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The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Over the years, Mormonism has been accounted for in various ways. This study applies the results of recent scholarship in apocalyptic and millenarian movements to the early Latter-day Saints and shows them to have been profoundly influenced by such views. In contrast to previous interpretations, the pervasiveness of millenarianism in early Mormon thought is demonstrated. A social as well as soteriological dualism growing out of their apocalyptic ideals is explored, and their millenarian exegesis of prophecy is portrayed in detail. Finally, Mormons are compared with Millerites to distinguish them from other contemporary millenarian groups, and the LDS experience in England is examined to show that Mormon millenarianism was not merely an American phenomenon.
INTRODUCTION

During the last thirty years two fields in the realm of social science—Mormon studies and Millennial studies—have so expanded and developed that observers almost date their inception to the late 1950s or early 1960s. In 1985, the Mormon History Association celebrated its twentieth anniversary. While nonpolemical, scholarly works had been written before that period, the organization's birth provides a convenient milestone in Mormon historiography.¹ Greater access to church archives, professional organization and activism, new documentary discoveries, a rapidly proliferating body of practitioners, and the rise of a number of new

characterized as "the explosion of Mormon history."\textsuperscript{2} Many incidents and individuals needing reassessment were lifted beyond the distorting confines of polemical or propagandistic history by an impressive array of scholarly articles and monographs. Riding the crest of this wave of scholarship were two significant new surveys of Mormon history—\textit{The Mormon Experience}, by Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton, and \textit{The Story of the}


The results of the "explosion" have yet to be comprehensively detailed, but a good place to start is with the sixty-three-page bibliography at the back of James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, \textit{The Story of the Latter-day Saints} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), which was nearly comprehensive at the time of publication. From that point on, readers should consult the "Mormon Bibliography" published annually in \textit{BYU Studies} and "Among the Mormons: A Survey of Current Literature" published periodically in \textit{Dialogue}.

Latter-day Saints, by James Allen and Glen Leonard. A glance at their notes and bibliographies reveals how much these now standard works have profited from as well as typify the "new Mormon history." That a reliable retelling of the entire span of LDS history is now available will be disputed by few.

As for millennial studies, the 1960s and 1970s also produced what one historian has called "a veritable blizzard of scholarly and popular writings in the often stormy field of millennialism." Nor did interest dissipate in the 1980s. By mid-decade Leonard Sweet exclaimed, "the word millennialism has become almost synonymous in recent years with American religious history." And several years later, James Moorhead, in his inaugural address as Bridge Professor of American Church History at Princeton, referred to Sweet's comment and remarked that "even this statement errs on the side

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of timidity." Hyperbole aside, one can hardly argue with Moorhead's assessment that "in recent years, millennialism has proven to be one of the most fertile areas of investigation in American religious history" and that "scholars have found millennialism almost everywhere."6

It is all the more surprising, then, that its presence in early Mormonism has received little more than passing mention. Mormon studies and millennial studies have never really converged in a systematic manner, and cross-pollination has been occasional at best. Earlier studies have correctly identified the first Mormons with Christian primitivism, or have viewed them from within the context of communitarianism, or, have even depicted them as a new religious movement. But if important parts of the building have been recognized before, the foundation supporting them all awaits incorporation of a generation of millennial scholarship to be fully revealed. That undergirding essence was their millenarian and apocalyptic worldview.

The latest millennial studies have made clear that millenarianism is far more than merely a set of beliefs

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about the chronology of future events. It is a comprehensive way of looking at human history, a particular kind of salvationism, a "cosmology of eschatology." This study, therefore, deals with more than what the Latter-day Saints thought about the Second Coming of Christ or how they envisioned the Millennium. It seeks to recreate the entire mental world of Mormonism in its pre-Utah phase (1830-1846) and to demonstrate how the most all-encompassing model for understanding that world is the cluster of concepts today labeled apocalyptic millenarianism.

Chapter 1 provides context by defining terms and tracing the history of apocalyptic eschatologies from their origins over two thousand years ago to the nineteenth century in which Mormonism was born. Against this backdrop, the next chapter describes Mormon eschatology in detail and demonstrates the degree to which previous interpretations fall short. Once the apocalyptic and millenarian nature of early Mormonism has been established, subsequent chapters proceed to illustrate how this not only revises existing understandings of the LDS thought world but also illuminates features heretofore neglected. Chapter 3 probes the sociological and soteriological dualism so

pronounced in Mormon apocalyptic. Chapters 4-6 demonstrate how time and again millenarian mentalities affected the very ways in which Latter-day Saints interpreted the Bible and Book of Mormon. They also flesh out the skeletal overview of early LDS thought provided in Chapter 2. With American Mormonism thus examined, two comparative forays constitute the final chapters. Chapter 7 analyzes the similarities and differences between Mormonism and Millerism, the two major millenarian movements of antebellum America, while Chapter 8 tests for symbiosis between Mormonism and apocalypticism by stepping outside of the United States and exploring the rise of Mormonism in England.

In the end, it is clear from a number of vantage points that apocalypticism, if not the only important aspect of early Mormonism, was certainly its most essential component. As technology replaces thaumaturgy, as people make their peace with the world, the apocalyptic dream of the great reversal, however, diminishes. So it happened with the Mormons. Latter-day Saints still retain a basic premillennial posture regarding Biblical scripture. They still anticipate a divine introduction of the millennium, but for many Mormons these doctrines have a detached and textbookish quality. The social ramifications of their theology are rarely if ever discussed today, and soteriological dualism is disparaged. In short, the more apocalyptic
features of Mormon millenarianism served their purpose in an earlier period and have been quietly, perhaps unwittingly, laid aside. Yet, to this day, because they have never officially been discarded, they remain in reserve to be called into service should the need ever arise again.
CHAPTER 1

THE APOCALYPTIC BACKGROUND OF EARLY MORMONISM

When attempting to comprehend eschatology of any kind, including Latter-day Saint, the old maxim "to understand the present, we must peer into the past" becomes particularly relevant. In the first place, it will correct the mistaken notion that millenarianism is merely an eddy in the mainstream of legitimate religion. All too often it has been dismissed with cavalier comments like those of Walter Rauschenbusch who once remarked that "eschatology is usually loved in inverse proportion to the square of the mental diameter of those who do the loving." 8 In point of fact, it has been a favorite field of study for learned and laymen alike. Sneers aside, however, the long view taken in this chapter will allow us to place Mormonism in context. From the Maccabees to the Montanists, from the Muenster Anabaptists to the Fifth Monarchy Men, earlier groups encountered life situations and responded with worldviews that would have a remarkable resonance in early Mormonism. While parallels do not prove origin, they do

facilitate understanding. For all of these reasons, the clock must now be turned back more than two millennia and the study begun with the rise of "apocalypticism."

"Apocalypse" is a technical term scholars employ when discussing a particular type of Jewish or Christian literature that flourished between the years 200 B.C. and 150 A.D. Strictly speaking, "apocalypticism" refers to the particular outlook on life and human history incorporated in this literature. However, it is also a term that has outgrown its technical definition and has become a useful shorthand for such ideas wherever found even when they are not accompanied by a written "apocalypse." As with most categorizations, characteristics of the apocalyptic literary genre differ slightly from scholar to scholar, but most include the following: 1) Apocalypses disclose the future by predicting a coming cosmic transformation in which the suffering righteous will be vindicated and their evil opposers vanquished. 2) This revelation of future triumph is delivered through a vision or dream by an angel or other heavenly messenger. 3) Famous ancient figures such as Daniel, Abraham and Ezra appear as the recipients of such visions. It should be pointed out that since most scholars do not believe in predictive

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prophecy, at least not with the specificity found in the apocalypses, and because they discern what they consider to be additional evidence for late dating, they often title this characteristic "pseudonymity" or false authorship attribution. 4) They are usually highly esoteric, filled with bizarre symbols, images, colors, and numbers that conceal the message from the persecuting majority and reserve it only for the enlightened elect. Among the most famous apocalypses are portions of the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, but other lesser known writings such as the Enoch literature, 4 Ezra, and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs more closely approximate the model in all aspects.

Before leaving apocalyptic as literary genre, it is important to clarify for the non-specialist that the Book of Mormon would not be viewed as a modern-day apocalypse. While some of the characteristics are similar, it lacks

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the esoteric and overwhelmingly eschatological nature of apocalypses. Just as in the Bible, where books and portions of books are singled out as "apocalypses," some chapters and groups of chapters in the Book of Mormon may be so classified, but they will be important in this study only as they reflect and reinforce the broader apocalyptic worldview found in early Mormonism.

In any case, this study is chiefly concerned with apocalypticism as ideology rather than with the literary genre of apocalypse per se. The common understanding is that distinctively "apocalyptic" thinking grew out of a profound crisis experienced by certain groups within second century B.C. Palestinian Judaism. These people felt that pressures to become Hellenized and abandon the Jewish way of life were growing overwhelming and intolerable. The problem had been intensifying ever since the Seleucids conquered Palestine from the Ptolemies, but by mid-second century under the aggressively anti-Jewish Antiochus Epiphanes the situation worsened considerably. Cosmopolitan Jewish elites, who long ago had embraced Hellenic culture, cooperated with Antiochus's proscription of circumcision and various dietary codes, emptied the temple treasury for his war fund, and even allowed an altar to Zeus upon which swine were sacrificed to be erected in the
temple.\textsuperscript{11}

One reaction to this development was the armed revolt by the Maccabees. Within a few years, they recaptured Jerusalem and promptly purged the temple of all pagan violations (an event celebrated to this day as Hanukkah). Another response, however, were the apocalypses. They provided both nonviolent catharsis and imminent hope for beleaguered Jews who felt powerless in the face of current affairs. Apocalypticism was the dream of "the great reversal." It promised that oppressive and persecuting Gentile overlords and their Jewish allies would be subdued and pious Jews restored to their ancient glory. For the next two hundred years, and particularly toward the close of the Second Temple period when Romans were the oppressors, sacking the holy city and scattering or slaughtering the Jews, apocalypticism flourished both as a mental construct and a literary genre.

Since apocalypticism will be frequently referred to as a particular type of eschatology, a proper understanding of that broader classification is

\footnote{Most scholars feel that it was this latter act that the Book of Daniel calls the "abomination which maketh desolate." See John J. Collins, Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Norman W. Porteous, Daniel: A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965); and Philip R. Davies, Daniel (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983)
necessary. Of Greek derivation, "eschatology" literally refers to "the doctrine of the last things, or end times." Its name implies a teleological or linear, rather than cyclical, view of history and concerns itself with a discussion of how human existence will come to a conclusion. In its broadest sense, eschatology deals with the final events in individual human lives as well as the end of collective human life. In Hebrew eschatology, however, the focus was on the Day of the Lord, that moment when God would act decisively in judgment and salvation in the historical realm, rather than on death and the afterlife.

As there was a natural evolution from prophecy to apocalyptic in Judaism, it may be helpful to distinguish the two. In terms of worldview, prophetic eschatology stressed Yahweh as the single explanation for all events. When people experienced afflictions in life, it was

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because God sent them as just recompense for a broken covenant. Conversely, when they were faithful, they were blessed with prosperity. In contrast, apocalyptic eschatology, which is generally felt to be an intertestamental phenomenon, ascribed tribulation and oppression to an independent, cosmic force for evil. Prophets concentrated on calling the nation to repentance and, failing that, on condemning their people to doom and destruction for their recalcitrance. The apocalypticists had a no more rosy-eyed view of the present, but they shifted the burden to the opposition. Evil was just as rampant, if not more so, but the focus was on their opponents rather than on their own people, and ultimate vindication of the elect was given greater emphasis. From this perspective, God's people temporarily might be held at bay and persecuted as the result of an ongoing cosmic struggle, but eventually, because he was in ultimate rather than direct control of history, God would come to vindicate and restore. In a way, apocalypticists were more pessimistic than the prophets. They could no longer view national repentance as a possibility; at best, a faithful remnant, the true Israel, would be preserved to reign in the golden age. Yet their total belief that history was on their side ultimately led to greater hope and optimism than the less deterministic call to repentance of the prophets for whom total failure to respond was a possibility.
Nor should the social dimension be overlooked. Access to priesthood in ancient Israel was hereditary. Priestly officers were employees of the temple cult and constituted a body of individuals somewhat akin to modern professional clergy. Prophets, on the other hand, were more vocational than professional. While few appear to have been held on retainer by the court, "classical prophets" such as Micah, Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah did seem to have access to royalty. Apocalypticists, on the other hand, were a nameless minority who, like most prophets, found themselves at odds with the priestly establishment but who had even less prestige in society. They were groups more than individuals. From a social-scientific perspective, they would be considered "sects" since their ideals stood in sharp contrast with the official Judaism upheld by the temple priests, and later with the major rabbinical teaching authorities, the Sadducees and Pharisees. As with sects in any major world religion, they reacted against the comfortable accommodation to the world evidenced by the entrenched hierocracy. They called for a purification and a return to "old-time religion." They were fighting against

attempts to make God present only in day-to-day temple worship and in ordinary events of history. They wanted to free God to do the remarkable things he had done in the past. Their apocalypses promised that he could do them again.\textsuperscript{15}

Since the 1950s, the propriety of perceiving the religious group associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls as an apocalyptic sect has been debated. Pioneering scholar Frank Moore Cross first labeled them an "apocalyptic community" over thirty years ago and continues to uphold such an interpretation today.\textsuperscript{16} Martin Hengel, in his important work on the interaction between Hellenism and Judaism, reinforced such a view, portraying them as prominent purveyors of apocalypticism.\textsuperscript{17} The interpretation has not gone without challenge, however. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor and Philip Davies question the Qumran-Essene identification, the notion of an ideologically unified sect, and what they consider to be

\textsuperscript{15} John J. Collins, "Was the Dead Sea Sect an Apocalyptic Movement," Unpublished paper delivered at the 1986 SBL meeting.


\textsuperscript{17} Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, 2 vols., (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:175ff., 216ff.
an exaggerated emphasis on apocalypticism. In a recent assessment of this debate, John Collins continued to see strong apocalyptic influence, but from a slightly different perspective. As will be apparent later, his description anticipates the Mormon situation with uncanny accuracy: "The hope for restoration was focused on a group within Israel, endowed with a new revelation. The salvation hoped for was not simply the restoration of Israel but had a transcendent dimension involving afterlife and cosmic judgment. Eschatology per se was never the raison d'être of these groups, but was part of the conceptual structure which supported their actions and practices."  

What was the conceptual structure of apocalypticism?

18 Philip R. Davies, _The Damascus Covenant_ (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983); and Davies, "Eschatology at Qumran" _Journal of Biblical Literature_ 104 (March 1985): 39-55; Jerome Murphy-O'Connell, "The Essenes in Palestine," _Biblical Archaeologist_ (Sept 1977): 100-124; and "The Essenes and Their History," _RB_ 8 (1974): 215-244. The whole issue is now complicated by debate over the beginning of the Essenes, whether they originated from the Maccabean Hasidim or from an earlier Babylonian setting, whether there were non-Qumran Essenes, and whether apocalyptic motifs originated with or were merely preserved by the Dead Sea Sect. Geza Vermes, _The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective_ , Rev. ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) assumes the Qumran community was a single unified sect identical with the Essenes. Davies and Murphy-O'Connor reject such a view.

Though not all apocalypses emanated from Judaism, there are commonalities that transcend the Jewish situation. Apocalypticism always seems to emerge in an environment of profound discontent with the status quo. Society and its power brokers are considered evil, corrupt, and intolerable. The forces of sin, however defined, are felt to be in control. Often, but not always, the apocalypticists constitute an oppressed minority. At least in their own mind they feel persecuted and alienated, temporally or spiritually. As for the solution, whether it be considered escapist fantasy or hardened realism, they see little hope in working through "the system." A system fully controlled by the adversary can hardly be expected to yield to the efforts of the godly. Undergirding their worldview is a cosmic dualism, which divides the universe into opposite, warring camps of good and evil each with its patron supernatural power. Because the evil is more than human, only by dramatic,
divine intervention can the situation be made right. Only in this way will the last be first and the first, last.

This reversal is to come cataclysmically, as more than mere human forces square off in the final showdown of good and evil. The apocalypticist, however, never wavers in his faith as to the outcome. The course is set; good will win out. Here scholars notice a sort of determinism, not the soteriological kind that predestines particular individuals to a given destiny in the afterlife, but the kind of teleological faith that Jews are renowned for passing on to Western civilization. One can push this distinction between historical determinism and personal determinism too far, but it does allow a disentangling of apocalyptic determinism from Augustinian or Calvinist determinism.

Such a faith engendered hope. To know that no matter how bleak the present may appear God and good would ultimately prevail was calculated to console. But the assurance went further. Apocalypticism inevitably portrays the transformation as imminent. Apocalypticists not only live in the latter days, they live in the last days. Some apocalypses include numerological components that allow the faithful to calculate the exact date, but most simply impress with a sense of nearness. Further, though the present is viewed with a profound pessimism, this period of "tribulation" or "messianic woes," as it
has been variously called in Judeo-Christian tradition, is felt to be a necessary prerequisite to the end. If the present generation is viewed as "ripe" in iniquity, and especially if the righteous are being persecuted, the faithful are thereby provided with additional assurance that all is proceeding according to plan, that everything is in place for "the great reversal" soon to be effected by the divine deliverer.

For a relative handful of Palestinian Jews, that deliverer came in the form of Jesus of Nazareth early in the first century A.D. How apocalypticism affected the rise of Christianity and how it continued to inform its contours has been a matter of lively debate for over a century. At the outset, it must be acknowledged that with the rise of Biblical criticism, references to "Christianity" as if it were a monolith gave way to an entirely new perspective. Just as many Old Testament scholars came to distinguish between Deuteronomistic and Yahwistic sources and theologies, so students of the New Testament came to contrast the Johannine school with the Pauline circle. At the simplest level such theories arose because the harmonizations of previous generations taxed Ockham's razor beyond the breaking point. Emancipated from dogmatic constraints, scriptural discrepancies and contradictions were now felt to emanate from different minds with slightly different perspectives on what Judaism or Christianity really was. Scholars
today are quite comfortable speaking of New Testament theologies. Various "trajectories of thought," rather than a single elusive "orthodoxy", are felt to better describe the first-century scene. 21

How this relates to apocalypticism turns the clock back a century to the time of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. In his influential book, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Schweitzer reviewed the work of 250 scholars from Reimarus in the eighteenth century to Albert Ritschl and Adolf Harnack late in the nineteenth century who had attempted non-devotional biographies of Jesus. In many ways an excellent survey of German christology, the book documented the effort to separate the Jesus of faith and dogma from the Jesus of history. Schweitzer, however, believed his study showed how thoroughly unscientific were the methods and unhistorical the conclusions of the allegedly "scientific" quest of nineteenth-century liberals for the "Life of Jesus." Tired of explicit or implicit confessional overlays, Schweitzer proposed his own allegedly objective reading

of the documents to produce what might be called the "apocalyptic" Jesus. 22

Schweitzer and Weiss argued that Jesus (and later Paul) believed in an imminent and radical transformation of the world that would occur in his own lifetime. Schweitzer focused on several key Biblical passages to make his case. Matt 24:34 (and Synoptic parallels in Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32) has Jesus remark, after detailing events surrounding the "end of the world," that "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." In Matt. 10:23 Jesus sends off his disciples with these words: "Verily, I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." And in Mark 9:1 Jesus remarks, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Whatever actually may be the best interpretation of these passages, it is at least clear how a literalistic reading could give one the ideas that Schweitzer (and others) set forth. From this perspective, Jesus' radical demands, such as are found in the Sermon on the Mount, were seen as emergency measures, "interim ethics," Schweitzer called them, for the brief interval yet

remaining. Schweitzer also rejected the reigning liberal Protestant view that the Kingdom of God was a spiritual sovereignty in the human heart and that through striving men could "build" the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, he countered, in no sense did Jesus view the Kingdom as a present reality in his lifetime. He fully expected that only God could introduce it and that he would do so dramatically in the very near future. For Schweitzer and colleagues, this was the most non-dogmatic, consistent reading of the New Testament text. Whether in agreement or in mockery, his view has since been dubbed "consistent eschatology", and while some aspects of his synthesis have been severely challenged in the twentieth century, it has in other ways remained what a recent reviewer called "one of the paradigmatic convictions of New Testament scholarship." 23

Schweitzer's first challenge came from C. H. Dodd and his "British school" with their notion of "realized eschatology", a modern dress-up of Augustine's view that with the resurrection of Christ and the Pentecost, the promised Kingdom had come, that in a sense, the "millennium" was already upon them. Later, Rudolph

Bultmann developed "existential eschatology." He admitted the pervasive apocalypticism Schweitzer had discerned in Jesus' message but argued that such sayings should be reinterpreted as signifying the suprahistorical transcendent realm of God. By the second half of the twentieth century, form and source critics were questioning whether most of the "coming son of Man" sayings were authentic words of Jesus. The sayings were felt to be the later interpolations of the apostles and their followers rather than the Savior's own words properly preserved.  

Furthermore, the "kingdom of God is at hand" statements were again viewed in terms of present, overall sovereignty more often than as a metaphor for the end of time, though it became popular to include both components in reconstructing the message of the historical Jesus.  

24Once again we must remind ourselves of the assumptions at work. Since the end did not occur in the first century nor has it yet occurred, if a scholar does not believe that Jesus could have been mistaken about eschatological events (as Schweitzer did), he is prone to ascribe such views to the disciples. When it is remembered that the earliest Christians were Jews and that apocalyptic modes of thought were present in that era, then it easy to see them writing their own notions back into the mouth of Jesus. Other critics, approaching the text less literally, provided for an infinitude of explanations that allow the words to be Jesus', but argue for a more transcendent interpretation.  

Most scholars, however, agree that at least among Jesus' followers, particularly his early Jewish converts, apocalypticism was common.26 As James Dunn, a prominent British scholar of the New Testament put it, "Christianity began as an apocalyptic sect within Judaism."27 And Howard Clark Kee recently argued that what "we have in Mark is the foundation document of an apocalyptic Christian sect."28 Apocalyptic literature from the Second Temple Period (540 B.C.-70 A.D.) bequeathed to the Jews of Palestine a sense of the decisive culmination of history, the restoration of Israel, the resurrection of Jewish dead, an imminent messianic age of peace variously ranging from several hundred to a thousand years, a final judgment, and a glorious age to come. Such ideas had become so pervasive in Palestine by the first century A.D. that they constituted the "common currency in the Judaism of Jesus'  


day.\textsuperscript{29} The quintessentially Christian notion of Jesus' resurrection, for example, was possible precisely because Persian ideas mediated primarily through apocalyptic literature had earlier introduced the idea of bodily resurrection into the thought world of Palestinian Judaism.\textsuperscript{30} Ernst Kasemann went so far as to conclude that "apocalyptic is the mother of Christian theology."\textsuperscript{31}

Yet, the point must not be overstated. Dunn discerns four different strands in the rope of early Christianity, only one of which is called "apocalyptic Christianity."\textsuperscript{32} For example, he distinguishes the Hellenistic Christianity of the Corinthian community from the apocalyptic Christianity of the Thessalonians. The


\textsuperscript{32}Dunn, \textit{Unity and Diversity in the New Testament}.
latter combined a definite sense of imminent expectation with moral earnestness, compared to the libertinism of certain Corinthian Christians who felt that the eschaton was present in the spiritual giftedness of their gatherings and had to be convinced that there would indeed be a future resurrection. Yet Dunn, himself, argues that on the whole, "there can no disputing the fact that apocalyptic had an integral part in first-century Christianity." Theologian Jurgen Moltmann made clear that eschatology is not simply one of several competing divisions of theology, but that it "is the necessary framework and motivating force of all theology." In fact the question emerges "to what extent is apocalyptic integral to Christianity so that without it Christianity becomes something qualitatively other than that movement which began in Palestine nineteen and half centuries ago?" As will be seen, it is precisely that same question which must likewise be put to Mormonism.


34 Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, pp. 335, 310.

A recent introduction to the New Testament which acknowledges this pervasiveness in its overall approach is Christopher Rowland, Christian Origins: From Messianic Movement to Christian Religion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985).

35 It must be done, however, with John Collins's important qualifier in mind: "Since Christianity in its earliest phase (pre-70 C.E.) did not produce apocalypses, it can be called an apocalyptic movement only in an
Another theme common in the study of early Christianity is the "delay of the Parousia." This theory accepts the Schweitzerian thesis at least for Paul and his followers, if not for Jesus himself, and argues that when the end did not come, the Catholic Church was born. In other words, by the second century, the "delay" was obvious and institutionalization had set in. A church hierarchy was established, creeds were formalized, and a canon was fixed. John Gager has applied cognitive dissonance theory to early Christianity and argues that the delay intensified a sense of "mission," as Christians subconsciously sought to convince themselves, through successfully converting others, that the movement was right after all. Following Leon Festinger in particular, he illustrates how disconfirmation (of prophecy regarding a "this generation" conclusion to history) did not necessarily result in discreditation.\(^{36}\)

As early Catholicism emerged in the second century, extended sense, insofar as it shares the apocalyptic worldview." Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination, p. 206.

apocalyptic issues and enclaves were temporarily overshadowed by the debate with Gnosticism. And yet, in the very midst of this reaction against Gnosticism, "Christian millenarianism," as a particular subset of apocalypticism, developed. It was, to be sure, an outgrowth and an extension of the apocalypticism of various early Christian communities, but it elaborated the idea of an interim golden age of a thousand years duration which would precede the final, cosmic transformation. In reality, Revelation 20, is the only place in the New Testament where the "thousand years" are actually mentioned. Since this pivotal passage has influenced eschatological discussion for nearly two millennia, however, it behooves us to quote it here in full:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither has received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (v. 4-6)

There are, of course, other verses which promise "a new heaven and a new earth" and numerous passages which describe the restored glory of Israel. While all these
would later be used by Christian eschatologists to refer to "the millennium," it should here be recognized that from the beginning it has been an exercise in interpretation and elaboration. Also known as chiliasm, from the Greek root for "thousand," the streams that flowed together to make this second-century river date back to the intertestamental period and before. During that time, Diaspora Jewish thought was influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism as well as Babylonian astrology to divide history into seven millennia under the seven planets. In the late second century, Christian fathers such as Papias, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus saw in this "Cosmic Week" schema a recapitulation of the creation account in Genesis. After six thousand years of existence, a millennial "day" of the rest, or "Sabbath of Creation," as it would later be called, could be expected. Moreover, these early fathers explicitly linked the return of Christ in glory (Parousia) to the inauguration of that "millennium," thus giving a particularly Christian twist to what was by then a common notion among Jews of Syria and Asia Minor.37

As has been noted, the second century also witnessed the intensification among Christians of another Jewish

concept—the millennium as terrestrial paradise. Irenaeus, in his famous polemic, Against Heresies, described the beauties and bounties of the millennium in a very materialistic fashion. His apparent purpose was to challenge the pronouncedly neo-Platonic Gnostics for whom matter was evil and only spirit and spiritual experience were of value. These Christian Gnostics held to a realized eschatology in which the Kingdom of God was an interiorized, present possession of the believer. In terms similar to the contemporary Jewish Apocalypse of Baruch and 4 Ezra which envisioned a millennium of such material abundance that a thousand grapes would grow on every vine, Irenaeus countered Gnostic teaching with the idea that the Kingdom would be future, physical, and terrestrial. Such views can be discovered in the Asia Minor writings of Papias, as well as in the Latin discourses of Justin Martyr. With the passing of the Gnostic controversy, however, the doctrine of an earthly millennium became uncongenial, particularly in the East where the tendency was to take it as a metaphor for heaven.


39Of related interest, though pursuing an eschatological debate among modern Evangelicals, is Thomas D. Lea, "A Survey of the Doctrine of the Return of
Before leaving the second century, mention must be made of the Montanist movement. Montanism originated in the second half of the century in Asia Minor and was led by a former priest, Montanus, and two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla. They inveighed against the loss of the apostolic gifts of the spirit and claimed that through them the Holy Ghost was speaking afresh. Not only were the Montanists charismatics; they were also chiliasts. They believed the end to be near and that the New Jerusalem would soon descend in their neighborhood where they would rule and reign with Christ during the millennium. Though declared a heresy and excoriated by Catholic ecclesiastics, Montanism represented that apocalyptic blend of charisma and chiliasm which had existed in the first century and which would reappear at various times and in various places ever there after.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{40}Most twentieth century scholarship on the Montanists has been produced in French and German. Effective, brief distillations of this European scholarship can be found in W. H. C. Frend, \textit{The Rise of Christianity} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); and Jaroslav Pelikan, \textit{The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, 100-600} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971). The latest comprehensive treatment in English is B. W. Goree, \"The Cultural Bases of Montanism\" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1980).

Recently, Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars have pursued the early years with new vigor and have dealt with the Montanists in passing. Such works include Paul Elbert, ed., \textit{Essays on Apostolic Themes} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985); and Stanley M. Burgess, \textit{The Spirit & the Church: Antiquity} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984).
As its very name suggests, apocalyptic presumes a belief in additional revelation, by which, among other things, the apocalypticist is convinced that the end has truly come. Early apocalypticists such as the Montanists would have had little trouble understanding young Joseph Smith, who claimed angelic ministrations and heavenly visions disclosing the imminent eschaton.

Though the nascent Catholic church had made its dominant view clear, apocalypticism was never fully extinguished in the next century. For one thing, persecution is the incubator for apocalypticism, and not until the fourth century when, beginning with the conversion of Constantine and ending with the decree of Theodosius, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, did intermittent persecution cease. By the end of that century, when Jerome and Augustine were alive, Christianity was something very different from its original situation as an apocalyptic sect of Palestinian Judaism. Christianity was now powerful, and it represented the status quo. Its numbers and influence were such that the church actually began to persecute its erstwhile persecutors. A consistency throughout the history of apocalypticism is that it almost never

Also helpful as a summary of beliefs about the "kingdom of God," which is germane to the whole debate over proper Biblical eschatology is Wendell Willis, ed. The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987).
attracts the satisfied in society. By very definition, apocalypticism portrays the status quo as intolerably corrupt and evil, and proclaims its imminent overthrow. Thus, it is no surprise that as one of his many contributions Augustine became the great architect of the anti-apocalyptic or amillennial perspective that would prevail in Western Christianity till the time of the Reformation. Augustine taught that with the establishment of the church, the Kingdom of God had come, and that the millennium, as a metaphor for the felicitous reign of the church, was coterminous with its history. Ironically, Augustinian eschatology amounted to an ecclesiastical version of the Gnostic notions his predecessor presbyters had been combatting two hundred years earlier. An even closer parallel is the "realized eschatology" that Dodd and followers would later propound in opposition to Schweitzer. Of course, one could hardly expect belief in a terrestrial, political millennium from the man who produced the City of God in an effort to disabuse both pagan and Christian of the idea that the "City of God" and the "City of Man" could ever mingle successfully.

In 431, the Council of Ephesus ruled that belief in a paradisiacal millennium was superstition, and apocalypticism went underground. But if it went underground, it had, as various scholars have
demonstrated, a thriving existence in the Middle Ages. As might be expected, apocalypticism was often the vehicle for prophetic excoriation of corruption in the church. The Avignon captivity in the 1300s and the Great Schism which followed in which there were simultaneously two, and for a while three popes, could hardly have failed to engender apocalyptic speculations that the antichrist was reigning supreme and that the end surely was near.

It was during this time, however, far away from the French-Italian rivalries of the period, that apocalyptic tradition was first put into the service of political revolution. Jan Huss, a powerful preacher in Prague, was influenced by Wycliffe to call for restriction of papal jurisdiction and various other reforms. Summoned to council and ultimately burned as a heretic, his death only served to spur on Bohemians already exercised by the issues of single-kind Eucharist and vernacular preaching. Peasants met on hilltops, which they called "Tabor" after the Mount of Transfiguration, in hopes that their activities might signal the transfiguration or reform of

the church. In Prague, radical elements overthrew the conservative city government and "Hussitism" began. The "Taborites" were socio-economically disadvantaged individuals who abandoned the old feudal arrangements and came together at Tabor to pool their goods and inaugurate a more popularly-based church. Soon their conviction that mankind was ripe for destruction and that they were the saving remnant, a common apocalyptic motif, led them to take the cleansing of society into their own hands. For a while, Taborites allied with Prague Hussites, but the unity was always fragile and soon there were divisions between them. The promised end predicted for 1420 came and went without success, and produced disillusionment and schism. By mid-century the Hussite movement, particularly the Taborite faction, had dwindled to a faithful few.42

During the 1500s, in the wake of the Reformation, apocalypticism emerged widely into the light of day. While most have tended to emphasize the flowering of this phenomenon in seventeenth-century England, Robin Barnes has recently demonstrated that in sixteenth-century Germany "a level of apocalyptic expectation that finds

few parallels in Western history" is discernible.\textsuperscript{43} This included not only those of the "radical reformation," but also literate lay burghers, classically trained professors, and educated Lutheran pastors.\textsuperscript{44} Of course, scholars have long recognized the apocalyptic aspects of Anabaptism.\textsuperscript{45} Marxist historians would make connections between the radical Anabaptists of the sixteenth-century and the Taborites of the fifteenth, seeing both as popular and proto-communistic. These characteristics, however, have more to do with


apocalypticism than communism. Their populism was primarily manifest through their anticlericalism, long recognized as a hallmark of apocalypticism, and their communal arrangements reflect a Biblicist motivation as much as they do an incipient rebellion of the proletariat. \(^{46}\) It is worth noting that these same features continually reappear in popular Christianity and certainly are discernible in the Latter-day Saints. \(^ {47}\)

Beginning late in the sixteenth century and with increasing intensity in the seventeenth, a mood of eschatological expectancy is also apparent in England. \(^ {48}\)


On anticlericalism, see Jose Sanchez, *Anticlericalism: A Brief History* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972); and Stayer, "The Anabaptists."


It is during this very period that a specifically "millenarian" type of apocalypticism received a new birth. When it became apparent that the Reformation was not immediately going to inaugurate the end of the world and Judgment day, later Tudor, as well as Lutheran, divines began to emphasize an interim golden age—the "latter day glory," as it was called—between the fall of Antichrist and Jesus' return to Judgment. Eventually, the traditional reading of the "thousand years" mentioned in Revelation 20 as having commenced with the conversion of Constantine gave way to a futurist interpretation which equated it with the "latter day glory." By the 1640s, millennial eschatology had received full-blown exposition in the writings of Cambridge don, Joseph Mede, and in German encyclopaedist Johann Alsted's *The Beloved City* which had spread widely among the literate population.49 As millenarianism was popularized, it took on a particularly apocalyptic character. The "Civil War sects" appeared bent on ushering in Christ's millennial kingdom—the literal and terrestrial "fifth monarchy"

prophesied in the Book of Daniel.\textsuperscript{50}

It seems to be a pattern in Christian history that periods of unusually abrupt change, including dramatic strides forward in religious reformation or renewal, almost always arouse the level of anticipation on the part of some that this time the reforming work will be carried through to its glorious conclusion and that the end of human history must be imminent. The prophecies and portents, therefore, are read accordingly. Moreover, the dream of the millennium provides a marvelous antidote to anxiety in times of great upheaval. Bernard Capp's summary of its appeal in mid-seventeenth century England is equally applicable in other times and places, including the antebellum America into which Mormonism was born:

At a popular level, the millennium seems to have meant a future world freed from the insecurity of the seventeenth century. Wars would cease. Crops would be gathered without the age-old fear of harvest failure and famine. The worker alone, liberated from taxes, tithes, and rent, would benefit from his


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labour. Family life would be transformed by the assurance of perfect health and long life. Fears that a large family meant inevitable poverty disappeared with the guarantee of plenty in a land of milk and honey. In a period of recession, fighting, and confusion, such promises had an obvious appeal...."t was more comprehensible than the traditional picture of heaven itself and far more attractive.\textsuperscript{51}

Millenarianism did not die out with the Restoration. "Historians and literary scholars involved with the late Renaissance and the seventeenth century have sometimes dealt with the Millennium," writes Paul Korshin, "as if it were a specialty of these chronological periods whose popularity temporarily ceased in the early eighteenth century, the age of reason and of classical revival." In fact, he argues, "millennial speculation never ebbs seriously at any time during the period [1660-1750]."\textsuperscript{52}

Only in the past generation has it been realized how

\textsuperscript{51}Capp, "Popular Millenarianism," p. 189.

fully Isaac Newton, for example, was involved in prophetic study. Margaret Jacob has shown that other late seventeenth-century men of science and letters were equally interested in the end times and that "academic millenialism" almost became a pseudo science. Beyond scientific interest in eschatology, the final third of the seventeenth century also witnessed widespread clerical involvement in deciphering the prophetic calendar, especially among Latitudinarian bishops.

Above all, however, there was continuity of millenarian apocalypticism at the popular level. As Hillel Schwartz put it in his sweeping study of the French Prophets, historians have been accustomed to regarding "the Restoration as a tollbooth in English

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history beyond which earlier millenarian attitudes could not pass." In actuality, "an entire millenarian way of life flourished in England between 1660 and 1740," and the French Prophets were not the source but merely "the sign of its vitality."\textsuperscript{56} David Lovejoy and Philip Gura have recently demonstrated that the same could be said of America.\textsuperscript{57}

As has been the case from antiquity, the association between apocalypticism and inspiration is particularly noticeable. Korshin discovered that "this quality of enthusiastic religion is intimately associated, in the early eighteenth century, with millenarianism."\textsuperscript{58} Actually, at the popular level, it had been so throughout Christian history.\textsuperscript{59} For those in quest of certainty, few sources could be more authoritative than direct revelation from God. Yet inspiration, whether it came to


\textsuperscript{58}Korshin, "Queuing and Waiting," p. 258.

the Camisard prophets in London or to millenarian mystics in Pennsylvania, was no more warmly received by the established religion of the day than had been the apocalyptic prophets of Judaism or the Montanists of early Christianity. In his *Tale of a Tub*, Swift saw millenarianism and enthusiasm as inseparably connected, and this satire, along with the subsequent activities of the French Prophets in England, helped push the Anglican church in the early decades of the eighteenth century to increasingly identify millenarianism with madness and step away from its own, albeit more academic, eschatological interests.

Nonetheless, it must be remembered that "as the notion of the apocalypse diminishes in immediacy for the established church, it grows in importance for minority religions and in popular literature."60 Thus between the time of the Civil War sectarianists and the Methodists, New Lights, and Shakers a century later, there is a noticeable continuity along the religious periphery of both apocalyptic impulse and charismatic performance. In his recent study of spirit possession and popular religion, Clarke Garrett provides a near global perspective on the phenomenon:

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...the eighteenth century witnessed possibly the greatest extent and diversity of episodes of spirit possession since the early Church. Prophecy, visions, and ecstatic trances visited the Jews and Moslems of southeastern Europe, and among the French Jansenists the ecstacies known as the Convulsionaries introduced a remarkable and bizarre repertory of behaviors, which despite persecution, persisted through most of the century. These movements were part of a general religious awakening that spread through much of continental Europe north of the Alps between the late seventeenth century and the 1740s. It affected all of the British Isles and England's American colonies as well....The intensity of religicus experience persuaded some that God was inaugurating the promised time of cultural innovation....61

How could these "showers of grace" not suggest that the "latter day glory" had either arrived or was imminent? Even the very theology of revival complemented a millennialist perspective. The notion of the dramatic rebirth of the individual went hand in hand with the idea of the rebirth of the cosmos. Individual conversion paralleled pending cosmic salvation. Either on a micro- or macrocosmic level, then, the focus was on regeneration and renewal. As Jerald Brauer expressed it, "Millennialism is but the individual's conversion writ large."62

61 Clarke Garrett, Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Camisards to the Shakers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 10-11. In some ways, the standard treatment of this phenomenon is still, though it is marred by the author's orthodox bias against the legitimacy of special, personal inspiration.

Yet, if the spiritual awakenings of the first half of the eighteenth century assimilated millennialist ideology, they did so by transforming it. Throughout history, when hope for apocalyptic transformation seems diminishes, the energy often turns inward toward pietism, even quietism. Such was the case with post-Muenster Anabaptists, Lutheran pietists after the holocaust of the Thirty Years War, and pacified Fifth Monarchists. Quakers turned from expectations of an imminent apocalypse to emphasis on the "inner light," and French Prophets and Methodists found in personal sanctification a way to harness previous millennial enthusiasms. With the "evangelical revival" that spanned the Atlantic ocean, explains Schwartz, "the social functions of prophecy were once again taken over by charismatic preaching, miracles were replaced by the marvel of the conversion process itself, and millennial fervor was directed toward the universal spread of religion which must precede the Kingdom."\(^63\) The pietist-evangelical revival discussed above tended to favor a spiritualized, rather than an apocalyptic millennialism. Thus, while this chapter focuses on apocalyptic groups, it is important to acknowledge that from the beginning the prevailing eschatology of evangelicalism, including

\(^{63}\) Schwartz, *The French Prophets*, p. 287.
America's version of this transatlantic phenomenon, the Great Awakening, has been a kind of realized or "being realized" eschatology.  

If, then, the intermittent revivals throughout this era generated hope for both an immanent and an imminent millennium, not all shared identical views of how the Kingdom would come or what it would be like.  Though the terms, "premillennialism" and "postmillennialism" would not enter theological vocabulary until the nineteenth century, their handiness in distinguishing the two basic divisions in Christian eschatological thought has caused scholars to anachronistically invoke them when describing millennialism in almost any age.  

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65 Brauer's comment is that "revivalism and millenarianism combined at the time of the Great Awakening in the colonies and proceeded to dominate the religious scene in the United States in a way unmatched either in England or on the Continent." Brauer, "Revivalism and Millenarianism in America," p. 147.
Since this practice is particularly noticeable for the eighteenth century onward, it is necessary to pause and analyze these two rival visions of the future as they eventually come to be developed.

In his book, *The Meaning of the Millennium*, Robert G. Clouse points out that many scholars go no further than the dictionary definition of these two major typologies, or their commonly used synonyms, "millenarianism" and "millennialism." This is unfortunate, warns Clouse, for "the distinctions involve a great deal more than the time of Christ's return. The kingdom expected by the premillennialist is quite different from the kingdom anticipated by the postmillennialist, not only with respect to the time and manner in which it will be established but also in regard to its nature and the way Christ will exercise control over it." Historically, both groups have maintained that Christ personally would return to the earth, and both associated with that return a resurrection and a day

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66 As in many fields, especially interdisciplinary ones like millenial studies, there is an unfortunate lack of consensus on nomenclature. Some historians have popularized a distinction between the terms "millennialism" and "millenarianism" which makes "millennialism" interchangeable with the more cumbersome postmillennialism and "millenarianism" synonymous with premillennialism. I will follow this convention from this point on.

of judgment. As the prefix implies, however, the postmillennialists felt that these events would conclude the millennium, that is, that there would be only one general resurrection of all mankind and one Day of Judgment, and that both would follow immediately upon Christ's return to earth at the end of the thousand years. On the other hand, the millenarians believed that there would be two physical resurrections and two judgments. The first resurrection would occur at the time of Christ's premillennial advent and would involve only the faithful dead. The rest of humanity would come forth after the millennium as the second resurrection. Like their millennialist counterparts, millenarians believed that the Day of Judgment on which individuals would be assigned their eternal state would occur after the millennium, but they also felt that there would be a kind of preliminary judgment (primarily the destruction of the wicked) that would accompany the second advent before the millennium.

Shifting from the events surrounding it to the nature of the millennium itself and how Christ will exercise control over it, other important differences are noticeable. Perhaps the most helpful distinction to make at the outset is hermeneutical. In his study of early nineteenth-century Calvinist theology, George Marsden reports that "in the writings of the day [postmillennialism] was often designated 'Spiritualist'
because its advocates believed that the promised Kingdom of Christ would be manifested in the reign of the Holy Spirit over the hearts of his people" rather than in some material way.68 On the other hand, literal interpretation of prophetic passages, in Ernest Sandeen's words, "was the foundation stone of millenarian theology."69 Along these lines, W. H. Oliver's summary is useful: "As a general rule literalists stressed the discontinuities between the mundane world and the future, and allegorists the continuities, in respect of both the means of change and the result of change."70

This distinction is plainly manifest in their differing perceptions of the millennial age. For the millenarian, the lamb really would lie down with the lion, immortal beings really would mingle freely with mortals, and Christ indeed would reign personally over the earth from some terrestrial capital. To all of these prophetic promises the millenialists gave a


70 Oliver, Prophets and Millenialists, pp. 18-19.
spiritualized interpretation. The scene of the lamb and the lion was just a pastoral metaphor to describe an age of peace and cooperation; the resurrection was the process of burying the old sinful self and "rising" to a new spiritual life in Christ; and it was Christ's spirit, not his body (if indeed they felt he still had one!) that would do the reigning during the millennium. As Oliver remarks, "The pre-millennialists are clearly closer to the meaning of the texts both accepted...Pre-millennialism is the basic stance; postmillennialism a compromise in the form of a metaphor."\textsuperscript{71} Or, to put it another way, premillennialism is much closer to apocalypticism. In fact, it amounts to a Christian subset of the same.

Not surprisingly, the two schools of thought also maintained differing expectations for the salvation of humanity. For the postmillennialists, the thousand years represented the culmination of the gradual Christianization of the entire world and would be achieved largely through successful evangelists. The premillennialists, on the other hand, could be just as active in missionary work, but merely hoped to convert a relative handful before Christ personally came to purge the earth and inaugurate the millennium. Other differences between the two groups could be added, but

\textsuperscript{71}Oliver, *Prophets and Millenialists*, p. 21.

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most reflect their contrasting scriptural hermeneutics.

In the eighteenth century, the distinctions elaborated above were mere trajectories heading in different directions and make an ill-fitting coat in which to clothe the thought of the day.\textsuperscript{72} Thus, to call Jonathan Edwards the "father of American postmillennialism" as C. C. Goen did years ago is to speak anachronistically. When Edwards sought to interpret the significance of what was happening around him, millennialism provided an ideological framework through which he could explain the history of redemption both personal and cosmic, but he did not do so in the same way that Charles Finney would a century later. Nor was he as eschatologically innovative as he is sometimes portrayed. For example, his idea that America, and New England in particular, were the "most likely" place for God to begin his latter-day work only recapitulated what numerous earlier eschatologues had done. From Montanus in Phrygia to Savanorola in Florence, and from Aspinwall

in England to Sam Sewell and Cotton Mather in America in the preceding century, all saw their own locale as the site for history's climax. As for Edwards's "fathering" American postmillennialism, John F. Wilson has recently challenged that old chestnut.\textsuperscript{73}

Postmillennialism aside, the Great Awakening did generate some apocalyptic expectation, as well as a separatist impulse which usually accompanies periods of religious renewal. Regarding the latter, the New Birth has often resulted in the New Church and hope for the New Age.\textsuperscript{74} When the Spirit moves one to conversion it is only another step for it to move him to schism with likeminded regenerates, and when an individual takes the awesome step of breaking away from the establishment, religious or otherwise, it is tempting to conclude that the New Heaven and New Earth must surely be imminent.

