria . . . might better understand the state [of Utah] and how it became the way it is” (18).

Bigler carries out his task with efficiency. Assuming a chronological, confrontational mode (potentially an appropriate approach given the tension of the era), Bigler outlines how Mormons and Gentiles in the late nineteenth century went head to head on political control, on polygamy, on attitudes and practices concerning Native Americans, on education, and on economic matters. Interspersed along the way are occasional chapters that do not emphasize confrontation but rather outline particulars of controversial events or periods in the Mormon past, such as the handcart disasters, the Mormon Reformation, and the Mountain Meadows massacre. In these chapters, Bigler focuses on the blind faith, zealotry, and penchant for violence among some Church members that ultimately led to both hardship and bloodshed.



Consistent with prefatory and introductory promises, Gentiles fare well in this book. While Bigler admits that some of these Gentiles were more clumsy than others, he claims all of them were guided by pure intentions. Patrick Conner, for example, despite his questionable actions in the Bear River Massacre, comes off as a knight in shining armor, and even Judge McKean, for all of his runaway zealotry, is shown as having more good moments than bad ones.

Bigler is the past president of the Oregon-California Trails Association and a former member of the Utah Board of State History. His immersion in things western and Mormon is apparent in every chapter. He has clearly paid his dues to master the secondary literature of the period and in some cases has done much spadework in primary sources. His familiarity with relevant government documents is obvious.

Bigler also writes with verve and skill. His is a lively and smart prose. And his knowledge of trails and terrain is evident. Battles, encampments, and journeys—all are wonderfully contextualized in a geographical setting that only one who is intimately acquainted with the land could provide. I enjoyed reading the book.

But I do hope Bigler's book is not the only volume readers peruse, and I hope they bear in mind that all historians have certain angles of vision and that Bigler's angle of vision is not the only one in town. Among other volumes I hope they look at are Leonard Arrington's biography of Brigham Young and Davis Bitton's recent release on George Q. Cannon. I hope they read another survey on the history of Utah such as Thomas Alexander's *Utah, the Right Place* or Dean May's *Utah: A People's History*, which are also good sources that appeal to a broad audience. And all four of these works, from my perspective, capture the salient truth that, although Gentiles and Mormons were undeniably headed on a collision course that could end only with Mormon accommodation, many in both groups were well intentioned.

I readily concede that it would have been challenging to be a Gentile in territorial Utah. I can understand how some Gentiles had difficulty with marked ballots, the sweeping powers of Mormon-dominated probate courts, or Brigham Young's economic boycott of gentile merchants. I, too, would have been chagrined when justice was not meted out appropriate to certain acts of violence. And I suppose I could have been exasperated at how Mormons for years were able to frustrate federal laws forbidding the practicing of plural marriage.

Bigler clearly understands such challenges and deftly conveys them to his readers. And perhaps, as Bigler maintains, some gentile appointees have not received their just dues for trying to do their job. So far, well and good. But in his effort to honor the forgotten patriots, the character and the motives of the Latter-day Saints and especially of their leaders (hopeful of



escaping harassment and anxious to create Zion in an isolated mountain fortress that Gentiles happened upon sooner than any of them expected) take an unjustifiable drubbing.

This lack of balance, in my opinion, is due to Bigler's methodology. My overriding reservation with his methodology is at once both a compliment and a concern. Not only is Bigler a knowledgeable historian, he is also a fine thinker who can sometimes see relationships among seemingly disparate events. Sometimes a person's strength, however, if carried to an extreme, can become a liability, especially if one is assuming a worst-case scenario. In several instances, Bigler goes beyond his evidence in either forming conclusions or engaging in unnecessary innuendos. Let me give some examples.

Bigler is critical of Brigham Young's professed Indian policy of "feed rather than fight," concluding that this rubric often translated or transmuted into the sentiment that the natives must either cooperate or be exterminated (65). Certainly there were tragic occasions where Native Americans and Latter-day Saints fought and killed each other. But gentile Indian policy was hardly any more successful. By providing so little comparative information, Bigler leaves readers with the impression that Brigham Young's policy was singularly distinguished by a lack of both sense and sensitivity. Contrary to what most readers will probably conclude, the consensus among historians is that Mormons pursued a more benevolent policy than many other Whites. By settling on land claimed or frequented by Native Americans, both the Gentiles and the Saints encountered inevitable conflict.

The author also levels some real stingers at Brigham Young. For one, Bigler charges that, in order to fulfill a prophecy made ten years earlier, Brigham staged Rockwell's dramatic arrival on July 24, 1857, and subsequent announcement about a coming army (145). A more serious charge has to do with Bigler's claim that recently surfaced information indicates that Brigham Young played a more than indirect role at Mountain Meadows by telling Dimick Huntington to inform certain tribal leaders that the cattle of the emigrant train were theirs for the taking (167–68). I feel the evidence presented does not sustain either conclusion.

Bigler also throws out occasional unwarranted "teasers," suggesting that while evidence is scanty Mormon influence could well have been a factor in certain inglorious happenings. For example, in his last chapter, he subtly implies to readers that the "protective" ghost shirts worn by Native Americans during the Ghost Dance Millennial movement may have Mormon roots (345). This notion, of course, has circulated for many years but was effectively challenged by historian Lawrence Coates (whom Bigler cites on page 345) fifteen years ago. In view of such tenuous evidence (aside from its questionable relevance), one wonders why Bigler chose to include a



section called “The Last Fight of the Sioux” in a chapter ostensibly dealing with the Americanization of Utah. Bigler concludes this particular section with the plaintive declaration of a wounded Sioux woman that her bulletproof ghost shirt did not really work. Interesting? Yes. Tragic? Of course. But what is the point of it all?

I conclude on a lighter note. In his informative epilogue, Bigler notes that Mormon exclusiveness continues to this day. He adds that many Church members are blissfully ignorant of this reality. Hopefully neither exclusivity nor ignorance will prove persistent. Bigler graciously concedes that present-day Church members have inherited a number of ideals from their forebears that are laudatory, such as honesty, thrift, and self-reliance. But one carry-over quality he does not mention is devotion to an organization that not only shapes one’s life for good (my bias as a Mormon) but exacts a huge commitment in time. One can only hope that in future years more Latter-day Saints, amid their heavy family responsibilities and Church-related activities, will make the time to develop meaningful relationships with people of all persuasions. Likewise, one hopes that people of Bigler’s persuasion will make the effort to see both sides of the fence with equanimity. Walls of misunderstanding, suspicion, and exclusivity have stood long enough.

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SCOTT R. CHRISTENSEN. *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822–1887*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999. xviii; 254 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. Hardback, \$39.95; paperback, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Larry EchoHawk

After publishing a few articles on Native American history and studying the Shoshone language, Scott Christensen has completed his first full-length work, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822–1887*, which won the Evans Handcart Award at Utah State University. Christensen is to be commended for this well-written documentary of the man who was a leader of the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Indians as Indian-white relations developed in early Utah history.

