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William W. Major’s painting, depicting Joseph Smith meeting with members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In a similar setting, the Prophet gathered members of the Twelve to give them his last charge. Courtesy Church History Museum.
"I Roll the Burthen and Responsibility of Leading This Church Off from My Shoulders on to Yours"

The 1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession

Alexander L. Baugh and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

The document presented and discussed in this paper is one of the most important early Latter-day Saint manuscripts associated with both the final months of Joseph Smith’s life and the postmartyrdom (or apostolic) interregnum period. Written in late 1844 or early 1845, the document appears to have been drafted for possible use as an official statement by the Twelve concerning Joseph Smith’s “last charge” to them, given at a special meeting held in late March 1844, three months before his death. On this occasion, the Prophet conferred upon the Twelve the priesthood keys and authority necessary to lead the Church following his death. The document is a powerful, declarative, united testimony that the Twelve were the authorized legal successors to Joseph Smith. Furthermore, the declaration provides valuable historical information concerning the March meeting—including where the meeting was held, which members of the Twelve were present, and the core of what Joseph Smith said on that occasion.¹

¹ In later months and years, members of the Twelve present at the time Joseph Smith conferred the priesthood keys and issued his “last charge” wrote or spoke about the experience. See Wilford Woodruff, Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:455; Wilford Woodruff, in Times and Seasons 5, no. 20 (November 1, 1844): 698; Wilford Woodruff, in Millennial Star 5, no. 9 (February 1845): 136; Parley P. Pratt, “Proclamation,” Millennial Star 5, no. 10 (March 1845): 151; Orson Hyde, in Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1855–1886), 13:180 (October 6, 1869); Wilford Woodruff, in Journal of Discourses 13:164 (December 12, 1869); Wilford Woodruff, in Millennial Star 49, no. 46 (November 14, 1887): 722; Wilford Woodruff, in Millennial Star 54, no. 34 (August 22, 1892): 530; Wilford Woodruff, in Journal History of the Church, March 12, 19, 1897. For an
Introduction to the 1844/1845 Declaration of the Twelve Document

The significance of this document went virtually unknown or unrecognized until 1981. Part of the reason for the document’s obscurity lies in the fact that it was never issued publicly or published by the Twelve, and as time passed it became part of the voluminous Brigham Young papers. We have found no evidence to suggest that the document, in whole or in part, was ever published anywhere before 1981.2

In 1970, simultaneous with the emergence of more professional scholarship among the LDS historical community, the first monograph advocating apostolic succession appeared in print. However, the book did not include any portion of or reference to the 1844/1845 document. Titled Succession in the Church, Reed C. Durham Jr. and Steven H. Heath’s work details the leadership role of the Apostles between 1835 and 1844 to demonstrate that the Apostles had the necessary authority and right to lead the Church following the Martyrdom. Unfortunately, in producing their narrative the writers relied almost exclusively on published sources, so it is no wonder that the 1844/1845 document does not appear in their work.3

In the early and mid-1970s, D. Michael Quinn’s studies focusing on 1844 succession authority produced new insights and interpretations. Significantly, however, in his discussions on apostolic authority, Quinn made

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2. For example, in his treatment of apostolic succession in his multivolume century-history of the Church, B. H. Roberts, who was well familiar with document sources, fails to demonstrate any knowledge whatsoever of the document. See 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), 2:413–25.

no reference to the 1844/1845 document, suggesting he may have been unaware of its existence.⁴

Credit for the initial discovery of the document should be given to Ronald K. Esplin, past director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University and present managing editor of the Joseph Smith Papers project. In the late 1970s, while completing his doctoral studies, Esplin focused on the preparation and development of the Twelve, as well as their expanding role in the Church leadership. Part of that research led him to produce an informative essay in 1980 on the events that led the main body of Latter-day Saints to accept Brigham Young and the Twelve as leaders beginning in August 1844. In the essay, Esplin mentions that “in the spring of 1844 [in] a dramatic meeting . . . Joseph Smith gave the Twelve additional priesthood keys along with a charge to ‘bear off the Kingdom’ to all the world—to build on the foundation he had laid.” Esplin continues, “As he had several times intimated since 1842, Joseph Smith on this occasion in March 1844 told them still again that he would not be long with them.” Such wording, which parallels somewhat the 1844/1845 document, suggests Esplin was aware of the manuscript, and he was no doubt even referring to it, but he gives no source for the material.⁵ However, the following year (1981), Esplin published a landmark essay on the 1844 succession question, and on this occasion he included several actual statements from the 1844/1845 document. His use of the document in the essay clearly illustrates that he not only knew of the manuscript’s existence but recognized its significance as well.⁶


Thus, Esplin was the first historian to actually cite and quote from the document and include portions of it in a published interpretive essay. Shortly thereafter, Leonard J. Arrington, relying on Esplin’s work and recognizing the significance of the 1844/1845 document, included several excerpts from the manuscript in his discussion on succession in his monumental 1985 biography of Brigham Young. In 1995, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel began work on a long-term project documenting all known images of Brigham Young, forcing him to wade through the massive Brigham Young Papers. In his searches, he came across the 1844/1845 manuscript and wrote about it in two separate books. With the exception of Holzapfel, during the decade of the 1990s, no other published works by LDS historians or authors on the subject of 1844 apostolic succession referred specifically to the manuscript. Significantly, however, in an April 1995 general conference

7. The same year Esplin published “Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity” (1981), Andrew H. Ehat completed a master’s thesis entitled, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981). Ehat cited two sentences from the 1844/1845 manuscript, indicating his awareness of the document. The citation he used was intended to indicate to the reader that Joseph Smith predicted his martyrdom three months previous. He did not cite the document as evidence of apostolic priesthood succession. See Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances,” 165. Ehat also attributes the document to Hyde, whereas Hyde may have been merely the recorder. Although Ehat’s thesis was completed the same year Esplin’s article on succession appeared, Esplin should be credited with bringing the document to light.


address, President Boyd K. Packer briefly cited a portion of the document to illustrate the fact that prior to his death Joseph Smith conferred upon the Twelve the priesthood keys necessary to lead the Church.11

It is only within the last five years that the Twelve’s “last charge” document has become more widely known. In 2005, Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera published a full text of the statement, but the authors provided no historical background or context for the reader.12 In addition, in 2007, LDS curriculum included two brief excerpts from the text in the Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society manual Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith.13

**Dating the Manuscript and Describing the Document**

Although the date of the document transcription is not given, it can be approximated. The text refers to a meeting held in Nauvoo on September 8, 1844 (the meeting was Sidney Rigdon’s excommunication trial). Therefore, the document had to be written sometime after September 8. Furthermore, the text states that the “last charge” meeting was held “the latter part of the month of March last” (italics added), meaning late March 1844. Since reference is made to “March last,” the document had to have been written before March 1845, but after September 8, 1844.

Initially the document was likely drafted to defuse Rigdon’s leadership claims. Immediately following the August 8 meeting in which the Twelve were sustained as the Church’s new leadership, Rigdon began undermining their authority, which resulted in his excommunication exactly one month later. Significantly, the minutes of Rigdon’s September 8 excommunication trial indicate that the March “last charge” meeting was one of the topics of discussion. In a portion of his remarks given at the trial, Orson Hyde emphasized one reason why Rigdon could have no claim on the leadership: he was not even present during the meeting in which the priesthood keys were conferred upon the Twelve. Significantly, Hyde’s

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comments bear a number of striking similarities to the Twelve’s apostolic succession document.14 Following his excommunication, Rigdon remained for a few days in Nauvoo, where he secured a few followers, but by November he was in Pennsylvania with intentions of garnering the support of LDS branches in Kirtland and in the East.15 Rigdon’s attempts during fall 1844 to garner support probably prompted the Twelve to make an official statement regarding the events that led to their receiving from Joseph Smith the authority to lead the Church.

Besides Rigdon, the Twelve also had to deal with another detractor, thirty-one-year-old James J. Strang. In August 1844, Strang produced a letter, purported to have been written by Joseph Smith nine days before his death, appointing Strang as his successor and designating a location near Burlington, Wisconsin (later named Voree), as the new place of Mormon gathering. Word of Strang’s claims reached the Twelve in Nauvoo in August, which led to his excommunication on August 26.16 Thus, while the Twelve apparently hoped their declaration would put to rest Rigdon’s influence, they were probably also targeting Strang’s claims.

14. Orson Hyde’s remarks on this occasion were as follows:
"Before I went east on the 4th of April last, we were in council with Brother Joseph almost every day for weeks, says Brother Joseph in one of those councils there is something going to happen; I dont know what it is, but the Lord bids me to hasten and give you your endowment before the temple is finished. He conducted us through every ordinance of the holy priesthood, and when he had gone through with all the ordinances he rejoiced very much, and says, now if they kill me you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom, as fast as you will be able to build it up; and now says he on your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest, for the Lord is going to let me rest a while. Now why did he say to the Twelve on YOUR shoulders will the responsibility rest, why did he not mention Brother Hyrum? The spirit knew that Hyrum would be taken with him, and hence he did not mention his name; Elder Rigdon’s name was not mentioned, although he was here all the time, but he did not attend our councils.”

15. For an examination of Rigdon’s activities during this period, see Richard S. Van Wagoner, Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1984), 352–60, 367–81. While Van Wagoner’s examination of the historical events is commendable, he paints a negative and unfavorable image of Joseph Smith and the Twelve.

After examining the historical sources, we conclude the document was drafted sometime during the fall of 1844. However, allowance must be given to extend the dating of the document to as late as March 1845.

If the document is so significant, the question might be asked, Why was the Twelve’s “declaration” never officially published or released? The answer may lie in the fact that those who were invited to attend the private meetings conducted by the Prophet Joseph Smith during the early months of 1844 were instructed to remain silent about the details of the closed meetings. For example, at a meeting held on March 10 (just a little over two weeks prior to the “last charge” meeting), those attending were told that “Joseph required perfect secrecy of them” regarding the things they had learned and were being taught. This possibly explains why William Clayton and Wilford Woodruff, both of whom were thorough and detailed diarists, did not record any of the particulars regarding the “last charge” meeting in their diary records. Given the restriction by the Prophet not to discuss what transpired in the closed-door meetings, the Twelve, at least initially, appear to have been cautious about sharing many of the details associated with the “last charge” meeting.

Many important events occurred in the Red Brick Store in Nauvoo, including the “last charge” meeting described in the 1844/1845 declaration of the Twelve. The original store was demolished in 1890. The Community of Christ rebuilt the store in 1978–79 and maintains it today. Courtesy Alexander L. Baugh.

17. Joseph Smith Diary, March 10, 1844, cited in Scott H. Faulring, ed., An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books 1987), 459; this sentence is lined through in the original. Later, one participant disclosed to a reporter, “For the time being, this was to remain a perfect secret until God should reveal to the contrary,” and Joseph Smith “swore them all to present secrecy, under the penalty of death!” George T. M. Davis, Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith (St. Louis: n.p., 1844), 7.
The two-page manuscript is written in Orson Hyde’s handwriting on unlined paper measuring approximately 12 x 8 inches. The fact that the document is in Hyde’s handwriting suggests several possibilities regarding the document’s actual authorship. One possibility implies that perhaps the document was collectively authored by the Twelve and Hyde was chosen as the scribe to write the draft. Or, Hyde may have been assigned by the Twelve to draft the manuscript and then submitted it to the Twelve for their approval and authorization. Finally, Hyde may have independently drafted the document and then submitted it to the Twelve for their approval. Regardless of who actually authored the document, the subject matter and content provide invaluable historical information as well as a collective testimony of the Twelve regarding the “last charge” meeting.

A note that reads “March 1844 Declaration of the 12 Apostles” was added later and is written sideways in the lower right-hand corner of the second page. This note should not be mistaken as the date the document was drafted. The manuscript is part of the Brigham Young Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

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18. As indicated, the document is in the handwriting of Orson Hyde. Hyde left Nauvoo on September 10, 1844, to travel to Kirtland, Ohio, to bring his family to Nauvoo. Hyde was also absent from Nauvoo most of the month of January 1845, spending his time St. Louis. In February he again returned to St. Louis on Church business and was gone for about a month. See Myrtle Stevens Hyde, Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), 183–85. Hyde’s absence from Nauvoo during most of the winter of 1845 supports the conclusion that the document was probably drafted in the fall of 1844.
The Document

We, the undersigned, do hereby solemnly, sincerely, and truly testify before God, angels, and men, unto all people whom this certificate may come, that we were present at a Council in the latter part of the month of March last, held in the City of Nauvoo in the upper part of the brick building situate[d] upon Water Street, commonly known here as “Joseph’s Store,” in which Council Joseph Smith did preside; and the greater part of the Twelve Apostles were present namely, Brigham Young, Heber C Kimball Orson Hyde, Parley P Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, Amesa Lyman, Willard Richards, and Wilford Woodruff. These we

19. The fact that the names of the Twelve do not appear at the end of the manuscript suggests that they were preparing the document for newspaper publication and possibly intended that their names would be added by the printer at the end.

20. The exact date of the meeting is not known, but several sources refer to late March 1844. Wilford Woodruff, who kept a daily journal during this period, suggests the meeting occurred on Tuesday, March 26. His entry under that date reads: “A rainy [sic] day. I met in council with the brethren.” Woodruff, Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 2:371. No other entry in Woodruff’s journal during the latter half of March suggests any other possible council meeting with the Twelve and others. William Clayton’s diary entry for March 26 reads, “In Council through the day.” William Clayton, Diary, March 26, 1844, Church History Library, as cited in William Clayton, An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 128. The Prophet’s own diary states, “Tuesday, March 26 1844 From 9 to 12 in council. From 2 to 5 P.M. in council. Warm, some wet.” Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 461. Joseph Smith’s published history under this date reads: “From nine to twelve, noon, in council; also from two to five p.m.” History of the Church, 6:274. As noted in the text, it is probable that Woodruff and Clayton purposely did not include specific details associated with the meeting because they were so instructed by Joseph Smith.

21. Joseph Smith’s two-story Red Brick Store, completed in January 1842 and situated on Water Street west of Joseph Smith’s home properties (that is, Homestead and Mansion House), was the center of Joseph Smith’s church, civic, and business operations and activities in Nauvoo. A small room on the second story served as the Prophet’s office. A larger room was used for meetings of the municipal council, Nauvoo Legion, Relief Society, and the leading councils and quorums of the Church. Joseph Smith also administered the temple ordinances to selected initiates there beginning on May 4, 1842. For an examination of the function and significance of the store, see Roger D. Launius and F. Mark McKiernan, Joseph Smith, Jr.’s Red Brick Store (Macomb, Ill.: Western Illinois University, 1985).

22. In March 1844, the Quorum of the Twelve consisted of thirteen Apostles (listed in seniority)—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, William Smith, Orson Pratt, John E. Page, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff,
feel confident were all present on that occasion besides many others who were of the quorum of high Priests to which we ourselves belong.\textsuperscript{23}

George A. Smith, Willard Richards, Lyman Wight, and Amasa M. Lyman. On August 20, 1842, Orson Pratt was excommunicated, leaving a vacancy in the quorum, at which time Amasa M. Lyman was ordained an Apostle to fill the vacancy left by Pratt. Five months later, on January 20, 1843, Pratt was rebaptized and reinstated in the quorum, thereby bringing the number in the quorum to thirteen. To rectify the situation, Joseph Smith made Lyman a counselor to the First Presidency, although he also continued as a member of the Twelve. See Breck England, \textit{The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt} (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 81, 84–85; also Loretta L. Hefner, “From Apostle to Apostate: The Personal Struggle of Amasa Mason Lyman,” \textit{Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought} 16 (Spring 1983): 92. Hefner incorrectly states that after Lyman became a counselor to the First Presidency he was no longer a member of the quorum, when in fact he retained his position in the body.

The four Apostles who were not listed as being present at the March 26 meeting were William Smith, John E. Page, George A. Smith, and Lyman Wight. At the time, the standing of William Smith, John E. Page, and Lyman Wight in the quorum was dubious. (William Smith was subsequently excommunicated by the Twelve on October 19, 1845; and John E. Page was excommunicated on June 27, 1846. Following the martyrdom, as plans were being put into place to leave Nauvoo, Lyman Wight felt compelled to strike out on his own to establish a colony in Texas.) Why were they not there? Were they not invited to the meeting? Was it Joseph Smith’s intent to purposely give the keys only to the more faithful members of the Twelve? Possibly so. The absence of George A. Smith’s name in the document poses some additional questions. Was he possibly present and Hyde inadvertently failed to include his name along with the other members of the Twelve, or was he actually missing? If he was not present, did he receive the keys at a later time? And finally, it is significant to note that both Sidney Rigdon and William Law were conspicuously absent. This is not surprising when considering the fact that Rigdon’s loyalty to Joseph Smith and the Church had been in question for months. See Van Wagoner, \textit{Sidney Rigdon}, 311–25. Law’s case was even more tenuous. In January 1844, he was dropped from the First Presidency, and less than four weeks after the “last charge” meeting he was excommunicated. See Lyndon W. Cook, \textit{William Law} (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), 18–19.

\textsuperscript{23} Although the text states that those present consisted of the Twelve and the quorum of high priests, Andrew H. Ehat gives evidence to show that the meeting was actually a meeting of the Council of Fifty, first organized on March 11, 1844, a little more than two weeks previous to the March 26 meeting. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances,” 162–63. Historian Klaus J. Hansen also writes that the “last charge” meeting was a Council of Fifty meeting but does not give a date. See Klaus J. Hansen, \textit{Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History} (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 63–64. Writing nearly sixty years later, Benjamin F. Johnson, a member of the Council of Fifty who was in attendance, recalled the events of the meeting as follows:
In this Council, Joseph Smith seemed somewhat depressed in spirit, and took the liberty to open his heart to us concerning his presentiments of the future. His own language to us on that occasion, as nearly as we can recollect, was as follows.

Brethren, the Lord bids me hasten the work in which we are engaged. He will not suffer that you should wait for your

“And now returning to the council and the ‘Last Charge.’ Let us remember that by revelation he had reorganized the Holy Priesthood, and by command of the Lord (D. & C. 124 and 123) had taken from the First Presidency his brother Hyrum to hold as Patriarch, the sealing power, the first and highest honor due to priesthood; that he had turned the keys of endowments, to the last anointing, and sealing together with keys of Salvation for the dead, with the eternity of the marriage covenant and the power of endless lives. All these keys he held, and under these then existing conditions he stood before that association of his select friends, including all the Twelve, and with great feeling and animation he graphically reviewed his life of persecution, labor and sacrifice for the church and kingdom of God, both of which he declared were now organized upon the earth. The burden of which had become too great for him longer to carry, that he was weary and tired with the weight he so long had borne, and he then said, with great vehemence: ‘And in the name of the Lord, I now shake from my shoulders the responsibilities of bearing off the Kingdom of God to all the world, and here and now I place that responsibility, with all the keys, powers and privileges pertaining thereto, upon the shoulders of you the Twelve Apostles, in connection with this council; and if you will accept this, to do it, God shall bless you mightily and shall open your way; and if you do it I now shake my garments clear and free from the blood of this generation and of all men;’ and shaking his skirt with the great vehemence he raised himself from the floor, while the spirit that accompanied his words thrilled every heart as with a feeling that boded bereavement and sorrow.”


D. Michael Quinn lists Johnson as becoming a member of the Council of Fifty between March 14 and April 11, 1844. See D. Michael Quinn, “The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945,” BYU Studies 20, no. 2 (1980): 194. Johnson’s presence at the “last charge” meeting indicates he had been admitted to the council in March.

24. In January 1844, two months previous, William Law, Second Counselor to Joseph Smith, was dropped from the First Presidency primarily because of his opposition to the doctrine of plural marriage. By March, William, his brother Wilson, Robert D. and Charles Foster, Chauncey and Elias Higbee, and a number of others were openly manifesting their opposition against the Prophet. Joseph’s despondency probably stemmed from the growing dissent being mounted against him by Law and the others. On April 18, 1844, about three weeks after the “last charge” meeting, William, his wife Jane, Wilson Law, and Robert D. Foster were officially excommunicated from the Church. See Lyndon W. Cook, William Law (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), 28–29; and History of the Church, 6:341.
The 1844/1845 declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles regarding
apostolic succession, written by the hand of Orson Hyde, a member of the quorum.

Courtesy Church History Library
endowment until the Temple is done. Some important scene is near to take place. It may be that my enemies will kill me, and in case they should, and the keys and power which rest on me not be imparted to you, they will be lost from the Earth; but if I can only succeed in placing them upon your heads, then let me fall a victim to murderous hands if God will suffer it, and I can go with all pleasure and satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation is laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared in this dispensation of the fulness of times. Upon the shoulders of the Twelve must the responsibility of leading this church hence forth rest until you shall appoint others to succeed you. Your enemies cannot kill you all at once, and should any of you be killed, you can lay your hands upon others and fill up your quorum. Thus can this power and these keys be perpetuated in the Earth. Brethren, you have many storms to pass through, and many sore trials await you. You will know what it is to be bound with chains and with fetters for this cause sake. God knows I pity you and feel for you; but if you are called to lay down your lives, die like men, and pass immediately beyond your reach of your enemies. After they have killed you, they can harm you no more. Should you have to walk right into danger and the jaws of death, fear no evil; Jesus Christ has died before you.

After this appointment was made, The Twelve received confirmed by the holy anointing under the hands of Joseph and Hyrum, Joseph continued his speech unto them, saying, while he walked the floor and threw back the collar of his coat upon his shoulders, “I roll the burthen and responsibility of leading this church off from my shoulders on to yours. Now, round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest a while.” Never shall we forget his feelings or his words on this occasion. After he had thus spoken, he continued to walk the floor, saying: “Since I have

25. At the time, eleven of the thirteen members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had already received the endowment from Joseph Smith. The only two Apostles who had not received the endowment were William Smith and John E. Page, both of whom, as noted, were not present at the meeting. Joseph’s expression that it was not expedient that they “should wait for your endowment until the Temple is done” implies he had intentions to administer the endowment to a number of others who were present on that occasion.

26. The wording from the text implies that the Twelve received the priesthood keys by the laying on of hands of both Joseph and Hyrum Smith. At the time, Hyrum held two priesthood offices, patriarch and assistant president of the Church (co-president), the position formerly held by Oliver Cowdery (see D&C 124:91–96). The fact that both Joseph and Hyrum held the keys jointly explains why the Twelve specifically state both participated.
rolled the burthen off from my shoulders, I feel as light
as a cork. I feel that I am free. I thank my God for this
deliverance."

We gave our testimony on the 8th of September last before
a special conference in this city, at which Sidney Rigdon was
tried and excommunicated from the church;27 and altho’ we declared
it there in the presence of many thousand people,28 we now feel
it a pleasure in reducing it to writing, and freely give our names
to the world in confirmation of the above statements; and further,
that Joseph Smith did declare that he had conferred upon the
Twelve every key and every power that he ever held himself
before God. This [is] our testimony [and]
we expect to meet in a coming
day when all parties will know that we have told the truth
and have not lied, so help us God.

[Side note added on the bottom of page 2] March 1844
Declaration of the 12 Apostles

27. The entire minutes of Rigdon’s excommunication trial were published.
See “Trial of Elder Rigdon” Times and Seasons 5 (September 15, 1844): 647–55; and
“Continuation of Elder Rigdon’s Trial,” Times and Seasons 5 (October 1, 1844):
660–67.

28. Rigdon’s trial was conducted by the Twelve in a large assembly of the
Latter-day Saints. The meeting was likely held in an open-air meeting place, some-
times referred to as the east grove, situated on the southeast corner of Knight and
Robinson Streets in Nauvoo. Beginning in April 1844, the east grove became the
preferred general meeting place for the Saints. See LaMar C. Berrett, ed., Sacred

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Clocks Have Not Stopped

Earth still pirouettes around the sun.
Big Dipper still points north.
Mother, you taught
as if each of us were the only one,
left us north, south, east, west
but hid your compass in a dot-to-dot sky.
Left us stunned but still hiking, searching
early mornings for nautilus shells.

—Norma S. Bowkett

This poem won first place in the BYU Studies 2009 poetry contest.
Even though we are well into the twenty-first century, we continue to be profoundly affected by events and developments of the twentieth century, a period of tremendous human achievement and remarkable progress in so many areas. The world’s population increased fourfold while the global economy increased twentyfold. The material quality of life improved for people around the world in ways unprecedented in human history. But the twentieth century left for us daunting challenges, including a host of environmental problems that challenge the well-being of current and future generations, such as the threat of disruptive climate change, the irreversible loss of biodiversity, and the scarcity of clean water.

This article explores the potential role religious belief might play in U.S. environmental policy making. It examines how religious groups are engaged in environmental policy making, the strengths and limitations of these efforts, and the prospects for religious-based contributions to environmental protection policies. Given the importance of environmental stewardship in Mormon theology, the article includes a discussion of how the experience of other believers might illuminate some of the choices members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints face when engaging in public debates over environmental policy.

Ecological Threats

A series of reports by the World Resources Institute, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Worldwatch Institute, and a host of scientists in other research institutions, universities, and government agencies have outlined a sobering set of environmental threats, risks, and
Gary Clifford Bryner (1951–2010) was an exceptional teacher, mentor, scholar, and example. He cared about students and associates; he cared about the power of ideas and knowledge; he cared about the economically poor and the sustainable potential of the earth. As a faithful Latter-day Saint, he sought for the sacred in idea and action with a constant focus on good works and the potential of humankind to care more for one another and for the earth.

I was privileged to first meet Gary in the early 1990s. He was a freshly tenured faculty member, an engaged law student, and was on his way toward several prestigious teaching awards. I was an undergraduate majoring in conservation biology and was impressed with Gary's peaceful confidence in the power of interdisciplinary solutions to many environmental problems. When it came time for his honors environmental science class to travel to Mexico, I tagged along. I made a minor contribution to the development projects, but Gary made a major contribution to my growing environmental philosophy, teaching me that many problems are solved through interdisciplinary cooperation and passion. Gary showed me, first as a student and later as a colleague, an example of how individuals can use their unique talents to make a difference in the world.

Gary served on the board of directors for the Inter-American Foundation and the Mali Rising Foundation and worked as a consultant to the Pew Charitable Trusts, making an even broader impact on international development. Remarkably, while he was mentoring students, he went back to school and received his juris doctorate from the J. Reuben Clark Law School. With this degree, together with his PhD in political science from Cornell University, he had the tools necessary to link broad global issues such as energy and climate-change law to impacts on individuals in developing countries. This paper is representative of his life effort to connect his disciplinary expertise with his strong faith to promote a more sustainable, equitable world consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

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Brigham Young University
challenges.¹ Many environmental threats are characterized as ecological problems that affect humans only indirectly, such as reports that one in four mammals faces extinction because of habitat loss, hunting, and climate change.² Other environmental problems threaten life directly. For instance, a study by Plantlife International reported that some 15,000 of the estimated 50,000 plant species that have medicinal value to humans face extinction due to habitat loss, overharvesting, and pollution.³ “The World Commission on Water predicts that water use will increase by 50 percent over the coming 30 years and that 4 billion people—half the world’s population—will live under conditions of severe water stress in 2025.”⁴ One-third of the world’s population lives in countries already experiencing moderate to high water stress, and without serious water conservation measures and coordinated watershed planning among water users, that portion could rise to two-thirds in the next thirty years. Climate change is widely viewed by scientists as the most serious environmental threat facing humankind because of its potential impact on drinking water supplies, water for agriculture, the spread of diseases, and a host of other problems.⁵ Table 1 summarizes some of the major global environmental threats that are widely discussed in the scientific literature.

In 2009, a group of scientists writing in the journal Nature proposed a way to identify and quantify boundaries for human activity that should not be transgressed if we are to prevent unacceptable global environmental changes. Such boundaries are necessary if we wish to preserve the environmental stability the planet has enjoyed during the past ten thousand years. They argue that human activities have pushed earth systems beyond the boundaries of the stable environmental state and pose catastrophic threats for much of the planet. During the Holocene era, environmental changes have been ubiquitous but within the regulatory capacity of earth systems to maintain stable conditions that are friendly to human development. Since the Industrial Revolution, a new era called the Anthropocene has been dominated by growing use of fossil fuels and industrialized agriculture that threaten the planet’s stability and could result in abrupt and possibly irreversible changes, with significant negative impacts on human development.⁶

Scientists estimate that human interference with three of the nine earth-system processes—climate, biodiversity, and the nitrogen cycle—has caused them to exceed safe boundaries, and others are close to doing so. These thresholds can be defined by critical variables such as the concentration of carbon dioxide or the number of species going extinct beyond the natural or background level. The climate boundary is proposed to be 350 parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere (the current level is 387). The boundary for biodiversity loss is no more than one per million
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global and Environmental Trends</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biodiversity</strong></td>
<td>Around 24 percent of mammals and 12 percent of birds are classified as threatened.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deforestation</strong></td>
<td>The net loss in global forest area from 2000 to 2010 averaged 5.2 million hectares annually, down from 8.3 million hectares during the 1990s. The net loss during the period from 2000 to 2010 equalled an area the size of Costa Rica.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desertification</strong></td>
<td>Desertification affects as much as one-sixth of the world’s population, 70 percent of all drylands, and one-fourth of the world’s total land area and costs the world approximately U.S. $42 billion a year.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Energy</strong></td>
<td>Global energy use, which has increased nearly 70 percent since 1971, is projected to increase at more than 2 percent annually for the next 15 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fish Stocks</strong></td>
<td>Three-fourths of the world’s fish stocks are in distress and nearing depletion while marine ecosystems continue to deteriorate.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Land Degradation</strong></td>
<td>By 1990, poor agricultural practices had contributed to the degradation of 562 million hectares, about 38 percent of the roughly 1.5 billion hectares in cropland worldwide. Since 1990, an additional 5–6 million hectares have been lost to severe soil degradation annually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td>One-third of the world’s population lives in countries experiencing moderate to high water stress. Every day, 2 million tons of human waste are disposed of in water courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wetlands</strong></td>
<td>It is estimated that 50 percent of wetlands have been lost since 1900.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources:
species each year; the current rate is between one hundred to one thousand times that rate. The limit for the amount of nitrogen removed from the earth, used to produce fertilizer for agriculture and other purposes, is proposed to be 35 million tons per year; the current volume is 120 million tons. Excess nitrogen ends up polluting waterways and coastal regions, and nitrous oxide is a potent greenhouse gas. Boundaries may soon be reached for global freshwater use, the amount of land converted to cropland, and ocean acidification. All these boundaries are also intertwined: “We do not have the luxury of concentrating our efforts on any one of them in isolation from the others. If one boundary is transgressed, then the other boundaries are also under serious risk.” There are many uncertainties about how long it will take to produce dangerous environmental changes or “trigger other feedbacks that drastically reduce the ability of the Earth system, or important subsystems, to return to safe levels.”

Three characteristics of global environmental trends are particularly significant. First, we cannot grow our way out of environmental problems simply by continuing to pursue economic growth. Environmental trends are clear and sobering. Many of the most serious environmental problems have grown worse, such as greenhouse gas emissions, the loss of biodiversity, and the accumulation of chemicals in the environment. Environmental scientists argue that the planet cannot sustain current levels of economic growth pursued by the wealthy, industrialized nations. Our current consumption of natural resources is not sustainable, especially if people in the developing world increase their resource use. These growth problems not only threaten people living now but also pose a tremendous challenge for succeeding generations as they pursue their life choices. This is what environmental scientists describe as unsustainability—the current, unprecedented level of pollution and consumption that is occurring in the industrial world that cannot be extended to everyone on earth and cannot be sustained into the future. The idea of the ecological footprint compares the environmental consequences of actions with natural resource limits and ecosystem functions. It ultimately estimates how many earths would be required to provide the flows of resources and wastes if everyone on earth lived a particular lifestyle. The ecological footprint—the amount of land needed to supply food, housing, energy, transportation, and goods and services—of the average American is twenty-four acres, but the United States only has about thirteen acres per person. The deficit it made up by importing resources from other countries and outsourcing pollution. Other high-consumption societies have a similar deficit.

Second, the most immediate environmental problems are typically found in the less developed countries, where poverty and environmental
decline are inextricably intertwined. People who struggle to survive often engage in environmentally unsustainable practices, and they are particularly affected by water and air pollution, lack of clean drinking water and sanitation, and loss of biodiversity. Addressing Third World problems is a profoundly important moral imperative because of the opportunity this affords to reduce suffering and remedy inequities in the distribution of benefits and burdens throughout the world. But it also poses a major political challenge since those who are best positioned to help solve these problems may be unaware of them and largely unaffected by them.

Third, in the past, the public has sometimes been more alarmed about environmental problems than scientists and policymakers, who have often criticized average citizens for having irrational fears and for poorly understanding risks. Now the opposite is occurring. Most scientists are alarmed about the loss of biodiversity, the threat of climate change, and the ecological unsustainability of our economy. In the case of climate change, for example, there are tremendous uncertainties and unknowns about the causes and consequences of disruptive climate threats, and the uncertainty means that future conditions could go either way, from relatively benign evolution to catastrophe. “A Warning to Humanity,” endorsed more than a decade ago by more than a thousand of the world’s leading scientists, summarizes the situation in sobering terms: “Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. . . . If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know.”9

These three characterizations of the state of the global environment are contested. Some measures of environmental quality show significant improvement over time. Air pollution, for example, the kind of pollution that in general has the greatest impact on human health, has improved throughout the developed world. In the United States, emissions of total suspended particles peaked around 1950 and declined steadily until the 1980s, primarily as a result of increased use of cleaner fuels and controls placed on fuel burning. Carbon monoxide emissions peaked in about 1970 and have fallen noticeably since then, largely a result of motor vehicle emission controls. Emissions of volatile organic compounds, the primary constituent of ozone pollution, also peaked in the 1970s but have declined only slightly in subsequent decades, as have nitrogen oxide emissions. Economic growth, technological modernization, and environmental regulation combine to improve air quality.10 Data from other industrialized countries show a similar pattern of dramatic improvement in air quality
Theology and Ecology

over the past three decades while, at the same time, population has grown by more than a third and their economies have more than doubled.11

As countries become wealthier, their citizens demand more protection from environmental hazards, and they have the resources to invest in cleaner technologies and in pollution control. The most immediate environmental problems are increasingly found in the less developed countries, where poverty and environmental decline are inextricably intertwined. Longer-term environmental threats, such as disruptive climate change, are a concern in both the industrialized and the developing world. Global warming has already been associated with significant changes in the climate of some regions and is expected to exacerbate problems of drought and severe storms that are already a plague throughout the developing world. Consumption of nonrenewable resources is similarly a global problem. Many petroleum engineers and analysts, for example, argue that we have reached or soon will reach peak oil, the point at which the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached and production begins an inexorable decline. But demand is steadily growing, and this will produce a tremendous gap between supply and demand, creating profound disruptions as prices eventually rise and conventional economic growth no longer becomes possible.12 These problems not only threaten people now but also pose a tremendous challenge as we think about their impact on the lives of future generations.

Some advocates of economic growth argue that future generations will be better off if we leave them greater wealth to adapt to whatever problems they face, rather than trying to prevent specific problems from occurring.13 Investments made now, such as the development of new technologies and new sources of clean energy, will benefit those who come after us. There is a yawning gap between economists and ecological scientists over the future of the planet, with many economists arguing that wealth is the key to the future, and that it can be used to solve whatever environmental problems occur, while ecologists warn that natural processes and ecological services on which life depends are irreplaceable.14 The message of economists is much more attractive: continue to consume as much as you want, be free to live your lives as you wish, and do not worry about future generations. However, as discussed below, the warnings from ecological science about the importance of ensuring our activities are environmentally sustainable is a much more cautious, conservative approach to how we live our lives and much more consonant with religious values and beliefs than the pursuit of unbridled growth and consumption.
Mormon Theology and Environmental Stewardship

Evidence of practices that threaten a sustainable planet should be no surprise to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The day we live in has been characterized by “great pollutions upon the face of the earth” (Morm. 8:31). There are plentiful natural resources, but they are to be distributed equally: “The earth is full, and there is enough to spare” (D&C 104:17). “And it is my purpose to provide for my saints. . . . But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low” (D&C 104:15–16). “Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell” (D&C 104:18). The warning applies not just to members of the Church: “The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance. But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin” (D&C 49:19–20). Many other scriptures emphasize the importance of temporal equality and eliminating poverty (see D&C 70:14; 78:6; Moses 7:18).

These themes are also reflected in statements by Presidents of the Church and have been quoted in other contexts but seem to be particularly relevant here. Said Brigham Young: “The earth is very good in and of itself, and has abided a celestial law, consequently we should not despise it . . . but rather desire and strive to obey the same law that the earth abides. . . . Fields and mountains, trees and flowers, and all that fly, swim or move upon the ground are lessons for study in the great school of our Heavenly Father. . . . Not one particle of all that comprises this vast creation of God is our own. Everything we have has been bestowed upon us for our action, to see what we would do with it.”