Nor did such scenarios play themselves out after midcentury. If all the colonies are taken into account, the latest research suggests that "awakenings" continued unabated for another hundred years. Leonard Sweet, for


example, in his exhaustive survey of recent studies on American evangelicalism concludes that "what has typically been periodized into the First and Second Great Awakenings may more properly be seen as part of the same phenomenon."\textsuperscript{75} Baptist and Methodist revivals extended the awakenings across time and space throughout the remainder of the century, and Stephen Marini details a particularly significant revival in rural New England called the "New Light Stir" which coincided with the years of the American Revolution and which gave impetus to the separatist impulse resulting in the formation of the Freewill Baptists, Universalists, and Shakers.\textsuperscript{76} Less theological concerns also played their part in shaping millennial ideologies. As in past centuries, natural and social disasters were significant stimuli. Michael Barkun has written extensively on the dialectic

\textsuperscript{75}Sweet, "The Evangelical Tradition in America," p. 12. One of the notions that has been challenged in the past generation is the old "ice age" theory of post-Revolutionary Protestantism. See Douglas H. Sweet, "Church Vitality and the American Revolution: Historiographical Consensus and Thoughts Towards a New Perspective," \textit{Church History} 45 (Sept 1976): 341-357.

between disaster and the millennium. A paragraph from his most recent book illustrates the connection he sees:

In times of high collective stress, deviant belief systems confront a markedly more sympathetic audience. Their official adversaries having been at least partially discredited, these maverick ideologies benefit from a temporarily open marketplace of ideas. Once ignored, scorned, or suppressed, they now may be perceived in a new and favorable light...because the alternatives appear to possess a greater ability to address the crisis of meaning. They assert moral order where none may appear to exist, typically by claiming access to previously untapped sources of power, identified with some body of hidden knowledge, and often promulgated by a charismatic figure. This knowledge purports to contain principles for the classification of phenomena into good and evil, pure and impure. The world becomes a Manichean battleground upon which cosmic forces contend. The outcome of the struggle is to be a millennium, in which the corrupt existing order will be replaced by a new and flawless form of social organization.

While millennialists also accommodated disasters through an "afflictive model of progress," Barkun's comments are especially applicable to apocalyptic groups. And though an intellectually sophisticated group of Biblical commentators tending toward premillennialist eschatology had existed since the time of the Reformation, apocalypticism more commonly went hand in hand with the


78Barkun, Crucible of the Millennium, p. 148.

79Davidson works explicates this model in his writings mentioned in note #57.

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kind of popular prophetism alluded to above. For the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this phenomena has been thoroughly traced in the recent works of J. F. C. Harrison and W. H. Oliver on English popular religion, Clarke Garrett on the Shakers, James Hopkins on the Southcottians, G.A. Rawlyk on the Nova Scotian New Lights, and Stephen Marini on the radical evangelicals of rural New England. 80

Let us briefly consider the latter group. Marini's subjects lived during the American Revolution, and frequently made sense out of that crisis through apocalypticism. Long ago, Shirley J. Case found this to be such a common occurrence, that he called it "a phase of wartime thinking." 81 Furthermore, as Marini points out, they endured the inevitable cultural fragmentation that accompanies migration to new settlements. The established Congregational church, for example, had been slow and uneven in its efforts to reach out to the settlers. All these factors combined to create the "open


marketplace of ideas" that allowed local millenarian prophets to arise and compel a following. "Above all," remarks Marini, "the rural revivalists seized on millennialism and perfectionism as vehicles of persuasion." In contrast to the genteel postmillennialism of an Ezra Stiles, for example, the radical evangelicals "held to the notion that war confirmed human sinfulness and depravity and that the revival itself signaled the speedy end of history and the imminent establishment of the otherworldly kingdom of the new Jerusalem."\(^82\)

As only two examples, we shall consider Joseph Meacham and the New Lights of New Lebanon, New York, and Nathaniel Wood and the New Israelites of Middletown, Vermont. Meacham had Baptist origins but found himself dissatisfied with the infighting among "the Brethren." In time, he migrated to New Lebanon and was caught up in the revival of 1779. Under his leadership, New Lighters held protracted meetings in which tongues, visions, and prophecy were prominent gifts, all of which pointed to the imminent millennium. As one participant remembered it, the charismatics "testified that the latter day of glory was near at hand, and that Christ would shortly set

\(^{82}\)Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England*, p. 46.
up his kingdom on earth and make an end of sin."83 When
the Second Coming did not immediately occur,
disappointment set in. Soon, however, Meacham found
among the Shaker community of Niskeyuna what he had been
seeking. Convinced by their spiritual giftedness and
realized eschatology that they were truly the "people of
God" on earth and that the millennial kingdom had already
been ushered in, he was converted and dubbed Mother Ann's
"first born in America." After her death, he played a
major role in institutionalizing the fledgling faith.84

Nathaniel Wood and family, of Separate
Congregationalist background, had migrated to Middletown,
Vermont and became prominent citizens. In the 1780s,

83Cit. in Marini, Radical Sects of Revolutionary New
England, p. 52.

84An early detailed account of Meacham's life is
Calvin Green, "Biographical Account of the Life,
Character, and Ministry of Father Joseph Meacham," ed.
Theodore E. Johnson, Shaker Quarterly 10
Secondary accounts can be found in Garrett, Spirit
Possession and Popular Religion; Marini, Radical Sects of
Revolutionary New England; Lawrence Foster, Religion and
Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the
Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press,
1981); and Edward Deming Andrews, The People Called

A similar migration from adventist anticipation to
disappointment to eschatological reorientation along
"realized" lines has been documented for certain
Millerites who, in the wake of the Great Disappointment,
also joined the Shakers in the 1840s. See Lawrence
Foster, "Had Prophecy Failed? Contrasting Perspectives of
the Millerites and Shakers," in The Disappointed:
Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century,
ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler,
however, Wood broke away to found his own conventicle. He claimed that his group constituted the "modern Israelites or Jews, who were under the special guardianship of the Almighty while the Gentiles—all who were opposed to them—would suffer from their hostility." They enjoyed the gifts of the spirit, including prophecy, and predicted dire judgments upon the wicked. By the late 1790s, the group embraced an individual whose gift was the use of a divining rod to discover both treasure and truth. This combination of folk magic, popular prophetism, and apocalypticism eventuated in a divining rod prophecy that on a certain date the unbelievers would be slain and the Woodites would inherit the region as the millennium commenced. When the promised Parousia did not occur, the group was "warned out" of town and eventually settled in New York.  

In her study of millennial themes in late eighteenth-century American thought, Ruth Bloch noticed what had been true since the days of the Maccabees, that

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85 The quoted portion is from Marini, Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England. p. 54. Rutland County, Vermont tradition had it that the parents of Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith, the two principals in organizing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, were involved with this group, at least during their "rodsmen" phase. The evidence for and against this is carefully analyzed in D. Michael Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View (Salt Lake: Signature, 1987), pp. 30-35, 84-97. Discussion of other charismatic millenarians in Vermont can be found in Donal Ward, "Religious Enthusiasm in Vermont, 1761-1847," (Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame University, 1980).
apocalypticism was also an effective tool with which to condemn the entrenched elites. "The various efforts to construct a premillennial interpretation of prophecy," remarks Bloch, "represented a kind of rebellion against religious intellectualism." Growing out of the pamphlet war which polarized eschatological camps in the 1790s was a "combative premillennialism" which, she explains, "had less to do with conflicts between political conservatives and progressives, pessimists and optimists, fatalists and activists, than with tensions between the New England theological elite and several forms of popular religious dissent." The disparity was basically one of education and status. "Although authors of the premillennial works tended to be fairly well educated themselves, these Universalist and Baptist ministers spoke for relatively unlettered constituencies, and the popular religious literature that so often assumed a premillennial Second Coming similarly appealed to the ideas of an untutored public." Thus, as pre- and postmillennialists developed into "distinct, self-conscious groups," their competing eschatologies belied "social as well as theological origins, and may even have had underlying political significance."  


87Ruth H. Bloch, Visionary Republic, pp. 132, 143.
Though long associated with apocalypticism, anticlericalism was also being fueled by the popular deism of Ethan Allen, Thomas Paine, and Elihu Palmer, and was therefore part of a broader cultural transition that transcended folk millenarianism. As the Enlightenment was democratized, it was the clergy, not Christianity that was really being challenged. "Once ordinary people found that they could change traditional religion as completely as they were changing traditional politics," remarked Gordon Wood, "they had no need for deism or infidelity."

For the period immediately following the French Revolution, the reactionary premillennialism of francophobic Federalists has tended to obscure notice of the manner in which popular Republican millenarianism served as a democratic critique of traditional society. Not all citizens of the new Republic felt that anti-Christian conduct on the continent had made "deist" and "democrat" synonymous. Rather, as Nathan Hatch has argued, when ordinary people married the Enlightenment ideals of civil and religious liberty to their eschatology, a popular millenarianism resulted which 'resisted traditional norms, particularly the hegemony of elites, insisted that freedom of thought be extended to those outside of power structures, and identified

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aspirations of common folk with the will of God.\textsuperscript{89} The results created a critically important precondition for the birth of Mormonism. In the words of Gordon Wood:

\begin{quote}
The disintegration of older structures of authority released torrents of popular religiosity into public life. Visions, dreams, prophesying, and new emotion-soaked religious seekings acquired a validity they had not earlier possessed. The evangelical pietism of ordinary people, sanctioned by the democratic revolution of these years, had come to affect the character of American culture in ways it had not at the time of the Revolution. It now became increasingly difficult for enlightened gentlemen to publicly dismiss religious enthusiasm as simply the superstitious fanaticism of the illiterate and lowborn.\textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, ordinary Americans had become more sophisticated. Touched by the democratization of Rationalism, and especially by the popularization of Scottish Common Sense Realism, they had acquired "their own small shrewdness and their own literal-minded standards of proof." Yet this intellectual self-confidence, this belief in the

\textsuperscript{89}Hatch, "Millennialism and Popular Religion," p. 130. As characteristics of this popular religious milieu of the early Republic, on p. 120, Hatch cites "1) a pervasive revolt against history characteristic of the Enlightenment [i.e., a reading of post-Apostolic Christian history as one long tale of sordid corruption as in Sidney Mead's notion of "historylessness"]; 2) a common sense rationality that rejected the mysterious and complicated and instead appealed to objects of empirical science; and 3) a commitment to democratic forms of social organization."

\textsuperscript{90}Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," p. 368.
perspicuity of truth for the individual freed from the "traditions of men," only amplified the cacophony of competing voices. 91 Richard McNemar, onetime colleague of Barton Stone and leading figure in the Kentucky Revival, put it thus:

Ten thousand Reformers like so many moles
Have plowed all the Bible and cut it [in] holes
And each has his church at the end of his trace
Built up as he thinks of the subjects of grace. 92

No wonder Joseph Smith, and countless other ante-bellum Americans, exclaimed, "In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are


92 Cit. in Hatch, "Sola Scriptura," p. 73.
they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" Retiring to a grove of trees near his Palmyra, New York farm house, Smith petitioned the Almighty for guidance. The resulting theophany inaugurated a decade of divine dispensations that culminated in 1830 with the publication of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of the Church of Christ. For frustrated seekers, part of the appeal of Mormonism was its claims to divine authority. Just as McNemar eventually found the certainty he sought in the revelatory nature of Shakerism, so, too, did the restoration of apostles, prophets, and ancient priesthood power give Mormon converts an authoritative resolution to the religious wranglings of the age. Only an individual or individuals divinely empowered to settle doctrinal

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94 Mormons bore this title until 1834, when the High Council—the Church's "board of directors" at that time—voted to name it the "Church of the Latter Day Saints." Four years later, in 1838, a revelation decreed: "thus shall my church be called in the last days, viz, The church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." *Elders' Journal* 1 (August 1838): 52.

The earliest years of Mormonism, especially the foundational experiences of Joseph Smith, are best detailed in Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

disputes, a sort of "supreme court of Christianity," could end the confusion. As Methodist restorationer James O'Kelley recognized, if such an authoritative spokesman for God existed on earth, "he must be a Prophet or Apostle."\textsuperscript{96} Despite establishmentarian bias against visions and revelations, then, the stage was clearly set for the successful rise of Mormonism. Enter the prophet Joseph Smith.

From Gordon Wood's perspective, Mormonism "appeared at precisely the right moment in American history; much earlier or later and the Church might not have taken hold....The democratic revolution was at its height, all traditional authorities were in disarray, and visions and prophesying still had a powerful appeal for large numbers of people."\textsuperscript{97} In addition to its authoritative attractiveness, it also responded experientially to the evangelical pursuit of holiness. Its emphasis on the regenerating and charismatic work of the Spirit, in Timothy Smith's view, made it particularly palatable to evangelical Protestants.\textsuperscript{98} Thus, according to Wood, the genius of Mormonism was that it "offered people the best of both the popular world of millenarian evangelicalism

\textsuperscript{96}Cit. in Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," p. 378.

\textsuperscript{97}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 381.

and the respectable world of priestly churches."99

We are now prepared to summarize matters as they stood at the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, on the eve of the birth of Mormonism. With regard to eschatology, the first observation that needs to be made is that postmillennialism reigned supreme. James Moorhead shows that for the first three quarters of the century, postmillennialism "dominated the popular denominational magazines as well as the weighty theological quarterlies," and that "it commanded allegiance in leading seminaries and pulpits alike."100

It was the eschatology of the "Second Great Awakening" and the "Benevolent Empire."101 Indeed, it has even been argued that it was the essence of an evangelical "civil" or "public" religion in antebellum America, a "root symbol in American life," and that American history itself "is thus best understood as a millenarian movement." In short, it identified the history of


101The numerous studies that have either implicitly accepted or explicitly demonstrated this thesis are reviewed in Sweet, "The Evangelical Tradition in America," pp. 14-46.
redemption with the history of the Republic. 102

Yet not everyone shared this vision of a rapidly Christianizing America. It has been commonplace among historians basing their reconstructions on elite sources to emphasize the nineteenth century's ebullient optimism and sense of constant, inevitable progress. Despite the grandiloquent rhetoric of Fourth of July orations or of key community leaders, though, a broad cross-section of Americans, in the privacy of their personal jottings, shared a more negative outlook. "Time and time again, when the mood of their age is under discussion," writes Lewis Saum, "Hawthorne and Melville--those Nay-sayers'... appear [to modern interpreters] as idiosyncratic counterpoints to the dominant confidence and assertiveness. However out of step they may have been with some optimism in higher circles, their dark


brooding about fate and providence bore a powerful resemblance to the outlook of the common American.¹⁰³ John Boles has also argued that "a deep current of pessimism ran through Jacksonian culture, bellying the optimistic egalitarianism usually portrayed."¹⁰⁴ In some circles, then, perhaps more than we have previously been aware, an apocalyptic worldview found particular resonance. When the likelihood of converting "the world" or of reforming mankind grows dim, the supernaturalistic alternative of apocalyptic millenarianism seems to be the more realistic resolution to current problems.

So where do the Mormons fit in all this? Can they be considered an apocalyptic sect, or did they imbibe the prevailing ethos of postmillennialism? And how did millenarianism affect the behavior of the Latter-day Saints? Did their millennial convictions influence their lives in significant ways? According to Marini, his radical sectarians of a previous generation were involved in "nothing less than the creation of alternative cultures," or an "alternative trajectory" whereby they "brought order and significance to their lives." To what degree did the Mormons do the same? These are questions taken up in subsequent chapters.


CHAPTER 2

MORMONS AS MILLENARIANS

Against the background of two thousand years of apocalypticism in Western civilization, we shall now sketch in the contours of early Mormon millenarianism. This chapter will start with an introductory exposition: once this has been accomplished, we will be prepared to reexamine, in the latter portion of the chapter, various interpretations of LDS millenarianism and reassess Mormonism's proper location in the constellation of Christian eschatologies.

In Joseph Smith's earliest description of his first encounter with Deity, he recorded the words of the Lord thus: "behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to the[ir] ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it [is] written of me in the cloud clothed in
the glory of my Father."¹

This stinging indictment of the present religious world and the warning of an imminent visitation in judgment is standard rhetoric in apocalypticism. Mormons were not the only ones who thought that Christendom had languished in corruption long enough and that the Lord would come soon and personally set things aright. As Ernest Sandeen has pointed out, a basic premise of nineteenth-century millenarianism "was the assumption that an irreversible deterioration in religion and culture had now reached crisis proportions and that the final act in this era of world history had already begun."² In the Mormon view, what inaugurated that act was a scene from John's Apocalypse: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth ... saying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come."³ As Latter-day Saints saw it, the angel did come to Joseph Smith and

¹Dean C. Jessee, ed., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), p. 6. At present, Jessee's collection is the most faithfully preserved and carefully edited compilation available of the Smith's unpublished writings. Jessee has chosen to retain the original spelling and syntax. A similar literal adherence to the original will also be followed with other quotations from early Mormon sources.


³Revelation 14:6-7.
through various revelations, the most significant of which was the Book of Mormon containing the "fulness of the Gospel," restored what had long since been lost and what was absolutely essential to prepare a people for the advent of Christ and to escape the awesome judgments that would accompany that return.

During the 1830s, Sidney Rigdon was one of the leading exponents of Mormonism.4 A former Reformed Baptist colleague of Alexander Campbell, the conversion of Rigdon seemed to provide a much needed "Aaron" to the Mormon Moses, Joseph Smith. An early revelation announced that "my servant Sidney should be a spokesman unto this people ... even to be a spokesman unto my servant Joseph."5 Through numerous articles in church periodicals and frequent Sunday sermons, as well as by being a member of the three-man ruling body of the Church, the First Presidency, Rigdon performed his appointed task well. In the mid 1830s, he wrote an important article entitled "The Latter Day Glory." In it he acknowledged the impressive impetus to evangelical activity that millennialism provided his contemporaries. He called it "the spur to all the efforts of the religious communities of the present day." "The great

4The standard biography of Rigdon is F. Mark McIver, The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793-1876 (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1971).

5D&C 100:9

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exertions," he elaborated, "which are made to excite revivals" grow out of the "view of the near approach of the latter day glory, and the coming of the Son of man. All the missionary schemes of the age are founded on the belief of it....The cry Millenium is heard all over the land, and men are required to use all their exertions to usher in the glory of the last days, by converting the world." But all of these efforts would come to not, for what was needed was for the Lord to "prepare the way of his coming by raising up and inspiring apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, and under their ministry restore again to his saints all the gifts of the church as in days of old." Those who would not respond to this divine initiative, "he will cut off and consign to the perdition of ungodly men" at the time of his coming.6

All of which led, for the Latter-day Saints, to the critically important corollary concept that "before the coming of Christ and the general destruction of the wicked, God will gather his saints together from every nation, tongue, language and kindred, under the whole heaven unto places before appointed." These gathering spots included Jerusalem in the Old World, but also "Zion," a New World sanctuary, where Mormon converts would gather "for a defense and for a refuge from the

storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth." The eleventh hour choice was simple: gather with the Saints or be destroyed, for truly "all the rest of the world will without exception be cut off."7

Another articulate apologist for early Mormonism was Orson Hyde. He, too, had been an Ohio "Campbellite," and was now one of the "first elders" of Mormonism. When the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was organized in 1835, he was called to serve and in time became president of that body. His apostolic ministry took him to England with the first Mormon mission in 1837 and alone to the Holy Land in the 1840s to dedicate it for the return of the Jews. Through it all, Hyde was an active publicist for the Church and wrote what appears to be the earliest and certainly one of the most influential LDS tracts in pre-Utah Mormonism--A Prophetic Warning.8 A review of this tract provides an excellent glimpse into the millenarian

7Ibid., p. 403.

8Written as a broadside introduction to the Mormon message, it was quickly reproduced in the Church's official newspaper, Messenger and Advocate 2 (July 1836): 342-346. The following year, as Hyde helped head the first LDS mission to Britain, he reissued it in almost identical words as "A Timely Warning to the People of England." For several years, it served as the chief British introduction to the Mormon faith. See Peter Crawley, "A Bibliography of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri," BYU Studies 12 (Summer 1972): 505; and David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1982).
world of early Mormonism.

Hyde's beginning premise was that just as the Mosaic Law was given to Israel to prepare that people for the initial appearance of Christ, so the Apostolic teachings were given to the Gentiles (or Western Christianity) "for the express purpose of preparing them for the Second Coming." Unfortunately, according to Hyde, in like manner to the Jews, "the Gentiles have made void the gospel through the tradition of their Elders, which now becomes my painful duty to show."

After citing Biblical predictions of apostasy, he continued, "I will now present the Gentile churches before the glass of the holy scriptures, and see if they possess the same form and beauty now, that they did Eighteen Hundred years ago." The verdict is obviously unfavorable. Priestcraft and liturgical formalism abound. The sick are not healed and the gift of the Holy Ghost is not conveyed by the laying on of hands. Gone are the charismata, the "signs" which "shall follow them that believe." "How," asked Hyde, "can the clergy of this day be of God; and yet deny the miraculous powers?" The conclusion was inescapable: "every person who is not biassed by most unhallowed prejudice can see that the churches of this day bear but a faint resemblance to those which existed in the days of the Apostles." Pursuing his analogy with the Jews, Hyde invoked the olive tree allegory of Romans 11 to explain that having
failed to "continue" in the "goodness" of God, the Gentiles would be "cut off" in the last days, just as the Jews had earlier, though ultimately the Jews would be "grafted" back in.9

For Hyde, all of this stood in frightening contrast to the perceptions of millennialist evangelicals. "Many are flattering themselves with the expectation that all the world is going to be converted and brought into the ark of safety. Thus the great millennium, in their opinion, is to be established. Vain, delusive expectation! The Savior said to his disciples that 'as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.' Query. Were all the people converted in the days of the of Noah, or mostly destroyed?" The answer was obvious, and with similar clarity, Hyde remarked that events "will soon show to this generation that the hour of God's judgment hath come."

Of course, history could be averted, if the Gentiles would "speedily turn to the Lord." After all, the predicted wars, pestilences, and natural disasters were etiologically linked to the behavior of the people. "The prime cause of all these calamities coming on the earth," wrote Hyde, "is the apostasy of the church. If the

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9 *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (July 1836): 342-346. Quotations in the next few paragraphs are taken from this article.
church was all righteous, they could save the nations from destruction. But the salt has lost its savor." Therefore, temporal judgments would continue until finally the Lord himself returned to finish the work and inaugurate the millennium.

"When Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven," concluded Hyde in good premillennial fashion, "the saints who have slept will arise from their graves; and those who are living will be changed speedily, and all be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then shall all the wicked, who have escaped the former judgments, be consumed, root and branch. Then shall the earth be cleansed from pollution; and the Lord descend upon it, and all the saints with him to reign a thousand years while satan is bound. Then will the saints inherit this promise: 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth'." Hyde closed his article with this expression: "The fulfilment of the foregoing predictions will convince this generation that I have not been presumptuous. May the great Creator of the Universe have mercy upon a fallen and perishing world."

Two other major eschatological treatises were produced in the 1830s, and provide the basis for much of what follows. The first was Sidney Ridgon's "Millenium," a series of fourteen articles appearing nearly monthly in the Church's periodical from December 1833 to May 1835. The second was Parley P. Pratt's Voice of Warning,
perhaps the most widely reprinted piece of Mormon literature in LDS history, aside from the Book of Mormon. In his writings, Rigdon acknowledged the widespread contemporary interest in the millennium and admitted that "the things spoken of by the ancient prophets, have never been fulfilled, nor never can, unless the Millenium is brought about in the economy of God." But, he argued, "in what manner it is to be introduced, and by what means," the Christian world has "been unable to see, or understand." His objective, of course, was to rectify this unfortunate lack of insight.

Before doing so, however, he could not resist a bit of "Campbell bashing." He took particular delight in pointing out the failed promise of Campbell's paper titled Millennial Harbinger. "For several years we have been waiting and reading the 'Millennial Harbinger' and finding a little of every thing in it which has been written or spoken of for the last hundred years, the Millennium excepted." The one series of articles that

10Parley P. Pratt, A Voice of Warning and Instruction to all People, Containing an Introduction to the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons (New York: W. Sandford, 1837). Unless wording has been significantly changed from the first edition, quotations in this study are from the 11th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1881).

11The Evening and the Morning Star 2 (Dec 1833): 117. In the early years, this periodical was known simply as the Star, a convention which shall be followed hereafter in this study.

12Ibid., p. 117. 77
did seem to Rigdon to pertain to the topic was written by Samuel McCorkle. Unlike Campbell, McCorkle was a premillennialist and was therefore closer in sentiment to the Mormons.\textsuperscript{13} Precisely because of that uncomfortable proximity, Rigdon helpfully endeavored to distinguish the LDS view.

The problem with the standard premillennial analysis of the coming judgments was singled out in these words: "Mr. McCorkle has cried death! destruction! desolation! judgment! but no provision! no way for escape! no hiding place! no city of refuge!"\textsuperscript{14} Here the critical difference with Mormon millenarianism is laid bare: "What a difference between a man of God, and a self authorized and self constituted messenger! The man of God will no sooner cry, Destruction, desolation, and judgment, than he will tell them of an ark, a Zoar, a Palla, a Mount Zion, a Jerusalem, or some other place which God has provided for them who will hear his voice. But Mr. M'Corkle, like every other messenger that God has never sent, can cry, Destruction, desolation, fire, and

\textsuperscript{13}Campbell's eschatology is discussed in Winifred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. De Groot, \textit{The Disciples of Christ: A History} (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948); and W. E. Garrison, \textit{Alexander Campbell's Theology}.


\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 117.
judgment, and write very ingeniously about it, but there it ends."15

Much as the doctrine of the "rapture" would come to function for Darbyite dispensationalists in later decades, the Mormon doctrine of the "gathering" served to provide a means of escape from much of the tribulation of the last days.16 At the same time, it functioned as a site for "in-house" preparations for the coming of the millennium. The gathering, therefore, was the pivotal pre-millennial event in the Mormon view.

"The only thing," remarked Rigdon, "which God promised to the world, after the great apostacy, which was to corrupt all nations, and defile all the kings of the earth; and terminate in the overthrow of the Gentiles ... was to return the scattered remnants of Jacob, and gather the house of Joseph; bringing them as he did at the first, and building them as he did at the beginning."17 So emphatic on this point was Rigdon that

15*Star 2* (Jan 1834): 126.


17*Star 2* (Jan 1834): 126.
he concluded his second article by declaring that "all the Millenium ever mentioned in the bible was promised to the seed of Abraham; and that unless the scattered remnants of Jacob should be gathered from all countries whither they had been driven, that no such thing as a Millenium could ever exist; or that God never promised such an era to mankind on any other ground than that of the gathering the house of Jacob to the land of their fathers; and that predicated on the fact of the Gentiles having forfeited all claim to the divine favor by reason of their great apostacy."¹⁸

The logic was simple. Gentile Christendom had had their chance. The end times were to be Israel's great day, and what triggered it in the divine economy was the fullness of Gentile apostasy. Once the glorious gathering or restoration of Israel was completed, the Savior could return, destroy the remaining reprobates, transform the earth, and usher in a thousand years of rest. To both identify Israel and carry out their restoration would, of course, require revelations and miracles. Hence the need for an authentic, revelation-receiving, miracle-performing priesthood and the concomitant reestablishment of the Church of Christ.

Whether believers were Israelite by race, as with the Jews, lost Ten Tribes, and American Indians, or by

¹⁸*Star* 2 (Jan 1834): 127.
"adoption," as with EuroAmerican converts like Smith, Ridgon, and the bulk of antebellum Mormons, they were equal participants in the promises of the "new covenant" and all were allotted a "land" or gathering spot for their millennial inheritance. A literalist hermeneutic helped the Saints discern two basic places of gathering. Church leader Edward Partridge was typical in his exegesis of Isaiah 24:23: "The moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his ancients gloriously.' Thus we see that the Lord is not only to reign in Jerusalem, but in mount Zion, also, which shows that Jerusalem and Zion are two places." In ways to be detailed in later chapters, the Saints believed that Zion was the designated gathering spot for white Gentile converts as well as for the Native Americans, which the Book of Mormon revealed to be the "remnant of Jacob." In traditional millenarian manner,

19 As the years progressed, increasing emphasis was placed on EuroAmerican Saints being literally of the "blood of Israel." Prominent church leaders traced their genealogies to the Holy Land, and some to the Holy One himself. See Victor L. Ludlow, Isaiah: Prophet, Seer and Poet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), pp. 171-172. Such attitudes welcomed the influence of British Israelism in America. On these matters see Richard Edmund, "British-Israel: A Study of Nineteenth Century Millennialism," (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1980); and, for the Mormons, Bruce Van Orden, "Anglo-Israelism and the Mormon Church." Unpublished paper delivered at the 1984 annual meeting of the Mormon History Association.

20 Messenger and Advocate 1 (Jan 1835): 57.
Jerusalem was for the Jews and the Lost Ten Tribes.

Understandably, most LDS interest focused on the establishment of the American gathering place which they called Zion. With an American Israel identified to be gathered, Advent anxious saints did not have to wait for dramatic happenings with the Jews, which for the rest of millenarian Christendom was the only manifestation of the restoration of Israel. The Saints were not slow to see "Gentile nursing fathers" gathering American Israel in the U. S. government's Indian removal policies of the 1830s. Even more urgent was their own need, as spiritual Israel, to gather to Zion.

Since much of the early history of the Church can only be understood in reference to this doctrine, it is essential that we review its history. The Book of Mormon affirmed that there would be such a New World site, but had not specified its location. Even six months after the organization of the church, a revelation declared that "no man knoweth where the city [Zion] shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter." Nonetheless,

\[21\] Ether 13:4-8.

\[22\] A large number of the revelations received during the early years of Mormonism have been compiled and canonized by the Church as The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or more simply, the Doctrine and Covenants. Throughout the remainder of this study, I will follow the standard convention of referring to this volume as "D&C," and will use the most recent editions unless the wording has been significantly changed from the original. The best study to date on the D&C and its textual development is Robert
the Mormon mission was clear: "ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect, for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts. Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father, that they shall be gathered in unto one place, upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts, and be prepared in all things, against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked."  

By the Church's first anniversary, they had relocated themselves from New York to Kirtland, Ohio and were perhaps several hundred strong. Several revelations in the interim had reassured the Saints that the location was soon to be revealed. Moreover, the Lord reaffirmed that they were to labor "in my vineyard for the last time, for the last time call ye upon the inhabitants of the earth; for in mine own due time will I come upon the earth in judgment, and my people shall be redeemed, and shall reign with me on earth, for the great Millenium of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants shall come."  

That summer of 1831, Joseph

J. Woodford's massive, three-volume "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," (Ph.D. diss., BYU, 1974). The citation is from D&C 28:9. The word "Zion" was added for clarification to later editions.


For the history of Mormonism in Ohio, the most detailed account is Milton V. Backman, The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983).

Smith and other leading elders were called to go to Missouri where "the land of your inheritance" was to be made known. Shortly after arriving, a revelation declared that "this land, which is the land of Missouri, is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the Saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city Zion....Behold the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse. Wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints ... that they may obtain it for an everlasting inheritance."26

When the elders returned to Kirtland with the news, enthusiasm was understandably high. Given the Saints' eschatology, it took some persuasion and several revelations to convince them not to gather "in haste, lest there should be confusion," and to stress that "the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase."27 Moreover, not all were to gather immediately. Several key merchant and landowning converts were directed that Kirtland was not yet to be abandoned. Frederick G.


Williams, soon to become one of the three-member "First Presidency" of the Church, was specifically told not to sell his farm and emigrate "for I, the Lord, will to retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland for the space of five years in the which I will not overthrow the wicked, that thereby I may save some. And after that day, I the Lord, will not hold any guilty that shall go with an open heart up to the land of Zion, for ... now it is called today until the coming of the son of Man ... but after today cometh the burning ... and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon."28

Thus, for the next half a dozen years, there were two American gathering spots—Jackson County, Missouri, known simply as Zion, and Kirtland, Ohio. Zion, however, with all the biblical prophecies and promises surrounding it, always held pride of place emotionally. This is graphically portrayed in Joseph Smith's diary entry about a dinner party in October 1835: After being seated around the table Bishop Whitney observed to Bishop Partridge that the thought had just occurred to his mind that perhaps in about one year from this time [the conclusion of the five year period] they might be seated together around a table on the land of Zion. My wife observed that she hoped it might be the case that not only they but the rest of the company present might be seated around her table in the land of promise; the same sentiment was reciprocated from the company round the table and my heart responded amen God grant it.29

This, despite their participation in the growing


prosperity of Kirtland and the near completion of their much anticipated "temple" in town. In the fall of 1837, the Bishop at Kirtland issued a Circular "to the Saints scattered abroad" in which he announced, "Our hopes, our expectations, our glory and our reward, all depend on our building up Zion according to the testimony of the prophets. For unless Zion is built, our hopes perish, our expectations fail, our prospects are blasted, our salvation withers, and God will come and smite the whole earth with a curse." As if any of his readers might have wondered why this was the case, he explained that "this great work of building the Zion of our God" was necessary so that "there may be a place of refuge for you, and for your children in the day of God's vengeance, when he shall come down on Idumea, or the world, in his fury, and stamp them down in his wrath, and none shall escape, but the inhabitants of Zion."30

Meanwhile, Zion was far from becoming the New Jerusalem. The story of the Saints' trials and persecutions in Jackson County, Missouri has been thoroughly told elsewhere.31 We need only note that

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30 This circular was issued as a broadside and reprinted in the Messenger and Advocate 3 (Sept 1837): 561-564.

within two years from the original settlement near Independence, Missouri, the Mormons had run afoul of their neighbors and were driven at gunpoint out of the county. They settled across the Missouri in Clay county and managed to eke out a meager but peaceful existence for the next few years. By 1836, the Saints were once again being asked to leave. This time they moved north and east within the state to a sparsely settled area and petitioned the legislature for incorporation as a county. When the request was granted, Saints poured into the new Caldwell county and most settled in a town they called Far West. Some went even further north and laid out a settlement divinely designated "Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said [the Lord], it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet." Joseph and Emma and most of the other Kirtland Saints got their wish to settle in the land of promise within the next two years. However, in Ohio, problems inside the Church and out forced the faithful to flee town rather than abandon it triumphantly. By the spring of 1838, under somewhat


32D&C 116.
different circumstances and on a somewhat different timetable from that originally anticipated, the bulk of the Saints--around 5000--had finally been "gathered in unto one place upon the face of the land"--northwestern Missouri.33

Rejoicing was brief, however, for the arrival of summer marked the beginning of the end. Sidney Rigdon's "salt sermon," the election-day fracas at Gallatin, Sampson Avard and the Danites, Haun's Mill Massacre, and ultimately the infamous "extermination order" of Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs exemplified escalating animosities that resulted in the jailing of Joseph Smith and the wintertime banishment from the state of thousands of Mormons.34 Never again in the nineteenth century would


the Saints return in mass to the site originally and ironically designated for their "defense and refuge," their Zion.

Yet Zion came to acquire a broader definition. Shortly after their exile, the Saints purchased land and started rebuilding their lives once again. This time the site was the sleepy little Mississippi river village of Commerce, Illinois, which they renamed Nauvoo. As one of the first public revelations received in their new home, Joseph Smith announced this divine direction:

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings....Therefore, for this cause have I accepted the offerings of those whom I commanded to build up a city and a house unto my name, in Jackson county, Missouri, and were hindered by their enemies, saith the Lord your God.\(^{35}\)

The location now became less important than the fact of

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\(^{35}\)D&C 124:49,51.
the gathering. In 1844, during the final months of Joseph Smith's life, he even announced with period gusto, "I have now a great proclamation for the Elders to teach the Church hereafter which is in relation to Zion. The whole of North and South America is Zion."  

Despite these doctrinal developments in Nauvoo, most members of the Church took this as a broadening of the concept of Zion as gathering place, rather than a burying of the notion of Zion as sacred city in Missouri. As late as 1900, Church President Lorenzo Snow exclaimed that "there are many here now under the sound of my voice, probably a majority who will have to go back to Jackson County and assist in building the temple." And just a decade ago, the Church updated one of its "Articles of Faith" to reflect both a broader interpretation of Zion and yet reaffirm its specific Holy-City dimension. A single phrase was added specifying which of several currently acceptable definitions of Zion was intended, so that the tenth article now reads, "we believe ... that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American


continent...."\textsuperscript{38}

Just how the scriptural hermeneutics of the early Saints permitted placing themselves in the middle of Old Testament prophecy regarding the gathering and restoration of Israel will be demonstrated in a later chapter. It should be clearly understood, though, that their vision was of a dual enactment, and that they used many of the traditional passages in the traditional way to refer to the restoration of the Jews alone. Parley Pratt's \textit{Voice of Warning} is particularly illustrative of this fact. He cites Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and even John the Revelator to prove that God will "set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people" by establishing a "new covenant with them" and miraculously leading them back to Palestine with "outstretched hand." At the end of long chapter, he concludes with words that might well have come from any Zionist millenarian:

Suffice it to say, the Jews gather home, and rebuild Jerusalem. The nations gather against them in battle. Their armies encompass the city, and have more or less power over it for three years an a half. A couple of Jewish prophets, by their mighty miracles, keep them

\textsuperscript{38}Italics added. The "Articles of Faith" derive from a March 1842 letter that Joseph Smith wrote to John Wentworth, editor of the \textit{Chicago Democrat}, describing the history and faith of the Latter-day Saints. They are reproduced in original form in Jessee, \textit{The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith}, pp. 219-220. An overview of the history of the Articles can be found in John W. Welch and David J. Whittaker, "'We Believe ...': Development of the Articles of Faith," \textit{Ensign} 9 (Sept 1979): 51-55.
from utterly overwhelming the Jews; until at length they are slain, and the city is left in a great measure to the mercy of their enemies for three days and a half. The prophets then rise from the dead and ascend up into heaven. The Messiah comes, convulses, the earth, overthrows the army of the Gentiles, delivers the Jews, cleanses Jerusalem, cuts off all wickedness from the earth, raises the saints from the dead, brings them with him, and commences his reign of a thousand years...After the thousand years are ended, then shall Satan be loosed, and ... the last and great struggle shall take place between God and Satan, for the empire of the earth. Satan and his army shall be overthrown. And after these great things, comes the end of the earth, the resurrection of the wicked, and the last judgment. And there shall be a new earth and a new heaven, for the former earth and the former heaven shall have passed away, that is, they will be changed from temporal to eternal, and made fit for the abide of immortals. 39

Whether discussing the restoration of the Jews or the gathering of the Gentile "elect," there was a noteworthy sense of urgency among the Saints. The end was felt to be imminent. On one of their first missions to the Eastern states, the newly constituted Quorum of Twelve Apostles wrote, "some of our number visited the city of Boston, and held forth to that people this important truth, that the Son of Man will appear in this generation." 40 Edward Partridge wrote to his friends in Ohio that "the signs that have been seen show that this is the very generation spoken of" in Matthew 24. Nor was


the idea restricted to the "leading brethren." On a mission to the South in 1838, Amos Fuller, typical of the numerous individuals who left no legacy in the Church other than a brief proselyting diary which has survived, preached a millenarian discourse to a large congregation, after which "one gentleman asked how that there was men standing in this generation that would not pass away until the saviour came. I told him that I knew by the revelation of Jesus Christ."41 As will be seen in the chapter dealing with the Mormon-Millerite encounter, the Saints were not given to prophetic numerology or exact calendrical calculations as to the date of Christ's Advent. They did, however, very much feel they were living in the shadow of the Second Coming.

Finally, we need to consider their views about the nature of the millennium itself. Contrary to popular postmillennialist notions of Christ reigning in the hearts of the regenerate, early Latter-day Saints looked forward to the day when the "King of Kings" would physically reign as supreme terrestrial monarch. "Not," remarked Rigdon, "as some have said, a spiritual (which might be more properly called imaginary) reign; but literal, and personal, as much so as David's reign over Israel, or the reign of any king on earth. All the inspired men have said that Christ shall reign over the

41 "Diary of Amos Bottsford Fuller, 1837-1838," typescript, Church Archives, p. 20.
earth literally; for literally the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ, and he shall reign on the earth." Lest anyone misunderstand him, Rigdon made clear, through allusions to Daniel 2:44, how Jesus would reign politically:

He will as literally break in pieces and destroy all the kingdoms of the world, as ever one king destroyed and broke down the kingdom of another. Never did Cyrus the Great, more literally break down and destroy the kingdom of ancient Babylon, than will Christ, the Great King break in pieces and destroy all the kingdoms of the world; and so completely will he do it, that there will not from one end of the earth to another, be an individual found whose word, or edict will be obeyed but his own: so that he will completely break in pieces and destroy all kingdoms.\(^{42}\)

But the Lord of Hosts was also the Lamb of God, and the Saints anxiously contemplated the privilege of enjoying a thousand years in his visible presence. He would be there to bless personally them with his love and "wipe away all their tears." The millennial reign of Christ "is to be an earthly reign," emphasized Sidney Rigdon. "In all that John has said about the coming of the Saviour, he has never told us of any other object he had in coming but to reign on earth a thousand years...and all those of the first resurrection with him."\(^{43}\) Indeed an earlier revelation had announced that the Lord would "dwell in righteousness with men on earth

\(^{42}\text{Star 2 (June 1834): 162.}\)

\(^{43}\text{Star 2 (April 1834): 147.}\)
a thousand years." Numerous early Mormon hymns and poems testify to the intensity with which this millennium-long mutual association was anticipated.

Nor was it to end there. After the millennium, the final transformation of terra firma was to turn it into the eternal abode of the blessed. Thus, wrote Parley Pratt, "man is destined forever to inherit this self-same planet, upon which he was first created, which shall be redeemed, sanctified, renewed, purified, and prepared as an eternal inheritance for immortality and eternal life!" So it was that W. W. Phelps could joyfully exclaim:

When we've been there a thousand years,
Bright shining as the Sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise,

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44. This revelation was first published in Star 1 (September 1832): [26], but is now found in D&C 29:11.

45. The earliest published poems are found in the Star and subsequent Church newspapers. The first compilation of hymns is Emma Smith, ed., A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Kirtland, 1835). Parley Pratt was one of the most prolific as well as popular hymnwriters in this period. His work can be examined in Samuel Russell, ed. and comp., The Millennial Hymns of Parley Parker Pratt (Cambridge: The University Press, 1913). On Mormon hymnody in general, see Newell B. Weight, "An Historical Study of the Origin and Character of Indigenous Hymn Tunes of the Latter-day Saints," (Ph.D. diss., USC, 1961); and David S. Wheelwright, "The Role of Hymnody in the Development of the Latter-day Saint Movement," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1943).

Than when we first begun.47

A corollary concept was the Saints' millennial co-regency with Christ. Early Mormons basked in John's promise of being made kings and priests to rule and reign with Christ a thousand years.48 Toward the end of his life, Joseph Smith began stressing an eternal component to this concept, but before that, the Saints projected all their afterlife enthusiasm and expectations on the millennium, rather than on the far-off future state. It was the millennium, not "heaven," that was being

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47Star 1(July 1832): (16). A characteristic of Phelps's hymn selection and preparation for Star was that he occasionally borrowed doctrinally agreeable lines or stanzas from non-Mormon songs and included them in his own compositions, sometimes with slight modification. The lines herein cited are one such example. The quatrain originally formed the final stanza of a popular Protestant hymn of the nineteenth century, "Jerusalem, My Happy Home," but is perhaps better known in its twentieth century from as the last verse in some arrangements of "Amazing Grace." See, William J. Reynolds, Companion to Baptist Hymnal (Nashville, Tenn.:Broadman Press, 1976), p. 165. The first line reads, "When we've been there ten thousand years." Phelps dropped the word "ten" and replaced it with an "a," thus making it clearly millennial in meaning. Since he made no other modification, it is obvious that he accepted the basic idea embodied in the stanza.

48The scriptural reference is Rev 5:9-12; some examples of their exegesis of this passage include Star 2 (April 1834): 146; Pratt, Voice of Warning, p. 51; and Star 1 (June 1832): [8]. The more developed understanding of this promise came during the early 1840s when the special temple liturgy known as "the endowment," was first revealed. See, Andrew Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," BYU Studies 20(Spring 1980):254-257; and Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," (Master's thesis, BYU, 1982).
referred to when the editor of the *Messenger and Advocate* wrote, "The sure promise of such ravishing bliss enabled the saints anciently to endure such great tribulations ... with more than manly fortitude."\(^{49}\) Whereas modern Mormons anxiously await the day in which they will be crowned with an inheritance in the "Celestial Kingdom," early Saints longed for their millennial inheritance. For them, that was the anticipated day of triumph and glory.

And what a day it would be. The Saints waxed eloquent in their descriptions of an earth renewed to its Edenic state. For that was the ultimate objective of the "restoration of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."\(^{50}\) As Parley Pratt put it, "if we can discover the true state in which [the earth] then existed ... we shall be able to understand what is to be restored."\(^{51}\) His review of Genesis led him to announce, "from this we learn that there were neither deserts, barren places, stagnant swamps, rough, broken, rugged hills, nor vast mountains covered with eternal snow; and no part of it was located in the frigid zone, so as to render its climate dreary and unproductive." In short, "the whole earth was

\(^{49}\) *Messenger and Advocate* 3 (April 1837): 482.

\(^{50}\) Acts 3:21.

probably one vast plain, or interspersed with gently rising hills, and sloping vales, well calculated for cultivation, while its climate was delightfully varied." All of this would have resulted in the "good of man, animal, fowl, or creeping thing; while from the flowery plain or spicy grove, sweet odors were wafted on every breeze and all the vast creation of animated beings breathed naught but health, and peace, and joy."  

Needless to say, when such circumstances were restored, there would be no death, disease, or even sorrow.  

If such a pastoral paradise seems quaint from a modern vantage point, Max Schultz reminds us that "since the seventeenth century, at least one silent assumption, and working hypothesis, has been that the earthly paradise is concocted out of the elements, and bound to the fortunes, of a mundane earth and its aspiring inhabitants." As such, "even Milton's recreation of Eden is heavily indebted to his generation's daydreams about the good life, rural retirement, estate planning, and gardening."  

In short, musings about the millennial paradise always tend to be idealizations of what one

52Pratt, Voice of Warning, pp. 182-183.

53For example, see Star 2 (February 1834): 131; Messenger and Advocate 1 (January 1835): 58; 3 (November 1836): 403-404; Pratt, Voice of Warning, pp. 119-130; and Elders Journal 1 (July 1838): 31-32.

yearns for on earth.