Sagwitch's life is significant in many ways and deserves the attention Christensen has given him. Sagwitch was born in 1822, a time when his people were enjoying the last days of the traditional life they had known for centuries. After the Mormon pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and as western territories saw more and more exploration and settlement, the Northwestern Band of Shoshone were forced to forever change their patterns of living. Sagwitch was a wise man and a gifted speaker, and he fell naturally into the leadership role that he maintained among his band throughout his life. A survivor of the Bear River Massacre in 1863, Sagwitch believed his people would best survive by assimilating with the Latter-day Saints who were inhabiting the traditional Shoshone lands. He and his band converted to Mormonism and attempted to follow their church leaders' directions in learning to farm and raise livestock. This book details the life of Sagwitch and his band as they interacted with the White pioneers and with other Native American tribes.

Faced with the possible disappearance of his culture and people, Sagwitch painfully tried, but with only partial success, to help them adjust and assimilate. Although at times they prospered at farming in northern Utah and southern Idaho, Sagwitch's people eventually became "landless Indians" in comparison to the Shoshone Indians who were placed on reservations in Idaho, Wyoming, and Nevada. Only recently, in 1988, has the band formally organized themselves into a tribal government and received federal recognition as a tribal entity. Today's Northwestern Band of Shoshone, including Sagwitch's descendants, are armed with their own constitution and are striving to provide housing and other services for their tribal members on 185 acres of land near Washakie on the Utah-Idaho border, an area near some of their original hunting and gathering spots.

Christensen has done extensive research for this volume. It is well indexed, has detailed notes, and includes numerous photos, maps, and



documents. Most impressive is his use of an exhaustive list of sources, including census records, photos, ledgers, maps, correspondence, journals, personal histories, discourses, personal interviews, books, newspapers, periodicals, annual reports of the commissioner of Indian affairs, records of the Bureau of Land Management, and materials from the LDS Church Archives. There appears to be much new information contained within this small volume.

For the most part, this book is an easy-to-read, well-organized narrative. The author never presupposes or draws explicit conclusions of his own, nor does he insert overt personal judgments. Christensen is also skilled in developing all sides of each event. He goes to great lengths to present various views of the events that he describes in great detail. To do so, Christensen uses not only local and state sources but also out-of-state and national sources. The result is a biography that draws the reader deeper and deeper into the life of Sagwitch and his band of followers.

The author also meets the challenge of conveying a factual, unbiased report of the events surrounding Sagwitch's dealings with members and leaders of the LDS Church. Because Christensen is a member of the Church and works as an archivist in the Church's Historical Department, it would have been easy for him to paint a very different picture than the one his readers view. He is to be complimented for letting history speak for itself. Scott Christensen has written a significant history of Sagwitch and the Northwestern Band of Shoshone that can take its place alongside Brigham D. Madsen's chronicles of the Bannock and Shoshone peoples.<sup>1</sup>

Readers with an interest in the early history of Utah Native American tribes would also do well to watch for Christensen's current projects. He is working on two biographies: one about Chief Little Soldier of the Weber Utes and the other about Dimick B. Huntington, the LDS Church's Indian interpreter from the early 1850s until his death in 1879.

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1. Brigham D. Madsen, *The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985); Brigham D. Madsen, *The Bannock of Idaho* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1996).



DAVIS BITTON. *George Q. Cannon: A Biography*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999. xiv; 554 pp. Photos, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.

Reviewed by William A. Wilson

On November 22, 1850, ten LDS missionaries sailed from San Francisco to Hawaii to open that land to the preaching of their gospel. Among them was twenty-three-year-old George Q. Cannon. Born in Liverpool, England, in 1827, George, with his family, had been converted to the gospel in 1840 by George's uncle, Apostle John Taylor. In 1842 the family immigrated to Nauvoo. George's mother died on the voyage, and his father died shortly following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. John Taylor then became his surrogate father. George was ordained a seventy in 1845, at age eighteen, and was endowed the same year. He made the trek to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. In 1849, with a few select individuals, he was sent on a gold mission to California. From there he was sent on his mission to Hawaii.

By the time he left Hawaii almost four years later, over four thousand members remained behind in numerous branches. Even more remarkable, George had learned Hawaiian well enough not only to teach the natives in their own tongue but also to translate the Book of Mormon into their language. In December 1900, fifty years after the opening of the Hawaiian mission, George Q. Cannon returned to Hawaii to participate in the mission's jubilee celebration. He visited sites of his earlier experiences, preached to the members, instructed the missionaries, and prophesied the eventual building of a Hawaiian temple. Shortly after returning to the mainland in failing health, Cannon died on April 12, 1901.

In the years between his two Hawaiian experiences, Cannon married six wives and fathered forty-three children; was ordained an Apostle in 1860 at age thirty-three; served as an additional counselor to Brigham Young and as first counselor in the First Presidency to John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow; and played such a prominent role in Church, business, and civic affairs that in the development of nineteenth-century Mormonism and in the progress of Utah toward statehood few men could be considered his equal.

Now we have Cannon's remarkable life chronicled for us in Davis Bitton's equally remarkable biography. Drawing on rich primary sources, especially Cannon's journals and letters, Bitton brings his subject vividly alive. Some may wish the narrative moved ahead at a faster pace, but it is Bitton's use of extended quotations from Cannon himself, rather than summary or paraphrase, that makes the Apostle such a believable character.



Following his return to Utah from his mission in Hawaii, Cannon married Elizabeth Hoagland and then set out for San Francisco to get his Hawaiian translation of the Book of Mormon into print and to publish the *Western Standard*, which, in addition to serving the Saints in the area, would counter the virulent anti-Mormonism pouring from the pens of other newspaper editors. While in California, he also presided over the Pacific Mission. Returning to Salt Lake City in 1858, he was sent on a mission to the East to assist Mormon immigrants on their journey to Salt Lake Valley and to incline eastern presses toward a more positive view of Mormons.

After being ordained an Apostle, Cannon was sent almost immediately to preside over the British Mission. He directed mission activities, edited the *Millennial Star*, and supervised the emigration of British Saints. During this mission, he returned briefly to the States to take part in an abortive attempt to win statehood for Utah—he was to have served as one of the state's senators.

After his return to Utah in 1864, Cannon served as Brigham Young's personal secretary, began publishing the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1866, and was called in 1867 to edit the *Deseret News*. Beginning in 1872, Cannon served for nearly a decade as Utah's territorial delegate to the United States Congress. Throughout his tenure, enemies of the Church in Utah, from the media, and in the Congress attempted to deny him the seat he had won in fair elections, finally succeeding in 1882, following the passage of the Edmunds Act, which barred polygamists from holding public office.

During the remainder of the century, Cannon continued to defend the Church against attacks from its opponents, engaged in not-always-successful business endeavors to save the Church from financial ruin, spent time on the underground hiding from federal marshals, and served time in prison for his polygamous marriages. He was a key player with President Woodruff in producing the 1890 Manifesto that would eventually bring about the end of polygamy. He was also instrumental in breaking the Church's unified People's Party into two parties, Republicans and Democrats—a move necessary to win statehood in 1896. To the end of his life, he remained a political figure to be reckoned with.