Hugh Nibley wrote, “A favorite theme of Brigham Young was that the dominion God gives man is designed to test him, to enable him to show to himself, his fellows, and all the heavens just how he would act if entrusted with God’s own power; if he does not act in a godlike manner, he will never be entrusted with a creation of his own worlds without end.”

Nibley observed:

In commanding Adam to “be fruitful, and multiply,” God also informed him that he had given the identical command to all his other creatures, and furthermore, that he was putting Adam in charge of things to see to it that his purposes were fulfilled. Specifically, he was to “replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over” every living
thing in the biosphere (Abraham 4:28). There are two clearly marked
departments—the earth itself as a storehouse and source of life, which
Adam is to keep replenished (filled is the word), and the creatures that
move about on and over the earth, over which he is to have dominion.
As Brigham Young explains it, while “subduing the earth” we must
be about “multiplying those organisms of plants and animals God has
designed shall dwell upon it,” namely, “all forms of life,” each to multiply
in its sphere and element and have joy therein.17

President Ezra Taft Benson, speaking as President of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles, warned Church members:

Every generation has its tests and its chance to stand and prove itself.
Would you like to know one of our toughest tests? Hear the warn-
ing words of President Brigham Young, “The worst fear I have about
this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and his
people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell.
This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty and all manner of per-
secution and be true. But my greatest fear is they cannot stand wealth.”

Ours then seems to be the toughest test of all for the evils are more
subtle, more clever. It all seems less menacing and it is harder to detect.
While every test of righteousness represents a struggle, this particular
test seems like no test at all, no struggle and so could be the most deceiv-
ing of all tests.

Do you know what peace and prosperity can do to a people—It can
put them to sleep. The Book of Mormon warned us of how the devil, in
the last days, would lead us away carefully down to hell.18

President Harold B. Lee offered a similar view: “We are tested and we are
tried, we are going through some of the severest tests today and we don’t
realize perhaps the severity of the tests that we’re going through. . . . Today
we are basking in the lap of luxury, the like of which we’ve never seen before
in the history of the world. It would seem that probably this is the most
severe test of any test that we’ve ever had in the history of this Church.”19 So
did President Spencer W. Kimball:

The Lord has blessed us as a people with a prosperity unequaled in times
past. The resources that have been placed in our power are good, and
necessary to our work here on the earth. But I am afraid that many of
us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and
wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have
power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can
stand? . . .

As the Lord himself said in our day, “They seek not the Lord to
establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and
after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the
world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall
perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:16;
emphasis added). . . . It may seem a little difficult at first, but when a person begins to catch a vision of the true work, when he begins to see something of eternity in its true perspective, the blessings begin to far outweigh the cost of leaving “the world” behind.

A growing literature articulates Mormon perspectives on the environment. Hugh Nibley’s essays are among the earliest explorations of the implications of Mormon theology for environmental issues. Thomas G. Alexander, Richard Jackson, and others have explored the role of environmental ideas in the settlement and development of Utah and the West. Two volumes of essays on environmental issues have been published in recent years. Terry Tempest Williams, William B. Smart, and Gibbs M. Smith edited *New Genesis: A Mormon Reader on Land and Community*, with essays on personal conversion to environmentalism, philosophical perspectives, environmental sustainability in developing countries, early Mormon practices and environmental principles, and examples of ecologically sustainable practices. In *Stewardship and the Creation*, George B. Handley, Terry B. Ball, and Steven L. Peck brought together more than a dozen essays on the history of conservation in Utah, philosophical and theological frameworks for environmental stewardship, environmentalism and economic prosperity, sustainability and cities, and studies of practical issues such as the management of national forests, reintroduction of the wolf into Utah, and landscape water conservation.

These and other essays suggest a number of principles that Mormon scriptures and sacred teachings can contribute to the debate among people of faith over the theological implications of religion for environmentalism. These principles have been well developed in the literature and are only summarized briefly here. First, the earth and all creation belong to God; they witness, bear record of, and reflect his power and love for humankind. The earth’s resources are to be used not just to meet human needs but also to elevate the human spirit. All forms of life have intrinsic value. All are creations of God. All living things have a spiritual as well as an earthly dimension, and all were created spiritually before being placed on the earth physically (see Moses 3:5; D&C 59:18). Second, our use of resources should be guided by principles of equity, conservation, and minimal waste; consumption that meets our needs; and restraint that encourages spiritual values (D&C 49:19–20; 70:14; 104:14–17). Third, materialism and overconsumption are threats to environmental and spiritual well-being. The biblical injunction of Luke 12:15, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” is repeated in Mormon scriptures where members are urged to seek first the kingdom of God and to trust not in the
things of the world (see Jacob 2:18–19; D&C 121:35). Fourth, humans have a sacred stewardship to protect and preserve creation for themselves and for succeeding generations (D&C 104:11–17).

The personal stories of how Mormons have come to embrace a strong commitment to environmentalism are wonderful illustrations of the difficulties involved in embracing ecological values in a world where material comforts are so beckoning and high levels of consumption are the norm. Environmentalism challenges our embrace of worldly values such as the pursuit of wealth and the accumulation of worldly possessions. Church leaders have warned against similar threats to our spiritual well-being since the time of Joseph Smith. Of all these principles, stewardship seems to be mentioned most often by essayists who write about how their theology informs their views on environmentalism. Why is this such an important concept to Mormons? One reason might be their belief that, as Eugene England put it, “all God’s creations—including animals, plants, even, it seems, the rocks themselves—have a spiritual existence and identity that can be loved and must be respected.”

As Adam and Eve were instructed in the creation story, humankind received the charge to care for all of creation. A second reason may lie in Mormonism’s agrarian roots and the way in which early members of the Church were so intimately connected to the land. They knew firsthand the importance of stewardship for their personal survival.

Particularly significant here is the fundamentally important idea that families can have an eternal existence. Mormon theology inextricably connects each generation with those that come before and after it. Latter-day Saints are well known for their intense interest in genealogy and in performing vicarious ordinances in temples, such as baptism for ancestors who lived without the Church. There is a tremendous emphasis on welding generations together, linking them both forward and backward in time through responsibilities and stewardships to seek the spiritual well-being of others. Among the most prominent of biblical scriptures quoted by Mormons is Malachi’s promise that the prophet Elijah would be sent to the earth to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [God] come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:5–6). While the focus here is a spiritual stewardship, the scriptures also include the idea of stewardship over the natural world.

Theology and Ecology

One of the key issues in environmentalism is the development of an ethic that compels support for changes in attitudes and expectations, such
as replacing the idea of economic growth with ecological sustainability and for specific measures such as higher energy prices that promote conservation and reduce consumption. Changing attitudes and expectations is a tremendously difficult task. Progress has been only very modest at best. Most respondents of U.S. public opinion polls, for example, report they care about the environment, but their support is actually very thin for the measures that are most difficult and essential in pursuing a path of ecological sustainability.

Since theology is such an essential source of fundamental human motivation, it is naturally at the center of humankind’s efforts to develop an ethic of sustainability. While sustainability is clearly compatible with the idea of self-interest, especially our interest in ensuring a healthy environment for our own future, it is much more dependent on an ethic of caring for others and accepting the responsibility for how our actions limit or expand the choices of not only those with whom we share the planet now but also those who come after us. Theologians have offered a number of ideas for the formation of an environmental ethic. Thomas Berry argues that the beginning point for an environmental ethic is recognizing the unity of the universe and the sacredness of all life forms. This sense of the sacred must extend beyond the human community to other forms of life that have inherent rights to be respected by humankind. Ancient Greek as well as modern intellectual traditions and sciences have encouraged the belief that all life on earth is to be used to benefit humans. These ideas, as well as misreadings of the Bible, have prevented us from considering that “the human constituted a single sacred community with the natural world that would prosper or decline, live or die, be redeemed or not-redeemed as a single sacred community. Nor could we even consider that the various beings of the natural world had inherent rights to their own proper mode of being that should be recognized by ourselves and incorporated into our ethical teachings.”

The problem is that humans “have always had difficulty in accepting the human as an integral component of the total earth community.” Instead, we see humans as the only ones who possess rights and all others as existing to serve human interests. As a result of our failing to understand the wholeness and unity of the universe, we lack an ethical framework to help us understand how damage to the natural world damages the human soul as well. Berry argues that indigenous peoples have been able to understand this because their culture and identity are rooted in a cosmology of the universe where natural phenomena such as rain, wind, stars, sunrises, and sunsets shape understanding of the world and humankind’s place in it. Believers in the Bible have often failed to make these connections because
of its “emphasis on the perception of the divine in historical events rather than within cosmological manifestation.” The Bible has come to be understood as a “movement from the cosmological to the historical which began with the Exodus experience.”29 As science has developed an understanding of the natural world as coming into being from random processes rather than spiritual roots, humans have become alienated from the natural world. Neither religious nor secular establishments have been able to help us make sense ethically of what we have done to the earth. “Our ethical traditions know how to deal with” violations such as “suicide, homicide and even genocide but, these traditions collapse entirely when confronted with biocide, the killing of the life systems of the earth, and geocide, the devastation of the earth itself.”30 An environmental ethic begins with the idea that the well-being of the entire community of earth is paramount, and human well-being takes place within that broader community.

A second theme is the religious imperative of living simply, seeking spiritual rather than material security, and rejecting the overconsumption that threatens spiritual and environmental well-being. For people of faith, the primary injunction is to seek spiritual values. The pursuit of wealth and consumption diverts believers from more important things. The agendas of environmental protection advocates and people of faith intersect closely here. For many environmentalists, preserving and then experiencing nature leads to spiritual experiences, even if they are not rooted in conventional or mainstream religions. Choosing to live simply creates opportunities to concentrate on enduring values and concerns, whether they be traditional religious experiences or alternative expressions of personal belief. What is particularly admirable about environmentalism is its commitment to ensuring that future generations have the same opportunities enjoyed by the current generation to pursue their life choices.31

Third, many American churches see interest in environmental protection as a natural extension of their commitment to civil rights, workers’ rights, and social justice. Environmentalism fits within a social justice movement as it focuses on the distribution of benefits and burdens of modern economic and industrial life. Burdens such as pollution and toxic wastes are not distributed randomly or equally but disproportionately affect low-income communities. Land values are lower in these communities, making them attractive sites for incinerators, waste, and industrial facilities. Since people of color are disproportionately poor, this often ends up becoming an issue of race and justice. Environmental justice advocates have been critical of mainstream environmental groups who have sometimes been all too willing to ensure simply that these unwanted land uses are not placed in their communities, unaware that when undesirable facilities are sent
elsewhere, they tend to accumulate in disadvantaged areas. As a basic prerequisite of justice and fairness, the commitment of these advocates also extends to protecting other forms of life besides human life. Humans have a particular obligation to ensure they act in behalf of the well-being of all forms of life since they alone have the power and opportunity to do so.  

Fourth, the obligation to future generations is a profoundly moral issue. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops began its inquiry into environmental ethics by writing, “At its core, the environmental crisis is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God’s creation.” The bishops emphasize the way in which environmental degradation threatens the “poor and the powerless” and how the poor “suffer most directly from environmental decline and have the least access to relief from their suffering,” but the obligation is just as strong to account for future generations. Protecting the sanctity of life requires “protection for all of God’s creatures, including the poor and the unborn.” Other Christian leaders have voiced similar concerns. One Unitarian minister, for example, said, “Living as we do, we are stealing from our children and grandchildren. It’s unconscionable.”  

Finally, perhaps the most widespread religious view is that protecting the environment is an essential part of showing respect for creation and reverence for its Creator. “The fundamental relation between humanity and nature,” the Catholic bishops wrote, “is one of caring for creation.” Old Testament scriptures taught that the earth is the Lord’s (Psalms 24:1), that the land was to rest every seven years (Leviticus 25), and that all humankind and animals were to rest on the Sabbath. New Testament teachings emphasized the Lord as a good shepherd who watched over his flocks (John 10) and a worker who tended the vineyards (John 15). “To protect the oceans is to do God’s work,” said Bartholomew I, leader of Orthodox Christians. “To harm them, even if we are ignorant of the harm we cause, is to diminish His divine creation.” Pope Benedict XVI argued that Christian belief “commits us to working responsibly for the protection of Creation.” Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams said Christians have a moral duty to “celebrate and care for every part of God’s creation.” The National Religious Partnership has brought together a number of religions in America to work on “caring for all creation.”  

Scientists and believers often experience profound differences over environmentalism that are rooted in the conflict between creationism and evolutionary science. This conflict becomes heated when advocates of intelligent design use the language of science and scientific research to prove their creation story and are critical of scientists who do not share their
sense of certainty about this and other complex issues.\textsuperscript{37} The gap between believers and environmental activists is even greater. Environmentalists who protest the cutting of old-growth forests, like Julia Hill, who lived in a giant redwood for two years to keep it from being cut down for timber, are labeled tree huggers, trespassers, hippies, and worse. Environmentalists’ values often appear to be at odds with the modern corporate society and its emphasis on material consumption. As a result, environmentalists are typically marginalized, even sometimes by believers who might be expected to have empathy or even solidarity with those who challenge materialism and consumption. But there are signs this is changing as some protests are now garnering support from middle-class residents who fear that cutting down old-growth forests is “destroying something we don’t understand.”\textsuperscript{38}

One challenge to the religious argument for environmentalism is that the people in the world who seem to be most engaged in reducing their carbon emissions, conserving energy, and supporting public transportation; who are most committed to solving environmental issues in poor countries and providing access to basic health care for everyone; and who are most generous in providing environmental assistance to developing countries are among the least religiously active. Why is it that the Scandinavian countries, where religion is relatively unimportant, are the world leaders in environmental stewardship? Why is it that Americans, who are among the most religious people in the world, are not leaders in developing an ecologically sustainable society?

Religious commitment ought to include the goal of sustainability, although often it does not. The dominant form of religious-based political activism in the United States has been the Christian Right, but its economic and environmental agenda has been largely shaped by a commitment to the free market and, by extension, the pursuit of self-interest. It is extraordinarily difficult, however, to find scriptural injunctions in support of a self-interested economic agenda, so the Religious Right focuses instead on arguments for liberty and unrestrained economic freedom. But embracing unfettered markets, globalization, and capitalism free from government restraint appear to act against the Christian Right’s core teachings of loving others, helping those who suffer misfortune, and preserving community. Bill McKibben put the issue this way: “Since the days of Constantine, emperors and rich men have sought to co-opt the teachings of Jesus. . . . They have invited us to subvert the church of Jesus even as we celebrate it.”\textsuperscript{39} If some people miss the economic argument about the importance of serving the poor, they may also miss the commitment to stewardship and caring for the earth.
Christian Environmental Activism

Religious groups have played a role in building support for a number of issues, such as reducing air pollution and protecting endangered species. For example, because of its belief that the natural world is God’s creation and must be protected, the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) promotes conservation, environmental stewardship, and scientific research about the importance of protecting ecosystems. EEN also played a key role in blocking efforts in Congress in 1996 to weaken the Endangered Species Act, calling the act the “Noah’s Ark of our day.” Evangelical Christians who went to Capitol Hill to lobby against the effort surprised some members of Congress, “especially the conservative Republicans many evangelicals had voted for,” but their lobbying was credited with having stopped the effort to weaken the law. The Interfaith Coffee Program encourages its members to purchase only coffee that is “fair-traded”—farmers are guaranteed a minimum price to protect them from price swings characteristic of many globally traded commodities. It also encourages them to engage in ecologically sustainable farming practices. This program has grown to more than 3,500 congregations, only about one percent of the total, but, as individual members also make the modest adjustment in their purchasing practices, it promises to make a difference in the lives of poor farmers.

Jewish traditions have been at the center of efforts to preserve old-growth forests. The Book of Deuteronomy’s prohibition on destroying fruit trees when the Israelites attacked enemy cities prompted a small Jewish congregation in Northern California to try to protect an old-growth redwood forest in the Headwaters Forest. The Maxxam Company had gained control of the forest when it took over the Pacific Lumber Company, but the local congregation’s rabbi caught Maxxam’s Jewish CEO off-guard when he led an interfaith protest against the company’s plan to log the forest. The directors of the company were outraged when the protesters spoke at a shareholders’ meeting and asked the directors how the firm planned to make an ethical decision about logging the forest. Other Jewish communities joined the effort, and the company eventually negotiated a deal to protect the forest and log other areas.

The threat of disruptive climate change has focused attention in the United States on the environmental implications of religious belief like no other. Working to slow climate change is a natural argument for people of faith to make, given their concern about the spiritual threats of materialism and excessive consumption and the notion that the natural world’s destruction is an affront to its Creator. Much as religious groups played a
key role in framing civil rights as a profoundly moral issue, they are playing a similar role in promoting political, economic, and social changes that significantly reduce the threat of climate change.

Environmental and religious groups have formed alliances in cleaning up streams and rivers, planting trees, advocating against overconsumption and materialism, and addressing other environmental problems. Episcopalians in California launched a campaign, the Regeneration Project, to promote renewable energy by encouraging parishes to choose energy generated from renewable sources. The campaign has spread to seven states. According to an EPA analysis, if the nation’s 269,000 houses of worship upgraded their energy efficiency, it could produce a reduction of six million tons of carbon dioxide a year and save congregations $500 million a year. The real impact of such efforts, they argue, will come as members of the churches also promote energy efficiency and renewable energy purchases for their own homes.

In January 2006, eighty-six leaders of the evangelical movement issued a public statement supporting strong policy actions to reduce the threat of climate change. Their statement made four arguments: “human-induced climate change is real,” “the consequences of climate change will be significant and will hit the poor the hardest,” “Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem,” and there is an urgent need to act now. Their moral conviction centered on loving God and all he created, being good stewards over the earth, and protecting and caring for the most vulnerable among us. “With the same love of God and neighbor that compels us to preach salvation through Jesus Christ, protect unborn life, preserve the family and the sanctity of marriage, defend religious freedom and human dignity, and take the whole Gospel to a hurting world, we . . . resolve to come together with others of like mind to pray and to work to stop global warming.”

One of the most influential evangelical voices in climate change is that of Sir John Houghton, who is also a physicist and chair of one of the scientific assessment teams for the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He was invited by a fellow British evangelical to meet with U.S. evangelical leaders. The meeting helped generate support among attendees for the statement issued in 2006. He told them that Americans must “cut your own greenhouse-gas emissions, on the fastest time scale you can possibly do. You’ve got to help China and India develop in ways that are environmentally friendly and don’t emit too much, but allow them to develop at the same time.” Similarly, in his 2006 book *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, E. O. Wilson, perhaps the
world’s most prominent biologist, called on believers to join with environmentalists to save creation.50

In June 2007, Episcopal, Catholic, Jewish, and evangelical Christian leaders in the United States appeared before Congress to urge action to reduce the threat of climate change. The presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church said, “While many in the faith community represented here today may disagree on a variety of issues, in the area of global warming we are increasingly of one mind. The crisis of climate change presents an unprecedented challenge to the goodness, interconnectedness and sanctity of the world God created and loves.”51

Not all religious leaders agree on the need to take action. The National Association of Evangelicals, for example, has not taken a stand as a whole on the issue of global climate change because other leaders in the movement disagree with the scientists and scientific bodies that have warned against the threat of climate change, arguing instead that human efforts to stop it are “largely futile” and would divert resources from more beneficial efforts.52 A Southern Baptist leader argued that “many of us . . . are not convinced that the extent of human responsibility is as it is portrayed by some global warming activists, or that the expensive and dramatic solutions called for will be able ultimately to transform the situation.”53 Other religious leaders like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and James Dobson argued against the movement, saying that climate science was unproven, although Robertson later changed his views and said he had become a convert to the reality of the threat of global warming.54

Many religious leaders who have long identified themselves with liberal issues such as reducing poverty and supporting civil rights have found it natural to embrace environmentalism because of its connections with these other issues. What is more significant is that many religious leaders who describe themselves as conservatives and supportive of other traditional conservative political issues have become strong proponents of aggressive climate change policies.

Discussing and Debating Stewardship

Mormon theology reinforces the ideas of caring for creation that are central to the efforts by Christians and others to root an ethic of environmental protection in theology. These believers often use the term stewardship to describe the commitment they feel to honoring the Creator through protecting his creation. Mormons have much to add to this emerging eco-theology, particularly their expansive views about stewardship in using the earth’s resources. The idea of a sacred stewardship for the
earth that enables succeeding generations to enjoy the same resources and opportunities our generation enjoys should resonate with Mormons, who see themselves inextricably linked to their progenitors and descendants. For many the connection between environmental stewardship and genealogy may seem tenuous, but in reality they both reflect a way in which we can become more linked across the generations.

One challenge lies in transforming what can be an abstract commitment to future generations into a concrete objective carried out in logical and practical steps. Parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents naturally look to the future of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren as they approach the end of their lives and assess the state of the world. They do not see sacrifice as a burden or a restraint on their personal freedom, but as part of who they are and what they seek to accomplish in life. The achievement of a person’s life is intertwined with efforts to perpetuate life. People who have sacrificed throughout their lives for their children and others will not see the sacrifice of ecologically unsustainable consumption and energy as onerous restrictions on their lifestyles but as restraint and good stewardship so that future generations can flourish.

A sense of stewardship can also nurture a commitment to equality, extending to those in the developing world who live with poverty and limited opportunity. Restraint in consumption frees up resources that can be used to alleviate poverty and its attendant problems of poor health; it can also help free people from the incessant demands of materialism so that they can enjoy lives of greater opportunity and choice. Stewardship reflects a commitment not only to intergenerational equity, but to intragenerational equity as well.

A sense of environmental stewardship also encompasses nonhuman forms of life. Each life on earth bears witness of a divine Creator. As the authors in *Stewardship, New Genesis*, and other writings on eco-theology have emphasized, humans can use animals for food and clothing with respect, frugality, and care, so that life is taken not needlessly but with reverence and gratitude, and so that resources are made more widely available.

Embracing a commitment to environmental stewardship is difficult enough, given the tremendous pressures arrayed against such a notion and in favor of materialism and consumption. Developing a personal ethic to govern one’s immediate life is obviously the first step, but stewardship should not end there. Environmental threats present not only a daunting set of physical risks to current and future generations but also an opportunity to understand that caring for creation and anticipating the needs of future generations are spiritual values and that these values are threatened now more than at any other time in recorded history. The threats to
the planet from environmental problems like climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and the decline of ocean life are sobering reminders of the stewardship each person has. If we are not part of the solution, then we are indeed part of the problem.

Once our commitment to environmental stewardship is secure, the challenges multiply as we decide which personal and public actions to take. Given the scope of the threats to the planet’s health, collective action is essential, but debates over policy options are divisive and pose tremendous challenges. Producing fundamental changes in consumption, energy use, and pollution-generating activities have thus far been impossible within a political atmosphere of partisan competition. Those with a commitment to stewardship will have to wade into the political thicket and work with others—both those who share a similar vision and those who see environmental problems in a different light—to construct workable policies. A commitment to stewardship does not bring with it a specific recipe for action, but it requires a continual effort to devise and deploy solutions for the most pressing environmental problems facing the planet.

A Call for Collective Action

In order to remedy these threats and problems, an unprecedented level of political change will be required, including widespread support for higher energy prices, dramatic increases in energy conservation coupled with decreases in resource consumption, and replacing the dominant expectation of never-ending economic growth with a culture of constraint and limits. While it is possible that technological breakthroughs will obviate the need for such wrenching changes, it is reckless to assume they will occur. Research into such technologies should be accelerated, but just as important is the exploration of how such transformative changes might occur. Given the role that religious belief can play in transforming lives and creating communities capable of collective action, Latter-day Saints should not be surprised to find in their own theology sufficient reasons to support political changes that protect and preserve the environment.

One of the greatest challenges for some members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lies in coming to terms with the reality that the kind of collective action discussed throughout this essay suggests an expanded role of government. Many conservatives balk at expanding the regulatory reach of government into their economic lives, preferring to be left alone to work out their own ideas of what constitutes environmental stewardship. But conservatives accept and even welcome governmental involvement in many aspects of their personal lives—for instance, in
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curtailing pornography, regulating reproductive decisions, and promoting national security. Because protecting the environment for the benefit of future generations is also a compelling moral imperative, government regulation can be similarly justified if it can create the kind of moral environment conservatives seek.

Both liberals and conservatives who believe that markets are an efficient way to make collective decisions and promote individual choice can agree that an appropriate role of government is to improve market performance by ensuring that prices reflect true costs. Markets are not self-executing social mechanisms but require instead strong and effective policies to ensure that competition is fair, that contracts are enforced, that private property rights are protected, and that a host of other prerequisites prevail. Liberals and conservatives can also share a commitment to conserve and protect the ecological systems on which life depends. Individual, voluntary actions are an essential part of that commitment, but they are not sufficient; collective action is necessary to assure these goals are achieved. A personal ethic of conservation, uncomplicated by the messiness of politics and collective action, seems attractive. Working out the details of political action requires compromise, patience, and time; environmental policies also tend to conflict with other pressing priorities. But our obligations to each other and to those who come after us cannot be discharged by our mere acceptance of worthy goals and true principles. Those obligations require that we plunge into the world of politics and work with others who may disagree with us on many issues in order to find common ground and workable solutions to the problems we face together.

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11. These data are reported in Bjorn Lomborg, The Skeptical Environmentalist (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 177.


25. Mormon scriptures include the traditional Bible (the King James Version is preferred), two books translated by Joseph Smith—the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price—and the Doctrine and Covenants, a collection of the revelations and writings of primarily Joseph Smith but other Church leaders as well. All are published by the LDS Church.


32. Environmental justice has been defined in a number of different ways. The problem might take either of these two forms: (1) poor and minority communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental risks; and (2) poor and minority communities are less likely than others to benefit from natural resource access and development policies. Both cases are examples of injustices, primarily seen here as problems with the ways in which benefits and burdens are distributed in society. Hazardous waste treatment and storage sites, representative of the first kind of problem, are often located in low-income and minority
communities because of low land prices and little political opposition. As a result, community members are exposed to greater levels of hazardous emissions, odors, water contamination, and other environmental risks than those who live in other communities. Or poor people may move into areas where these facilities already exist because housing prices there are cheaper. People of color may have fewer housing choices because of discrimination and have few options other than moving into areas with higher environmental risks. There may also be in poor and minority communities less enforcement, prevention, and mitigation and other efforts to reduce environmental problems because of their lack of political influence. Other communities, where residents have more political clout, are more likely to be able to use their influence to ensure that government officials respond to environmental threats in their communities. See Robert D. Bullard, “Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement,” in Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots, ed. Robert D. Bullard (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1993), 15–40; Sheila Foster, “Justice from the Ground Up: Distributive Inequities, Grassroots Resistance, and the Transformative Politics of the Environmental Justice Movement,” California Law Review 86 (July 1998): 775; Evan J. Ringquist, “Environmental Justice: Normative Concerns and Empirical Evidence,” in Environmental Policy, 4th ed., ed. Norman J. Vig and Michael E. Kraft (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000), 232–56.


35. Renewing the Earth, 5.


42. Gardner, Invoking the Spirit, 43–44.


44. Gardner, Invoking the Spirit.


54. McKibben, “Will Evangelicals Help Save the Earth?”
In the late 1950s, LDS bishop John Bearson, of Utah, left, befriended Nobel Prize–winning novelist Halldór Laxness, providing him background information for his Mormon-themed novel, *Paradísarheimt*. Courtesy of Gljúfrasteinn (Halldór Laxness Museum), Mosfellsbær, Iceland.
Halldór Laxness and the Latter-day Saints
The Story behind the Novel Paradísarheimt

Fred E. Woods

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Halldór Laxness’s well-known novel Paradísarheimt (Paradise Reclaimed).¹ On the occasion of this anniversary, I wish to revisit this fine work and address some of the salient facts behind the fiction of Laxness’s novel as well as his relationship with the Latter-day Saints. I approach this subject not as a literary scholar but as a historian of religion and immigration. I will briefly sketch the Icelandic Latter-day Saint experience and share biographical information on a few key figures as well as the historical background from which the book was framed. In addition, I will demonstrate that Laxness enjoyed a pleasant association with the Latter-day Saints and respected their lifestyle, though he approached the topic with a bit of irony and satire and took poetic license in his writing of this work.

LDS missionary work in Iceland commenced in 1851 but came to an abrupt halt on the eve of World War I, when Laxness was about twelve years old.² For the next six decades (1914–1974), there was no official, organized ecclesiastical unit in Iceland for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the same year that Laxness won the Nobel Prize for literature (1955), Elder Spencer W. Kimball, a member of the LDS Church’s Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, visited the Danish Mission and wrote a letter to Church President David O. McKay and his counselors, stating, “I wonder if further consideration should be given to the inclusion of this area [Iceland] in the Danish Mission because of the language, to be made an independent mission later if and when it is secure enough.”³

Two years later, in mid-September 1957, Laxness came to the United States at the invitation of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. Though he was branded by some as a “notorious Communist” and people knew
he did not want an American base in Iceland, he still managed to say a few good things about America, even if they were only diplomatic expressions. Laxness and his wife, Auður, visited several American cities, including Salt Lake City, where they met a Mormon bishop named John Bearnson.⁴ Bearnson, who was associated with the American-Scandinavian

Fred E. Woods

I have studied Mormon immigration for many years now, but I became interested in Icelandic Mormon immigration only about ten years ago. My wife, after reading a newspaper article announcing the development of a museum exhibit in Hofsos, Iceland, on Latter-day Saint emigration, phoned me at work and told me that she had a feeling I should be involved. That prompting proved to be a blessing for the past decade.

I soon came upon the novel Paradise Reclaimed by Icelandic Halldór Laxness, Nobel Prize winner for literature, and I also discovered that many Icelanders have become acquainted with Mormonism by reading this novel. It tells the story of an Icelandic Mormon convert immigrating to Utah in the nineteenth century in search of paradise and of his return to his native homeland in Iceland to find the paradise he was seeking. The book gave me a great launching pad to tell the facts behind the fiction: of about four hundred Icelandic converts who immigrated to Spanish Fork in the years 1855–1914, only a few returned home or left the Church. I have been blessed with opportunities to share this history on Iceland’s national radio and television stations as well as through the courses on Mormon doctrine and history that I have taught at the University of Iceland the past two summers. In addition, I have given a number of lectures in several locations in the land of fire and ice. It has been a great conduit to clarify LDS history and doctrine and to share the wonderful relationship Halldór Laxness had with his Latter-day Saint friends in Utah.
Foundation, had contacted Laxness via telegram to make arrangements for their initial meeting.5

Less than two months later, Laxness sent a letter to the Bearnsons thanking both John and his wife, Birdella, for their “generous hospitality,” noting that he was pleased to have met a Latter-day Saint who had the high standards that Bishop Bearnson possessed. Laxness warned that Bearnson “must be prepared to receive letters from me bye and bye, in which I shall be asking of you small services.” Laxness also noted, “As I told you, the struggle of the early Mormons has been intriguing me for a long time and if I ever should get down to writing a little novel about the Icelandic Mormons, some chapters must be placed in the Mormon state itself.”6

Not everything in the Mormon state pleased Laxness. In describing this Utah visit, Halldór Guðmundsson notes that though “the Mormons were very helpful,” Laxness “was not exactly enthusiastic in Utah: it did not sit well with him to spend a lot of time with people who offered neither coffee nor alcohol. Halldór always thought water an unofferable drink when people gathered.”7

Ambassador David B. Timmins Meets Laxness

The following year, Laxness would again come into contact with the Mormons, but this time it would be on his native soil. A twenty-eight-year-old Latter-day Saint named David B. Timmins arrived with his young family to work as the American consul at the U.S. embassy in Iceland. Consul Timmins later wrote, “When my wife and I arrived in Reykjavik, Iceland, with our two small sons in early 1958 for my posting to the U.S. Embassy there we immediately found ourselves to be objects of great interest because of the fact that we were Utahns and Mormons. We quickly learned that virtually everyone in Iceland has relatives in Utah—most in the Spanish Fork area.”8 Timmins further related, “We soon found ourselves invited to any number of receptions, where we were besieged with questions about Utah and the Church. And the local newspaper soon arrived to interview and photograph us and our three children [their third child was born after their arrival] for a front page article.”9 Soon thereafter, Timmins was told that the Lutheran bishop of Iceland, Ásmundur Guðmundsson, was teaching a comparative religion course at the University

David B. Timmins. Courtesy Church History Library
of Iceland and wanted him to discuss Mormon doctrine with his students. Timmins reported:

The Bishop, who proved to be a most distinguished and courteous gentleman, came to our home for a period of one night a week for six or eight weeks while we explored Mormon doctrine in detail, and in the process we became good friends. At the end of our relationship two years later when we were about to depart Iceland, he told me that he would be pleased to welcome Mormon missionaries back to Iceland (where they had not been for over a hundred years) because he felt we had a message which would improve the moral climate of his countrymen which he considered to be deteriorating.

Timmins was welcomed not only by this kindly bishop, but he and his wife were also invited to spend an evening in the country home of Halldór Laxness. Here in the Laxness home, the Timminses had the opportunity to mingle with other guests who were numbered among Iceland’s aristocracy. During the course of the evening, Laxness invited Timmins privately into his library and related to him that Iceland’s bishop had told Laxness about the Mormon from the embassy.

Timmins explains what followed:

It turned out that he was considering a Mormon theme for his next novel and had been put on to me by our mutual acquaintance the Bishop. We talked history and doctrine for about three hours, and at the end of the evening he asked my assistance in arranging contacts and interviews for his intended visit to Utah to gather background for his novel.

I thereupon wrote my father, W. Mont Timmins, a bishop, patriarch, and historian, who agreed to make further appointments and escort Mr. Laxness during his visit to Utah. I also wrote a couple of General Authority acquaintances. . . . Mr. Laxness made his trip, later informing me how courteously he’d been received and how delighted he was with his trip. While I’d by that time left Iceland for Harvard University, Mr. Laxness sent me an English language copy of his new book which he called Paradise Regained[sic].

In an interview in spring 2008, Timmins noted additional things related to his visit to the Laxness home:

He had a nice two-story country estate. . . . Laxness invited us to the dinner party at his house. I had no idea why. . . . We got to Laxness’s
house and were welcomed, and it was an English-speaking evening, I think in honor of us. . . . We had dinner, and we started visiting after dinner, and Laxness took me by the elbow and led me upstairs to his very lovely study and left my wife and the others downstairs to entertain themselves, which they did very well. He told me he wanted to learn more about Mormonism, that he was thinking about writing a novel about the Mormon experience in Iceland. I didn’t tell him, but this was going to present some problems because this was the height of the Cold War, as I repeat again, it was after the McCarthy era, but just barely, and Washington took very seriously the provisions of the Immigration Act, which banned entry to the United States of Communists or Communist sympathizers, and we had a very deep, far-reaching, inquisitive, extensive Intelligence Program in Iceland because Iceland had been on the verge of turning Communist at an early stage of the Cold War. . . . At one point, Laxness, being the author of An Independent People, had demonstrated considerable sympathy with the Communist movement, which never emphasized the world Communist movement, but rather the independent Communist structure. I didn’t know how we were going to get Laxness a visa and . . . we constantly had problems with visas. [Yet] there was a provision in the Immigration Law which said that “the Attorney General of the United States could for good and sufficient reasons, grant a waiver of this ban.” I did . . . talk to Ambassador Muchio and we felt that this was a significant case and a worthy case to ask for a visa waiver for a petition to be approved, and so I wrote a telegram, and we sent it off to the state department for translation to the Attorney General, and in ten days or two weeks we got an approval.14

Timmins’s assignment as a U.S. diplomat in Iceland ended in 1960. Still, the catalytic events he experienced over a period of two brief years proved consequential to the reemergence of the LDS Church in Iceland, and he paved the way for Laxness not only to get his visa but also to launch his research in Utah. Timmins recalled that he told Halldór on the evening of the party, “I was sure my father [W. Mont Timmins], who was a bishop, and fairly well connected, could make appointments with leaders and the arrangements and what not.” Timmins further noted: “And he did; he did. And Laxness was delighted with his [Utah] visit; he thought he’d been given red carpet treatment everywhere he went. . . . He was a good guy, and he was a seeker; he was looking for truth and he wasn’t afraid to look into things.”15

Laxness Visits Utah

Halldór was a truth seeker from the beginning. His own sacred and secular search had carried him “from country to country, from Catholicism to socialism and finally to renunciation. As a young convert to Catholicism, he had entered a Benedictine monastery in Luxembourg where for five years he wrestled to reconcile enormous spiritual and intellectual tensions.”16
It appears that this inner quest led him to explore Utah in 1957 and 1959, though he had first entered the Latter-day Saints’ “promised land” in the fall of 1927.17

On his first visit to the Mormon mecca, Halldór explained what appeared to be an amusing experience when he passed through U.S. Customs and was presented with a series of questions. One of these questions was “Are you a polygamist? I, of course answered this ‘No. . . . ‘ Then I read the next question, which presented me for the first time with great difficulty: ‘Are you in sympathy with polygamists?’ To this day I haven’t been able to solve this difficulty.”18

Halldór also recounted how he was “confronted with the straight up-and-down, stern, and simple forms of the Mormon Temple of Salt Lake City, and the flat Tabernacle opposite made to look like the mouth of God.”19 In addition, Laxness said that as he looked at the temple it brought back memories of his boyhood reading of the extended travels of “the little man [Eiríkur Ólafsson á Brúnum] through the kingdoms of the world in search of the Promised Land, and the still more hazardous adventures of his poor family who set off to join him later, all this was brought to my mind again, this time with a force of reality that did not leave me in peace for over thirty years.”20

Three decades after his initial visit, Laxness returned to Utah. Then two years later, following the additional groundwork that Timmins had laid, he returned to Utah for a third time.21 On this trip he was hosted by several Latter-day Saint families, including John Bearnson. Writing from Utah to Auður in a letter dated October 4, 1959, Halldór related, “Recently, I spent four days visiting Bearnson and spoke with the people in Spanish Fork, Provo and Springville, mostly of Icelandic origin, dozens of them, some of them I visited from morning to evening, each after another. I learned incredibly much and gained a tremendous amount of solid knowledge about Icelandic pioneering from first hand.”22

Shortly after his 1959 visit to Utah, Laxness wrote, “Bishop Jon [sic] Bearnson of Springville [was] my host there in the state.” He further noted, “This kind-hearted man spared no pains to see that I was invited to stay in the Salt Lake Valley and even offered us wayfarers full disposal of his house for the duration of our stay.”23 Judge A. Sherman Christensen and his wife,
Lois Bowen Christensen, a descendant of Icelandic immigrants, were also involved with hosting Laxness. In another letter written to Auður, Laxness noted that he had visited a federal judge whose wife was of Icelandic ancestry. Speaking of Judge Christensen and his wife, Laxness said, “They were extremely friendly and nice people, the wife was particularly attractive, like Icelandic people can be at their best. She is the third generation here. . . . It is unbelievable how Icelanders keep up their national roots even without knowing it. They stick together as Icelanders for many generations even though they have no Icelandic traditions to keep it up.”