The restorationist approach to millennial conditions also led to the striking belief that eventually the continental landmasses would be unified into a sort of prophetic Panagaea. Genesis 1:9, with its comment about the waters being gathered "unto one place," was interpreted to mean that "the land which is now torn assunder and divided into continents and islands almost innumerable, was then one vast continent or body, not separated as it now is." And the Genesis 10:25 declaration that in the days of Peleg "was the earth divided," was understood geologically not socially. Therefore, remarked Pratt, in the last days "the continents and islands shall be united in one, as they were on the morn of creation."55 Not just imaginative exegesis, this was supported by a revelation received through Joseph Smith which announced that when Christ came, he would "break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land. And the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided."56


A final aspect of the Saints perceptions of millennial paradise, and one in which literalism again played an important role, was their eschatological ecology. The millennium, explained Rigdon, is also to "materially affect the brutal creation. The lion and the ox are to eat straw together; the bear and the cow to graze the plain in company, and their young ones to lay down in peace: there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the Lord's holy mountain." His reasoning was based on a literal hermeneutic: "The lion will be carnivorous no longer; and all the beasts will cease to prey on flesh and blood; for if they do not they will both hurt and destroy, and the testimony of the prophet fail; and if no such day comes, there will be no Millenium."57 Publicist Pratt put it more succinctly, both "man and beast" will become "perfectly harmless as they were in the beginning, and feeding on vegetable food only."58

Perhaps Rigdon's most imaginative use of scripture on this count was his interpretation of Joel. "The Lord promised by the mouth of Joel, and on the day of pentecost renewed the same promise by Peter, that in the last days he would pour out his Spirit on all flesh. If that promise is ever fulfilled in its full extent,"

57 Star 2 (Feb 1834): 131.

58 Pratt, Voice of Warning, p. 197.
reasoned Rigdon, "the Spirit of God will have to be poured out on beast as well as man, for they also are flesh. And if there never should be a time when the Spirit of God is poured out on the beast, there never will be a Millenium. And when that day comes, the Spirit of the Lord, when poured out, will make a great revolution on the irrational creation; changing their nature to both as to food and habits, for the God of Heaven, by the Spirit with which he garnished the heavens, can also change the nature of both the rational and irrational creations, from one end of the heaven to the other."\(^{59}\)

By now it should be abundantly clear that Latter-day Saints stood squarely on that side of the taxonomic division of eschatologies discussed in the last chapter as premillennial, millenarian, or apocalypticist. A convenient summary can be provided by demonstrating how their views correspond to the typology of millenarian movements worked out a generation ago by social scientists from different disciplines at a famous 1960 University of Chicago conference. According to that definition, a religious movement is said to be millenarian when it views salvation as a) **collective**, to be enjoyed by the faithful as a group; b) **terrestrial**, to be realized here on earth; c) **total**, to completely

\(^{59}\) *Star* 2 (Feb 1834): 131.
transform earth life; d) **imminent**, to come soon and swiftly rather than gradually; and e) **miraculous**, to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies.⁶⁰

Mormons fit this description quite closely. In the formative years, as we have seen, the Saints expected to realize their salvation as a gathered group of the "elect," as part of latter-day Israel. In those days, they did not emphasize that infinite variations in individual righteousness in this life would result in correspondingly varied placement in a multi-leveled heaven in the next, a matter which will be discussed in greater detail later. As to the second point, Latter-day Saints clearly delighted in the prospects of literally inheriting the earth. Even eternity was to be enjoyed on earth, since spatially, the "Celestial Kingdom" turned out to be a terrestrial kingdom after all. What made all this worth seeking, of course, was the totality of the future transformation of life on earth, the third facet of millenarianism. Far from its present fallenness, the earth would be "renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory," including the herbivorization of carnivores, the co-mingling of mortals and immortals, and a topography

that would have tantalized any pre-transportation-revolution traveler. Regarding their sense of imminence, the very name of the church discloses the dominant expectation that the Saints were living in the very generation that would witness the Second Coming of Christ and the supernatural inauguration of the millennium. In short, early Mormon beliefs correspond to each category in this and other millenarian models and thus are best seen as a millenarian version of apocalypticism.

Despite the overwhelming propriety of locating the Latter-day Saints in the conventional category of premillennialists, this has not been the standard evaluation. David Smith summarized a previous generation's millennial studies in part by describing the Mormons as an "eccentric embodiment" of the "postmillennial idea." Ernest Tuveson also thought that they "fit awkwardly" into the postmillennial movement, but argued that they could not "be completely excluded either." The weakness of such studies is that they are based on a very superficial examination of early Mormon sources.

On the other hand, some studies reflect a limited

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understanding of Christian eschatologies in general. Ernest Sandeen first noticed this flaw some years ago when he wrote that Klaus Hansen's analysis, for example, was "not entirely competent." 63 Nonetheless, with the 1967 publication of Quest for Empire, and in the absence of other contenders, Hansen established himself as the authority on Mormon millenarianism. 64 Since that time, writers for whom Mormon eschatology has been a peripheral concern have tended to accept his views without much question. But Hansen is not the only scholar who has had trouble with millennial typologies, and for that reason, we must now turn our attention to teasing out this interpretive tangle. 65


65 A dictionary-definition, if not an outright confused understanding of eschatological categories has made common the interpretation that Latter-day Saint doctrine vacillated between pre- and postmillennialism during the 1800s, and that by the turn of the century it had moved away from millenarianism for good. The idea was first articulated in Hansen, Quest for Empire, and in Louis G. Reinwand, "An Interpretive Study of Mormon Millennialism During the Nineteenth Century with Emphasis on Millennial Development in Utah," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971). As only the most recent example, see Keith E. Norman, "How Long O Lord?: The Delay of the Parousia in Mormonism," Sunstone 8 (January 1983): 59-65. The "transformation" of the Mormon
The problem is basically one of dated stereotypes. Millenarians were supposedly pessimistic about society and, therefore, were largely uninvolved in evangelism or social reform. They expected Christ single-handedly and supernaturally to set up his Kingdom. The millennialists, on the other hand, were assumed to be optimistic about human possibilities, actively involved in missionary work and social reform, and convinced that Christ could work only through them or other natural means to establish the millennium. Thus, when commentators on Mormonism have considered the Saints' Kingdom-building rhetoric, they have felt compelled to label it postmillennial. They also have interpreted the Saints' energetic evangelism in the same light. And finally, because a sense of imminence seemed to be the essence of premillennialism for those who did see aspects of millenarianism in early LDS thought, when such rhetoric subsided around the turn of the century it looked as if Mormonism was turning postmillennial. 66

The latest scholarship, however, has made it clear that such tidy typologies are inadequate on at least two critical counts. First, as we have already mentioned,


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such neat distinctions conceal the overlap that is inevitable where the same scriptural images inform both schools of thought. "The millennial hope is a paradoxical one," James Moorhead writes, "and one can extrapolate a dismal or optimistic view of history, encompassing temporal disaster or progress, or both...Efforts to seize the Kingdom by violence, passive withdrawal from corruption to await the Second Coming, or melioristic reform efforts—all these and other responses have been adduced from eschatological symbols."

Recent research has shown us that naturalism and supernaturalism, progress and cataclysm, optimism and pessimism indeed can be found side by side in either millennial scenario. As Sacvan Bercovitch noted, "pre- and post-millennialism are often present in the same movement and sometimes in the same thinker."

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course, there are fundamental literalist-allegorist differences, but the point is that even though the Saints urged human efforts to build the kingdom, or were mission-minded, or occasionally waned in their enthusiasm for the imminence of paradisiacal glory, these attitudes do not warrant shifting them out of the premillennialist camp where their hermeneutics and basic eschatology so clearly place them. Perhaps a few comparisons will help to clarify. The Fifth Monarchy Men of mid-seventeenth-century England have been considered a prime example of millenarianism. Yet, as Clarke Garrett has noted, they could "in the same sermon call upon men to regenerate the world through their own efforts [an act clearly assumed to be postmillennial] and upon Jesus to transform it through his miraculous intervention."\textsuperscript{70} So too could the Mormons, and here we must add a related distinction often overlooked by commentators. Most of their optimistic rhetoric was "in-house," that is, it targeted what the Saints would be able to achieve in building Zion. For them, not the wicked world around them (including America as Babylon), there was hope of true progress. Unless repentance became general, the fate of nations was sealed.

As another seemingly inconsistent twist of the

"human efforts" coin, Samuel Hopkins, one of the leading postmillennialists of his day, admitted that while the antichrist would fall partly because of Christian exertions, the telling blows would be delivered "by the immediate hand of God, by famines and pestilences...earthquakes, terrible storms of lightnings and thunders and inundations of water."\textsuperscript{71} Again one is reminded of Mormon doctrine: an 1832 revelation warned the elders to be diligent, "for after your testimony cometh the testimony of...earthquakes...and also cometh the testimony of tempest."\textsuperscript{72} On finding this similarity one would be ill-advised to argue, however, that Hopkins was a proto-Mormon, for his basic eschatology and theology were far removed from Mormon thought. Similarly, it is just as misleading to label Mormons postmillennialists simply because of a few shared views as it would be, for example, to consider them Baptists because they believed in baptism by immersion.

The other major problem with the old pre/post distinction, as Leonard Sweet points out, is that until recently American historians "have been pre-occupied with studying nineteenth-century postmillennialism" and have therefore "made uninformed generalizations (some of a


\textsuperscript{72}D&C 88:84,89-90.
formulic if not predictive character) about premillennialism and its association with quietism, pessimism, and catastrophism as opposed to the optimism, activism, and progressivism inherent in the 'post' outlook.\textsuperscript{73} James Davidson, in his recent book, \textit{The Logic of Millennial Thought}, demonstrates that many of these generalizations inappropriately derive from postmillennial stereotyping. Historians, he writes, "have not always been equally astute in rejecting postmillennial ideas on how premillennialists ought to behave."\textsuperscript{74} George Marsden found that during the nineteenth century postmillennialists "frequently repeated the accusation that premillennialism implied a pessimistic outlook for the world that would discourage missionary and reforming efforts," adding that "only their views provided a proper rational for missionary zeal."\textsuperscript{75} Davidson discovered that in reality millenarians oftentimes "pursued exactly the same goals but for slightly different reasons."\textsuperscript{76}

Both Ernest Sandeen and, more recently, Timothy

\textsuperscript{73}Sweet, "Millennialism in America," p. 522;


\textsuperscript{76}Davidson, \textit{Logic of Millennial Thought}, p. 277.
Weber have studied premillennialism in book-length monographs and found that the old stereotype of an evangelically inactive millenarian simply does not hold up. In fact, in studying the renaissance of premillennialism in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, Weber found that it brought a heightened interest in missionism: "Just as D. L. Moody [said he] 'felt like working three times as hard' after becoming a premillennialist, others experienced a new desire to being the gospel to a dying world." George Duffield, a contemporary of Joseph Smith, defended his premillennialism against the charge that it dampened missionary efforts in these words: "The groans of a world perishing in its corruption calls for quickened, multiplied effort, and for zeal irrepressible and inextinguishable. The Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The Latter-day Saints themselves also found a prophetic prod to proselytism in their millenarianism. Orson Hyde expressed it in verse:

Shall I behold the nations doomed


79Cit. in Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, p. 194.
To sword and famine blood and fire?
And not the least exertion make
But from the scene in peace retire?
No. While kind heaven shall lend me breath
I'll sound repentance far abroad
And tell the nations to prepare
For Jesus Christ, their coming Lord.\textsuperscript{80}

Thus even though he recognizes that the Saints "laid upon themselves the responsibility to hasten the millennium, much as the main body of American and English evangelicals, called postmillennialist," Timothy Smith's careful scrutiny of Mormon sources in preparation for delivering the special "Tanner lecture" in 1980 to the Mormon History Association as well as his astute understanding of Christian eschatology led him to regard the Mormons as "premillennialists.\textsuperscript{81}

If their zeal was equal or superior to millennialist evangelicals, their expectations for numerical success were not. As David Smith correctly notes, millenarians were "conservative' in their views of "the possibility of salvation.\textsuperscript{82} "To put it simply," writes Weber "God had absolutely no intention of saving the world before the second coming of Christ. His chief purpose in this dispensation was to 'visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name,' not to convert the world." So it was held in Mormon theology, in the important

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Messenger and Advocate} 2 (July 1836): 344.


\textsuperscript{82} Smith, "Millenarian Scholarship in America," p. 539.
doctrine of gathering out of Babylon to Zion. Mormons
did not expect to convert the world, only to warn it.
However, Weber's qualifier also fits: "They realized that
not everyone responded favorably to the gospel, but they
expected to reap a huge harvest of souls if they were
faithful in their efforts."\textsuperscript{83} To modify a phrase from
Leonard Sweet: the Mormons have always believed that they
were called to bring to pass the gathering of the elect,
not the broad electorate, of mankind. In fact, the
Finneyan faith in global conversion rather annoyed the
early saints. "The ignorance of the religious teachers
of the day," complained Sidney Rigdon, "never appeared
more glaring in any thing, than in an attempt to create a
Millennium by converting this generation."\textsuperscript{84}

Turning to the notion that millenialists stood in
contradistinction to millenarians in their feelings of
imminence, consider the example of Charles G. Finney, one
of the most famous of all postmillenialists. On 28
November 1830, he told an audience in Rochester, New York
that if Christians would unite and dedicate themselves to
the task at hand, they could "convert the world and bring
on the millennium in three months."\textsuperscript{85} Such

\textsuperscript{83}Weber, Living in the Shadow, pp. 69-70.

\textsuperscript{84}Star 2 (June 1834): 163.

\textsuperscript{85}Cit. in Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's
Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York,
pronouncements (and he made other similar ones) make Mormon and Millerite speculations seem tame in comparison. Or what of Jonathan Edwards? Did not the Great Awakening lead him to believe that the new age was about to dawn? And did he not devise a way to interpret the "Two Witnesses" of the Apocalypse as a past event, thus removing the barriers for belief in a much more imminent millennium than usually imagined possible?\textsuperscript{86} Clearly, millenialists have been just as ebullient in their hopes and just as anxious for an imminent millennium as have any millenarians. In fact, Robert K. Whalen, after having studied both schools of thought in the nineteenth century, concluded that "the millenialists were more given to date-setting than their millenarian contemporaries."\textsuperscript{87}

Historians in the past have also tended to emphasize the unique way in which Mormon eschatology was a prophetic embodiment of New World exceptionalism and how the Book of Mormon was an expression of the antebellum search for a "usable past." "But from a millenarian perspective," writes J. F. C. Harrison, "Mormonism looks

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somewhat different":

If Joseph [Smith] taught that Adam had dwelt in the
Mississippi Valley and that Christ had visited the
Nephites,
William Blake believed that Noah and the patriarchs
had lived in Britain and the Holy Lamb of God had walked
upon England's mountains. Richards Brothers' theory of
British Israel linked the Anglo-Saxons with
forgotten  Israelite ancestors; and the Southcottians
were assured that in God's providence a special place
had been given to the
British people. It was a characteristic of
millenarians to pronounce God's wrath upon the
society around them, but at the same time to assure
their compatriots that a special role in the coming
millennium was assigned to their nation.
In this respect Joseph was not more (and not less)
exceptionalist than his British counterparts. It
almost seemed as if the more millenarians emphasized
their separateness or withdrawal from the nation at
large, the more they felt it necessary to assert that
their's was a higher patriotism and that they were the
saving remnant (or new Israel) of the whole nation.88

If Mormon views of America were neither jingoistic
nor exceptional, the idea of a wilderness Zion where the
Saints could establish the Kingdom as a sort of
prelibation of paradise was compelling indeed. "A man
might be hard put to know how to be pure, or to wait
indefinitely, or to find a community," wrote W. H. Oliver
in describing a typical premillennialist plight, but in
Mormonism, "he could think he was beginning to do all
these things if he paid down 5 pounds and took ship for
America." The gathering "[added] to the disembodied
outline of the millennial dream the firm contours of

88 Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular
Millenarianism, 1780-1850 (New Brunswick: Rutgers
America, the fresh start, the second chance, the new society. No British prophet produced a millennial vision as complete, as compelling or as concrete as Joseph Smith's" and none "enjoyed a success comparable to that of the Mormons." 89

Given his influence in Mormon studies, the segment dealing with Mormon millenarianism in Klaus Hansen's most recent book, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, deserves special attention in the closing pages of this chapter. What is disappointing at the outset is that the brief discussion of LDS eschatology in his fourth chapter is basically a recapitulation of his earlier *Quest for Empire*, with the addition of parts of an essay he wrote in 1973. 90 That he has not kept abreast of the latest millennial scholarship is apparent as he refers his readers to David E. Smith's 1965 historiographical essay for a survey of the literature even though it has been superseded by the more recent and far more comprehensive articles by Hillel Schwartz (1976) and Leonard Sweet (1979), both of which would have been available to him. 91

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91 Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, p. 230. He also there cites Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, as his only other reference.
More glaring, however, is his overemphasis on millenarianism as an epiphenomenon of socioeconomic concerns. "Unlike the millennialist who represent the upwardly mobile segment of society," writes Hansen, "many of the millenarians were either on the fringe of social and economic progress, or else belonged to a displaced elite that was losing out to the rising self-made man of Jacksonian America." The millenarian did not reject the existing social order because his Bible compelled him to, but "because the Jacksonian rhetoric of individualism, equalitarianism, and progress had left the hopes of these people unfulfilled." Repeatedly, he stresses that millenarians became millenarians because "they saw no hope" in Jacksonian America. 92 In regard to the Saints specifically, Hansen assumes that Joseph Smith's millennial program was likewise a response to "the dislocations of nineteenth-century America" and that the Mormon Kingdom of God "provided people who were alienated from the American social order with a social order of their own." He explains: "A man who could not achieve self-respect in the society of Jacksonian America could achieve it in the society of the Mormon kingdom of God.


92 Hansen, Mormonism and the American Experience, pp. 115-117.
Through an elaborate system of interlocking political, social, and ecclesiastical organizations, a hierarchy of offices and positions in the Mormon priesthood provided a prestige ladder for those who may not have been even on the bottom rung of that other American ladder of upward mobility and progress.\textsuperscript{93}

Even if Hansen had documented such marginality (which he did not), problems remain. In current scholarly debate, explanations of millenarianism as an ideology for those "on the fringe of social and economic progress" are under sharp attack. Sweet summarizes: "Increasingly it is being realized by this second generation, however, that millennialism is a natural, rational and sometimes normative force that can exert formative influence over all strata of society." No longer is millenarian thought considered the "preserve of peasants and the oppressed," nor is it construed necessarily to be "a function of social frustration, economic dislocation, or cognitive dissonance."\textsuperscript{94} The implication is that to portray Mormons as millenarians no

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., pp. 119-122. Such a clearly socioeconomic interpretation of millenarianism might have been bolstered by the insights and interpretive models of such historians and social scientists as E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawn, Vittorio Lanternari, Peter Worsley, and Christopher Hill, all of whom see millenarianism as a response to social or economic tensions but none of whom, interestingly enough, Hansen cites in either his text or his sources.

\textsuperscript{94}Sweet, "Millennialism in America." p. 513.
longer requires us to see them as socially or economically disenfranchised.

William Lamont, for example, in his *Godly Rule*, rejects Christopher Hill's characterization of English Puritanism in general and the Fifth Monarchy men in particular as derivative of socioeconomic tensions and demonstrates that chiliasm was theologically respectable and widespread regardless of social stratum.95 Robert Lerner's recent reconsideration of the medieval heresy, the "Free Spirit," provides this correction to Norman Cohn's earlier assessment: "The primary motivation for turning to the life and ideas of the Free Spirit was not that of material or social benefit, but the religious and emotional search for perfection."96 Closer chronologically to Mormonism are Owenism and the millenarian thought of the early nineteenth century studied by John F. C. Harrison. Harrison disputes the idea that millenarianism was "a psychic escape from intolerable conditions in the early Industrial Revolution" and traces its pervasiveness at all levels of English society.97 Most pointed of all is W. H. Oliver's


recent rebuttal to "the view that millenarianism and social disturbance go together." "Inevitably," he explains, "it will seem likely that early nineteenth-century anxieties bear some sort of relationship to the rise of industrial capitalism. Unluckily, such appearances are constantly pressed into service to account for a bewildering variety of phenomena," including millenarian movements. After studying British eschatologists in the first half of the nineteenth century, Oliver concludes that they "span the entire social spectrum, from noble to humble, from land to manufacturing, from master to operative, from don to illiterate, from scientist to mystic, from reactionary to agitator." The moral of the story is that historians "should be especially reluctant to conclude that prophetic and millennial theorizing arose from tensions in the lives of individuals and in their society."\(^98\)

The pendulum should not swing too far the other way, however, for as sociologist Yonina Talmon correctly points out, certain socially frustrated groups or individuals were attracted to such thinking. However, she warns against "reductionism" which makes millenarianism solely a response to social and economic

conditions. The problem with socioeconomic interpretations is stated succinctly by Hillel Schwartz: "Deprivation in psychological, social, or economic terms, however 'relative', however computed, is based upon the observer's ethic." In essence, Schwartz, like Robert F. Berkhofer, is reminding us that the participant's perspective is not only valid but vital in historical analysis.

His assertion is corroborated by sociologist David Aberle's comments about applying relative deprivation theory to millenarian movements. Relative deprivation is said to exist only when an individual or a group has a particular expectation considered to be a proper state of affairs, and then this expectation is not fulfilled. "It is important to stress," urges Aberle, "that deprivation is relative and not absolute. To a hunting and gathering group with an expectation of going hungry one out of four days, failure to find game is not a relative deprivation, although it may produce marked discomfort." Subjective discontent, therefore, cannot be extrapolated inevitably from objective poverty, as,


for example, in the case of propertyless Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, Ohio in the early 1830s. Actually, the latest demographic study of Kirtland Mormons demonstrates that, overall, the Saints had almost the same wealth distribution pattern as their neighbors.\textsuperscript{102}

Then, too, as Aberle points out, "the discovery of what constitutes serious deprivation for particular groups or individuals is a difficult empirical problem [requiring] careful attention to the reference points that people employ to judge their legitimate expectations, as well as to their actual circumstances."\textsuperscript{103} The relevant question here is how the Mormons perceived themselves and their circumstances. Did they express socioeconomic frustration or disenchantment? If so, in an age that celebrated self-reliance and free will, would they have blamed society or self for their failures? Or, would they have retreated from naturalistic explanation altogether and resignedly relegated it to the inscrutable will of Providence? The sources, however, evidence little frustration of any kind other than religious. The early Saints were an

\textsuperscript{102}Milton Backman has nearly completed a long awaited "community study" of Kirtland. He presented some of his pre-publication findings in "Decision of 1830: Birth of Mormonism in Kirtland," a paper delivered at the 1988 Annual meeting of the Mormon History Association in Logan, Utah.

\textsuperscript{103}Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory," p. 209.
intensely devout people for whom the Holy Book was a much greater motivator than the pocketbook, a people whose figuralism linked them to Moses in esteeming "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the earth."104 "Viewed in this light," writes Timothy Smith, "the Saints perceived themselves to have caught hold of the little and of the biggest thing in the universe--a cornucopia of unimaginable blessings promising 'the riches of eternity'.... One did not have to feel marginal to the existing social and economic order to opt for such an inheritance. Yeomen and craftsmen, captains and queens could recognize the infinite value of this 'pearl of great price'."105

This view coincides well with the idea that the taproot of millenarian movements is doctrinal. In condemning reductionism, Talmon stresses the "potency and partial independence of the 'religious factor'."106

Another scholar who would stress the religious sources of millenarianism is Gordon Leff. In his monumental study of heresy in the later Middle Ages, he argues that millenarianism should be viewed principally as a protest movement whose roots were doctrinal and devotional, not

104 The quotation is Hebrews 11:26.


social or economic. David L. Rowe recently applied such a model to the Millerites of upstate New York, a millenarian movement contemporary with the Mormons. They were a protest movement, to be sure, but they were protesting clerical abuses and religious institutional impotency. If the Millerites wished to see the world destroyed, it was because it had deprived them of spiritual, not economic, opportunity. Rowe even suggests that this perspective could be applied generally to "the rise of religious movements in the 1830s, and 1840s."

"Each was a rebellion against the churches," he writes, "each eschewed sectarianism, charged the churches with dividing the 'body of Christ,' and condemned the clergy for lusting after worldly power and wealth. In turn, each of the dissenting sects proposed an alternative vehicle to meaningful, spiritual, cosmological, salvationist experiences, in effect a restoration of the primitive church." The connection with Mormonism is obvious. What seems clear from recent literature is


the impossibility of drawing specific socioeconomic perimeters around millenarianism. This discovery in turn has muted the connection between millenarians and revolution. Most millenarians, after all, were more interested in the bursting open of graves than in the breaking down of institutions. Thus, it is just as likely that the Mormon Council of Fifty, a nineteenth-century governing body set up in anticipation of managing the millennial kingdom, was merely the "symbolic formality" Michael Quinn called it, rather than the revolutionary midwife for the millennium that Hansen projected it to be.\textsuperscript{109} Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Saints were restorationists and therefore represented an essentially conservative movement which was, to use Sidney Mead's colorful phrase, "backing into the future."\textsuperscript{110} The paradox of prophetic scripture and a caveat for interpreters is that millennial images serve the reactionary as readily as the revolutionary. Or as Oliver put it, "the millennial drama is simple and infinitely malleable," and thus


"there was, as well as a millennialism of revolution, a millennialism of counter-revolution." 111

Though we have ranged broadly across the landscape of millennial studies, this survey has been necessary to demonstrate fully the inadequacy of previous interpretations, particularly those of Klaus Hansen. Recent terminological rigor combined with our careful overview of LDS millennial thought makes clear that Mormonism is best viewed as a millenarian type of apocalypticism. To the degree that definitional caveats are considered, Latter-day Saints might also be classified as premillennialists. In any case, against the backdrop of nearly two thousand years of eschatological thought, Mormon teachings fall clearly and consistently on the apocalyptic end of the spectrum, however labeled. It is in this direction that we must now turn our attention.

111 Oliver, Prophets and Millennialists, pp. 16-18.
CHAPTER 3

APOCALYPTIC DUALISM IN EARLY MORMONISM

Perhaps the most basic component of apocalyptic movements, Christian or otherwise, is their dualism. They divide the world into opposing factions, with the status quo and its supporters as the enemy and themselves as the last remnant of righteousness. Moreover, they add to this sociological dualism a satisfying soteriological dualism which ultimately dams the opposition and consigns them to perdition, while they themselves live on triumphantly in a transformed world. That early Mormonism provides an excellent example of such apocalyptic dualism, however, has generally been overlooked in the past. In part, this is due to the eventual popularity of Joseph Smith's "Vision of the Three Degrees of [post-mortal] Glory" which has seemed to church member and outsider alike to subvert the eschatological dualism of heaven and hell. Yet, both social and soteriological dualism were fundamental features of the LDS thought world. How this was so, therefore, needs to be illustrated in detail and constitutes the subject of this chapter.

In the July 1838 issue of the Elders' Journal,
Joseph Smith responded to a series of questions which he said were "daily and hourly asked by all classes of people." To the question "Will everybody be damned but Mormons?" he replied, "Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent and work righteousness."\(^1\) Judging Mormonism by its more inclusivist, twentieth-century posture regarding postmortal salvation, many have felt that Joseph's response was rather tongue-in-cheek. Actually, as we shall see, he was very much in earnest and was simply reflecting a sentiment widely held among the early Saints. Benjamin Winchester, to cite only one example, reasoned that as "Mormonism" was the restoration of New Testament Christianity, "all who reject this will be damned, if the scriptures are true."\(^2\) Such categorical statements were indeed rooted in the scriptures, particularly passages like Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."\(^3\) One finds this verse frequently and unequivocally invoked in the early literature.\(^4\) In an article for the *Star*, Sidney Rigdon


\(^2\) *Times and Seasons* 1 (November 1839): 10.

\(^3\) Similarly worded declarations are found in three revelations received during the 1830s: D&C 68:9; D&C 84:74; and D&C 112:29.

\(^4\) Examples in the early literature of how this verse was used include *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (June 1834): 131, 135; 1 (July 1835): 151; 2 (March 1836): 283-84. Of
wrote:

Unless God had sent the apostles, or others authorized as they were, the world must have perished: every creature in it must have been damned: for they were to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, and he (that is, every creature) that believed and was baptized, should be saved; but he (that is, every creature) that believed not, should be damned. Had there been one creature in all the world who was in a state of salvation, or could have attained that state without the apostles, this commission would not have been correct, that is, that every creature in all the world who did not believe them and be baptized by their direction should be damned.  

But what of the honest and honorable of other churches? A *Times and Seasons* editorial answered bluntly that it did not matter "how often a man prayed, how much alms he gave, how often he fasted, or how punctual he was in paying his tithes, if he believed not, he would be damned." Such "either/or" thinking did not belong to some fanatic fringe; it permeated the membership from the Prophet on down. In a Nauvoo address Joseph referred to "the various professors of religion who do not believe in revelation & the oracles of God" and said, "I tell you

the sixty most frequently cited scriptural passages in LDS periodical literature between 1832 and 1838, only two were quoted more often than Mark 16:16 (see Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13[Summer 1973]:481).

5 *Star* 2 (September 1834): 187. Emphasis in original. This article was later reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* (see *Times and Seasons* 2[November 1840]:197).

6 *Times and Seasons* 4 (February 1943): 106.
in the name of Jesus Christ they will be damned & when
you get into the eternal world you will find it to be so
they cannot escape the damnation of hell."7 A week
later, he singled out the Presbyterians as an example and
declared, "If they reject our voice they shall be
damned."8

That the Saints did not balk at laying out the
consequences of rejecting the message of the restored
gospel is also evident from the frequency with which
anti-Mormons and other observers commented on this very
point, an emphasis they found suffocatingly
exclusivistic. La Roy Sunderland, an active
abolitionist minister who wrote one of the more widely
circulated anti-Mormon pamphlets of the 1830s, decried
Mormonism's "monstrous cruelty" in "pretending to send
all to hell who do not believe it."9 In Truth
Vindicated, Parley P. Pratt, a leading early Mormon
apologist and apostle, replied:

7 This excerpt from the Wilford Woodruff Journal is
reproduced in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds.,
The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of
the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph (Provo, Utah:

8 Ehat, Words of Joseph Smith, p. 162.

9 La Roy Sunderland, Mormonism Exposed and Refuted
(New York: Pierce and Reed, 1838), as cited in Parley P.
Pratt, Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman unmasked, and
its editor, Mr. L. R. Sunderland, exposed: Truth
Vindicated: the devil mad, and priesthood in danger!
Every dispensation that God ever sent, is equally cruel in this respect: for God sends all to hell who reject anything that he sends to save those that believe. And I add, if Methodism be true, God will send every man to hell who rejects it. And a man must be very inconsistent, to come with a message from God, and then tell the people that they can be saved just as well without, as with it. 10

Modern Latter-day Saints are accustomed to extolling the "Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory" as the antidote to the confining polarities of Protestant conceptions of the afterlife. Of course, the highest "degree of glory" or salvation—the Celestial Kingdom—is reserved only for those who "received the [LDS] testimony of Jesus and ... were baptized" and endured in faithful obedience to the end of their mortal lives. But instead of condemning the rest to hell, the Vision describes those inheriting the second degree of glory—the Terrestrial Kingdom—thus: "these are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men." Not only are godfearing Christians to be spared, but even blatantly bad people traditionally set aside for everlasting torment, such as...  

10 Ibid.

Parley P. Pratt was one of the most prolific pamphleteers in early Mormonism. Given the unsystematic manner in which doctrine was then expounded, he was, therefore, also one of the most influential "theologians" during the early decades of the church's history. His contributions and impact are ably assessed in Peter Crawley, "Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering," Dialogue 15 (Aut 1982): 13-26; and David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering," (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1982).
liars, adulterers, and "whoremongers," will enter the third degree or Telesstial Kingdom after spending at least a millennium in "hell" expiating their own sins. Only militantly anti-Mormon apostates from the LDS church qualify to spend an eternity in outer darkness with the Devil and his minions. Thus, the idea that early Mormons spoke almost entirely in terms of either being saved in the "Celestial Kingdom" or else being damned, rather than discussing "Terrestrial" or "Telesstial" salvation, seems foreign indeed. Yet part of the purpose of this chapter to trace within Mormon thought the persisting lineaments of traditional salvationist rhetoric and to demonstrate that in large part due to the Saints' apocalyptic worldview, the "Vision" did not begin to significantly alter such notions until just before they left for Utah.

We begin with a word about background. After surveying the religious landscape in America in 1844, the eminent German churchman Philip Schaff remarked that "the reigning theology of the country...is the theology of the Westminster Confession." The Westminster Confession, a

11 The "Vision" was canonized and is now found in D&C 76. The passages quoted are from D&C 76:51,75,103.

creedal delineation of faith formulated two hundred years earlier by Reformed divines from both England and Scotland, had announced that, upon death, the souls of the "righteous" were received into heaven while the "wicked" were cast into hell. "Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies," concluded the Confession, "the Scripture acknowledgeth none."  


13 Phillip Schaff, ed., The Creeds of Christendom, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), 3:671. This contrasts with the Roman Catholic ideas of Purgatory and Limbo. Purgatory is defined as "the state, place, or condition in the next world, which will continue until the last judgment, where the souls of those who die in the state of grace, but not yet free from all imperfection, make expiation for unforgiven venial sins or for the temporal punishment due to venial and mortal sins that have already been forgiven and, by so doing, are purified before they enter heaven" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Purgatory"). Limbo is "the state and place either of those souls who did not merit hell and its eternal punishments but could not enter heaven before the Redemption (the fathers' Limbo); or those souls who are eternally excluded from the beatific vision because of original sin alone (the children's Limbo)" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Limbo").

However, eighteenth and even early nineteenth century continental Catholicism differed little from Protestantism in its didactic use of descriptions of hell and damnation to motivate the populous to godly living. In France, Father Jacques Bridaine preached numerous sermons on hell which were far more lurid than those of his contemporary, Jonathan Edwards, who is popularly stereotyped in that role. Moreover, Jean-Baptiste Massillon, court preacher to young Louis XV, published an influential sermon entitled "On the small number of the elect," a piece one might expect to have been of Protestant origin. See Ralph Gibson, "Hellfire and Damnation in Nineteenth-Century France," Catholic

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final chapter of the Confession dealt with the Last Judgment and explained:

The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.  

For centuries, the polarities of heaven and hell, election and reprobation, had informed the contours of Protestant thought. Thus, in the world into which Mormonism was born, it was customary to conceptualize man as either saint or sinner, righteous or wicked, bound for heaven or headed for hell; and this formed an important part of the cultural baggage early converts carried with them into the LDS church.

Significantly, such sharply contrasting categories were not explicitly contradicted either in the Book of Mormon or in the new revelations. One early revelation described the Last Judgment in these familiar terms: "And the righteous shall be gathered on my right hand

Historical Review 74 (July 1988): 383-402.

14 Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, p. 672.

15 Some of the more obvious examples from the Book of Mormon of a polarized afterlife are 1 Ne. 15:29-36; 2 Ne. 9:11-19; and Alma 40:11-26.
unto eternal life; and the wicked on my left hand,...I will say unto them--Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."16 On another occasion the Lord spoke of the gathering "that the wheat may be secured in the garners to possess eternal life, and be crowned with celestial glory...while the tares shall be bound in bundles...that they may be burned with unquenchable fire."17 To only portray Judgment Day outcomes as either "Celestial glory" or "unquenchable fire," "eternal life" or "everlasting fire," without mentioning the intermediate glories, seems incomplete from the perspective of later LDS theology.18 Yet, with the exception of the Vision, a subject to which we will later return, the revelations of "the Restoration" perpetuated such traditional polarizations.

In fact, they seemed to strengthen the dichotomies by crystallizing into a single criterion the distinction

18 In the current lexicon of Mormon theology, eternal life "is the kind, status, type, and quality of life that God himself enjoys. Thus, those who gain eternal life receive exaltation" (McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 237). On the other hand, those whose destiny "is to be cast out with the devil and his angels, to inherit the same kingdom in a state where 'their worn dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'" are defined as "sons of perdition" (McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 746). Thus, today, these two terms apply only to the polar ends of afterlife possibilities.
between the two groups. That criterion was an individual's response to the Mormon message. "Mine elect," declared the Lord, "hear my voice and harden not their hearts."\(^{19}\) By divine definition, the "elect" were only those who accepted the restored gospel. The same criterion was extended to the definition of "goodness." "And there are none that doeth good except those who are ready to receive the fullness of my gospel, which I have sent forth unto this generation."\(^{20}\)

Conversely, the Lord defined the "wicked" just as succinctly. They were simply those "that will not hear my voice but harden their hearts."\(^{21}\) Even the casual observer will note that this is phrased as the exact negation of what constituted election. As if it were not already clear enough, a year later the Lord taught his Saints how to distinguish the two types of people: "Whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin...And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked."\(^{22}\) Parley P. Pratt defined "the wicked" as "that portion of the people who were not of the Kingdom of

\(^{19}\) D&C 29:7.  
\(^{20}\) D&C 35:12.  
\(^{21}\) D&C 38:6.  
\(^{22}\) D&C 84:49-53.
On the other hand, believers were collectively described as "the righteous." A Times and Seasons article explained that "when a man is adopted into the church and kingdom of God, as one of his Saints; his name is then enrolled in the book of the names of the righteous." When talking theology, then, the Saints used the word "wicked" as a sort of generic term for all unbelievers regardless of their personal ethics.

The lines between good and evil, between saintly and satanic, were thus clearly drawn and had important consequences for how millenarian Mormons pictured the world around them. That life was black and white for them is apparent, for instance, in the Book of Mormon.


24 Times and Season 4 (March 1843): 141.

25 Such social reductionism may seem strange to twentieth-century pluralists, but it is quite typical of certain small groups with clearly marked membership, especially millenarian movements. In her book, Natural Symbols, Mary Douglas points out that the ideas of "inside and outside, purity within, corruption without" are "common to small bounded communities" and can be described as "a form of metaphysical dualism." The doctrine of "two kinds of humanity, one good, the other bad, and the association of the badness of some humans with cosmic powers of evil," she writes, "is basically similar to some of the so-called dualist religions." Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (London: Cresset Press, 1970), pp. 118-119. Not only did Zoroastrianism divide the universe between two warring deities in its search for a satisfying theodicy, but, as we have already seen, such apocalyptic writings as Daniel and Revelation, which constitute the mainstay of Christian millenarianism, also dualistically depict history as the ongoing battle between the Lord and Lucifer.
statement that that which "inviteth and enticeth" to sin and evil is from the devil, while that which "inviteth and enticeth" to do good is "inspired of God." Thus, concluded Mormon, the way to judge is as plain "as daylight is from the dark night."26 The emphasis on the simplicity of moral judgment, here, is striking but typical of apocalypticists. In looking at early Christianity as a millenarian movement, John Gager found that the otherwise complicated moral judgments required in complex society were "resolved into a series of binary oppositions: poor-rich, good-evil, pious-hypocrite, elect-damned. And a final reckoning was proclaimed for the near future."27 Similarly Kenelm Burridge's studies led him to conclude that millenarian movements take the disquieting and "unmanageable manyness" of life and re-order it into "sharply contrasted contraries."28

In terms of these polarities, what was true for the individual was also true for the group. Neighboring churches were identified in various revelations as "the congregations of the wicked."29 "Babylon, literally

26 Moroni 7:12-19.


understood," wrote John Taylor, "is...the Roman Catholics, Protestants, and all that have not had the keys of the kingdom."30 And in the Book of Mormon, one finds this classification of known religions: "Behold, there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth."31

Entire cities were also classified collectively. After their initial failure in London, early missionaries wrote home that though it was "the boast of the Gentiles," London contained "one million five hundred thousand souls who are ripening in iniquity and preparing for the wrath of God; and like the ox going to the slaughter, know not the day of their visitation."32 Yet, as Parley Pratt later explained: "The people of England may repent, and never be destroyed; but if they do not repent, they will perish, in common with all nations who are unprepared for the second advent of the Messiah: For lo! the time is near--very near, when every one who does not give heed to Jesus Christ 'will be

30 Times and Seasons 6 (June 1845): 939.
31 1 Nephi 14:10.
32 Times and Seasons 2 (December 1840): 250.
destroyed from among the people." This applies equally to England, and all other places."33 Thus, this was not just Yankee arrogance, for the American cities of Boston, Albany and Cincinnati were singled out for "desolation and utter abolition" if they rejected the gospel.34 Even close friends were not exempt. Edward Partridge once penned this earnest entreaty to all his former acquaintances: "O take the advice of one that wishes you well...humble yourselves before God and embrace the everlasting gospel before the judgments of God sweep you from the face of the earth."35

In his book, The Logic of Millennial Thought, Davidson demonstrates at length how what he calls the "rhetoric of polarization" inheres in all millenarian movements.36 But if understandable and inherent, such a polarized cosmology could also be problematic. Apocalypticism expected opposition, assumed animosities,

33 Pratt, An Answer, p. 41.
35 Messenger and Advocate 1 (January 1835): 61.
36 James West Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 163-175, 281-297. Polarized perceptions of society, however, are not restricted to millenarian groups. As George F. Kennan wrote in "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," Foreign Affairs 25 (July 1947): 59, referring to Soviet attitudes towards the outside world, "It is the undeniable privilege of every man to prove himself right in the thesis that the world is his enemy; for if he reiterates it frequently enough and makes it the background of his conduct he is bound eventually to be right."

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and in so doing created a sort of siege mentality. When history is seen as one continual struggle of the forces of God against Satan, "it is natural," explains James Moorhead, "for the adherents of the Kingdom to perceive a coherent, sinister intelligence animating the various problems they encounter." 37

When Gentile neighbors learned that the Saints had fitted them into a larger-than-life battle either as emissaries of Satan or, at least, as the unwitting dupes he manipulated to block the progress of the Kingdom, it is little wonder that their dander was raised. Correspondingly, when Missourians read in the Star that all those who did not obey the restored gospel would be consumed at Christ's coming, and that such a day was soon at hand, how did they feel? Or, when the Saints emphasized that with the speedy dawning of the millennium, the only people who would be inhabiting Jackson County would be Native American Israelites and believing Gentiles (meaning baptized Mormons), should that have bothered the old settlers? On one occasion, Edward Partridge interpreted Malachi 4 to mean that the saints would "literally tread upon the ashes of the wicked after they are destroyed from off the face of the earth." 38 When such sentiments found their way into


38 Messenger and Advocate 1 (January 1835): 58.
print, would the average Gentile have wanted them for neighbors? Clearly, such exclusivism coupled with vivid apocalyptic imagery did not augur well for peaceful interaction between Mormon and Gentile.

During the period under study, it was this aspect of Mormon millenarianism that must be considered a prime source of conflict, rather than the idea of "political kingdomism" which only began to develop in the late Nauvoo years. To read such ideas back into the 1830s is anachronistic. Ironically, at least from the point of Gentile perception, it was the Council of Fifty that actually began taking the exclusive edge off earlier eschatology. Years ago, David B. Davis documented the fear of conspiracy characteristic of antebellum America which manifested itself, in part, as a paranoia that Mormonism was un-American. What seems equally apparent is that Mormon millenarianism disposed the Saints to a similar conspiratorial view which, clothed in scriptural imagery, leagued the whole sectarian world with Lucifer.39

In a sense, then, Laurence Moore, is correct when he speaks of religious "outsiders" such as the Mormons "inventing" an identity for themselves simply by claiming

to be different. Yet even though one may agree with his overall attempt to downplay the degree to which Mormonism was exceptionalist, in throwing out the bathwater, he almost discards the baby. What is frustratingly absent from his provocative presentation is any substantial explanation for why the Saints would have stressed their separateness and almost welcomed persecution. The whole tenor of his discussion of "inventing" identity through "deliberate strategies of differentiation" makes the process sound far more conscious, even conniving than it really was. Placing Mormon views and behavior in the context of an apocalyptic worldview, however, as is here being done, offers a much more satisfying analysis. As will be


41Grant Underwood, "Re-Visioning Mormon History," Pacific Historical Review 55 (Aug 1985): 403-426 challenges from various angles the popular perception of Mormonism as dramatically countercultural in the nineteenth century. My review of the evidence lends credence to Moore's statements that "any case for Mormon difference that rests on a purported Mormon rejection of middle-class standards of virtue is bound to fail" and that the Mormon-Gentile problems "represented conflicts about power, not about values." See Moore, Religious Outsiders, pp. 31, 32.


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demonstrated in subsequent chapters, for a group that looked at the scriptures apocalyptically, the "rhetoric of deviance" from the world and its fate was inevitable. A vision of persecution followed by ultimate vindication was the role clearly set out in scripture for the people of God. Moreover, the very foundation of the apocalyptic worldview consisted of the dualistic differentiation of society and distinct destinies being predicted for each segment.

Yet, if their millenarianism promoted social stereotyping, their experience in life seemed to validate it. During much of the first sixteen years of Mormon history, the saints experienced severe persecution and crisis conditions. While their millenarianism might have been partially responsible for provoking persecution, it is even more clear, as will be seen, that persecution intensified their millenarianism. Persecution served to concretize and localize the apocalyptic scenario encountered in the scriptures. The Saints knew that as time spiraled to its climax at the Second Coming, Satan would be waging a war of ever increasing intensity against them, and therefore, persecution became an assurance, albeit a painful one, that all was proceeding on prophetic schedule. As Moorhead explains, "opposition could in turn become evidence to the believer that the millennium was indeed approaching and that his zeal
should be redoubled.\footnote{James H. Moorhead, "Social Reform and the Divided Conscience of Antebellum Protestantism," \textit{Church History} 48 (Dec 1979): 421.}

Though physically destructive, such opposition, precisely because it fit into an eschatological drama with a pre-determined victory for the Saints, was less successful in daunting them. Their apocalyptic ideals provided strength in a world turned upside down, and allowed them to rationalize otherwise irrational behavior. Moreover, consistent with Michael Barkun's axiom that "men cleave to hopes of imminent worldly salvation when the hammerblows of disaster destroy the world they have known," harassment helps account for oscillations in millenarian intensity.\footnote{Michael Barkun, \textit{Disaster and the Millennium} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 1.} As persecution increased, there was a corresponding increase in millenarian rhetoric.

This clearly can be seen in the expulsion from Missouri. The besieged Saints were confronted forcibly with the stark inadequacy of their efforts to thwart the onslaughts of the Gentile enemy. As a result, they felt and expressed a heightened dependence upon God, realizing that nothing short of his supernatural intervention could defeat Satan's minions and usher in the long desired millennial day of rest. In a hymn composed shortly after the Saints' world had been shattered in Far West,
Missouri, Parley Pratt shifted from his previously pastoral treatment of eschatological themes to a more explicitly apocalyptic tone:

How long, O Lord, wilt thou forsake
The Saints who tremble at Thy word?
Awake, O Arm, O God! Awake
And teach the nations Thou art God.