In Bitton's biography, two themes dominate Cannon's life—the struggle over polygamy and the struggle to correct the malevolent distortions and misinformation spread everywhere by the Church's enemies. Bitton attempts to present the polygamy struggle as it occurred, without taking a stand, though he does take the rather relativistic position that the conflict was ultimately not over what was right and what was wrong but over what people holding two conflicting worldviews considered to be right and wrong.

Bitton shows us the tragedy and heartbreak that resulted from families being split apart as a result of federal intervention, but his description of



polygamy itself, at least as it was lived in the Cannon family, tends to focus on the “smiling aspects” of that peculiar institution—probably because the evidence would suggest that the Cannon wives and children really did live together in harmony and because Cannon genuinely loved them all and treated them fairly. In some families, however, there was a darker side of polygamy. Bitton’s oblique reference to Annie Clark Tanner’s “poignant account” in *A Mormon Mother* does not quite get at the issue (331). What’s more, Bitton makes short shrift of post-Manifesto polygamous unions. One might have expected him at least to respond to the charges made by D. Michael Quinn regarding these unions and Cannon’s alleged role in bringing them about.<sup>1</sup>

It was the struggle over polygamy, of course, that gave rise to the need to defend the Church—and the Church could have asked for no more eloquent a spokesman than George Q. Cannon. From his days as a missionary in Hawaii, when he called other Christian leaders to task for their blasphemous charges against the Church; to his days in San Francisco, where he played the same role as editor of the *Western Standard*; through his tenures as editor of the *Deseret News* and the *Millennial Star*; during his years in Washington, when he lobbied newspaper men, representatives, senators, and presidents; through close cooperative efforts with his non-Mormon supporter, Thomas L. Kane; during his political maneuverings to win statehood for Utah—during all these times and activities, as Bitton notes, “Cannon tirelessly promoted the cause of his people” (226).

One may not always admire the word games he sometimes played in giving less than forthright answers to questions about polygamy, but no one can question his devotion to the church that had won his unyielding allegiance. He did not carry the day—that was an impossible task so long as the Church continued to practice polygamy. But at least he made sure the Church’s voice was heard.

As the figure of George Q. Cannon emerges from the pages of Bitton’s biography, certain of his character traits become crystal clear. First and foremost is an unwavering, almost childlike faith in God and in the restored gospel, combined with a positive, optimistic view that no matter how bleak circumstances may look at the moment, God will in the end overrule all things for good. “We need not fear,” he said. “God is with us; the angelic hosts are with us, the glorious army of martyrs who have died for the truth in the past ages of the world are looking down upon us, interested in this great work and in its success” (297).

Second is a profound sense of duty combined with indomitable courage. When some of his discouraged missionary companions in Hawaii wanted to give up and return home, he persisted and persuaded others to persist. Throughout his life this pattern continued; he fearlessly and without apology stood up against lions.



Third is an intense loyalty to the Church and to his Church leaders. At the death of each President he served, Cannon felt he had lost his best friend. At Cannon's own death, President Snow stated, "In our councils, whatever might be the matter under consideration, although my decision was sometimes opposed to his views, he invariably yielded his point gracefully and gave me his most loyal support" (450).

Bitton tells us that his intention has been "to see the world through his [Cannon's] eyes, for his angle of vision best enables us to understand what motivated him and why he reacted as he did" (xiv). Especially through his use of primary sources, Bitton has in large measure achieved his goal. Still a fully objective picture is probably never possible, for the biographer always stands between his subject and his readers, selecting and interpreting the details readers will see. Perhaps one leaves this biography liking George Q. Cannon because Bitton so obviously likes him, even though he acknowledges his faults. Whatever the case, Bitton has produced a faith-promoting work in the best sense of that term, a work that promotes faith not by preaching but by drawing as honestly as possible a picture of a faith-inspiring man. For that we owe Davis Bitton a debt of gratitude.

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1. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (spring 1985): 73–82.



PETER L'HUILLIER. *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996. xii; 340 pp. Index. Paperback, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Carl W. Griffin

Following apostolic precedent (Acts 15), Christian leaders from early times convened local councils and synods to discuss and resolve ecclesiastical problems. When Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, ecclesiastical issues became problems of state that could affect the peace of the entire empire. The Emperor Constantine convened the first ecumenical (or universal) council to address one such set of problems, and succeeding emperors would do the same to resolve other problems. The first four ecumenical councils came to have a particular authority: Nicea (A.D. 325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451).

The work of the councils was twofold. Matters of faith and doctrine were always of predominant concern, and doctrinal definitions were issued as creeds, or "symbols" of faith. But the councils also discussed issues of church discipline and organization, judgments on which were issued as canons, or "rules of conduct." Collections of these canons, such as the Roman Catholic Church's Code of Canon Law, are analogous to the LDS Church's *Church Handbook of Instructions*, though much larger and broader in scope. Most of the very numerous scholarly works on the first four ecumenical councils focus on their theological projects and the controversies surrounding them. This book departs from the norm by focusing instead on their canonical legislation.

Peter L'Huillier is archbishop of the New York and New Jersey diocese of the Orthodox Church of America and adjunct professor of canon law at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary. He originally composed this work in French some twenty years ago and translated it into Russian for submission as a doctoral thesis in canon law at the Theological Academy of Moscow. This second translation, into English, is substantially unrevised in content. Following a brief introduction, the author treats the four councils in chronological order, first discussing the history and circumstances of their convocations, then providing an English translation of and commentary on each of the canons. L'Huillier, as an Orthodox canonist, is naturally interested in the interpretation of the conciliar legislation within Eastern Orthodox canon law. His introduction provides a historical conspectus of the subject, and his commentary, when it deals with the broader history of interpretation, is largely confined to the Orthodox tradition. Such discussion is valuable and interesting (and rare in an English-language



publication) though perhaps not of general interest. But the author's primary aim is to provide a careful grammatical and historical exegesis of the texts, focusing on the life situation (*Sitz-im-Leben*) and intentions of the original legislators. This he accomplishes admirably. Such analysis is valuable to church historians because canonical legislation is a critical source of information on ecclesiology, church discipline, and even social life.

By way of example, the third canon of Nicea "absolutely forbids any bishop, priest, deacon, or any other member of the clergy to have a woman living with him, unless she is a mother, a sister, an aunt, or any other woman completely above suspicion" (34). This canon is directed towards the practice of clergy cohabiting chastely with virgins. These women were taken in (thus their Latin epithet *subintroductae*) for their work as housekeepers as well as for their own maintenance and protection since the church was obliged to provide for a large number of widows and consecrated virgins. In some cases, the union was maintained to challenge ascetic virtue. Opponents charged that the motivation was often, in fact, carnal, even if not adulterous, and that in any case the practice gave cause for suspicion. L'Huillier notes both previous and subsequent legislation on the practice, indicating that it was persistent, and also argues that this legislation in no way implies mandatory clerical celibacy, as some would apparently read into the omission of a wife as a licit female companion. His concern on this point perhaps betrays his own confessional stance (with which Latter-day Saints would agree), but his assessment is doubtless correct.