Laxness wrote to Judge Christensen several years later, telling him that he was mailing an English copy of *Paradise Reclaimed* and noted that he was “writing into it a few personal words for your wife.” In addition, Laxness wrote, “I am keeping in thankful memory the visit at your home in 1959 and the long talk I had with you and your wife about Mormon personal history and related subjects. Your wife gave me some remarkable points about this, thus enriching my material for Paradise Reclaimed with substantial facts.” Halldór further noted, “The picture she gave me of some old Utah settlers of her family I pinned up over my desk while doing the final work on the book in Switzerland, and I think the Mormon house in my book has
something to do with that wonderful picture; and very decidedly the pram in the picture is the one described in Paradise.”

Two and a half years later, the Christensens visited Laxness in his homeland, where their generosity was reciprocated. Laxness publicly noted on another occasion that during his fall 1959 trip to Utah, “I was helped along with my research work by genial Mormons of all ranks, in Salt Lake City and Provo, in Springville and Spanish Fork.” However, when he went to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir perform in Salt Lake City at the Tabernacle, he did not care for the selection of music, saying, “The program was rather poor, and I do not understand why so many tremendously good singers are being woken up at eight o’clock in the morning to weep ‘Londonderry Air’ and songs like that.”

In order to retain the memories of this trip and especially to collect information for his novel, Halldór kept a minnisbók (daily planner). Among other things, he had several pages containing what he called “Questions in Utah.”

1. On what points do Mormons consider the Mormon doctrine right where other religious doctrines are wrong? For instance baptism. In what way is baptism by immersion better than baptism by other methods? (Probably because practiced in the case of Christ?)

2. Is Mormonism the true Christian religion? Or is it nearer to the true Christian religion than other Christian beliefs. Or does not the Mormon religion claim to be Christian at all?

3. Which are the religious practices in Mormonism that are different from other general Christian practices? Articles of Faith by Talmage.

4. Which are the special Mormon terms for religious practices as f. inst. baptism, marriage, burial rites. The term ‘to seal’ used for marrying people. What is the special Mormon term for baptizing people who are dead? Called baptism for the dead.

5. Only 2% were allowed to practice it [polygamy]. What were the special reasons for polygamy? Are those arguments, now that polygamy has been given up, considered to be invalid? Or do they still hold true, although they are no longer the base of a practice? Or are they held in suspense? 1894 abolished.

6. How was jealousy kept away in the households where there were many wives?

7. Who is nearer to the heart of the Mormons, Joseph Smith or Jesus Christ?

8. What is the reason for Mormons being tea-totallers as far as coffee, tea or liquors go?

9. Organization of education within the Church.

10. Is it the true gospel?
In addition, Laxness made notations on a number of doctrinal issues, including the following:

1. Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost: healing of
2. Every male member leading a good life may have the priesthood. Holds such so long as he remains righteous.
4. Ordinances—compare to ordination, blessing, healing of the sick.
5. Believed there was an apostasy in Christianity from ca. 3rd century to the appearance of Joseph Smith. Therefore no prophet in this period. Whom do you consider the last Christian prophet before Joseph Smith entered the scene?  

Furthermore, Laxness had information on the history of early Icelandic Mormons who settled in Spanish Fork, Utah, including the 1938 erection of the monument dedicated to the town's early Icelandic settlers. In addition, he made mention of "Vigdís Bjarnadóttir [sic] Holt doctor, nurse, mid-wife, jack of all trades . . . of the Bearnson brothers." Halldór also included notes to remind him of what to gather from the Utah Genealogical Society:

- Get from the Genealogical Society's files . . .
  1. Loftur Jónsson (Halldóra Arnason, wife)
  2. Gísli Bjarnason—Halldóra Árnadóttir 1st wife, Mara (?) (2nd wife) all children & progeny
  3. Samuel Bjarnason family
  4. Magnus Bjarnason—? (1st wife) ? (2nd wife) Guðný Erasmusdóttir (3rd wife?)
  5. Vigdís Björnsdóttir Holt

Laxness also mentioned LDS Church organizations such as the Sunday School and the Mutual Improvement Association established for the Mormon youth. In addition, he made this general assessment concerning the intellectual nature of the Saints: "I am not impressed with how the intelligence of the Mormons could have ended up being so little, for it is not very great. I do admire, on the other hand, their ignorance. However mistaken, their ignorance has caused to lift them. I consider their ignorance to be greater, for it has taken them farther than their wisdom."  

This evaluation is followed by a brief comment that later would become a part of the story of Paradísarheimt: "Þjóðrekur gives Steinar money . . . to go west [to] Utah." And Laxness further makes the notation "brick layer Mormon in Spanish Fork in Utah."
Plot Elements of Paradísarheimt

After several months of gathering information in Utah, Laxness returned to Iceland and developed the plot of his Mormon-based novel: An Icelandic farmer named Steinar has desires of having his family obtain a promised land. Steinar initially thinks to obtain such a land by giving a special pony to a Danish king who visits Iceland in 1874. Instead of the anticipated land, Steinar receives only autographed photographs that he decides to trade for four needles.

Steinar is later assured by a Latter-day Saint missionary, Bishop Þjóðrekur, that the promised land he seeks is in Utah. Thus, Steinar sets out for the Mormon mecca in the western United States. After arriving in Utah, he does not fully assimilate, and during his absence from his Icelandic homeland, his family suffers physically and economically. Later his wife dies traveling to Utah, but his children finally arrive in the promised land, assuming that by this time their father has passed away. Steinar returns to Iceland as a missionary and in due course ends up back at his humble farm. The book concludes with Steinar laying stones to repair the wall surrounding his old farm. As he is doing so, a stranger passes by.

“Who are you?” asked the traveller. The other replied, “I am the man who reclaimed Paradise after it had been lost, and gave it to his children.” “What is such a man doing here?” asked the passer-by. “I have found the truth, and the land in which it lives. . . . But now the most important thing is to build up this wall again.”

Biographical and Historical Facts behind the Fiction

As noted, the plot of the novel is based considerably on the life and writings of Eiríkur Ólafsson á Brúnum (1823–1900), who is depicted as Steinar in the text. Eiríkur Ólafsson was born in 1823 in Steinar, Rangarvalla County. He married Runhildur Runólfsdóttir, and they joined the LDS Church in 1881. A few months later, they left Iceland with their daughter Ingeveldur and grandson Þorbjörn as part of a group of twenty-two converts.

From Eiríkur’s own account, we know the following about his departure from Iceland:

On the evening of the 8th of July, 1881, I went on board the ship Camoens, a horse transport ship of Kökkels, after I, with some effort, a scuffle, and some tribulation of soul and body, was made to protect my grandson, of 14 months old, before 10 sturdy men of Reykjavík, who intended to attack my daughter and tear the child from her bosom at the command of the child’s father, who then wished to be such, but
Halldór Laxness would not acknowledge the boy when newborn. I saw then no way to protect the child from this mob, except I prayed God, as I had the sense to do, to make it so, that they did not obtain the child, and he heard my prayer concerning this, so that she came on board with the child and to this place, who is now very hopeful.16

The Utah-bound Icelanders steamed their way to Granton, Scotland, and then to Liverpool before embarking on July 16 on a Guion Line steam vessel known as the Nevada. They reached New York on July 28 and Salt Lake City on August 8.37 On the day of their arrival, the Salt Lake City Latter-day Saint Deseret Evening News reported the following:

From Iceland. A company of Saints numbering 21, all told, arrived in this city last evening from Iceland. The company left Iceland on the 8th of July and came by way of Granton, (Scotland), Liverpool and New York, crossing

Eiríkur Ólafsson á Brúnum, 1876, the Icelandic Mormon immigrant on whom Paradise Reclaimed is based. Courtesy National Museum of Iceland.

Camoens, the ship on which Eiríkur Ólafsson á Brúnum left Iceland in July 1881. This photo was taken in 1888. Courtesy National Museum of Iceland.
the ocean in the steamship “Nevada”. Twins were born July 20, 1881 two
days before arriving in New York, to the wife of Halldur B. Jonsson, 
namely Halldur Atlantic and Victoria Nevada. One sister died on the
overland route and was buried at North Platte. Brother John Eyvindson, 
President of the company, remained behind to attend to the funeral.
Brother Jacob B. Johnson, returning missionary, brought the company
on to this city, and they proceeded to Spanish Fork to-day.38

The one sister who died along the way was Eiríkur’s wife, Runhildur,
who was buried in North Platte, Nebraska.39 The following year Eirikur left
Utah on a self-appointed mission to Iceland. He returned to Utah in 1883
and remained in Spanish Fork for a decade. However, he returned to Iceland,
remarried, and became disaffected from the LDS faith; he died in 1900.40

Þórður Diðriksson, the Mormon Bishop

Following Runhildur’s death, Eiríkur’s daughter Ingeveldur and her
infant son Thorbjorn (Þorbjörn Þorvaldsson) continued with the 1881
Mormon company to Utah, where they stayed with
the Thordur Didriksson (Þórður Diðriksson) family
in Spanish Fork. Eirikur joined them three weeks
later.41 Diðriksson is the Mormon bishop in Paradise
Reclaimed, Bishop Þjóðrekur.42 Þórður, born in 1828,
converted to Mormonism in Iceland in February 1855
and left Liverpool for Utah on December 12, 1855, on
the ship John J. Boyd.43 Soon after arriving in Utah,
Þórður’s family was very helpful to native Icelanders,
who faced a sudden transition in assimilating into
the American settlement of Spanish Fork in the mid-
nineteenth century.44

In 1875, Diðriksson and Samúel Bjarnason, who
had previously immigrated to Utah, were called
to proselyte in their Icelandic homeland for one
year. Although they did not baptize anyone during
this time, they established many friendships,
and several Icelanders immigrated with them to
Utah, where they arrived in the fall of 1876, having
concluded their mission.45 Just three years later,
Diðriksson wrote the first known missionary tract
in Icelandic, a 186-page work titled Aðvörunar og
sannleiksraust (A Voice of Warning and Truth),
which proved to be a useful missionary tool in
Iceland during the next century.46
Byron Geslison’s Meeting with Halldór Laxness

A copy of this missionary tract would be given to Laxness as a gift when the Geslison family, a Mormon family of Icelandic descent from Spanish Fork, Utah, was sent to reopen missionary work in Iceland. Byron Geslison, his wife, Melva, and their twin sons, David and Daniel, arrived in Iceland in 1975 and later met Halldór at his country home in Iceland. In an interview I held with Byron Geslison and his son David in winter 2000, they reflected on this meeting a quarter of a century earlier. Byron recalled, “We drove out there, he had a summer home, . . . and we knocked on the door. He had been to Utah. And [when we] told him who it was and he invited me in, and I unveiled this book and took it out and handed it to him, he says, ‘Oh! I’ve been looking for 40 years for a copy of that book.’”

It pleased Byron that Laxness was so thrilled to get a copy of the tract. Laxness said, “How can I pay you?” Geslison responded, “Well, I brought it for you and I don’t expect any pay. I am doing it out of good will and I’m glad to give it to you.”

Halldór replied, “Oh, well I’m so thrilled to get this. This is the most well written book that I have ever seen. This man is a great writer, and he gets it to your heart.”

Laxness then asked Byron, “Your people don’t like me very much, do they?” Geslison replied, “Well, some of them do, and some of them maybe don’t, but we wondered about you because there are some critical things in there [Paradise Reclaimed] that are not true.”

Laxness said, “You know, we writers have a poetic license. You know that I didn’t mean all those things I said in there that weren’t complimentary to you.”

Byron said, “Well, I wondered about that. I’m glad to hear that from your lips.”

Laxness concluded, “Well, I know that it wasn’t all true, but I did it with my poetic, political license.”

Evidence reveals that for some time Laxness had been troubled by the reception of the book among the Utah Mormon community. For example,
he wrote in a letter to his esteemed Latter-day Saint friend Judge A. Sherman Christensen, “I had the book sent in English to some of my distinguished Mormon friends and acquaintances in Utah, among whom John Bearnson in Springville and Mr. Christansen the Superintendent of the Genealogical Society, who both of them were very helpful to me in my research work.” Yet, Halldór noted, “To my great regret, I have not had a word from any of them, so I think they must be cross with me and this makes me sorry. I thought my book was completely free from malice towards Mormons. . . . Of course it is a book by a Gentile, but a friendly one, I hope.”

### Why Laxness Wrote the Book and How He Defined a Promised Land

Shortly after *Paradísarheimt* was released in 1960, an interview with Halldór regarding the novel was published in the Icelandic newspaper *Morgunblaðid*. When asked, “What was the impetus for writing about this subject?” Laxness answered,

Well, nothing else than that the motif has intrigued me since I visited Utah for the first time as a young man thirty years ago. I had read the account of Eiríkur á Brúnum, whose personal prophet was Thordur Didriksson. This is an alluding poetic subject about paradise and the millennial kingdom: it invites one’s thoughts to it. Yes, I have actually always found it intriguing since I first learned about it, and I’ve often pondered...
it without doing anything further. Some subjects follow one about for a long time yet are never written, others one completes at once.\(^{51}\)

Two years later, in 1962, in conjunction with the publication of the English version *Paradise Reclaimed*, Halldór wrote an eight-page pamphlet called *The Origins of “Paradise Reclaimed,”* in which he explained the book’s genesis and underlying idea. Here he again addressed the question of why he wrote the book: “Many readers have asked what could have moved me, a man from faraway parts, born and bred in Iceland, to write a novel with the center of its plot laid in Utah.” He answered, “It is all very simple. Many of us are to some extent believers in a Promised Land where truth and happiness shall prevail forever; and even if we do not believe it ourselves, we think it is wonderful when other people do so.”\(^{52}\)

Concerning the concept of a promised land, Laxness continued: “This wonderland is not primarily of a geographical nature, although it might coincide with a geographical location.”\(^{53}\) Commenting on this statement, Professor Steven Sondrup of BYU has written, “What must be particularly noted is Laxness’s explicit divorce of the Promised Land from geographical considerations. . . . Laxness rejected the concept of an ideal being linked too intimately to topology, geography. . . . Paradise is an ideal but not an ideal place.”\(^{54}\)

This statement is most interesting in light of the Mormon definition of Zion, in which Zion is understood to extend beyond the limits of a geographic location to include not only the state (or place) in which one lives but also the state (or inner life) of an individual. In Latter-day Saint scripture Zion is “the pure in heart.”\(^{55}\) It is defined as a people of “one heart and one mind . . . [who dwell] in righteousness; and . . . no poor among them.”\(^{56}\)

Several Laxness scholars, including Þórður Einarsson, have suggested that Laxness was portraying himself more than he was Eiríkur in his work. Einarsson felt that Halldór was saying in his own way that in whatever concerns the truth and a millennial kingdom, it is the person of man, his personality and what he does to others and his environment, which is of most worth. This has some similarity to the Mormon concept of Zion.\(^{57}\) As BYU Professor George S. Tate notes, “Laxness is not writing a biography of Eiríkur á Brúnum or a story specifically about the Mormons. *Paradise Reclaimed* is at once personal and universal. There is something of Laxness in Steinar, something of his own spiritual or ideological odyssey that has taken him from monasticism, to socialism, to his present renunciation and mistrust of ideologies and dogmas.”\(^{58}\)

Concerning the relationship of Zion to the paradise of the novel’s title, Sondrup explains, “Not too long after Steinar [Eiríkur á Brúnum] would have returned to Iceland [1891], the Mormon concept of Zion began to
evolve and become more comprehensive.” Further, “once the continued existence of the church was no longer seriously in question and a center was secure, the admonition to emigrate to Utah—to gather to Zion in a literal and geographical sense—was replaced with the [counsel] to stay at home and establish Zion throughout the world.”

Laxness Praises the Life of the Latter-day Saints in Several Interviews

Whether Halldór was observing the Mormons in Iceland or in Utah, several statements he made both before and after the publication of *Paradísarheimt* in 1960 and the English *Paradise Reclaimed* in 1962 seem to demonstrate that he was impressed with the model of Zion that Latter-day Saints were trying to create at home and abroad. Hints of his admiration are apparent as early as 1957 when his novel *Brekkukotsannáll* (*The Fish Can Sing*) was published. Laxness’s narrator describes a woman fleeing Iceland whose passage to the United States was paid by the Mormons: “And indeed I know for a fact that amongst them are to be found some of the finest people in America.” Before *Paradísarheimt* was published, Laxness wrote that the Utah Mormon “community life seems to be directed to an upbringing, culminating in a wholesome and pure life.” In another article, he noted that the “remarkable” Utah kingdom had “achieved a status that makes the Mormons one of the most sterling and exemplary of America’s many prominent ethnic groups.”

Soon after *Paradísarheimt* was released three years later, Halldór noted in an interview with *Morgunblaðið*, “I didn't think I would write a novel about the Mormons, but their attractive life enchanted me so much, and out of some inner reason which I don't understand, I began collecting materials and information for this book.” In this same discussion he was asked, “And what do you yourself think of the truth of the Mormons, Halldór?” He responded, “If it is true that the truth is concealed in living well, then the Mormons have come closer to the truth than most men. They lead exceptionally beautiful and healthy lives, not merely in a moral sense, but in general. They live in a very agreeable society.”

In a later interview, a decade after *Paradísarheimt* was released, Laxness told Randi Bratteli, journalist wife of the Norwegian prime minister, “I was once interested in the Mormons and traveled twice to Utah. I have also written a book about them called *Paradise Reclaimed*. . . . Unfortunately there are no Mormons in Iceland, I would gladly have supported them.” Finally, in the pamphlet *The Origins of “Paradise Reclaimed,”* Halldór wrote, “In case these lines should reach any of my Utah friends, I want to express my gratitude to them with my apologies for what to them must look like
childish superficiality in recording things with which they are conversant.” He further noted, “All the same I hope that not only the Mormons, but also other readers who in their fashion believe in the Promised Land, and might even have found it, shall not be doubtful of my intentions.”

Laxness enjoyed a warm friendship with several Mormon families in Utah and ultimately respected their lifestyle. After decades of correspondence, the last letter in the Laxness file of incoming correspondence from his dear friend Bishop Bearnson represents the general feeling shared by a number of Latter-day Saints in the Icelandic Utah community. By way of invitation to return to Utah, Bearnson told Laxness, “The door is wide and always open.” Laxness’s daughter Guðný recalled the feelings Laxness had for the Latter-day Saints: “My father was always very positive towards the Mormons and Utah.”

Though he took poetic license with the setting and characterization of Paradísarheimt, Laxness admired the Mormon culture, especially the ideals of hard work and community building as the Saints sought to create a new Zion and a new paradise. Laxness, like his Latter-day Saint friends, celebrated these ideals of hard work and community as he made his own quest to reclaim paradise.

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Most of his publications have been in the area of Mormon emigration and immigration in the nineteenth century by sail, rail, and trail. This past spring he launched a new website, “Mormon Migration,” designed and hosted by the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, which contains a compilation of much of his research on this topic for the past fifteen years: http://lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration/. Fred is married to JoAnna Merrill; they have five children and three granddaughters.

1. The Icelandic version of the novel was published in Reykjavík in 1960 and the English translation in 1962.

2. Halldór Laxness was born on April 23, 1902, and died on February 8, 1998. On the history of the Icelandic Latter-day Saints, see the works by Fred E. Woods, listed on page 63.

3. Marius A. Christensen, “History of the Danish Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1850–1964” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), 131. In a talk titled “Icelandic Settlement in Utah 100 Years Old,” given in 1955 at the centennial anniversary of the Icelandic settlement in Spanish Fork, Utah, Petur Eggerz, an ambassador of Iceland, stated, “Two years ago Utah’s Genealogical Society sent welcome representatives to Iceland. They took microfilms of all books and documents in possession of the National Archives in Iceland.” Thus, the microfilming of these records in 1953 may also be viewed as part of the preparation for Iceland to again receive missionaries.


5. John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, telegram, October 15, 1957, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness, National and University Library of Iceland, Reykjavík. A letter written by Bearnson to Laxness three months later further reveals that Bearnson was very involved with providing sources for Halldór’s research. Bearnson notes, “Regarding Church books, I am today mailing to your address in Iceland, two books which are considered the ‘Standard Works of our Church.’ . . . I think this will perhaps give you the information of which you desired and if you need other books let me know and I will try to procure them.” John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, January 13, 1958, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. Laxness sent a letter back to Bearnson about two months later, thanking him for “the great gift you made me of the two Sacred Books of your religion, which are going to be of great use to me in studying the Spiritual background of Utah.” Halldór Laxness to John Y. Bearnson, March 27, 1958, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. Bearnson wrote another letter to Halldór and Audur and again mentioned, “If you desire any information about Utah and the L.D.S. Faith, just write and I will try to supply it for you.” John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, May 14, 1958, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.

6. Halldór Laxness to John Y. Bearnson, December 4, 1957, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.
7. Guðmundsson, Islander, 381.

8. David B. Timmins, “The Second Beginning of the Church in Iceland,” unpublished three-page document in the possession of the author, 1. The author wishes to express appreciation to Clark T. Thorstenson, who later served as the Icelandic consul to the western United States, for allowing him to have a copy of this manuscript. In a manuscript in the files of the LDS Branch in the Reykjavik region, the first entry to a written Church record since the closure of the mission in 1914 was on May 3, 1959. The entry for that day states: “Kenneth Fowles, Elder, ‘presiding and conducting’ First meeting held in Reykjavik at the home of Brother and Sister Timmins. Bro. Timmins is listed as employed at the American Embassy.” Donald R. Knight, comp., “A Brief History of the Icelandic Branch,” 1. The second entry, dated May 6, 1959, notes, “Wednesday evening meeting at Keflavik Naval Air Station. The pattern was [s]et for regular Sunday and Wednesday meetings which continued unbroken until 2 Nov 1960. During this time attendance at the meetings ranged from 3 to 12.” Page two of this thirteen-page document, dated September 16, 1972, indicates that Knight compiled these assorted notes.


10. Ásmundur Guðmundsson was appointed bishop of Iceland in 1954 and served until 1959, when he turned seventy years old and therefore was required by Icelandic law to retire from this office. Michael Fell, And Some Fell into Good Soil: A History of Christianity in Iceland, American University Studies, series 7, Theology and Religion, vol. 201 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 319, 352.

11. Timmins, “Second Beginning of the Church in Iceland,” 1. Timmins was incorrect that missionaries had been away from Iceland for a hundred years; it had been sixty.

12. Apparently, not long after Timmins made contact with Laxness, Halldór wrote a letter to John Y. Bearnson in which he noted, “Your American consul in Reykjavik Mr. David Timmins, is a Mormon, we see him and his wife occasionally, and he has been to my place, an extremely nice couple, as I think many Mormons are.” Halldór Laxness to John Y. Bearnson, June 29, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. Bearnson responded with a letter to Laxness three weeks later: “My brother . . . knows David Timmins mother real well. He told me that he worked in the U.S. Consulate in Reykjavik, when he was here on his visit.” John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, July 18, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. This suggests that Laxness had already written Bearnson soon after Timmins had spent the evening in the Laxness summer home.

13. Timmins, “Second Beginning of the Church in Iceland,” 2. It seems strange that Timmins was apparently unaware that Laxness had visited Salt Lake City less than two years earlier. It is not certain if Halldór withheld this information from Timmins or if Timmins just did not remember it. If Halldór did not mention the visit, perhaps it was because of his paranoia due to his Communist branding or because he thought it might be possible that Timmins would supply additional contacts.


15. Timmins, interview.

Halldór’s instigation this article subsequently appeared, translated by Jóhann S. Hanneson, as “Halldór Laxness, Mormónarnir og fyrirheitað Landið,” in Lesbók Morgunblaðsins, May 5, 1979, 1–5, 14–15. Throughout this paper I have relied on the prior research and translations, some not previously published, of my colleague George S. Tate, professor of humanities and comparative literature at Brigham Young University. Tate interviewed Halldór at the novelist’s home while he was a Fulbright student in Iceland in 1971–72 and sent Laxness the Dialogue article when it appeared. See also Tate’s “Eldorado and the Garden in Laxness’ Paradísarheimt,” Scripta Islandica 36 (1985): 21–34.

17. Peter Hallberg, in his book Halldór Laxness, trans. Rory McTurk (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), points out that “as late as the spring of 1927 he was able to explain in a controversial newspaper article on the subject of Vefarinn mikli, that ‘among the many conceptions of life which are put forward in my book, I personally favor one alone, namely the Catholic’” (57).


19. Shortly after Halldór returned from his 1959 visit to Utah, he described the impressive Salt Lake Tabernacle in greater detail. Among other things, he noted that Brigham Young had directed the erection of this edifice, which Laxness called “a great Ark of the Covenant or Tabernacle, the congregation house of the Mormons.” Further, Halldór noted, “The Lord inspired [Brigham Young] with the wisdom that if good acoustics were to be achieved in the congregation house, so that the Lord might be suitably praised, then the hall should be built according to the same principle as man’s inner mouth, from lips to gullet. He erected there one of the most astounding edifices in the world. The building is ca. 90 meters long, 50 meters wide and 25 meters high.” Halldór Laxness, “Ævintýri um fyrirheitna landið,” in Gjörníngabók (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1959), 122–23 (translated by George S. Tate). This piece first appeared as a two-part illustrated cover article in successive issues of the magazine Samvinnan: part 1 in May 1958, 4–7, and part 2 in June 1958, 4–7; part 1 deals primarily with Mormon history, part 2 with Laxness’s visit to Utah.


21. The fact that Laxness indeed made three trips to Utah and truly respected his Mormon friends is strengthened by a letter he wrote to a friend in New York, in which Halldór noted, “I went twice to Utah before starting the work, and for the third time, during the proceeding of the work, I stayed a month in Utah. Such an idea as belittling the Mormon case would never occur to me.” Halldór Laxness to Julius Isaacs, April 24, 1978, extract via email correspondence from Halldór Guðmundsson. The author thanks Guðmundsson for reading this paper, providing useful advice, and kindly sharing this material and other letters from his Laxness files.

22. Halldór Laxness to Auður Laxness, October 4, 1959, in the possession of Halldór Guðmundsson. Guðmundsson provided excerpts and notes from this
letter as well as three others written by Halldór to Auður during the period of September 24 to October 4, 1959, which are cited several times in this article. Gratitude is also expressed to Gerhard Guðnason, who translated the excerpts and notes from each of these letters.

23. Laxness, “Ævintýri um fyrirheitna landið,” 121 (translated by George S. Tate). In anticipation of this 1959 visit, John Y. Bearnson sent a letter to Halldór in which he said, among other things, “We [meaning he and his wife, Birdella] will be delighted to see you when you come to Utah, in late August or early Sept. Remember the welcome mat is always out for you. You must let me know when you are to arrive here.” Bearnson to Laxness, July 18, 1959. In a letter dated December 2, 1959, Halldór thanked the Bearnsons for their “valuable help, friendliness and hospitality” during his Utah visit earlier that fall. In addition, he asked the Bearnsons to “please remember me to the wonderful people of Spanish Fork . . . and tell them how deeply I enjoyed their company, both privately and in their homes, and at the big gathering where they gave me the beautiful gifts.” Halldór Laxness to John Y. Bearnson, December 2, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. In another letter written by Bearnson to the Laxness family later that same month, Bearnson responded to questions which Laxness had about doctrinal and historical issues in Mormon history. John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, December 29, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. Several months later, Bearnson again responded to a question Halldór apparently had with reference to the geography of Utah. Bearnson gave a rather lengthy, detailed response and included in his remarks a note concerning where the early Icelanders settled in Spanish Fork. John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, March 8, 1960, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.

24. Halldór Laxness to Auður Laxness, September 24, 1959, in the possession of Halldór Guðmundsson. It appears that at this time Laxness was unaware of the strong Icelandic traditions that were maintained in Utah during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Evidence of this may be seen in the annual celebration of Iceland Days, which commenced in 1897, and the Icelandic Association of Utah, which is still a very active organization. See Fred E. Woods, Fire on Ice: The Story of Icelandic Latter-day Saints at Home and Abroad (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005) 186–88.

25. Halldór Laxness to Judge A. Sherman Christensen, February 5, 1963, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. The author recently received a copy of this photograph from Guðný Halldórslóttir, a daughter of Halldór who lives in Iceland. On the back of the photo it states, “Dear Mr. Laxness—This is a copy of the picture in which you were interested in at our house on Wednesday. The home was one of many built in Spanish Fork, Utah, by Loftur Jonsson.” After identifying the individuals in the photograph, the writer then notes, “Good luck and God bless you in your present quest. Sincerely, Mrs. A. Sherman Christensen.”

26. Lois Bowen Christensen noted that on a trip with her husband to Iceland, they had “stopped off at the summer home of Haldor Kiljan Laxness and his sweet wife, Audur, where we were invited for dinner. . . . We had entertained Mr. Laxness at our home in Salt Lake when he was doing research for his new novel, Paradise Reclaimed. . . . We found these people to be sweet, modest, and humble, even though they are very famous.” Lois Bowen Christensen, “Icelandic Adventure” (Castle Valley, Utah: Featherweed, 1992), 18–19. The author thanks
Cris Coffey, daughter of A. Sherman and Lois Bowen Christensen, who at his request searched through her father’s private journal to find the date of her parents’ trip to Iceland and discovered that the visit to the Laxness summer home would have been in late August 1965. In a Christmas card sent by Lois later that year she wrote, “Dear friends—the Laxnesses—Sherman and I loved our visit in your beautiful home. You provided us with such delicious food and with such warm and happy companionship. . . . We think of you and talk of our experiences in Iceland very often.” Lois B. Christensen to Halldór Laxness, Christmas card, 1965, Correspondence of Lois B. Christensen to Halldór Laxness, National and University Library of Iceland. On September 29, 1978, Lois sent another card to Halldór and Áudur, thanking them for a necklace she had received via their daughter “Dóna” (Guðný Halldórsvó). Lois writes further, “Next year I am to give a program in my Relief Society [LDS adult women’s organization] on Iceland and I can think of nothing more special to show the ancient art of Iceland than this lovely necklace.” Lois B. Christensen to Halldór Laxness, September 29, 1978, Correspondence of Lois B. Christensen to Halldór and Áudur Laxness.

29. Laxness, Minnisbók, National and University Library of Iceland. This daily planner does not generally have dates or page numbers. In addition, Laxness wrote entries in both Icelandic and English, and some of the planner is illegible. The author thanks BYU Icelandic instructor Darron S. Allred for translating Icelandic excerpts from this minnisbók for this article and for proofing the diacritical marks in this article. When Laxness returned from his trip, he continued to ask specific questions of both a historical and doctrinal nature. In a letter he wrote to Bearnson shortly after he left Utah, Laxness asked, “In what direction from the hill where the Icelandic monument is placed (in Spanish Fork), was Þórður Diðriksson’s bricklayer yard?” and “Who exactly are the so called Josephites?” and “Was land in Spanish Fork owned by the church or by individuals, or both, in the settlement day?” Halldór Laxness to John Y. Bearnson, December 14, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. The minnisbók and such questions as these, appearing in a number of letters, reflect the fact that Laxness conducted very careful research for his Mormon novel. Two weeks later, Bearnson faithfully responded with detailed explanations for each of these three questions. Bearnson to Laxness, December 29, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.
30. Laxness, Minnisbók.
32. Laxness, Minnisbók. This comment seems a bit strange inasmuch as one of his hosts was Judge A. Sherman Christensen, who no doubt had a very keen intellect. Christensen was a federal judge in the U.S. District Court for Utah from 1954 until his death in 1996. Wikipedia, “Albert Sherman Christensen,” online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Sherman_Christensen (accessed July 15, 2010).
33. Laxness, Minnisbók. In Halldór Laxness, Paradise Reclaimed, trans. Magnus Magnusson (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), the name Bishop Þjóðrekur first occurs on page 51, when Steinar asks the name of the Mormon missionary
who has been searching for converts in Iceland. The character Þjóðrekur is based on a historical figure named Pöþur Diþríksson, an Icelandic Mormon convert, who will be discussed later in the text. Steinar, the central character in Paradise Reclaimed, is also based upon a historical figure, Eiríkur Ólafsson á Brúnum, as noted above.

34. Laxness, Paradise Reclaimed, 299.
35. David Ashby, Icelanders Gather to Utah, 1854–1914 (Spanish Fork, Utah: Icelandic Association of Utah, 2008), 23. According to La Nora Allred, The Icelanders of Utah (Spanish Fork, Utah: Icelandic Association, 1998), 110, “[Ólafsson] was a rancher and also operated a restaurant in Reykjavik.” Vilhjálmur Gíslason, Eiríkur á Brúnum (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja H.F., 1946), 7, notes that Eiríkur “was an industrious man and good farmer, when he was in the prime of life, a skillful craftsman and knew a thing or two about folktales and poetry, as well as being a good story teller. . . . [He] did not receive any education growing up apart from the usual confirmation lessons. Nevertheless, he was attentive and had a thirst for knowledge.” This passage was translated by Friðrik Rafn Guðmundsson.

36. Gíslason, Eiríkur á Brúnum, 116 (translated by Darron S. Allred); Ashby, Icelanders Gather to Utah, 123, identifies Þorbjörn’s father as Thorvaldur Bjornsson, who was born October 18, 1833, and died January 30, 1922. Evidence strongly suggests that Thorvaldur, twenty-one years older than Ingeveldur Eiríksdóttir (1854–1930), is portrayed as Björn of Leirur in Paradise Reclaimed. According to Laxness’s novel, Thorvaldur fathered an illegitimate child via Ingeveldur, who is portrayed as Steina, the daughter of Steinar, in the story. The introduction to Paradise Reclaimed by Jane Smiley (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), states, “The other visitor was the agent Björn of Leirur: Björn of Leirur is loosely based on the historical character named Þorvaldur Björnsson (1833–1922), a farming magnate who lived at Þorvlasteyvi at the roots of Eyiafjallajökull. He, too, became an entrepreneur, investing all his money in trawlers, but went bankrupt. He had no children by his wife, but had two children by Ingvald [Ingeveldur], the daughter of Eiríkur of Brúnar (the original of ‘Steinar of Hliðar’)” (301).

37. See http://lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration. Search for “Nevada, 1881.” Information on this database was compiled and edited by the author.


39. In his novel, Laxness has Steinar’s wife and family traveling to Utah after Steinar had already immigrated there. However, the facts assert that Eiríkur and his family traveled together until Runhildur’s untimely death. Ashby notes that she became sick and died on the way to Utah and is buried at North Platte, Nebraska (Icelanders Gather to Utah, 106).

40. Ashby, Icelanders Gather to Utah, 23–24. See also a biographical sketch of Eiríkur in Allred, The Icelanders of Utah, 110.