Descend with all Thy holy throng,
The year of Thy redeemed bring near,
Haste, haste the day of vengeance on,
Bid Zion's children dry their tear.45


How long O Lord shall men prevail,
To kill and drive thy saints?
Let not, O God, thy promise fail,
But hear thou their complaints!

And let thy judgements be made known,
Until oppression cease,
And wickedness shall all be gone,
The earth be filled with peace.

*Times and Seasons* 2 (April 1841):

373-374.

As late as the early twentieth century, Latter-day Saints still sang these words from a hymn composed by Mormon apostle Charles Penrose:

In thy mountain retreat, God will strengthen thy feet;
On the necks of thy foes thou shalt tread;
And their silver and gold, as the Prophets have told,
Shall be brought to adorn they fair head....

Thy deliverance is nigh, thy oppressors shall die,
And the Gentiles shall bow 'neath thy rod.


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As the Saints fled Missouri, Joseph Smith and other leaders were taken captive and languished in Liberty Jail for nearly six months. Their situation was squalid and they were reported to have been fed human flesh. From this crucible of adversity, Joseph Smith himself pled that the Lord would avenge the Saints of their wrongs, expressing, at the same time, intense faith that "the time soon shall come when the Son of Man shall descend in the clouds of heaven" and shall "have our oppressors in derision" and "will laugh at their calamity, and mock them when their fear cometh."\textsuperscript{46}

Similar sentiments were expressed after Smith's martyrdom in 1844 and on the eve of the exodus west the next year. John Taylor spoke for many when he declared, "We owe the United States nothing. We go out by force, as exiles from freedom. The government and people owe us millions for the destruction of life and property in Missouri and in Illinois. The blood of our best men stains the land, and the ashes of our property will preserve it till God comes out of his hiding place, and gives this nation a hotter place than he did Sodom and Gomorrah. 'When they cease to spoil, they shall be spoiled,' for the Lord hath spoken it."\textsuperscript{47} The connection between injustices suffered and apocalyptic yearnings is

\textsuperscript{46} History of the Church 3:291-292.

\textsuperscript{47} Times and Seasons 6 (Dec 1845): 1052.
pointed. Earlier a *Times and Seasons* editorial had endeavored to comfort the Saints with this thought: "He that said to the flood 'come' and make an end of wickedness, will say also 'go' to the elements, and sweep the earth with the besom of destruction till it is fit for Paradise again, and then my people shall inherit the kingdom."48

Such rhetoric is typical of embattled millenarians. When a people feel the weight of the oppressor's heel, it is natural that of all the facets of the eschatological drama, the one they focus on the most is the destruction of the wicked. As Davidson explains, the judgments to be poured out "were part of an immutable guarantee that no matter how much the wicked seemed to triumph in the present age, God would supernaturally set the scales of Justice aright at the Day of Judgment."49 Such was the simple yet profound hope of a great many early Mormons. In his study of the French Prophets, Hillel Schwartz calls it the "ethos of judgment."50 Since in the rhetoric of polarization the term "wicked" included all opposers, scriptural promises of their ultimate destruction at Christ's coming provided a satisfying

48 *Times and Seasons* 6 (July 1845): 952.

49 Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought*, p. 83.

conclusion to history in the Saint's eyes. One early member wrote to a kinsman in the East, recounting the hardships and deprivations endured in the last days of Nauvoo. His one hope, though, was that the Saints would "have a name and a being on the earth when our enemies are extinct or else the word of the Lord fails" and "we will some day become the head and not the tail." It was the apocalyptic dream of the "great reversal."

In important ways such sentiments found their best contemporary analogue in the millenarianism of antebellum blacks. For them, as well as for the Mormons, the coming of Christ was a Day of Deliverance at once liberating and vindicating. Yet, the extent of this emphasis has been overlooked. Donald Matthews claims that "it is the Apocalypse which is missing from most evaluations of black Christianity." Because students of Mormonism have tended to miss how profoundly apocalypticist the early Church was, they have also failed to stress the importance to early Mormon theology of a day of judgment and vengeance as part of the millennial drama.

51 Solon Foster to Luther Foster, 28 December 1848, Foster Family Correspondence, Church Archives.


53 When considering the "great and dreadful day of the Lord," the Saints' focus was on the attendant destruction of the unbelievers, at least as much as on the salvation of the Saints. For examples, see, Star 1 (February 1833): [67]; and 1 (January 1833): [60].

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The apocalyptic hope, however, is not restricted to those outwardly threatened. According to Davidson, whenever the elements of polarization and imminence combine in a millennial logic, "the temptation [grows] to bring down judgment future and apply it to the present." Both early Mormon experience and ideology demonstrate that the typical "them--us" dichotomy of apocalypticism prevailed, as well as a pervasive feeling that the Lord's coming was nigh. According to the Davidson model, then, this should have led to a desire for prophecy to promptly take its rightful toll, regardless of external animosities. William Smith's remarks illustrate the point. "When I consider the condition of mankind," he wrote, "even, what are termed enlightened nations, and through the glass of scriptures see manifest all their blindness, depravity, and hypocrisy, my heart sickens at the sight and I turn away from the contemplation and I am ready to exclaim, O Lord!

How long shall such wickedness,
Be suffered in the land?
How long before thou make bare
Thy own Almighty hand?

Whatever the external stimuli, an apocalyptic worldview infused the saved-damned dichotomy with an imminence and a tangibility that also significantly shaped the Saints' philosophy of missions. One early

54 Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought, p. 294
55 Times and Seasons 2 (June 1841): 445.
revelation commanded the brethren to "lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth, and declare...that destruction shall come upon the wicked."56 Another told them to set forth "clearly and understandably the desolation of abomination in the last days."57 This the elders took literally. As one individual expressed it, "this is not the time to sing lullabies to a slumbering world."58 Even in the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith chose to petition the Lord thus: "And whatsoever city thy servants shall enter, and the people of that city receive not the testimony of thy servants...let it be upon that city according to that which thou hast spoken...terrible things concerning the wicked, in the last days--that thou wilt pour out they judgments without measure."59

Thus, when Freeman Nickerson arrived in Boston, he announced in all earnestness: "I request the citizens and authorities of the city of Boston to open a house for the servant of the people, that the Lord hath sent to this city to warn the people of the destruction which will take place in this generation, that is now on the earth, and teach them how they may escape, and come through and

56 D&C 63:37.
57 D&C 84:117.
58 *Times and Seasons* 2 (July 1841): 461.
59 D&C 109:41,45.
abide the day of the second coming of Christ to reign on
the earth a thousand years." In 1837, Parley Pratt was
in New York City, where he published his first edition of
A Voice of Warning. In a chapter not since included, he
similarly declared, "Wo, wo, wo unto the inhabitants of
this city; and again wo, wo, wo unto the inhabitants in
all this land; for your sins have reached unto Heaven,
and God has remembered your iniquities; and only this
once will he call upon you to repent....Behold the sword
of vengeance hangs over you and except you repent, the
Lord will cause that it shall soon overtake you." For
this reason, Orson Hyde, in his "Prophetic Warning,"
felt compelled to urge: "Pray, therefore, that God may
send unto you some servant of his, who is authorized from
on high, to administer to you the ordinances of the
gospel. Except you do this, you...must fall victims to
the messengers of destruction, which God will soon send
upon the earth." If in the early years, then, the phrase "voice of
warning" carried very literal connotations, it must be
balanced with an acknowledgment that the elders were
occasionally counseled to avoid overzealousness in

60 Reported in Times and Seasons 3 (May 1842): 798.

61 Parley P. Pratt, A Voice of Warning (New York,
1837), pp. 141-142.

62 Messenger and Advocate 2 (July 1836): 346. The
tract was published separately as a broadside entitled A
Prophetic Warning (Toronto, August 1836).
declaring judgments against the wicked. As W. W. Phelps advised, "Warn in compassion without threatening the wicked with judgments which are to be poured out upon the world hereafter. You have no right...to collect the calamities of six thousand years, and paint them upon the curtain of these last days to scaro mankind to repentance; no, you are to preach the gospel...even glad tidings of great joy unto all people."  

Nor was the proclamation to be made without pathos. During the same temple dedicatory prayer, it was remarked, "O Lord, we delight not in the destruction of our fellow men; their souls are precious before thee; but thy word must be fulfilled."  

And that such comment was more than mere rhetoric is obvious from diary entries such as Orson Hyde's for 16 September 1832: "Called on sister Laura and her husband Mr. North. They disbelieved. We took our things and left them, and tears from all eyes freely ran, and we shook the dust of our feet against them, but it was like piercing my heart; and all I can say is 'The will of the Lord be done'."  

By now it should be obvious that the Saints apocalypticism made quite clear who "the wicked" were and

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63 *Star* 1 (July 1832): [14].

64 *D&C* 109:43-44.

specified the imminent, this-worldly judgments to be poured out upon them. If all of this strikes at modern sensibilities, it must be remembered that the early Saints did not have the benefit of twentieth-century psychology to make their message less abrasive. Rather, they had a whole Bible full of doomsaying holy men after whom to pattern their ministries. Even more than example, for a people weaned on the Bible and steeped in its literal interpretation, there were simply too many graphic passages predicting "woe" upon unbelievers to have the notion "spiritualized" or "explained away."

Time and again in early Mormon writings one encounters references to Moses' prophecy that all who will not hearken to Christ will be "cut off from among the people," or to Paul's portrayal of a Savior descending in flaming fire to take vengeance "on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel." No Bible

66 Modern Mormons simply do not speak to their associates in such apocalyptic terms. Today, such "if-you-don't-repent-you'll-be-destroyed" talk more accurately characterizes the proselyting of the Jehovah's Witnesses than it does the Latter-day Saints. Few would expect a modern Mormon to address his friends as did Edward Partridge and pointedly tell them that if they did not accept the gospel they would soon be swept off the face of the earth. Today's LDS missionaries are influenced by a different psychology of motivation. To talk of impending destruction or imminent punishments is perceived as needless negativism.

67 Moses' prophecy was originally recorded in Deut. 18:15-19, but the Mormons preferred the rendition in Acts 3:22-23. Examples of their discussion of this passage can be found in Star 1 (September 1832): 30; 2 (June 1843): 161; and Times and Seasons 2 (April 1841): 359.
verse, however, more effectively bolstered an apocalyptic scenario for the last days than Luke 17:26: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." This scripture told the Saints two things. First, the majority of mankind in their day would reject the message; and second, such people would therefore be destroyed. "Just precisely as it was then," wrote the editors of the Times and Seasons, "so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man.' Revelations shall precede his coming, the whole world shall ridicule them and cast them off, for so it was in the days of Noah, and the consequences were inevitable destruction; and so it will be with this generation, the righteous only, will be saved."68

That this would leave few people to enjoy the millennium merely accorded with their understanding of Isaiah's prophecy that "the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left."69 "This destruction." explained Parley Pratt in his Voice of Warning, "is to come by fire as literally as the flood in the days of Noah; and it will consume both priests and people from the earth...or else we must get a new edition of the

Paul's words are found in 2 Thess. 1:7-10. Examples of how the Mormons used this passage are Star 2 (May 1834): 155, Messenger and Advocate 1 (January 1835): 56-57; and Times and Seasons 1 (December 1839): 26.

68 Times and Seasons 2 (March 1841): 351.

69 Isa. 24:6
Bible, leaving out the 24th of Isaiah." For literalist Latter-day Saints, it was no more difficult to conceive of the earth being swept clean of every single non-Mormon at the Second Coming than it was to accept the fact that the Flood had destroyed all but the eight believers then in existence. Parley Pratt explained to Queen Victoria that "as Noah was a survivor of a world destroyed, and himself and family the sole proprietors of the earth, so will the saints of the Most High possess the earth, and its whole dominion, and tread upon the ashes of the wicked." Given its apocalyptic character, then, Mormonism consistently moved ahead the traditional saved-damned reckoning of the Final Judgment (which followed the millennium) to a saved-destroyed outcome apparent at Christ's Advent. "In the day of the coming of the Son of Man," explained an early revelation, "cometh an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked; and in that day will I send mine angels to pluck out the wicked and cast them into unquenchable fire." Moreover, as we have seen, there was no middle ground. Only Mormons would survive the second coming of Christ. As Sidney

70 Parley P. Pratt, Voice of Warning and Instruction to all People (New York: Sanford, 1837), p. 71.

71 Pratt, Truth Vindicated, p. 6. See also Malachi 4:1-3.

72 D&C 63:53-54.
Rigdon put it, all people on the earth during this period would be Saints: "all the rest of the world will without exception be cut off."  

That early Mormons viewed the Second Coming primarily as a day of judgment or vengeance also served as impetus for the gathering of the elect—the other phase of their missionary outreach. Rigdon explained: "When the God of heaven sent a messenger to proclaim judgment on the old world, he provided an ark for the safety of the righteous: When Sodom was burned, there was a Zoar provided for Lot and his family...and in the last days, when the Lord brings judgment on the world, there will be a Mount Zion, and a Jerusalem, where there will be deliverance."  

For first-decade disciples, Zion  

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73 *Messenger and Advocate* 3 (November 1836): 403.  
In a 16 March 1841 sermon (Ehat, *Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 65), for the first time on record, Joseph Smith advanced the idea that there would be "wicked" men on the earth during the millennium. When he did, it represented an abrupt about-face from a decade of Mormon consensus to the contrary, and it would be at least another decade before the idea really caught hold even among church leaders. As late as 1857, Orson Hyde was still talking of all the wicked being consumed at the Second Coming (see *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Dept., 1855-86], 5:355-56). On the other hand, Brigham Young clearly felt that there would be "wicked" men—unbelievers—on the earth during the Millennium (see *Journal of Discourses*, 2:316, 7:142).  

74 When Hazen Aldrich was set apart as one of the first missionary "Seventy," he was typically instructed that his twofold mission was to "warn the wicked" and "gather the elect." *Kirtland Council Minute Book,* p. 174, Church Archives.  

75 *Star* 2 (Jan 1834): 126.
was the only spot the Lord had designated as "a
defense...and a refuge from the storm."76 Thus, Joseph
Smith urged all to "embrace the everlasting covenant, and
flee to Zion before the overflowing scourge overtake
you."77 Even after the expulsion from Missouri prompted
greater emphasis on gathering to settlements of the
Saints wherever they might be, called "stakes" of Zion,
the First Presidency followed the established rationale
in an 1841 editorial. "This gathering," they declared,
"must take place before the Lord comes to 'take vengeance
upon the ungodly'."78 If sand in the hourglass of time
was running out, the Saints were assured that the "great
and dreadful day of the Lord" would not dawn until the
elect "shall all have come from one end of heaven to the
other, and not one is left in all nations...under
heaven, and then and not until then will Christ come."79
Before the Lord rains down his wrath upon the world, all
believers would be gathered to the prophetic panoply--
Zion and "her stakes." Thus, the Mormons' philosophy of,
and motivation for, missions was integrally related to
their millenarianism. Because the Day of the Lord, as a
day of judgment, was at hand, the elders were to traverse

77 History of the Church 1:315-316.
78 Times and Seasons 2 (Jan 1841): 276.
79 Messenger and Advocate 3 (Nov 1836): 404.
the earth to warn the wicked and gather the elect, preaching "nothing but repentance," for truly it was "a day of warning, and not a day of many words."\textsuperscript{80}

From all that has been presented thus far, it seems clear that apocalypticism was deeply entrenched in Mormon eschatology and soteriology. But what about the famous 1832 "Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory?" Did it not immediately uproot all the old "either-or" notions? Was not their apocalyptic worldview drastically altered by this vision of a pluralized rather than a polarized afterlife? The answer is "no," and since it counters standard assumptions, the "how" merits careful consideration.

First, a brief history. The "Vision," as it was commonly called in the early years, was received by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in February 1832. Five months later what appears to be the earliest identifiable copy of the revelation was published in the \textit{Star}, and the Vision attracted a little attention for the first year or two.\textsuperscript{81} Though some "stumbled at it," at least one

\textsuperscript{80} A good discussion of both substance and style in early Mormon preaching is Barbara J. Higdon, "The Role of Preaching in the Early Latter Day Saint Church, 1830-1846" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri, 1961). The quote is D&C 63:58.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Star} 1 (July 1832): [10-11]. See Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974).
individual considered it "the greatest news that was ever published to man." 82  A few developed strange ideas about it that required reproof, but even legitimate comments were sufficiently superficial that they offered no real interpretation or elucidation of the Vision and certainly no repudiation of the traditional Christian cosmos. 83  A specific search of presently available periodicals, pamphlets, and tracts, as well as hundreds of unpublished diaries, journals, and letters from this time period reveals that throughout the rest of the decade and on into the early 1840s, the Vision was generally ignored. 84  Admittedly, there were numerous

82 For samples of the "stumbling," see John Murdock Journal, 18, 27-29; and Orson Pratt Journal (1833-34), both in the Church Archives. There were also examples of "stumbling" over the Vision in Britain as well. Unfortunately for intellectual history, the cause for concern is almost never identified.

For the "praise," see Star 1 (July 1832): [14].

83 For an account of some who advanced doctrinally unacceptable positions, see History of the Church 1:366. For an early but brief discussion that was apparently acceptable, see Star 1 (June 1832): [6]; 1 (July 1832): [22] (this source is reproduced in History of the Church 1:283); and Star 1 (February 1833): [59].

84 Some have felt that the absence of discussion of the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory was by design, that due to its revolutionary nature, it was considered too advanced for those still needing milk and was therefore intentionally suppressed during the early years. Such thinking is based on the Prophet's recorded counsel to the English missionaries to "remain silent concerning the gathering, the vision, and the book of Doctrine and Covenants, until such time as the work was fully established" (History of the Church, 2:492). The assumption is that similar restrictions must have been in effect in the United States. There are problems, however. In the first place, there is almost no
references to the "Celestial Kingdom," but for most
Mormons that term seems to have been just another name
for the heaven Christians had always talked about, and it
required no new mental framework to adopt it.
"Celestial," after all, was a common synonym for
"heavenly." Discussion, even mention, of the Terrestrial
or Celestial "glories," however, which might have
hastened the demise of dualistic thinking, appears to
have been almost nonexistent. The only example of
documentary evidence to support this extrapolation. On
the contrary, there is overwhelming evidence to show that
such a limitation was not in effect. American
missionaries constantly talked of "the gathering." It
was central to their millenarian message. They were also
occasionally encouraged to preach the "late revelations"
(Times and Seasons 4 [April 1843]: 175, for example). Thus
two of the three doctrines initially restricted in
Britain were openly advanced in America. Since the
Vision was merely listed along with other delicate
doctrines, rather than being singled out, can its absence
in America be considered intentional when the other
controversial concepts were freely advocated?
Furthermore, it should be remembered that even in
the Prophet's proscription, provision was made for a
later learning when "the work was fully established." Yet we have no evidence of anything more than passing
mention of the Vision in any of the early Church
headquarters, whether Kirtland, Far West, or early
Nauvoo. Though in extant reports of sermons and in the
early periodicals we find that the "plan of salvation"
and the afterlife were frequent topics of discussion,
they almost never included the Vision, even when written
to a gathered Mormon audience accustomed to other deep doctrine.

85 One exception to this is the following from W. W.
Phepels: "All men have a right to their opinions, but to
adopt them for rules of faith and worship, is wrong, and
may finally leave the souls of them that receive them for
spiritual guides, in the celestial kingdom: For these are
they who are of Paul, and of Apollos... but received not
the gospel." Star 1 [February 1833]: 69. Also
interesting along this line, though from a decade later,
is Joseph's poeticized version:

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anything like a substantive commentary on the Vision was Joseph Smith's 1843 poetic version. Perhaps the experience of reissuing the revelation as a kind of epic poem stimulated the Prophet's pondering of the overall significance of the Vision, for in the remaining sixteen months of his life he discussed in new ways the nature of hell and the torment of the damned. Furthermore, he specifically ridiculed the pervasive Protestant rhetoric that in the hereafter there were only two possible destinies—heaven or hell. This represents a watershed

These are they that came out for Apollos and Paul;
For Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;
For Enoch and Moses, and Peter and John;
For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.
(Times and Seasons 4 [February 1843]: 85)

Another exception which illustrates the conceptual confusion apparent when these kingdoms were mentioned is Wilford Woodruff's record of Zebedee Coltrin's prophecy upon his head when he was ordained a "seventy": "Also that I should visit COLUB [Kolob] & Preach to the spirits in Prision & that I should bring all of my friends or relatives forth from the Terrestrial Kingdom (who had died) by the Power of the Gospel" (Dean C. Jesse, ed., "The Kirtland Diary of Wilford Woodruff," BYU Studies 12 [Summer 1972]: 380).

86 Times and Seasons 4 (February 1843): 82-85.

87 Ehat, Words of Joseph Smith, pp. 183, 206, 211-14, 240, 244, 319, 330-31, 335, 342-61, 367-72, 381. Of course, Joseph Smith was not the first individual to challenge traditional formulations. Mitigated conceptions of hell, eternal damnation, and divine punishment have been advanced periodically since the days of Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers (see D. P. Walker, The Decline of Hell [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964]).
in Mormon thought.

Until that time, if the Vision were discussed at all, it was done from within an interpretive framework that was still patently polarized. Even the Prophet himself, when describing the thinking which led to the revelation, wrote: "It appeared self-evident from what truths were left [in the Bible], that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body the term 'Heaven,' as intended for the Saints' eternal home must include more kingdoms than one."\(^{88}\) There is a subtle difference between saying that there are divisions within heaven and saying that there are different heavens, and the Saints had not yet shifted to the latter position. W. W. Phelps felt that the great value of the Vision lay in providing details on the various heavenly mansions.\(^{89}\) To be sure, those mansions were distinguished as "the great, greater, [and] greatest,"

\(^{88}\) *History of the Church*, 1:245. Such an idea had also occurred to earlier religionists. "The idea of different degrees of felicity in future life, as differences of reward was widely prevalent" among the early Church fathers. This was also true even of some later Protestant divines. "In opposition to Rome, the influence of personal merit on the future state was denied by these theologians; but some of them, while admitting that blessedness is essentially the same for all, hold to several degrees of blessedness." (John McClintock and James Strong, eds., *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 10 vols. [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1867-81; reprinted., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969], 3:315, 317.)

\(^{89}\) *Star* 1 (July 1832): [14].

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but conceptually they all blended into one "heaven." As Joseph Smith put it:

The glory celestial is one like the sun;  
The glory terrestrial is one like the moon;  
The glory telestial is one like the stars,  
And all harmonize like the parts of a tune.90

"Men are agents unto themselves," declared an early Saint, "and they can prepare for a kingdom of glory, or, for one without glory"—as much as if to say, though clothed in new terminology, men can prepare for heaven or for hell.91 Even part of the poem's final quatrain summed up the entire revelation in dualistic terms: "The secret of life is blooming in heaven, and blasting in hell."92

Telling evidence that the Vision did not immediately force an abandonment of traditional notions of damnation and hell is manifest in the Mormon reaction to Universalism. Universalism reflected the optimism of the Age of Enlightenment from which it emerged and, as its name implies, taught that all men would ultimately be redeemed, that damnation would be done away, and that the notion of eternal torment in a lake of sulfurous fire

90 Times and Seasons 4 (February 1843): 85.

91 Star 1 (March 1833): [77]. Or as W. W. Phelps later put it, "The vision points out the degrees of happiness and misery" so plainly that "all of the commonest understanding may learn for themselves what kingdom the Lord will give them an inheritance in" (Messenger and Advocate 1[February 1835]:66).

92 Times and Seasons 4 (February 1843): 85.
was superstition. Modern Mormons might find much that is appealing in such ideas, believing, as they do, that the vast majority of mankind will ultimately receive some degree of salvation. Early Saints, however, did not react this way. When a Universalist preacher came to Kirtland in 1835, Oliver Cowdery withstood him with the same zeal that Gideon did Nehor, a Book of Mormon "Universalist." What incensed Oliver Cowdery was the audacity of asserting, in the face of overwhelming scriptural proof to the contrary, that there would be no damnation: "If no such principle exists as damnation, and that eternal," Oliver exclaimed, "[God] certainly has spoken nonsense and folly."94

It must also be remembered that before the late Nauvoo period there was little explanatory discussion of the term "unpardonable sin." Therefore, even if the early Saints had talked of damnation coming in its fullest sense only to "sons of perdition," there were at


94 Messenger and Advocate 1 (July 1835): 151. Lewis O. Saum has recently reminded us of the widespread antipathy to Universalism among the common man in antebellum America. See his The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 44-47.
that time no conceptual restraints limiting the category to apostate Mormons alone, which is the case today. 95 Again we see that circumstances and understandings in the 1830s did not require interpretations of the Vision that undermined their apocalyptic dualism.

As for hell itself, Joseph's belief in its reality, and his use of traditional jargon to describe it, is conspicuous as late as his 1843 poem. Whereas in the original scriptural text of the Vision the word "hell" is found only once, the Prophet uses it six times in his poem. In terms familiar to Christians from any century, he talks of the ungodly suffering "in hell-fire, and vengeance, the doom of the damn'd." No passage, however, is more striking than this quatrain describing the fate of the sons of perdition:

They are they who must go to the great lake of fire, Which burneth with brimstone, yet never consumes, And dwell with the devil, and angels of his, While eternity goes and eternity comes. 96

Though to later Saints a hell that is continually burning

95 A standard current statement on the nature of the "unpardonable sin" and the "sons of perdition" is McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 746, 816-17. Joseph began discussing these topics in depth about the same time he was also modifying his conception of hell and the afterlife, that is, during the final months of his life (see Ehat, Words of Joseph Smith, pp. 330, 334-35, 342, 347-48, 353-54, 360-61). It is true that in June 1833, Joseph mentioned the sons of perdition, but, as we have already noted, this was only to say that not enough was known about them or their destiny to justify discussing it (History of the Church, 1:366).

96 Times and Seasons 4 (February 1843): 83.
but never consumes is a mass of confusion, such was not always the case.

That the Vision is not mentioned in the earliest anti-Mormon works is further evidence that it was not initially seen as subversive to contemporary Protestant thought. Given the tenor of their writings, it is hardly conceivable that such men as Philastus Hurlbut, Origen Bacheler, or La Roy Sunderland would not have eagerly seized the chance to ridicule the Vision had they been aware of it or perceived its eschatological implications.¹⁷ Yet the earliest I have found mention of the doctrine is in ex-Mormon John Corrill's *A Brief History* published in 1839. Though Corrill had been a leading elder almost from the first, his comments evidence little more than simple awareness of the revelation.¹⁸ Furthermore, later anti-Mormon commentators like Henry Caswall or J. B. Turner seem only to be borrowing from Corrill.¹⁹ The question that

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¹⁷ Philastus Hurlbut was the principal collaborator, but the book was published as Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834); Origen Bacheler, *Mormonism Exposed* (New York: Published at 162 Nassau St., opposite the Park, 1838); and La Roy Sunderland, *Mormonism Exposed and Refuted* (New York: Pierce and Reed, 1838). There is neither direct mention nor allusion to the Vision in any of these works.


follows, then, is why did all these early anti-Mormons overlook that which would later become stock-in-trade for such polemicists if the Vision's revolutionary significance were widely perceived?

Also significant is the case of former Mormon William Harris. In his expose, he claimed that the Saints felt that their idea of heaven "shows the superiority of their system over all others" and that they "ridicule as absurd the notion generally entertained of the location and nature of heaven." As a matter of curiosity, then, William Harris continued, "I will here insert a description of the Mormon Paradise." What follows is not a recapitulation of the Vision, as might be expected from his lead-in, but rather an excerpt from Parley P. Pratt's Voice of Warning showing that heaven would be material, not spiritual, and here on earth, not out in the ethereal blue. This recollection from Harris's seven years in the Church as to what the Saints actually ridiculed about contemporary notions of heaven further confirms the minimal role of the Vision in early

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100 William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed (Warsaw, Ill.: Sharp and Gamble, 1841), p. 23. Harris is mentioned in the context of faithful missionary service in Messenger and Advocate 3(January 1837):446.

LDS thought. 102

That which persisted, however, eventually began to break up. Just four months after the Prophet versified the Vision, he began to publicly and repeatedly denounce the heaven-hell dichotomy. Wilford Woodruff recorded this comment, for example: "Says one I believe in one hell & one heaven all are equally miserable or equally happy, but St. Paul informs us of three glories & three heavens." 103 Later, Joseph reiterated, "I do not believe the methodist doctrine of sending honest men, and noble minded men to hell, along with the murderer and adulterer." 104 In a famous funeral address preached in 1844 at the death of King Follett, we find the culmination of Joseph Smith's latest thinking about salvation and damnation. During recent months, hell had been acquiring an explicitly nonphysical dimension, and he here announced, "I have no fear of hell fire, that doesn't exist, but the torment and disappointment of the

102 Harris's recollection is confirmed in the words of this early Mormon song:

The heaven of sectarians is not the heaven for me; So doubtful its location, neither on land nor sea. But I've a heaven on the earth----

The land and home that gave me birth,---

A heaven of light and knowledge---

Oh, that's the heaven for me, &c.

(Times and Seasons)

6[February 1845]:799)

103 Ehat, Words and Joseph Smith, p. 214.

104 Ibid., p. 368.
mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone."105

If salvation or damnation still revolved around one's reaction to Mormonism, there was now a qualifier attached: "I call upon all men--priests, sinners, and all...[to] obey the gospel. For your religion won't save you, and if you do not, you will be damned, but," he

105 For this and subsequent quotations from the King Follett address, I have used Stan Larson's amalgamation of the various contemporary accounts (Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," BYU Studies 18[Winter 1978]:205).

A total of seven verses in the Book of Mormon directly equate "torment" with a "lake of fire and brimstone" (2 Ne. 9:16, 19, 26: 28:23; Jacob 6:10; Mosiah 3:27; and Alma 12:17). A symbolic connection, however, seems necessary only in Mosiah 3:27 and Alma 12:17, where the word as is used to link the two terms (for example, "Then is the time when their torments shall be as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever" [Alma 12:17]). For individuals accustomed to a literal hermeneutic, the remaining passages would not have seemed unusual. In well-worn cadences, Jacob 6:10 speaks of going "away into that lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever, which lake of fire and brimstone is endless torment"; 2 Ne. 28:23 also warns of a "place" prepared for them, "even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment." It is easy enough to see how such verses with their spatial allusions would not have forced abandonment of traditional perceptions of a physical hell.

Of related interest is the textual change from the 1830 edition in 2 Ne. 9:16. Originally it read, "And they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for them; and their torment is a lake of fire and brimstone" (1830 ed., 80). Later the important word as was inserted, and today this verse and the other two mentioned above are invoked to provide scriptural justification for the metaphorical interpretation Joseph Smith began explicitly employing in the last months of his life (for example, McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 280-81). Significantly, I could find no instance in which either Joseph Smith or any other Latter-day Saint used these verses in such a fashion during the period studied.

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added, "I do not say how long."\textsuperscript{106} Though the concept of a terminable hell was provided for in a revelation received even before the Church was organized (D&C 19), not until Joseph led the way interpretively did others begin describing hell as a purgatory for unrepentant sinners.\textsuperscript{107} At the same time, he acknowledged that those who had committed the unpardonable sin "\textit{must dwell in hell, worlds without end}" and that "they shall rise to that resurrection which is as the lake of fire and brimstone."\textsuperscript{108} Only the sons of perdition would be damned in the fullest and most traditional sense. Toward the close of his life, then, Joseph Smith began to emphasize a pluralized, rather than a polarized picture of eternity. He symbolized hell, diminished damnation's domain, and expanded salvation.

The fact that he repeatedly discussed these concepts during the last months of his life did not, however, guarantee that they were instantly internalized by the Saints. This is perhaps best illustrated in the case of John Taylor. Throughout this period, John Taylor was closely associated with the Prophet both as editor of the

\textsuperscript{106} Larson, "King Follett Discourse," p. 207. The duration of postmortem punishment was an issue raised by the Universalists.

\textsuperscript{107} The early revelation is D&C 19:5-12. The "chains of hell" are given symbolic meaning in Alma 12:9-11, but, again, the verses were not discussed in the early years.

Times and Seasons and, from September 1843, as a member of the Anointed Quorum, a select group who had been the first to experience the ritual ceremony that would be performed in the Nauvoo and all subsequent Mormon temples. John Taylor was thus well exposed not only to Joseph's public but also his private teachings. Yet, in a Times and Seasons editorial published less than a year after Joseph's death, John Taylor declared that "hell" is literally "in the midst of the earth, and when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed they sunk down to hell, and the water covered up the unhallowed spot...No wonder we have earthquakes, hot springs and convulsions in the earth," he continued, "if the damned spirits of six thousand years...have gone down into the pit...No wonder the earth groans and is in pain to be delivered as saith the prophet." 109

If a man as intelligent and literate as John Taylor either did not understand or ignored the Prophet, one can imagine to what degree the finer doctrinal subtleties that Joseph was introducing in the late Nauvoo period actually settled into the conscious understanding of the ordinary member. It is a truism that what one who speaks (or writes) intends to convey is not necessarily what the person who hears (or reads) understands. Scholars are liable to error if they simply assume that once an idea

109 Times and Seasons 6 (February 1845): 792.
was revealed or once it was taught by the Prophet the Saints immediately assimilated it into their mental universe. "Mormon" thought is the sum total of the thinking of individual Mormons rather than some creedal collectivity.\(^{110}\) Thus it is difficult indeed to assert that the Prophet's ideas or even revealed ideas were "Mormon" ideas equally ascribable to leader and layman alike. As Darrett Rutman pointed out some years ago in his study of the Puritans, "The idea that filters past the preconceptions, values, and particular concerns of the imparter, travels the sound waves or light rays to the recipient, filters past the recipient's own preconceptions, values, and concerns, [and] mixes in the melting pot that constitutes the recipient's mind with all the other notions and impressions stored there."\(^{111}\)

The point is that even though Joseph opened the door for a further break with traditional Protestant views, the old saved-damned dichotomy did not die out immediately. Much of the explanation for this is to be found in the way in which the social dualism inherent in the Saints' apocalypticism prevented significant deviation from the soteriological dualism basic to their Protestant heritage. If by the 1850s some leading


Mormons grasped and elaborated on what the Prophet was saying a decade earlier, it should not be assumed that as of 1844 the entire Church shelved "sectarianisms" in favor of less Calvinistic conceptions of salvation and damnation. Though Joseph's late Nauvoo teachings did signal the beginning of a slow transformation, the controlling cosmological paradigm for the Saints during the life of the Prophet was still apocalypticism.

112 A shift is evident in Parley P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855); yet the old saved-damned dichotomy persists in Lorenzo Snow's The Only Way to Be Saved which, though originally published in 1841, went through nineteen later English editions and over two dozen foreign language printings right up to the turn of the century.
CHAPTER 4

THE BIBLE, THE MORMONS, AND MILLENNARIANISM

All theology, including eschatology, grows out of the interpretation of scripture. Thus, if we are to truly "feel the pulse" of first generation Latter-day Saints, we must carefully examine how they invoked the Word of God to elaborate their doctrine. Over the next few chapters, as we continue our quest to recreate the thought world of early Mormonism, we shall explore in detail their use of both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Our approach will be comprehensive, so as to sample the full sweep of LDS doctrine and thus be able to see their millenarianism in perspective with the rest of their teachings. In the end, we shall have gained a clear sense of just how much millenarianism actually shaped their exegetical agenda.

More so than today, the early Latter-day Saints were a Bible-oriented people. The messages of Micah and Zephaniah were as familiar to them as the Book of Mormon words of King Benjamin and Alma are to modern Mormons. Their heroes were Abraham, Moses, and Joshua rather than Alma and Captain Moroni. And phrases like, "to your
tents, O Israel!" (1 Kings 12:16) fell more freely from their lips than "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). In part, this was due to cultural context. It has long been recognized that antebellum America was a society saturated with biblicism. The imagery and vocabulary of the King James Version were constantly echoed in the speeches and writing of the era. As Perry Miller put it, "The Old Testament is truly so omnipresent in the American culture of 1800 or 1820 that historians have as much difficulty taking cognizance of it as of the air the people breathed."\(^1\)

Thus, in certain obvious ways, Mormons were products of their age. On the other hand, the Saints "out-Bibled" the Biblicists. This was so, as we shall see, not only because of their marked literalism in scriptural interpretation (there were other literalists as well), but also because in an era that paradoxically was witnessing the decline of the theological influence of the Old Testament and the ascendancy of the New Testament, the Saints' millenarianism caused them to continue to find the Hebrew scriptures central to their self-image. The prophetic books of the Old Testament brimmed with meaning for their understanding of the new dispensation. In their eyes, they were the fulfillment


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of much of what they read about in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Moreover, the historical books provided a veritable treasure trove of types and figures foreshadowing their day. They could not have agreed more with the personalization evident in what Thomas Prince declared to elected leaders of Massachusetts a hundred years earlier on the centennial of the arrival of the Arbella: "there never was any People on Earth, so parallel in their general History to that of the ancient ISRAELITES as this of NEW ENGLAND...one would be ready to think the greater Part of the OLD TESTAMENT were written about us."^2 Of all of this, the Prophet Joseph Smith was a prime example and it is his use, in particular, of the Old Testament that will be the focus of this chapter.

The study is based upon a detailed analysis of the three major published collections of Joseph Smith's communications---Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, The Words of Joseph Smith, and The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith.^3 Each volume was carefully scrutinized to find every quotation of, or allusion to, an Old Testament passage. With over 400 references being discovered, it

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should be obvious that in the brief compass of this chapter, we shall be able to explore only the tip of the iceberg. Since an overall perspective will nonetheless be valuable, some general observations possible from this tabulation of data are in order.

To begin with, we note that only six of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are not represented in the Prophet's words. This is consistent with general LDS usage patterns and evidences a profound familiarity with the Old Testament in its entirety.⁴ Yet, over 200, or nearly half the total number of references, are drawn from just three books--Isaiah, Psalms, and Genesis. This, too, is consistent not only with broader Mormon tendencies but also with millenarian groups in general. Table 1 below lists the books most frequently quoted or alluded to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th># References</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," BYU Studies 13(Summer 1973):473-488. Irving tabulates overall Mormon usage patterns, as found in the periodical literature, for the years 1832-1838.
Malachi 24 6
Daniel 21 5
Deuteronomy 17 4
Jeremiah 16 4
Job 13 3
Zechariah 10 2
Proverbs 9 2

Turning to specific passages, we discover that almost four out of every five references are found only once in all of Joseph Smith's writings, again suggesting the broad base from which the Prophet drew his messages. Of those repeated more than once, Table 2 lists the ones most frequently employed:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th># Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malachi 4:5-6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 29:21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 51:3 or 58:12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obadiah 21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 1:26-27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 2:2-3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 2:44</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not our intent in this chapter to enter into a lengthy statistical analysis, but rather to highlight primarily how Joseph Smith used the Old Testament. The bulk of our discussion will be organized around five topics: 1) his figural or typological approach to the Old Testament—a prominent, yet generally overlooked tendency in the Prophet's writings; 2) his literalism; 3) the free and random incorporation into his prose of verbal
snippets from numerous passages of scripture; 4) how Old Testament theology shaped Joseph Smith's theology; and 5) how Joseph Smith's divine insights opened new vistas on the Old Testament itself.

Figuralism

Most readers are familiar with the terms "type" and "typology" and probably associate them with the tendency to view the Old Testament as a book of anticipatory pictures of the person and work of Christ. While this is a legitimate definition, it is not the broadest one, and actually the Latter-day Saints almost never used the Old Testament in this particular way. Anytime an earlier event is seen to anticipate or foreshadow a later one, or anytime later experience seems to be a recapitulation or fulfillment of an earlier event, typological or figural thinking is occurring. Biblical action is felt to take place in two realms—in antiquity as literal event, but also in current affairs, though with different characters and settings. The exodus from Egypt, for example, has served for nearly two millennia as perhaps the prime archetype for political and cultural revolution in the Western world.5 Within the Church, as will be seen, there was a profound faith in the reliveability of

Biblical narratives. Indeed, the student of Mormon history misses or misconstrues much of the felt significance of the Saints' experiences if he disregards this pervasive feature of their mental universe. It is almost as if the Old Testament were a script and the Saints were the actors destined to reenact it on a nineteenth-century stage. Again, as Sacvan Bercovitch and others have shown; such typological thinking is a prominent part of the millenarian worldview. Let us turn now and consider some examples from the Mormon experience.

Immediately after learning of the Saints' expulsion from Jackson County, Joseph Smith wrote to them in words that make clear his typological thinking. Said he, "all pharohs host or in other words all hell and the combined powers of Earth are Marshaling their forces to overthrow us and we like the children of Israel with the Red Sea before them and the Egyptians ready to fall upon them to destroy them and no arm could deliver but the arm of God

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and this is the case with us...."7 Shortly after his incarceration in Liberty Jail several years later, Joseph tried to comfort the scattered Saints with these words, "those who bear false witness against us do seem to have a great triumph over us for the present. But we want you to remember Haman and Mordecai you know that Haman could not be satisfied so long as he saw Mordecai at the king's gate, and he sought the life of Mordecai and the people of Jews. But the Lord so ordered that Haman was hanged upon his own gallows. So shall it come to pass with poor Haman in the last days...I say unto you that those who have thus vilely treated us like Haman shall be hanged upon their own gallows, or in other words shall fall..."8

Pursuing a figural understanding of the Old Testament allowed Joseph to make sense out of the opposition he was experiencing from within the household of faith as well. Examples of ancient Israel's backsliding demonstrated that dissension within the modern church was not a sign of its imminent collapse, but rather of its divine sponsorship. When he received a particularly "cutting reproof" from certain brethren in Missouri, Joseph recited the story of how the Israelites worshiped the golden calf while Moses was on the mount

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7 PW 185. As in previous chapters, original spelling and punctuation has been retained in all period quotations.

8 PW 375.
and asked, "Therefore, I say, if we should suffer perils among false brethren, should it be accounted a strange things?" This same Old Testament episode seemed to be relived in 1837 when Joseph and other brethren were away tending to business in Michigan. David Whitmer, who Aaron-like had been one of Joseph's earliest and most faithful followers, gradually soured on the Prophet's leadership, taking a small group with him. While Smith was out of town, this group of dissenters attempted a coup. The Sunday after Joseph's return, he occupied the stand and, in the words of notetaker Wilford Woodruff, "for several hours addressed the Saints in the power of God. Joseph had been absent from Kirtland on business for the church, though not half as long as Moses was in the mount, & many were stir'd up in their hearts & some were against him as the Israelites were against Moses." Despite the modern tendency to feel spiritually superior to or more civilized than the children of Israel, Joseph's figuralism precluded his finding much difference between ancient and modern Israel. "Men," he wrote, "are as liable in this generation to turn aside from the holy commandments, as were the children of Israel when Aaron bought the golden calf...while Moses tarried yet forty days in the mount."

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9 PW 317.


11 PW 316-317.
Other episodes of apostasy during Israel's forty years in the wilderness were also figurally applied to contemporary disaffection. In the aftermath of the "extermination order" issued by Governor Boggs to expell the Mormons from Missouri, Joseph wrote that the dissenters who aided and abetted the mobbers "like Balaam being greedy for a reward sold us into the hands of those who loved them, for the world loves his own.\textsuperscript{12} Singling out W. W. Phelps in a piece of typological satire, he continued, "This poor man who professes to be much of a prophet has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel, and this ass not being of the same kind of Balaams therefore the angel notwithstanding appeared unto him yet he could not penetrate his understanding sufficiently so but what he brays out cursings instead of blessings. Poor ass whoever lives to see it will see him and his rider perish..."\textsuperscript{13} But Phelps and Whitmer were not alone. Referring to all the apostates, Joseph remarked, "we classify them in the error of Balaam and in the gainsaying of Core and with the company of Core and Dathan and Abiram."\textsuperscript{14} Core, or Cora (Korah), and Datham and Abiram, it will be remembered, were the leaders of a

\textsuperscript{12} PW 376.
\textsuperscript{13} PW 376.
\textsuperscript{14} PW 477.
revolt against Moses and Aaron and were swallowed up in the earth for their rebellion (Numbers 16).

Later, when Phelps repented and wished to return to the fold, the Prophet freely forgave him, but also taught him the seriousness of what he had done. This he did by making figural application of a pair of verses from Obadiah. Recalling the overwhelming disappointment he felt when Phelps, with whom he "had oft taken sweet council together and enjoyed many refreshing seasons from the Lord," turned against him in the last days of Missouri, Joseph quoted verses 11 and 12: "In that day that thou stookest on the other side, in the day when strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Far West [originally it read "Jerusalem"] even thou wast one of them. But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress."15

Most people today would probably be unfamiliar with this obscure passage, and yet its appropriateness to the situation is impressive. Indeed, one cannot long research early nineteenth-century sermons without being compelled to pause and admire an earlier generation's remarkable ability to use Old Testament narrative both to

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15 PW 472-473.
illuminate contemporary circumstances as well as to predict future outcomes. When the "bad guys," for example, seem to have the upper hand today, do we think of Haman and Mordecai? Or when treachery is afoot do we recall Korah and Abiram or some remote passage in Obadiah? Or do we draw our illustrations and analogies from sports, television, or the movie theatre? Clearly, the manner in which the Bible dominated the framework of thought and expression in times past is profound.

Types were more than nice figures of speech or clever metaphors, however. They were compelling models for behavior. When John E. Page abandoned Orson Hyde on their mission to the Middle East, and the case was brought before the Church, Joseph explained that the problem was that they did not follow Biblical precedent. "He said that no two men when they agreed to go together ought to separate, that the prophets of old would not and quoted the circumstance of Elijah and Elisha [2] Kings 2 chap. when about to go to Gilgal, also when about to go to Jericho, and the Jordan, that Elisha could not get clear of Elijah, that he clung to his garment until he was taken to heaven and that Elder Page should have stuck by Elder Hyde..."16

Similarly, Joseph Smith found the burial practices at the end of Genesis archetypical for the people of God

16 W 111.
in any age. "Look at Joseph in Egypt," remarked the Prophet, "how he required his friends to bury him in the tomb of his fathers—see the expense which attended the embalming and the going up of the great company to his burial."\(^{17}\) Joseph Smith desired all his family and friends to be buried together, just as the ancient patriarch. "I will tell you what I want," he said, "if tomorrow I shall be called to lay in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection, let me strike hands with my father...as soon as the rock rends."\(^{18}\) On another occasion, obviously seeking to recapitulate Old Testament experience, he declared, "let my father, Don Carlos, and Alvin and the children that I have buried be brought and laid in the tomb I have built. Let my mother and my brethren, and my sisters be laid there also; and let it be called the tomb of Joseph, a descendant of Jacob; and when I die, let me be gathered to the tomb of my father."\(^{19}\)

A final example of how figuralism, as an interpretive approach, made the ancient scriptures prescriptive not only in general principle, but in very detail, is a single sentence from the Prophet's letter to Gideon Carter. "You quoted a passage in Jeremiah," he

\(^{17}\) W 195.