The second canon of Chalcedon also addresses clerical regulation and reform, in this case the sale of church offices. This canon was enacted at the request of the Emperor Marcian (a relevant detail L'Huillier omits) to combat what had for some time been a widespread abuse. While one certainly might profit from office in one of the wealthier sees, many men would purchase a clerical appointment either to avoid military service, which was hereditary, or to escape the heavy taxation and compulsory community service that was the onus of landowners. As one of his first benefactions upon conversion, Constantine granted clerics and their families exemptions from such, but alarmed at the response, he attempted (and failed) to stem the flood of soldiers and landowners fleeing into holy orders. By the time of the Council of Chalcedon, the problem was critical. While naturally silent about the West, Pope Gregory the Great (died 604) would quip: "In the churches of the East, no one attains holy orders except through bribery" (217, reviewer's translation). L'Huillier briefly documents the persistence of simony, or the purchase or sale of religious offices, up to the present, as revealed particularly in the repeated enactment of this canon.

However useful his contribution towards such, L'Huillier has not attempted a synthetic analysis of canonical legislation within the church



history of the fourth and fifth centuries. Rather, he has written a precise philological and historical study of sixty-five early and influential canons, and within the ambit he describes, he has done so with judgment and acuity. Of particular value is his substantial text-critical and lexical study of each canon, which at times comprises more than half of his commentary. L'Huillier's frequent (but fragmentary) citation of the Greek text and of the Latin and Old Slavonic versions are useful for the specialist, though these citations and his discussion in general would have been much more useful if he had included the full Greek text on which his translations and commentary are based. The nonspecialist, however, will regret that his Greek, Latin, and Old Slavonic citations are not translated. In these respects, the needs of both specialist and nonspecialist might have been better met. Less venial is the author's decision not to update his twenty-year-old bibliography. Nor did L'Huillier "deem it indispensable" to revise his dated text at several points he might have (xi). But as an Orthodox churchman and canonist, he is able to make relevant to the present what others might consider dead history. Even in relatively recent times, he notes, a Russian bishop could, invoking the fourteenth canon of Chalcedon, forbid the marriage of a priest's daughter to a nonbeliever on pain of church discipline (243).

While this work is intended primarily for church historians and canonists, Latter-day Saints may find it of interest for the light it sheds on the struggles of the early Christian priesthood. Many of these early canons deal with issues of clerical misconduct, such as conspiracy, abduction, embezzlement, self-castration, heresy and schism, illegal translation to other sees, simony, ordination of neophytes, and similar irregularities. One ought not to generalize about such abuses, but they make more intelligible why there were reform movements at this time, and perpetually thereafter, that sought for an apostolic purity that the state church had lost.

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RODNEY STARK. *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997. xiv; 215 pp. Illustrations, index, bibliography. \$14.00.

Reviewed by John W. Welch and Kathryn Worlton Pulham

The burden Rodney Stark undertakes to bear in this book is a heavy one. He ventures to show that long before Constantine's Edict of Milan, Christianity had spread across an empire to become the force that would cause rather than result from the emperor's decree. This rapid rise of Christianity cries out for a thorough study of the sociological and socio-economic environment of its first four centuries. Having illustrated a plausible growth curve for the rise of Christianity, sociologist Stark observes and delineates easy parallels between the rise of the Christian movement and the growth of modern religions, giving particular attention to Mormonism.

Stark is well known for his projections of the future growth rates of Mormonism as a new world religion. For many reasons, Latter-day Saints should take particular interest in the very readable and informative explanations given by Stark to account for the extensive Christianization of the Roman Empire by the middle of the fourth century.

### **Stark's Thesis and Sociological Approach**

In his ten self-contained chapters, many of which come from the previously published Stark canon,<sup>1</sup> Stark illuminates several crucial events and historical trends that transpired in the first centuries of Christianity. Based on extensive sociological data, his conclusions rely on a very lengthy and competently extracted bibliography of the best sources on life in the world of postapostolic and precreedal Christianity. Stark's basic thesis, which may well come as a surprise to many historians, holds that normal geometric population growth rates, when coupled with peculiar demographic factors, demonstrate that the Christian population of the Roman empire would have exceeded on its own steam half of the population of the ancient Mediterranean world by the year 350. Thus, Christianity did not arise out of nowhere when Constantine adopted it as his state religion. In effect, he co-opted the most vigorously growing religion capable of enduring the social concerns of his day.

In the course of playing out his account of the rise of Christianity, Stark brings to the table a set of well-established sociological theories, developed and validated through modern social scientific research. The



theories explain to a large extent many phenomena, such as the dynamics of upper-class preferences for new religious movements, profiles of why mission activity succeeds, effects of networking in close social circles, demographic impacts of epidemics, birthrates, women's attraction to the religion, urbanization, cost-benefit analyses of martyrdom, and personal sacrifice as a rational human choice.

Though his arguments are oftentimes posed creatively and persuasively, Stark somewhat naïvely asserts that ancient and modern models for religious experience and conversion are congruent. He frequently relies too much on the repeatability of history: what has happened in one case dictates what did or should happen in another. Here Rodney Stark as sociologist consciously places himself and Isaac Newton as physicist on comparable planes—scientists who supposedly both develop universal truths. Stark asks us to “consider a physics that must generate a new rule of gravity for each object in the universe. And it is precisely the abstract generality of science that makes it possible for social science to contribute anything to our understanding of history” (22–23). Sociology as an explicative science based on the abstract and unpredictable, however, cannot be promoted to the status of universal truths. Though Stark admits that “some historians might be tempted to embrace such an assertion . . . that basic social . . . processes were different in the days of Rome from what they are now,” he promises that “no competent social scientist would consider” the claim that general social theories of religious conversion cannot span almost two thousand years of history (45). Even so qualified, the notion forces skepticism. Ancient and modern sociology are not of the same vintage. Stark's reliance on absolutes—even inconsistently in many cases—weakens his arguments, which therefore should not be overrated.

Moreover, some of Stark's explications are problematic. While as a sociologist he is required to follow the line of economic rationale even when explaining the irrational line of religious conversion, he fails to intersect the two. The book relegates religious conversion to a rational choice cost-benefit theory while at the eleventh hour it only lamely mentions the spiritual virtue of conversion as “its own reward” (215); the approach overly reifies conversion. Those interested in absorbing a more intense dialogue on the subject might read Steve Bruce's *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory*, in which Bruce specifically takes aim at Stark's economizing of conversion. Although Bruce finds preposterous Stark's materialization of religious experience, Latter-day Saints can to some extent allow Stark his free-market theorizing, considering the lack of true spiritual conviction among converts by the time of the fourth century, when the divergence from original Christianity had well evolved.



### **Stark's Use of Mormon Parallels**

As stated, Stark has taken up an ambitious task. Along the way, he compares what he has learned through his study of the growth of new religious movements in modern times with what he finds in the ancient experience. On five occasions, Stark draws explicitly on the Mormon experience:

1. Steady Mormon growth without the need for mass conversions in recent times shows that early Christianity could have grown at a similar manner and rate. "The numerical goals Christianity needed to achieve [in its first three hundred years] are entirely in keeping with the modern experience" of Mormonism, which has grown at a rate of 43 percent per decade. Evidence shows that early Christianity grew at a rate of 40 percent per decade, which under purely normal circumstances would have brought Christianity to a total of 56.5 percent of the population by the year 350 (6–7).