41. Ashby, Icelanders Gather to Utah, 60–61, notes that Ingeveldur Eirkursdóttir met Jon Jonsson on the voyage over to America in 1881. They were married about four months later and had five children together. She died in 1930 at the age of seventy-six and is buried in the Spanish Fork Cemetery. In addition,
Ashby, 123, further notes that Þorður Diðriksson remained in Spanish Fork, where he died in 1965.

42. On his visits to Utah in 1957 and in 1959, Laxness showed a keen interest in knowing more about Diðriksson, as can be evidenced in letters he wrote to John Y. Bearnson following each of these visits. See for example, Halldór Laxness to John Y. Bearnson, December 4, 1957, and September 16, 1959, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.

43. On the Atlantic voyage from Liverpool to New York, Þórður was very seasick. He noted, “I often heard the emigrants ask if the Icelander was still alive and the usual answer was, ’It won’t be long untill he is gone,’ and that answer made me wish I was out of the way so they wouldn’t have to bother about nursing me any longer.” “Autobiographical Sketch of Theodur Dedrickson” (Þórður Diðriksson), 2, Church History Library.

44. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 4:343. For voyage information on the vessel *John J. Boyd*, see Mormon Immigration Index CD. A note inserted apparently by an E. Iver in the “Autobiographical Sketch of Thedur Dedricksson,” 7, points out that “the Dedrickson home was noted for its generous hospitality and there many of the emigrants were taken in and kept like family members untill they could get settled.” In Halldór Laxness, *Paradise Reclaimed*, 152, the author incorporates into his novel the idea that the Mormon bishop, based on the character of Diðriksson, was hospitable to the incoming Icelanders. Ashby, *Icelanders Gather to Utah*, 124–26, states that Diðriksson was born at Holmar, Kross, Rangarvalla County, and notes that he married Helga Jonsdottir in 1858. Ashby further notes, “Thordur homesteaded 160 acres on the east bench of Spanish Fork. He established an adobe yard which furnished materials for many homes in Spanish Fork. The adobes were made of mud and straw. Thordur was a leader among the Icelandic pioneers in Spanish Fork. He presided at many of their meetings. Many of the Icelandic emigrants that came to Spanish Fork found shelter and food under his roof. . . . Thordur died 9 September 1894 of diabetes.”

45. A few of the nineteenth-century Icelanders who converted to Mormonism and immigrated to Utah reverted back to their Lutheran faith. One historical individual who appears in a key role in *Paradísarheimt is* “Reverend Runólfur,” a Lutheran pastor. Runólfur Runólfsson was born in 1854, joined the LDS Church in 1874, and emigrated from Iceland to North Dakota in 1881. The following year he came to Utah, where he worked as an interpreter for men constructing the Salt Lake Temple. Here he entered polygamy and took a second wife. However, his first wife told him he had to choose between her and polygamy. As a result, Runólfur abandoned the Mormon faith and became the Lutheran pastor for the Icelandic congregation in Spanish Fork. He also served as a reverend in Seattle, Washington, and in Iceland, but he eventually returned to Spanish Fork, where he died in 1929. Ashby, *Icelanders Gather to Utah*, 106–7. My research assistant Mark J. Sanderson, in an unpublished paper titled “The Old Lutheran Church in Spanish Fork,” 4, stated that “while several Icelanders left the LDS Church, they maintained close ties with LDS Icelanders and the Lutheran church became a community center for Icelanders.” This close relationship has also been mentioned to the author by
a number of people who have Icelandic roots and who are currently members of
the Icelandic Association of Utah. For information on the history of Lutherans in
Utah, see Ronnie L. Stellhorn, “A History of the Lutheran Church in Utah” (mas-
ter’s thesis, Utah State University, 1975); see also Thomas Edgar Lyon, “Evangelical
Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas: 1865–1900” (PhD
diss., University of Utah, 1962), 221–30, on contact between Lutherans and
Mormons throughout Utah during the late nineteenth century.

46. Referring to Diðriksson’s tract, Einar Eiríksson, who wrote “Short History
of the Iceland Mission” in 1912, noted, “I consider this book the best that has been
published in the Iceland language on our religion.” A copy of this work is housed
in the Church History Department. Byron Geslison, who was called to reopen the
Icelandic Mission in 1975, indicated that the missionaries still used Þórður’s tract
century after it was written. Byron Geslison and his family, interviews by the
author, winter 2000, Spanish Fork, Utah.

47. Byron Geslison and his family, interviews by the author. On another occa-
sion, Byron Geslison wrote, “Halldór Kiljan Laxness . . . has received us several
times and has much of our literature. He and his wife have offered to help us and
there is a letter on file from him stating his desire to help us where he can.” Byron
of the author. In a letter to Bearnson, written from Hong Kong, December 4,
1957, Laxness reveals that he had been wanting the Diðriksson book for decades.
He writes, “I was really happy to find and hold in my hands the book of Þórður
Diðriksson, a bibliographical gem, not to be found in any collection of printed
Icelandic books. Only I felt utterly distressed not to find time or convenience to
read a single line in this book which I have been yearning for at least 30 years. . . .
I should also be very happy if you could persuade the granddaughter of Þórður
Diðriksson to send his valuable writings to a library which specializes in Icelandic
books, like Landsbókasafn Íslands.” Laxness to Bearnson, December 4, 1957. On
January 13, 1958, Bearnson replied to Halldór, “I will try to see some of the decen-
dents [sic] of Thordur Didriksson . . . and see if something can be done to get them
to put his writings in safe keeping.” Bearnson further noted that he was going to
try to get a microfilm copy of this book by Diðriksson which Laxness had wanted.
Bearnson to Laxness, January 13, 1958.

48. When Paradísarheimt was published, it outsold every other book for the
Christmas season of 1960 in Iceland. However, as in Utah, Laxness also had his
critics in his homeland. Some liked the book while others did not. Some disliked
the style and thought the novel was anticlimactic; others believed that Halldór left
too many unresolved issues, and they puzzled over the apparent inconclusiveness
of the ending. Hannes Hölmsteinn Gissurarson, Laxness 1948–1998 (Reykjavík:
Bókafélagið, 2005), 242; I am indebted to Friðrik Rafn Guðmundsson for translat-
ing this summary of critical responses for me.

Halldór Guðmundsson, author of The Islander (see endnote 4), wrote the fol-
lowing in an email to the author dated June 10, 2010:

“This study of Fred Woods about the relationship between Halldór and the
Mormons is highly interesting not the least because it demonstrates well Halldór’s
approach to story writing. Even if it were not his intention to discuss the theol-
ogy of the church of the Latter-day Saints, he didn’t miss studying it thoroughly,
along with the social life of Utah, without prejudice, and with sincere interest and
respect. He consulted with scholars and clergymen, visited the settings, and read books and essays—but in the end all facts . . . had to [be] swayed to the one desire Halldór never rejected—the desire to tell a good story.

49. Tate, “Halldór Laxness,” 31, writes that “Mormon readers who are offended at the satiric aspects of Laxness’s portrait of Zion should understand that irony and satire are common to all his fiction, regardless of subject or setting, and are not simply marshalled out to undercut the Mormons.”

50. Halldór Laxness to Judge A. Sherman Christensen, February 5, 1963, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.


56. Moses 7:18. In Mormon theology, the term Zion is defined as both a righteous people and a place or a land designated for the Latter-day Saints to congregate. The Salt Lake Valley and other Mormon colonies throughout the American West became gathering places for the Saints from 1847 until the end of the nineteenth century. See A. D. Sorenson, “Zion,” in Encyclopedia of Mormonism, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1624–26, for more information concerning the meaning of Zion.


58. Tate, “Halldór Laxness,” 33.


paper written in 2003, in possession of author, indicates that the Icelandic Association began to hold an annual Thorablot gathering in March 1998. There are currently two hundred and fifty LDS Church members listed in Iceland in two ecclesiastical units known as branches. 2009 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2009), 196. These branches are located in Reykjavík and Selfoss.

65. Halldór Laxness, interview by Randi Bratteli, Arbeiderbladet (Oslo), February 28, 1970 (translated by George S. Tate); Tate, “Halldór Laxness,” 30. Shortly after this interview, Ray C. Johnson, a mission president stationed in Oslo, Norway, who supervised missionary work in Iceland, sent a letter to Laxness, indicating that he was aware of the interest Laxness apparently had in the Church when Laxness expressed this view in this interview with Mrs. Bratteli. Johnson also told Laxness, “There are some Mormons in Iceland, and church meetings are being held there. They are held under the direction of Capt. Bert V. Rhoton. He is an American-Air Corps Officer (Address: Box 52, Keflavik Airport, Keflavik, Iceland). I am writing him and inviting him to get in touch with you.” Ray C. Johnson to Halldór Laxness, March 16, 1970, Correspondence of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Halldór Laxness, National and University Library of Iceland. Laxness wrote back to Johnson just eight days later and thanked the mission president. Worried about the reception of Paradise Reclaimed among the Utah community, Halldór again noted, “I was told that some local Mormons, among them some of my friends in Spanish Fork and Provo, did not find my book rich enough in hero worship and glorification of the early Mormon settlers. This is the case with all local people when a stranger writes a book about their environment. . . . My very good friend in Salt Lake City, the Federal judge Sherman Christensen, wrote to me that there was nothing whatsoever objectionable to Mormons. . . . Since my Utah visits I have always been happy to see Mormons as guests at my home in Iceland. If you have found a mission in Iceland I shall be glad to recommend their endeavor to Icelanders, because I know from experience that Mormons are excellent people.” Halldór Laxness to President Ray C. Johnson, March 24, 1970, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness.


67. John Y. Bearnson to Halldór and Auður Laxness, Christmas 1979, typescript, Correspondence of John Y. Bearnson to Halldór Laxness, National and University Library of Iceland. In this same letter, Bearnson thanked Laxness for his kindness shown to him and his wife, Birdella, during the time they served a mission to Iceland from about August 1977 to August 1978. In a 1978 Christmas letter, Bearnson also thanked Halldór and Auður for their kindness shown on this same mission and also noted, “Birdella often speaks of your visits to the Hospital.” See John Y. Bearnson to Halldór and Auður Laxness, December 14, 1978, Correspondence of Halldór Laxness. In the 1979 Christmas letter, John Bearnson told Halldór and Auður, “Birdella has done very well with her broken hip.” This appears to be the reason for the hospital visit Bearnson noted in his letter and why the Bearnsons served a mission to Iceland for only one year instead of eighteen months, the general time frame for most LDS missionary couples.

68. Guðný Halldórsvísind, phone interview by the author, April 2, 2009. During the course of our conversation, Guðný further remarked that she visited Utah for the first time in the fall of 1979 in order to participate in a two-month film shoot of a documentary about Paradísarheimt. Guðný added that she found the
Mormons to be an “ordinary” and a “very nice people.” In a phone interview with the author on July 27, 2010, Guðný said that her father told her that “the Mormons were a blessed people. He was positive towards Mormons because they treated him so well. He had problems come to America because of the C.I.A. Through the Mormons he was helped in coming to the United States to do his research.” Guðmundsson, Islander, 459, notes, “In the summer of 1979 Rolf Hådrich started work on a version of a new television series based on Paradise Reclaimed. It was a huge production and the filming took place in Copenhagen, Iceland and Utah, where an entire set had been built for the town of Spanish Forks [sic]. Icelandic actors took the most important roles. Halldór did not participate, yet he and his son Einar took a car trip to a remote part of eastern Iceland to watch the shooting.”
The so-called white horse prophecy is a document attracting much undeserved attention both in and out of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The text claims to contain words spoken by the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in 1843 to Edwin Rushton and Theodore Turley. The prophecy assigns a white horse, a red horse, a black horse, and a pale horse to different groups of people. It prophesies that the white horse (the Latter-day Saints) will create a wealthy haven in the Rocky Mountains to which many people of the world will gather for safety amid anarchy, war, and massive destruction. The prophecy was denounced by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as early as 1918 \(^1\) and as recently as 2009,\(^2\) but it still circulates among some Church members and unofficial publications today.

The prophecy is often erroneously cited as the earliest and most reliable source of two statements: that the United States Constitution will hang by a thread and that Joseph Smith prophesied that the Latter-day Saints would settle in the Rocky Mountains. In fact, these statements have reliable sources that predate the writing of the white horse prophecy, as shown below; those other sources should be cited rather than the white horse prophecy. The evidence presented hereafter shows that the document was not written around 1854, as is commonly claimed, but more likely after 1890.

This article publishes for the first time the two documents that are the basis for the white horse prophecy. One document is in the handwriting of Edwin Rushton and presumably predates the other, which is in an unidentified hand but is signed by Edwin Rushton. Both are undated. These documents are here presented in their entirety to demonstrate that Rushton’s original text underwent significant revision prior to its being circulated.
among Latter-day Saints as a prophecy. Transcripts of both documents follow on pages 116 to 126. This article gives the history of the documents, narrows the range of likely dates in which they could have been created, and examines problematic claims in the text of the documents. By these examinations, this article strives to demonstrate the unreliability of the Rushton documents as an accurate record of the words of Joseph Smith.

Don L. Penrod

This article sprang from my master’s thesis, “Critical Analysis of Certain Apocryphal Reports in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as Related by Members of the Church.” For that study, I reviewed all of the materials related to the creation and circulation of the white horse prophecy that I could find by 1971, when my thesis was published. Some twenty-nine years later I received a strong prompting to go to the Church Historian’s Office and look anew in the white horse prophecy file, where I found that a copy of Edwin Rushton’s handwritten document and other related documents had been donated to the file. These provided a reliable and solid basis for further investigation into the provenance, historical validity, and accuracy of the so-called prophecy still being circulated and quoted.

Personally, I think that the white horse prophecy came about because an elderly Edwin Rushton was pressured to write a memory that aggrandized his relationship with Joseph Smith. I find it unfortunate that anyone continues to perpetuate the myth that the white horse prophecy has a tacit seal of approval from the Church. In fact, Joseph Smith never had a chance to state his judgment about it. The Church President who did have opportunity to make a judgment was Joseph F. Smith, and he soundly refuted it. I wholeheartedly agree with his statement that the white horse prophecy “was never spoken by the prophet in the manner in which they have put it forth.”
Edwin Rushton and the Writing of the Documents

Born on June 1, 1824, in Leek, England, Edwin Rushton joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there and immigrated to Nauvoo, Illinois, arriving on April 13, 1842, at age seventeen. He was eighteen years old in May 1843, the date he later gives for the experience he writes about. When the Latter-day Saints left Nauvoo and headed west in 1846, Rushton went to live with family in St. Louis, eventually arriving in Utah in 1851 with the John Brown company. In 1855, he wrote a three-page signed, dated history of his life to that point. He worked as a miller, farmer, and stock raiser until his death on December 28, 1904, in Salt Lake City at age eighty.

Edwin Rushton penned his undated ten-page document (figs. 1–11, hereafter referred to as the Rushton original) himself. The handwriting and textual style of this ten-page document are similar to those found in his signed handwritten history of 1855. The unsteady writing suggests that the document was written by Rushton in his older years. A photocopy of the document is archived in the Church History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. The original remains in private possession.

An unidentified person wrote two pages that were very close to Edwin Rushton’s original (figs. 12–13) but crossed out those pages and began anew with a revised version that was better written (figs. 14–28). This document, hereafter referred to as the revision, is also archived in the Church History Library. The handwriting and orthography of the revision attest that it was not written by Edwin Rushton, although his signature appears at the bottom of the final page (fig. 28). Next to Rushton’s signature are the words “witness signature A. G. Giauque” (pronounced Juke). It is unclear exactly what is meant by the words “witness signature” (fig. 28). Arnold G. Giauque (1857–1919) came to Utah in 1868, when he was eleven years old. When he became acquainted with Edwin Rushton is unknown, but it is reasonable that he would have been considerably older than eleven to serve as a witness for the document. Giauque’s involvement indicates that the revision was created some years after 1868.

Comparing Giauque’s signature along with the words “witness signature” to the rest of the text hints that Giauque may well have written the
revision. The unique one-humped w of “witness,” the open s of “witness,” the L-like s of “signature,” the trailing cross stroke of the two t’s, and the open G of “Giauque” can clearly be seen elsewhere in the revision (for example, fig. 26). The words “witness signature A. G. Giauque” are of a different ink weight, hinting that they may have been added later.

Circulation of the Revision

Copies of the revision were made and circulated. Of the known extant copies, the one with the earliest date appears in the journal of John J. Roberts in 1902. Roberts returned home to Paradise, Cache County, Utah, on February 4, 1902, from a mission to Samoa. His journal entry for March 2, 1902, states, “On the next page will be found a Prophecy by the Prophet Joseph Smith related to Edwin Rushton and Theodore Turley. This Prophecy has never been given to the Public. I recorded it from Robert Pearce on Friday Febr. 28, 1902 and I now copy it here.” Who Robert Pearce was and his relationship to Roberts is not recorded in the journal, and a search to identify Pearce and discover the provenance of his copy proved fruitless.

Church Leaders’ Denunciation of the Prophecy

By 1918, the text of the revision had circulated enough to warrant the attention of Church leaders. At general conference in October 1918, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith spoke these words:

In my travels in the stakes of Zion, my attention has been called, on a number of occasions, to a purported revelation or vision or manifestation, whatever it may be called, supposed to have been received by President Smith sometime in the distant past, in regard to events of great importance dealing with the nations of the earth and the Latter-day Saints. Many things in that purported vision, or revelation, are absurd. My attention has been called to this thing, and good brethren and good sisters have inquired of me to know whether or not there was any truth in that which had come to their attention. It is in printed form; and I have been under the necessity of telling them that there was no truth in it. Then, in other places I have discovered that people have copies of a purported vision by the Prophet Joseph Smith given in Nauvoo, and some people are circulating this supposed vision, or revelation, or conversation which the prophet is reported to have held with a number of individuals in the city of Nauvoo. I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that if you understand the Church articles and covenants, if you will read the scriptures and become familiar with those things which are recorded in the revelations from the Lord, it will not be necessary for you to ask any questions in regard to the authenticity or otherwise of any purported revelation, vision, or manifestation that proceeds out
of darkness, concocted in some corner, surreptitiously presented, and not coming through the proper channels of the Church.\textsuperscript{13}

In that same meeting, President Joseph F. Smith said this in a pronouncement about several spurious prophecies, including the white horse prophecy:

The ridiculous story about the “red horse,” and “the black horse,” and “the white horse,” and a lot of trash that has been circulated about and printed and sent around as a great revelation given by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is a matter that was gotten up, I understand, some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by two of our brethren\textsuperscript{14} who put together some broken sentences from the Prophet that they may have heard him utter from time to time, and formulated this so called revelation out of it, and it was never spoken by the prophet in the manner in which they have put it forth. It is simply false; that is all there is to it.\textsuperscript{15}

President Smith was told that the revelation was said to have been put together “some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” It is not known who communicated that understanding to President Smith. Edwin Rushton’s daughter Edith Rushton Christensen recorded, “Some years before Father passed away, two prominent Church officials questioned Father at great length concerning this prophecy, and recorded the statement he made at that time.”\textsuperscript{16} Edith does not name the visiting officials, their Church position, or give any idea of the nature of the statement Edwin made. Possibly from this visit came the delineating phrase “some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith” used by President Smith. Although the phrase was not confirmed or corroborated, copyists circulated “ten years after the death of Joseph” as the date the document was written.\textsuperscript{17}

**Historical Clues for Dating the Document**

If Edwin Rushton did pen his document around 1854, ten years after the death of Joseph, it remained unmentioned in his own 1855 history.\textsuperscript{18} His daughter Marie Rushton Fields wrote an undated three-page history of her father covering his birth to his activities in Utah but recorded nothing about a prophecy.\textsuperscript{19}

**Theodore Turley.** Edwin Rushton’s document puts Theodore Turley present when the white horse prophecy was uttered. Turley is often credited with cocreating the document.\textsuperscript{20} But Turley’s signature is conspicuously absent: it does not appear on Rushton’s original document, the revision, or any copy of the revision. This is a significant omission since Turley, born on April 10, 1801, would have been forty-two years old when the prophecy was allegedly spoken and would have still been alive had the document been
penned in the 1850s. Turley actively fulfilled responsible assignments and appointments both in the Church and civically. As far as has been found, he never made any mention of witnessing the Prophet Joseph Smith speak the words that Edwin Rushton recorded.21 That there is no collaboration from Turley suggests that the document was not written prior to Turley’s death at Beaver, Utah, in 1871.

Thomas Bullock. Thomas Bullock and his wife, Henrietta, Edwin Rushton’s sister, immigrated from England to Nauvoo in 1843, where Thomas served as clerk to Joseph Smith.22 His journal reveals his ability to record every detail during their voyage.23 With his experience in record making,24 it is reasonable to believe that had the white horse prophecy document been in existence during his lifetime, he would have been conscious of it, since Thomas was among the extended family of Edwin. Two of Thomas’s journal entries (November 14 and 22, 1845) mention Edwin, but nowhere in Thomas’s journal or letters is there mention of the prophecy or the existence of any documentation of it penned by Edwin.25 Thomas Bullock died on February 10, 1885, at Coalville, Utah.

Meetings with Joseph Smith. Edwin Rushton’s name is absent from the record kept in Joseph Smith’s collection of journals. The record for May 6, 1843, in Joseph Smith’s unpublished personal journal states:

- Early Morning JS had a visit with a lecturer on mesmerism.
- JS met with a Methodist Minister.
- 9:30–2:00 p.m. JS at or near his farm. Marched the Nauvoo Legion down to Nauvoo in the afternoon. Gave a short speech to the NL in the afternoon.
- 7:30–11:30 p.m. JS in court room over at Red Brick Store. Attended on Mr. Vickers’ performance on wire-dancing and legerdemain dancing.26

Of all the articles, diaries, books, papers, letters and biographies researched for this article,27 nothing has been found that corroborates Rushton’s claim of meeting with Theodore Turley and Joseph Smith in Nauvoo and hearing the prophet speak prophetically in their presence.

The revision states that “about two weeks” after the initial meeting, Joseph again stated the concepts of the white horse prophecy. A search for such a meeting about two weeks later or any time thereafter in 1843 turned up nothing.28

Journals and Periodicals. A search of a database of 150 pioneer and early Utah journals turned up none that mention a prophecy about white, red, black, or pale horses. A similar search of LDS periodicals from 1850 to 1899 also turned up nothing about such a prophecy.29 This lack of any mention of the white horse prophecy suggests that it was not in circulation among the Saints in 1854 or for many years afterward.
Textual Clues for Dating the Document

Within the text of the original document are found clues that may help us ascertain the date of its writing. One clue is found in the wording “they will be afraid of becoming Slaves again.” The document speaks of a terrible revolution taking place in America, with England being neutral till the condition becomes “so inhuman to look at and to Stop the Shedding of Blood, France & England will be Allied together and come with the intention to make Peace” and the black horse “will Flee to the invaders and Join in with them for they will be afraid of becoming Slaves again” (fig. 8). Presumably this is a reference to the enslavement of blacks in the United States. There is nothing in the document prophesying the freeing of the slaves, which would have to occur before they would fear becoming slaves “again.” The Emancipation Proclamation, issued in September 1862, became effective on January 1, 1863. Mentioning this fear of re-enslavement indicates that Rushton wrote the document after the end of the Civil War.

Another clue is Rushton’s use of the term “Japs.” The document states, “There is a land beyond the Rockey Mountains that Will be Invadered By the Chineas or Japs” (fig. 10). The term did not appear in English usage until 1880 to 1890, suggesting that the document was created after 1880. Since this term would not likely have been used by the Prophet Joseph in 1843, here is evidence that the document does not contain a reliable record of Joseph Smith’s spoken words.

Textual Comparisons of the Rushton Original Document with the Revision

Comparing Edwin Rushton’s original and the revision demonstrates that the reviser made substantive changes to the original. These changes call into question the reliability of the prophecy.

The Inclusion of a Date in 1843. Edwin Rushton’s original document begins, “On the [blank space] 1843 Being at Work Close by President Joseph Smith Mansion” (fig. 1) Rushton did not include a date when he began to write but left a space for it to be added later. The “1843” appears to have been added later than the surrounding text: the ink is darker and more solid than the surrounding text. The crossed-out first page of the rewritten text (fig. 12) has a year but no day or month.

The revision shows a complete date of “On or about the 6th day of May 1843” (fig. 14). However, the numeral 4 in the date is written in a darker ink than the surrounding text and is superimposed over some original number, rendering the original number undistinguishable but leaving a loop of it discernible. This act of altering the year to 1843 may possibly coincide with
the insertion of “1843” in the Rushton original. It is likely that the reviser wanted a firm date for the prophecy, but in Rushton’s memory the date was by no means certain.

**The Inclusion of a Toast by Joseph Smith.** Another discrepancy is that Rushton’s original document describes a vile and abusive man coming to Joseph’s home “to Chastize the Prophet For Drinking a toast with a glas of water to the Mobocrats” (fig. 2; see also fig. 13) without any details about the wording of the toast. The words of the toast are found on what appears to be an intermediary page (fig. 11), written in the same handwriting as the revision. The revision adds more information: “The weather being hot he [Joseph] called for a glass of water. With the glass of water in his hand he said ‘I will drink you a toast to the overthrow of the mobocrats’ which he did in language as follows” (fig. 14). These statements are unsupported by the record of that date as recorded in the History of the Church, and the description of the weather is exactly the opposite. It states the day was “windy and very cold.”

The revision then gives this text of the toast: “Here’s wishing they were in the middle of the sea in a stone canoe, with iron paddles, and a shark swallow the canoe, and the devil swallow the shark and him locked up in the north west corner of hell and the key lost, and a blind man looking for it” (fig. 14). The words of the toast clearly were written on a separate piece of paper and then glued to the bottom of the first page of the revision.

These words were possibly copied from Parley P. Pratt’s allegorical “A Dialogue Between Joe. Smith & the Devil,” first published in 1844. Parley has Joseph toasting Satan with these words: “Here’s to his Satanic Majesty; may he be driven from the earth, and be forced to put to sea in a stone canoe with an iron paddle, and may the canoe sink, and a shark swallow the canoe and its royal freight, and an alligator swallow the shark, and may the alligator be bound in the north west corner of hell, the door be locked, key lost, and a blind man hunting for it.”

**Changing the Prophecy to First Person.** Rushton wrote that Joseph “turned to me and said he wanted to tell us, somethings in the future, but he Shoud Speak in Parables like unto John the Revelator” (fig. 2).

The revision states, “Turning to me he said he wanted to tell us ‘I want to tell something in the future but he should I will speak in parables, like unto John the revelator’” (fig. 16). This changes the wording from narrative to direct quote, thus adding an air of certainty that did not exist in the original. Rushton employed no quotation marks in his original, but some 1,484 of the approximately 1,853 words in the revision are presented within quotation marks.
Use of the Term “Mormons.” Where the original document used the term “Mormons” (fig. 6), the revision first had “Mormons,” which was crossed out and changed to “Saints” (fig. 20). Joseph preferred the term “Saints” over “Mormons” to identify his people and would not likely have used “Mormons” in a prophecy.

The Addition of a Statement of Reliability. Found only in the revision is a declaration that Rushton accurately remembered the words of Joseph Smith many years after hearing them spoken once and reiterated some two weeks later. It states:

The words of the Prophet made a strong impression on me and I have never forgotten them. On an occasion, about 2 weeks after I first heard him speak these words, I was at a meeting where he preached a sermon, which he said should be the greatest of his life, on that occasion he reiterated the matter which I have now written so that the subject became firmly rooted in my memory and I know them to be true. (fig. 27)

Problematic Content of the Rushton Document and the Revision

Rushton’s original document and the revision make claims that are not substantiated by history and scripture.

Political events. The original document makes this statement about England, France, and Russia: “England and France——he said—at this time where Bitter Enemies to each-other but they will be allied Together in order to Keep Russia From Conquering the world, this alliance was Fullfilled in the Franco-Russion War” (fig. 4). The reviser changes the statement to this wording: “England and France are now bitter enemies but they will be allied together in order to keep Russia from conquering the world” (fig. 21). Also, the sentence’s location in the sequence of events within the text is changed.

This statement is problematic in several ways. England and France were not bitter enemies in the 1840s. Second, Rushton claims that the prophecy was fulfilled but does not explain how he knows this; presumably he pronounced the fulfillment himself. Third, no nineteenth-century war fits the description of England and France against Russia with Russia aiming to conquer the world. Rushton’s pronouncement that the prophecy had been fulfilled hints that years had passed between the time the prophecy was allegedly spoken and the time Rushton wrote it down.

Ten Tribes to Guard the Rocky Mountains. Rushton’s original document states, “The Peace and Safety in the Rocky Mountains was protected By a Cordon Band of the White Horse and the Red Horse and the ten tribes of Israel, Comeing of the Messiah Among his People would be so Natural
that only those who saw him, would Know he had come, but he would come and give his Laws unto Zion and Minester unto his People” (fig. 9).

The revision moved the mention of the Ten Tribes to the following sentence: “Peace and Safety in the Rocky Mountains will be protected by a cordon band Band of the White Horse and the Red Horse. The coming of the Ten Tribes of Isarael, the coming of the Messiah among His people, will be so natural, that only those who see Him will know He has come, but He will come and give His law unto Zion, and minister unto His people” (fig. 25). That change eliminated Rushton's scripturally and prophetically unsupported claim that the Ten Tribes will come to the Rocky Mountains to help maintain peace and safety there.

**Unusual Word Usage.** The original document declared, “There is a land beyond the Rockey Mountains that Will be Invadered By the Chineas or Japs with out great Care and Protection is given to them” (fig. 10). These words were revised to “There is a land beyond the Rocky Mountains that will be invaded by the heathen Chinese unless great care and protection is given” (fig. 26). A search for any use of the term “heathen Chinese” in Joseph Smith’s writings turned up nothing. That Joseph would use either “Japs” or “heathen Chinese” seems very unlikely.

**The Russian Czar.** The final topic in Rushton's document touches on the theme of the great battle of Gog and Magog. It predicts, “The last great Struggle Zion will have to [erasure] contend with when America will be the Zion of Our God, will be Called Gog & Magog, led By the Russiaian Czar his Power will be very great” (fig. 10). The revision states: “The last great struggle Zion will have to contend with will be when the whole America will be made the Zion of our God, will be Those opposing will be called Gog and Magog, the nations of the world led by the Russian Czar and his their power will be great, but all opposition will be overcome and this land will then be the Zion of our God” (fig. 27). The claim that a Russian czar will lead the nations in the battle of Gog and Magog is not supported elsewhere in scripture or prophecy.

**The Prophecy’s Use of Horses to Represent Saints.** A novel element in the prophecy is the utilization of white, red, black, and pale horses to represent groups of people. In Joseph Smith's writing and speaking, horses or any other beasts were never utilized allegorically as a symbol for the children of God. In fact, he taught just the opposite:

I could not help laughing at the idea of God making use of the figure of a beast to represent His kingdom on the earth, consisting of men, when He could as well have used a far more noble and consistent figure. What! the Lord made use of the figure of a creature of the brute creation to represent that which is much more noble, glorious, and important—the glories and majesty of His kingdom? . . .
When God made use of the figure of a beast in visions to the prophets, He did it to represent those kingdoms which had degenerated and become corrupt, savage and beast-like in their dispositions, even the degenerate kingdoms of the wicked world; but He never made use of the figure of a beast nor any of the brute kind to represent His kingdom.\(^\text{37}\)

John the Revelator’s vision of a white horse, a red horse, a black horse, and a pale horse specifies that the color of each horse was related solely to the power wielded by its rider (Rev. 6:2–8; see also Zech. 1:7–11; 6:1–8). A review of the works of ten respected modern authors examining and explaining the vision of John the Revelator found none of them interpreting horses as symbols representing people.\(^\text{38}\)

**Points in the White Horse Prophecy Found Elsewhere**

The white horse prophecy is often cited as the source for Joseph Smith’s prophecies that the U.S. Constitution will hang by a thread and that the Saints would settle in the Rocky Mountains. These prophecies do not originate with the white horse prophecy but were spoken by Brigham Young in the 1850s. Edwin Rushton may have been present when Brigham spoke these words in Salt Lake City, and almost certainly he heard about the speeches or saw them in published form; the *Journal of Discourses* was published between 1855 and 1886. Edwin Rushton’s daughter Edith characterized Edwin as “well schooled in England, a critical reader of everything available.”\(^\text{39}\)

**The Constitution Hanging by a Thread.** The Rushton document states, “And you will see the Constitution of the United States almost destroyed so that it will only be saved as it were by a thread, and that thread as fine as the finest silk fiber” (fig. 4). The revision states, “You will see the Constitution of the United States almost destroyed, it will hang by a thread, as it were, and that thread as fine as the finest silk” (fig. 17).

This prophecy was spoken at a Fourth of July celebration in 1854 in the Salt Lake Tabernacle by Brigham Young, who attributes it to Joseph Smith: “Will the Constitution be destroyed? No: it will be held inviolate by this people; and, as Joseph Smith said, ‘The time will come when the destiny of the nation will hang upon a single thread. At that critical juncture, this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction. ’ It will be so.”\(^\text{40}\) The prophecy has circulated frequently in Latter-day Saint thought and publications.\(^\text{41}\)

**The Saints Would Go to the Rocky Mountains.** The Rushton document states, “The Prophet commence to talk. . . . You will go to the Rocky Mountains and will see a great and Mighty People Built up” (figs. 2, 3). Brigham Young in 1856 spoke of Joseph’s design to go to the Rocky
Mountains: “I did not devise the great scheme of the Lord’s opening the way to send this people to these mountains. Joseph contemplated the move for years before it took place.”  

How the White Horse Prophecy Document Has Been Misused

Since its creation and still today, the white horse prophecy receives consideration it does not deserve. For example, Duane Crowther’s *Proph-ecy—Key to the Future*, an oft-reprinted and popular book, presents the prophecy as reliable.

The white horse prophecy is widely proliferated currently on the Internet. It is referred to in religious contexts as well as political, with personal interpretations aplenty. One author, John Hamer, asserts in a September 2008 blog that an art installation in the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., is based on the white horse prophecy. (Hamer’s assertion is soundly refuted by the curator of the exhibit, Paul Chaat Smith.) When Latter-day Saints run for public office, the white horse prophecy is sometimes invoked. It is time to set this prophecy aside and turn to more reliable sources.

Conclusion

Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have consistently denounced the white horse prophecy as spurious. Extensive research has revealed no official Church statement in support of the prophecy. In regard to the prophecy, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith gave the following insightful explanation of the Lord’s consistent method of providing revelation to his people:

When a revelation comes for the guidance of this people, you may be sure that it will not be presented in some mysterious manner contrary to the order of the Church. It will go forth in such form that the people will understand that it comes from those who are in authority. . . . It will not spring up in some distant part of the Church and be in the hands of some obscure individual without authority, and thus be circulated among the Latter-day Saints. Now, you may remember this.

The evidence presented here indicates that Edwin Rushton wrote his document after 1890. Apparently Edwin Rushton, who greatly loved the Prophet Joseph Smith, in his elderly years recorded some things that Joseph actually said, mixing in words of his own creation. It is widely acknowledged that memories of words and events, especially many years later, are often faulty. The case of Edwin Rushton would make an interesting study for those who analyze problematic memories. A more compelling question
for us today might be, why is that people still circulate and promote as truth this denounced prophecy? That is a topic others may see fit to address.

Of course it cannot be disproven that Joseph Smith ever spoke the words Edwin Rushton wrote. However, no one has ever substantiated Rushton's words, and Rushton's document cannot be considered reliable. Even if a different document with text similar to this one were someday found, as researchers delve into long-forgotten records, the document created by Rushton still could not be considered a reliable source. The efforts of promoters to make it into a prophecy and to prove its historicity have proved fruitless. Serious readers of the Rushton document will be persuaded that this text did not come forth from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

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Fig. 1. Rushton original document, known as the white horse prophecy, page 1. Manuscript 3771, photocopy of original. Courtesy Church History Library. A transcript follows on pages 116 to 120. A stamp bears the name C. N. Christensen, the husband of Rushton’s daughter Edith.
Language was so vile he would have graduated an Angel, During this time Brother Theodore from St Kitts came up and he was the only one they want, whether to chastise the Prophet For drinking a toast with a glass of water to the Mobercrats, he accuse the Prophet and called him a False Prophet after he was gone, The Prophet commenced to talk about the Mobbings and the Drivings and the Persecutions we as a People had endured,

But he said we had worse things to see he said our Lord have all the Mobbings they will want, But he said to me, Don’t wish them any harm, For when you see these sufferings you will shed Bitter Tears for them, while this conversation was going on we stood near his South Hicker Cape, in a triangle he turned to me and said he wanted to tell us, somethings in the future but he Should Speak in Parables like unto John the Revelator, Sitteth did I think the Prophet would be
Slain so soon, in cold Blood.

You will go to the Rocky Mountains and will see a great and Mighty People Built up. Which I will call the White Horse of Peace and Safety, when the Prophet said you will see, I asked him where he would be, about that time he answered I shall never go there.