\(^{18}\) W 195.

\(^{19}\) PW 536.
wrote, "with regard to journeying to Zion; the word of
the Lord stands sure, so let it be done." The identity
of the particular passage referred to is less important
than the matter-of-fact way in which Joseph took it as if
it were an actual script delineating exactly how the
divine drama was to be played out centuries after
Jeremiah spoke. In the figural tradition, the historical
meaning and situation of scripture is clearly
subordinated to its present significations.

Of course, all of this is very much in line with how
Jesus or Paul used the Old Testament. In the words of
one scholar, "we may say the New Testament method of
interpreting the Old was generally that of typology.
Types and prophecies of the coming of Christ were sought
throughout the Old Testament" and "were readily
found...." The early Christians "regarded the events
described in the Old Testament as prefigurations of
events in the life of Jesus and his church." Thus,
just as a Christocentric interpretation of the Old
Testament growing out of typology gave the book relevance
to the church in Paul's day, so a "Restoration--centric"
interpretation of the Old Testament rooted in figuralism
made it meaningful for Mormonism. In both ages, the

20 T 22.

21 Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, A Short History
of the Interpretation of the Bible, 2nd ed., Rev. and
church was the "New Israel," the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

For John Wilson, it was bringing such literary figuralism to bear on Mormon millennial thought that compelled him to distance the Saints from postmillennialism. "If figural elements are part of the movement's self understanding," he explained, "the degree of dependence upon human initiative required to secure the kingdom should not be overinterpreted. This is to say, if the Prophet and his associates viewed themselves as, so to speak, acting out revelatory roles in this world written in another and transmitted through scriptures, the degree of the 'initiative' they were required to take would seem to be less striking than it is ordinarily held to be."\(^{22}\)

**Literalism**

While the apostle Paul could be highly figural, almost allegorical, in his interpretation of the Old Testament, he could also bring to bear a rigorous literalism. The same held true for the Prophet Joseph Smith. One of the clearest examples of this was his use

of Amos 3:7 to refute speculation about the date of the Second Coming. After one enthusiast claimed to have seen the "sign of the Son of Man" predicted in Matthew 24, Joseph replied, "he has not seen the sign of the Son of Man, as foretold by Jesus; neither has any man...for the Lord hath not shown me any such sign; and as the prophet saith, so it must be--'Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.' Therefore, hear this, O earth: The Lord will not come to reign over the righteous, in this world, in 1843, nor until everything for the Bridegroom is ready."23 Joseph found nothing in this literal interpretation of Amos 3:7 which conflicted with the Savior's words that "no man knoweth the day or the hour when the Son of Man cometh," for, he asked, "Did Christ speak this as a general principle throughout all generations Oh no he spoke in the present tense no man that was then living upon the footstool of God knew the day or the hour But he did not say that there was no man throughout all generations that should not know the day or the hour. No, for this would be in flat contradiction with other scripture for the prophet says the God will do nothing but what he will reveal unto his Servants the prophets consequently if it is not made known to the Prophets it will not come to pass."24

23 T 280.

24 W 180-181. 189
Another example is drawn from a Nauvoo Lyceum lecture in the winter of 1841. As William P. McIntire remembered it, "Joseph said in answer to Mr. Stout that Adam Did Not Commit sin in eating the fruits for God decreed that he should Eat & fall...incomplyance with the Decree [Gen. 2:17] he should Die---only he should Die was the saying of the Lord therefore the Lord apointed us to fall & also Redeemed us." In reasoning analogous to twentieth-century Mormon prophet, Spencer W. Kimball's, suggestion that Jesus commanded, rather than predicted, Peter's denial of Christ, it appears that on this occasion Joseph interpreted the scriptural phrase "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" as a command or decree rather than as a warning. Since Stout apparently took it the more traditional way, Joseph felt to correct him. This propensity for precision was again manifested a month later when the Prophet returned to this passage and said, "Now the Day the Lord has Refference too is spoke of by Petter a thousand of our years is with the Lord as one Day &c," thus making Adam's death at 930 fall, as decreed, within the technical definition of one "day."26

Such literalism often fostered doctrinal innovations such as the idea of a premortal existence for all

25 W 64.
26 W 64.
mankind. Joseph interpreted "the Lord's question to Job 'where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the Earth [Job 38:4]' as "evidence that Job was in Existence somewhere at that time." Few examples, though, would have more far reaching effect than the Prophet's reading of Isaiah 2:3 which speaks of going up "to the mountain of the Lord" and announces that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." By interpreting "Zion" and "Jerusalem" as two different places, rather than viewing the passage as a manifestation of Hebrew poetic parallelism which would have made them identical, Joseph not only opened the door for locating Zion elsewhere than in Palestine, but made apparent the truly revolutionary necessity of interpreting nearly every other reference to Zion in the Old Testament as descriptive of a western hemisphere site.

Here we must pause and note the importance to both Latter-day Saint tradition and Christianity generally of identifying Israel and describing its destiny. For a

27 W 68.

thousand years prior to the Reformation, the Augustinian teaching that the church was the antitype of Israel and that all Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in her prevailed. Thus, there was no need for, nor propriety in, the expectation of any special work among the Jews. By the time the Reformation had been underway a few decades, however, certain of Calvin's followers began to teach that toward the end of the world a widespread conversion of the Jewish people would occur. Some even began following rabbinic exegesis of Old Testament prophecies and postulated a territorial restoration of Israel to Palestine. For these divines, the terms Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, and Zion required literal interpretation. They referred to the ancient people of God and to the actual site of the Sacred City rather than being mere metaphors of the church. This significant shift occurred in the late 1500's and early 1600s and crossed the Atlantic with the Puritans.

Of course, not all Christians were persuaded by this view. Fundamentally, it was a matter of hermeneutics. If one thought that the prophecies ought to be


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interacted allegorically or figuratively, then no Jewish conversion to Christ was expected and the church, as "modern" Israel, fulfilled the Word. On the other hand, literalists anticipated a wholesale conversion of the Jews and an actual return to their ancestral homeland. Both schools of thought, and various shades in between, were present in the world of Joseph Smith.

Mormon hermeneutics, however, represented a unique literalist/allegorist blend. As we have already mentioned, modern revelation taught the Saints that Zion and Jerusalem were two distinct holy cities located on two distinct hemispheres. For literalist Christians, Zion and Jerusalem were essentially synonymous terms. Allegorist Protestants, on the other hand, had long spoken of an American Zion, but they did so in the usual typological terms, never anticipating on their continent the actual presence of a glistening New Jerusalem. Additionally, the Saints learned that Israel's restoration involved more than just the Jews, that the Indians, too, were a "remnant of Jacob." Just as the Jews would gather to Jerusalem and rebuild David's city, so the Indians would gather to western Missouri and build Zion, the "New" Jerusalem. Nor should we fail to make clear that unlike others, the Saints perceived the "lost ten tribes" as a separate group, usually thought to be sequestered somewhere in the frozen "north countries," and were not to be confused with the American Indians.
Like allegorist Christians, the Mormons also viewed the Church, consisting overwhelmingly of Anglo-Americans, as "spiritual Israel," but they applied the ancient prophecies to themselves in the same literal way as they did to racial Israel. The need to gather, therefore, was just as incumbent upon them as upon the Indians or the Jews. In essence, then, Mormonism added one more literal gathering spot and several more literal gathering groups to what even literalist Protestants around them had been led to expect.

A good example of how these themes blended together is seen in the apostolic proclamation of 1845. The latter-day mission of the Church was described as a three-pronged thrust: "A great, a glorious and a mighty work is yet to be achieved, in spreading the truth and kingdom among the Gentiles--in restoring, organizing, instructing and establishing the Jews--in gathering, instructing, relieving, civilizing, educating, and administering salvation to the remnant of Israel on this continent." Furthermore, the Lord's work would involve "building Jerusalem in Palestine, and...Zion in America." The end product would be that "the whole Church of the Saints, both Gentile, Jew and Israel [note the threefold distinction], may be prepared as a bride for the coming of the Lord." As for the ten tribes, they will "be revealed in the north country, together with their oracles and records, preparatory to their return, and to
their union with Judah." ^29 Thus, in the last days, Gentile and Indian Saints would be planted in an American inheritance, Zion, while the Jews and the "lost tribes" of Israel were to be located in a renovated land of Canaan with Jerusalem rebuilt as their capital.

So central was the restoration of Israel to the meaning of the Mormon mission that it even influenced what they valued most about their new scriptures. Early saints stressed that one of the prime purposes for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and other revelations was to identify Israel and to locate the place of her gathering. "If God should give no more revelations," asked Joseph Smith, "where will we find Zion and this remnant?" He later added, "take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none; for without Zion, and a place of deliverance, we must fall." ^30 Note that the emphasis was not "take away the restoration scriptures, and we shall have none of our distinctive truths," but "take away our revelations and we shall not be able to identify Israel nor locate Zion, one of the places to which Israel must be gathered to find temporal salvation in the coming day of desolation."

The eschatological setting is explicit here and brings

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^30 History of the Church 2:52.
into sharp focus the fundamentally millenarian nature of the doctrine of the restoration of Israel. Indeed, for centuries the topic had been discussed under the rubric, "the latter day glory."

That the restored glory of Israel was expected in the last days did not necessarily mean that all saw themselves as then living in such a time. For the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, though, as their very name implies, the idea was crucial. One reason was their exegesis of the Christian Zionist favorite, Romans 11.\textsuperscript{31} Toward the end of the chapter, Paul tells of a day when spiritual blindness would depart from Israel and they would all be saved, adding that it would occur when "the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."\textsuperscript{32} If, therefore, it could be established that the "fullness of the Gentiles" had "come in," then the stage was set both for the final gathering of Israel, a mission which the Saints acutely felt as their raison d'etre, and for the Second Coming, an event which Latter-day Saints believed


\textsuperscript{32}Romans 11:25,26.

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would follow immediately after the restoration of Israel.

It was the unique way in which they interpreted this scripture that helped them justify their place in prophetic history. The following excerpt from the *Messenger and Advocate* typifies the Saints' explanation of this passage:

> when will the fulness of the Gentiles be come in? The answer is again at hand.--That is, when they all shall have ceased to bring forth the fruits of the kingdom of heaven, of all parties, sects, and denominations and not one of them standing in the situation in which God had placed them...then is the time that the world may prepare themselves to see God of heaven set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people.  

Early Mormons, therefore, equated the "fullness" of the Gentiles with the "apostasy" of the Gentiles--the Gentiles, of course, being Western Christianity. The prophetic chronology seemed clear--the Gentiles apostatize, the Israelites are gathered, and the millennium is ushered in. "Unless the scattered remnants of Jacob should be gathered from all countries whither they had been driven, no such thing as the millennium could ever exist," declared Sidney Rigdon, "and that predicated on the fact of the Gentiles having forfeited all claim to the divine favor by reason of their great apostasy." Thus, in good millenarian fashion, the

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34 *Star* 2 (January 1834): 127.
saints invested the idea of apostasy with eschatological overtones. To them, the apostasy was more than just evidence that truth and authority had been lost. It was more even than the pious repudiation of neighbors typical of millenarian movements. It was, in fact, evidence that the end scene was upon them, that the Lord had begun his latter-day work.

Again, Joseph Smith provides an excellent example of all this. In 1833, he composed his first description of the LDS faith for public consumption in a letter to the American Revivalist and Rochester Observer. Smith quoted Isaiah 11:11, and announced, "the time has at last arrived when the God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob has set his hand again the second time to recover the remnants of his people which have been left from Assyria, and from Egypt and from Pathros &c. and from the Islands of the Sea and with them to bring in the fulness of the Gentiles and establish that covenant with them which was promised when their sins should be taken away." With the gathering and restoration of Israel under way, there were only two choices for Yankee Gentiles--come into the fold, thus being "adopted" into or "numbered with" Israel, and gather to Zion, or, face certain and imminent destruction. As the Prophet expressed it, "Repent ye Repent ye, and imbrace the everlasting Covenant and flee

35 PW 271.
to Zion before the overflowing scourge [alluding to Isaiah 28:15, 18] overtake you."36 Again, the geography was clear. "The City of Zion spoken of by David in Psalms 102," declared Joseph, "will be built upon the Land of America" and, in words from Isaiah 35:10, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to it with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads and then they will be delivered from the overflowing scourge that shall pass through the Land."37 As support for the general theme of the restoration of Israel, the Prophet also cited, but did not comment on, Joel 2:32, Isaiah 26:20-21, Jeremiah 31:12, Psalms 50:5, and Ezekiel 34:11-13, passages which he was not alone in using. The sobering reality announced was that "the people of the Lord, those who have complied with the requisitions of the new covenant, have already commenced gathering together to Zion which is in the State of Missouri" and "there are those now living upon the earth whose eyes shall not close in death until they see all these things which I have spoken fulfilled."38

A virtual love affair with the restoration of Israel, combined with his pronouncedly literalist hermeneutic, may also have been primarily responsible for

36 PW 274.
37 PW 273.
38 PW 274.
predisposing the Prophet to consider the restoration of such ancient Israelite practices as plural marriage and sacrifice.\textsuperscript{39} Since the former has been much discussed elsewhere, we shall only remind ourselves that the opening statement in the revelation commanding polygamy makes explicit the mental link between plural marriage and the Old Testament: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David, and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines. Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions

\textsuperscript{39}From David Katz's latest study, \textit{Sabbath and Sectarianism}, it is noteworthy how often in transatlantic sectarian Protestantism since the English Civil War that a literalist fascination with the Old Testament and an interest to study the Hebrew language link up with a millenarian eschatology. See also, Daniel Liechty, \textit{Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists: An Early Reformation Episode in East Central Europe} (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1988). Not surprisingly, Joseph Smith and many of his closest associates also studied Hebrew. See Louis C. Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," \textit{Dialogue} 3 (Sum 1968): 41-55.

Richard Popkin has pointed out how "increased Christian knowledge of Jewish source materials and Jewish ideas" at times "intensified Millenarian theorizing and expectations." Popkin, "Jewish and Christian Relations," p. 365.

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which I am about to give unto you."40

Similarly fascinating is a review of Joseph's thoughts on sacrifice. Two of his favorite New Testament passages, taken literally, provide the framework for this matter. Acts 3:19 speaks of the "restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets," and Ephesians 1:10 notes that "in the dispensation of the fulness of time" God would "gather together in one all things in Christ." Joseph emphasized the uniformity of time of priesthood rights and powers, and concluded that "all things had under the Authority of the Priesthood at any former period shall be had again."41 Noting that "we frequently have mention made of the offering of Sacrifice by the servants of the most high in ancient days prior to the law of Moses," it should be obvious that "the offering of Sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the priesthood. It began with the priesthood and will be continued untill after the coming of Christ from generation to generation."42


41 W 42.

42 W 43. 201
Joseph acknowledged the widespread belief that "Sacrifice was entirely done away when the great sacrifice was offered up," but charged that "those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the priesthood or with the prophets." Sacrifice was also necessitated by a literal reading of Malachi 3:3-4, which indicates that the coming Christ would "purify the sons of Levi...that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness," an offering which Joseph took to be actual animal sacrifice. "It will be necessary here," he remarked, "to make a few observations on the doctrine, set forth in the above quotation [Mal. 3:3-4]." He then proceeded directly into a discussion of "the offering of sacrifice," concluding that "these sacrifices as well as every ordinances belonging to the priesthood will when the temple of the Lord shall be built and the Sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to...Else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by all the Holy Prophets be brought to pass."

43 W 43.

44 Though later Joseph seemed to suggest that this would be fulfilled by the Church offering up "a book containing the records of [their] dead which shall be worth of all acceptation" (D&C 128:24), at this point (October 1840), he perceived it as dealing with animal sacrifice.

45 W 43-44.

His remarks have occasionally been read as having nothing to do at all with Mosaic sacrifices, and that it
was only a restoration of patriarchal sacrifice that was contemplated. Whether or not this is true in some ultimate sense, it creates a qualitative distinction not found in the Prophet's words or not yet substantiated in studies on sacrifice. The misreading seems to grow out of this passage: "It is not to be understood" remarked Joseph, "that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rights and variety of ceremonies, this had never been spoken of by the prophets but those things which existed prior to Moses's day viz Sacrifice will be continued" (W 44). In other words, the entire Mosaic ritual was not to be restored, just that portion of it which had also existed previously, namely sacrifice. Thus, Joseph's intent seems to have been to separate ceremonies and sacrifices, not to make a qualitative distinction between pre-Mosaic and Mosaic sacrifices. This is especially clear earlier in the speech when after citing Leviticus, the very core of Mosaic sacrificial codes, to make a certain point about sacrificial procedure, he declared that "these sacrifices [referring to those just outlined in Leviticus] as well as every ordinance belonging to the priesthood will when the temple of the Lord shall be built and the Sons of Levi be purified be fully restored and attend to (W 43). He further remarked that Revelation specified "the number of priests who should be appointed to administer in the daily sacrifice" (W 170), and was, therefore, a clear allusion to the daily sacrificial ritual that was a fundamental feature of the law of Moses, but nowhere described as part of patriarchal practice.

Whatever Joseph's original intent, the idea of bringing back animal sacrifice has not always been received with relish. By the twentieth century, significant qualifiers were in place. Sidney B. Sperry remembers with the First Presidency in "1921 or 1922" to the effect that "in their opinion sacrifice would be on a more limited scale than formerly." (Doctrine and Covenants Compendium, p. 394). During the same period, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote that it was his feeling that "blood sacrifices will be performed long enough to complete the fulness of the restoration in this dispensation. Afterwards sacrifice will be of some other character." (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:94). And by the final quarter of the twentieth century, Bruce R. McConkie, could, with the exception of a single sentence in his comprehensive Millennial Messiah (p. 118) and his equally thorough A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, completely bypass the subject of millennial sacrifice altogether, though he discusses sacrifice and mentions
At the same time that Joseph Smith was bringing back polygamy and envisioning a restoration of Old Testament sacrifice, he also restored what he described as the ancient Israelite Temple ceremony. Even if this was somehow related to Masonic ritual, the more important connection is Hebraic. Margaret C. Jacob has recently documented a definite Jewish influence on Freemasonry. To her listing of Quakers, Jews, and Freemasons as all having had a "common emphasis on the Mosaic law, the Hebrew language, and the mystical tradition," we might well add the early Latter-day Saints.

Allusions

Malachi. Perhaps the trend is toward emphasizing the words of the Savior in 3 Nephi, "ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away...and ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:19-20).


The pervasive Biblicism that fueled the millenarian and restorationist impulses within Mormonism is particularly apparent at the near subconscious level of language usage. Here we note the great number of allusions to, and phrasal borrowings from, the Old Testament that find their way into Joseph Smith's speech. Over 300, or nearly 3 out of every 4 references discovered fall into this category. In other words, Joseph rarely quoted, with exactness, a complete passage. Nearly always it was a single striking phrase or a brief figure of speech, and often his use of it, Pauline-like, had little to do with the original. Most of his metaphors or peculiar idiomatic expressions were Biblical. Space will permit only a brief review of this aspect of Joseph's encounter with the Old Testament.

The cadences of the King James Version exercised a profound influence on the Prophet's prose. "Perverse and crooked generation" from Deuteronomy 32:5; "bind up the law and seal up testimony" from Isaiah 8:16; "weighed in balance" from Daniel 5:27; "furnace of affliction" from Isaiah 48:10; and "broken heart" and "contrite spirit" from Psalms are just a few of the familiar expressions originating in the King James translation that found their way into Joseph's speech.48 Other phrases will

48 We are here less concerned with establishing an exact linguistic lineage than with making the point that Joseph was deeply influenced by Old Testament words and ideas, whether they came to him directly from his own
sound less familiar to modern ears. On several occasions, Joseph remarked in the words of Proverbs 25:11 that someone's words or letter were "like apples of Gold in pictures of Silver."" 49 Or he described a man whose "heart must be hard as the nether mill-stone," a simile taken directly from Job 41:24. 50 In a combination of phrases from Isaiah 22:23 and Ecclesiastes 12:11, Joseph prayed that his exposure of the abominations of certain Presbyterians would be "like a nail in a sure place, driven by the master of assemblies." 51 In a phrase found in both Psalms 72:8 and Zechariah 9:10, he talked about spreading the light and truth of the everlasting gospel "from the rivers to the ends of the earth." 52 And on one occasion he swore "that this arm shall fall from my shoulder [Job 31:22] and this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth [Psalms 137:6] before I will vote for them." 53

At times his words contain a dense mass of such allusions. In one excerpt he successively invoked phrases or expressions from three different passages in study of the book or indirectly through their previous infiltration of society at large.

49 PW 94, 528.
50 PW 570.
51 PW 120.
52 PW 139.
53 W 242.
Psalms. Writing from Liberty Jail that the Spirit promised him deliverance, he said this "gave me great comfort: and although the heathen raged, and the people imagined vain things [Psalms 2:1], yet the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, was my refuge [Psalms 46:7]; and when I cried unto him in the day of trouble [Psalms 50:15], he delivered me." On other occasions the allusion was vague enough almost to escape notice. During a meeting with the twelve apostles in the fall of 1835, Joseph remarked that "the endowment you are so anxious about you cannot comprehend now, nor could Gabriel explain it to the understanding of your dark minds." Why the reference to Gabriel? Was it simply a popular Biblical name? In reality, the comment was a reasonably certain allusion to an experience recorded in Daniel 8:15-17. Daniel had seen a vision and "sought for the meaning." He heard a man's voice which "called and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood and when he came...he said unto me, Understand, O son of man" and then proceeded to explain the vision.

Much of the imagery and phraseology used by the Prophet when he blessed other people also came from the Old Testament. Joseph told Oliver in words drawn from

54 PW 443.
55 PW 82.
Genesis 9 that he would "be made like unto the bow which the Lord hath set in the heavens he shall be a sign," and, borrowing a phrase from Isaiah, told him that he would be "an ensign unto the nations." In language reminiscent of Isaiah 49:2, he told Hyrum that he would be "a shaft in the hand of his God...and he shall be hid by the hand of the Lord." He also promised him, in Isaiah's phrase [3:17] that "none of his secret parts shall be discovered unto his hurt." Before leaving our survey of the presence of Biblical expressions and phrases in the words of Joseph Smith, we must briefly look at his allusions to Isaiah 29:21, one of the Old Testament passages he invoked most frequently (See Table 2). Two phrases, in particular, from this verse caught his attention. First and foremost was the phrase "make a man an offender for a word"; the other was "him that reproveth in the gate." After his debating-school scuffle with William, Joseph wrote his brother that "duty binds us not to make each others offenders for a word." He wrote in 1840 to Oliver Granger that he hoped "that even in Kirtland, their are some who do not make a man an 'offender for a word'."

57 PW 24.
58 PW 114.
59 PW 476.
In the final months before his death, he told the saints that there were men "in our midst that are watching for iniquity & will make a man an offender for a word."\textsuperscript{60} And in the most detailed allusion of all, he wrote the saints scattered in Caldwell County that the problem mentioned in this passage was at the root of their Missouri problems. "The old prophet verily told the truth," explained Joseph, "We have no retraction to make, we have reproved in the gate and men have laid snares for us we have spoken words and men have made us offenders, and notwithstanding all this our minds are not darkened but feel strong in the Lord."\textsuperscript{61}

Thematic Influences from the Old Testament

Blessing and cursing are among the basic organizing principles of the early books of the Old Testament and were fundamental to ancient Israelite religion. The Saints' strong self-identification as part of eschatological Israel made them responsive to a latter-day recapitulation of these ancient aspects. We have already noted the tendency to bless, and should not be surprised to find that the Saints also absorbed the ability to curse. Newel K. Whitney was instructed by the

\textsuperscript{60} W 325.
\textsuperscript{61} FW 376.
Prophet that "when his enemies seek him unto his hurt and
distraction let him rise up and curse and the hand of God
shall be upon his enemies in Judgment they shall be
utterly confounded and brought to dessolation."62 In
Nauvoo, Joseph "preached on the hill near the Temple
concerning the building of the temple, and pronounced a
curse on the Merchants and the rich, who would not assist
in building it."63 And during the Pentecostal outpouring
in the Kirtland Temple in 1836, cursing mingled freely
with blessing. On the occasion of a washing-of-the-feet
ceremony, Joseph Smith recorded that "the presidency
proceeded to wash the feet of the 12 pronouncing many
prophecys and blessings upon them in the name of the Lord
Jesus." Then, he added, "the brethren began to prophesy
upon each others heads. and cursings upon the enimies
of Christ who inhabit Jackson county Missouri."64

If this sounds a bit harsh to modern ears, we note
again that the combination of Biblicism, literalism, and
restorationism preconditioned the Saints to take quite
seriously the common scriptural doctrine of curses. In
one epistle to the elders of the Church, Joseph quoted
Deuteronomy 30:7--"And the Lord thy God will put all
these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate

62 PW 62.
63 W 129.
64 PW 182–83).
thee, which persecuted thee"—and remarked, "Now this promise is good to any, if there should be such, that are driven out, even in the last days, therefore, the children of the fathers have claim unto this day. And if these curses are to be laid over on the heads of their enemies, we be unto the Gentiles."  

The related theme of vengeance and being avenged of one's enemies is also prevalent in the Old Testament and therefore was very much alive in the Latter-day Saint church as well. Though there were ample entreaties to patient submission and, in another Old Testament phrase, to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," there were also felt to be legitimate occasions for "settling accounts." At a meeting of leading brethren in the Kirtland Temple, Joseph remarked, "I want to enter into the following covenant, that if any more of our brethren are slain or driven from their lands in Missouri by the mob that we will give ourselves no rest until we are avenged of our enemies to the uttermost, this covenant was sealed unanimously by a hosanna and Amen."  

Toward the end of a life filled with persecution, and after relentless pursuit by authorities from Missouri seeking to convict him of the assassination attempt on Governor Boggs, Joseph made it clear that "the time has

65 T 85.
66 FW 183.
come when forbearance is no longer a virtue."\textsuperscript{67} Just four hours after being acquitted from the third extradition attempt by Missouri officers, Joseph declared, "Before I will bear this unhallowed persecution any longer I will spill my Blood their is a time when bearing it longer is a sin I will not bear it longer I will spill the last drop of Blood I have and all that will not bear it longer say AH And, the Cry of AH rung throughout the Congregation."\textsuperscript{68} Though he explicitly counseled the saints to "be not the aggressor" and to "bear until they strike" both cheeks, he announced that "I this day turn the Key that opens the heavens to restrain you no longer from this time forth."\textsuperscript{69} In one memorable statement from that same speech, he exclaimed, "if mobs come upon you any more here, dung your gardings with them."\textsuperscript{70} Later that year, he declared, "when the Mobs come upon you, kill them; I never will restrain you again but will go and help you...."\textsuperscript{71} All of this, of course, had ample precedent in the Old Testament, precedent that did not go unnoticed by the Prophet. "If oppression comes," he declared, "I will then shew them

\textsuperscript{67} W 217.
\textsuperscript{68} W 217-218.
\textsuperscript{69} W 218.
\textsuperscript{70} W 219.
\textsuperscript{71} W 258.
that there is a Moses and a Joshua amongst us."72

And yet, consistent with the assumptions of apocalypticism, he also realized that most of the battles would be fought by the Lord and that ultimate victory and recompense would come only with the Savior's Advent. This, too, Smith frequently called to the Saints' attention through the use of Old Testament prophecies. "We rejoice," wrote Joseph, "that the time is at hand when the wicked who will not repent will [invoking a phrase from Isaiah 14:23] be swept from the earth with the besom of destruction."73 After the expulsion from Jackson County, he wrote to Edward Partridge and leading brethren of Missouri that "we have nothing to fear if we are faithful: God will [in the words of Psalms 110:5] strike through kings in the day of his wrath...and what do you suppose he could do with a few mobbers in Jackson County, where, ere long, he will set his feet when earth & heaven shall tremble."74 From Liberty Jail, Joseph and his prison mates explained why "our harts do not shrink neither are our spirits altogether broken at the grievous yoak which is put upon us." Their hope was a composite allusion to a phrase from Psalms and one from Proverbs: "We know that God will have our oppressors in derision

72 W 129.
73 PW 95.
74 PW 319.
Psalms 2:4) that he will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh [Proverbs 1:26]."75

Modern Revelation Unlocks the Meaning of The Old Testament

In the fifth and final segment of our discussion, we shall highlight the way in which Joseph Smith tapped his revealed knowledge to shed new light on various passages of the Old Testament. Of course, in one sense, the "inspired revision" of the Bible that Joseph Smith made during the early 1830s can be seen as a prime example of this, but we are here confining ourselves to his speeches and writings.76 Several brief examples from the "King Follett discourse" will serve to introduce this aspect of the Prophet's teaching. Genesis 1:26-27, with its mention of man being created in the image of God, has generated considerable theological discussion over the centuries. Joseph Smith, however, who had had a personal vision of the Father and taught that he was a glorified man, was able to give new meaning to the phrase "image of God". "If you were to see him to day," declared the Prophet, "you would see him in all the person, image,

75 PW 392.

very form of man, For Adam was created in the very fashion of God."77 In a second example, his knowledge of the eternities led him to replace the word "create" in Genesis 1:1 with the more appropriate word "organize", thus allowing him to dismember ex-nihilo creation and establish eternalism. Genesis 2:7 provided the springboard for demonstrating that essence of human personality was co-eternal with God. What God made, Joseph explained, was a "tabernacle & put a [previously existing] spirit in it and it became a Human soul, man existed in spirit & mind coequal with God himself."78 And lastly, his inspired exegesis of the Genesis 1:1 phrase, "in the beginning," led him to conclude that "an old Jew" had tampered with the text and that originally it read, "the head one of the Gods broat froth the Gods", thus adjusting it to the properly reflect the plurality-of-Gods doctrine.79

Revealed insights came line upon line, though, and the way in which revelation gradually unlocked the meaning of the Old Testament is perhaps best observed by tracing the history of Joseph Smith's use of Malachi 4:5-6. During the early 1830s, it seemed to have no special significance. In an 1835 article for the Messenger and

77 W 357.
78 W 346.
79 W 345.
Advocate, Joseph directed the elders in the mission field to "commence their labors with parents or guardians; and their teachings should be such as are calculated to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, and no influence should be used with children contrary to the consent of their parents." Here Joseph is using the passage to promote domestic harmony rather than to advance the doctrine of salvation for the dead which was still unrevealed at that point. The sense of Doctrine and Covenants 98:16 seems to be along these same lines: "Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children."

By the early 1840s, however, the doctrine of baptism for the dead had been revealed and, accordingly, important new meaning was discerned in Malachi 4:5-6. The clearest illustration of this comes from the Prophet's 6 September 1842 letter to the Saints, later canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 128. After citing 1 Corinthians 15:29, Joseph wrote, "in connection with this quotation I will give you a quotation from one of the prophets who had his eye fixed on...in an especial manner this most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel, namely, baptism for the dead."

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80 T 85.
81 D&C 128:17.
He then quoted the passage from Malachi and commented: "I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other,—and behold what is that subject? It is baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect..."\(^{82}\)

By the fall of 1843, marriage sealings for eternity were being performed and Joseph, therefore, added this element to the "welding link." In an address later that winter, he chose to render the Malachi passage plainer: "The word turn here should be translated bind or seal."\(^{83}\) He then spoke of the need to participate in temple ceremonies to receive the "sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with us, & here in is the chain that binds the hearts of the father to the Children, & the Children to the Fathers which fulfills the mission of Elijah."\(^{84}\) Thus we see, in the span of a

\(^{82}\) D&C 128:18.
\(^{83}\) W 318.
\(^{84}\) W 318.
single decade, how the line-upon-line revelation of divine knowledge could provide provocative new insights into the Old Testament.

To summarize, Mormon use of the Bible, as typified by Joseph Smith, was figural, literal, and allusive. Doctrinal themes, as well as rhetorical style, were often conditioned by their pronounced biblicism. Through it all, the degree to which prophecies of the latter days occupied their attention is impressive. Clearly, these were the matters that interested them most. Equally important, but more subtle, was the way in which the social categories of antiquity, such as "Israel" and "Gentile," or the devices of boundary maintenance, such as cursing, reinforced a millenarian mindset. And of course, those explicitly apocalyptic portions of the Bible were among the most cherished by the Saints. In short, whether their literalism and figuralism generated their apocalypticism, or vice-versa, they were, like the chicken and the egg, integrally related.
CHAPTER 5

THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE MILLENNARIAN MIND

Perhaps it could be argued that much of what we learned in the last chapter about the Saints' use of the Bible merely reflected contemporary patterns of millenarian interpretation, that there was nothing intrinsically "Mormon" about it. The question arises: If well worn paths of understanding had not already existed, would they have seen the same things in the same way? That kind of tabula rasa approach to the Bible, of course, was impossible, but with the Book of Mormon, a wholly different situation existed. Here there was no history of interpretation, no published commentaries, no standard exegesis—only the text itself and the predilections and presuppositions they brought to its interpretation. Thus, the Book of Mormon provides an independent variable against which to test the conclusions of previous chapters, specifically the degree to which its usage reflected and reinforced a millenarian worldview. In order to accomplish this test, the following questions will be pursued: Which passages from
the Book of Mormon were cited and with what frequency? How were they understood? What does their usage reveal about the content and nature of early LDS thought?¹

In order to insure a degree of comprehensiveness in this study, all major Church periodicals published before 1846—the *Star* (1832-34), *Messenger and Advocate* (1834-37), *Elders' Journal* (1837-38), *Times and Seasons* (1839-46), and *Millennial Star* (1840-46)—were searched for Book of Mormon citations and commentary. In addition, the study included some seventy Mormon "books"—many of which today would be called tracts or pamphlets.² These sources, hereafter collectively referred to as the "early literature," plus a handful of journals and other

¹ Gary P. Gillum and John W. Welch list about 2,000 entries in their *Comprehensive Bibliography of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies, 1982). Only two, however, attempt some sort of historical look at Book of Mormon exegesis. Even then, theirs is a peripheral concern since they are more interested in tracking general perceptions about the book: Alton D. Merrill, "An Analysis of the Paper and Speeches of Those Who Have Written or Spoken About the Book of Mormon Published During the Years of 1830 to 1855 and 1915 to 1940, to Ascertain the Shift in Emphasis" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1940); Alton D. Merrill and Amos N. Merrill, "Changing Thought on the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* 45(September 1942):568.

² Lesser known, though important, "periodicals" which in reality were serialized tracts published as a single volume (e.g. Benjamin Winchester's *Gospel Reflector*) were classified as "books." All known early Mormon imprints are listed in Chad J. Flake, ed., *A Mormon Bibliography, 1880-1930* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1978). Approximately 100 were published before 1846. Only those inaccessible because of their location in distant repositories—about two dozen—were not consulted.
unpublished items checked for comparative purposes, yielded a total of 243 citations, analyzed in Tables 1-4.3

Before proceeding, a word about methodology is in order. For over a century and a half, students of Mormonism, be they scholar or scribbler, defender or detractor, have shared a simple assumption: the Book of Mormon can be used as evidence of early Mormon belief. While this is true in many respects, it fails to properly account for that crucial mediating link between the written text and the actual life and teaching of the Church—interpretation. Just as the way in which the Declaration of Independence was understood in the eighteenth century is distinct from the Declaration of Independence as modern Americans have used it, so we cannot merely assume that what a modern reader understands by a given passage in the Book of Mormon is what a Latter-day Saint in the 1830s would have understood by that same passage.4 Nor can we assume that what seems significant today is necessarily what Mormons would have found noteworthy in the formative years. To recognize the reality of such interpretive differences,

3 This tally does not include Book of Mormon passages cited only because they were being defended from ridicule raised against them in anti-Mormon tracts. The concern here was with how the book was used when the Saints set their own agenda.

one has only to look at the contrasting uses made of the same Book of Mormon by the RLDS and the LDS churches.

Thus, the nearly universal procedure of using the unmediated text of the Book of Mormon to articulate early LDS views provides only a plausible reconstruction at best. Perhaps it is a lingering nineteenth-century belief in the perspicuity of scripture that leads modern students to assume an identity of understanding between themselves and their subjects. Perhaps they operate on implicit faith that the early Saints literally lived by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God. Or perhaps they simply have been unaware of the numerous primary source "interpretations" from that period that do exist, ranging from passing comment to lengthy exegesis. Whatever their motivation, this study is based on the need to ground characterizations of early Mormon thought more securely to sources that actually disclose, rather than merely assume this early perspective.

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TABLE 1

Early Literature Sources Ranked by Number of Citations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIODICAL</th>
<th>VOLUME</th>
<th>CITATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Evening and the Morning Star</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Star</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times and Seasons</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger and Advocate</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times and Seasons</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times and Seasons</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Star</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger and Advocate</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evening and the Morning Star</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Star</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times and Seasons</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Times and Seasons</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Star</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder's Journal</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times and Seasons</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Millennial Star</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>1</td>
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Subtotal: 162
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLICATIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CITATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Thompson, <em>Evidences in Proof of Book of Mormon</em> (1841)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Winchester, <em>Gospel Reflector</em> (1841)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parley Pratt, <em>Truth Vindicated</em> (1838)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parley Pratt, <em>Voice of Warning</em> (1837)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Corrill, <em>History of Mormons</em> (1839)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orson Pratt, <em>Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions</em> (1840)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Smith, <em>Hymns</em> (1835)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Shearer, <em>A Key to the Bible</em> (1844)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenzo Barnes, <em>References</em> (1841)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orson Hyde, <em>A Voice from Jerusalem</em> (1842)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parley Pratt, <em>Plain Facts</em> (1840)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Subtotal: 64

Journals: 17

Grand Total: 243
### TABLE 2

**Most Common Citations From Early Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Number of Times</th>
<th>Specific Passages</th>
<th>Number of Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Ne. 21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Eth. 13:4-8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ne. 16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 Ne. 21:1-7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ne. 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 Ne. 30:3-6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ne. 29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 Ne. 3:4-21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ne. 30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 Ne. 29:3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ne. 28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 Ne. 8:5-9:12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ne. 20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1 Ne. 22:6-12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eth. 13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 Ne. 15:11-16:4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Ne. 22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Eth. 2:7-12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morm. 8:29-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3

**An Annotated List of Passages Cited More Than Once in Early Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Times Cited</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nephi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:14</td>
<td>2 Rhetorical exclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:26</td>
<td>2 Plain and precious parts of Bible removed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

225
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22:6-12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indians gathered by United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:20-22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identity of Moses-like prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nephi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:4-21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Blessings to and through Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:14-16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explains archaeological findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28:3-17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gentile corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Bible, A Bible: Gentile compalint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:3-6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indians restored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:7-8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jews gathered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31:5-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jesus and baptism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2-4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>More than one wife forbidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:19-22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ten tribes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:7, 8, 17-19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Melchizedek priesthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explains archaeological findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:17-23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48:7-8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explains archaeological findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49:18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explains archaeology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
50:1-6  3  Explains archaeological findings

3 Nephi

8:5-9:12  5  Explains archaeological findings
11:20-40  3  Baptism and gospel basics
15:11-16:4  4  "Other sheep" of Israel
16:4-7  3  Gathering of Israel (Indian)
16:8-16  3  Fate of unbelieving Gentiles
16:10  3  Exodus to Utah fulfills
20:22  2  Gathering of Israel
20:43  2  Joseph Smith
21:1-7  7  Sign that restoration of Israel has commenced
21:1-29  3  Restoration of Israel (Indians)
21:11-15  2  Fate of unbelieving Gentiles
21:10  2  Joseph Smith
27:13-22  2  Nature of gospel
28:7  2  Second Coming

Mormon

8:29-30  4  State of world when Book of Mormon discovered

Ether

2:7-12  4  Decree concerning America
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:2-4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Three witnesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Faith moves mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:4-8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>An American New Jerusalem designated for gathering of Joseph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4**

Principal Themes Based on Classification of Book of Mormon Passages Cited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration of Israel</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering of Israel (General)</td>
<td>28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph (Indians)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jerusalem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten Tribes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prophecy Relating to Gentiles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Christendom in 1830</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America: repent or suffer</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Archaeological Evidences</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

228
Table 2 identifies the Book of Mormon chapters and verses that were most frequently cited during the period under study. The topics treated in the citations tallied in Table 2 are noted in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 lists and annotates every passage cited more than once in early literature, and Table 4 ranks the themes most commonly developed from these scriptures. Both the annotations and the theme classifications in Tables 3 and 4 are derived from period perceptions. By the time the analysis reaches Table 4, what stands out in bold relief is the thematic preeminence of that cluster of concepts which the early Saints lumped together under the rubric of the "restoration of Israel." That this preoccupation was so pronounced, not only in their use of the Bible but also of the Book of Mormon, clinches the fundamentally millenarian aspect of early Mormonism. How they found the book relevant to these concerns occupies most of our attention in this chapter, though, as in the last, we shall also survey other major usages as well.
In the first place, the Book of Mormon was primarily responsible for allowing the early Saints to move beyond a discussion of Israel's identity and destiny that involved only the Jews. As Joseph Smith explained to an eastern editor, through the Book of Mormon "we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph which was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them."\(^6\) That their Native American neighbors were as "Israelitish" as any Jew had long been suspected by others; that the whole prophetic scenario of a gathering to Zion and a restoration to glory was to be dually enacted—once on American soil by native inhabitants and again by Jews in the Old World—added a new dimension to the drama.\(^7\) To be sure, the Saints still followed newspaper accounts of Zionist stirrings among the Jews with the usual millenarian enthusiasm, but they also believed in a local Zion, as real as the ancient Jerusalem, and in a local

\(^6\) *History of the Church* 1:315.

people, as pedigreed as the Jews, to be gathered to that holy city in fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

As the Saints readily acknowledged, the source for this revolutionary concept was the Book of Mormon. "The vail which had been cast over the prophecies of the Old Testament," wrote one early Saint, "was removed by the plainness of the book of Mormon." At last, "that embarrassment under which thousands had labored for years to learn how the saints would know where to gather was obviated by the book of Mormon." And it was Ether 13:4-8, more than any other passage, that was responsible for this clarification:

Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land. And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come--after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel. And that a New Jerusalem should be built upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph...Wherefore, the remnant of the house of Joseph should be built upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old.

In the heyday of manifest destiny, it was not popular to assert, as did the Mormons, that America

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8 *Star* 1 (January 1833): 57. The editor at this time, and almost certainly the author of this unsigned article, was W. W. Phelps. As in previous chapters, period spelling and grammar have been retained.
actually belonged to the Indians and would be their millennial inheritance. While they frequently pointed out, using parts of 3 Nephi 16, 20, and 21, that all Gentiles who repented would be "numbered among this the remnant of Jacob," such an "adopted" status, even if it did entitle them to all related blessings, seemed to reverse contemporary caste distinctions. Even more calculated to raise hackles was the sharply drawn alternative. Speaking of unrepentant gentiles, Parley Pratt assured the Indians that

the very places of their dwellings will become desolate except such of them as are gathered and numbered with you; and you will exist in peace, upon the face of this land from generation to generation. And your children will only know that the Gentiles once conquered this country and became a great nation here, as they read it in history; as a thing long since passed away, and the remembrance of it almost gone from the earth.9

Such rhetoric, to say the least, seemed unduly solicitous of the lowly Indian, but the drama only intensified when the "ways and means of this utter destruction" were discussed. On three different occasions during his postmortal ministry in the New World, the Savior applied the words of Micah to an

9 Parley P. Pratt, A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People (New York: W. Sandford, 1837), p. 189. This portion of the text was deleted by Pratt in his second edition (1839), and has not been restored in subsequent editions.
American setting. If the Gentiles reject the new covenant offered in the latter days through the Book of Mormon, then

my people who are a remnant of Jacob [Indians] shall be among the Gentiles yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beast of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.

Nothing here was figurative to the early Saints. Book of Mormon prophecies, wrote Pratt, "are plain, simple, definite, literal, positive and very express." As for Jesus' words, Pratt explained, "This destruction includes an utter overthrow, and desolation of all our Cities, Forts, and Strong holds--an entire annihilation of our race, except such as embrace the Covenant and are numbered with Israel." Another who believed the passage "very express" was Charles G. Thompson, presiding elder of the Genessee (New York) Conference of the Church. In his "Proclamation and Warning," he intoned,

wo, wo, wo unto you, O ye Gentiles who inhabit

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10 3 Ne. 16:15, 20:16-17, 21:12-13. For the purposes of this article, I will assume that authorship designations made in the Book of Mormon are correct.

113 Ne. 21:12-13; cf. Mic. 5:8-9.


13 Ibid., p. 15.
this land, except you speedily repent and obey the message of eternal truth which God has sent for the salvation of his people....Yea, except ye repent and subscribe with your hands unto the Lord, and sir-name yourselves Israel, and call yourselves after the name of Jacob, you must be swept off, for behold your sins have reached unto heaven....The cries of the red men, whom you and your fathers have dispossessed and driven from their lands which God gave unto them and their fathers for an everlasting inheritance, have ascended into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.14

Even without the "paranoid style" prevalent in antebellum America, it is understandable that such pro-Indian rhetoric would have caused many outsiders to think there was a treasonous conspiracy against the United States in the offing.15 Yet the Saints categorically rejected the Mohammedan metaphor. In the words of a Millennial Star editorial:

We wish it distinctly understood that the interpretation given to the Mormon predictions as to the Latter-Day Saints drawing the sword against others who may differ from them in religious belief is without shadow of truth, being contrary to the whole spirit of the Christian religion, which they (the Saints) profess; and however the Lord may see fit to make use of the Indians to execute his


15 One of the earliest examples of this is Eber D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), pp. 145-46, 197. Many later anti-Mormon books borrow extensively from Howe. That the fear did not cease after the Saints left Missouri is apparent from its perpetuation in subsequent works. See, for example, James H. Hunt, Mormonism (St. Louis: Ustick and Davies, 1844), pp. 280-83. The phrase "paranoid style" originated with Richard Hofstadter, Paranoid Style in American Politics (New York: 1965).
vengeance upon the ungodly, before they (the Indians) are converted by the record of their fore-fathers, yet it is certain that if they once become Latter-day Saints they will never more use weapons of war except in defence of their lives, and liberties. The Latter-day Saints never did draw the sword except in defence of their lives and the institutions and laws of their country, and they never will.16

That few whites in antebellum America had a more expansive, almost romantic, vision of what lay ahead for the Native American is also made clear from the Saint's exegesis of the popular passage 2 Nephi 30:3-6. Nephi here prophesies that the Book of Mormon would someday come through the Gentiles to the "remnant" of his "seed" and would be the means of restoring them "unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ." As a result, his posterity would "rejoice" and the "scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes." In time, they "shall be a white and a delightsome people."17 As might be expected, literalist Latter-day Saints appear to have anticipated an actual blanching of the skin. "The Indians are the people of the Lord," wrote W. W. Phelps in his famous series of letters to Oliver Cowdery, "and the hour is nigh when they will come flocking into the kingdom of God, like doves to their windows; yea, as the Book of Mormon

16 Millennial Star 2 (July 1841): 43.

17 The 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon follows the 1840 edition, rendering the latter phrase "a pure and delightsome people"; italics mine.
foretells—they will soon become a white and delightful people."