2. Stark's research among new religious movements has shown that "attachments lie at the heart of conversion and therefore that conversion tends to proceed along social networks formed by interpersonal attachments" (18). The first early Mormon recruits were among Joseph Smith's family and circle of close friends, and it appears that Jesus' first converts were also from a similar group. Again asserting a comparison between early Christianity and early Mormonism, Stark argues that "the statistics . . . require that Christianity arose through pre-existing networks" (56). Actually, very little historical evidence can be adduced from the records to clarify what social networks and affiliations existed in advance of early Christian conversions. But assuming that the early Christian mission to the Jews continued and succeeded well into the second century, as Stark argues, then preexisting networks of Jews throughout the Roman empire probably existed and were crucial in the growth of early Christianity, consistent with the modern data from Latter-day Saint missionary work.

3. Another social law important for Stark is that "people are more willing to adopt a new religion to the extent that it retains cultural continuity with conventional religion(s) with which they already are familiar" (55; italics removed). Just as "the message of John the Baptist and of Jesus gave form and substance to the dreams of a kingdom which had haunted many of their compatriots for generations"<sup>2</sup> and just as early Christians emphasized continuity with the Old Testament by quoting frequently from the law and the prophets, so Christian converts to Mormonism can retain much of their original cultural heritage while adding to it (55). By not asking converts to discard the Bible but to add a new set of scriptures to their religious library, "Mormonism does not present itself as an alternative to Christianity, but as its fulfillment. Joseph Smith did not claim to bring revelations from a new source, but to bring more recent tidings from the same source" (55).



4. Likewise, in exploring the question “How could a rational person accept grotesque torture and death in exchange for risky, intangible religious rewards?” (179), Stark again draws an interesting comparison between the Mormon experience and what we know of early Christian persecutions. In both cases, the movements retained members precisely because of the high costs involved, not in spite of them: inevitably so, the worth of a cause will increase proportionately when much is invested into it. Interestingly, Stark points out that the persecutors of early Christianity were interested in seizing and punishing only the leaders, while crowds of obvious ordinary Christians went unpunished.<sup>3</sup> In attempting to destroy Christianity from the top down, the persecutors made the mistake of assuming that the flocks of early Christians would disperse as soon as their shepherds were eliminated. Interestingly, opponents of early Mormonism made a similar erroneous assumption. Mormon opponents in Nauvoo assumed that the death of Joseph and Hyrum would end the Mormon fervor, and the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the national press predicted after Brigham Young’s death that Mormonism would follow him to the grave.<sup>4</sup> In both cases, the opponents underestimated the commitment of the rank-and-file members of the movement, who took advantage of organizational opportunities in the Church to perpetuate their mode of worship.

5. Stark corrects the long-standing generalization that all religious movements originated in lower-class deprivation. According to this thesis, Mormonism had a proletarian basis. But the accounts are neither documented nor credible considering that Mormonism in this context was viewed incorrectly as a Protestant sect rather than a new religion. Stark sees the mistake in this. In researching the economic class of typical converts, Stark has found that the people most prone to embrace new religious movements are those who have a substantial privilege in society but are not in the top economic echelons. In a lengthy discussion, Stark posits the necessity for a convert to have *relative deprivation*, such that only those who are at least somewhat deprived will see the need for (supernatural) compensation. These middle-ground privileged converts are typically educated and sophisticated enough to embrace the new ideas inherent in a new religion. Stark produces significant evidence that early Christian converts were well educated, blessed with intellectual capacity, and possessed sufficient social standing and privilege to host and perpetuate the new religious congregations. Likewise, Stark finds that the earliest Mormon converts came from a relatively prosperous area of western New York, were on the whole better educated than many of their neighbors, and displayed considerable intellectual sophistication. Moreover, extending this parallel, Stark points out that neither Mormonism nor early Christianity remained “a middle- and upper-class movement forever but eventually penetrated all classes”



(30–43; quote on 43). Although it does not take phenomenal wealth to launch a new religion, without sufficient resources from a person like Martin Harris or the benefactors who contributed to the building of the Kirtland Temple, the initial capital required to launch a new movement would fail. Likewise, it appears that several of Paul's essential collaborators, such as Lydia in Philippi and Prisca and Aquila in Corinth and Ephesus, were comfortably wealthy people; beyond that, many factors indicate that Paul himself (with his special status as a Roman citizen, exceptional education away from home, his ability to travel extensively, and the means to correspond with the aid of a personal scribe) was also in a comfortable financial situation.

### Further Possible Parallels

Although Stark draws explicit parallels to Mormonism on these five occasions, he could have done so at many more stages of his argument. A Latter-day Saint reader might find surprising the absence of some obvious parallels that would do nothing but bolster Stark's claims. Consider the following representative ideas mentioned in his portrait of early Christianity. Each of these elements has easily recognizable parallels in the Mormon experience: demographically, a slow but steady growth rate at first (7); the eventual emergence of a central seat that directs the broadening organization (9); the importance of a few major group conversions in the initial stages of growth (13); but more significantly the steady expansion of the religion based on friendship networks of members (17).

Challenging stresses, such as the epidemics that plagued the Roman empire in the second and third centuries but allowed Christianity to grow more rapidly when compared with the general population and forced relocations (76–77), can be compared with the catastrophic destruction brought upon the general society by the U.S. Civil War, World War I, and World War II, each of which allowed for Mormon advances vis-à-vis the rest of the population. Early Christianity responded to the social crises of its day by giving theological meaning to deep suffering (80) while providing physical welfare and relief (87), and miracles were especially important in confirming religious growth (90). Sociologically, women converts were in a majority in early Christianity (100) as reflected in the significant roles offered to women in early Christian congregations (109). An early “over-supply of marriageable Christian women” (111), together with socially and religiously adaptive practices and an approving ecclesiastical policy toward religiously mixed marriages, increased the relative fertility of Christians over and above the normal society (114–15). Stark also mentions the relative ease of travel (135) and the chaos of new urban settings (144) that were new in the world of early Christianity, conditions that also existed as new developments in the nineteenth century.



High social costs of conversion were also involved (167), but evidence of benefits and strong testimonials of eternal rewards, even in the face of martyrdom, encouraged membership loyalty (173–74), while the problems of free riders and false prophets were firmly handled (175). Certain stigmas of membership were happily borne (176), and costs of joining the group were simply subsumed into the enormous promises of future rewards (187–89).

Moreover, Stark points out, Christianity arose at a time when the state provided open opportunity for associations and organizations to form (191–93), while at the same time the strength of old religions was waning (191). Early Christianity offered a financially inexpensive, popular form of worship compared with the extremely expensive and aristocratic models of patronage and temple building and cult observances common in Greek and Roman religions (198). Moreover, Christianity seemed to follow only a few steps behind the trails blazed and the beachheads established by the worship of Isis and Serapis (199), and it attracted loyal membership by requiring exclusive loyalty to the Christian faith, while other religious options available did not require exclusivity. Similar conditions prevailed in antebellum protestant America.