Your Enemies will continue to follow you with persecution and make obnoxious Laws against you, in Congress to destroy the White Horse. But you will always have a friend or two to defend you and throw out the worst part of the Laws, so they will not hurt much. You must continue to petition Congress all the time. But they will treat you as Strangers and Aliens and give you your rights but govern you with Strangers and Commissioners.
Edwin Rushton as the Source of the White Horse Prophecy

Fig. 4. Rushton original document, page 4. The markings on this and other pages suggest that this version was used to create the revised version.
as a Power, For Freedom must be given for the Gospel to be reached, in the holy Land, the white Horse will find the Mountains full of all Kinds of Minerals, and they will become very rich, and you will see Silver piled up on the street By the Coast South land, in this Day there was no Mines known in the Rocky Mountains and I should also see Gold Shovel up like sand and Gold would be of no Valuation, in a Mercantile Capacity for the People of the World would have something else to do in seeking for Salvation, the time would come when the Banks in every Nation would fail, and only two Places would be safe to Deposit their Gold and Treasure, and that would be with the white Horse and England Vaults. A Terrible Revolution would take Place in the Land of America, such as had never been seen before, For the Land would Literally Sink without a Supreme Government, and every Species.
of wickedness would run rampant; it would be so terrible that Father would be against Son & Son against the Father & Mother against the Daughter & Daughter against the Mother the most terrible scene of Murder and Blood & Rape that was ever look upon will take place Peace will be taken from the earth and there will be no Peace only in the Rocky Mountains this would cause Hundreds and Thousands of the Honest in Heart to gather not because they were Mormons but because they would not take up the Sword against these Neighbors you will be so numerous you will be in Danger of famine but he said not for seed time & Harvest and that many would come with Bundles under their arms to Escape the Calamities and there was no Escape only by fleeing to Zion those that come to you will be guided under the laws and be one with you for they will see the great if your Organ Ignation & Unity
(England) The Lord took of the best Blood of the Nations, and planted them on the small Island called Great Britain or England, and gave them great power in the Nations for a thousand years and this power will continue with them, that they may keep the Balance of Power to keep Russia from asserting power over all the World. The two Papes Greek and Coenitaclic will come together and be united, the Protestant religions do not know how much they are indebted to Henry the 8th for throwing off the Papias Ball and establishing the Protestant Faith. He was the only Monarch that could do so, and he done it because the Nation was at is back to sustain him. One peculiar feature in England was there establish Red Coats to wear such a remarkable Mark to be shot at and yet they continued where ever they have gone, the reason for this they will know some day. The Lion and the Unicorn are the ensign of Israel, the Wisdom and Statesmanship of England comes from there being so much of the Blood of Israel in the Nation.
While this terrible Revolution goes on in England will be Neubastane it becomes so intolerable and to stop the shedding of Blood France England will be Allued to gather and come with the intention to make Peace Not to Subdue the Nation But when they find the nation so Broken up with many Governments or No Government then it will appear to the other Nations as though England had taken Possession of the Country, the Black Horse will flee to the invaders and join in with them for they be afraid of becoming Slaves again. Throwing England more behind in Slavery they would be safe, armed with British Bayonets the doings of the Black Horse when got the Monster so the Prophet said in the Vision to him the Scene was so terrible he could Bear to look upon it and the Lord to close the scene and if he could not Bear to look upon it who had seen the Father Son and Angels in there Glory he did not know who could Bear to see it. During this time the great White Horse was gathering strong sending out Elders to get the Honest among them. The Pale Horse or people of the United States to Stand By the Constitution of the United States as it was given by Inspiration of the Lord.
In these days God will set up a Kingdom never to be thrown down for these Kingdoms to come unto and those Kingdoms that will not let the Gospel be preached will be shut until they will Germany, Denmark, Scotland, Switzerland, Norway, & Sweden, Belgium, the reason being that the kings and courts are heavy with the nations and nations must be gathered. Have much of the Blood of Israel among them and they will submit to the Kingdom of God. But England will be the first Kingdom to surrender but when she does surrender she will do it as a whole. In comparison to the threat of the Catholic Power, the Prophet said the English Nobility knew the Gospel was True but it had no Power and Grandeur to influence for their embrace. If they are prompt and will not acknowledge the Kingdom of God come in it until the last day the Power which it will have. The Peace and Safety in the Rocky Mountains was protected by a Cordate Band of the White Horse and the Red Horse and Tribes of Israel. Coming of the Messiah and his People. This is not his coming in the Clouds of Heaven to take vengeance on the World.
The Temple in Jackson County is to be built up in this generation. But the Saints will think there will be no time to build it. If you have all the great help you receive, you can put up a great temple. You will have gold and silver and precious stones. For these things will be used for beauty in the temple with all the skilled mechanics and the Ten Tribes of Israel to help you build it.

At this point he became more earnest and ended up as though he wished to add something:

There is a band beyond the Rocky Mountains that will be invaded by the Chinese without great bloodshed and destruction given to them. The last great struggle Lion will have to contend with, when America will be the Lion of our God, called Yog. He will God by the Russian Czar. His power will be very great.

These are the inspired words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Testimony of Elder Edmund Rushton of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
This book was open and was the cause of one of my
friends.

I will drink you a toast to the mirth and
you will get one a drink of water; here we are in the middle of the sea, in a stone
cornet with iron paddles, and sharks swallow the
come, and the devil swallow the shark, and he
looked up in the north most corner of the shell and
the key last and a little man looking for it.

W. Clayton
This Bulluck

Is there any man who can talk this day I'm going to preach the greatest some-
ever preaching.
On the 7th of 1843 while at work near by the Prophet Joseph Smith’s mansion, I saw the Prophet running toward where I was. I stopped work as soon as I could and started toward, as I did so, I saw him fall to the ground. As he was always being persecuted, I thought some one was after him, and that the fall must have hurt him, so I hastened to his assistance. Before I reached him he arose quickly, having hold of a man by the coat collar, as I reached the place where they were, the Prophet was cuffing the man’s ears as though he were a boy. I wanted the Prophet to turn him over to me, but he refused saying, “You would give him too much of a cuff, I know you.”

The man’s language was so vile that he would have aggranated an angel. After having chastised him pretty severely the Prophet let
him go. During this time Bro. Theodore Rigby came to the scene.

We learned from the Prophet that when the man arrived at the mansion he began abusing the Prophet because some time before the Prophet, at a gathering of the Nauvoo Legion, had drank a toast, with a glass of water, to the mobocrats, this evidently had displeased the fellow considerably. He abused the Prophet greatly and called him a false prophet once finally so exasperated him that he drove him out. The fellow started to run and the Prophet after him. The man evidently could see that he would be caught to avoid which he stepped suddenly and dropped down, which action caused the Prophet to fall over him as related above.

After the man had been allowed to depart, those being then present the Prophet Joseph Smith
On or about the 6th day of May, 1843, a grand review of the Warrick Legion was held in Warrick. The Prophet Joseph Smith complimented them for the good discipline and evolutions performed; the weather being hot, he called for a glass of water. With the glass of water in his hand, he said, "I will drink you a toast to the overthrow of the mortals," which he did in language as follows:

"Here's wishing they were in the middle of the sea in a stone canoe, with iron paddles, and a shark swallowed the canoe, and the devil swallowed the shark and him locked up in the west corner of hell, and the key lost, and a third man looking for it."
The next morning a man who had heard the Prophet give the toast here referred to, visited the mansion of the Prophet, and so abused him with abuse and use of bad language, that he was ordered out by the Prophet:

It was while the two were out that my attention was attracted to them, and hearing the man speaking in a loud tone of voice I went toward them, the man finally leaving.

There were then present the Prophet, Joseph Smith.
Theodore Burley and myself. The Prophet began talking to us of the mobbings and drivings, the persecutions we as a people had endured. But, said he, "we will have worse things to see, our persecutors will have all the mobbings they want, don't wish them any harm, for when you see their sufferings you will shed bitter tears for them."

While this conversation was going on we stood near his south wicker gate, in a triangle, turning to me he said, if I wanted to tell something in the future, he would speak in parables, like unto John the revelator."

"Little did I then think the Prophet of the Lord would so soon be slain in civil blood."

Continuing he said, "You will go to the Rocky Mountains and you will see a great and mighty people established, which I."

Fig. 16. Revision, page 3.
will call the White Horse of Peace and Safety” when the Prophet said “you will see.”
I asked him where he would be about that time, he answered, “I shall never go there.”

“Your enemies will continue to follow you with persecutions, and they will make
miserable laws against you in Congress, to destroy the White Horse, but you will all
have a friend or two to defend you and throw out the worst part of the laws, so they will not
hurt much. You must continue to petition Congress all the time, but they will treat you
as strangers, and aliens, and they will not give you your rights, but will govern you
with strangers and commissioners. You will see the Constitution of the United States almost
destroyed, it will hang by a thread, and there will be a thread as fine as the finest silk.”

Fig. 17. Revision, page 4.
At this point the Prophet concluded: "The Constitution was made by the inspiration of God and it will be preserved and saved by the efforts of the White Horse and the Red Horse who will combine in its defense.

The White Horse will raise an ensign on the tops of the mountains of Peace and Safety, where all nations may flee for safety. The White Horse will find the mountains full of minerals, and they will become very rich. You will see silver piled up on the streets. By the east land (or this time it must be remembered, that it was not known that the precious metals existed either in the Rocky Mountains as in California.)" You will see God shovelled up like sand. Gold will be of but little value, even as a memorandum.
Capacity for the people of the world will have something else to do, no seeking for salvation. The trial will come when the banks in every nation will fail, and only two places will be safe where the people can deposit their gold and treasure: these places will be with the White Horse and England's vaults.

A terrible revolution will take place in the land of America, such as has never been seen before, for the land will be literally left without a supreme government, and every species of wickedness will run rampant. It will be so terrible that father will be against son, and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother; the most terrible scenes of murder and holocaust and rape that have ever looked upon will take place. Peace will be taken from the

Fig. 19. Revision, page 6.
earth and there will be no peace, only in the Rocky Mountains. This will cause hundreds and thousands of the honest in heart, of the world to gather there, not because they would take up the sword against their neighbors. You will be so numerous that you will be in danger of famine, but not for the want of bread, milk, and harvest, but that so many will have to be fed; many will come with bundles under their arms to escape the calamities, and there will be not escape only by fleeing to Zion. Those that come to you will try and keep the laws, and be one with you, for they will see your unity and the greatness of your organizations.

The Turkish empire, or the Crescent, will be one of the first powers that will be disrupted as a
power, for freedom must be given for the Gospel to be preached in the Holy Land.

The Lord took of the best blood of the nations and planted them on the small island, now called England or Great Britain, and gave them great powers in the nations for a thousand years, and this power will continue with them, that they may keep the balance of power, that they may keep Russia from usurping power over all the world. England and France are now bitter enemies but they will be allied together in order to keep Russia from conquering the world.

The two popes, Greek and Catholic, will come together and be united. The Protestant religions do not know how much they are indebted to Henry the 8th for throwing off the Pope’s Bull and establishing the Prot-

**Fig. 21.** Revision, page 8.
In his faith, he was the only monarch that could do so at that time, and he did it because the nation was at his back to sustain him. One of the peculiar features in England is the established red coat, a uniform making so remarkable a mark to shoot at, and yet they have conquered wherever they have gone. The reason for this will be known by them some day. The Lion and the Unicorn of England is the ensign of Israel. The wisdom and statesmanship of England comes from there being so much of the blood of Israel in the nation.

While the terrible resolution of which mention has been made, is going on, England will be neutral, until it becomes so unhuman that she will interfere to stop the shedding of blood. England and France will then unite.
together and come with the intention to make peace, not to subdue the nation. They will join the nations to break up, so many claiming government, still there will be no responsible government, then it will appear to the other nations or powers, as though England had taken possession of the Country. The Black Horse will flee to the invaders, and will join with them, for they will have fear of becoming slaves again, knowing England did not believe in slavery, fleeing to them, they believed would make them safe. Armed with British Beyonets, the doings of the Black Horse, will be terrible, so the Prophet said. thus he could not bear to linger upon the scene, as shown him in vision, that he asked the Lord to close the scene, continuing he said, "during this time the Great White Horse will have gathered strong
Sending out Elders to get the honest in heart among the Pale Horse, or people of the United States to stand by the constitution of the United States, as it was given by inspiration of the Lord.

In these days God will set up a kingdom never to be thrown down, for other kingdoms to unite with, and those kingdoms that will not let the Gospel be preached will be humbled until they will. England, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium have a considerable amount of the blood of Israel among their people, which must be gathered, these nations will submit to the kingdom of God. England will be the last of these kingdoms to surrender, but when she does, she will do it as a whole, in comparison as she threw off the Catholic power. The nobility of England
know the Gospel is true, but it has not
enough pomp, grandeur and influence for
them to embrace it, they are proud and
will not acknowledge the Kingdom of God.
Or come unto it, until they see the power
which it will have.

Peace and safety in the Rocky Mountains
will be protected by a cordon, one of the
White Horse and the Red Horse.

The coming of the Ten Tribes of Israel,
the coming of the Messiah among this
people, will be so natural, that only those
who see Him will know He has come.
But He will come and give His law unto
men, and minister unto His people, this
— His coming like coming in the clouds
of Heaven to take vengeance on the world.
The temple in Jackson County will be built
in this generation. The Lords will think there will not be time to build it, but with all the great help you will receive, you can put up a great Temple quickly. You will have Gold, Silver and precious Stones. For these things will be used only in beautifying the Temple, all the skilled mechanics you want, and the Ten Tribes of Israel to help when you see this land surrounded with war, you may look to work and you build it.” (At this point he made a pause and looking up as though the vision was still in view, he said) “There is a land beyond the Rocky Mountains that will be inhabited by the heathen Chinese unless great care and protection is given. Speaking of the heathen where there is no law there is no condemnation, this will apply to them. Power will be given the White Horse to refute nations afar off, and they will
They, not that they will be one with the White Horse, but when the law goes forth they will obey, for the law shall go forth from Zion.

The last great struggle Zion will meet will be the whole world to contend with, when America will be the Zion of our God. Those of the nations of the world called Gog and Magog led by the Russian Czar and their power will be great, all opposition will be overcome and this land will then be the Zion of our God.

The words of the Prophet made a strong impression on me, and I have never forgotten them. On an occasion about two weeks after I first heard him speak these words, I was at a meeting where he preached a sermon, which he said should be the greatest of his life, at that occasion he reiterated the matter which I have now written so that the subject became firmly rooted in my memory and I know there is the true, more truthful...
I testify that these are the inspired words spoken by the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he stood looking up into heaven. His countenance became white and transparent. He looked as if he had as much of the heavenly influence as he could bear and stay with the Saints. His voice was powerful and his words cut like a two-edged sword.

Witness signature
A. G. Jeanquett

Edwin Rushton

Fig. 28. Revision, page 15.
Transcription of Rushton Original Document, Manuscript 3771, The White Horse Prophecy
Written by Edwin Rushton, undated

City of Nauvoo Hancock
County Illi
Joseph Smith as a Prophet of the Last Dispensation of the Fullness of Times

On the [blank space] 1843 Being at Work Close by President Joseph Smith Mansion I was at my employment when I Saw the Prophet Running towards me I Drop my Labor as soon as I could do, so. and Started toward him, For I saw him Fall to the Ground and as he was Always Being Persecuted I thought he was Hurt and was going to his assistance but he arose quickly with a man by the Coat Collar he had insulted the Prophet in the Mansion so he run him out, the reason For his Fall was the Man threw himself under his Feet which Caused the Prophet to Fall and when he got on his Feet he was Cuffing his Ears like he would a Boy I wanted the Prophet to turn him over to me and he said you would give him to much <of a cuffing> I know you, <said he> The Mans

No 2
Language was so Vile he would have agrivated an Angel, During this time Brother Theodore Turley came up and he was the only one, <that was Present> this Man whent to Chastize the Prophet For Drinking a toast with a glas of water to the Mobercrats. he accuse the Prophet and called him a False Prophet after he was gone, The Prophet commence to talk about the Mobbings and the Driveings and the Persecutions we as a People had endured But he said we had worse things to see he said Our <Persecutors> will have all the Mobbing they will want, But he said to me, Dont wish them any harm, For when you see there Sufferings you will shed Bitter Tears for them, while this conversation was going on we Stood near his South Wicker Gate, in <a> triangle he turned to me and said he wanted to tell us, somethings in the future, but he Shoud Speak in Parables like unto John the Revelator, Littel did I think the Prophet Would be

3
Slain so soon, in Cold Blood.
You will go to the Rockey Mountains and will See a great and Mighty People Built up. Which I will call the white Horse of Peace and Safety, when the
Prophet said you will See, I asked him where he would be, about that time he answered I Shall never go there,
Your Enemise will Continue to Follow you with Persecution and make Obnoxious Laws Against you, in Congress to Destroy the White Horse, But you will allways have a Friend or two, to defend you and through throw out the worst Part of the Laws, So they will not Hurt much You must continue to petition Congress all the time, But they will treat you as strangers and Aliens and <Not> give you your rights but govern you with Strangers and Comisioners

4 England and France——he said—at this time where Bitter Enemies to each-other but they <will> be allied Together in order to Keep Russia From Conquering the world, this <alliance> was Fullfilled in the Franco-Russion War.
You will see Ann Ensign raised on the Tops of the Mountains of Peace & Safety For all Nations to Flee unto, by the white Horse

And you <will> See the Constitusion of the United States almost Destroyed so that it will only be saved as it where by a thread, and that thred as fine as <the> finest silk fiber, at this Point the Prophet countainence became Sullen for he Loved the Constitution, he said it was made By the Inspireration of God and it would be Saved By the White Horse and red Horse Combined In its defence,
The Turkish Empire or the Cresent will be one of the first Powers that will be Disrupted

5th as a Power, For Freedom must <be> given for the Gospel to be Preached in the holy Land, The white Horse will find the Mountains full of all <kinds> of Minerals and they will become very rich, and you will see Silver piled <up> on the Street By the Cart Load, (and in this day there was no Mines Known in the Rockey Mountains <or California at this time>) and I Should also see Gold Shovel up like Sand and Gold would be of no Valueation in a Mercantile capacity for the people of the world would have something else to do in seeking for Salvation, the time would come when the Banks in every Nation would fail, and only two Places would be safe to Deposite their Gold and treasure and these where with the white Horse and England Vaults
A Terrible Revolution would take Place in the Land of America such as had never been seen before For the Land would Littlerally <be> Left without a 
Supreme Government, and every Specias

6th of wickedness would <run> rampant; it would be so terrible that Farther would be against Son & Son against the Farther & Mother against the Daughter & Daughter against the Mother the most terrible Scense of Murder and Blood <shed> & Rapine that was ever look upon will take Place Peace will be taken from the Earth and there will be no Peace only in the Rocky Mountains this would cause Hundreds and Thousands of the Honest in Heart to garther not because they were Mormons but because they would not take up the Sword against there Neibors, you will be so numerous you will be in Danger of famine but he said not for seed time & Harvest, and that many would Come with Bundles under there arms to Escape the Calamities and there was no Escape only By Fleeing to Zion, Those that come to you will try and <Keep the Laws> and be one with you for they will see the great<nes> of your Organization & Unity ________

7th England, The Lord took of the Best Blood of the Nations, and Planted them on the small Island called Great Brittain or England, and give them Great Power in the Nations for a thousand years and this Power will continue with them, that they may Keep the Balance of Power, to Keep Russia from Usurping Power over all the World, The two Popes Greek and Catholic will come togarther and be united, the Protestant religions do not Know how much they are indebted to Henry the 8th for throwing of the Popes Bull and Establishing the ProTestant Faith he was the only Monark that could do so <at that time> and he done it because the Nation was at is Back to Sustain him, One peculiar feature in England was there Establish<ing> Red Coats <a uniform> to ware such a remarkable Mark to be shot at and yet they conquered where ever they have gone, the reason for this they will Know some day, The Lion and the Unicorn <of England> are the Ensign of Israel, the Wisdom and Statesmanship of England Comes From there Being so much of the Blood of Iserel in the Nation,

8th While this terrible Revulution goes on England will be Neutral untill it becomes so inhuman <to look at> and to Stop the Shedding of Blood, France & England will be Allied together and come with the intention to make Peace. Not to Subdue the Nation But when they find the nation so Broken up with many governments or No <Reponsible> Government, then
it will appear to the other Nations <or Powers–> as though England had taken Possession of the Country, the Black Horse will Flee to the invaders and Join in with them for they <will> be afraid of becoming Slaves again, Knowing England never believed in Slavery they would be safe, Armed with Brittish Bayonets the doings of the Black Horse when <they> got the Master so, the Prophet said in the Vision to him, the Scene was so terrible he could <not> Bear to look upon it and he ask the Lord to close the Scene and if he <the Prophet> could not Bear to look upon it who had seen the Farther & Son and Angles in there Glory he did not Know, who could Bear to see it. During this time the great white Horse was gathering Strong & sending out Elders to get the Honest among them <&> the Pale Horse or people of the United States to Stand By the Constitution of the United States as it was given <By> Inspiration of the Lord.

9th
In these days God will set up a Kingdom never to be throne down for these Kingdoms to come unto, and those Kingdoms that will not let the Gospel be Preached will be Humble untill they will, Germany, Demark Holland Switzeland—Norway & Sweden, Belgium, the reason being that to a great extent the Blood of Israel is in these nations and were a be saved or must be gathered Have much of the Blood of Israel among them and they will Submit to the Kingdom of God But England will be the last Kingdom to surrender but when she does surrender she will do it as a Whole, In comeparison as she threw of the Catholic Power, the Prophet said the English Nobility Knew the Gospel was True but it had not Pomp and Grandjure & Influence for them <to> embrace it, they are proud and will not acknowledge the Kingdom of God or come into it until they do see the Power which it will have. The Peace and Safety in <the> Rockey Mountains was protected By a Cordon Band of the White Horse and the Red Horse and <the ten> tribes of Israel, Comeing of the Messiah Among his People would be so Natural that only those who saw him, would Know he had come, but he would come and give his Laws unto Zion and Minister unto his People. This is not his Comeing in <the> clouds of Heaven to take Vengeance on the World

10th
The Temple in Jackson County to be Built up in this Generation but the Saints will think there will be no time, to Build it but with all the Great Help you <will> receive you can Put up a great temple, You will have Gold & Silver and Precious Stones For these things will be only used for Beautifying the temple with all the Skilled Mechanic <you want> and the Ten Tribes of Israel to Help you Build it, <at this point he here made a pause and looked
up as though the vision was still in view and said> There is a land beyond the Rockies that will be invaded by the Chinese or Japs without great care and protection is given to them, The last great struggle Zion will have to contend with when America will be the Zion of Our God, Called Gog & Magog, led by the Russian Czar his Power will be very great.

These are the inspired words of the Prophecy of Joseph Smith [blank space] Testimony of Elder Edwin Rushton of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints.

As the Prophet Stood looking into the Heavens his countenence became white and transparent he look as if he had as much of the Heavenly Influence as he could Bare and Stay with the Saints his Voice was Powerfull and his words cut like a two Edge Sword.

Edwin Rushton

[There is no page 11]

12

This toast was given and was the cause of bringing about the foregoing.

I will drink you a toast to the mobocrats, if you will get me a drink of water; Here’s wishing there were in the middle of the Sea, in a Stone canoe with iron paddles, and shark swallow the canoe, and the devil swallow the shark, and him locked up in the North West corner of Hell and the Key lost and a blind man looking for it.

W Clayton

Ths Bulluk

is there any man who can talk
this day I’m going to preach the greatest sermon I ever preached
Transcription of White Horse Prophecy Revision, Manuscript 7897

Writer unknown, possibly A. G. Giauque
Signed by Edwin Rushton, undated

[whole page crossed out]

On the [blank] day of [blank] 1843 while at work near by the Prophet Joseph Smith’s mansion, I saw the Prophet running toward where I was. I stopped work as soon as I could and started toward <him,> as I did so, I saw him fall to the ground. As he was always being persecuted, I thought same one was after him, and that the fall must have hurt him, so I hastened to his assistance, before I reached him he arose quickly having hold of a man by the coat collar, as I reached the place where they were the Prophet was cuffing the man’s ears as though he were a boy. I wanted the Prophet to turn him over to me, but he refused saying, “You would give him too much of a cuff. I know you!”

The man’s language was so vile that he would have aggrevated an angel after having chastised him pretty severely the Prophet let him go. During this time Bro. Theodore Turley came to the scene.

We learned from the Prophet that when the man arrived at the mansion he began abusing the Prophet because some time before, the Prophet, at a gathering of the Nauvoo Legion, had drank a toast, with a glass of water, to the mobocrats, this evidently had displeased the fellow considerable, he abused the Prophet greatly, and called him a false Prophet and finally so exasperated him that he drove him out; the fellow started to run and the Prophet after him. the man, evidently could see that would be caught, to avoid which he stopped suddenly and dropped down, which action caused the Prophet to fall over him as related above.

After the man had been allowed to depart there being then present the Prophet Joseph Smith

1st

On or about the 6th day of May 1843 [written over an illegible number] a grand review of the Nauvoo Legion was held in Nauvoo The Prophet Joseph Smith complimented them for the good discipline and evolutions performed; the weather being hot he called for a glass of water. With the
glass of water in his hand he said “I will drink you a toast to the overthrow of the mobocrats” which he did in language as follows

“Here’s wishing they were in the middle of the sea in a stone canoe, with iron paddles, and a shark swallow the canoe, and the devil swallow the shark and him locked up in the north west corner of hell, and the key lost, and a blind man looking for it”

2

The next morning a man who had heard the Prophet give the toast here referred to, visited the mansion of the Prophet and so abused him with abuse and use of bad language, that he was ordered out by the prophet;

It was while the two were out that my attention was attracted to them and hearing the man speaking in a loud tone of voice I went toward them, the man finally leaving.

There were then present the Prophet Joseph Smith

3

Theodore Turley and me <myself>. The Prophet began talking to us of the mobbings and drivings, the persecutions we as a people had endured. But, said he, “we will have worse things to see, our persecutors will have all the mobbings they want, don’t wish them any harm, for when you see their sufferings you will shed bitter tears for them.”

While this conversation was going on we stood near his south wicker gate, in a triangle, turning to me he said he wanted to <tell> us <“I want to tell> something in the future but he should <I will> speak in parables, like unto John the revelator.”

(Little did I then think the Prophet of the Lord would so soon be slain in cold blood.)

Continuing he said “You will go to the Rocky Mountains and you will see a great and mighty people established, which I

4

will call the White Horse of Peace and Safety” when the Prophet said ‘you will see”, I asked him where he would be about that time, he answered, “I shall never go there.”

“Your ennemies will continue to follow you with persecutions, and they will make obnoxious laws against you in Congress, to destroy the White Horse, but you will allways <have> a friend or two to defend you and throw out the worst worse part of the laws, so they will not hurt much. You must continue to petition Congress all the time, but they will treat you as strangers, and aliens, and they will not give you your rights, but will govern you
Edwin Rushton as the Source of the White Horse Prophecy

with strangers and commissioners. You will see the Constitution of the United States almost destroyed, it will hang by a thread, as it were, and that thread as fine as the finest silk

5 fibre”, at this point the Prophet’s countenance became sad because as he said, “I love the constitution, it was made by the inspiration of God and it will be preserved and saved by the efforts of the White Horse and the Red Horse who will combine in its defense.

The White Horse will raise an ensign on the tops of the mountains of Peace and Safety, where all nations may flee unto for safety. The White Horse will find the mountains full of minerals, and they will become very rich. You will see cart-loads of silver piled up on the street. “by the cart-load” (at this time it must be remembered, that it was not known that the precious metals existed either in the Rocky Mountains or in California.) “You will see gold shoveled up like sand. Gold will be of but little value, even in a mercantile

6 Capacity, for the people of the world will have something else to do, in seeking for salvation. The time will come when the banks in every nation will fail, and only two places will be safe where the people can deposit their gold and treasure, these places will be with the White Horse and England’s vaults.

A terrible revolution will take place in the land of America, such as has never been seen before, for the land will be literally left without a supreme government, and every species of wickedness will run rampant, it will be so terrible that father will be against son, and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother; the most terrible scenes of murder and bloodshed and rapine that was have ever been looked upon will take place. Peace will be taken from the

7 earth and there will be no peace, only in the Rocky Mountains, this will cause hundreds and thousands of the honest in heart, of the world, to gather there, not because they would be Mormons but because they wanted but for safety, and because they would not take up the sword against their neighbors. You will be so numerous that you will be in danger of famine, but not for the want of seed time and harvest, but that so many will have to be fed; many will come with bundles under their arms to escape the calamities, and there will be not escape only by fleeing to Zion.
Those that come to you will try and keep the laws, and be one with you, for they will see your unity and the greatness of your organizations.

The Turkish empire, or the Crescent, will be one of the first powers that will be disrupted as a

8
power, for freedom must be given for the Gospel to be preached in the Holy Land.

The Lord took of the best blood of the nations and planted them on the small island, now called England or Great Britain, and gave them great powers in the nations for a thousand years, and this power will continue with them, that they may keep the balance of power, that they may keep Russia from usurping power over all the world. England and France are now bitter enemies but they will be allied together in order to keep Russia from conquering the world.

The two popes Greek and Catholic will come together and be united. The Protestant religions do not know how much they are indebted to Henry the 8th for throwing off the Pope's Bull and establishing the Protes-

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tant faith, he was the only monarch that could do so at that time, and he did it because the nation was at his back, to sustain him. One of the peculiar features in England is the established red coat, a uniform making So remarkable a mark to shoot at, and yet they have conquered wherever they have gone, the reason for this will be known by them some day. The Lion and the Unicorn of England [illegible] is the ensign of Isarael. The wisdom and statesmanship of England comes from there being So much of the blood of Isarael in the nation.

While the terrible revolution, of which mention has been made, is going on, England will be neutral, until it becomes so inhuman that she will interfere to stop the shedding of blood. England and France will then unite

10
togather and come with the intention to make peace, not to subdue the nation. They will find the nation so broken up, so many claiming government, still there will be no responsible government, then it will appear to the other nations or powers, as though England had taken possession of the Country. The Black Horse will flee to the invaders, and will join with them, for they will have fear of becoming slaves again, knowing England did not believe in slavery, fleeing to them, they believed, would make them safe. Armed with British Beyonets, the doings of the Black Horse, was will so
terrible”, so the Prophet said, that he could not bear to linger upon the scene, as shown him in vision, that he asked the Lord to close the scene, continuing he said “during this time the Great White Horse will have gathered strong

11

sending out Elders to get the honest in heart among the Pale Horse, or people of the United States to stand by the constitution of the United States, as it was given by inspiration of the Lord.

In these days God will set up a kingdom, never to be thrown down, for other kingdoms to come unto, and those kingdoms that will not let the Gospel be preached will be humbled until they will. England, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden Switzerland, Holland and Belgium have a considerable amount of the blood of Israael among their people, which must be gathered, these nations will submit to the kingdom of God, England will be the last of these kingdoms to surrender, but when she does, she will do it as a whole, in comparison as she threw off the Catholic power. The nobility of England

12

know the Gospel is true, but it has not enough pomp, grandeur and influence for them to embrace it, they are proud and will not acknowledge the kingdom of God, or come unto it, until they see the power which it will have.

Peace and Safety in the Rocky Mountains will be protected by a cordon band of the White Horse and the Red Horse.

The coming of the Ten Tribes of Israael, the coming of the Messiah among His people, will be so natural, that only those who see Him will know He has come, but He will come and give His law unto Zion, and minister unto His people, this is not His coming in the clouds of Heaven to take vengence on the world.

The temple in Jackson County will be built

13

in this generation. The Saints will think there will not be time to build it, but with all the great help you will receive, you can put up a great Temple quickly. You will have Gold, Silver and precious Stones, for these things will be used only for beutifying the Temple, all the skilled mechanics you want and the Ten Tribes of Israel to help you build it.” <when you see this land bounded with iron you may look toward Jackson County” (at this point he made a pause and looking up as though the vision was still in view he said) “There is a land beyond the Rocky Mountains that will be invaded
by the heathen Chinese unless great care and protection is given, speaking of the heathens <Nations> where there is no law there is no condemnation, this will apply to them.

Power will be given the White Horse to rebuke nations afar off, and they will obey, not that they will be one with the White Horse, but when the Law goes forth they will obey, for the Law shall go forth from Zion.

The last great struggle Zion will have to contend with < will be> when <the whole> America will be <made> the Zion of our God, Those opposing <will be called> called Gog and Magog, <the nations of the world> led by the Russian Czar and his <their power will be great.” but all opposition will be overcome and this land will then be the Zion of our God.

The words of the Prophet made a strong impression on me and I have never forgotten them. on an occasion, about 2 weeks after I first heard him speak these words, I was at a meeting where he preached a sermon, which he said should be the greatest of his life, on that occasion he reiterated the matter which I have now written so that the subject became firmly rooted in my memory and I know them to be true, now therefor

I testify that these are the inspired words spoken by the Prophet Joseph Smith As he stood looking up into Heaven, his countenence became white and transparent. He looked as if he had as much of the Heavenly influence as he could bear and stay with the Saints. His voice was powerful and his words cut like a two edged Sword. Edwin Rushton

witness Signature

A. G. Giauque
1. Joseph F. Smith, in *Eighty-ninth Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1918), 57–58.


3. Frank Esshom, comp., *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City; Western Epics, Inc., 1966), 1145.


5. Edwin Rushton, History, Manuscript 8766, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. His history is just over two pages long and bears the date 1855.


7. Manuscript 3771, Church History Library.

8. Personal interview with Thomas G. Truitt of the Church Historian’s Office, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

9. Manuscript 7897, Church History Library.


11. Missionary Card Index, Church Historian’s Office.

12. Journal of John J. Roberts, Church History Library, Ms, d, 4856, fd 2, v. 4; not paginated.


14. Edwin Rushton and Theodore Turley are credited with the creation of the document, but there is no evidence that Theodore Turley helped write the document; see discussion on pages 79–80.


17. That phrase appears on several different copies of the prophecy. See Church History Library, MS 2670.

18. Rushton, History.


21. For one example of Turley’s life, see the many entries under “Turley, Theodore,” in *History of the Church—Index*, 452–53. On Turley’s personal writings and biography, Assistant Church Historian Richard E. Turley Jr., who is very familiar with Theodore Turley’s life history, was consulted. None of Theodore’s papers


23. Thomas Bullock Journal. During the voyage to America, he records the specific directions of the course of the ship, names of birds and fish seen, events that occurred on board, and landmarks they passed, among other interesting items.


26. Joseph Smith’s personal journal, May 6, 1843, unpublished; forthcoming in Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press). Thanks to Alex Smith for this information. In History of the Church there is no record of this day’s activities.

27. This author searched standard LDS history sources such as Andrew Jenson, comp., Church Chronology, 2d ed., rev. and enlarged (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914) as well as forty-five other sources. For a complete list, contact the author or BYU Studies.

28. History of the Church, all volumes; B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols.; Jenson, Church Chronology; Andrew Jenson, Historical Record (Salt Lake City, 1889); Nauvoo Database; Truman G. Madsen, ed., Concordance of Doctrinal Statements of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: I.E.S. Publishing, 1985).

29. This author searched the first 150 journals of the early Saints and pioneers entered into the Nauvoo Database, which has been superseded by Early Latter-day Saints: A Mormon Trail Pioneer Database, at http://earlylds.com/index.ht. The word “prophecy” is one of the many words keyed for quick reference. A word search of that database for “white,” “horse,” “prophecy,” “Theodore Turley,” and “Edwin Rushton” uncovered nothing relative to such a prophecy. There are certain elements of Rushton’s document that do appear in nineteenth-century publications. See the discussion on pages 85–86 about these elements.


Edwin Rushton as the Source of the White Horse Prophecy

(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 88n. It seems impossible that Pratt, who published his work in the eastern United States in 1844, copied Rushton, since Rushton had not written his document by 1844.

33. It is very unlikely that Joseph would have used the word “parables” to describe the writing of John the Revelator; Joseph would have known the difference between parables and John’s symbolic prophecy.

34. Responding to the statement of England and France being bitter enemies during the 1840s, Professor Malcolm Thorp said, “There did exist a popular animosity between the people of England and France, not the political leadership. But to characterize the two countries as bitter enemies during that time would be an exaggeration.” Telephone conversation with Malcolm Thorp, Department of History, Brigham Young University, March 7, 2003.

35. On the lack of any Franco-Russian war, telephone conversation with Katherine Brown, Russian history, Utah Valley State College, and Blair R. Holmes, Department of History, Brigham Young University, March 2003. Both stated that the Crimean War did not fit the description given in the prophecy. A search of many entries in Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, did not show a war that would match the description in the prophecy.

36. Truman G. Madsen, Concordance of Doctrinal Statements of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: I. E. S., 1985); History of the Church.