As they did for the Jews, the early Saints also anticipated a territorial restoration for the Native Americans. From revelations to Joseph Smith, the Saints had learned that Zion was to be built in western Missouri. Portions of 3 Nephi were read to mean that the Indians would exercise a prominent role in building and settling the New Jerusalem. Converted white Gentiles "shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob [Indians], unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob ... that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And they shall assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem." The concurrent U. S. Government policy of relocating the Indians just west of the revealed Missouri site, therefore, struck the Saints as too coincidental not to be providential. For those who could read the handwriting on the wall, it was clear that Jehovah was using Andrew Jackson just as he had earlier used Cyrus the Great to facilitate the gathering of his people.


Numerous comments to this effect are found in the early Church periodicals. "Last week," wrote the editor in the December 1832 Star, "about 400, out of 700 of the Shawnees from Ohio, passed this place for their inheritance a few miles west, and the scene was at once calculated to refer the mind to the prophecies concerning the gathering of Israel in the last days. For the instruction of our readers, we make a quotation from the Book of Mormon." Aware that not all Indians may have been the happy recipients of such assistance, the editor elsewhere commented, "Notwithstanding the Indians may doubt, or even fear the policy of the government of the United States, in gathering and planting them in one place, &c--they may be assured that the object is good, and they will soon be convinced that it is the best thing that has come to pass among them for many generations." Even after the Saints had been driven from Jackson County, Missouri, they still regarded Indian relocation favorably. As late as 1837, in his Voice of Warning, Parley Pratt urged the Indians to tolerate the Removal Act "as a kind of reward for the injuries you have received" from the American Gentiles.

By the mid 1840s, however, the Mormons were disappointed with the actual results of Indian removal,

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20Star 1 (Dec 1832): [54].
21Star 1 (Sept. 1832): [32].
and the partnership between God and government no longer seemed so apparent. "As to what the missionaries do for the Indians, they have their reward," wrote John Taylor, editor of the *Times and Seasons*, "they are hirelings--All they have done, and all they will do, will be as a drop in the bucket." Lest readers get the wrong impression, Taylor continued,

That we may not be accused of a want of charity, we will state, no doubt, the government officers do what they consider humane and praiseworthy in removing the Indians; and the christian clergy suppose they are rendering God a little service in preaching to and teaching the rude sons of forest; but from the results . . . it appears he has never given authority to any to act for him without direct revelation, it will be sufficient for our purpose, to say when the deliverer comes out of Zion, he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

This was the crux of the issue for Latter-day Saints. "It will be seen," explained Taylor, "that God, and not man, has the power to bring Jacob to his glory again," and then he quoted 2 Nephi 30:3–6.22

While the restoration of New World Israel always took precedence in the minds of early Mormons, the traditional millenarian anticipation of the gathering of Old World Israel was also an important aspect of the LDS conception of the "restoration of Israel." From the beginning, the Saints showed interest in reports of Jewish conversions and emigrations to Palestine. Their interest was shared by most Protestant denominations and

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was particularly strong in Britain. There, by the nineteenth century, religious impulses mingled with political desires to shore up a waning Ottoman empire and generated considerable enthusiasm for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.\textsuperscript{23} When the apostles arrived in England in 1840, they found themselves in the midst of widespread discussion on the topic. Famed Christian Zionists such as Lord Shaftesbury as well as the Jewish Sir Moses Montefiore were prominent in the effort to bring about the restoration of the Jews through human instrumentality. An astute observer of the "signs of the times" like Parley Pratt could hardly have missed the excitement and included occasional reports of it in his England-based \textit{Millennial Star}. The year before Pratt's arrival, British Secretary of the Admiralty and devout millenarian, Henry Innes, sent a "Memorandum to the Protestant Sovereigns" on "behalf of many who wait for the redemption of Israel." This document, imploring the European leaders to act as "nursing fathers" and help the Jews return to Palestine, was published in all the prestigious papers of Britain. Pratt called attention to

it in his paper, as well as to reports of Jews who had or who were about to convert to Christianity, and then remarked, "thus is fulfilling a prediction of Nephi: 'And the Jews shall begin to believe in Christ, and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land' (2 Nephi 30:7)."  

In the early years following the Reformation, Protestant commentary was almost united in the belief that the conversion of the Jews would precede their gathering. By the eighteenth century, however, and especially in the 19th when Christian Zionism mixed with politics, spiritual restoration was no longer considered a prerequisite to territorial restoration. While both opinions could be found among the Saints, most went along with Wilford Woodruff who remarked, "If the Jews ever go to Jerusalem they will not go as Jews but all Christians as Christ's body &c." This also seems to be how Pratt was interpreting verse seven which juxtaposes the conversion and gathering of the Jews.


25Christopher Hill, "'Till the Conversion of the Jews'," in Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought, 1650-1800, ed. Richard H. Popkin, (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 12-36 demonstrates how widespread in seventeenth-century England was the idea that the conversion and restoration of the Jews was the crucial antecedent to the millennium.

What was new with the Saints was the idea that the Book of Mormon would be the key to Jewish national conversion. Commenting on portions of 2 Nephi 29 and 30, Benjamin Winchester, an early Mormon pamphleteer and one-time president of the important Philadelphia branch of the church, remarked that "there are many of the House of Israel that do not believe that Christ is the true Messiah . . . but when the Book of Mormon is presented unto them they will discover that it is the testimony of another nation that was secluded from those of the Eastern continent." As such, the Book of Mormon's agreement with the Bible fulfilled Nephi's prophecy of "the testimony of two nations" that have "run together, both affirming Christ to be the Son of God. This," he noted, "will be a testimony that will not be easily dispensed with [by the Jews]; consequently they will search deep into the matter, and peradventure learn that Jesus is the true Messiah. Hence we see the utility of the Book of Mormon." 27

The Book of Mormon also alluded to the "lost tribes" of Israel. Jacob 5, or the "parable of the olive tree" as it was known in the early years, spoke of "natural branches" being "hid" in the "nethermost part of the vineyard," which also happened to be the "poorest spot." This seemed to coincide perfectly with contemporary

27 Benjamin Winchester, Gospel Reflector 1 (1841): 129.
notions about the 10 tribes having been sequestered away to the frozen "north countries." In a letter to Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps postulated:

The parts of the globe that are known probably contain 700 millions of inhabitants, and those parts which are unknown may be supposed to contain more than four times as many more, making an estimated total of about three thousand, five hundred and eighty million souls; Let no man marvel at this statement, because there may be a continent at the north pole, of more than 1300 square miles, containing thousands of millions of Israelites, who, after a highway is cast up in the great deep, may come to Zion, singing songs of everlasting joy....This idea is greatly strengthened by reading Zenos' account of the tame olive tree in the Book of Mormon. The branches planted in the nethermost parts of the earth, "brought forth much fruit," and no man that pretends to have pure religion, can find "much fruit" among the Gentiles, or heathen of this generation.28

As we have already learned, the idea that the Gentiles had failed to bring forth "fruit" was actually central to the Saints periodization of redemptive history. They read Matthew 21:43 to mean that God originally offered the kingdom to the Jews but in time they ceased to "bring forth the fruits thereof."

Finally, after their rejection of Christ, the Kingdom was taken from them and offered to the Gentiles. This was done, and here they invoked Romans 11, with the warning that, should the Gentiles also cease to produce the fruits of godliness, they would be "cut off" and the Israelites "grafted" back in. This final shift of

divine favor back to the ancient covenant people would culminate in the millennium and represent the climactic conclusion to the "restoration of Israel." The necessary antecedent was the apostasy of Christendom. Once that precondition was met, the drama was ready to proceed.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Book of Mormon passages dealing with the latter-day status of the Gentiles attracted exegetical attention second only to the theme of Israel’s restoration (See Table 4). Among the relevant scriptures, 2 Nephi 28 was particularly popular. Since it was generally introduced by writers as a "plain" prophecy needing no commentary, entries from early reference guides to the Book of Mormon allow us to identify their unspoken interpretations. In References, the one entry for 2 Nephi 28 is: "State of the Gentiles in that day." An index to the 1841 edition of the Book of Mormon amplified this to include three listings: "Their priests shall contend," "Teach with their learning & deny the Holy Ghost," and "Rob the poor." The phraseology of these entries allows us to pinpoint several of the key verses:

For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I am the Lord's and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord's and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord. And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance. (2 Ne. 28:3-4)
Remembering what sent Joseph Smith to the Sacred Grove and recognizing that many converts expressed similar concern over the multitude of competing sects, it is easy to see how such verses would have both explained the religious world around them and confirmed the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

As for robbing the poor, that index authors Brigham Young and Willard Richards would have targeted such abuse seems natural. At the time they created the index, they were living amidst the grovelling poverty of the manufacturing district of Manchester, England. Converts and investigators alike, whose working class slogan was "We want more bread and less Bibles, more pigs and less parsons," would have resonated with Nephi's description of the oppression exercised by the clerical elite.29

Early Mormon Robert Crawford found further evidence for the apostate condition of Gentile Christendom in the contemporary existence of "liberal religion" singled out in 2 Nephi 28:22: "And behold, others he [the devil] flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no

deliverance." Recent studies of nineteenth century theological controversies concerning hell and eternal punishment as well as the history of popular belief about Satan make clear that such thinking was definitely on the rise when the Book of Mormon came forth.\textsuperscript{30}

Beyond irreligion, hypocritical religion was also felt by the Saints to be graphically foretold in Chapter 28. Charles B. Thompson concluded his lengthy volume, Evidence in Proof of the Book of Mormon, with an appendix entitled "A PROCLAMATION AND WARNING TO THE GENTILES WHO INHABIT AMERICA." At one point he declared, "wo, wo, wo unto the inhabitants in all this land," and then quoted 2 Nephi 28:11-16 as his explanation.\textsuperscript{31} These verses describe religionists who "rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries," "persecute the meek," "wear stiff necks," "are puffed up in the pride of their hearts," "commit whoredoms," "turn aside the just for a thing of naught," and "revile against that which is good."

This rather dark picture of establishment Christianity was fully in keeping with the image of total


apostasy so common and so essential to both apocalyptic millenarianism in general and early Mormon literature and preaching in particular. Furthermore, since jeremiads had been a staple of American life for nearly two centuries, people were well accustomed to such rhetoric. It was part of the catharsis before conversion. In his letter to the American Revivalist and Rochester Observer, Joseph Smith observed, "For some length of time, I have been carefully viewing the state of things as now appear through[ ]out our christian Land and have looked at it with feelings of the most painful anxiety." He went on to describe the "vail of stupidity which seems to be drawn over the hearts of the people," and asked in language reminiscent of the passage just quoted from the Book of Mormon, "has not the pride highmindedness and unbelief of the Gentiles provoked the holy one of Israel to withdraw his holy spirit from them and send forth his Judgments to scourge them for their wickedness; this is certainly the case." "Destruction," he wrote, "to the eye of the spiritual beholder seems to be written by the finger of an invisiable hand in Large capitals upon almost evry thing we behold."³²

This sobering prophetic analysis stood in sharp contrast to what millenarian Mormons considered the ill-founded optimism of Christendom generally. As Nephi

predicted in 2 Nephi 28:21, the cry would be heard "all is well in Zion, yea Zion prospereth." With the rapid expansion of foreign missions and the spread of domestic revivals during the Second Great Awakening, Gentile churches did indeed confidently proclaim the prosperity of Zion or what they took to be the cause of God. As we have already discussed, historians have long noted the connection between revivalism and postmillennialism in that period, and many antebellum Americans were certain they would soon see the "latter day glory."

The Latter-day Saints, however, felt they knew better. As the editor of the Star remarked, "There seems to be one error common to all writers on the Millennium, which is that they think that it is to be brought about by converting the Gentiles." With Joseph Smith, the spiritually enlightened realized that as it was in the days of Noah, so it would be at the time of the coming of the Son of Man. Rather than widespread conversions, the Saints learned from Nephi that the latter-day followers of Christ would be "few" and that the "dominions" of his Church would be "small" "upon . . . the face of the earth" (1 Nephi 14:12). As for the majority of the Anglo-American world, the future, though not predestined, was predictable. Parley P. Pratt quoted the first part of 2 Nephi 28:32 to Methodist detractor La Roy

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33Star 2 (Jan 1834): 126.

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Sunderland: "Woe be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts; for notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me."34

To the uninitiated, early Mormon rhetoric occasionally sounds harsh, almost vindicative. This, however, is due in large part to the Saints' firm belief in the inevitable and complete fulfillment of God's word, including less than flattering scriptural descriptions of the wicked and their fate. But, it is also important to point out that theirs was no morbid monomania, for on the other hand, they also noticed the glimmers of hope embedded in scripture. After the dismal scene of the previous chapters, References called attention to the first two verses of 2 Nephi 30 with the interpretive phrase "Mercy yet for the Gentiles." Here Nephi cautions that "because of the words which have been spoken ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed. For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord."

Part of the problem with Gentile Christendom was a dependence on the "traditions of the fathers." 2 Nephi 28:31 warned: "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the

precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost." Along with other Christian primitivists, Mormons found the creedalism of the mainline denominations distasteful and saw in this passage a pointed repudiation of such practices. "The world," wrote W. W. Phelps, "endeavors to worship the Lord by wisdom . . . and thousands risk their souls from year to year, on the say-soes, creeds and covenants of men, when it is written "cursed is he that putteth his trust in man."  

Amidst the bewildering babel of conflicting voices, man needed something authoritative—modern revelation.

But it was precisely this matter that Mormons found so enraged the Christian world around them. On one of his many missionary tours, Heber C. Kimball wrote, "We delivered our testimony to many [ministers] who with one consent said 'we have enough and need no more revelation'; thus fulfilling a prediction of the Book of Mormon." The passage Kimball was referring to was 2 Nephi 29:3 which says that because of the book "many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." This passage seemed to be fulfilled at every turn of the corner. "The vanity, the unbelief, the darkness and wickedness of this

35 *Star* 1 (March 1833): [74].

36 *Times and Seasons* 2 (16 August 1841): 507.
generation has caused many to fulfill the predictions of Nephi," wrote the editor of the *Messenger and Advocate*. Rather than sowing doubt, the book's frequent rejection thus promoted faith by fulfilling prophecy.

Nor was the Book of Mormon the only example of modern revelation. "For I command all men," declared the Lord in 2 Nephi 29:11, "both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written." This led Parley Pratt to title the penultimate chapter of his classic *Voice of Warning*, "THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH ALL NATIONS IN REGARD TO REVELATION." According to Pratt, God "has granted unto all the nations of the earth the privilege of feeling after him and finding him . . . whether they were in Asia, Africa, Europe, or America; or even upon the islands of the sea. Now, we will suppose a case; what if any nation, in any age of the world, or in any part of the earth should happen to live up to their privileges . . . what would they obtain? I answer, Revelation." If they did obtain revelation, he continued, "it was their privilege to write it; and make a record of the same, . . . and this record would be

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37 *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (January 1836): 251.
sacred . . . no matter whether it was written by the Jews, the Ten Tribes, the Nephites, or the Gentiles."\(^{38}\)

That precisely such an abundance of revelation would not only occur but would be shared was predicted in 2 Nephi 29:12-13: For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.

And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

Just as the house of Israel would be gathered home unto "the lands of their possessions," so God's word also "shall be gathered in one." According to Pratt, this was how "the knowledge of the Lord is to cover the earth, as the waters do the sea."\(^{39}\)

Above all, what the rejection of modern revelation proved to the Mormons was that Gentile Christendom had become effete and that the stage was thus fully set for that final act in the redemptive drama--the restoration of Israel. Even the very birth of the Book of Mormon was an unmistakable witness that the "winding-up scenes" were underway. The second most frequently cited series of

\(^{38}\)Parley P. Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning and Instruction to all People} (New York: W. Sandford, 1837), pp. 193-94.

\(^{39}\)\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 201-2.
verses in the early literature was 3 Nephi 21:1-7. The Savior promised the Nephites "a sign that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel." That sign, as he went on to explain, was the Book of Mormon itself and "it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel." As Parley P. Pratt remarked, this, and other similar passages show, in definite terms not be misunderstood, that, when that record should come forth in the latter day, and be published to the Gentiles, and come from them to the house of Israel, it should be A SIGN, A STANDARD, AN ENSIGN by which they might KNOW THAT THE TIME HAD ACTUALLY ARRIVED FOR THE WORK TO COMMENCE AMONG ALL NATIONS, IN PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE RETURN OF ISRAEL TO THEIR OWN LAND.  

Thus, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon served as an invaluable prophetic landmark, a millenarian milestone that helped the Saints to locate themselves in the eschatological timetable.

Once located, though, leadership was essential. Fortunately, the Book of Mormon made clear that a prophet would be raised up in the latter days to assist in this final "work of the Father." 2 Nephi 3 recorded the prophecy of Joseph who was sold into Egypt that a "choice

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40 Millennial Star 1 (August 1840): 75 (italics in original).
"seer" would be raised up to bless the "fruit of his loins." In verse 15, he identified the individual quite precisely: "His name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me." Such specific prophecy and its fulfillment in Joseph Smith, Jr., obviously appealed to literalist Latter-day Saints. In the church's first hymnbook a song appeared in which this correlation between antiquity and actuality was extolled:

He likewise did foretell the name,
    That should be given to the same,
    His and his father's should agree,
    And both like his should Joseph be.

The song goes on to encapsulate the essential significance that this popular portion of the Book of Mormon probably held for the average Saint:

According to his holy plan,
The Lord has now rais'd up the man,
    His latter day work to begin,
    To gather scatter'd Israel in.
    This seer shall be esteemed high,
    Joseph's remnants by and by,
    He is the man who's call'd to raise,
    And lead Christ's church in these last days.41

All the important elements of Joseph Smith's mission are present--the gathering of Israel, the conversion of the Indians, and the leadership of the restored Church of Christ.

41 A Collection of Sacred Hymns (Kirtland: 1835), pp. 95-96.
For ages individuals have found refuge from the unknown in the security of prophecy. That Mormons, therefore, discovered comforting scriptural assurances that their leader would be protected and that his work would not be cut short is to be expected. After receiving word of Joseph Smith's 1841 acquittal in Quincy, Illinois, a distant Parley Pratt editorialized in the Millennial Star, "Be it known that there is an invisible hand in this matter," and then he quoted 2 Nephi 3:14: "THAT SEER WILL THE LORD BLESS, AND THEY WHO SEEK TO DESTROY HIM SHALL BE CONFOUNDED." As evidence, Pratt cited "some twenty times in succession" in which Joseph's enemies had tried to destroy him legally but had been foiled each time. This, commented Pratt, "is sufficient of itself to establish the truth of the Book of Mormon."  

Even more popular than the promised preservation was a pair of passages from 3 Nephi. In his visit to the Americas, the Savior quoted various portions of the Isaiah prophecies. One such segment was the beginning of the "suffering servant" prophecy (Isaiah 52-53), where it describes the servant's "visage" being "so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."  

For centuries Christian exegetes had considered this one  

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42 Millennial Star 2 (August 1841): 63-64.
43 Ne. 20:43-44.
of the great Messianic prophecies of Christ's scourging and crucifixion. Yet in 3 Nephi, the risen Lord himself gave it another meaning. Speaking of a latter day context and of a "servant" who would be instrumental in bringing about the "great and marvelous work," Jesus said, "and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them. But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil."44

References identified this servant as "Joseph the seer spoken of," and in a Nauvoo Neighbor editorial, John Taylor explained the prophecy thus: "This 'marring' happened near the hill Cumorah, when Joseph Smith was knocked down with a handspike, and afterward healed almost instantly! The second time he was marred" occurred in March 1832 "when his flesh was scratched off, and he tarred and feathered. He was again healed instantly, fulfilling the prophecy twice." But to Taylor there was a critical distinction between being "marred" and being martyred, for he also pointed to 1 Nephi 20:19 as evidence that Joseph's death had actually been

44 3 Ne. 21:9-10.
anticipated in prophecy. 45 Like Parley Pratt's use of 2 Nephi 3:14, then, it seems that for early Saints Joseph Smith's tribulations at once certified the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and imparted divine significance to what was happening in his life.

Occasionally, such parallels between Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ led to novel exegesis. Following the dark days of the Kirtland apostasy, apostle David W. Patten attempted to curb some of the faultfinding by writing an epistle "to the Saints scattered abroad." His approach was to give a different twist to the traditional favorite Romans 11:25-26. When it spoke of Israel's salvation in the latter days being effected by a "Deliverer" who "shall come out of Sion" and "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," Patten claimed that it referred to Joseph Smith. Despite the fact that other Mormon commentators such as Parley Pratt followed the traditional interpretation of the "Deliverer" as Christ, Patten used 2 Nephi 3 and 3 Nephi 20 along with numerous Biblical passages to argue that this "Deliverer" was in reality Joseph Smith. 46


If apologetics produced apotheosis, so did the enthusiasm of converts. While Patten's interpretation was unusual, a more common mixing of the roles of Jesus and Joseph occurred when explaining the identity of the "the prophet" spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and quoted again by Peter in Acts 3:22-23. On two occasions it was deemed worthwhile to print clarifications in Church periodicals. In both instances, passages from the Book of Mormon were invoked. The Evening and the Morning Star published a letter asserting that the problem lay in "not knowing the scriptures, on the subject, especially the book of Mormon. For Christ said, when he showed himself to the Nephites, Behold I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up."\(^{47}\) In Nauvoo, the editor of the Times and Seasons cited a similarly clear passage from 1 Nephi 22 "where the matter is fully set at rest" as to the messianic identity of the "prophet." Nonetheless, the high regard in which Joseph Smith was held among the Saints caused the editor to tread lightly:

If any are fearful lest we, by our interpretation, wrest a gem from the crown of our beloved prophet, let them remember, that we place it in the royal diadem of him who is more excellent than Joseph; and where even Joseph will be pleased to have it remain and shine. That God hath exalted him to a station of great dignity and responsibility, we do not doubt, but the truth of it rests on other testimony

\(^{47}\)Star 1 (March 1833): 79.

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than the above.\textsuperscript{48}

Shifting to other prominent uses of Book of Mormon passages, we note that a significant number of passages were felt to explain contemporary archaeological or scientific findings (Tables 3, 4). The first half of the nineteenth century probably saw the relationship between science and religion reach its apex. In America, where the twin ideals of Scottish Common Sense philosophy and the Baconian inductive method reigned supreme, the association was especially congenial.\textsuperscript{49} During this "Indian summer" before Darwin seemingly dealt the death blow to biblical literalism, a plethora of publications confidently set forth the "evidences of Christianity." The undergirding faith of this literature was simple. "The God of science was after all the God of Scripture," explains George Marsden. "It should not be difficult to demonstrate, therefore, that what he revealed in one realm perfectly harmonized with what he revealed in the other. The perspicuity of nature should confirm the perspicuity of Scripture."\textsuperscript{50}


\textsuperscript{50} Marsden, "Everyone One's Own Interpreter," p. 86.
Such, too, was the faith of the Saints when it came to establishing the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Not one of them doubted for a moment that what explorer John L. Stephens was discovering in Central America and the Yucatan in the early 1840s was tangible testimony to the book's truthfulness. The tower at Palenque was surely the temple mentioned in 2 Nephi 5; the ruins of Quirigua almost certainly the city of Zarahemla; and the Isthmus of Darien (Panama) the "narrow neck of land." 51 Extracts from Stephens's book, Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, & Yucatan, were published in church periodicals with considerable jubilation. "It affords us great joy," wrote the editor of the Times and Seasons, "to have the world assist us to so much proof." 52

The last major theme noted in our survey of early LDS use of the Book of Mormon is the Atonement. Though positioned fourth overall in Table 4, this rating distorts its actual topical significance in the early years. Nearly 90 percent of all passages cited on the subject came from one 1845 article in the Millennial Star. T. S. Barr, a Mormon priest in Glasgow, published


52 Times and Seasons 3 (September 1842): 914.
a twenty-eight-page pamphlet entitled *A Treatise on the Atonement*, proving the necessity of Christ's Death for Man's Redemption neither scriptural nor reasonable. Naturally, the pamphlet came to the attention of the Church leaders in England, and Wilford Woodruff, President of the Church in the British Isles, responded with an article entitled "Rationality of the Atonement."

His introductory comments tell the whole story:

We are sorry to be under the necessity of occupying our time and pages in noticing a pamphlet bearing such an introduction, as the production of a member of the Church of Christ; or that any man bearing any portion of the authority of the holy priesthood, should have his mind so much overcome by the powers of darkness, as to stray so widely from the order and counsel of the kingdom of God, in presenting for the investigation of the public a heresy so much opposed to the revelations of God and every principle of holiness.

Our object in the present article will not be so much to refute the heretical doctrine advanced, as to introduce a portion of the testimony in favour of the principle of redemption through the blood of Christ, with which the revelations of God so much abound, in order that our views on the subject may be rightly understood by all, and that the Saints of God may be prepared to withstand the assaults of the grand enemy of man's salvation, as well as to set the matter for ever at rest in the minds of those who believe in the revelations of God.  

What follows is a chain of passages from the three volumes then accepted by the Mormons as scripture (Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants) to demonstrate that redemption did indeed come through the

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shedding of Christ's blood. After arraying this arsenal of scripture, Woodruff chose a particularly poignant passage from the Book of Mormon with which to close:

Behold, will ye reject these words? Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye reject all the words which have been spoken concerning Christ, after so many have spoken concerning him; and deny the good word of Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit; and make a mock of the great plan of redemption, which hath been laid for you? Know ye not that if ye will do these things, that the power of redemption and the resurrection, which is in Christ, will bring you to stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God? (Jac. 6:8-9).

In addition to the major themes already treated, Book of Mormon passages were occasionally used to encourage prayer, the obedience of children, or hard work.\textsuperscript{54} They hallowed the American Revolution, explained how to conduct meetings, and promised the revelation of all truth.\textsuperscript{55} They inveighed against salaried clergy, creeds, and contention.\textsuperscript{56} Though these less frequent usages have transcended time and continue to this day in the LDS Church, others have not. We shall examine two

\textsuperscript{54} Alma 34:17-23 as in Messenger and Advocate 1 (August 1835): 168-69; 2 Ne. 4:3-6 as in Star 1 (May 1833): 93; and, Mosiah 23:7 as in Star 1 (November 1832): 47.

\textsuperscript{55} 1 Ne. 13:14-19 as in Star 1 (October 1832): 38; Moro. 6:9 as in Star 1 (April 1833): 88; and 3 Ne. 26:1-9 as in Orson Pratt, Remarkable Visions, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{56} 2 Ne. 26:30-31 as in Star 1 (December 1832): 54; 2 Ne. 28:31 as in Star 1 (March 1833): 74; and, 3 Ne. 11:29 as in Millennial Star 3 (October 1842): 110.
that grew out of their millenarian mindset.

As the Church's general conference convened at Nauvoo in April 1840, Orson Hyde, obviously anxious to hasten the restoration of Israel, announced that the Spirit was whispering to him to take up a mission to the Jews and Jerusalem. The expression was heartily seconded from the floor and approved by the Prophet. Thus began one of the most famous missions in Mormon history, culminating two years later in a special apostolic prayer offered on the Mount of Olives to dedicate the Holy Land for the return of the Jews.\textsuperscript{57} Shortly after he had set out, Hyde wrote a letter commenting on a Zionist movement then being reported in the newspapers. This recalled to his mind the words of Isaiah that there would be "none to guide her among all the sons she hath brought forth; neither that taketh her by the hand but these two things which are come unto thee."\textsuperscript{58} Noting that in the 2 Nephi 8 recapitulation of this portion of Isaiah, things appeared as sons, "this is better sense, and more to the point," declared Hyde. It also allowed him and his

\textsuperscript{57} History of the Church 4:106. Hyde published the account of his mission as A Voice from Jerusalem, or a Sketch of the Travels and Ministry of Elder Orson Hyde, Missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to Germany, Constantinople, and Jerusalem (Liverpool, Pratt, 1842). In the late 1970s, the LDS church dedicated a garden spot on the Mount of Olives to Hyde and included a bronze plaque containing his prayer in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.

\textsuperscript{58} Isa. 51:8-19 as quoted by Hyde, Times and Seasons 1 (August 1840): 156.
missionary companion, John E. Page, to step into the pages of prophecy: "As Jerusalem has no sons to take her by the hand and lead her among all the number whom she hath brought forth, Bro. Page and myself feel that we ought to hurry along and take her by the hand; for we are her sons but the Gentiles have brought us up." 59

An equally literalistic exegesis grew out of the Church's decision in the fall of 1845 to evacuate Nauvoo the following spring. Rather than engage enraged vigilantes from Hancock County in what seemed to be an inevitable civil war, Church leaders decided to move west. Again, Book of Mormon prophecy helped to explain current events and did so from within a decidedly apocalyptic framework. According to 3 Nephi 16:10,

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

Early Saints expected the closing lines to be literally fulfilled in the Church's exodus from Nauvoo. An elaborate exegesis of this appeared in a circular entitled "Message From Orson Pratt to the Saints in the

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Eastern and Midland States." Pratt was then presiding over the Church in that section of the country. His analysis deserves quotation in full:

This wholesale banishment of the Saints from the American republic will no doubt, be one of the grandest and most glorious events yet witnessed in the history of this church. It seems to be a direct and literal fulfilment of many prophecies, both ancient and modern. Jesus has expressly told us, (Book of Mormon), that if the "Gentiles shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them." Now, what could the Gentiles further do to reject the "fulness of the Gospel"--the Book of Mormon? Is there one crime that they are not guilty of? I speak of them in a national capacity....

If then, all these crimes do not amount to a national rejection of the "fulness of the gospel," I know not what more they can do to fully ripen them in crime and iniquity. Therefore, is not the time at hand for the Lord to bring the "fulness of the gospel" from among the Gentiles of this nation? If we are banished to the western wilds among the remnants of Joseph, is it not to ripen the wicked and save the righteous? Is it not to save us from the impending judgments which modern revelation have denounced against this nation? How could the gospel be brought from among the Gentiles while the priesthood and the Saints tarried in their midst.60

In the final portion of this chapter, we shall seek to provide perspective for what has been discussed thus far. A number of general observations will be helpful. First, in terms of overall scripture usage, compared to

60Millennial Star 6 (December 1845): 191-92. See also Times and Seasons 6 (15 November 1845): 1037; Millennial Star 7 (15 January 1846): 26; and Millennial Star 7 (1 February 1846): 35.

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the Bible, the Book of Mormon was hardly cited at all. Though this chapter has examined a greater variety of sources over a longer period of time, Gordon Irving's earlier analysis of Bible usage during the years 1832-38 makes a precise quantitative comparison possible for at least that six-year span of time (See Table 5 below). To a people who have come to prize the Book of Mormon as "the keystone" of their religion, it may come as a surprise to learn that in the early literature the Bible was cited nearly twenty times more frequently than the Book of Mormon. Such a ratio is corroborated in unpublished sources as well. During his proselyting peregrinations at this period of time, Orson Pratt kept a fairly detailed record of the scriptures used in his sermons. Bible verses were listed ten times more frequently than passages from Book of Mormon ones. Moreover, in the 173 Nauvoo discourses of the prophet Joseph Smith for which contemporary records exist, only two Book of Mormon passages were cited as opposed to dozens of Biblical quotations.

61 Elden J. Watson, ed., The Orson Pratt Journals (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1975). A specific search was made for the period between February 1833 and November 1937 (pp. 16-94). Of the 371 entries, 281, or 76 percent, mentioned topics. Within those 281, 96 Bible citations, 10 Book of Mormon citations, and 1 D&C citation appeared. Thus the Bible to Book of Mormon ratio is about 10 to 1.

62 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph (Provo, Utah: BYU
Table 5

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Number of Bible Citations*</th>
<th>Number of Mormon Citations</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evening and Morning Star</strong> 1</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evening and Morning Star</strong> 2</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Messenger and Advocate</strong> 1</td>
<td>357</td>
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<td>20:1</td>
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<td>193</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elders Journal</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pratt, (Voice of Warning)</strong></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>19:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*This column is taken from Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," BYU Studies 13(Summer, 1973):479.

Since these statistics fly in the face of such long-standing assumptions, we must here pause and attempt some explanation. A plausible answer to the question of why the Book of Mormon was cited so infrequently when compared with the Bible would seem to be that such a move was calculated to avoid Protestant antipathy to the "new scripture." If the Saints built their case from the

Religious Studies Center, 1980), p. 230. The phraseology suggests 3 Ne. 27:21 and Moro. 8:12, 19, or 22.
Bible, the Gentiles would have no ready excuse for rejecting their testimony. Yet, no evidence exists for either a formal church directive or even an informal agreement not to use the Book of Mormon in their public ministry. On the contrary, an early revelation positively instructed the elders to "teach the principles of my gospel which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon"(D&C 42:12), and missionary diaries, while sustaining the predominant use of the Bible, suggest that many seemed to feel no qualms about occasionally quoting from the book when it seemed pertinent to their purposes. Moreover, the "regard-for-the Gentiles" argument does little to account for the equal lack of Book of Mormon citation within the household of faith.

A more satisfying answer looks to the Saints' love of the Bible rather than to a supposedly intentional avoidance of the Book of Mormon. The image of Parley Pratt spending an entire winter alone in his Ohio log cabin, delighting in the opportunity to study the Bible from dawn to dusk, seems archetypical of those earnest souls who first joined the LDS community.63 The Saints felt comfortable and intimate with the Bible. From it, most took their first lessons in reading. It had been their lifelong associate. From any angle, the depth of familiarity with the Bible among antebellum Americans is

staggering compared to today's almost scripturally illiterate generation. Even though the new scripture contained many acknowledged insights, it was not easy to abandon their old companion. Much like the runner who hesitates to break in a new pair of shoes during actual competition, the elders fell back on their knowledge of the Bible not only for defense of the faith, but for doctrinal exposition as well. In their mind, a race was on, the "winding-up" scenes were underway. With the apocalyptic moment soon upon them, little time was available for a detached perusal of the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants. The new scriptures, in any case, were seen less as a realm of study than as an agenda for activity. Then, too, we must remember that the Saints had only known the Book of Mormon since the time of their relatively recent, adult conversion. For all these reasons, we should not be surprised that they received a divine chastisement for having "treated lightly the things you have received" and a charge to "remember" the Book of Mormon.

Moreover, if, as our study demonstrates, they did not immediately respond to this challenge, that is not surprising either. Modern Mormons seem to have fared

64 See, for example, Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in The Bible in America, pp. 39-58.

65D&C 84:54-57.
little better in "remembering" the two visions, now D&C 137 and 138, added to their sacred canon in 1976. Though these "new" revelations provide the most detailed description of the post-mortal spirit world found in Mormon scripture, many Latter-day Saints continue to cite more familiar, though less comprehensive, passages from the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants when discussing the topic. It seems to be part of the human condition to rely on the tried and true rather than the new.

A second observation is that for the years under study a discernible pattern of usage frequency is not evident. A glance at Table 1 reveals that the 1832-33 volume of the *Evening and Morning Star* contained the greatest number of citations, followed by the 1845 volume of the *Millennial Star*, the 1841-42 volume of the *Times and Seasons*, and the 1834-35 volume of the *Messenger and Advocate*. A similarly random pattern is also present in the column ranking the "books." No sense of steady development across time is apparent here.

The fluctuations are best accounted for as a fortuitous confluence of publishing histories and contemporary affairs. There is no evidence that deliberate policy changes were responsible. Thus, it is more appropriate to view the sharp drop in citations between 1832 and 1834, for example, as a result of much
of the print space in the second volume of the *Star* being occupied with descriptions of the Saints' expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri. It may also have been related to the fact that Oliver Cowdery, who replaced W. W. Phelps as editor, printed Sidney Rigdon's exclusively Biblical treatments of theology, whereas Phelps had published his own doctrinal essays containing an unusual number of Book of Mormon citations. Likewise, one accounts for the sharp peak in 1840-41 by noting that it was at that time that Pratt initiated the *Millennial Star*, and that the two "books" which most heavily cited the Book of Mormon during the early years--Charles Thompson's *Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon* and Benjamin Winchester's *Gospel Reflector*--were also published at that time.

As for topic, except for a flurry in the early 1840s of archaeology-related citations generated by LDS interest in John L. Stephens's book, *Incidents of Travel in Central America* and except for the 1845 cluster of passages on the Atonement emanating from a single article, treatment of the various themes seems fairly even throughout the years studied. Because the number of citations per year is relatively small, especially when divided topically, caution must be taken to avoid concluding too much from such limited data. Perhaps the safest observation to make is simply to reiterate that during the pre-Utah period, Book of Mormon usage was
random, infrequent, and appears to have been largely a matter of personal preference.

Lastly, when usage patterns are examined from the perspective of a book-by-book analysis, we find that three of the largest books—Mosiah, Alma, and Helaman—which together constitute approximately half the Book of Mormon actually account for only 15% of the citations. Conversely, 3 Nephi and Ether represent just over 15% of the total volume of the book and yet account for nearly 45% of the citations. Obviously, this tells us something about the Saints’ perceptions of the relative value of the various books. When content is considered what is positively clear is that the prophetic portions of the Book of Mormon—parts of 3 Nephi, Ether, and 2 Nephi—received significantly greater attention from the early Saints than did the historical books—Mosiah, Alma and Helaman.

Statistical analysis, therefore, confirms the fundamentally millenarian nature of early Mormonism. When W. W. Phelps reflected upon the early "neglect" of the Book of Mormon, he raised a revealing question. "Has this been done," he asked, "for the sake of hunting mysteries in the prophecies?"66 Whether that was what drew or held the Saints to a study of the Bible (and one suspects that he is at least partially correct), a

66*Star* 1 (January 1833): 60.
preoccupation with the prophetic has certainly been verified in the present study of Book of Mormon usage. Prophecies relating to the fate of the Gentiles and to the restoration of Israel were by far the principal interests of the early Saints. In fact, as Joseph Smith declared in a *Times and Seasons* editorial, they have "interested the people of God in every age." The "latter day glory" was felt to be "a theme upon which prophets, priests, and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight," and to which "they have looked forward with joyful anticipation." The nature of the *-logies* that make up "theology," it was eschatology that for the Saints outweighed the rest. Though the Book of Mormon has since been used in the LDS community as a source for a unique LDS brand of anthropology, soteriology, and even Christology, its earliest uses were primarily eschatological, and an apocalyptic variety at that.

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67 *Times and Seasons* 3 (May 1842): 776.
CHAPTER 6

ANOTHER WINDOW INTO THE MILLENNARIAN WORLD
OF EARLY MORMONISM

Because the literature examined in the last chapter represents dozens of documents and thousands of pages, it constitutes a broad base for understanding early Mormon use of the Book of Mormon. With that foundation laid, however, several additional items, mentioned there only in passing, now require more careful examination. During the period under study three finding aids for the Book of Mormon were published. They alone provide over twice as many citations as all the rest of the literature combined. These reference guides provide a unique and hitherto unexplored perspective for ascertaining early Mormon perceptions of the Book of Mormon. Preparing a reference guide, then or now, is an obvious act of interpretation. By what these early Saints chose to include or exclude, as well as by the very manner in which they worded their entries, through these heretofore neglected sources, we are provided with a marvelous window into early Mormon minds.

Little is certain about the origin of References to the Book of Mormon, referred to hereafter as simply
References, but bibliographers conclude that the four-page item of unknown authorship was probably printed in Kirtland in 1835. In 1841, as part of the first European edition of the Book of Mormon, Brigham Young and Willard Richards included a six-page "index" they had prepared. The following year in Philadelphia, Robert P. Crawford, about whom virtually nothing is known, published a document entitled An Index, or Reference, to the Second and Third Editions of the Book of Mormon. Despite their varying titles, each of these publications had the same objective and essentially the same format. They amount to extended tables of contents, proceeding sequentially from 1 Nephi to Moroni and directing readers to those portions of the Book of Mormon


2 Hugh G. Stocks, "The Book of Mormon, 1830-1879: A Publishing History" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979), pp. 69-72. Stocks points out that "all subsequent LDS editions before 1920 include it virtually unchanged, but they correctly label it as a table of contents and place it in the front of the book" (p. 69).

3 Crawford, An Index, or Reference to the Second and Third Editions of the Book of Mormon, Alphabetically Arranged (Philadelphia: Brown & Guilbert, 1842). David J. Whittaker confirms in his "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1982) and in a personal letter to the author dated 25 March 1985 that nothing is known about Crawford other than that he authored this document.
considered noteworthy. Each entry consists of a brief phrase, such as "Nephi slayeth Laban" or "Charity recommended," followed by a page number from the referenced edition. Together, the three guides provide 1244 citations, of which 615, or just under 50 percent, are not repeats.

To give purpose and direction to our "window viewing" in this chapter, we shall look particularly for two kinds of references: those that reveal something about how the Saints viewed the theological and cultural landscape around them and those that shed light on matters uniquely Mormon. Even with this attempt at focus, the hundreds of references involved force us to

4 Crawford arranged his index alphabetically rather than sequentially.

5 Early-edition pagination of the Book of Mormon has been converted to the chapter/verse divisions found in the 1981 Utah LDS edition. Moreover, as elsewhere in this study, unless the wording has been changed significantly from the 1830 edition, the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon is used.

6 38% of the entries in the Young/Richards index are either identically worded or obvious parallels to those found in the 1835 References. Whether Young and Richards had access to or utilized the earlier and smaller References is not known. It does seem clear, however, that Crawford possessed and used the Young/Richards index. Though Crawford switched from a sequential to an alphabetical format, the fact that he included with little variation 440 of the 476 (94%) of the Young/Richards entries, including mistakes, and added only 76 new references seems strong evidence for his heavy reliance on the apostles' work. Despite his apparent plagiarism, his effort to conceal it with different phraseology along with some of his own original entries still affords an additional and profitable perspective on early understandings of the Book of Mormon.
be highly selective in what we examine at close range. Thus, we shall first step back and try to gain some sense of the discernible contours and characteristics of the references as a whole.

It is possible to group reference guide entries into two broad categories—historical and conceptual. The first type, consisting of over half the references, seems to reflect little more than the authors' commitment to track Book of Mormon history. A typical example of such entries is this sequence from Young/Richards: "City of Antiparah taken; City of Cumeni taken; 200 of the 2060 fainted; Prisoners rebel, slain; Manti taken by stratagem" (Alma 57, 58). That half of their references fall neatly into this category, though, is really not surprising for work aspiring to a degree of comprehensiveness, since the majority of the Book of Mormon text itself is essentially narrative. Of course, these early Saints could have chosen to overlook the historical parts and concentrate solely on the theological. That they did not, that they gave them their due, however, lends support to Richard Bushman's

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7 Because the guides are only a few pages in length and because of their sequential or alphabetical arrangement, it seemed more helpful to the individual wishing to consult the original sources to simply cite parenthetically in the text the current (1981) book and chapter designations rather than use the traditional footnotes, which cite only page numbers. The page number seems to be of little value in locating the desired phrase in a table of contents or index in any case. This procedure should facilitate further reference.
recent assertion that "the core of Mormon belief was a conviction about actual events" about what the Saints believed had actually happened to, among others, the people of the Book of Mormon. 8 The large number of narrative events cited in these guides, as well as the very tone and style of those references, strongly suggest that they did take Book of Mormon history seriously. There is perhaps no better corroboration of this than the delightful report from Joseph Smith to his wife, Emma, while on march with Zion's Camp. "The whole of our journey," he commented in his letter, has been one of "wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity." 9

We can even go a step further and notice what kinds of narrative items captured their attention. A certain fascination with war is clearly discernible. Battles are conscientiously referenced throughout the two longer


9 Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in Dean C. Jesses, ed., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), p. 324. As discussed in the last chapter, a concern to discover "evidences" for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon was prominent among early Saints.
guides and military strategy seems to be savorred. Of course, in a country priding itself on its free-citizen militias and their regular, if raucous, musters, Mormon admiration for the martial was not unusual. Other interests seemed to be fired by Romanticism, which involved "a renewed interest in...the unique, colorful, primitive, exotic, and distant." Attention to the primitive and exotic is clearly manifest, for example, in these entries from the Young/Richards index: "Lamanites eat raw meat" (Enos); "Lamanites drink blood" (Jarom); "Abinadi is scourged with faggots" (Mosiah 17); Ammon "smote off arms" (Alma 17); Koriho is "trodden down" (Alma 30); "women and children sacrificed" (Mormon 4); "women fed on their husband's flesh" (Moroni 9); and "daughters murdered and eat[en]" (Moroni 9). They also referenced stabbings, hangings, killings, deaths, massacres, slaughters, and of course the devastating

10 See entries for Mosiah 9; Alma 2, 3, 24, 28, 43, 51, 52, 56, 58; Helaman 1, 6 11; 3 Nephi 4; Mormon 4, 6; Ether 7, 13, 14, 15.

11 Most social histories of militias have been done for the period surrounding the American Revolution, but such militias were still very much a part of the young republic. In 1830, the editor of the Vermont Journal inveighed against "the love of military glory" manifest at such musters as "a canker sore blighting the life of the nation." Cit. in Randal A. Roth, "Whence This Strange Fire? Religious and Reform Movements in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1843" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1981), p. 206.

destruction accompanying the three days of darkness while Christ was in the tomb. In short, little that was exotic or gruesome in the Book of Mormon escaped the notice of these early readers. All of this, however, was not out of character with the age, as we are reminded somewhat dramatically by literary historian Curtis Dahl:

From about 1810 to 1845, an influential through now half-forgotten group of American poets, novelists and painters had celebrated, though only artistically, terrific, blood-curdling destruction...preferably by cataclysmic supernatural forces, of whole cities, nations, races or indeed of the world itself. These connoisseurs of holocausts, dilettantes of disaster, form an American "School of Catastrophe" that bridges the gap between literature and painting and offers an amusing yet valuable insight into the taste of early nineteenth-century America.

What Dahl does not seem to realize is how pronounced the conceptual kinship here is with an apocalyptic worldview.

Be that as it may, it is the non-narrative references that principally concern us in this study. As we attempt to gain a general sense of their character, three prominent motifs merit special note. First, the guides evidence a clear preoccupation with prophecy. Since this tendency, which was even more pronounced in

13 See entries for 1 Nephi 4; Alma 1, 2, 24, 43, 47, 48, 51, 52, 57, 62; Helaman 1, 2, 5, 8; 3 Nephi 4, 7, 8; Mormon 6; Ether 7, 9, 14.


the pamphlet and periodical literature, has already been analyzed at length in the last chapter, we will here mention only that the reference guides manifest a healthy respect even for seemingly insignificant utterance. All three, for example, are careful to note by the words "prophecy of a soldier" what some might consider merely the battlefield braggadocio of the warrior who scalped Zerahemnah and who then predicted that as Zerahemnah's scalp fell to the ground, so would the Lamanites if they did not surrender their weapons of war (Alma 44).\textsuperscript{16} Consistent with the hermeneutical bias of millenarianism, the authors of the guides also seem to have been impressed with both the specificity and the exact fulfillment of prophecy. As only two examples, they reference Alma's prophecy that the "Nephites would dwindle in unbelief 400 years after Christ should come" (Alma 45), and they notice that "three witnesses" would view the golden plates (2 Nephi 27).