Ultimately, Stark asks, “How was it done? How did a tiny and obscure messianic movement from the edge of the Roman empire . . . become the dominant faith of Western civilization?” (3) Perhaps the more appropriate question is, Why did paganism fail? Just as the less rugged individualistic gnostic groups were marginalized by the fourth century, paganism diminished into what Stark economically describes as a noncompetitive “religious firm” devoid of *belonging*. Paganism’s (soon-to-be monopolistic) competitor would concertededly generate this feeling of belonging within its members, particularly women. Women escaped paganism’s brutality (female infanticide, forced abortion) and joined Christianity’s pursuit of “humanity” (215), thus making possible marital assimilation and hence in-the-faith childbirth. We could say, then, that Stark agrees at least in part with Brigham Young, who professed at the outset of polygamy that women (particularly plural wives) would provide the structural basis for the religion. Thus, another parallel emerges. In both early Christianity and early Mormonism, women were guardians of religion. Recognizing this point takes one step towards answering the question Stark poses.

### Agendas for Future Research

Typical of his engaging unconventionality, Stark invites us to consider a set of excellent questions that should well set the agenda for further research, especially for Latter-day Saint scholars. Good questions are rare commodities, and Stark’s questions open obscure doors onto early Christian history. For the most part, Latter-day Saint approaches to the early



centuries of Christianity have been primarily negative. Typical works on the Apostasy by Latter-day Saint authors present the story as one of darkness and despair, with little good happening as the ways of early Christianity were warped and distorted beyond recognition. Stark, with his proclaimed interest in Christian conversion patterns, missionary work, fellowship, morality, and charity, is in a strong position to attest to the survival of these virtues throughout the so-called Dark Ages. Fortunately, Latter-day Saint scholars are in the same position and can pick up where Stark has left off. This book urges a research agenda to repeal the perception that no Christian virtues survived the Apostasy.

In this regard, Latter-day Saint scholars might look more attentively at the parable of the wheat and the tares given by Jesus in Matthew 13. According to this parable, which is Jesus' prophecy of the coming Apostasy, the wheat and the tares would be allowed to grow side by side until the day of final judgment. This parable tells us that much of the wheat would survive into the period of apostasy and loss of authority, and the problem would be, not the nonexistence of many good and true things, but the inability of people to distinguish in those early years between the wheat sown by the Savior and the tares sown by the evil one. The Restoration of the gospel, however, allows us to see what was wheat and what was tare. By applying to history the keys of knowledge restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith, scholars may thus identify vestiges of the teachings of Jesus Christ that survived well into and throughout Christian history. The task of the Restoration is to bring the true and living church "out of obscurity" (D&C 1:30); fittingly, Stark sheds light on many corners of this long and recursive process, from its obscure beginning in antiquity to implications in the latter days.

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1. Earlier versions of the chapters: "The Class Basis of Early Christianity" appeared in *Sociological Analysis* 47 (1986): 216–25; "Epidemics, Networks, and Conversion" appeared as "Epidemics, Networks, and the Rise of Christianity," in *Semia* 56 (1992): 159–75 (L. Michael White, guest editor); "The Role of Women in Christian Growth" was given as the Paul Hanly Furfey Lecture, 1994; "Christianizing the Urban Empire: A Quantitative Approach" appeared as "Christianizing the Urban Empire," in *Sociological Analysis* 52 (1991): 77–88; "Urban Chaos and Crisis: The Case of Antioch" appeared as "Antioch as the Social Situation for Matthew's Gospel," in *Social History of the*



*Matthean Community*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 189–210; the theoretical propositions included in “The Martyrs: Sacrifice as Rational Choice” appeared in Rodney Stark and Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Rational Choice Propositions about Religious Movements,” in *Religion and the Social Order: Handbook on Cults and Sects in America*, ed. David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Haddon (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1992), 241–61; and Rodney Stark and Laurence R. Iannaccone, “A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the ‘Secularization’ of Europe,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33 (September 1994): 230–52.

2. Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), 10.

3. Stark, 208; citing Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 129.

4. “Brigham Young as a Ruler,” *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, August 30, 1877, 2; and “Press Remarks,” *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, September 4, 1877, 3.



# Brief Notices

*The Dead Sea Scrolls: Questions and Responses for Latter-day Saints*, by Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000)

To call the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the archaeological find of the twentieth century is an understatement. The world's understanding of Judaism and early Christianity has been increased to such a degree that I would not hesitate to call it the greatest contribution to non-LDS biblical studies since the Reformation.

This handy volume by Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks answers seventy basic questions for Latter-day Saints, whetting the appetite for anyone interested in Dead Sea Scroll research. These answers are divided into eight parts, ranging from a description of the discovery to specific texts and insights.

Twenty photographs and illustrations accompany the text, including a map of the Qumran community, a photo of the Copper Scroll, and the locations of the various caves where the scrolls were discovered. A bibliography of Dead Sea Scroll articles written by LDS authors is appended, as well as lists of English translations and general studies on the scrolls.

The good news for Latter-day Saints is that the eminently qualified authors of this little book offer a succinct alternative to wading through scholarly sources that are far beyond the needs of many general readers. As far as this reviewer is aware, no other up-to-date summary of the Dead Sea Scrolls exists that offers in such an excellent manner the important facts concerning this momentous discovery.

—Gary P. Gillum

*A Call to Russia: Glimpses of Missionary Life*, by Thomas F. Rogers (BYU Studies, 1999)

Rather than using a traditional straight narrative, Tom Rogers, Professor Emeritus of German and Slavic Languages at BYU, effectively tells the story of his term as mission president in St. Petersburg, Russia, through a roughly chronological collection of short reflections and anecdotes. Many passages found in this account are taken from his own journal, with additional stories and observations contributed by his family and by the missionaries themselves. In these short passages, Rogers gives penetrating insights into his own soul, the strengths and failings in Russian society, the attributes of a good missionary, and the qualities that make Church organizations work. He writes with brutal honesty about his own failings, especially in the first section covering the beginning of his mission. It is revealing to see that the early months of a mission are full of many small embarrassments, foolish mistakes, and a general lack of comfort and that incidents such as those portrayed here can be and are experienced as much by the mission president as by the young missionary.

Rogers does not fail to mention the drudgery and disappointments of missionary work, including the guilt he and his missionaries felt because of their inability to help most of the numerous people they found drowning in alcoholism. Such discussion makes the joy over the miracles of the work, which he also details, that much stronger. Most satisfying are the discussions of how Russian districts and branches work. Rogers's loving descriptions of the wisdom and foolishness of his local leaders are masterfully portrayed. And in that portrayal, important lessons can be drawn that are applicable even to readers in large, stable wards in the United States.