43. Duane Crowther introduces his popular book *Prophecy—Key to the Future* by thanking his master's thesis committee, who approved his thesis: Brigham Young University professors Ellis Rasmussen, Hyrum Andrus, and Eldin Ricks. This introduction implies that they also approved the inclusion of the white horse prophecy. Both Ellis Rasmussen and Hyrum Andrus have verified to this author that Duane Crowther attempted to include the white horse prophecy in his thesis and that they firmly rejected it. Professor Andrus stated he had written to the publisher on more than one occasion strongly requesting his name be taken out of the book, but his request was not honored. Personal interview with Professor Ellis Rasmussen, Summer 1968 and Summer 2002; personal interview with Professor Hyrum Andrus, Summer 1967 and Fall 2002; notes in the files of the author. A comparison of the thesis and the printed book found that nowhere does the thesis include the white horse prophecy, but the book quotes it frequently, namely on pages 13, 53, 55, 64, 78, 87, 93, 113, and 117, and in its entirety in an appendix, 301–22. Duane S. Crowther, *Prophecy—Key to the Future* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962); Duane S. Crowther, “A Study of Eschatological Prophecies Found in the Scriptures and in the Works of General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960). Significantly, the version cited in *Prophecy—Key to the Future* is not identical to either Rushton’s original document or the revision. Crowther does not say where he obtained his copy of the prophecy.

44. A Google search of “White Horse Prophecy” produces numerous links to recent articles about the prophecy.


46. Paul Chaat Smith, Associate Curator, Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, letter of February 17, 2009, to Don Penrod, stating: “Thanks for contacting us about the Eye of the Storm. I am the curator for that section of the exhibit, and I commissioned Edward Poitras to execute a contemporary art installation that would connect the three outer walls in the gallery, which feature guns and bibles and government documents, around a theme of wealth and dispossession. I worked closely with Edward on the installation in 2004, and have known him since the mid-1990s. As the accompanying text makes clear, Edward referenced a number of ideas in the work, including the Book of Revelation.

“I did look at the curious reading you are asking about (http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2008/09/a-red-horse-prophecy/) and I can state with certainty that Edward was not referencing Mormon religious beliefs, or making a connection between Wovoka and Mormons. There is nothing in Edward’s piece to suggest any such link, only the geographical coincidence that Mormons and Wovoka both lived in the same region. While I never asked Edward directly if he was thinking about Mormons, it never came up in our many discussions, and again, there is nothing in the work to suggest he was. . . . Edward is a very deliberate and thoughtful artist. If he intended such a connection I am sure he would have made that clear.”


Juggling, Mothering

Bills, babies.
Mopping, maybes.
Catching, crying.
Teasing, trying.
Honking, hoping.
Holding, coping.
School, stress.
Is this a test?
Laughing, loving,
Sharing, shoving,
Reading, feeding.
Watch me! Am I free?
Explaining, maintaining.
Waiting, hating.
Goodbyes. Dry eyes.
Always tries. Not a price.
Fill, spill, need to chill.
Wake up. Make up.
Take up. Never break up.
Hugging, snuggling.
Giggling, wiggling.
Listening, whispering,
Answering. Not a thing.
Playing, saying.
Wishing, kissing.
Helpless, selfless.
Living, giving.
Take a breath. Stop to rest,
Need to eat. Do I ever sleep?
Watching, wondering.
Missing mothering?
Don’t cry, days fly by,
Hold on tight. This feels right.
—Nicole Hall Dominguez

This poem won second place in the BYU Studies 2010 poetry contest.
Creativity in the Cosmic Context
Our Challenges and Opportunities

Jon D. Green, Jerry L. Jaccard, and Rita R. Wright

The gospel paradigm of creativity is embodied in the Savior’s words: “I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me” (3 Ne. 27:13). Taken in isolation, this statement is the farthest thing from our society’s notion of the creative individual. The world’s view is that any moral restraint or external control automatically stifles the creative mind and leads to art that is derivative and formulaic. This prevailing definition is the aesthetic equivalent of moral relativity and license. Art that has eternal value challenges our narrow vision of the human condition, a vision filtered through the lens of worldly fame and moral expediency, and teaches us how to recognize the good, the true, and the beautiful. True freedom and creative achievement is grounded in moral and aesthetic discipline, humility, and a willing submission to divine law. Thus, the Savior personifies this highest level of creative achievement. He is the “Word” (John 1:1) through which the Father created “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33). Indeed, his atoning power derives directly from his creative power, as Nephi says, “for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him” (2 Ne. 9:5).

We introduce this gospel paradigm of creativity for educators who want to help students understand how to distinguish superficial, manipulative art from that which nourishes and edifies the soul, as well as for students interested in discovering their own inherited creative capacities. Both groups could benefit from understanding and applying this paradigm in order to fortify themselves against the worldly models so prevalent in contemporary media and to undo the belief that we are not
naturally creative, a false notion sometimes implanted early by well-meaning parents or by the school system.

Crisis in the Classroom

Two of us have regularly taught a basic Humanities 101 class each semester in which students learn how to critique the major fine arts. In preparation for teaching them needed perceptual skills, we assign them to write a creative process paper. They choose a creative project (perhaps writing a poem, drawing a picture, carving a bar of soap, or composing a tune) and then write about the process of creating this object. For some it is a challenge to come up with a task they can accomplish, but for virtually all of them, the very idea of creating something is not only foreign to their self-images, it is terrifying. The vast majority of the students begin their papers with words like “When I found out I had to create something, I considered dropping the class, because I’m not creative!” or “I knew I wasn’t going to be able to do this project, because I don’t have a creative bone in my body.” One young woman had completed a beautiful piece of handiwork, and yet in her paper she insisted that she was still not creative, to which I replied, in large underlined letters, “Come up to me after class and take this back!” When she meekly approached me following class, I asked her: “Who told you that you were not creative?” The adversary can beguile us into denying this divine attribute. On the brighter side, one young man wrote from his mission in South America that he had brought several people into the Church with the help of the song he composed in Humanities 101. He was musically gifted but had never composed a song of his own before that assignment. He wrote, “I will be eternally grateful to you for showing me that I can create something worthwhile with my talents.” As author Marianne Williamson wrote, “We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

The Nature of Creativity: Control and Freedom

Understanding the divine nature of the creative process will help us answer the question “Who told you that you were not creative?” We all understand through the scriptures that Christ and Lucifer possess diametrically opposed natures: God is good because he creates; the devil is evil because he destroys (his very name, derived from the Latin diabolos, literally means to throw across, to slander). Whereas the adversary’s eternal
goal is to “divide and conquer,” to separate us from God and to sever the ties that bind us to each other, the Father and the Son seek to unite us to them and to our families and friends through love and the sealing power of the priesthood. The Savior’s atoning sacrifice opens the door for us to return to his presence and heals the wounds that sin inflicts upon us all because of the Fall.

The Prophet Joseph Smith’s definition of creativity contradicts the traditional *ex nihilo* view of God’s creative activities in the universe. Joseph taught that “the word create . . . means to organize—the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship,” bringing order, design, and purposeful function out of the chaos of eternal matter. Even in this light, most of us still tend to misunderstand what creativity really is. We think of it as a mysterious gift that only some lucky people possess, and that these fortunate few one day just sit down and create Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony or design Saint Peter’s Basilica or paint the *Mona Lisa* or write *Hamlet*. Nothing could be further from the truth. Enduring creativity is built on the foundation of discipline. For Jerome Bruner, pioneer American cognitive scientist, there could be no real creativity without prior structure and mastery of skills and concepts. László Dobszay, one of the world’s great authorities in Gregorian chant, observed that the very greatest composers have consistently “achieved their results by reshaping the musical elements in their memory and not by creativity drawn on nothing,” implying that those elements got into their memory through their study of the discipline of previously created music. Recent research into the nature of creativity and the thought processes behind it confirms that “creative work, at least at the conscious level, involves a far more orderly set of procedures than many artistic people like to think.”

A study of the collegial relationships among Haydn, the composer-mentor, and the younger Mozart and Beethoven yields a perfect example of these creative dynamics. Haydn inherited from C. P. E. Bach the newly evolving concept of the symphony and brought it to the height of its formal structure and classical proportions. Mozart took that well-balanced form and filled it with new melodies and tonal colors, but always stayed well within the boundaries imposed by the form itself. Beethoven took the same formal structure and turned it inside out, stretching and pushing it to its limits, culminating in his highly innovative choral symphony, the Ninth; but Beethoven’s output was still recognizable as being symphonic in form, and it obeys all of the rules of thematic statement, development, recapitulation, and return to the original key. Yet no one would deny the
extraordinary creativity of any one of these three composers, who together composed nearly 180 symphonies.

These examples strongly challenge our popular notion of random, undisciplined creativity. One of the primary reasons for the inconsistency in basic arts education lies in the erroneous belief among arts educators themselves that “the teaching of art should focus almost exclusively on developing a student’s creative ability.” Believing this dogma has led many of our educators to resist specifying any structure or content “for fear that it would stifle creativity,” resulting in art, dance, drama, and music curricula that simply lack substance. This attitude arises partly because educators often confuse children’s natural expressivity with creativity, when these are actually different matters. It is easy to observe that many students have wonderful artistic ideas but lack the skills necessary to bring them to life. This is a tragic situation that retards our progress as a nation and that also affects our LDS attitudes about creative participation as a culture and as individuals, particularly when it has already been well established in many other disciplines that as human beings, “we have a native sensitivity to patterns, which accounts for many important human discoveries.”

Edward Villella, former college baseball player and lead dancer for the New York City Ballet, observed that the paradox of dance involves the tension between total control and total freedom. This is the point we are making about all of the arts and about the true nature of creativity. The educator’s burden is to keep learners’ natural expressivity alive and growing until their knowledge and skills catch up. Only then can original creativity blossom.

The Arts in Society

We cannot escape the very visible role of the arts in our society, all of them accessible through every kind of media. Because we are so familiar with the fine and popular arts, we scarcely give them and their influence on us a second thought. We often overlook the necessity of art in attaining a fulfilled life. The earliest cultures expressed basic societal values through the arts. Living folk art continues today in many parts of the globe, where entire communities participate in creating and sharing through their arts. In these societies, children and adults participate together, the younger ones learning and being mentored while doing, rather than by being excluded until they are old enough or because they may be perceived as untalented. We have much to relearn from the example of these so-called primitive peoples.

Cecil Sharp, one of the instigators of the great British folk song revival before and after World War I, reported the following insightful incident
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during a collecting trip in rural England: “One old woman once sang to me out in the open fields, where she was working, and between the verses of her song she seized the lapel of my coat, and looked up into my face with glistening eyes to say, ‘Isn’t it beautiful?’” This incident captures the essence of artistry revealed in our spiritual and emotional makeup. Contrast this with the adversary’s corrupt preemption of modern media for his own self-serving ends. He holds up to us the mirror of elusive hedonistic pleasures, infecting us with base desires and undermining the cultural unity found in more established cultures, where everyone participates in the artistic life of the society, where there are no obscene and obscenely overpaid superstars and their copycats, and where each individual plays a culturally unifying role by participating in the ebb and flow of seasonal and religious celebrations of life and death, of sowing and reaping, of gratitude and supplication. (Think of David, the king of Israel, dancing his dance of thanksgiving to God at the very altar of the temple!) The unfortunate result of the adversary’s forced shift in focus has led to many of our present dilemmas, where the influences of the arts and artists are destroying the very fabric of our morality and civility. We have privileged and enabled them to our great detriment.

The worldly model of the artist favors fame, wealth, and exclusivity. Rather than acknowledging the traditional ideals of a community of artists, today’s models strive for worldly reputation and frequently glorify aberrant behavior. Kay Redfield Jamison in her work on the artistic temperament, Touched with Fire, writes, “Certain lifestyles provide cover for deviant and bizarre behavior, and the arts, especially, have long given latitude to extremes in behavior and mood. The assumption that within artistic circles madness, melancholy, and suicide are somehow normal is prevalent, making it difficult at times to ferret out truth from expectation.” A common characteristic of those with compulsive and addictive disorders is the belief in their own superiority or separateness from “the common crowd.”

Zion versus Babylon

Elder Boyd K. Packer, in his insightful essay “The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord,” focuses on the artist’s role in building Zion: “You who have such talents might well ask, ‘Whence comes this gift?’ And gift it is. You may have cultivated it and developed it, but it was given to you. Most of us do not have it. You were not more deserving than we, but you are a good deal more responsible.” He presents here the Zion model rather than the worldly model of Babylon, and warns LDS artists:
It is sad but true that, almost as a rule, our most gifted members are
drawn to the world. They who are most capable to preserve our cultural
heritage and to extend it, because of the enticements of the world, seek
rather to replace it. That is so easy to do because for the most part they
do not have that intent. They think that what they do is to improve it.
Unfortunately many of them will live to learn that indeed, “Many men
struggle to climb to reach the top of the ladder, only to find that it is lean-
ing against the wrong wall.”

A retrospective documentary on Leonard Bernstein, narrated by his
close collaborator, Arthur Laurents, reveals that the self-destructive ego-
mania of one of America’s most gifted composers was aided and abetted by
his adoring audiences. “I think the world wanted him to be outrageous,”
said Laurents. “They wanted him to wear capes and not coats. And he did.
I’ve never known anyone in my life who had more people throwing roses
before his every footstep. . . . You know, fame is terrible stuff.” Here we
have an example of a creative genius with his ladder too often propped
against the wrong wall. His gift, with all its good, often left a wake of
destruction in his personal life.

Since the Renaissance, when the image of the artist-as-hero first
emerged, we have lost the communal vision of the arts as a spiritual and
socially cementing agent in our culture—hence the “I am not creative”
response. Even in the Church, we have been subtly seduced into accept-
ing this false paradigm that has all the trappings of the tarnished veneer
of Babylon or the spacious building floating high above those whom its
inhabitants mock. The counterfeit model has deflected us from our true
objective, which is to allow the arts to function as handmaidens to our
religion in helping to establish Zion on the earth. When we are willing
to separate ourselves as a community of educators and artists from the
world’s model, we will be able to experience true spirit-directed art and
receive the confirmation that each individual child of God is an artist/
creator by birthright and heavenly inheritance. In Elder Henry B. Eyring’s
testimony of Christ, he relates the story of when he was in one of the towers
of the Salt Lake Temple.

I was . . . in a place few people would have been [in] since the building
was dedicated. In a small room that has rarely if ever been used, I saw
exquisite pioneer era woodwork.

I remember the sense of awe that came over me when I imagined the
workmen who had so carefully carved and finished the detailed mold-
ings. They toiled away without power tools in a place where, for the most
part, only the Lord they loved and heavenly beings would look upon it.
They did it not for man or for recognition but for Him, for His house.
The Arts in Zion: A Community of Creators

The primary function of the arts in Zion is to grace our lives with beauty, to foster truth, and to perpetuate the good that is in all of us. Late in his life, the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy argued that “the ideal held up in a proper work of art comes from God, was originally revealed in action by the life of Christ . . . and is passed on to all humanity by artists.” John Gardner reduces his concept to a simple but compelling formula: “The gods set ideals, heroes enact them, and artists or artist-historians preserve the image as a guide for man.” The arts have a remarkable power, through the senses, to focus our attention on universal realities, or, as Percy Bysshe Shelley once wrote, to make “familiar objects be as if they were not familiar,” thereby lifting our sights and giving us a vision of what could be.

How do we reintroduce into our own culture the vision of communal artistic endeavor about which we are speaking? Reviewing certain scriptures through a more artistic lens reveals solutions we may not have thought of before. The collective vision of Lehi, Nephi, and John provides powerful metaphors that reveal stark differences between worldly and Spirit-directed creative activity. In Revelation 12:12–17, we learn that the adversary is symbolized as a dragon-serpent, and that the Church of God and its faithful members are symbolized by a woman and man-child. The dragon “was wroth” with the Church membership “and went to make war” with them who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” by casting “out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (verse 15). Now consider this flood in the light of Lehi’s imagery of the fountainhead and the dangerous river flowing from it, in the depths of which “many were drowned,” “lost from [Lehi’s] view, wandering in strange roads” (1 Ne. 8:20, 32). Further, consider how Nephi explains that the river of water was “filthiness,” “an awful gulf, which separated the wicked from the tree of life” (1 Ne. 15:27, 28). We are certainly experiencing this flood now. The “great and spacious building” (1 Ne. 8:26) is an obvious type of Babylon. John describes Babylon as the antithesis of Zion in its lust for gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, vessels of various make and materials, spices, foodstuffs, farm animals, chariots, slaves, and even the “souls of men” (Rev. 18:12–13). Those active in today’s Babylon have been knowingly merchandising in the souls of men. John’s description of the fall of Babylon has great relevance to our subject: “And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found
any more in thee” (Rev. 18:22). This can be interpreted in at least two ways: either the artists and artisans were no more found in Babylon because they had long ago deserted that evil empire and its commercial prostitution of the good, the true, and the beautiful in favor of being artists for Zion; or, the worst scenario is that they all went down with Babylon. We hope for the former, but fear for the latter. There is much serious food for thought for us in these scriptural scenes. How ironic that composers of the stature of di Lasso, Palestrina, and Verdi would have set Psalm 137 to music: “By the [waters] of Babylon, there we sat down [and] wept, when we remembered Zion.”

“Seek Ye Earnestly the Best Gifts”

Besides putting our own houses in order by rejecting the lure of making merchandise of our God-given creativity, we can expand our conception of spiritual gifts to include artistic gifts, for they are virtually identical in origin and proper usage. It is clear to anyone who has studied the lives of great artists and composers that they came into this life already endowed with remarkable skills connected to their chosen art. Mozart, for example, was composing music when he was only four years old; Beethoven wrote his first composition when only twelve. The prophet Samuel heard the voice of the Lord while yet a child (1 Sam. 3:1–11), and the boy prophet Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son in vision at fourteen; both became great in the sight of God. Whether artistic or prophetic, spiritual gifts are dispensed in accordance with ability, need, and potential for good, both for the possessor and for those who might be blessed by that gift. In fact, some gifts, like the gift of tongues, are paired—they require a giver and a receiver: “It is given to some to speak with tongues; and to another is given the interpretation of tongues” (D&C 46:24–25). Likewise, the full expression of an aesthetic impulse also requires delivery and response, an artist and an audience, and the results of bridging the two are similar: “Wherefore, he that preacheth [or performeth] and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22). When the unity of the artist’s expression and receiver’s edification fails, either the artist’s skill was insufficient or the receiver was unprepared to receive the message. Elder Orson F. Whitney promised, “We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own.” When a colleague’s wife was asked, “Why don’t we yet have such greats in the Church?” she replied, “We will have our Miltons and Shakespeares when we have audiences who can understand and appreciate the works of Milton and Shakespeare!”
But these points also relate to each individual: “To every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God” (D&C 46:11). It was once said of a departed friend: “He died with his music still in him.” We all have both a creative bent that needs development so we can give expression to all the good that is in us and also a “work on the earth” to perform. In both cases, we have an errand from the Lord. To realize it we must discover that inner gift and bring it forth as our special offering to help build the kingdom. Our faithful artists are uniquely endowed and especially responsible for giving sublime expression to the “music that is in them,” for the Lord expects us to give our best that all may be “edified and rejoice together.”

We have stunning examples of the hidden, humble artists of our own dispensation. Consider the artistic contributions of a prophet-craftsman like Brigham Young, who lovingly applied his carpentry, stone masonry, and glazier’s skills to the Kirtland and Nauvoo temples. What of the multitude of unnamed, yet highly artistic, brothers and sisters who carved the sun-, moon-, and star-stones; the wood and plaster friezes; painted the murals; and crocheted the altar doilies of our temples? Whether knowingly or unknowingly, an elaborately knitted altar covering mirrors a devoted person’s attempt to celebrate the God-created symmetry of the universe, where every planetary orbit works in perfect synchronization with all others in willing obedience to a divinely decreed order, just as Abraham saw in vision (Abr. 3 and Facsimile No. 2).

In the Washington D.C. Temple is found a small treasure created by President Spencer W. Kimball—a short poem in free verse written by a prophet of God to celebrate the quiet holiness of that place. It is art freely created and gladly given with no thought of personal gain. His small creative offering signals what we as a people must become—faithful servants who produce art for the glory of God and the beautification of Zion. Even scientific inquiry supports this point: studies have shown that the mind seems more inclined toward creativity when motivated by the joy of solving a problem than by extrinsic rewards. President Gordon B. Hinckley wrote a telling inscription for Brigham Young University’s Museum of Art that is displayed beside the museum’s centerpiece, Carl Bloch’s Christ Healing the Sick at Bethesda: “What is displayed [at the Museum of Art] will nourish our finer instincts and cause us more frequently to ponder on the wonder of him who is our God and our creator, the author of all the truly beautiful.”
Conclusion

The gospel paradigm of creativity suggests a new perspective on the arts in the Church and in our personal lives. Our individual creative impulses are outward manifestations of our divine parentage. Our need to leave an ordered imprint on a chaotic world, or merely to decorate a common object with an original design, reflects the divine spark in every one of us. The adversary, who manipulates most of the world’s artistic media, is intent on blinding us to our creative natures in order to pervert the arts to his own soul-destroying ends. We sometimes unwittingly further these dead ends by uncritically accepting what is produced and made popular and alluring by the mass media. Even some of our best creative minds can be seduced by worldly models because they guarantee success in terms of self-serving fame and fortune, thereby undermining the communal creativity and selfless devotion that the Lord would have us give in laying the foundations for a Zion society. The importance of developing our individual creative capacities goes beyond professional pursuits; it lies at the very heart of each individual’s potential contribution to the establishment of Zion on this earth. Perfecting our individual creative impulses is the final test of godhood. “Then shall they be gods, because they have no end” (D&C 132:20). If all this is true, then the answer to the original question—“Who told you that you weren’t creative?”—is obvious.

Brigham Young had two grandiose visions of the gathering in the last days. The first and most important was following the guide of the Prophet Joseph by gathering the Saints to Zion to receive the higher law embodied in temple ordinances. The second gathering was a grandiose intellectual project, which was nothing less than the salvaging of world civilization. As Brother Brigham put it, “Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science and art belong to the Saints,”22 and they “shall begin to rapidly collect the intelligence that is bestowed upon the nations, for all this intelligence belongs to Zion. All the knowledge, wisdom, power, and glory that have been bestowed upon the nations of the earth, from the days of Adam till now, must be gathered home to Zion.”23

Why? Because it is quite possible for such treasures to be lost and this wisdom to be taken from the wicked, and once it is gone, “I question,” Brigham says, “whether it would return again.”24 In the spirit of Malachi’s prophecy, we must turn our hearts to our cultural fathers by passing on that rich legacy to our children. This knowledge will provide a sure foundation for building our own creative contribution to the Zion that will surely come.
Creativity in the Cosmic Context

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7. Williams, “Arts Education.”
8. Williams, “Arts Education.”
The Paternity Test

*Eric d’Evegnee*

O, sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters.

—King Lear

In difficult moments, I imagine my revenge. It would start slowly and sporadically. I’d throw up on him when we were out in public, maybe at a restaurant with friends or at church. I’d go on a quick trip to the store with him just to buy milk or cheese for dinner. And, softly at first, I’d protest about the brand or color of what he was buying. Gradually my voice would rise as I became steadily more incoherent until saliva foamed around my mouth as I shouted about chips, the color blue, and my left shoelace. After the store, I would sneak around his house when he was not looking; I would begin by writing on the walls. Writing nothing in particular, just scribbles. Not high enough for him to just wipe away the markings from a standing position and not low enough for him to sit on the ground and clean, but at the spot on the wall that would make him bend. I’d then move to the kitchen; I’d place a CD in his toaster, and, as the plumes of black smoke would rise from the melting disc, I’d plant moist pieces of sugary cereal on the floor and carpet in hard-to-see places. And before sneaking away, I’d be sure to use the restroom without lifting the seat. I wake from my cruel fantasy knowing my scheme would never work. I know my victim would call me soon after discovering what I had done inside the house.

“Dad, what did you do that for?” my son would ask, his voice trembling with confused frustration. Then I would have to explain myself.
I promise these revenge fantasies are not about bitterness or an aspiration for a Hatfield and McCoy–type blood feud; they are really about mitigating my son’s disappointment in me. I imagine that if I can show him how difficult fatherhood can be, he would forgive me more readily. The popular image of fatherhood would place me into one of two camps: I’m either the paragon of wisdom and wry humor or a deadbeat who neglects his children. If this conventional dichotomy of fatherhood had a TV channel, it would show family dramas like *The Waltons*, reality shows like *COPS*, and nothing in between. A dad is either a bumbling but lovable fool eating plain vanilla ice cream and dispensing aphorisms or a shirtless deadbeat who uses his kids to hide his stash. For me, the truth of my fatherhood is not in either extreme but in both of them. Homer Simpson’s pathological mixture of love, well-meaning imbecility, and tender hedonism comes closest to the swinging of this paternal pendulum in my own life. In my better moments, I take my kids to church, have family home evening (even when my wife isn’t there), and make dinner. In my weaker moments, covered in vomit at stake conference or trying to clean a feces-smeared survivor of some intestinal Vesuvius, I admit to have muttered under my breath, “May your children do this.” I don’t think Rockwell painted these parts of the pendulum. My hope is that my children may see me as a good dad with weaker moments rather than a bad father with okay moments.

Ultimately my revenge fantasies are just an attempt to make my children feel sympathy in the absence of the loyalty I hoped my fathering would instill. Shakespeare best dramatized this ultimate test of paternal piety in his play *King Lear*. In a play about devotion, love, and natural affection, Shakespeare focuses on the instant when the children no longer need their father. This is the real paternity test. This test measures whether your children return to you when they have no need of you or anything you could give them besides your love. When Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters, he also divests himself of his children’s need for him. Having banished one daughter in a foolish rage, he soon is evicted from his other daughters’ castles. Following this familial coup d’état, the audience follows his grief and fury to a heath where Lear rages at his impotence. His fall from sovereign king to mere old man is the potential fall for all fathers.

My little children have already given me, as a young father, smaller quizzes to prepare me for my own Lear-like paternity test. My first practice exam began when my oldest son stood there with a block of wood in his hand and asked, “When should we start working on our Pinewood Derby car?” Some questions have less to do with an actual answer and more to do with the relationship between our past decisions and our current
circumstance. Questions like “Did you know how fast you were going?” or “Shall we check your prostate now?” aren’t posed to discover some new information; these types of questions merely implicate your role in the process. And so it was with my son’s question; I knew my time had come. I had set this chain of events in motion the minute I knew we were having a boy. I knew there would be a moment to come where he would ask me to complete something I knew I couldn’t. He stood in front of me, smiling in anticipation, with that small piece of wood, the oracle that through my attempts at woodworking would reveal the prophesy of my future paternal inadequacy.

Up until this point, my son, Holden, still enjoyed watching my feats of strength, like hitting a Wiffle ball over the roof of the house or wrestling all four boys at the same time, but now, staring at the block of wood, he would surely see me as I am. And I could do nothing about it. So now I would begin the slow descent from the Mount Olympus of his childhood.

As I walk over to my neighbor’s house to use his saw, I try to hide my trepidation. My son excitedly walks beside me almost bouncing as we walk. His mouth moves as quickly as his feet: “Can we build a seat for my Stormtrooper? . . . Will they have awards for everyone? . . . I would feel fine with third place; I don’t have to win everything. . . . Wouldn’t a dragon design look cool?”

Before I can respond, I see images of the uneven bench that still rocks, the plastic car with wrench dents of rage, and my other failed attempts at engineering strewn across my memory like a junkyard for the criminally insane and mechanically challenged. I quietly think of ways to make a triangle sound dazzling. I can hear myself start in on the value of the triangle and how other fathers tend to overthink the design, when I just want to kneel down next to him, look him in the eye, and tell him what I’m thinking: “Son, if I can use this saw without losing a hand or somehow destroying the Richards’ house, I’m going to consider this a success.” But I can’t say it; I need his illusions about me. So I continue on about the strength of the triangle and about the secret hole I’m going to drill down the middle and stuff with screws, nails, and glue. Those other dads won’t even know.

When I start the saw up, I hesitate, hoping the muse of Pinewood Derbies and sons will inspire me. Nothing comes. I watch the saw make its irrevocable way through the wood. Measure twice, cut once. I see the shadow of the boy behind me on the wood as it splits apart. I can remember all the times I started some project and near the finish realized I had made an earlier mistake that made the end product I wanted impossible. The unforgiving nature of building or cutting with my hands vexes me. And I’m afraid raising sons may not be all that different from shaping
wood. *Measure twice, cut once.* But life doesn’t always allow us the time to measure each thought or action, and, for some of us, having all day doesn’t improve either our parenting or jigsawing skills. This is why I love the craft of writing. It’s perfect for those who need to see and correct their mistakes before they move on. Cutting does not afford such forgiveness. My fear is that the pinewood car and the son I worked with would come out the same. My misstep here or my failure there would later blossom in the life of my son.

After trying to hide my inexperience with the saw, we painted an Incredible Hulk theme for the car with some green and white paint we had in the garage. We ran over to the church with the car still dripping green and white paint. At the doors of the church, I could already hear the deliberate din from inside the cultural hall. For a Mormon, this was like walking into the Roman Coliseum. In a church with a focus on consistent improvement, our gyms channel the reservoirs of our anxieties over whether we measure up to our ideals.

Peering into the cultural hall, I felt more like a Christian than a gladiator. The movement inside was like a hive: fretting parents at the weigh-in hurriedly grabbing graphite and hot glue guns, their boys awkwardly buzzing around with some kind of weird mixture of childish glee and an early form of testosterone. Holden and I went to the weigh-in, where the parents not making last-minute fixes were eyeing the other cars. I could feel the corners of their mouths moving up as they looked over our car.

Holden and I weighed our car and found it well underweight. Luckily I had had a flash of insight before we left the house. I had driven one nail into the back of the car and two into the sides, so I could use little round magnets as weights. I figured if the car didn’t fit the weight requirement, I could use as many or as few of the magnets as I needed. So when we came in underweight, I was prepared to keep my son’s hope in me. I placed three magnets on the back nail and two magnets on either side of the car. Our car weighed in perfectly. And, for a minute, I felt like we’d be okay.

The seriousness and focus of the first few minutes in the gym turned to anticipation as the Scout leaders started to set up the heats. Two race officiators positioned themselves on either side of the finish line, while another official kept track of the heats on a laptop. Our car joined the heat with engineer-fathers and dads who worked with their hands for a living. The engineer-dad’s car was shaped like a space-aged shoe stretcher; another car looked identical to an actual Nascar race car with paint and fenders. We had a rolling piece of Brie.

Holden and I waited for our car number to be called. As I watched the first cars race down the track, my nervousness began to dissipate. I felt like
I had vaulted the pinewood hurdle. *Maybe I did okay. I can't use tools well, but I understand physics and weight distribution.* Holden could barely sit still, and he popped out of his seat when our number was called. Almost twitching with excitement, he placed our car on his selected track. We got a good position near the track to watch our race. Slowly I could feel my stomach tighten as the gatekeeper said, “Ready, set, go.” The gate released, and our car shot out in front of the other cars. *I did it! I did it!* I thought. But right when the track flattened out after the steep decline, I saw the front left wheel begin to wobble. In an instant, we went from first to last.

I couldn’t have just had the car splinter apart or burst into flames. I had to have a car that jumped out of the gate like a champ, only to lose badly. It was the ultimate engineering irony to make a car that could heighten the expectations of my son and then shatter them all in a matter of seconds. In any other circumstance, I wouldn’t have cared; it wouldn’t have made a difference to me. But in the periphery of my vision, I could see the stillness of my son’s posture, which had been almost convulsing with excitement a few seconds earlier. He looked up at me with concern and with what I hope was not a suspicion of having been betrayed.

Looking over at him, I told him, “Okay, we started out great, but now we just need to fix our one problem, and we’ll be fine.”

He looked down, and I feared he sensed the hollowness of my words. We went over to the table and I tried to stabilize the wheel. The groove for the axle was so worn that it had trouble keeping the axle steady. Not sure what to do, I put the axle in the best spot I could and added some weight to that side of the car, hoping it would keep the wheel from wiggling. I could feel that old frustration I’d had with dozens of Christmas toys, dining room chairs, and car headlights. This, however, was different. Most of my failures hadn’t spread beyond me. But here in this gym, I feared I had infected my son with my own illness. With the little cars zooming past in front of us, I lean over to Holden to ask how it was going.

“I’m really trying to be happy for my friends who are winning,” he got out before his eyes betrayed his attempt at a straight face.

During our last race, as we watched our car waddle to the finish line, my son turned to me and said, “It feels like guilt.”

At that moment I was tempted to talk about the track or the graphite or even how someone else had misapplied the rules, but I knew that what wobbled across the finished line was the product of my own hands. It was a reflection of what I could do and, I feared, a divination of the future. Somehow I imagined my son in an airport coming home off his mission or surrounded by people after his wedding in the temple with all these people moving to surround him and congratulate him, and I, in the middle,
trying to make my way toward him, wobbling like the car toward the finish line—last in a row of others competing to show their affection. Like Willie Mays in a Mets uniform, our little derby car was the mark of an aging idol.

If the Pinewood Derby is an indicator of my future performance on paternity tests, I fear one day they will find me, an Idaho Lear, in only strips of clothing, raging against the wind in a potato field. But I wonder if I’ve misread *King Lear* and the prediction of the pinewood. Lear’s paternal fall teaches me less about what his wobbling wheel was than about what blinded him from being able to fix it. King Lear doesn’t illustrate that I am forever frozen in my missteps or that children are mere objects to be rigidly shaped before they are beyond my control. It’s not just what Lear did. It’s what he didn’t do with his children; it’s what Lear couldn’t see.

In the collaborative editorial relationship between parent and child, Lear refuses to revise until the very end, when his banished daughter returns to him with absolution. To *revise* means simply to “see again.” It is an echo of Lear’s loyal courtier, Kent, who, trying to keep Lear from his rash stupidity, exclaimed to the King, “See better Lear!” (*King Lear* 1.1.156). Kent acutely perceived what Lear and I couldn’t discern. We do not engineer our children—we write them. We collaborate with our children on the drafts of their souls, and they, in turn, help us revise ours. Fatherhood is a proofreading, a shaping of ideas and a mentoring for dealing with introductions, conclusions, and transitions. Together through the effort, we become something better than what we were without each other.

As I write this, I envision a less vengeful future with my son. In his home, I am no longer counting or weighing old injuries inflicted or received. Instead, I observe him. I sift through the layers of his idiosyncrasies like some kind of fatherly geologist, reminiscing over those moments when I first saw them and contemplating how the layers of his personality then influence the man I see before me now. I see the receding hair where I once skillfully straightened cowlicks. I see the glint of my young boy’s eyes in his laughter. I accept his kindness to me not as an entitlement to an aging sovereign, but as morsels of grace from the table of one at whose feet I once served imperfectly. Old flawed father, I sit reverently in his living room.

This essay by Eric d’Evegnee (who can be reached via email at devegneee@byui.edu) won second place in the *BYU Studies* 2010 personal essay contest.
German writer Walter Kempowski, who passed away in late 2007, had a long and interesting history of involvement with Brigham Young University, so it seems fitting that a small commemoration of his life and work take place here in Provo to echo the nationwide commemorations in his native land.

It is likely that Kempowski is Germany’s best-known writer in the broadest circles of the German population. It is extremely rare to meet a German who doesn’t know his name and something about his works. This is due in part to the spectacular popularity of two television films by Eberhard Fechner, aired as a series in Germany during the late seventies and early eighties and based on two of the nine historical novels about Kempowski’s family—a kind of German “everyfamily.” The author collectively entitled these historical novels Deutsche Chronik (German Chronicle), a vast literary arc through the tragic history of Germany in the twentieth century. (The closest American analogy is probably the television series *Roots* of 1977.)

Kempowski’s printed works themselves—often called “faction,” a blending of fact with fiction—have invariably been bestsellers, widely read and discussed in Germany (though only a few have been translated into English and remain nearly unknown in the United States). As a result of the popularity of his novels and the films, many quirky mannerisms and witty speech patterns of members of the Kempowski family as described in the German Chronicle have found their way into current idiomatic German usage. “What does the proud oak care,” Walter’s older teenaged brother Robert is wont to proclaim, for example, whenever he is annoyed
by something, especially by his younger brother, “if a wild pig comes along to scratch its bristled hide thereon.”

Kempowski’s writing style is unique. Basically, he is a collector and archivist of historical facts and linguistic artifacts. He arranges bits and pieces of language on the page, as a graphic artist might arrange a collage or as someone might place snapshots into a scrapbook. But the juxtaposition of these snaps and scraps is brilliantly accomplished, for much profound meaning resides in the gaps between utterances.