Another characteristic common to all three reference guides is their interest in the miraculous, in special manifestations of divine power. Dreams, visions, and angelic visitations are all carefully referenced, as is the use of miraculous devices, such as the Liahona and

\textsuperscript{16} Later in the chapter, the Book of Mormon text itself does recall the episode with the same characterization (Alma 44:18).
the Urim and Thummim. The powers of faith sufficient to move mountains, rend prison walls, heal the sick, and raise the dead are likewise duly noted. Crawford even included a special section at the end of his guide entitled "THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES ON THIS LAND, &c., &c." John Greenleaf Whittier, a perceptive outsider with limited exposure to Latter-day Saints, wrote,

They contrast strongly the miraculous power of the Gospel in the apostolic time with the present state of our nominal Christianity. They ask for signs of divine power, the faith, overcoming all things which opened the prison doors of the apostles, gave them power over the elements, which rebuked disease and death itself, and made visible to all the presence of the Living God. They ask for any declaration in the Scriptures that this miraculous power of faith was to be confined to the first confessors of Christianity. They speak a language of hope and promise to weak, weary hearts, tossed and troubled, who have wondered from sect to sect, seeking in vain for the primal manifestations of the divine power.

Early LDS writings are replete with such themes. That this should be reflected in what was considered reference-worthy in the Book of Mormon reinforces the

17 Entries for 1 Nephi 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 16, 18; 2 Nephi 5; Mosiah 8, 27, 28; Alma 8, 37; Helaman 5, 16; 3 Nephi 7, 17; Ether 3.

18 Jacob 4, Alma 14, 15; 3 Nephi 7, 26; 4 Nephi; Ether 12.

19 Crawford, Index, or Reference, p. 21.

20 Cit. in Millennial Star 10:302-303.

charismatic character of early Mormonism. Calling attention to such items would have served several purposes. In the first place, in an era tinged with the skeptical repudiation of even Biblical miracles from the likes of Tom Paine or Ethan Allen, references to divine intervention in the Book of Mormon would have provided important corroboration for similar Biblical accounts, thus "proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true."\textsuperscript{22} They would also have confirmed that God really is "no respecter of persons" and that he does "remember one nation like unto another," thus dramatically reinforcing the early belief in the continuity across time and space of the "eternal gospel."\textsuperscript{23} Finally, a cataloguing of charismata would have served to whet the appetite of modern worthies for what they might anxiously expect to receive from a God who was "the same yesterday, today, and forever." One readily senses such yearning in these references so careful to tally the triumphs of faith, and realizes that in early Mormonism many searching souls indeed must have found a legitimate outlet for pentecostal proclivities.

In ways not yet noticed in the relevant scholarly

\textsuperscript{22} The quotation is from D&C 20:11. Thomas Paine, \textit{The Age of Reason} (1794); Ethan Allen, \textit{The Only Oracle of Man} (1784).

\textsuperscript{23} As illustrated in Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," \textit{BYU Studies}, 13 (Summer 1973): 473-88; Scriptural quotations are Acts 10:34 and 2 Nephi 29:8.
literature, the early Mormon rationale for the restoration of spiritual gifts was closely paralleled a half a century later by early Pentecostal writers. Both groups were heavily influenced by their fundamentally apocalyptic worldview. Living in the last days made them expect to personally realize Joel's prophecy of an end-time outpouring of the Spirit. Furthermore, both groups stressed the presence of "signs following belief" as prime evidence for their being the reprivitated Christianity both claimed to represent.24

A third shared tendency among the non-narrative references in the guides is their sometimes explicit, sometimes subconscious link with the Bible. The power of parallels has long been regarded as central to religion, and Jan Shipps has provocatively illustrated this for Mormonism as well.25 What we have in the reference guides is fascinating firsthand evidence that their Biblical background conditioned the very way in which early Saints interpreted Book of Mormon events. One of


the clearest examples of this is found in Helaman 10. Here Nephi is visited by the voice of the Lord, praising him for his faithfulness and pronouncing upon him power, "that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven" (Helaman 10:7). For this passage both Young/Richards and Crawford make the following entry: "Keys of the kingdom." What is intriguing, of course, is that in the text neither the word "keys," nor the word "kingdom" are anywhere to be found. How, then, did they come up with such an interpretation? Crawford gives it away, noting in a parenthetical addition to his reference, "See Mat. xvi. 19." It is the Matthean account of Christ's words to Peter: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." That the circumstances surrounding the two proclamations were quite different seems unimportant to these latter-day interpreters, and direct linguistic parallels overpower discriminating theological reflection.

At times the parallelism was more subtle. As we might expect, given their interest in the power of faith, all three guides cite this passage in Jacob: "Our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the
mountains, or the waves of the sea" (Jacob 4:6). Though the author of References words his entry "trees removed by faith," the text simply says they "obeyed" rather than that they were "removed." Theoretically, they might have been fruit-bearing trees commanded to make accessible their upper-branch delights. Yet if the thought ever crossed his mind, it appears to have been secondary to the association with Christ's words to New Testament disciples that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed, they "might say unto this scyamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:6). Similarly, in his section "Miracles wrought by Jesus and His Disciples on this land," Crawford, with one exception, included only references from 3 Nephi or 4 Nephi, that is, from the period during or immediately after Christ's New World ministry. That single exception was this passage, which must have seemed so New Testament-like as to merit inclusion in a list intent on drawing the transoceanic parallel. Awareness of Biblical precedent, therefore, seemed to have served consciously or unconsciously both as a principle of selection in what these early Saints noticed in their reading of the Book of Mormon and as a conditioner of how they interpreted what they read.26

26 Additional parallels include Mosiah 13, "Abinadi's face shone like unto Moses"; Alma 45, "Alma's strange departure" and 3 Nephi 1, "Nephi's strange departure," also parallel to Moses; and Helaman 10,
Let us shift now from the general to the specific as we begin to examine those isolated but illuminating references which reflect an LDS perspective on the theological and cultural issues of the day. One of the most oft-quoted characterizations of the Book of Mormon is Alexander Campbell’s charge that it "decides all the great controversies" of the day. To be precise, he felt that Joseph Smith had authored it specifically with that objective in mind.27 Our concern, however, is not with questions of authorship but with matters of perception. Whether early Mormon readers actually understood it to be deciding all the great theological controversies seems to be the more important question, since intent counts for little in the face of actual use. On the whole, neither in the reference guides nor in the early literature do we find that the Saints, Joseph Smith included, were very concerned with using the Book of Mormon in this manner. Less than one in ten references can be so construed. We cannot emphasize enough this quantitative corrective and hope that this important perspective will be kept constantly in mind as we now proceed to spend the bulk of the chapter examining some of the few, but revealing, exceptions that do comment on contemporary theology or

"Nephi taken away by the spirit," parallel to Jesus’ and Philip’s similar transportation.

culture.

A rare example of where both the true and the false are identified is a pair of references to "election." "Election," or the belief in God's extension of saving grace only to a predestined few, had been a hallmark of Reformed or Calvinist thought for nearly three centuries when the Book of Mormon was published, and Calvinism had been the dominant theological orientation of Americans at least until the Revolution. At issue was the proper relationship between grace and nature, that is, between how much salvation depended on God and how much it depended on man, as well as whether Christ's atonement was limited or universal in scope. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the "new measures" revivalism of the Second Great Awakening had combined with the earlier Enlightenment-spurred celebration of human potential to decisively tip the scale to the side of man and an unlimited opportunity for saving grace. For many popular religionists, predestined election had come to symbolize in religious terms an issue that exercised the entire nation--the propriety of inherited versus achieved status. "Election" took on a pejorative connotation for all but orthodox diehards and became a catchword for an increasingly unpopular Calvinism. 28

Mormons shared this antipathy. Under the heading "The Zoramites preach election," References cited these words: "We believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and...thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell" (Alma 31:16-17). In the mind of the author of References, such a passage paralleled the detested doctrine of "double predestination," especially since it is the only place in the entire Book of Mormon where the word "elect" or its cognates, so commonly associated with Calvinism, are used. Brigham Young and Willard Richards, on the other hand, discovered the "true" doctrine of election in the early part of Alma 13. That they were making an interpretive judgment as to what "election" meant is clear from the fact that their reference read "election spoken of," despite the absence of the term in the text. We can be reasonably certain of which passage they had in mind, however, since about the same time that they prepared their index, they also wrote an article entitled "Election and Reprobation" in which they quoted Alma 13:3-7.29 Examining a portion of that passage, therefore, provides a window into their


understand of election, which actually stood the old Calvinist notion on its head. The text says that those ordained to the High Priesthood were called "on account of their faith, while others would reject the spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren. Or, in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts."

If the door to calling or "election" was open to all, it was not insured for any. Mormons, as we shall see, were just as opposed to Universalism, with its belief in the ultimate salvation of all people, as they were to Calvinism. Universalism was a product of the "Age of Reason." What began in the seventeenth century as a challenge to notions of "eternal torment" ended up in the latter part of the eighteenth as a positive belief in the universal salvation of all God's moral creations. Deity acquired traits of benevolence rather than vengeance, and his mercy was emphasized more than his justice. Such liberal views toward God were not, of course, held by all. Originally, they appealed mostly to latitudinarian clergy and their genteel parishioners. During the final quarter of the eighteenth century, however, Universalism popularized such notions among the
rural folk of northern New England, and by the early nineteenth century the sect had spread across the Yankee belt to Ohio.30

In one of the few instances where a reference guide explicitly links Book of Mormon individuals or ideas to the contemporary religious scene, the first two entries in References for the book of Alma are "Nehor the Universalian" and "Amlici the Universalist." One passage, in particular, must have made the connection crystal clear: Nehor "testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Alma 1:4). In this case, not only the narrative repudiation of Nehor's Universalism but also the epithetical characterization of him in References as "Universalian" leaves little doubt about how Universalist doctrine was viewed by one early

Mormon.

Though none of the reference guides makes the association explicit, Alma's son Corianton also seems to have had Universalist leanings, and it appears that much of that father's message to his son was understood to be a lengthy response to such inclinations. All three guides call the reader's attention to the latter part of Alma 40 and the whole of Alma 41 with the words "the restoration spoken of" or, as Crawford put it, "the restoration of all things." The term "restoration," of course, was also a favorite with nineteenth-century Christian primitivists and denoted the recovery of New Testament principle and practice. But even before that, the phrase had been popularized by Universalists as referring to final, universal salvation or, in the words of their Profession of Faith, to the "restoration" to "holiness and happiness" of "the whole family of mankind."31 The very scripture that Mormons would come to cherish for their own reasons—Acts 3:21, with its reference to the restitution or restoration "of all things"—gave hope to Universalists that Biblical prophets had long ago foretold the future salvation of all mankind. No wonder Alma remarks that "some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing" (Alma 41:1). His subsequent explanation

31 Cit. in Miller, The Larger Hope, pp. 45-56.
of the term, the gist of which was that Judgment Day would bring "back again evil for evil" and "good for that which is good" (Alma 41:13), was probably much appreciated in deciding that controversy. Particularly pointed, in light of the Universalist slogan about the restoration of all to "holiness and happiness," would have been Alma's warning not to "suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Perhaps even more significant to the authors of the reference guides than straightening out the meaning of the term "restoration" was Alma's response to the supposed "injustice" of consigning sinners "to a state of misery" (Alma 42). Young/Richards and Crawford each made two relevant entries for this chapter: "justice in punishment" and "mercy rob justice." The mere fact that they chose to highlight such notions illustrates that liberal religion, with its emphasis on God's love and benevolence, had succeeded in calling such concepts into question. To denigrate eternal punishment, however, was to demean the atonement. "Repentance," explained Alma, "could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul" (Alma 42:16). As we saw in chapter 3, despite the portion of an 1830
revelation (D&C 19) redefining "eternal punishment" and "endless torment" along Universalist lines, before the late Nauvoo years, Latter-day Saints generally maintained a traditional commitment to the reality of hell, the validity of postmortal punishment, and the occasional need for eternal retribution. As Oliver Cowdery remarked in answer to a Universalist preacher who visited Kirtland in 1835, "If no such principle exists as damnation, and that eternal...God has spoken nonsense and folly."\(^\text{32}\) No matter how soothing the thought, mercy, in that striking phrase noticed in the guides, could never be allowed to "rob justice" (Alma 42:25).

Not even all Universalists could deny the many compelling arguments justifying the punishment of sinners. By the early nineteenth century, the Universalist church itself was riven by what came to be known as the "Restorationist Controversy." Essentially, the discord centered around the issue of postmortem punishment. Universalists, or Ultra-Universalists, as their opponents labeled them, denied the proposition that there would be any punishment after death, arguing that all such suffering by the wicked would occur during mortality and that at death all would be immediately restored to God. The Restorationists, however, felt that there was too much scriptural evidence to deny the future

\(^{32}\) *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (July 1835): 151.
punishment of the wicked and contended that it would occur, if only for a limited duration, before their ultimate "restoration to holiness and happiness" in God's presence. Occupying a kind of middle ground, and actually having earlier roots, were the Annihilationists or Destructionists who, like the Universalists, argued that a merciful god would never torment his creations in eternity, but who admitted, with the Restorationists, that they deserved something more than just earthly suffering. Their solution was to argue that the souls of the unjust would not be damned at death, simply exterminated.33

In one of the most intriguing and, to twentieth-century readers unaware of this doctrinal milieu, mysterious entries in the guides, the author of References cites 1 Nephi 14 with these words "annihilation spoken against." The particular passage being referenced speaks of "hell--yea, that great pit which hath been dug for the destruction of men,...saith the Lamb of God; not the destruction of the

33 The most detailed study of the "restorationist controversy" is Kenneth M. Johnson, "The Doctrine of Universal Salvation and the Restorationist Controversy in Early Nineteenth Century New England" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1978). Annihilationism has yet to be made the subject of scholarly study. Passing comments can be found in Marini, Radical Sects, and Miller, The Larger Hope, but I found most helpful Dolphus Skinner, A Discussion of the Doctrines of Endless Misery and Universal Salvation, in an Epistolary Correspondence Between Alexander Campbell and Dolphus Skinner (Utica, N.Y., 1840).
soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end" (1 Nephi 14:3). Again, we notice the reaffirmation of traditional notions of hell and postmortem punishment, along with an important qualifier on the nature of "destruction," which References interprets as a direct repudiation of annihilationism.

Aside from Universalists, the only other religious group singled out by name in the reference guides is the Catholic church, and this occurs only once in a Crawford reference to Mormon 8 entitled "Catholics, &c., foretold." The passage involved tells of a day "when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins" (Mormon 8:32). This textual description, reminding him perhaps of the Tetzelian jingle, "as money into the coffers rings, another soul from purgatory springs," accorded too closely with popular perceptions of a medieval Catholicism epitomized by the sale of indulgences to escape certain identification.

That such identification was not made explicit in references to Nephi's vision of the "great and abominable church"(1 Nephi 13) should not be exaggerated. In an age of widespread, often virulent, anti-Catholicism, the express connection would have been unnecessary. In the first issue of the Star, W. W. Phelps quoted an excerpt from 1 Nephi 13 with these words of introduction: "It will be seen by this that the most plain parts of the New
Testament have been taken from it by the Mother of Harlots while it was confined in the Church,—say, from the year A.D. 460 to 1400."\(^{34}\) The identity of the "great and abominable church" was so obvious that it needed no interpretation. Significantly, all three reference guides also cite the angel's words to Nephi that "there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth"\(^{1}\) Nephi 14:10). This should not be taken to mean, however, that Mormons harbored any special love for the "papists"; rather it meant that they were happy to find scriptural justification for adding the Protestants to that corrupt collectivity known as the "church of the devil." As John Taylor succinctly put it, "The old church is the mother [of harlots] and the protestants are the lewd daughters."\(^{35}\)

Another much-debated issue within popular religion of early nineteenth-century America was the nature of the "gospel" itself. In what did it consist? The impulse toward primitivism with its celebration of the Bible as the sole source for theology had jettisoned centuries of

\(^{34}\) *Star* 1 (June 1832): [3].

\(^{35}\) *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1845): 811.
Christian tradition on the assumption that scripture was perspicuous even to the ploughboy and that neither creeds nor dogmatic expositions were necessary. What resulted, however, was the proliferation rather than the harmonization of doctrinal positions. To the satisfaction of the early Saints, a number of passages in the Book of Mormon were felt to "throw greater views upon [Christ's] gospel" (D&C 10:45). In particular, the reference guides seem to take special notice of passages linking baptism and the Holy Ghost, thus moving beyond the Campbellite emphasis on faith, repentance, and baptism alone. Their intent seems to be to demonstrate, as Joseph Smith said, that the two "are necessarily and inseparably connected." 

Debate over "open communion" had exercised popular Protestantism for years by the time the Latter-day Saints came into existence. Not surprisingly, the issue surfaced early on. As one of the first members, John Whitmer, recorded it, "in the beginning of the church, 

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37 History of the Church 6:316. Book of Mormon passages cited along these lines include 2 Nephi 31: 3 Nephi 11, 19, 26; Moroni 6.
while yet in her infancy, the disciples used to exclude unbelievers, which caused some to marvel and converse about this matter because of the things written in the Book of Mormon." References both corroborates this concern as well as pinpoints the particular Book of Mormon passage in question by citing with the words "Open meetings set forth" the Savior's comments in 3 Nephi 18 to "not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together" (3 Nephi 18:22). That the smaller and earlier References chose to call attention to this passage while neither of the later and larger guides did so suggests that what may still have been noteworthy as an issue in the mid-1830s, at least for the Mormons, had subsided by the beginning of the next decade.

The propriety of pedo- or infant baptism was an even older issue that had long engaged Christian theologians and polemicists. Contrary to popular perception, it was not the numerically insignificant Catholics who had been its chief supporter in America. Rather, it was orthodox Calvinists like Increase Mather who felt that


"God hath seen meet to cast the line of Election...through the loyns of godly parents." 40 Beginning with the Great Awakening and through successive waves of revivals in which grace fell irrespective of genealogy, such perspectives were seriously undermined and groups like the Baptists, who made the rejection of pedobaptism one of their central tenets, swelled in size. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a majority of Americans found the practice, with its implicit stress on inherited status, out of tune with the temper of the times and decided that it was indeed a "solemn mockery before God." The Latter-day Saints agreed, and all three reference guides found in Moroni 8 confirmation of that decision. That they did not make multiple citations, highlighting particular ideas or phrases as they had for other chapters, suggests perhaps that the issue did not concern them as much as other matters. Thus, in this instance, they did not use the Book of Mormon as much to settle as to confirm the majority decision on an issue already settled.

But what of matters not strictly theological? How do reference-guide entries reflect acceptance or rejection of other facets of nineteenth-century culture? Nathan Hatch finds "considerable evidence that a common

40 Cit. in Mark A. Noll., et al., eds., Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 125.
cultural revolution" took place in the 1830s, to "wage a joint battle against what was perceived as 'King-craft, Priest-craft, Lawyer-craft, and Doctor-craft'." Did the Saints join in this "battle"? It seems so. Reference guides cite passages in which kings are forbidden (Mosiah 23), and divine promises are made that there would be "no kings upon the land" (2 Nephi 10). They note the condemnation of priestcraft in 2 Nephi 26 and the interrogation of Amulek by harassing lawyers in Alma 10. And they cite the only passage in the Book of Mormon which mentions the "excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove the cause of diseases" (Alma 46:40). It seems that what was at issue was a common mistrust of mediating elites. As Samuel Thomson, the best-known proponent of herbalist opposition to "orthodox medicine" and in whose system both Mormon "doctors" Frederick G. Williams and Willard Richards were licentiatists, remarked, "The people should in medicine as in religion and politics, act for themselves."42

Given this populist tendency, one might expect the


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early Saints to have been dedicated Antimasons and to have seen a direct parallel between Masonry and the "secret combinations" mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Yet, the connection is never made explicit. Nor is there much evidence for an indirect link. Though "secret combinations" are mentioned in dozens of places in the Book of Mormon, the guides cite only three rather minor passages. They include a few more references to "Gadianton robbers", but in nearly every instance, the intent seems to be to track the narrative rather than point up parallels. Major "anti-Masonic passages" such as those found in Alma 37, Helaman 6, and Ether 8 are entirely overlooked. Book of Mormon usage, therefore, would seem to support Bushman's conclusion that in the early years "Masonry was scarcely mentioned among the Mormons" and that "people who knew anti-Masonry and the Book of Mormon in the 1830s made less of the connection than critics today."

Yet, the door should not be closed too firmly. Young/Richards and Crawford, for example, may have been recalling the alleged judicial perfidy of Mason-dominated courts when they referenced the only Book of Mormon passage where "Gadianton Robbers" are "setting in the

43 2 Nephi 26; 4 Nephi; Ether 13.
44 Helaman 2, 6, 7; 3 Nephi 2, 4; 4 Nephi.
45 Bushman, Joseph Smith, p. 131.
Judgment seat" (see Helaman 7). They also noticed the mention of "secret signs" in connection with the robber band's origination in Helaman 2. Could they have had Masonic ritual in mind? Finally, Crawford alone cites the prophecy in 2 Nephi that in the "last days" there would be "also secret combinations, even as in times of old" (2 Nephi 26:22). Since this passage expressly refers to the latter days, the link to his time must have been on Crawford's mind, but was it to the Masons or to some other group, such as the "Nicolaite band" with all its "secret abominations" mentioned in an 1838 revelation (D&C 117:11)?

That the Saints may not have been Antimasons is not as inconsistent as it may appear. The latest research on Antimasonry suggests that in western New York, at least, no clear socioeconomic perimeter can be drawn around the movement. It was not the uniformly lower-class, democratic movement it was once believed to be.46

Furthermore, as Randal Roth points out, Antimasonry was

"not a monomaniacal chase after conspirators, but a multifaceted movement" that addressed a wide range of concerns. Much of its impetus was toward the building of a "Christian republic" along evangelical lines, and by the mid-1830s the vast majority of former Antimasons had joined the nascent Whig party, which expressed similar aspirations.

The Mormons, however, uniformly opposed the reform societies of the day. In their eyes, reformism, whatever its laudable objectives, was destined to fail because it ignored scriptural eschatology. "Though they were ten times as vigilant and their reformation ten to one," explained the Star, "still when the Savior comes the people will be as they were in the days of Noah." To the Mormons, reformism was a tragic waste--like a climber who spends time and energy to scale the mountain only to discover he has climbed the wrong one.

47 Roth, "Whence This Strange Fire," p. 255.


49 Star 2 (June 1834): 163.
But even if reform had been the right answer, the organizations of the Benevolent Empire were not the right agents. The *Star* reminded its readers of:

The perfect folly of all the pretended reformations of ancient and modern times, when there were not inspired men at the head of them, both apostles and prophets; for without such, the God of heaven never at any time produced a reformation, nor did he ever bring back an apostate race at any time, by any other means, than by raising up and inspiring men from on high.\(^{50}\)

To think otherwise was ludicrous. With obvious satire, the *Messenger and Advocate* remarked, "God has done his work and we don't need any more prophets. We have Bible societies, missionary societies, abolition of slavery societies and temperance societies to convert the world and bring in the Millennium."\(^{51}\) Such groups were

\(^{50}\) *Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834): 153.

The "Benevolent Empire" is a collective term for the major interdenominational associations and reform societies that grew out of the revitalization of evangelical Protestantism in the years following the Revolutionary War. These societies reflected the contemporary theological emphasis that sin, both personal and societal, could be totally eradicated, and that it was the obligation of every true Christian to continue to struggle against sin by seeking to convert and reform his brother through acts of benevolence. The story of this phase of American Christianity is told in detail in Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1960); and Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960). Both authors espouse a "social control" thesis that has been severely challenged in the subsequent generation, but the volumes still provide a useful description of the various agencies opposed by the Mormons.

\(^{51}\) *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 97.
simply superfluous at best and sinister at worst. "As to so many appendaged societies to the gospel, we must say," remarked the editor of the Star, "that neither the Savior, nor his apostles, nor the Scriptures, have taught any thing more necessary, than to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus, and be baptized for the remission of sins; to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; and continue faithful to the end, to inherit eternal life." 52

Since the Mormons were so clearly antagonistic to the Benevolent Empire and its attempts to legislate Protestant morality, and since in Kirtland the Saints were Jacksonian Democrats almost to a man, it would actually be surprising to have discovered much evidence of a Mormon–Antimason connection. 53 For this reason, I


53 T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 155–158 suggests that resentment of Eastern-based reform societies (antimissionism) and Jacksonianism were opposite sides of the same cultural coin.

take exception to Bushman's suggestion that "insofar as early Mormons had political preferences, they likely were anti-Masons."  

The danger of using the Book of Mormon, or any other scripture for that matter, as ipso facto evidence of early Mormon views is also apparent when we consider the book's teachings on slavery. While the word "slavery" per se is used very little, "bondage" being the more common term, the practice is never sanctioned in the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin prides himself on not having permitted his people to "make slaves one of another" (Mosiah 2:13), and when the Anti-Nephi-Lehies offer to become Nephite slaves, Ammon responds that "It is against the law of our brethren, which was established by my father, that there should be any slaves among them" (Alma 27:9). The latter passage is singled out by both Young/Richards and Crawford with the words "slavery forbidden" and "prohibition of slavery" respectively.

Yet, in a lengthy discussion on the topic in 1836 in which he condemned abolitionism, Joseph Smith cited commonly invoked Biblical sanctions for, rather than Book of Mormon proscriptions against, the "peculiar institution." Even later in the 1840s, when his views

54 Bushman, Joseph Smith, p. 131. Even W. W. Phelps, who earlier had edited the Antimasonic Ontario Phoenix and who used the Book of Mormon more than any other early publicist, made no known written comment on the subject.

shifted to an antislavery position, there is no evidence that Book of Mormon teaching had any influence on the matter.\textsuperscript{56} Particularly ironic is the fact that Brigham Young, a decade after calling attention in his 1840 index to the Nephite law prohibiting slavery, signed into effect a Deseret law that permitted it. How is this to be explained? Perhaps, in light of seeming Biblical sanctions, the Saints did not view the Book of Mormon prohibitions as universally normative. On the other hand, they may have viewed the Nephite practice as ideal, but, as loyal Jacksonians and avowed antiabolitionists, felt it impolitic to push the point.\textsuperscript{57}

Most likely, they were not troubled at all by the matter. For centuries, individuals had distinguished between whites and blacks when it came to civil liberties and human rights. During the Revolution, for example, \textsuperscript{56} The best overall histories of Mormon attitudes toward blacks and slavery are Newell G. Bringhamurst, Saints, Slaves and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), and Lester E. Bush, Jr., and Armand L. Mauss, eds., Neither White nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1984).

\textsuperscript{57} Richard H. Brown links proslavery, antiabolitionist Northerners with the Democracy in "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery, and the Politics of Jacksonianism," \textit{South Atlantic Quarterly} 65 (Winter 1966): 55-72. Not only were the Democrats solidly anti-abolitionist, but Vernon L. Volpe demonstrates that in the 1840 election even many of the Whigs were forced to adopt a similar position. See Volpe, "The Anti-Abolitionist Campaign of 1840," \textit{Civil War History} 32 (Dec 1986): 325-339.
the Founding Fathers denounced in grandiloquent terms the specter of bondage to Britain, and yet at the same time justified, even demanded, the perpetual involuntary servitude of black Americans.\textsuperscript{58} This distinction was widespread until the Civil War and helps us understand how Joseph Smith could, with cultural consistency, denounce abolition and uphold slavery after having received a revelation that "it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another" (D&C 101:79). The simple insertion of the word "white" before "man" provides the key.

Sharing the common racial assumptions of antebellum America may also help explain why Crawford, who indexed the 1840 edition in which the prophecy about the Lamanites becoming "white and delightsome" was changed to "pure and delightsome" (2 Nephi 30:6), continued to reference it with the words "white and delightsome people."\textsuperscript{59} Like many others, he probably just assumed a direct relationship between skin color and moral purity. W. W. Phelps expressed it thus:

Is it not apparent from reason and analogy as drawn from a careful reading of the Scriptures that God causes the saints, or people that fall away from his church to


\textsuperscript{59} It should be noted that Crawford's guide indexes both the 1837 and the 1840 editions, and his retention of the old phrasing may simply reflect his being accustomed to the 1837 wording and his not having noticed the 1840 change.
be cursed in time, with a black skin? Was not Cain, being marked, obliged to inherit the curse, he and his children, forever?...Are or are not the Indians a sample of marking with blackness for rebellion against God's holy word and holy order? And can we not observe in the countenances of almost all nations, except the Gentile, a dark and sallow hue, which tells the sons of God, without a line of history, that they have fallen or changed from the original beauty and grace of Father Adam?  

The reference guides confirm that the earliest Latter-day Saints also shared certain moral sensibilities with the Evangelical establishment. All three guides, for example, cite the episode in 1 Nephi where several members of Lehi's and Ishmael's families during their transoceanic voyage to the promised land "were lifted up unto exceeding rudeness," singing, dancing, and making merry, though each guide references the incident as simply "dancing in the ship" (1 Nephi 18:9). In the 1830s and early 1840s, before Joseph Smith promoted dancing in Nauvoo and when Saints might still be arraigned before a high council court for "attending a ball," the word itself conveyed sufficiently negative connotations that no other explanation was necessary for what went wrong on board.  

Nor was dancing the only proscribed activity. In 1835, the Church's Messenger and Advocate renounced "the frivolous practice of playing ball" as something liable

60 Messenger and Advocate 1 (March 1835): 82.

61 In 1837, nineteen Latter-day Saints were disciplined for "attending a ball" at a member's store. "Kirtland Council Minute Book," typescript, LDS Church Archives, pp. 256-57.
to "bring reproach upon the glorious cause of our Redeemer." By 1844, however, John Taylor, editor of the *Times and Seasons*, would be able to write that "wrestling, running, climbing, dancing, or anything that has a tendency to circulate the blood is not injurious, but must rather be considered beneficial to the human system, if pursued in moderation."

Here again we must pause and accent the developmental nature of early Mormonism. It seems clear that by the Nauvoo period, Joseph Smith, who was himself never burdened by overpious inhibitions, had clarified that contrary to the evangelical upbringing of many converts, athletics, dancing, and appropriate dramatic and musical events were not inherently evil.

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63 *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (May 1837): 511.
64 *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 March 1844): 459.
Edgar Lyon explained, "This released the Saints from old mores and gave them a new sense of freedom. It opened new avenues for finding refreshing diversion in activities many had been taught were the works of Satan." 66

The fact that by the 1840s Mormonism was opening formerly forbidden paths did not, however, make them any easier for some to walk in. Orson Hyde's delightful reminiscence of Parley P. Pratt's adventure in adjustment provides the classic example. Hyde recalled how "trammelled" his fellow Apostle's mind was when dancing was first introduced in Nauvoo: "I observed brother Parley standing in the figure, and he was making no motion particularly, only up and down. Says I, 'Brother Parley, why don't you move forward?' Says he, 'When I think which way I am going, I forget the step; and when I think of the step, I forget which way to go.'" 67

If dancing was no longer evil, evil use could still be made of it. As a large river town, Nauvoo attracted a sizeable Gentile population, and not all diversions were either conducted or sanctioned by the Saints. A concerned father wrote a letter to the editor of the Times and Seasons asking about the propriety of "balls


67 Journal of Discourses 6:150

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and dancing as it has lately existed in our city." The reply forthrightly distinguished between evil by nature and evil by association. Consistent with a Mormon concern for scriptural sanction, John Taylor cited various biblical precedents for dancing and then concluded:

As an abstract principle...we have no objections to it; but when it leads people into bad company and causes them to keep untimely hours, it has a tendency to enervate and weaken the system and leads to profligate and intemperate habits. And so far as it does this...it is injurious to society, and corrupting to the moral of youth. 68

Besides, he added, "Solomon says that 'there is a time to dance,' but that time is not at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, nor at one [or] two...in the morning."

The tension between appropriate and inappropriate amusements ultimately required a policy statement from the Quorum of the Twelve who had been leading the Church since the Prophet's death. "If the people were righteous," wrote Brigham Young, "it would do to dance, and to have music, feasting and merriment. But what fellowship has Christ with Belial?...All amusements in which saints and sinners are mingled tend to corruption."

The conclusion, therefore, was inescapable: "So far at least as the members of the church are concerned, we would advise that balls, dances, and other vain and useless amusements be neither countenanced nor

68 Times and Seasons 5 (1 March 1844): 460.
Occasionally, even Mormon events crossed the line of propriety. In the days before elaborate newspaper advertising, points of interest or special events might be heralded by a staged theatrical or musical exhibition. In late 1844, the Nauvoo Library decided to put on a theatrical exhibition in an attempt to renew interest in its presence. The trustees employed several local youth as actors for the evening. One of them recorded the aftereffects: "The next day brother Brigham blew up everything that had evil consequences attending it and frequent exhibitions among the rest."71

Another contemporary conveyor of "evil consequences" was the novel. As pointedly as any Evangelical paper, the Messenger and Advocate warned that novel reading led to "lightness and lechery."72 Even in the later Nauvoo years, one had to look hard to find what few novels there were in the holdings of the Saints' library.73 The problem was that with other Americans, the Mormons liked

69 Times and Seasons 5 (1 October 1844): 669.
71 Oliver B. Huntington, Journal, p. 22, Church Archives.
72 Messenger and Advocate 2 (November 1834): 223.
their literature to be didactic. An 1832 revelation had admonished them to seek "words of wisdom" out of the "best books" (D&C 88:118), and novels never seemed to qualify. In the words of a John Taylor editorial, they were "as destitute of truth, true science and practical knowledge as Satan's promises were to Eve." Why, continued Taylor, "read the fancied brains of disappointed men and women, and then go the theatre; and ten to one, but you will be just like them."74

In denouncing social and artistic evils of the day, the Saints were little different from their evangelical neighbors. Yet, they recognized redeeming value in some amusements and modified them to suit themselves, thus appropriating for their own use purged versions of what, in other settings, had been the objects of their scorn.

Sympathy with prevailing moral sensibilities also helps explain why all three reference guides cite the prohibition of polygamy found in the early chapters of Jacob (Jacob 2, 3). This may seem ironic in light of subsequent history, but all three were written in the period before plural marriage was introduced.75 Not

74 Times and Seasons 5 (1 November 1844): 697.

75 Young and Richards did not hear about plural marriage until after their return from England, and Crawford would not have known about it in Philadelphia in 1842.

On the origins of polygamy, a convenient summary is Richard Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy: a History (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986).
surprisingly, therefore, it is the condemnation of polygamy that was noticed, not the phrase, later to become so popular as a loophole, indicating that if the Lord wished to "raise up seed" unto himself, he could command his people to practice plural marriage; "otherwise they shall hearken unto these things" (Jacob 2:30). The earliest Saints wanted to make clear that they stood squarely within traditional Christian morality when it came to domestic arrangements. "Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy," noted an article on marriage appended to the first (1835) edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, "we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband." 76

Not so clear is what can be learned about LDS attitudes toward the subculture of American folk magic. The Book of Mormon itself has very little to say about magic or buried treasure, and even when it does, the reference guides do not always find it noteworthy. 77 Brigham Young and Willard Richards, for example, make no reference to any such passage. The principal commentary on buried treasure comes in Helaman 13 as part of Samuel


77 Relevant texts include Helaman 12:18; Helaman 13:17-23, 30-37; Mormon 1:18-19; Mormon 2:10.
the Lamanite's prophecy on the last days of the Nephites, and References alone calls attention to the early portion of that discussion with the words "the hiding of riches in the earth." The passage noted warns that because of wickedness a "curse" will come upon the land such that "whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more." The righteous were to be spared, of course, but "he that hideth not up his treasures unto me, cursed is he, and also the treasure, and none shall redeem it because of the curse of the land" (Helaman 13:16-20). Later in Mormon it is recorded that "the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them. And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, even unto the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite" (Mormon 1:18-19). Both References and Crawford cite this passage, or at least the first sentence, with the words "treasures become slippery."

The important issue is why these scriptures were referenced in the first place. Was it because the principles and experiences involved were considered normative and relivable in the American republic, or exotic and bound in time and space to ancient America?
Unfortunately, the phrasing of the references alone allows no certain evaluation of motive. As for evidence of any tie-in with the magic lore discussed in Michael Quinn's recent study, the Book of Mormon text makes no mention of "clever spirits" protecting treasure, nor of seerstones or hazel sticks locating it, nor indeed of any power other than God's as the causes for its becoming "slippery." The most likely explanation for the inclusion of these citations relates to the Saints' previously demonstrated preoccupation with manifestations of divine or supernatural power. Individuals impressed by trees and mountains being removed or by Nephi being transported from place to place by the Spirit would likewise find noteworthy that hidden treasures became "slippery."

In any case, it seems unnecessary to disengage magic from religion. Both espouse a belief in the supernatural and both propose a method of control. Similarities are more noticeable than the old Frazerian distinctions, long since discarded by most anthropologists, that the former is manipulative and the latter supplicative or that magic seeks to influence forces while religion deals with

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78 Mormon 1:18 specifies that "they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land." Quinn's book is Early Mormonism and the Magic World View (Salt Lake: Signature, 1987).
beings. As one anthropologist remarked about even modern individuals, "People, be they Azande [African tribe] or Americans, can act under the influence of their magical beliefs in some contexts and in a rational-technical manner in others. When things go wrong in an uncontrollable and unforeseeable way, the Azande will attribute it to witchcraft, the American perhaps to bad luck." Therefore, we should be surprised if Latter-day Saints did not retain some participation in the folklore of the period. Despite the advance of mechanistic philosophy and technology, for many early nineteenth-century Americans, Mormons included, the world had not yet been fully stripped of the attributes of personality.


that make magic or religion untenable and unnecessary.\textsuperscript{81} Furthermore, it has been shown that in all ages and places a characteristic common to millenarian groups like the early Saints is their interest in thaumaturgy or wonder-working.\textsuperscript{82}

By now it should be apparent that these three reference guides provide valuable insight into the thought world of early Mormonism. At points they confirm and at points they correct the picture of early belief and teaching portrayed in reminiscent accounts from later in the century or in modern scholarly reconstructions. More specifically, they supply us with by far the most comprehensive set of clues as to how the Saints in Joseph Smith's day might have understood the Book of Mormon.

In summary, let us step back from the window through which we have been peering and briefly review what we have seen. We have noticed, and not surprisingly, that these four Mormons--two apostles and two virtually anonymous disciples--reflected the culture around them in


a number of ways. They seemed tinged with both a Rationalist concern for evidences and a Romantic relish for the exotic. They participated in the popular cultural revulsion against mediating elites, whether doctors or divines, and had little use for Catholics, Antimasons, or any other facet of "Gentile" Christendom, for that matter. Though they did not generally use the Book of Mormon to "decide all the great controversies," they did make a point of distinguishing themselves from Universalists and Annihilationists on eschatological matters, and from Calvinists on notions of nature and grace. Above all, they demonstrated the enthusiastic preoccupation with prophecies and miracles we have come to expect from their millenarian worldview.
CHAPTER 7

APOCALYPTIC ADVERSARIES: MORMONISM MEETS MILLERISM

In his diary for Sunday, February 12, 1843, Joseph Smith recorded, "seven or eight young men came to see me, part of them from the city of New York. They treated me with the greatest respect. I showed them the fallacy of Mr. Miller's data concerning the coming of Christ and the end of the world, or as it is commonly called, Millerism, and preached them quite a sermon." ¹

Who was William Miller and wherein, from the Latter-day Saint perspective, was the fallacy of his "data" concerning the Second Coming? To raise such questions introduces us to a little known but illuminating chapter of Mormon history. While many identify Miller as the man who predicted that Christ's Second Coming would occur in 1843, the actual nature of his teaching as well as the extent and impact on LDS thought of the Mormon-Millerite interaction is a story that remains to be told. Moreover, one of the favorite ploys of antebellum editors was to make Mormonism and Millerism twin bedfellows of


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"humbuggery." Though both groups were millenarian in doctrine and similar in social background, how far can the association really be pushed? It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to add greater refinement to our portrait of Mormonism by making a close comparison of these, the two most successful millenarian movements in mid-nineteenth-century America.  

William Miller was an upstate New York farmer old enough to be Joseph Smith's father. At about the same time young Joseph Smith was undergoing his religious turmoil, Miller also came to the conclusion that "there are but few who walk the narrow path." And while Joseph was learning new truths through visions and revelations,  


4Cit. in Rowe, Thunder and Trumpets, p. 6.
Miller felt he was unraveling the key to prophetic interpretation. What he discerned was a symbolic uniformity throughout Biblical prophecy whereby if in one passage a beast symbolized a kingdom, or, a day a year, then such would always be the case, unless otherwise noted. Focusing particularly, but not exclusively, on the books of Daniel and Revelation, he discovered through a complex method of symbolic and typological interpretation that the Second Coming of Christ would occur "about the year 1843."^{5}

Miller arrived at this insight around the same time that Joseph Smith had his "First Vision," but he did not publicize it beyond a small circle of family and friends until 1831. That year a neighboring Baptist congregation invited him to preach in their meetinghouse, and his public ministry began. For the rest of the decade he itinerated throughout northeastern New York and western Vermont. Somewhat to his frustration, he was appreciated more for his successful revivals than for his adventism. In 1836, he published his foundational work, Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843; Exhibited in a Course of Lectures, known simply as Lectures, and continued to gather new recruits.

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^{5}William Miller, Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843; Exhibited in a Course of Lectures (Troy, New York: Kemble & Hooper, 1836). Hereafter cited as Lectures.
It was not until 1840, however, when Joshua V. Himes, veteran evangelical reformer and friend of William Lloyd Garrison, took up the crusade, that Millerism really became an independent and self-conscious movement. Himes alone did for Millerism what Sidney Rigdon with his pulpit eloquence, Parley Pratt with his pamphleteering zeal, and Brigham Young with his organizational ability did for Mormonism. Under his aggressive leadership, Millerite newspapers—the Signs of the Times in Boston and the Midnight Cry in New York—were started; regional and general conferences were convened; "Second Advent libraries" were established; separate adventist prayer meetings and Bible studies were inaugurated; and more extensive, better organized lecture tours were carried out.

Unlike Joseph Smith, Miller founded no new church. Just as Wesley originally intended Methodism to be a reinvigorating movement within the Anglican church, so Miller felt that belief in the "near advent" of Christ was something that could vitalize all denominations. In a way, Millerism was simply one more of the numerous nineteenth-century voluntary associations like Temperance or Abolitionism that focused on a single issue, a single crusade, and drew devotees from a wide variety of churches. This contributed to its doctrinally diverse character. As one recent student remarked, "The Millerites varied greatly. Millerism was many things to
many people, with little consensus of belief or practice, a 'movement' rife with disputes and contradictions."\(^6\)

There was, of course, the common doctrinal core centered around belief in the personal, literal, and imminent return of Christ which Miller repeated frequently. In a synopsis of his beliefs published in 1841, he declared:

I believe that the Scriptures do reveal unto us in plain language that Jesus Christ will appear again on this earth, that he will come in the glory of God, in the clouds of heaven, with all his saints and angels; that he will raise the dead bodies of all his saints who have slept, change (to a condition of immortality) the bodies of all that are alive on the earth that are his, and both these living and raised saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. There the saints will be judged and presented to the Father, without spot or wrinkle....Then will the Father give the bride to the son Jesus Christ; and when the marriage takes place, the church will become the "New Jerusalem," the "beloved city." And while this is being done in the air, the earth will be cleansed by fire, the elements will melt with fervent heat, the works of men will be destroyed, the bodies of the wicked will be burned to ashes, the devil and evil spirits with the souls and spirits of those who have rejected the gospel will be banished from the earth, shut up in the pit or place prepared for the devil and his angels, and will not be permitted to visit the earth again until 1000 years. This is the first resurrection and first judgment. Then Christ and his people will come down from the heavens, or middle air, and live with his saints on the new earth in a new heaven, or dispensation, forever, even forever, and ever. After 1000 years shall have passed away...the sea, death and hell will give up their dead....The saints will judge them, the justice of God will drive them from the earth into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever. "This is the second death." After the second resurrection and second judgment, the righteous will then possess the earth

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\(^6\) Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets*, p. x.

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As late as 1842, despite Miller's long-standing belief that the end would occur "about the year 1843," the matter of a definite time had been subordinated to acceptance of the more general premillennial scenario set forth above, a scenario, we might add, with which Mormons themselves had few quibbles. A general conference in December 1841 announced that it was necessary only for Millerites to believe in the "near" advent of Christ rather than a definite time. Miller had reluctantly accepted this type of adventism for over a decade, but leading Millerites soon pressed for acceptance of 1843 as a test of fellowship. As a result, some former Millerites left the movement. With time drawing to a close, Miller refined his prediction. In a synopsis of his views published in the Midnight Cry, he wrote, "I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for his coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21st, 1843, and March 21st, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come."

Almost as important as belief in a definite time was rejection of the popular notions of a "temporal


millennium" and the literal return of the Jews to Jerusalem. By "temporal millennium," Miller meant the postmillennial doctrine held by most Christian churches of the day that Jesus would personally come only after the thousand years and that the world would gradually be turned into a millennium as people turned to Christ. From Miller's perspective, individuals who taught such a doctrine fulfilled the Matthean prophecy of people who would say, "My lord delayeth his coming."\(^9\) Besides, the world was to be "as it was in the days of Noah" immediately before Christ's coming, not in a condition of Christian harmony. This, of course, was the standard premillennialist position. But in denying the literal restoration of the Jews to their homeland, the Millerites, both because they interpreted Israel as all true Christians and because an actual Jewish return did not appear possible within the prescribed timetable, parted company with other millenarians, including the Latter-day Saints. That, however, is a matter which shall be taken up later in this chapter.