*A Call to Russia* is the best nonfiction book on missionary work I have ever read and is among the best LDS nonfiction–essay books put out in the last decade. It is on the level of the works of the best LDS authors in almost every way: intellectual depth, writing skill, and spiritual imagination. Many writers have one or two of those qualities, but few have all three. At the same time, the book is full of enough interesting stories to appeal to readers on a variety of levels. I especially recommend it as a gift for soon-to-be missionaries and mission presidents.

—Andrew Hall



# A Biblical Sonnet

## To Rachel

*And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her.*

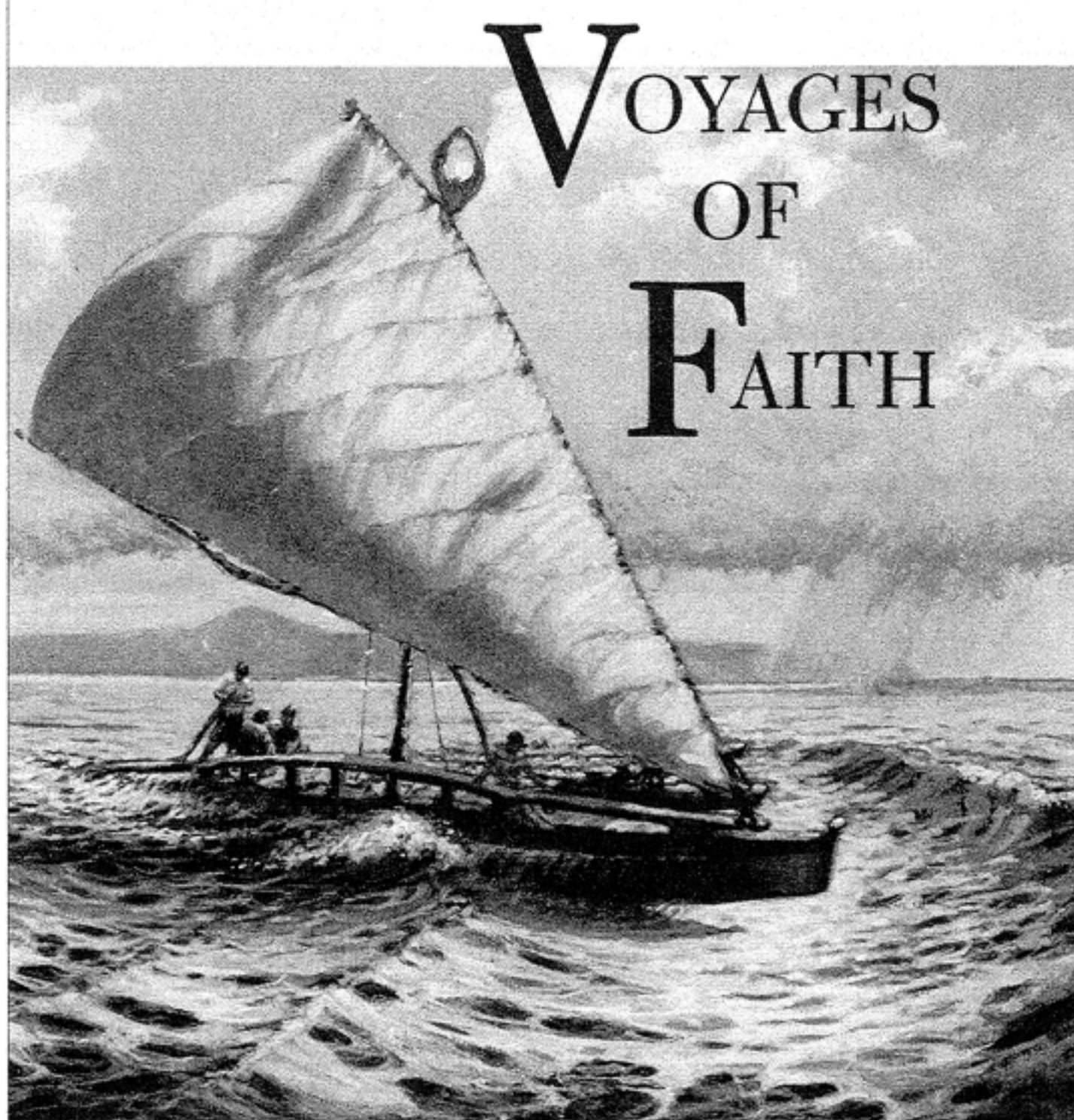
Genesis 29:20

Your voice ran lithe as lions through my blood;  
My limbs would lift and liven with your gaze.  
Your eyes, so deep, spilled darkness like a flood  
(Such dark would soothe a thousand garish days).  
Each sun came up, and each one was your smile,  
And long and long the wheat fields waved like hair.  
The wind was light, and every pleasant while  
the thought of you would fill my chest like air.  
You pulled so strong that even time was bent  
and curved beneath the power of your grace,  
and all was end and endless where you went—  
I marked the days by sunlight on your face.  
So years were born, and flashed like gold, and died—  
My heart could sing forever by your side.

—Marilyn Nelson



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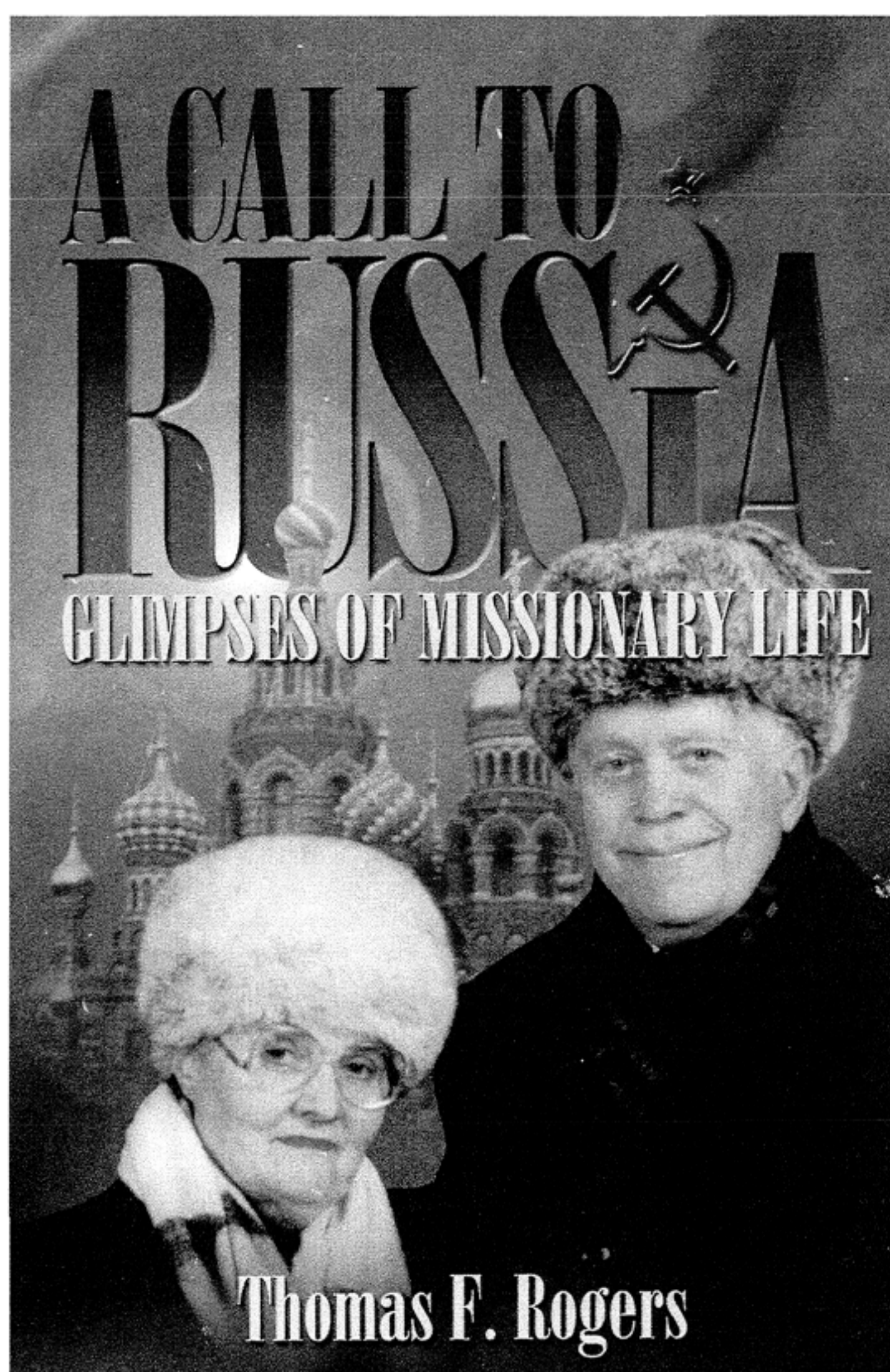
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Hopeful and heartbreaking, sobering and exultant, *A Call to Russia* captures missionary life as experienced by a mission president, his wife and daughter, and the sisters and elders who served under him. But above all, this book is an invitation to reflect upon our own lives. Some glimpses from President Rogers:

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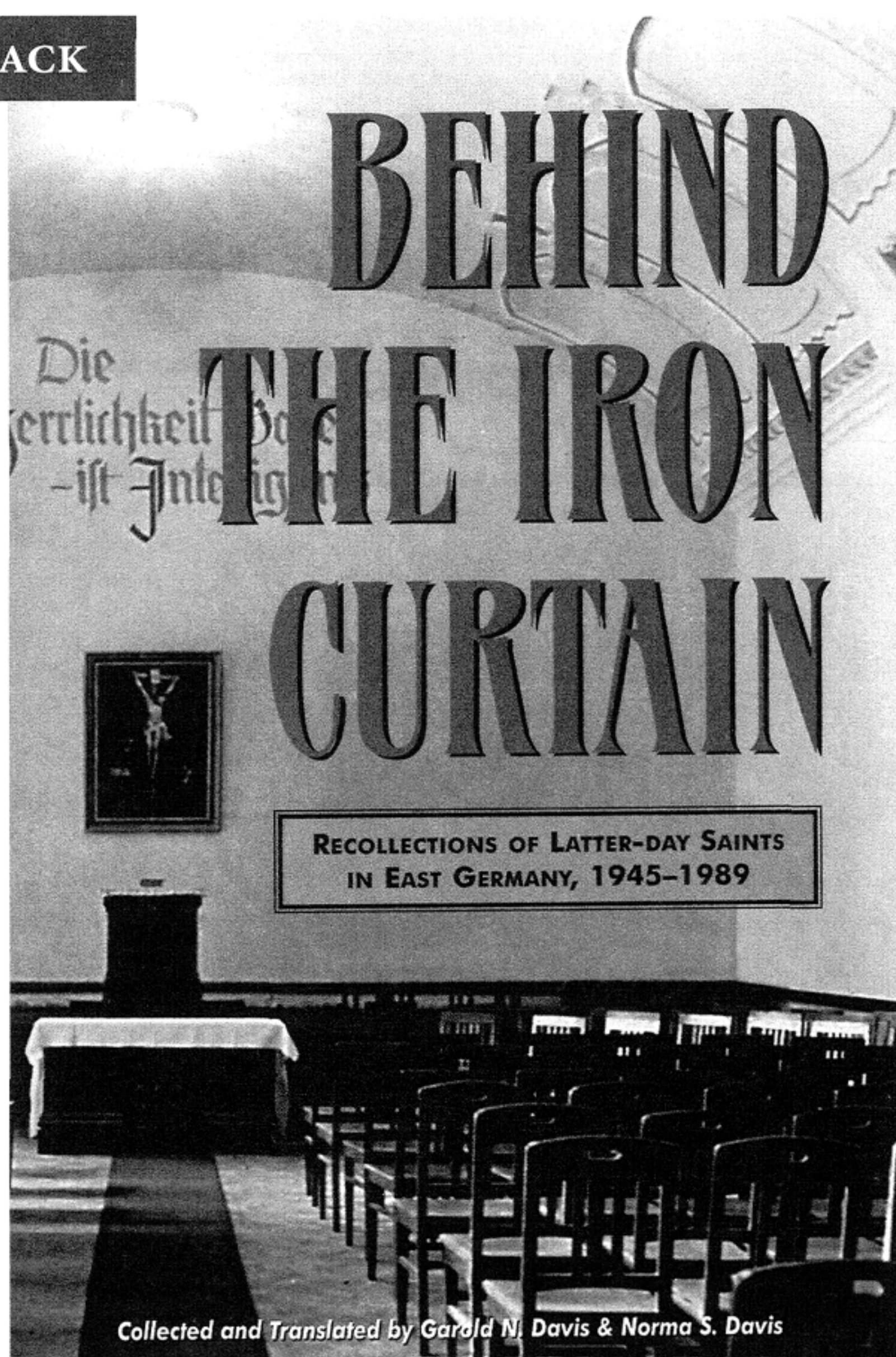
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Through the personal histories of East German Saints, *Behind the Iron Curtain* brings to life a chapter of LDS Church history that cannot be missed. Witness these excerpts from two Latter-day Saints showing their perserverance and faith:

We started to walk along the river away from the death and destruction. We were part of a pilgrimage of thousands of people who were tired and homeless and in shock. The injured remained behind, lining the path.

—Dorothea Condie

Sister Herod pulled out a long stocking from behind a kitchen cabinet and began untying several knots. She made a dish of her hands and filled them with money from the stocking. "This is my tithing. Even though it has been twenty-five years, I knew that the priesthood would visit me some day."

—Günter Schulze



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# POPOL VUH



THE MYTHIC SECTIONS—TALES OF  
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*Translated and Edited by*  
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Allen J. Christenson

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LDS PERSPECTIVES ON IMAGES OF CHRIST:

A LATTER-DAY SAINT ARTIST

A CULTURAL HISTORIAN

AN ART HISTORIAN

A PROFESSOR OF RELIGION

JOSEPH SMITH'S 1844 ELECTIONEERS

LETTER FROM LIBERTY JAIL

JOSEPH SMITH ON GENESIS 1:1