To cite an example, for one of his books, Kempowski had advertised widely in Germany under the heading “Did you know about it?” (with “it” clearly being the Holocaust). In response he received thousands of personal narratives from people who invariably wrote things like “No, I didn’t know about it . . . but . . .” and then proceeded with accounts of mysterious trains going through their town at night, of mysterious smells, of rumors and talk in the neighborhood, of families disappearing overnight—all of which, in juxtaposition with other bits of evidence, told the chilling macrotale: yes, they had known about it after all, and, in fact, everyone had known about it but had managed to convince themselves they hadn’t known about it. (Kempowski’s home—now a public museum and archive, the site of concerts, readings, and lectures—is the repository of many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of such responses and other collections of artifacts about life in the twentieth century.)

Kempowski’s vision for his work was as gigantic as his collections. To underpin the nine volumes of the German Chronicle, as though building a pyramid in reverse order, he planned to lay an even larger course of stones as a foundation: this eventually grew to ten nine-hundred-page volumes, which he entitled Das Echolot: Ein kollektives Tagebuch (Sonar Soundings: A Collective Diary).

Kempowski applied the same structural principles as in the German Chronicle but broadened them: the Collective Diary interweaves not just elements on the scale of Kempowski family utterances about the events of their lives but also—centered on a critical date in history—longer bits and pieces of diaries and communiqués from Hitler and Churchill and Roosevelt and a common German soldier and a common Russian soldier and an American bomber pilot and people on whom the bombs fell and countless others involved in the titanic and historical struggles of the twentieth century.

But Kempowski wanted to underpin the Collective Diary as well. He imagined an even bigger foundation, a megascrapbook consisting of many book-length accounts by varied eyewitnesses to the historical events in the German Chronicle and in the Collective Diary. Before he died, he
succeeded in getting many of these published, including a very important one with an intriguing BYU connection.

His relationship to BYU started out inauspiciously, with one visit and a lecture here in 1980 as part of a broader U.S. tour under the aegis of the Goethe-Institute. Because my specialty is postwar German writing, I was assigned to be his host. I had no prior knowledge about Kempowski, so I went to do some research, only to discover that the Harold B. Lee Library had none of Kempowski’s books either. (This oversight has been corrected: Dr. Richard Hacken, German and European Bibliographer at the HBLL, has become one of Kempowski’s leading bibliographic experts, and the HBLL’s Kempowski holdings are among the best anywhere in the world.)

One minor fact I was able to glean about Kempowski (in those ancient days before Google) was that more than anything else in the world Kempowski hated to be kept waiting. As fate would have it, when I went to pick him up at the airport, I was delayed by road construction and arrived a few minutes late. Kempowski was nowhere to be found. I had him paged, to no avail. Embarrassed and frustrated, I was standing perplexed at the curb when a taxi suddenly pulled up and Kempowski leapt out.

Upon landing and finding no one to pick him up, he had jumped into a cab and ordered the driver to take him to Provo. A moment later he thought to ask how much this would cost. A quick U-turn brought him back to the airport right where I was standing at the curb.

Sometimes great friendships have such rough beginnings. In a later novel, *Letzte Grüße* (Last Greetings), Kempowski would remember this airport episode in Salt Lake City in great detail as he described the (fictionalized) visit to BYU of a (fictional) author named Alexander Sowtschick, who was picked up at the airport by a certain “Professor Flower” in an ancient yellow Cadillac with a five-hundred-cubic-inch, eight-liter engine—something most remarkable for a fuel- and cubic-liter-displacement-conscious German—and a carburetor Flower described as being like a toilet sitting atop the engine. Pressing the gas pedal down was like hitting the flush handle. (“Flower” now owns a Prius.)

Actually, Kempowski conflates in this novel his first visit and his later, second visit among the “members” in Utah. (Everyone he met here wanted to know, “Are you a member?”) He returned to Provo with his daughter Renate to be a visiting lecturer in fall semester 1986.

In preparation for this longer visit, in which Kempowski conducted a seminar on his *German Chronicle*, he had begun to pester me about finding him a bomber pilot. He wanted a book for the book series or, at the very least, a shorter account of the experiences of an American bomber crewman who had participated in the raids over Germany.
I had placed ads in the newspaper and had contacted the Veterans of Foreign Wars, so Kempowski was able to interview a number of older vets or “Kriegies” as they call themselves—short for “Kriegsgefangene” (POWs). But on the way back from a lunch at the Skyroom in the Wilkinson Center, Kempowski buttonholed Professor Ray Hillam of Political Science in the elevator. “You look about the right age,” he began. “Were you a bomber pilot?” No, Hillam replied. He had served in Vietnam, but he knew someone who had been a bomber crewman, Professor Ray Matheny of Anthropology.

Kempowski and I headed straight for Matheny’s office in the Kimball Tower. Ray listened for a moment, then opened his desk drawer and brought out a book-length manuscript. “My story,” he said. Kempowski borrowed the manuscript and took it home with him to his apartment near the stadium (made available by Professor George Bennion of the English Department).

When I picked him up there the next morning, Walter was ecstatic. He had spent the whole night reading the manuscript from start to finish, he said. It was an absolutely gripping narrative about Matheny’s life from the time this young technical genius lied about his age and joined the Air Corps to his 1945 liberation from a Stalag Luft POW camp in Austria where the Germans had imprisoned him after they shot down his B-17 over Germany. Kempowski immediately and professionally translated the manuscript (no small feat, as it reads in part like a technical manual for the Boeing B-17 bomber), and it appeared a little over a year later, in 1988, as Die Feuerreiter: Gefangen in Fliegenden Festungen (The Fire Riders: Imprisoned in Flying Fortresses), one of the first volumes in Kempowski’s series. (One of my enduring claims to fame among Kempowski scholars and cognoscenti is that I am the one who helped Walter find “the bomber pilot.”)

Another claim to fame also came about by serendipity. In the time between the first and second visit, I had acquired and read all the books in the German Chronicle. Because others in the College of Humanities such as Randy Jones (German) and Steven Sondrup (Comparative Literature) had paved the way by learning how to make literary concordances, I decided it would be particularly useful to have a word concordance of the German Chronicle, in order to quickly find related matters among all nine of these complex linguistic “photo albums.” With the earliest scanner (a very expensive Kurzweill provided by a generous grant to the College of Humanities), a multimillion-dollar IBM 370 mainframe computer (likewise a generous grant to the college), and the expertise of Mel Smith and his staff at the Humanities Technology and Research Support Center, I was
able to present Kempowski with a paper copy (in binders extending four linear feet on a shelf) as well as a microfiche copy of this concordance.

Kempowski was thrilled and began to look closely at this modern gadget, the computer. When he returned to Germany, he acquired a computer of his own, along with an expert to help him use it, for in the computer he could now see a way to manipulate all those many texts he wished to weave into what became Das Echolot, the Collective Diary, including a gripping account he was given by BYU German Professor Walter Speidel of his experiences as a young communications officer attached to Field Marshall General Erwin Rommel’s headquarters in the famous Afrikakorps. (Because of this chain of events, my second claim to fame, although I am in no way a computer whiz, is that Kempowski dedicated Das Echolot to Alan F. Keele.)

As a reward for helping him discover the computer and no doubt because I was constantly lamenting his works’ lack of notoriety in the United States, Kempowski once mentioned that he would be willing to allow me to translate his latest best-selling novel, Hundstage (Dog Days), into English. When I learned that my colleague Professor Garold Davis (German) and his wife, Professor Norma Davis (Humanities), might be interested in translating the book as a “fun” husband and wife project, I quickly arranged for it. Later, when they were called to be the first missionary couple in East Germany, I became the third translator on the team, in order to put the finishing touches on the book. Dog Days is the first novel about the fictitious, Kempowski-like author Alexander Sowtschick, the one who later visits among “the members” at BYU.

Kempowski was born in the East German port city of Rostock in 1929. When the war ended, he was sixteen. His father, a ship owner, had been killed on the Eastern Front and his ships sunk. Walter’s older brother Robert had begun working for a shipping firm in town.

It was common knowledge that the Soviets were systematically dismantling East Germany’s industrial capacity—factories, trucks, rolling stock, anything valuable of a technical nature—and shipping it off to Russia. But Robert mentioned that he had access to the bills of lading that showed exactly all the stuff being shipped away. Walter decided to slip across the border to West Germany in hopes of finding a job for himself. When he arrived in Wiesbaden, a friend helped him find his way to the offices of the American CIC, the Counter Intelligence Corps, forerunner of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency).

The CIC agents were, in fact, interested in these bills of lading and asked him to bring them some the next time he was in Rostock, and as a reward they gave him a job stocking shelves in the American commissary—a place
literally overflowing with milk and honey in these lean postwar years in Germany—where the Americans didn’t care if he took with him every day after work such treasures as dented cans of Spam or any of the rest of the so-called “broken stuff.”

In due time, he traveled back to Rostock to share this bounty with his family, but he was almost immediately arrested by the Soviet Secret Police, the NKVD, and charged with espionage. His mother and his brother were also arrested and sentenced to long prison terms called “a quarter” by the Russians (who meant “a quarter of a century”). After eight years, there was an amnesty and he was freed. He went to West Germany, where he attended university and became an elementary school teacher in a small village and began to write on the side. Naturally, he included the account of his arrest and imprisonment in the German Chronicle.

In 1994, Professor James K. Lyon joined the German faculty at BYU. He had made a distinguished career as an expert on the famous German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht, especially on the years Brecht spent in exile in the U.S. For his book Bertolt Brecht in America, Lyon had asked for and received under the Freedom of Information Act numerous FBI materials on the Marxist Brecht, who had been constantly surveilled while in the U.S. This gave me the idea of filing a request myself under the Freedom of Information Act, asking to see the CIC files on Walter Kempowski.

When they were made available, the files showed that Kempowski had told the story quite faithfully in his German Chronicle, though there were some critical and interesting differences, including some things he did not know about at the time. For instance, it was obviously his friend in Wiesbaden who had tipped off the Russians to his visits with the CIC.

In brief, the files have allowed me to show more exactly which portions of the German Chronicle are fact and which are fiction and to speculate about why Kempowski used that particular blend of the two.

This is my third claim to fame, but in order to protect the identity of the double-agent friend and to prevent other unpleasantness, I agreed with Kempowski not to publish much of this material until after Walter’s death. I presented my findings in Rostock at a conference there in the spring of 2009, whereupon all the German papers printed major articles about the sensational fact that “Walter Kempowski Really Was a Spy!”

There is much more to say about Walter Kempowski. He was an accomplished musician and a gifted amateur photographer, for example. But in the end, it is probably most important to remember that he enjoyed being associated with “the members” at BYU, teaching the students here about German literature and history and film, and finding remarkable and unexpected friends and resources here such as Ray Matheny, Walter
Speidel, Garold and Norma Davis, Richard Hacken, and Mel Smith. Of course, this is what universities do: they bring great minds to the attention of those who study great minds. In the case of Walter Kempowski, it was a nice bonus that this was a two-way street. The “members” at BYU will miss him.

Alan F. Keele (alan_keele@byu.edu) is Professor Emeritus of German Language and Literature at BYU. He was born in Provo, educated in Laramie, Wyoming, and Wayne County, Utah. He attended the University of Utah as a chemical engineering major until his mission call to Germany in 1962. After his mission, he came to BYU to teach German in the newly created Language Training Mission. He earned his BA at BYU in 1967 and his PhD in 1971 at Princeton. He began his teaching career at BYU the same year. Keele is married to Linda Kay Sellers, and they have six children as well as eight grandchildren. He served twice as a BYU campus bishop. He is the author of a number of books and articles about German literature and the Mormons in the Third Reich and has translated German poetry with his late friend, the poet Leslie Norris.

1. Was kümmert es die stolze Eiche, wenn sich ein Borstenvieh dran wetzt?
2. Kurzweills cost on the order of $100,000.
Jesus Was Not a Unitarian

David Paulsen, Jacob Hawken, and Michael Hansen

The doctrine of the Trinity has long distinguished conventional Christianity from the world’s other great monotheistic religions, including Judaism and Islam. But in his book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*, Sir Anthony Buzzard argues for a strict, numerical monotheism and argues against all major forms of trinitarianism. He asserts that the doctrine “God is a single Person . . . ought to be the creed of the Church. That it is not should be cause for alarm. Jesus was a unitarian, believing that God the Father alone was truly God.” Similar to the message of the Latter-day Saints, Buzzard’s claim is one of restoration. Indeed, the subtitle of the book is “A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus.” However, the book declares anything but numerically literal monotheism as antibiblical. This clearly makes the LDS view of the Godhead and of Christ’s divinity heresy in Buzzard’s eyes. His insistence on monotheism has some warrant, as it appears to be repeatedly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. However, as we will argue in our critique, we believe Buzzard’s specific formulation of biblical monotheism is problematic.

When taken as a whole, Buzzard’s claims decree that conventional Christians are seriously in error. Nor do they fit well within Mormon doctrine. Though Latter-day Saints are not monotheists, they would agree with Buzzard’s primary theses that the conventional Trinitarian view of God is not biblical, was developed long after Christ’s death, and would have been alien to the mortal Messiah. In this review essay, we compare Buzzard’s unitarian understanding of God with views held by Latter-day Saints and conventional Christians, briefly summarize and critique Buzzard’s biblical case for unitarianism and against the divinity of Jesus Christ, and examine and defend why Latter-day Saints are
uniquely committed to both the divinity of Jesus Christ and a plurality of
divine persons in the Godhead. By pointing out these contrasts, we hope to
demonstrate that the LDS model of the Godhead, including both a divine
community and a subordination to the Father, allows for the most grace-
ful resolution of the tensions arising in the debate over monotheism and
Trinitarianism.

Buzzard’s Biblical Case for Unitarianism

Buzzard’s stated goal is to define “who the God of the Bible is”
and, more specifically, to define “biblical monotheism.” Buzzard argues
against conventional readings and interpretations of scripture, and he
accordingly offers detailed accounts of his views together with citations
from supporting scholarship. The book particularly focuses on creeds,
both biblical and ecumenical, and argues that anything that contradicts
the unitarian “creed of Jesus” is heretical. Though the word creed is found
nowhere in the New Testament, Buzzard claims that the Jewish Shema
prayer (Deut. 6:4–9) is the creed to which Christ and his disciples strictly
adhered, as found in Mark chapter 12: “The first of all the commandments
is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. . . . There is one God; and
there is none other but he” (see verses 28–34).

Buzzard is right to afford the Shema so much attention due to its role
in biblical religion, but his interpretation is considered unconventional.
Weinfeld explains in the Anchor Bible series that Deuteronomy 6:4–25
“centers on exclusive allegiance to YHWH, which means scrupulous
observance of his commandments,” and adds that the phrase in verse 4
is best translated as “YHWH our God is one YHWH (cf. Driver 1902) . . .
with a clarification, however: the connotation of ‘one’ here is not solely
unity but also aloneness.” Weinfeld establishes this aloneness by citing
parallel language in the kingship context of the ancient Near East, found
in a Sumerian inscription, Ugaritic literature about Baal or Mot, and other
ancient literature. He concludes that “all of these pagan proclamations
cannot of course be seen as monotheistic; yet they are of hymnic-liturgical
nature. By the same token, Deuteronomy 6:4 is a kind of liturgical con-
fessional proclamation and by itself cannot be seen as monotheistic.”
Though Weinfeld believes that Deuteronomy 6:4 fails to introduce other
deities within biblical religion, he concedes that “no explicit notion of
exclusiveness is attested here.”

The regular interpretation of the Shema in Mark 12:28–34 also dis-
agrees with Buzzard’s interpretation. Joel Marcus’s commentary for the
Anchor Yale Bible points out the peculiarity of the account given by
Mark,\(^{11}\) for Matthew and Luke lack the oneness declaration from the Shema (“Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord”). Buzzard does not mention these alternate accounts but draws from Mark’s minority account and its oneness declaration to support Jesus’ unitarianism. Furthermore, Marcus understands Mark’s peculiarities much differently than Buzzard: “Mark’s answer . . . is that Jesus’ authority comes from God; in the very next passage, indeed, Jesus will come close to placing himself on par with ‘the Lord’ (12:35–37). . . . Mark thus foreshadows a daring Christian reinterpretation of the Jewish idea of divine oneness, a reinterpretation that implies a unity between God and Jesus.”\(^{12}\) Where Buzzard sees unitarianism, Marcus sees shared unity.

Buzzard’s case for unitarianism consists of two parts relating to divinity: his biblical case against the divinity of Jesus Christ and his refutation of biblical arguments for Christ’s divinity. Buzzard’s arguments against the divinity of Jesus are based upon the numerical singleness of God, the “begotten” nature of Jesus Christ, and the assumption that divinity must be exclusive. However, research on the wider ancient Near East provides an interesting context for the issue. For instance, scholars generally now hold that early Israelite religion esteemed God as the head of a court of divine beings and did not teach a strict numerical monotheism.\(^{13}\) Mark Smith represents most scholars’ position well:

> The earliest texts render Yahweh as a divine monarch enthroned among other heavenly beings. *The divine status of the other members of the council* is stressed by terms such as “sons of gods,” *bēnē élim* (Pss. 29:1; 89:7) and “congregations of the holy ones,” *qĕhal qĕdōšîm* (Ps. 89:6; cf. Hos. 12:1; Zech. 14:5). Similarly, *êlōhîm* in Psalm 82:1b apparently means “gods,” since it parallels the divine council. All these texts present Yahweh as the preeminent member of the divine assembly.\(^{14}\)

Others even argue that the idea of a divine council endured throughout second temple Judaism.\(^{15}\) In light of this research, we find that a more historically informed resolution of the biblical dilemmas of the Trinity is found not in Buzzard’s unitarian interpretation of numerical monotheism but in positing a sharing of divinity via council: subordination without exclusion. In this way, one can preserve a single God in some respects (there is only one Most High Father) as well as affirm Christ’s divinity.

Nevertheless, Buzzard identifies several biblical arguments for the divinity of Jesus Christ and attempts to show that none of them is compelling. These arguments are based on biblical passages wherein Christ is referred to as Lord or even God, Christ is described as being worshipped, and Christ is identified as the Creator of the world or otherwise affirmed to be eternal or to have existed premortally. Buzzard’s general strategy in
rebutting these putative proof-texts is to attribute them to misinterpretations or mistranslations of the earliest Hebrew and Greek texts—errors occasioned by translators who read the ancient texts, not in terms of their likely original meanings but in terms of the then-reigning Christian theology. Below are some examples of proof-texts that Buzzard attempts to refute.

1. Passages referring to Christ as “Lord” or “God.” Perhaps the clearest New Testament text affirming Christ’s divinity is Thomas’s exclamation upon viewing the risen Savior, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). According to Buzzard’s reading, Thomas carefully addresses two ontologically distinct persons, namely the Messiah (“my Lord”) and the God of Jesus who is at work in him (“my God”). Such a reading of John 20 seems strained. One would expect the master teacher to issue a correction if Thomas mistakenly addressed him as God, or at least to confirm Buzzard’s suspicion that Thomas was referring to two separate beings. Jesus did neither. The straightforward reading ascribes both titles to the resurrected Christ.

Another proof-text used in support of Christ’s divinity comes from Psalm 110 and is quoted by Jesus in Mark 12: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Ps. 110:1; Mark 12:36). Buzzard argues that the Psalmist’s prophecy is a declaration that the “LORD” (Yahweh) is speaking to the mortal “Lord” Jesus. Buzzard contends that the Psalmist uses the words Ado-nai (used in place of YHWH, translated as LORD) and adoni (Lord), and “adoni in none of its 195 occurrences ever refers to Deity.” Buzzard, who believes that begottenness contradicts premortality, has colored his reading of Psalm 110:1 and its appearance in Mark 12:36. These verses are best understood as affirming Christ’s premortality together with his mortal begottenness: the two concepts need not exclude one another. Joel Marcus explains that for these verses “many exeges . . . prefer to take their cues from Rom 1:3–4: Christ is both the Son of David and the Son of God.” Philosophically, the “two Lords” problem need not imply the nondivinity of the Son, but rather a welcoming of the Son to rule at the Father’s side. Indeed, in their book Putting Jesus in His Place, Bowman and Komoszewski explain that the imagery of sitting at God’s right hand implies just that:

A careful examination of Psalm 110:1 . . . reveals how remarkable Jesus’ claim was and why it seemed to the Sanhedrin to be blasphemous. It was one thing to enter God’s presence and yet another to sit in it. But to sit at God’s right side was another matter altogether. In the religious
and cultural milieu of Jesus’ day, to claim to sit at God’s right hand was tantamount to claiming equality with God.\textsuperscript{20} Given this cultural understanding, Jesus’ divinity appears unproblematic and his subordination moot. The \textit{Word Biblical Commentary} summarizes that the phrase in New Testament times “affirmed supreme exaltation without calling into question the glory of God the Father. It permitted Christians to confess faith in the absoluteness of Jesus before they had resolved such problems as ditheism or subordinationism.”\textsuperscript{21} Latter-day Saints and Buzzard would agree that the Trinitarian solutions to these problems, offered by the postapostolic church, are biblically and philosophically unsatisfying. But the Latter-day Saint solution forfeits less of the conventional reading: it maintains divinity for Christ “without calling into question the glory of God the Father.”

2. \textit{Passages describing the worship of Christ.}\textsuperscript{22} After his resurrection, Christ appeared to the disciples in Galilee, and Matthew tells us that “when they saw him, they worshipped him” (Matthew 28:17). There is no record of Christ reproving the disciples for this; rather, Jesus appears to assure them that their worship was appropriate, telling them in response, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Buzzard’s rebuttal claims that to worship someone (even appropriately) does not necessarily mean that the person is divine, and Jesus is worshipped in a different sense than the Father.\textsuperscript{23} In the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint, Buzzard explains, the word for divine worship is \textit{latreuō} and is used only once in reference to the Messiah, in Daniel 7:14. He asserts that in other references of worship or paying homage, Greek scripture uses \textit{douleuō}, \textit{peithō}, or \textit{proskuneō}.\textsuperscript{24} The problem with his argument is that, although \textit{latreuō} appears to be Father explicit, the Father accepts other varieties of worship as well\textsuperscript{25}—\textit{proskuneō}, for example, which means “to prostrate oneself in homage.”\textsuperscript{26} Kittel and Friedrich’s \textit{Theological Dictionary of the New Testament} highlights the sacred character of this word used in the New Testament, where the Father and the Son each regularly accept \textit{proskuneō}.\textsuperscript{27} Perhaps a more convincing example than mere mortal worship of the Messiah is that of him being worshipped by the angels of heaven. The Epistle to the Hebrews quotes the Father as saying, “Let all the angels of God worship (\textit{proskuneō}) him [Christ].”\textsuperscript{28} Bowman and Komoszewski maintain that Hebrews is not saying “that angels happened to worship Jesus . . . but that God told them to worship Jesus.”\textsuperscript{29} It would take a very robust argument to deny the Father’s endorsement and command for angelic worship of the resurrected Christ. Buzzard’s argument appears to rest on the assumption that worship and divinity do not admit to degrees. If one breaks free of these
assumptions, a more comprehensible model appears in which the Father and the Son share in divinity and worship.

3. *Passages describing Christ as Creator or otherwise affirming his premortal or eternal existence.* Several passages affirm or imply that Christ existed premortally as a divine person. See, for instance, Christ’s words in his intercessory prayer: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5; emphasis added). Despite the clarity of this passage, Buzzard gives a labored explanation that these verses reference “glory in prospect, glory promised in advance. [Jesus] says nothing about regaining glory, temporarily forsaken, but of winning that glory for the first time.”

Contra Buzzard, the *Word Biblical Commentary* points out that as Christ prays for glory, his mortal life “entailed a forfeiture of glory that the Son once possessed.” The intuitive reading of John 1—that Christ possessed premortal glory—is also supported by mainstream exegetes.

However, the most common reference used to validate the doctrine of Christ’s premortal Godhood is the first chapter of the Gospel of John, verses 1–10, which describes the Word. Buzzard begins by calling the convention of capitalizing the W in *Word* an artful interpolation, “forcing readers to suppose that a second Person has existed as God from eternity.” He reads “the word” as God’s “divine intention and mind,” and nothing more. This reading might be fine except that John explains that the “Word” is Jesus Christ: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Sadly, Buzzard makes no mention that John equates “the Word” with Christ. This is alarming, considering that, as the *Word Biblical Commentary* states, the declaration that “the Word became flesh” is “the controlling utterance of the sentence. It is not to be subordinated to the third clause, as though it signified only the condition for manifesting the glory of God in the world.”

Unconvincingly, Buzzard has overlaid a definition of “the word” that he does not draw from the text of the Bible itself but from his own unitarian viewpoint.

**Jesus Christ and the Trinity in LDS-Specific Scripture**

Whatever doctrines may be problematic in the biblical record, unique LDS scripture helps clarify them. Mormon scripture definitively establishes Christ’s divinity and antemortal Godhood. Indeed, our expanded and expanding canon enables us to resolve many of the otherwise intractable disputes arising out of conflicting interpretations of the Bible. A quick
overview of Latter-day Saint–specific passages that explicitly set forth the divinity of Christ will illuminate a very high Christology.

The title page of the Book of Mormon itself declares its aim of “convincing . . . Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (emphasis added). In his prophecy of the coming of Christ, King Benjamin declared, “For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men” (Mosiah 3:5; emphasis added). Throughout the Book of Mormon, Jesus is declared to be the God of Israel. Nephi proclaims, “And the God of our fathers . . . yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself . . . as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up . . . and to be crucified” (1 Ne. 19:10). And the resurrected Lord confirms Nephi’s testimony: “I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Ne. 11:14). The Doctrine and Covenants gives this expansive description the Savior’s divinity:

Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made; The same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes; I am the same which spake, and the world was made, and all things came by me. (D&C 38:1–4; see also 18:33, 47; 27:1)

Such verses are categorical; clearly there is no room in Latter-day Saint theology for unitarianism. The Latter-day Saint Standard Works reveal a very high Christology and an unarguably clear proclamation that Jesus Christ is divine.

LDS Reconciliations between Trinitarianism and Monotheism

Relevant LDS discourse reveals several models for understanding Christ’s divinity that elegantly navigate and even bring together the unity of monotheism and the variety of Trinitarianism. The first way Latter-day Saints view divinity deals with the relationship between the members of the Godhead. Joseph Smith taught that an “everlasting covenant was made between three personages [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] before the organization of this earth and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth.” As a result of their separate roles, they are “one” God in the sense that they do their separate work together as part of the single “work and glory,” namely “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Paulsen and McDonald explain that Joseph Smith
understood this covenant to consist of each of the three divine beings covenanting with the others to fulfill specific roles in relation to the salvation of the human family. The Father, according to Smith, is God “the first” and presides “over all,” and it is the Father’s plan of creation and redemption that the Son carries out. Thus, Smith refers to the Son as God “the second” and as “the Redeemer” and “the Mediator.” According to Smith, God “the third,” or Holy Ghost, is “the witness or Testator.” Because of their covenant relationship, a synergetic bond exists between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the nature of which is distinctive to the Trinity. This bond was forged not only out of their oneness of minds, hearts, natures, and attributes, but also out of their interdependent missions.37

The second model operates by means of “divine investiture of authority.” In other words, the Father has given Christ the full, complete use of his authority and power, and the right to represent him and act as if he were, in fact, the Father himself. Christ alluded to this investiture of authority when he said, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43) and “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). By asserting divine investiture of authority, Latter-day Saints affirm38 a version of monotheism and the divinity of Christ. In this model, Christ and the Holy Ghost are both deity by divine investiture of the Father’s authority, but in the Godhead, the Father is the one fount of divinity. Thus, even though “there be gods many, and lords many” (1 Cor. 8:5), there is one God the Father.

In denying that Christ had to be divine in order to fulfill his salvific mission, Buzzard makes an interesting point: “Another [person or agent] can of course represent Yahweh or act for Yahweh, reflect Yahweh’s character, or carry out the will of Yahweh—and Jesus did all of those things.”39 This resembles the Latter-day Saint understanding of divine investiture of authority or priesthood: acting in the place of God, using authority given from God to man; in effect, doing what God himself would do if he were present. When miracles have been performed, they have always been done by virtue of the Father’s invested authority. Christ himself even acknowledged this fact (for example, see John 5:19). The Father has given Christ all of his power and authority.40 According to Buzzard’s view, however, even such complete investiture of authority does not suffice to make Christ God.

The third way of understanding what Latter-day Saints mean by divinity is that in LDS discourse, including scripture, God is sometimes used as a title (like “President”) and thus represents a description of a certain type of person who meets certain criteria, but not a specific person in particular.41 Book of Mormon writers Alma and Moroni audaciously claim that God could hypothetically “cease to be God.”42 They are not describing pure annihilation (a philosophical impossibility in Mormon theology) but what would happen if he were to be ungodly or unjust, namely, he would
no longer fit the description of what the title of “God” entails and would therefore no longer be known by that title or able to function with divine powers. Therefore, as a descriptive title of one who has the attributes of godliness, God can be appropriately used in reference to Christ, as well as to the Father, the Holy Spirit, and even to that “congregation of the holy ones” as referenced above.

Fourth, God has also been used in LDS discourse to refer to persons who stand in a specific relationship. LDS philosopher Blake Ostler explains that godhood belongs to beings who have entered into a “relationship [that] is so profound and the unity so complete that the persons who share this unity have identical experiences, know exactly the same things . . . and always act in complete unison.” Though ontologically distinct, the members of the Godhead are perfectly united—“of one heart and one mind.” And to be so is to be divine.

Conclusion

Although Trinitarian represents an impassioned effort, Buzzard has attempted to defend a very difficult position. The standing evidence and scholarship is ultimately too much to overcome. His biblical argument for unitarianism is sophisticated and radical, but it cannot hope to supplant what are practically consensus biblical interpretations. His rebuttals to biblical arguments for Christ’s divinity are delicate and often strained because of their seeming implausibility. Though Buzzard has spelled out the attendant problems of Trinitarianism, his solutions discard vital elements of Christ’s gospel. Where other solutions are available, they must be considered. For Latter-day Saints, Restoration scripture and teachings affirm the plausible biblical reading that the Father is God while at the same time Christ shares in that divinity, is appropriately given divine worship, and cooperates with his Father in a Godhead based upon an interdependent social model.

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2. A *Journal from the Radical Reformation*, the journal of Buzzard’s theological community, has published an article that explicitly denounces Mormonism as “the fruit of the Trinitarian Christian tree” and as “a logical progression of Trinitarianism.” In a gross oversimplification, the article also condemns Mormonism for causing “God to be lowered to the level of people.” Alan M. Goldberg, “Every Tree Is Known by Its Own Fruit: Of Mormonism, Trinitarianism and Polytheism,” *A Journal from the Radical Reformation* 6, no. 1 (1996): 25, 29. Also, in appendix 1 (page 387) of *Trinitarian*, Buzzard reproduces an essay by Durousseau noting that the formulation “Jesus is God” was anathemized by the fifth ecumenical council (553 CE) at Chalcedon as Eutychianism or Monophysitism.


belief in El’s council of gods, the later emergence of Yahweh as Israel’s warrior
god, the eventual merging of El and Yahweh, and a final achievement of mono-
theism in the postexilic era. See Smith, Early History of God, chap. 1; and Mark
Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and
the Ugaritic Texts, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 10. It
is important to note that many Latter-day Saints may not be comfortable with
some of the baggage that comes with Smith’s developmental approach to biblical
history. These problems are not necessarily insoluble for Mormons but will not be
treated here.

16. Buzzard, Trinitarian, 98 n. 13. Buzzard even states that in a proper
translation of John 20, Thomas is rebuked. Buzzard acknowledges, however, that
Thomas is rebuked not for addressing Savior as God, but for his predisposition
toward disbelief.
19. Marcus, Mark 8–16, 847; emphasis in original.
20. Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, Putting Jesus in His Place:
The Case for the Deity of Christ (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2007), 244.
22. From the KJV, Matthew alone gives a multitude of examples, each deserv-
ing linguistic review: Matthew 2:2, 8, 11; 5:6; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 28:9–10; 15:25; 20:20;
28:9, 17.
24. Buzzard, Trinitarian, 143.
25. For proskuneō in reference to the Father, see Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; John
4:20–24; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Hebrews 11:21; Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:7;
26. In fact, the first instance of the word translated “worship” in the Old
Testament Hebrew means precisely the same thing, and there is not another word
used that is translated as “worship” until midway through the Book of Jeremiah:
Gen. 22:5, where Abraham says that he and Isaac will go worship, presumably
God, on Mount Moriah, in offering a sacrifice.
27. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel and
Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 6:763. The reader should understand that Buzzard does not deny that proskuneō is used in reference to the Father. Buzzard’s primary argument is
that latreuō is unique. See Buzzard, Trinitarian, 135–48.
28. Hebrews 1:6; the language is originally from Psalm 96:7 and Deuteronomy
32:43. Buzzard does not deal directly with this particular passage as implying wor-
ship. The three times this verse is cited in his book, Buzzard overlooks its worship
implications and focuses on the phrase that says God “brings the firstborn into
the world.”
29. Bowman and Komoszewski, Putting Jesus in His Place, 40.
30. Buzzard, Trinitarian, 287. Buzzard’s argument for prospective pre-
existence is detailed. The old Jewish idea that religiously important figures
or objects often held a form of pre-existence in God’s consciousness supports
Buzzard’s theory. Adolf Von Harnack presented this theme long ago in a special appendix on pre-existence in his landmark work History of Dogma, wherein he contrasts Hellenic and Jewish ideas of pre-existence: “According to the theory held by the whole of the Semitic nations, everything of real value that from time to time appears on earth has its existence in heaven. . . . Its manifestation on earth is merely a transition from concealment to publicity. . . . The old Jewish theory of pre-existence is founded on the religious idea of the omniscience and omnipotence of God, that God to whom the events of history do not come as a surprise, but who guides their course.” Buzzard, Trinitarian, appendix 1, 318.

33. Buzzard, Trinitarian, 274.
34. Beasley-Murray, John, 15.
37. Buzzard, Trinitarian, 47; italics added.
39. The 1916 declaration from the First Presidency on the Father and the Son makes the point that the Son is often referred to in scripture as the Father because of this authority, because of his role as the Creator, because of stewardship over those who have entered the gospel covenant, and because of divine investiture of authority. The First Presidency makes clear the fact that the creation of the earth, clearly ascribed to God in the Bible, was enacted by the premortal Jesus Christ. See James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 5:26–34.
40. See Alma 42:13, 22, 25; see also Mormon 9:19.
42. Ostler, Of God and Gods, 10.
43. Paulsen and McDonald, “Joseph Smith and the Trinity,” 54.
The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education is a deeply provocative work. Editors Michael D. Beaty and Douglas V. Henry, both of Baylor University, put forth the objectives of the book in what I found to be an enlightening and engaging introduction. Tracing the history of the institutional position of moral formation once held in higher education, they argue that the traditional emphasis on building morality was displaced primarily by the epistemological shift that occurred during the 1930s. According to their view, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberal education at universities embraced revelation from God as the source of absolute moral truth. However, during the 1930s, the prominence of the scientific method caused a shift away from revelation as an accepted source of truth. They assert this has led to the demise of liberal education’s once harmonious union of science and moral truth and has reduced a university education to career training. What is worse, this epistemological shift has aided in the escalation of moral relativism, which denies that revelation from God establishes absolute moral truth. Their book is, in part, a response to Derek Bok’s Universities and the Future of America and is a cry for a return to the type of university-level liberal education that integrates moral education. They assert this change must flow from and be founded in the Christian tradition, but it still should uphold the scientific method as a viable way to obtain knowledge. They issue a formal call to all Christian universities to return to the original foundations of liberal education, which they contend were to educate the whole man and to “initiate students into a quest for goodness,” not merely provide them with the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen occupations (20).

I found this entire volume to be deeply provocative and significant in the context of what the academy professes to believe and do—particularly to those interested in scholarly pursuit in the unique context of faith-based universities such as Brigham Young University.
The first chapter in this volume, written by Warren A. Nord, argues that there are two legitimate approaches to moral education: that which has traditionally been labeled “liberal arts” and its counterpart, “liberal-free.” The first “is grounded in the classical canon” and “binds students to the past, to tradition” (31). In contrast, the liberal-free ideal “values free, critical inquiry and tolerance; it is skeptical” (32). His assertion is that while both have their risks, both also have their place. The risk of the tradition-bound liberal arts ideal is that true educational pursuit can degenerate into mere indoctrination founded in dogma, or what he and others in this book refer to as “training.” He proposes that, despite this risk, younger children need moral socialization, so there is a place for this approach. However, this place is not in higher education. His primary contention is this: by the time young adults reach the level of a university education, they must not be bound down by any such restraints. However, they will not be able to navigate a liberal-free education without the assistance of carefully integrated curriculum and educated university professors.

One danger of the liberal-free approach is that it can easily be reduced to a chaotic, disjointed array of “disciplinary monologues,” possibly leading students to the dangerous precipice of moral relativism (which I would argue, it has). However, with correct management, this ideal can take students to the next moral level, allowing for free thinking and personal decisions while still guiding them to consider “what matters most”: “our existential concerns about good and evil, suffering and flourishing, justice and injustice, love and beauty, God and the ways we find meaning in life” (43). Nord proposes a university environment where academic and intellectual freedoms are mandatory, but where religious studies are equally mandatory—not as a purely academic pursuit but as a viable lifestyle choice. Inhibiting anything, including and especially religious beliefs, is just another form of indoctrination. Secular dogma violates these principles of freedom as much as religious dogma.

In the next chapter, Robert C. Roberts presents a counterargument to Nord’s. He contends that since the time of Aristotle, moral value has been attached to behavior that is discernable with the five senses. Therefore, something is only defined as moral if it is a demonstrable achievement or accomplishment of some sort. He argues that an additional component of true morality involves escaping earthly measures and pursuing the divine. In order for something to be truly moral, he asserts, it has to escape behavioral measures, which are focused only on achievement, and pursue the truly divine in each of us and in the universe. He gives as an example the Socratic tension between the utilitarian lawyer and the pensive philosopher. He contends that since the time of Plato there has been
an artificial separation between what is thought of as moral education and intellectual pursuit in universities. In reality, true intellectual, scientific pursuit can and should be morally educating. To a Christian, Roberts contends, morality must be both practical and theoretical. He feels that public universities are not suited to pursue Nord’s ideal of a liberal-free education because they are, or at least attempt to be, “morally neutral” (65). This furthers the artificial divide between intellectual and moral pursuit. Nord himself argues that in order for students to form their own concept of morality in the liberal-free ideal they must possess a certain set of virtues. Roberts asserts that these virtues are based on morals; this places Christian universities in a position of preeminence in helping students receive a truly value-based moral education because they are not morally neutral. He is equally critical of Nord’s perception of liberal arts education as good only for training or indoctrination. Roberts bases this criticism on his own perception that the Christian tradition is rich with its own devices to critically claim all truth. He posits that in the current system, public (secular tradition) universities are not in a position to reverse the trend of our eroding moral condition. On the other hand, Christian universities—as long as they carefully select faculty based on moral character, choose students just as carefully, and then join the two in a close “apprenticeship”—are aimed at educating the human soul.

The third chapter in this volume, written by Nicholas K. Meriwether, argues against Nord’s liberal-free ideal and Robert’s assertion that publicly-funded state universities are not in a position to correct the problem. As he reminds us, this is partly because Christian universities educate less than one percent of the total student population in the United States. After meticulously chronicling the history of the epistemological shift from classical texts and the scriptures as the source of truth to the absolute abandonment of moral verities in favor of positivism, Meriwether includes a rather detailed historical summary of the key players in the drama of the demise of moral education in modern universities. He then asserts that competing pedagogies—the “pedagogy of profession” vs. the “pedagogy of mediation”—lie at the heart of the erosion of moral education. The pedagogy of profession, he asserts, “assumes an unchanging, normative account of human nature and moral absolutes” and “is a pedagogy of reminding, reinforcing, elaboration, and exhortation of universal and necessary moral truths” (84, italics in original). The pedagogy of mediation, on the other hand, rejects these tenets in favor of “a pedagogy that stresses adaptation, discovery, and open-ended application of particular and contingent moral truth” (84). His important point is this: the pedagogy of mediation, which has not only replaced the pedagogy of pro-
fession but has led to moral relativism based on positivism, is founded on quantitative modes of knowing and of proving that are ill suited to a moral theory committed to both moral realism and teleological eudaimonism. Furthermore, he asserts, moral truth cannot be arrived at via quantitative methods, but only through the qualitative modes of awareness, which are elicited via the pedagogy of profession: “Thus, as we will see, an attempt to harness moral realism and enduring moral norms to a pedagogy of mediation in the (faint) hope that a combination of a survey of options, case-study dilemmas, and open-ended dialectic in a context of instructional neutrality will produce the ‘discovery’ of enduring moral values is fraught with peril for the simple reason that the methods employed are designed to produce completely opposite results” (84–85). What follows is a critical examination of the pedagogies of mediation and profession, including the primary argument against the pedagogy of profession, which is that it is merely indoctrination. Meriwether asserts that Nord’s liberal-free education paradigm discussed above is merely a watered-down pedagogy of mediation. He also argues that history has shown that the profession of a set of values has not limited creative and critical thinking; in many instances it has led to or enhanced it. In fact, he contends, if private and state universities are truly committed to “a generous sampling of alternatives duly represented . . . striv[ing] for balance and equal representation, the presence of religiously informed moral belief would have to be significantly increased” (99). He asserts that this is not the business of private or Christian universities alone but of the entire academy.

What follows next is a remarkable chapter by Stanley Hauerwas that is equally enjoyable and insightful. At times he had me laughing until I was crying. Hauerwas’s point is both simple and profound: modern universities in the United States are turning out students who are as faithful to the morals and values of the state as students of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Christian universities were to those of the church. By participating in carefully engineered “ethics” courses designed to teach them what they had already presupposed—that they should decide for themselves what is right and wrong in a given situation—students develop an increased allegiance to what they had already perceived as the “American dream”: to do what they want to do and to get what they want to get. The state has effectively replaced the church as the wellspring of moral values. As long as universities continue to serve the state instead of the Christian cause, he asserts, “We live in dark times. By ‘we’ I mean we Christians” (103).

Freedom, Truth: Moral Education and the ‘Schooled Heart,’” he identifies and then expounds on what he terms the four desiderata (desired ends) of education: wisdom, community, freedom, and truth. He does this primarily by examining what the Bible teaches about each. He postulates that wisdom is incarnate in Jesus and in the example he set before us and can best be obtained from reading and discussing the scriptures. Next he tackles the concept of community. He notes: “Moral education in a Christian context is . . . inescapably, a corporate function. Whereas great knowledge may be acquired by solitary study, and individualized tutorial mentoring may further sharpen both wit and skill development, moral education requires for its proper Christian practicum a wider communal context” (123). He then explains the etymology of the word college, tracing it back to the description of the association Jesus had with his twelve apostles—a “colage,” to quote Wycliffe, or a group devoted to Christ-centered learning. He muses, “Perhaps we can . . . try to imagine why it is that universities and colleges once founded upon [these] principles . . . departed from them so far as to be thoroughly opposed not only to Christ and the church, but in some cases opposed even to cultural remembrance of their own historic witness to Christ” (125). Instead of being Christ-centered, modern institutions of higher education have increasingly become places of private benefit rather than public good. To counter this, he contends, “we must resist the commodification of education by refusing to treat our students as clients, but welcoming them rather as neighbors” (124)

One of the main thrusts of his chapter is that included in the definition of neighbors, whom in the Christian imperative we must love, are those of the past as well as those of the present in other cultures; in addition, “no learning that neglects either of these can be meaningfully moral”(130). To address his third desiderata, Jeffrey notes that the word freedom “has become for our culture a debased term, and in its debased assertion, a contradiction, in many cases, of community. Contemporary notions of Christian freedom can too easily reflect the modern secular connotation of autonomy and license instead of the biblical idea which is their contrary rather than their source” (125). Again, drawing on the etymology of the word, he notes that anciently freedom implied generosity, as in liberality. In fact, he posits, this was at the very root of the notion of liberal studies itself: “other-directed freedom is an indispensable condition of moral education” (126, italics in original). Jeffrey also notes that moral relativism has also destroyed the meaning of the word truth, his fourth desired aim. He uses the doctrine of Bertrand Russell as an example of the persuasive “glorification of the ‘self-made’ man or woman” that has led to the “pursuit of self-interest at the expense of all other interests,” which has allowed
truth to be defined by this pursuit (127). This glorious essay is a clarion call
for all educators in Christian institutions of higher education to return to
the original quest dedicated to examining the wisdom, community, free-
dom, and truth in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ; as a stand-alone
piece, it is easily worth the purchase price of this book.

One of the more profound chapters in this volume is “Tracking the
Toxins of Acedia: Reenvisioning Moral Education” by Paul J. Wadell and
Darin H. Davis. Responding to Charles Taylor’s The Ethics of Authenticity,
Wadell and Davis offer another explanation for the twisted, dark side of
individualism pervasive in our postmodern society: the notion that in
order to be an authentic individual, you must deny yourself of anyone or
anything that transcends you. While Wadell and Davis accept Taylor’s
premise that this unfortunate phenomenon has caused much inertia in
our current culture, their explanation diverges from Taylor’s; instead of a
simple conceptual confusion about authenticity, Wadell and Davis argue
it is the outgrowth of acedia. They define acedia as lowering one’s sights
away from the pursuit of goodness because of disgust for or despair in
achieving it. It is the numbing and dumbing down of one’s expectations
in life because of the discouraging, even depressing, belief that achieving
greatness isn’t possible or perhaps even desirable. This sloth or laziness
is characterized this way: “I’ll just get by day-to-day, stay out of people’s
way, do my thing, and float along.” Acedia hinders people from achieving
greatness, changing, or attempting to do great things, and it is fostered by
the couch-potato, video-game, entertainment culture of sitting idly by the
wayside, observing others doing great things but never really becoming
engaged in them as more than a spectator. Acedia is further promoted and
more easily accepted by the cultural message that economic success
and social prominence matter more than moral and spiritual excellence.
Not that seeking job security, professional certification, and economic
survival are necessarily wrong—it is that this myopic pursuit becomes a
distraction from seeking for more.

Wadell and Davis succinctly summarize the three causes of acedia, as
explained by Hook and Reno, as egalitarian piety (the notion that “being
oneself” is heroic in and of itself, without being associated with greatness),
cynical suspicion (the “distrust of and disenchantment with anything that
is noble, heroic, or magnanimous”), and supine indolence (the refusal to
take any risks for the greater good) (139). They assert that the antidote for
acedia is a moral education that focuses on the vocation of “hearing and
responding to the call of goodness,” an education that calls us out of our-
selves and into relationships with others, especially with God (141). In fact,
they argue that, contrary to the contemporary notion that happiness is
rooted in self-gratification, we can only find that which was missing in our lives by moving outside of ourselves, that none of us is the answer to the incompleteness in our own lives. They raise a clarion call to teachers to appeal to the notion that “fulfillment and happiness are found not in lives of calculated self-interest but in lives spent seeking excellence through virtue, service, goodness, and love,” an idea that has been silenced in our culture as dangerously unrealistic (143). However, they warn that in order for students to seek goodness, they will need to be imbued with some sort of spiritual revelation—much like the experience the ancient Apostles had when asked by the Savior to forsake all and follow him. This will be prerequisite to pursuing a path utterly at odds with what they have been taught will make them happy and will “demand unlearning so many of the messages [they] have imbibed”; in fact, it will require “being reeducated about happiness” (144). Wadell and Davis argue that “such a radical reorientation in our thinking about happiness must become the central element in the moral formation of students” (145).

The difficulty of this quest for happiness through goodness, they argue, will require the mastery of the triad virtues of hope, courage, and perseverance. Hope will empower students when they become discouraged at their lack of goodness and their power to acquire it as well as the strong allure of acedia. Courage, in contrast with perseverance, or sheer endurance, is daring to attack and overcome anything that comes in opposition to the quest for good. Together, these three virtues facilitate the quest. In order for this quest to become a reality in students’ lives, Christian colleges and universities “must foster in students an ambition for goodness instead of . . . for wealth, . . . virtue must be . . . more compelling than celebrity, service more attractive than self-aggrandizement” (149). Instead of supporting whatever values students finally endorse, institutions must help students realize that “no life is morally praiseworthy simply because [they] have chosen it; rather, it’s morally praiseworthy because by . . . embracing it [they] actually become good” (150). Institutions must embrace and perpetuate the notion that each student’s calling in life—his vocation—is the pursuit of goodness, and then they must provide a place where the meaningful initiation into that vocation can occur. This would require an extraordinary element of faculty unity and purpose, as well as an almost complete but refreshing overhaul of the curriculum. Inasmuch as the quest for goodness is the faculty’s and the institution’s vocation as well, no price would be too high to pay.

The final two chapters in the volume treat humility as the quintessential virtue required for moral formation in higher education. I found the first to be less compelling than the second, but both left me reflecting on
the philosophical dimensions and foundations of their arguments. In the first of the two, Shawn D. Floyd contends that although humility is typically viewed as a Christian virtue (and in reality can best be understood in that context), it ought to be accepted in the liberal academy as the requisite virtue for the appropriate exchange of secular ideas because it facilitates the ends of what he terms a “democratic education.” He asserts that “our educational institutions ought to promote distinctively democratic virtues” that “prepare students to contribute to—and flourish in—a society in which its citizens collectively embrace the foundational principles of democracy” (156). The balance of his argument is a simple justification for the inclusion of the virtue of humility in the liberal academic interchange despite its religious or Christian overtones. He argues that just because a particular virtue is rooted in religious belief does not mean it would not benefit the honest pursuit of intellectual truth. On the contrary, accepting the virtue of humility would not require the liberal academy to accept religious beliefs or convictions, but rather, it would require us to submit to honest inquiry and respectful deliberation.

In the second of the two chapters on humility, Stephen K. Moroney, Matthew P. Phelps, and Scott T. Waalkes diverge from Floyd’s approach dramatically. By basing their argument exclusively in the scriptural canon, they argue a tripartite theological rationale for cultivating humility in the academy. They assert that humility is requisite because (1) others are made in God’s own image and may have something valuable to teach us, (2) we are finite creatures whose knowledge is limited, and (3) our fallen, sinful natures cause us to have distorted perceptions of reality. Simply put, because “the central practices of higher education are learning practices aimed at seeking the good called truth,” the virtue of humility must be cultivated in teachers and learners in order to pursue that end most effectively (171, italics in original). Their chapter concludes with the authors sharing pedagogies specific to their disciplines (international studies, psychology, and theology) based on their theological tripartite as examples of how to cultivate humility in students. They argue that each of their disciplines offers plentiful resources for cultivating humility in that context.

While this collection is important to the Brigham Young University community on a philosophical level, the book left me empty-handed as far as practical recommendations for solutions to the larger problems it raises regarding moral formation in higher education. The incredibly lucid and pertinent nature of the arguments establishing the philosophical context of the problems and their solutions was, for me at least, in stark contrast to the narrow and shallow nature of the chapters that purportedly offered solutions in practice to these problems. Perhaps this is epitomized in the
concluding arguments of Waddell and Davis’s chapter on *acedia*. They assert that if those in the liberal academy do not believe that what they propose is a possible, realistic, or pragmatic solution, it is endemic to the problem itself. I found myself in this camp. While I wholeheartedly agree with the foundational arguments of the demise of and need for moral formation in higher education as well as the philosophical arguments explaining the roots of the dilemma in which we find ourselves, I did not find the practical solutions offered comprehensively viable. The contributing authors of this volume collectively and individually call for an overhaul of the curriculum, faculty selection, and operation of Christian liberal arts universities and colleges on a philosophical level only and should follow up with an additional volume or volumes, inviting chapters from those with expertise in translating these arguments into educational realities.

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Forty years after Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock published the results of the first two major surveys of American religious beliefs and practices, Stark finally picked up where *American Piety* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968) left off. Now codirector of the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University, Stark has published an analysis of data gathered in two Baylor Surveys of Religion—one in 2005, the other in 2007—as well as a 2006 survey focusing on economics and religion. The results are surprising in many regards. In fact, Stark delights in debunking popular misconceptions and myths about what Americans believe, hence the book’s title. In the introduction, for instance, Stark highlights four areas where the “experts” are dead wrong: the end of denominationalism, declining attendance, losing our young people, and overall church membership. In short, denominationalism is alive and well, attendance at church is not declining, young people have always attended less frequently than their elders but increase their church-going when they marry and have children, and the percentage of Americans who belong to a local congregation has increased steadily since the colonies declared their independence—from 17 percent in 1776 to 34 percent in 1850 to 51 percent in 1906 to 59 percent in 1952 to 69 percent in 2005.

*What Americans Really Believe* is an easy but information-packed read. It is divided into twenty-three short chapters, each dealing with a distinct topic and featuring multiple tables that present summarized data from the surveys. The Baylor questions were much more detailed and more thoughtfully constructed than those included in previous surveys and therefore yield a more complete picture of the religious beliefs and practices of the American populace than has previously been available. In this review, I will discuss five of the chapters to present a sample of what the book contains. I will then make a few observations about the book in general and its relevance to LDS readers.
Chapter 2, “Church Growth,” begins with the statement, “Early in 2008, when the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reported that 44 percent of American adults have switched from one denomination to another, many observers seemed to think this observation was a bit scandalous.” The Wall Street Journal even surmised that people were changing denominations to avoid certain moral obligations or doctrinal demands. “If that were true,” writes Stark, “then the more permissive ‘liberal’ denominations would be gaining and the more demanding ‘conservative’ denominations would be shrinking” (21). Statistics show, however, that the exact opposite is taking place. Americans are deserting the liberal denominations in droves and are flocking instead to the demanding conservative faiths. In fact, all liberal Protestant denominations decreased in membership from 1960 to 2000, while all conservative Protestant faiths gained members. Roman Catholic membership decreased by 5 percent during this period, and LDS membership increased by 122 percent. Some Latter-day Saints will undoubtedly be disappointed to learn that, contrary to faith-promoting rumor, the LDS Church is not the fastest-growing denomination in the United States. Four churches, including the Jehovah’s Witnesses, grew faster than the Mormons. The Church of God in Christ topped the list with an astounding 786 percent increase. It should be noted that these membership numbers come not from the Baylor surveys but from statistics gathered by the Yearbook of American Churches (1962) and Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches (2001). Also, instead of using simple membership totals, Stark lists the number of members per 1,000 U.S. population in order to account for population growth.

Chapter 8 deals with the fascinating question of who thinks they are going to heaven. A 1957 Gallup poll found that “74 percent of Americans said they believed in life after death” and “another 13 percent said they were undecided.” The 1964 poll from which Stark and Glock drew their analysis for American Piety revealed that 47 percent of Americans were “absolutely sure” about life after death and 32 percent were “pretty sure.” Starting in 1973, the General Social Surveys often asked this same question. Consistently, about 70 percent of Americans responded affirmatively, with 8 or 9 percent undecided. Significantly, the 2005 Baylor survey shifted the focus of the question from life after death to belief in heaven, resulting in 67 percent who answered that they were “absolutely sure” heaven exists, and another 17 percent who thought it “probably” does (69–70). The 2007 survey yielded similar totals. The responses varied, predictably, according to religious affiliation. Among conservative Protestants, 89 percent were absolutely sure, compared to only 60 percent of liberal Protestants and 62 percent of Roman Catholics. Interestingly, of the Jews surveyed,
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zero percent were absolutely sure heaven exists, while 23 percent were pretty sure. As with many of the survey results, other factors influenced belief in heaven. For instance, 68 percent of women believe in heaven while only 56 percent of men report being absolutely sure, African Americans (86 percent) are more certain about heaven than are whites (60 percent), and Republicans (77 percent) are more believing than Democrats (54 percent). Age has no effect, but education does—70 percent of those who did not go to college are absolutely sure, compared with 43 percent of those who have attended graduate school.

The 2007 Baylor survey asked additional questions, attempting to reveal a more detailed picture of the American religious landscape. One of the questions, “How certain are you that you will get to heaven?” yielded the following breakdown: 30 percent were very certain, 16 percent quite certain, 20 percent somewhat certain, 4 percent not very certain, 3 percent not at all certain, 16 percent didn’t know, and 11 percent didn’t believe in heaven. In total, then, 66 percent of Americans are at least somewhat certain that they will go to heaven. Apparently, we are still a fairly optimistic society about either our own worthiness or God’s leniency.

Chapter 10 explores the notion of evil and reconciling its existence with the idea of an omnipotent and loving God. Previous research offered limited information on societal perceptions of evil. The 2005 Baylor survey showed that about 58 percent of Americans believe in the existence of Satan and 48 percent believe in demons. The 2007 survey probed for further information. Respondents were asked to identify what they felt were the primary sources of evil in the world. Only 43 percent agreed with the statement that most evil in the world is caused by the devil, while 89 percent agreed that most evil is caused by mankind. (Among conservative Protestants, however, 73 percent blamed the devil and 84 percent blamed mankind.) Obviously, these were not mutually exclusive categories and, apparently, many people blame both the devil and human nature. But only 25 percent of respondents agreed that human nature is basically evil. How people view the source of evil affects their stance on certain moral questions. For instance, among those who agree that most evil is caused by the devil, only 18 percent believe the government should abolish the death penalty and 81 percent believe in harsher punishment for criminals, while among those who disagree that the devil causes most evil, the percentages were, respectively, 30 and 59. These last statistics appear counterintuitive on the surface or perhaps point to a bit of irrational reasoning among the American populace. It would seem that those who blame the devil for most of the evil in the world would be more merciful toward those who commit serious crime. But we must look at these numbers in tandem with the
figures shown above—namely, that conservative Protestants blame both the devil and the individual for evil. This being the case, these respondents are inclined to favor harsh punishment for crime, even though they place part of the blame on the devil.

Chapter 14 is titled “Atheism: The Godless Revolution That Never Happened.” Intellectuals have been prophesying the demise of religion for centuries, but the Baylor surveys and other studies show that belief in deity is alive and well, not only in America, but also in almost every other nation. The 2001–2 World Values Surveys, for instance, show that the percentage of the population who confess to being “convinced” atheists is surprisingly consistent throughout the world. In most nations, the percentage of convinced atheists is below 8 percent, with most nations ringing in at 3 to 5 percent. Even in countries that belonged to the former Soviet Union, where atheism was taught in the schools and faith was actively discriminated against, the prevalence of atheists ranges from 1 percent in Poland and Romania to 8 percent in the Czech Republic. Russia is at 4 percent, exactly the same as the United States. Interestingly, the only country that rivals China’s 14 percent atheism is France. Japan, at 12 percent, is the only other country included in the survey with more than 10 percent atheism.

What does this say about the human race being “hardwired” for belief in deity? Quite a bit, actually. “One reason the percentage of atheists has not grown during the past sixty years,” writes Stark, “is that irreligion is not effectively transmitted from parents to children. Studies show that the majority of children born into an irreligious home end up joining a religious group—most often a conservative denomination” (117). Stark also addresses the recent slate of books by such high-profile atheists as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens and their apparent lack of success in converting people to their belief system. “Because these books sold well, it was widely assumed that they signaled a breakthrough for atheism—that large numbers of Americans were now ready to stand up and admit they didn’t believe in God” (116), but such, apparently, is not the case. “So,” asks Stark, “why have books by angry atheists been selling well? For one thing, 4 percent of . . . 300 million Americans amounts to more than 12 million people—a lot of them potential book buyers. For another thing, this 4 percent is greatly overrepresented in the media, especially among book reviewers, and so the books received maximum coverage” (121). Some reviewers, however—even some who themselves are atheists—have been critical of these books. For instance, biologist H. Allen Orr, writing for the New York Review of Books, admitted to once calling Richard Dawkins “a professional atheist.” But after reading The God Delusion, Orr was forced to conclude that “he’s actually more of an amateur” (121).
Perhaps Michael Novak offered the best explanation for the ineffectiveness of these books, observing that “there is an odd defensiveness about [them]—as though they were a sign not of victory but of desperation” (121).

Chapter 18, titled “Faith and Politics: Is There a Secret Plot of Evangelicals to Take Over the American Government?” is the one problematic chapter in the book. To this point, Stark has maintained a more-or-less objective and evenhanded tone, but in this chapter, for some reason, he assumes a defensive posture, and his interpretation of the data is questionable at best. This defensive tone is difficult to explain, considering Stark’s own professed religious beliefs. In a 2004 interview, he stated that although he is not an atheist, “I don’t know what I believe. I was brought up a Lutheran in Jamestown, North Dakota. I have trouble with faith. I’m not proud of this. I don’t think it makes me an intellectual. I would believe if I could, and I may be able to before it’s over. I would welcome that.” Since that interview, Stark has apparently experienced the change of heart he hoped for. In a 2007 interview, he made this statement about his personal beliefs:

I was never an atheist, but I probably could have been best described as an agnostic. As I continued to write about religion and continued to devote more attention [to] Christian history, I found one day several years ago that I was a Christian. Consequently, I was willing to accept an appointment at Baylor University, the world’s largest Baptist university. They do not require faculty member[s] to be Baptists (many are Catholic) and I am not one. I suppose ‘independent Christian’ is the best description of my current position.2

Since it doesn’t make sense for an “independent Christian” to wax defensive over questions of Evangelical motives, perhaps the incompatible tenor and slant evident in only this chapter have something to do with Stark’s employment at Baylor. Or, more likely, since the book was published by Baylor University Press, perhaps this chapter reflects an institutional editorial bias.

The subtitle of the chapter is the first indication of this shift in tone. Because the chapter revolves around one particular Christian group, it seems largely out of place among the other chapters, all of which focus on American religious beliefs in general. The chapter begins with this statement: “Evangelical Christians are the new scapegoats of liberal American culture.” Then, after citing a study showing that 53 percent of college professors have negative feelings toward Evangelicals, Stark makes this emotional claim: “These findings are entirely consistent with a deluge of hysterical warnings against an impending theocracy and other calamities if something isn’t done soon to curb these religious fanatics” (149). After
citing three books with anti-Evangelical messages and referring vaguely to a whole “new literary genre” of similar books, Stark marvels, “Given how often these issues are included in opinion polls, it is amazing that little or no data have been offered to support claims about the ideological chasms separating Evangelicals from everyone else. This chapter is intended to make up for that deficiency” (150). But Stark’s interpretation of the survey data is puzzling at best.

In a section subtitled “Identifying Evangelicals,” Stark conveniently refuses to even offer a definition of what an Evangelical is. He mentions that Baptists, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, and members of other conservative denominations are often classified as such, while members of liberal Protestant churches and Roman Catholics are not. The problem with this, he says, is that many of the conservative Christians do not self-identify as Evangelicals, but many members of liberal denominations and even some Catholics do. His solution is to define an Evangelical as anyone who claims to be an Evangelical, regardless of theological doctrine or denominational membership. If only Evangelicals were so generous in their classifying of others as either Christian or non-Christian.

The problem with this chapter is that Stark begins with a stated purpose—to show that Evangelicals are not so different from mainstream Americans—and when the numbers do not quite support his thesis, he must explain away significant statistical differences in the survey results. For instance, the Baylor survey showed that 94 percent of Evangelicals support prayer in school, while only 67 percent of liberal Protestants and 60 percent of all non-Evangelicals do. “What seems evident,” he writes condescendingly, “is that substantial numbers of non-Evangelicals don’t really know what strict separation of church and state means these days—it is to them nothing but a slogan. . . . In contrast, Evangelicals seem more aware of what is implied by the strict separation of church and state and therefore reject it” (153). In other words, ignorance explains the difference, not that Evangelicals actually do have very different views from other Americans.

Other significant differences in the survey results are similarly dismissed. For instance, even though 94 percent of Evangelicals oppose abortion, compared with 60 percent of liberal Protestants and 63 percent of all non-Evangelicals, “we see that Evangelicals aren’t that different in comparison with other Americans, as opposed to comparison with the positions much favored by the media” (157). The survey results show similar differences in attitudes regarding same-sex attraction. In this chapter, a 30 percent difference is simply dismissed, while in earlier chapters an 8 to 10 percent difference in survey results is statistically significant.
A particularly apt aphorism for this chapter is “torture numbers and they’ll confess to anything.” After waterboarding the data for several pages, Stark finally returns to his subtitle, expressing hope that “spurious claims about evangelical theocratic plots will . . . soon seem . . . ridiculous. For the fact is that Evangelicals are not so very different after all” (158).

But Mormons are. And so are Jews. This is one area in which the surveys definitely speak for themselves. Throughout the book, respondents are divided into categories such as liberal Protestant, conservative Protestant, and Roman Catholic, and in several chapters Latter-day Saint and Jewish respondents are also specifically identified. And these two generally represent extremes in the data set. For instance, 85 percent of LDS respondents claimed to attend church weekly, which would certainly please and likely surprise the statisticians at Church headquarters. The next highest attenders are members of the Assemblies of God, at 61 percent. By contrast, only 13 percent of Jewish respondents attend church weekly. The only group with lower attendance than the Jews were the Unitarians, at 7 percent. Similarly, when measuring “tension” between a denomination and the surrounding culture, as measured by attitudes toward pornography, abortion, homosexual behavior, premarital sex, cohabitation, gambling, and wearing revealing clothing, the Mormons come in far ahead of most other denominations, with 94 percent reporting “high tension.” Assemblies of God, again, were second, at 81 percent. Surprisingly, only 49 percent of Baptists identified high tension between their religion and the surrounding culture. And Jewish respondents rang in at zero percent, with 83 percent reporting “low tension.”

One exception to this general trend of Mormons representing one extreme in the data set comes from questions regarding religious and mystical experiences. Six questions probed into this aspect of religion, which asked if respondents had heard the voice of God speaking to them, had felt called by God to do something, had been protected by a guardian angel, had either witnessed or received a miraculous healing, or had spoken or prayed in tongues. While 86 percent of Latter-day Saints answered yes to at least two of the six questions, only 53 percent answered yes to at least three. By contrast, 81 percent of Assemblies of God members answered yes to three or more of the questions, as did 70 percent of Pentecostal respondents. On the other extreme, 7 percent of Jewish and zero percent of the Unitarian respondents claimed to have had three or more of these experiences.
Overall, the Baylor Surveys of Religion reveal a fascinating picture of American beliefs, and Stark admits that his slender book barely scratches the surface in analyzing the information. Fortunately, the Institute for Studies of Religion has planned to conduct similar surveys every two years through 2018. We can hope that these surveys and the resulting analysis will increase our understanding of what Americans believe and how their beliefs are changing over time.

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This book is a collection of twelve sociological studies that examine how active, faithful Latter-day Saint singles go about deciding to marry and selecting a mate. Since most of the research was conducted via surveys of BYU students and asks the question “What makes the Mormon marriage process different from the typical American process?” it accounts for a very narrow part of the worldwide LDS community. Focusing on this small segment is a good start but shows that research in LDS sociology is still often limited in its scope.

An introductory chapter by Thomas B. Holman provides the backdrop necessary for comparing LDS teachings and the American dating scene. His overview shows how Church standards are increasingly at odds with American culture, especially concerning young people’s desire to get married and comparative rates of sexual activity.

A highlight of the collection is “Hanging Out or Hooking Up: The Culture of Courtship at BYU,” by Bruce A. Chadwick, Brent L. Top, Richard McClendon, Mindy Judd, and Lauren Smith. This piece was also printed in *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 67–90. It surveys BYU students’ responses to important questions about whether students actually want to be married (the answer is yes), how they go about dating (hanging out in groups is the usual way to start), and how they think they will recognize the person they want to marry (spiritual confirmation ranks highest, but only about one-fourth of students surveyed offered this response). The survey was conducted in 2002 and so provides a fairly up-to-date confirmation that students generally follow the counsel they are given at church.

The next study, by G. Bruce Schaalje and Holman, presents a baseline of data (conducted in 1993) on the length of time BYU students date before...
becoming engaged, the length of engagements, their age when they first marry, and students’ attitudes toward each of these practices. The data show that married BYU students were married about two years younger than their American counterparts; however, the survey excludes students who drop out at the time of marriage and those who get married after graduation—a limitation that may significantly affect the results. Two fascinating aspects of this topic stand out: missions affect marriage age not only by taking many men and some women out of the BYU dating pool, but also by leading to a higher percentage of husband-younger-than-wife marriages than is found in American society, caused by couples who met on their missions. And “single students in the College of Fine Arts favored significantly longer dating periods before engagement than students in other colleges” (56).

The next essay presents a study by EmRee M. Pugmire, Vjollca K. Martinson, and Holman. It starts with a general survey of BYU women about their role in courtship, then narrows with in-depth interviews of a small selected group of respondents who demonstrated a desire to be a strong partner. These women “are not stating that they want total equality. Rather, they want to be able to influence, and they also want to be influenced” (61). “They sought a relationship in which both partners were contributing fully, caring wholly, and bringing their particular strengths to the relationship” (69). This attitude differs from a typical feminist agenda, which focuses on equal sharing of household and family duties.

A study of the dating practices of male returned missionaries by Nancy C. McLaughlin surveys four categories of attitudes they have about dating. Most return missionaries report that the transition to dating after a mission was not difficult, but immediately after their return some felt a “false sense of preparedness for marriage” (75). With time they learned to date in a less driven, more comfortable friendship-first style. Most report that their missions helped them be more outgoing and increased their awareness about family relationships (83).

Craig James Ostler presents “Seeking, Sending, and Receiving Interest Cues.” The bottom line here is that those who don’t flirt don’t date very much. And it is clear that Mormon young adults learn to act very differently when they are not in a safe group of other Mormons, lest those “interest cues” be misunderstood.

The process of creating a new family from two “families of origin” is explored in the next piece by Cynthia Doxey. She describes how all parties involved can maximize their happiness by accepting each other: a new couple “should recognize the importance of having an accepting relationship with their own parents and their parents-in-law” through good
communication and good will (121). And “parental acceptance and support can influence couple unity and identity” (118). In this process it is not necessary to have equal time with each set of in-laws or expect a change of behavior from a perceived wrongdoer; feelings of acceptance can come through a change of heart.

The practice of creative date invitations (such as sending a date invitation via a treasure hunt or a “Fear Factor” challenge) is likely to sound crazy to people unaccustomed to it. Author Kristi A. Young does not specify the geographical boundary of creative invitations, but my guess is it is limited to Utah (all the stories happen in Utah) and places where transplanted Utahns have some social influence. Young uses folklore theory to examine how such creativity allows self-expression for young men and women.

Mary Jane Woodger writes about the process of deciding on a mate and desiring spiritual confirmation of the decision. She briefly relates over one hundred specific examples that include “visions, voices, dreams, temple experiences, blessings, and inspiration” (159). These anecdotal experiences evidence that we are a people who believe in and have overt manifestations, but many of the stories told here involved a man and a woman who barely knew each other or had not even formally met making a decision to marry. And it’s not just reckless youngsters who do this: one previously married grandfather “felt it was a sign to marry his second wife when she put nutmeg in an apple pie in the same way his first wife had” (145). I would hesitate to encourage anyone to select a spouse using such a method.

Also by Woodger is a chapter on the unique LDS models of marriage proposals. The uniqueness stems from the LDS belief in the eternal nature of marriage: One woman, “when making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for her boyfriend, was asked if she would make ‘his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for eternity’” (167). Couples are sometimes expected to provide a good proposal story in announcing their engagement. One young man “did not have a unique story to tell. Bowing to peer pressure, he asked his wife to marry him again in a memorable way so he would have a story to tell the curious” (168). If you happen to be looking for creative proposal ideas, this chapter is a gold mine.

In the next study, Rhonda Walker Weaver writes about trousseaus as a folkloric tradition: the making of quilts, hand-decorated tablecloths, and crochet-edged towels trained girls not only in home crafts but in looking forward to marriage. Today’s young woman may more likely desire to enter a marriage with a diploma in hand than a well-stocked cedar chest, but LDS tradition still emphasizes careful preparation for marriage and stresses marriage as a serious life event.
A final piece by Kristi A. Young also uses folklore methodology in looking at Mormon wedding receptions. Again, the stories are anecdotal, but the collection shows a firm tradition among Latter-day Saint couples to use receptions to portray their personalities, and in so doing they express the liminality of the moment as a step from one stage of life to the next, a “time out of time” (199).

In sum, these chapters explore what is peculiar about Latter-day Saints in dating, courtship, and marriage traditions. While we could do without many of the traditions, I found great hope in some of the wisdom expressed by young people and told here. For example, when asked what kind of relationship she desired with a future spouse, one young woman said, “It’s better to be good friends with someone and have that friendship before you start getting more involved. . . . It’s harder to learn how to be friends than it is to learn how to have that romantic element” (66). While Latter-day Saint couples will enjoy having their fun stories to tell, their marriages will not be solid without such a foundation.

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The restoration of priesthood authority was a key event leading to the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Joseph Smith in 1830, as is well known. Much less familiar is the fascinating process of continuing revelation and administrative brilliance that has unfolded over the last two centuries as priesthood offices and quorums have gone into action.

“This remarkably thorough collection of Professor William Hartley’s career writings is a handsome tribute to a very talented and careful scholar, and a ‘must read’ for every serious student of LDS Church History.”

Richard E. Bennett, Associate Dean, Religious Education, Brigham Young University
As an administrator, a trainer of teachers, and a teacher himself, George H. Brimhall believed he stood at the intersection of the sacred and the secular for his students. Education also became his constant passion, sustaining him through humble beginning as a Utah pioneer to his pivotal role as president of Brigham Young University (1904–1921). During times of conflict, disappointment, personal tragedy, and great economic uncertainty, Brimhall steadfastly steered the school through the growing pains of its early years toward its unique mission.

“[This book] gives readers a glimpse into the life of the man who made it possible for BYU to become accredited under Franklin S. Harris and who helped demonstrate that the secular can be integrated with the sacred in meaningful ways.”

J. Gordon Daines III, University Archivist, Brigham Young University