As 1843 wore on, the tempo of the "midnight cry" was stepped up. Tent meetings, camp meetings, and the famous Millerite "chart," a visual aid filled with horned beasts and prophetic numbers, were seen in major population centers throughout the Northeast. There was also a

\(^9\)Miller, *Lectures*, p. 198
radicalizing tendency within the movement. By fall, a new cry was being raised—"Come out of Babylon." To the chagrin of former pew-mates, all non-adventists came to be regarded as corrupt apostates and the entire Christian world, not just Roman Catholicism, was labeled Babylon, "the great whore." Of course, Latter-day Saints, while holding freedom of worship in high regard and striving to maintain friendly relations with their unbelieving neighbors, theologically had all along expressed a similar denunciation of the salvific validity of any church in Christendom. For the Millerites, though, what led to their distinct come-outer phase from mid-1843 on was both increasing persecution and their own insistence on belief in an 1843 advent as a litmus test for true Christianity.10

As the predicted year elapsed and March 22, 1844, dawned, Millerites faced their first major disconfirmation. Apparently most responded like A. N. Bentley did when he wrote to Miller, "As God has lengthened out our day, I for one, feel thankful."11 This reaction is not as surprising as it might seem given the Festinger theory that where belief is strong, social reinforcement pronounced, and commitment irreversible, belief actually increases rather than decreases in the

11 Cit. in Rowe, Thunder and Trumpets, p. 135.
wake of disconfirmation.  

Spring of 1844 brought new hope, and the summer new campaigns. Most significantly, veteran adventist Samuel Snow reexamined the prophecies and announced his discovery that a specific day, the Jewish Day of Atonement—the seventh month and tenth day—which he calculated to be October 22, 1844, would be the actual date of Christ's return.  

This was just what eager adventists were hoping for, and the new "cry" readily caught on. Himes, more concerned with the movement than the moment, enthused, "'43 never made so great and good an impression as this has done...for ought I know he may come on the 7th month & 10th day."  

Miller was not so sure. Opponent claims to the contrary, he never felt he had violated the Scripture's words that "the day and hour knoweth no man." He had only specified the year. Now here was an actual date being put forward. Not until two weeks before the set time did he change his mind. Finally and to the great delight of all Millerites, he wrote to Himes, "I see a glory in the seventh month which I never saw before...Thank the Lord. I am almost home. Glory! Glory! Glory!...I am strong in the opinion that


13The Midnight Cry 6 (August 1, 1844).

14Cit. in Rowe, Thunder and Trumpets, p. 135.
the next will be the last Lord's day sinners will ever have in probation."\textsuperscript{15}

Without ascension robes and not on hill tops, Millerites gathered quietly on the designated day to preach, pray, and await the advent.\textsuperscript{16} During their vigil, they watched the hours tick by "until a faint glow in the east, for ages the sign of renewal, brought not cheer but despair" to these anxious adventists.\textsuperscript{17} The story, of course, does not end with the "Great Disappointment," as it was called, for in time the Seventh-day Adventists, the Christian Advent church, and several other smaller, more ephemeral groups rose out of the ashes of Millerism, but here we must end our account and return to the early 1840s when the Mormon-Millerite encounter first becomes noticeable.

Remembering that Millerites were also Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists, it will come as no surprise to learn that they shared the usual Protestant antipathy to Mormonism as unscriptural, unevangelical, and even diabolical. As David B. Davis explained long

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Midnight Cry} 6 (October 12, 1844).

\textsuperscript{16}Recent studies such as those listed in note #3 dispel these myths. Early adventist Mary A. Seymour remarked, "As to the charge of having robes ready for the ascension, we do not deny...they are linen, the righteousness of the Saints...In these robes we shall be caught up to meet our coming King." \textit{Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings} 5 (January 29, 1845): 2.

\textsuperscript{17}Rowe, \textit{Thunder and Trumpets}, p. 139.
ago, Mormons were perceived as being sufficiently outside the mainstream that they aroused deep seated suspicion in an identity-anxious antebellum America.\textsuperscript{18} Most of the relatively few comments Millerites made about Mormonism could have come from any sector of American Christianity, and consisted of the typical bombastic denunciation and caricature.\textsuperscript{19} Only one full-scale attempt was made to refute the Mormons--Joshua V. Himes's 1842 pamphlet, \textit{Mormon Delusions and Monstrosities}--and it, admittedly, was merely a pastiche of other anti-Mormon attacks. The first half consisted of a reprint of Alexander Campbell's early attack on the Book of Mormon, and the latter half was excerpted from LaRoy Sunderlund's \textit{Mormonism Exposed}, a pamphlet published earlier that year in New York.\textsuperscript{20} Even Himes's own preface, in which he highlighted five special objections to Mormonism, was borrowed material. The point is that


\textsuperscript{19}See, for example, \textit{Signs of the Times} 3(April 6, 1842):8; 3(April 13, 1842):13; 3(May 25, 1842):61; 3(June 8, 1842):79-80; 3(June 15, 1842):88; 3(June 22, 1842):96; and 3(July 27, 1842):131, 135.

\textsuperscript{20}Joshua V. Himes, \textit{Mormon Delusions and Monstrosities} (Boston, 1842). Campbell's section appeared a decade earlier as \textit{Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon} (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832).
Millerites mounted no independent attack on Mormonism.21

With others, they deplored the temporal involvements of LDS church leaders, which they took to be too authoritarian and monetarily motivated. Above all, though, they denounced the possibility of extra-Biblical scripture and the Mormon claim to have a modern prophet. Their view of revelation was the one which had held sway in majoritarian Christianity since the days of the Montanist controversy late in the second century. Montanus, as Joseph Smith, believed that the Spirit would continue to speak anew in each age, even at times to the superseding of earlier prophets and apostles. For the early Catholic Fathers, as for later believers including the Millerites, this seemed to lay Christianity at the mercy of the prophets of each new generation. The promise that the Spirit would lead into all truth, therefore, was redefined to mean that the Spirit had uniquely led the original apostles into all truth as they composed the books of the New Testament and would only

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21 This supports the recent conclusion of Stephen Stein and Catherine Albanese that in the latest studies of Millerism "the 'marginal' Millerites are shown to be participants in the cultural center of religious life in the mid-nineteenth century," that in important ways they are "representative of the religious outlook of nineteenth century America." Cit. in Numbers and Butler, The Disappointed, p. xi. This is also clearly in evidence in Doan, The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture. R. Laurence Moore, Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), provides a revisionist look at the whole notion of an American religious "mainstream."
lead subsequent generations of Christians to that same truth through their writings, not through direct personal communications from God. As Tertullian graphically summarized it, "The Holy Spirit was chased into a book." Thus, even though Mormons and Millerites, or Mormons and almost any other religious group, proclaimed a belief in "revelation," the term was understood quite differently. This generally disdainful, out-of-hand dismissal of Mormonism by Millerites obviated the need to come to grips with the particulars of Latter-day Saint eschatology.

If Millerites were distracted from examining Mormon millenarianism by other, more objectionable elements of the Latter-day Saint faith, the Mormons, on the other hand, had little else to notice in Millerism. Intent on discrediting each other, neither group acknowledged what they had in common. Before proceeding to consider the Mormon disagreements with Millerite eschatology, therefore, it is important to recall what they did share. Contrary to the prevailing postmillennialism of the day, both groups taught the literal, personal return of

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23Here I take exception to Wayne Judd, "Millerism and Social Reform: An Historical Paradox" (History 285D seminar paper, Loma Linda University, June 8, 1979), 7-8 who argues that Mormonism posed a threat to Millerism. My reading of the early Millerite newspapers suggests that it was a minor concern at best.
Christ to inaugurate the Millennium. Both groups believed that at Christ's coming he would destroy the wicked (which they each characterized as everyone but themselves), raise the faithful dead as the first resurrection, renew the earth, and reign with the saints for a thousand years of bliss. In the end, heaven would not lie beyond the bounds of time and space, but would be located on a changed earth. Essentially, these beliefs were held in common by most premillennial thinkers of the day. But on certain matters the Saints felt they had to take exception to Millerism. Though the satirical tone of their responses differed little from the Millerites or from polemics of the period generally, they did, in a number of articles, sermons, and pamphlets, deal with substantive eschatological issues.²⁴ What they had to say sheds important light on certain aspects of early Mormon thought and will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Most LDS commentary comes from the early months of 1843, as the designated year was about to commence, and then again the next winter as it was about to end. Traveling elders had earlier encountered and mentioned Millerite lecturers, and Boston-based Mormon John Hardy

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had written a non-eschatologically oriented rebuttal to Himes's *Mormon Monstrosities* the year before, but 1843 marks the intensification of the discussion.\textsuperscript{25}

A major Latter-day Saint objection to Millerism, and one peculiar to the Mormons, was that Miller and his followers were "running where they had not been sent," that they were unauthorized to raise the "midnight cry." To do so required modern, plenary revelation and a prophet to receive it, both of which the Millerites vigorously eschewed. As Noah Packard expressed it in his tract *Millerism Exposed*, "[Matt. 25:6] shows plainly that someone will receive a revelation and command to give the Midnight Cry; and it cannot be the Millerites, for they do not believe in modern revelation." Packard also read Matthew 24:25—"who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season"—as evidence that there must be a divinely commissioned representative on earth to help usher in the millennium. Said he, "Here we find a single servant spoken of whom the Lord, and not man, will set over his household, to give them meat before his coming,

\textsuperscript{25}Hardy's pamphlet was *Hypocrisy Exposed, or J. V. Himes Weighed in the Balance of Truth, Honesty, and Common Sense, and Found Wanting; Being a Reply to a Pamphlet Put Forth by Him, Entitled, Mormon Delusions and Monstrosities* (Boston: Albert Morgan, 1842).
or in due season."26 It does not require much imagination to see that for Mormons Joseph Smith fit the description perfectly.

If God had an authorized servant on earth, then, as Amos pointed out and Joseph Smith himself recognized, the Lord certainly would not circumvent him. Responding to the claims of Hiram Redding that he had seen the "sign of the Son of Man," Joseph retorted, "He has not seen the sign of the son of man as foretold by Jesus, neither has any man...for the Lord hath not shown me any such sign, and, as the prophet saith, so it must be: Surely the Lord God will no nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets [Amos 3:7]. Therefore, hear this, O earth, the Lord will not come to reign over the righteous, in this world, in 1843, nor until everything for the bridegroom is ready."27

Whether or not Redding was a Millerite or Joseph Smith was referring to Miller's prediction, the press took it that way. Less than two months after Joseph's comment first appeared in the Times and Seasons, it was quoted in the Millerite newspaper, Midnight Cry, with this editorial comment, "One day the world represents Mormonism and Millerism as twin brothers. The next,

26Noah Packard, Political and Religious Detector: In Which Millerism is Exposed, False Principles Detected, and Truth Brought to Light (Medina Ohio: Michael Hayes, 1843), P. 27.

they hear that 'Joe Smith' has wiped all the stain from his pure skirts which a belief in Christ's near coming would attach to it, and they seem disposed to fondle him as their favorite pet. [This prophecy] from the Mormon imposter is going the rounds as if it afforded great relief."\(^{28}\)

This, however, was not the last time the prophet would wipe from his garments the "stain" of belief in what by then was an almost immediate advent, nor was Amos 3:7 his only rationale for doing so. A month later at General Conference on April 6, 1843, he remarked, "Were I going to prophesy I would prophesy the end will not come in 1844 or 5 or 6 or [for] 40 years." And his reason was clearly stated: "I was once praying earnestly upon this subject and a voice said unto me, My son, if thou livest till thou art 85 years of age, thou shalt see the face of the son of man."\(^{29}\) Several days earlier he had made the same disclosure to a private gathering with this additional commentary, "I was left thus without being able to decide wether this coming referred to the beginning of the Millennium, or to some previous appearing, or wether I should die and thus see his face. I believe the coming of the son of man will not be any sooner than that time."\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) _The Midnight Cry_ 4 (April 13, 1843):11.

\(^{29}\) Ehat, _Words of Joseph Smith_, pp. 179-180.

\(^{30}\) Ehat, _Words of Joseph Smith_, p. 169.
For the time being, this seemed to calm concerns about an imminent advent, but in the early months of 1844, Millerism again became an issue. John Taylor noted in the *Times and Seasons* that "the proselytes of Miller are also holding forth in this city, as well as in all the principal cities of the west."31

In late January, Sidney Rigdon debated one such Millerite itinerant, and the discussion reportedly "excited a good deal of interest."32 On March 10, with only days remaining before the expiration of the appointed year, Joseph Smith again took up the matter. John Fullmer recorded his message thus: "The Revelation of the Son of Man from Heaven would not be in this year, nor the next; and he would say to his Millerite friends, that it would not in forty years to come. He uttered all this in the name of the Lord, and said we should go home and write it."33

His reasoning for so declaring grew out of another answer to prayer: "I have asked of the Lord concerning his coming, & while asking, the Lord gave me a sign & said in the days of Noah I set a bow in the heavens as a sign & token that in any year that the bow should be seen the Lord would not come, but there should be seed time--

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31*Times and Seasons* 5 (March 1844): 454.

32*Times and Seasons* 5 (March 1844): 427.

harvest during that year, but whenever you see the bow withdraw, it shall be a token that their shall be famine pestilence & great distress among the nations." Thus, he declared, "I take the responsibility upon myself to prophesy in the name of the Lord that Christ will not come this year as Miller has prophecyed, for we have seen the bow."³⁴

Direct, divine revelation was ultimately the most reliable reason for rejecting Millerism, but there were other reasons as well. One of the most common was that the Millerite calculation left insufficient time for all the necessary precursor events to take place. The gist of Rigdon's entire argument against Millerism was that "the prophecies which are to be fulfilled before the Savior's coming would not allow of so short a time as is specified."³⁵ Or as Joseph Smith told his young visitors from New York, "The prophecies must be fulfilled; the sun must be darkened and the moon turned into blood, and many more things take place before Christ would come."³⁶

Of that list of essential antecedents, the most unmistakable was the gathering of the Jews to Jerusalem. In one of the earliest references to Miller, and one that set the tone for what would follow, Parley Pratt and

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³⁴Ehat, Words of Joseph Smith, p. 332.
³⁵Times and Seasons 5 (February 1844): 427.
³⁶History of the Church, 5:272.
Elias Kigbee, in their 1840 "Proclamation to the World," declared that "as to the signs of the times, we believe that the gathering of Israel and the second advent of Messiah, with all the great events connected therewith, are near at hand....But we disclaim all fellowship with the predictions of the Rev. Mr. Miller, Rev. Joseph Wolff, and others--such as that the Lord will come in 1840, 1841, 1843, 1847, and so on."37 Their reasoning was simple: "We do not believe that he will come until the Jews gather to Palestine and rebuild their city." Joseph Smith later elaborated: "Jerusalem must be rebuilt & Judah must return & water come out from under the temple--the waters of the dead sea be healed.--it will take some time to build the walls & the Temple. &c & all this must be done before the Son of Man will make his appearance."38 Moses Martin, an early Mormon pamphleteer, expressed it thus: "The 14th chapter of Zechariah, the 31st of Jeremiah, the 37th of Ezekiel, and many other passages, too numerous to mention, prove, beyond a possibility of doubt, the truth of the gathering of the children of Israel in the last days just before the second coming of Christ; and as this cannot be done in one year, Mr. Miller's words must fall to the ground,

37 Times and Seasons 1 (March 1840): 69.

or else those of the holy prophets of old."\textsuperscript{39}

The concept even caused problems within the Millerite fold, and here we see one example of diversity among believers in the "near advent" of Christ. For Miller, the matter was quite clear. Old Testament prophecy regarding Israel would be fulfilled symbolically in the Christian church, not literally in the Jewish nation.\textsuperscript{40} But, as one historian has noted, "The issue actually fractured adventism in New York City where a group of 'judaizers' who believed that the Jews must return to Palestine before the end of the world seceded from the Millerites' General Conference, established their own meeting, and adopted Jewish customs and clothing."\textsuperscript{41}

The Mormons could actually go part way with Miller. In August 1843, Wilford Woodruff and several other apostles, while in Philadelphia on a mission to the East, went to hear a leading Millerite named Josiah Litch lecture on the orthodox Millerite view of the gathering of the Jews. Woodruff responded to Litch's comments in his journal. "I will admit," he wrote, "that...if the Jews ever go to Jerusalem they will not go as Jews but

\textsuperscript{39}Moses, Martin, \textit{A Treatise on the Fulness of the Everlasting Gospel} (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1842), p. 43.

\textsuperscript{40}Miller, \textit{Views}, pp. 77-98, 225-231.

\textsuperscript{41}Rowe, \textit{Thunder and Trumpets}, p. 120.
as Christians as Christ body &c &c." He added that this, however, did not "do away with the literal fulfillment of the Bible concerning the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerrusalem." On that point, the Saints could not compromise. Moses Martin considered it "consummate ignorance" to "suppose that prophecy has any allusion to spiritual gathering" and declared that "it would take a larger and more powerful spiritualizing machine than Mr. Miller" to make him believe it.

Indeed, it was precisely here, in the matter of how literally to interpret scripture, particularly prophecy, that we find another reason Mormons found Millerism intolerable. "Prophecy," wrote Miller is "highly figurative," and requires a consistent system of symbolic and typological interpretation. As W. H. Oliver demonstrated, such a premise had been shared by Biblical commentators at least since the days of the Reformation. Joseph Smith's hermeneutics, however, were simpler. "What is the rule of interpretation," he asked, "Just no interpretation at all." It should be


43 Martin, Fulness of the Everlasting Gospel, pp. 43-44.

44 Miller, Lectures, p. 4. See entire introduction.

"understood precisely as it reads."46 While he accepted the traditional historicist view of Daniel wherein Daniel's visions of beasts were matched with successive empires in ancient history, Joseph did not agree that the book of Revelation could be read that way. "John," declared the prophet, "only saw that which...was yet in futurity."47 Furthermore, instead of Daniel's symbolic images of worldly kingdoms, John saw real animals, "strange beasts of which we have no conception," explained Joseph.48 These beasts, he continued, "were actually living in heaven, and were actually to have power given to them over the inhabitants of the earth precisely according to the plain reading of the revelations."49 As an example, he cited the beast with seven heads and ten horns mentioned in Revelation 13. Admitting that it had been interpreted as everything from Nebuchadnezzar to Catholicism, he declared, "The beast John saw was an actual beast to whom power was to be given. An actual intelligent being in heaven and this beast was to have power given him...to destroy the inhabitants of the earth."50

Miller, however, had no place for making distinctions between prophets. For him, all the inspired authors acted "in union, speaking the same things, observing the same rules, so that a Bible reader may almost with propriety suppose, let him read in what prophecy he may that he is reading the same prophet, the same author."\textsuperscript{51} This premise was fundamental to his whole system of prophetic numerology and allowed him, by its uniformly applicable principles, to range across the entire Bible and find united testimony to 1843 as the year of Christ's coming. Since the Lord told Ezekiel, "I have appointed thee each day for a year" (Ezekiel 4:6), Miller felt justified in applying that equation, known as the day-year theory, to all prophecy wherein numbers of days were specified. For instance, Daniel 8:13-14 foretells that after "two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Making the days years and dating it from 457 B.C., the year he believed Ezra returned to rebuild Jerusalem, Miller calculated that in 1843 the "sanctuary," which he interpreted spiritually as God's people, would be cleansed, or "justified," as part of Christ's coming.\textsuperscript{52}

This brings us to the final area of Mormon

\textsuperscript{51}Miller, \textit{Lectures}, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{52}Miller, \textit{Lectures}, pp. 36-53. A synopsis of fifteen different scriptural ways for arriving at 1843 is presented in \textit{The Midnight Cry} 4 (June 15, 1843): 107-109.
disagreement with Millerite teaching—prophetic numerology. A very detailed rebuttal of this matter appeared in the *Times and Seasons* in February 1843. The author appears to have been fully acquainted with the various Millerite calculations and proceeded to take issue with a number of them, including the example cited above. Predictably, in that case, he opposed the symbolic rendering of "sanctuary," arguing that it referred to the temple sanctuary which was actually "cleansed under Judas Maccabees in B.C. 165."53 Throughout the article, his purpose was "to show the total failure of days being symbols of years in all cases in the scriptures." For him, "counting prophetic numbers" was "manifest folly."54

While editor John Taylor ran the article, he felt the need to qualify it. He was leery of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Regarding prophetic numbers, he said, "We believe that there is a certainty in them when they are understood; (or why did the prophets give them?) but we do not think that either Mr. Miller or his followers understand them."55 The trouble with the Millerite computations was that they applied the day-year theory straight across the board without being sensitive

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53*Times and Seasons* 4 (February 1843): 104. See entire article, pp. 103-105.

54*Times and Seasons* 4 (Feb 1843): 103, 105.

55*Times and Seasons* 4 (Feb 1843): 105.
to what Taylor called the "different rules of calculation." If Miller would just petition God for revelation, "he may, perhaps, get to know what a prophet's time is...and having the spirit of prophecy to know the circumstances under which the numbers were given, and their application, he will be able to arrive at more just conclusions than to believe that the end of the world will be this year, or next."\textsuperscript{56}

Of course, anyone could dabble with prophetic numerology, and some Latter-day Saints tried putting it to their own use. In his \textit{Dissertation on Nebuchadnezzar's Dream}, William Appleby expressly applied the day-year theory to Revelation 12:6 where the woman, or church, is described as having "fled into the wilderness" for "a thousand two hundred and three score days." In Mosheim's \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, Appleby found that "the gifts and blessings of Christ" which he believed characterized the true church "began to decline in the days of Constantine, and about the year A.D. 570, they were all fled." Then, "by adding the 570 to the 1260," he wrote, "we have 1830, which is the year she must be organized" and come forth out of the wilderness.\textsuperscript{57} Smith, however, was less sanguine about

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Times and Seasons} 4 (Feb 1843): 105.

the whole system, though he did not dismiss it out of hand. In his April 1843 Conference address he evidenced both familiarity with and skepticism of prophetic numerology, using it in either case against the Millerite timetable. Turning to Revelation 14:6-7 where the angel announces that "the hour of [God's] judgment is come," Joseph interpreted the word hour in day-year terms using the Petrine formula of "1000 years as 1 day." Thus, by his calculation, the "hour of judgment" would last "41 years 8 months." The prophet wasn't clear on when the period began, but he did say that "the coming of the Son of man never will be, never can be till the judgments spoken of for this hour are poured out, which judgments are commenced."\textsuperscript{58} Appleby was more definite: "14 years has passed since the Gospel was committed: take 14 from 41 leaves 27 years for the winding up scene."\textsuperscript{59} Whatever the starting point, the "hour" still left many years before the Second Coming, thus negating Miller's calculation.

Another passage popular among prophetic numerologists, which Joseph Smith also discussed, was Hosea 6:2: "After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." The "third day" seemed to be a clear

\textsuperscript{58}Phat, \textit{Words of Joseph Smith}, p. 180.

description of the first resurrection and millennial reign in the presence of Christ. Miller interpreted the two prior days as a thousand years each and dated their commencement from a "league" the Jews supposedly made with the Romans in 158 B.C., which he felt was being discussed in Hosea 5. This, of course, led to 1843.\textsuperscript{60} Joseph, on the other hand, for reasons left unexplained, ascribed 1260 years to each day thus totaling "2520 years" and dated them from an unstated event in 630 B.C. "which," he said, "brings it to 1890."\textsuperscript{61} The year 1890, it will be remembered, was the year Joseph Smith would have turned eighty-five. Finally, Joseph cited another prophetic commentator that there would still be "45 years according to Bible reckoning" left before the end of time.\textsuperscript{62}

How serious about prophetic numerology Joseph Smith really was, or whether he was simply humoring the Millerites, is uncertain. What is clear is that he did not routinely discuss such topics. Quite to the contrary, he counseled that "if the young elders would let such things alone it would be far better."\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{The Midnight Cry} 4(June 15, 1843):108.
\textsuperscript{63}Ehat, \textit{Words of Joseph Smith}, p. 171.
CONCLUSION

So what are we to learn from this review of the Mormon-Millerite encounter? In what ways does it further our understanding of early Mormonism? First, our study has demonstrated that the Saints were more involved with the larger millenarian "community of discourse" that existed throughout the Anglo-American world at that time than has generally been assumed.\(^{64}\) They understood the issues and could dialogue with the best of the prophecy hunters. Even if Joseph Smith himself was not much given to such matters, the frequency with which the elders were counseled to avoid the topic, and the evidence that they did not, suggests that it was a popular pastime.\(^{65}\) Indeed, awareness of such involvement may illuminate a previously obscure passage in Doctrine and Covenants 130, recorded in the midst of the Millerite discussion. Verse 4 mentions "God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time." God's time is well known (1000 years to one day), angel's time is commented on in the next verse, and man's time is obvious. But why the additional category

\(^{64}\) That "community of discourse" is ably evoked in Oliver, Prophets and Millennialists and Harrison, The Second Coming.

\(^{65}\) A year after the Prophet's death and as far away as Alabama it was necessary to discuss "the inconsistency of young elders trying to explain John's seven headed and ten horned monster, and such like things that occur in the scriptures." Times and Seasons 5(July 1844):573.
of "prophet's time"? If it is here being used in the same sense John Taylor used it a month earlier, then a "prophet's time" referred to the particular equation which had to be applied to that prophet's words to get his prophetic numbers correctly computed.\textsuperscript{66}

Second, the encounter with Millerism provided impetus for the eventual abatement of imminentism among Latter-day Saints. Here we must be careful to not overstate the matter. It is possible, for example, that the answer to Joseph's prayer concerning the time of the Second Advent in which his eighty-fifth birthday is singled out and which seemingly came in response to the Millerite excitement was actually received a decade earlier.\textsuperscript{67} In any case, it was not until the encounter with Millerism that he mentioned it. Furthermore, despite a possible earlier awareness of how much time was left, expressions of imminence from the prophet and his followers continued into the 1840s. Indeed, the Saints generally, as evidenced by later comments at the time of the Utah War, the Civil War, and the 1870s, never quite seemed to

\textsuperscript{66}Taylor's usage is found in \textit{Times and Seasons} 4 (February 1843): 105.

\textsuperscript{67}In February 1835, at the charter meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Joseph Smith remarked that "fifty-six years should wind up the scene" (\textit{History of the Church} 2:182). Richard L. Anderson figures that since 1835 and fifty-six years makes 1891 and since that is virtually the same as the 1890 of Joseph Smith's birthday, they must have originated from the same source. See Anderson, "Joseph Smith and the Millenarian Time Table," \textit{BYU Studies} 3 (Spring/Summer 1961): 55-66.
shake the feelings of an imminent advent during the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, for the prophet, who responded to Millerism during the final eighteen months of his life, the matter was settled. His clear and repeated denunciations of a near advent, uttered in reaction to Millerism, suggest that a permanent modification had occurred in his thinking at this time. Ultimately, familiarity with and reflection on these comments would also lead other Saints away from imminentist beliefs. 68

Interaction with Millerism also reinforced the Saints' use of a literal hermeneutic when approaching the scriptures. There would be a literal, physical restoration of the Jews and rebuilding of Jerusalem, and 'there literally would be monstrous animals that would have a role to fulfill on earth in the last days. Particularly in this latter matter of the proper interpretation of the book of Revelation, it appears that Millerism was the occasion for further development in Latter-day Saint thought. A decade earlier Joseph Smith had written that the seven-headed, ten-horned beast mentioned in Revelation 13 was a "sign, in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth." 69 This was not an


atypical interpretation within the Christian world. Encountering Millerism, however, apparently forced him to rethink the matter and he explained, "Some say it means the kingdoms of the world...Suppose we admit that it means the kingdoms of the world, what propriety would there be in saying, [verse 4] who is able to make war with myself. If these spiritualizing interpretations are true, the book contradicts itself in almost every verse, but they are not true."  

Above all else, what is particularly noticeable in the Mormon response to Millerism is the frequent reference to revelation—revelation to give the midnight cry, revelation to solve the prophetic numbers, revelation to gather the Jews, and revelation to explain the imagery of prophecy. Dealing with Millerism made revelation's fundamental importance all the more apparent. As Joseph Smith remarked early in 1843, "Jesus in his teaching says upon this rock I will build my Church & the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, what rock? Revelation." Millerism may not have represented the gates of hell for Mormonism, but the way the Saints responded to it certainly highlighted the fact that the rock upon which Mormonism was built was revelation.

70Ehat Words of Joseph Smith, p. 187.
71Ehat, Words of Joseph Smith, p. 158.
CHAPTER 8

THE MILLENNARIAN APPEAL OF MORMONISM IN ENGLAND

In 1837, the first Mormon missionaries set foot on fair Albion's shore. Within less than a decade one out of every three Latter-day Saints in the world was British, and the vast majority of those were English.¹ What was it about the religious landscape of early Victorian England that made it such fertile soil for the Mormon planting? What did thousands of English converts see in Mormonism that attracted them to this indigenous American church? In this chapter we shall explore the rise of Mormonism in England with a particular eye for the intellectual sources of conversion and what they tell us about the nature of the early English Mormonism.²


²The broader story of all aspects of early British Mormonism has been told most recently in several publications growing out the 1987 sesquicentennial
ultimate purpose will be to see how this transatlantic comparison affects our understanding of the millenarian world of early Mormonism generally. First, we must turn to examine the religious landscape in England at the time of the arrival of the first Mormon missionaries. We shall begin by focusing on the three major divisions of English Protestantism—Anglicanism, Dissent, and Methodism—and then proceed to probe deeper into those aspects of English religion that seem to have been particularly conducive to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England.

ANGLICANISM

While England and America share a common language and, to a large degree, a common culture, their religious development has been significantly different. The most obvious contrast is that, unlike America, England, since the days of Henry VIII, has had a state religion—

Anglicanism. Its Civil War, fought more than two hundred years before America's, was in large measure a religious war. At that time Puritanism, which sought to "purify" the Church of England of its "popish" precepts and practices, gained the upper hand, but with the subsequent Restoration of scepter and mitre, non-Anglicans became Dissenters and were sorely persecuted. Even after the Glorious Revolution in 1688-89, toleration for Dissenting religion was limited, and political power continued solely in Anglican hands.

By the nineteenth century, the winds of reform were blowing, stimulated in part by the American and French revolutions and the accompanying advance of democracy, and in part by the international Evangelical movement. An entrenched Anglicanism resisted as long as it could, but the decade before the arrival of the first Mormon missionaries is often regarded as a turning point in

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English history. A mere five years before Heber C. Kimball and companions set foot on English soil, the monumental Reform Act was passed which gave the vote for the first time to a portion of the middle class and redistributed Parliamentary seats to provide representation for the industrial cities in the midlands and in the north. Only a few years before that, in 1828, the Test Act limiting officeholding to Anglicans had been repealed. And only the very year before the elders arrived did it first become possible to have marriages solemnized outside the Anglican parish church. Thus, old laws were repealed and new ones enacted that changed the status quo prevalent since the late 1600s.

The missionaries actually arrived midstream, for it still was not possible to bury the deceased in public cemeteries except under Anglican rites by Anglican clergy, nor would the mandatory tax in support of the established church, called the "rate," become voluntary until the 1850s. Coming from a country where

5 In addition to the general treatments cited in note 1, see G.F.A. Best, "The Constitutional Revolution, 1828-1832, and Its Consequences for the Established Church," Theology 62 (1959): 226-34. J. C. D. Clark, English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) is a provocative, revisionist work that argues that eighteenth-century England was an ancien regime society, a conservative and confessional "Church-State" bolstered by ideological consensus and popular Anglicanism. Taking the long view, he argues that nineteenth-century reform was by no means inevitable and sees the period 1828-1832 as a sudden and fundamental discontinuity with the past.
disestablishment had been accomplished several generations earlier and where ministers as such did not wield political power, Mormon missionaries, despite the transformation underway, viewed the religious landscape of England as marred by government-sponsored priesthood.

At the time of their arrival two out of every three English subjects were members of the Church of England. As might be expected of an organization numbering in the millions, all was not well in the Anglican household. For centuries there had been complaints and attempts at reform, and the period just before the coming of the Saints was no different. In the 1820s the famous newspaper editor and commentator, William Cobbett, published his *Rural Rides*, which graphically portrayed the malaise of rural Anglicanism and its limited impact upon the people. A few years before his death, the celebrated philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, also heaped scorn on the corrupt and disorganized state of the Anglicans in his book, *Church of Englandism*. While it now appears that much of this was caricature and that the Church of England in the nineteenth century was actually making improvements in pastoral performance, Mormonism profited from this popular image and drew converts from the disenchanted among the large nominal sector of early
Victorian Anglicanism.6

Nonetheless, by the 1830s, there were three major groups seeking to reform the Church of England from within: the "high church" movement--socially conservative Anglicans who emphasized ritual, clergy, and historical continuity; the "low church" movement--essentially the Evangelical wing, with its religion of the heart and call to seriousness in life which resulted in missions and reform societies; and the "broad church" movement--those Anglicans who, as the name implies, ecumenically emphasized ethics over dogma, and were generally learned and liberal, perpetuating the "rational" Christianity of the previous century. Social class distinctions and other circumstances prevented much interaction between humble Latter-day Saints and any of the three groups, yet, in theory at least, Mormonism could have sympathized with aspects of each of these critiques of traditional Anglicanism.

Carrying the "high church" emphasis to a novel

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6Malcom Thorp, "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837-1852," Journal of Mormon History 4 (1977): 51-65. Edward R. Norman, in Church and Society in England, 1770-1970 (Oxford, 1976), challenges the accuracy of the "clerical corruption" stereotype, but, as Thorp notes, nineteenth century Anglican reforms were "too little and too late to assuage popular images of an indifferent clerical establishment." He also comments that Mormon "reminiscences do not generally reveal a pattern of deep commitment to the [Church of England]" and concludes that Anglicanism, for LDS converts at least, had been a "family tradition" rather than "a source of spiritual satisfaction."
extreme were a group of men at Oxford University in the 1830s. Dismayed over the recent breaches in the exclusive privileges of the Established Church, they began to issue a series of tracts condemning what they called a "national apostasy" and criticizing the weakness of contemporary Anglicanism. These Tractarians, as they were labeled (also known as the Oxford Movement or Puseyites), argued that what made the Anglican Church the legitimate heir of the Apostles was episcopal succession. As a divine institution, therefore, it was sacrilege to have the church compromised by the political expediencies of the day. In their efforts to revive what they considered a rather effete Church of England, the Oxford Movement looked to the ancient church rather than to the Reformation for precedent and direction. In so doing they rediscovered the richness of the ancient liturgy and architecture. For the Tractarians, the restorationist quest was a return to the Patristic Christianity of the early Catholic Fathers rather than to the Primitive Christianity of the Apostles. Since the ultimate

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tendency, actually carried out only in a few cases, was to reunite with Rome, the Latter-day Saints could never fellowship the Puseyites. Yet, the Oxford Movement was symptomatic of a broader primitivist or restorationist impulse which, as we shall later see, significantly paved the way for the rise of English Mormonism.

If Mormonism in England was still as antagonistic to the histrionics of revivalism as they had been in the United States, they were somewhat more sympathetic to the reform movements of low church Anglicanism than they had been to the agencies of the Benevolent Empire. On the one hand, their concern for the plight of impoverished converts tended to overshadow their usual misgivings about the "unscriptural" means of reform. Equally important, though, was the nature of the English endeavors themselves that made the relationship more congenial. Particularly was this true of the Temperance movement. Heber Kimball's reminiscence is instructive: "It was often said by temperance men who joined the Church that that movement was a preparatory work or forerunner to the introduction of the Gospel; in most every place we went where there was a Temperance hall, we could get it to preach in, many believing that we made men temperate faster than they did; for as soon as any obeyed the Gospel they abandoned their excesses in
drinking."\textsuperscript{8}

Mormons had perhaps the least in common with broad churchmen such as the neoplatonic Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biblical critic Henry Hart, and literati such as Charles Kingsley or Alfred Lord Tennyson. Their liberalism and skepticism, not to mention their social status, was far removed from the millenarian world of early Mormonism. The distance between the two sensibilities is succinctly captured by William Wordsworth, whom later Mormons considered a kindred spirit because of writings which seemed to contain an echo of their own beliefs. Yet, when a niece joined the LDS church and was ready to migrate to Nauvoo, Wordsworth sent this query to the American editor Henry Reed: "Do you know anything of a wretched set of religionists in your country, \textit{superstitionists} I ought rather to say, called Mormonites, or Latter-Day Saints?"\textsuperscript{9}


\textsuperscript{9}Cit. in Gordon K. Thomas, "The Book of Mormon in the English Literary Context of 1837," \textit{BYU Studies} 27 (Wint 1987): 37. Thomas sees the "Ossian controversy" in which ancient Gaelic manuscripts of the third-century Celtic bard, Ossian, were allegedly translated but later discovered to be a fraud, as the means of poisoning the well for any serious reception of the Book of Mormon by men whose unorthodox outspokenness might otherwise have made them open to such a volume. See pp. 37-45.
DISSENT

A second major branch of English religion at the time of the Saints' arrival consisted of the Dissenters. Though they often tended to dissent from the pro-crown politics of the Tories as well, they acquired the name because of their dissent from the established Church of England. They included such groups as the Presbyterians, Congregationalists (or Independents, as they had been called in England since the days of the Civil War), Baptists, and Quakers. In a sense, aside from the Methodists, who always considered themselves more loyal to church and state than the Dissenters and therefore in a class by themselves, Dissent was a catchall title for any trinitarian Protestant denomination other than the Established Church. Later, the term "Nonconformists" was also used to describe Dissenters and was a label more congenial to Methodist sensibilities in the nineteenth century. One good reason for distinguishing "Old Dissent" from

Methodism is that the former denominations were fundamentally Calvinist in theology, while the latter were usually Arminian. The distinction, however, came to be less important in the nineteenth century as the "New Dissent" rejected the more negative aspects of high Calvinism. For American readers it is also important to note that in England, Anglicans built churches, Dissenters and Methodists built chapels; the two terms for houses of worship were not used interchangeably as in the United States.

What of the interaction between Mormons and Dissenters? Though nationally less significant in number, it appears that more Dissenters joined the LDS church than did Anglicans.\(^{11}\) Aside from occasionally shared political perspectives and similar socio-economic circumstances, religious sympathies were of primary importance. Noncomformists (and, to a lesser extent, Evangelical Anglicans) tended to be responsive to the transatlantic wave of revivalism that had intermittently been sweeping both England and America since the mid-eighteenth century. Particularly after 1780, the less doctrinal, more conversion oriented practice of

Itinerancy took hold of Dissent. 12 By the early nineteenth century, Baptists as well as Congregationalists had developed a moderate, evangelical Calvinism that elevated human ability in the work of salvation, that perceived Christ's redemption as paying a price sufficient for the salvation of all, and that brought Dissenters into closer harmony with the experiential mood of Methodism and American evangelicalism. One recent study demonstrates that "the later 1830s and early 1840s" represented the high point of "Nonconformist recruitment" through revivals. 13 This is important since revivalism also nurtured Mormonism in the United States. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that the explosive growth of the first Mormon missions to England coincided chronologically with a surge in evangelical activity.

This connection is typified in an 1838 episode involving Heber C. Kimball and a Baptist congregation in Barnoldswicke. Hearing of the profound interest in the Mormon message manifest in the nearby Lancashire villages of Chatburn and Downham, Barnoldswicke Baptists sent for the Mormon elders. According to Joseph Fielding,


Kimball's traveling companion, "six or seven hundred" crowded into their chapel in eager anticipation. Hyde preached on the millenarian theme of the first resurrection and Kimball followed with a discourse on the first principles of the gospel. As Kimball tells it, "the congregation was overjoyed, tears ran down their cheeks, and the minister could not refrain from frequently clapping his hands together while in the meeting for joy." The service concluded at 10 p.m., but the preacher and some of the people followed the elders to their quarters where discussion continued till four the next morning. So great was the interest that later that morning "a number of influential men suspended operation in their factories to allow their workmen the privilege of hearing us preach."

METHODOISM

The single largest contributing group to Mormonism, however, seems to have been the Methodists. According to the only statistical study to date, more Methodists were baptized into the Church than either Anglicans or Dissenters. This is significant when it is remembered


15This is based on Thorp's analysis of 298 conversion accounts providing sufficient information to identify prior religious involvements. See Thorp, "Religious Backgrounds," p. 60, for a statistical table.
that at the time of the earliest Mormon missions, there were four Anglicans for every one Methodist in England. For this reason it is important that we take a close look at this branch of English Protestantism.

By 1837, when the first elders arrived, Methodism had been in existence for just about a hundred years. It began as a renewal movement within the Anglican church and remained that way almost till founder John Wesley's dying day a half century later. Methodists attended Anglican services on Sunday and received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the hands of Anglican clergy. In this way, therefore, Methodism was to Anglicanism in England what Pietism had been to Lutheranism in Germany.

And the German connection was more than analogical. When John Wesley had his famous "Aldersgate experience," one of the formative events in English Methodism, it was in reaction to a reading of Luther's preface to his Commentary on Romans. Even more important, both during and after his fateful voyage to Georgia in the 1730s, he

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16The Anglican-to-Methodist ratio is documented in Currie, et. al., Church and Churchgoers, passim.

had contact with Moravians who spurred him on in the direction of experiential religion. "Do you know Christ?" Wesley was asked. His intellectualist response met with the Moravian's insistence that Christ must be known personally, not doctrinally, a notion fundamental to all pietist-evangelical groups. Orthodoxy asked of an individual, "Is he sound (doctrinally)?" Methodism, Pietism, and later Revivalism, evangelicals all, asked, "Is he saved?" 

18 Key characteristics of early Methodism were its basic organizational unit, the "class," which met regularly for prayer and study; its system of unordained, traveling preachers, all carefully orchestrated under the ultimate supervision of Wesley himself; its Arminian, as opposed to Calvinist, theology; and its enthusiastic religion. It is this latter aspect that most concerns us here. In the classical sense of the term, "enthusiasm" meant simply the indwelling of God. 

19 Earliest Methodism reveled in the reality of personal spiritual

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experience. Godly gifts abounded in response to Wesleyan preaching, but all did not perceive this as a shower of divine grace. Belief in such direct interaction and personal communication between God and ordinary men without the aid of intermediaries like clergy or canon had always been a dangerous notion for the religious establishment. It made the individual the ultimate source of religious authority. The philosopher-cleric Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, told Wesley with a shudder that "pretending to extraordinary revelations and flights of the Holy Spirit is a horrid thing, yes, Sir, it is a very horrid thing." ²⁰

As time passed, however, Methodism followed the sociological model of movement from sect to denomination. Renewal rigidified into regimentation, and the initial outpouring of the spirit was subordinated to institutional concerns. Even before Wesley's death in the final decade of the 1700s, cries were heard that "primitive" Methodism had been lost. Within only a matter of years, splinter groups began to break away, and by the turn of the century it was no longer possible to talk of Methodism as a single entity. In nineteenth-century England, it is necessary to distinguish Wesleyan Methodism or, more simply, Wesleyanism from Primitive Methodism, Independent Methodism, New Connexion

²⁰Knox, Enthusiasm, p. 450.
Methodism, and a host of others.21

This is an important distinction generally overlooked in Mormon studies but valuable precisely because it points us to the source of a disproportionate number of early English converts. Perhaps the most obvious example of this was the conversion of the United Brethren. While the story of Wilford Woodruff's marvelous success in bringing hundreds of this group into the fold is well known, what concerns us here is to note that the United Brethren were a break off from the Primitive Methodists who in turn had earlier broken away from the Wesleyans not only for the usual reasons of ecclesiological localism but on the grounds that the original spirituality had been lost.22 Clarke Garrett

21Hempton, Methodism and Politics, pp. 216, 230, makes the point that Methodism must not be treated "as a monolith" since there were "many Methodisms in many places at many times." In volume 2 of Davies, et. al., History of the Methodist Church, separate chapters treat "The Wesleyan Methodists" and "Other Methodist Traditions," pp. 213-329. A recent study quite attuned to such variation is Deborah M. Valenze, Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England (Princeton, 1985). Also useful for its specific focus on areas frequented by Mormon missionaries is D. A. Gowland, Methodist Secessions: The Origins of Free Methodism in Three Lancashire Towns: Manchester, Rochdale, and Liverpool (Manchester, 1979).

22The standard work is now Julia S. Werner, The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History (Madison, WI, 1984). Also valuable is From Mow Cop to Peake, 1807-1932: Essays to Commemorate the 175th Anniversary of the Beginnings of Primitive Methodism, May 1982 (Wesley Historical Society, Yorkshire Branch, 1982). In terms of the institutionalization that may have prompted the United Brethren schism, Turner remarks that "Wesleyanism was not the only Methodism that can be shown
described early Methodism thus: "Like Quakerism in the preceding century, 'methodism' was as much a style of spirituality and an affirmation of the possibility of the immediate experience of divinity as it was an organized religious body. It was the most visible sector of a broad movement of popular piety that affirmed that the age of miracles was not past and that Christianity would regain the purity and vitality of its beginnings."23 It appears that in attempting to recapture the early spirit of Methodism in the face of a definite establishmentarian drift in the nineteenth century, non-Wesleyan Methodists were questing for some of the very same values heralded as immediate and available by Mormon missionaries. Interestingly enough, the kinship with early Methodism did not go unnoticed by the Saints. Parley Pratt reprinted one of John Wesley's sermons in the Millennial Star with this heading, "JOHN WESLEY A LATTER-DAY SAINT, in Regard to the Spiritual Gifts and the Apostacy of the Church!!"24

in development. Primitive Methodism illustrates much more sharply the transition from sect to denomination so beloved of modern sociologists." Conflict and Reconciliation, p. 82.

An important LDS reminiscence of the United Brethren is Job Smith, "The United Brethren," Improvement Era 13(July 1910):818-823. See also his "Diary" (Church Archives), pp. 1-5.


24Millennial Star (hereafter, MS) 2:23.

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But of course, the later schismatic Methodist search for "primitive" Methodism was itself only the attempt to restore "primitive" Christianity. What's more, not all Methodists seeking a charismatic religion were separatists. Some, including a number who later converted to Mormonism, could not bring themselves to formally dissociate with Wesleyanism.\(^{25}\) Therefore, for our purposes, it may be more helpful to look at Methodism from the perspective of a spectrum rather than denominational label. Toward one end of the spectrum would be found those groups, whatever their specific affiliation, who were interested above all else in enjoying a vital, gifted Christianity. Knowing what we do about the great tendency of early Mormon missionaries to stress the "signs following belief," it is not

\(^{25}\)Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided* (London, 1968) and J.C. Bowmer, *Pastor and People* (London, 1975) make clear that the Methodism of the pulpit was not always the Methodism of the pew. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, and Gowland, *Methodist Secessions* also illustrate that generalizations are dangerous and that an alternative to formal schism was the private gathering of the pious while retaining nominal affiliation with the parent body. Finally, the rash of regional studies in Methodism, too, is qualifying stereotypes. As just one recent example, David Luker demonstrates how "Cornish Wesleyan Methodism was clearly something very different from orthodox Wesleyanism." See Luker, "Revivalism Theory and Practice: The Case of Cornish Methodism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 37 (1986): 603-619.

Thorp counters P. A. M. Taylor on the proportion of Wesleyan versus splinter-Methodist converts to Mormonism, but the important point seems to be that both types of converts shared a desire for charismatic Christianity regardless of which body held their formal membership or what the attitudes of their denominational leaders were.
surprising that the overwhelming number of Methodist converts, who themselves were the single most statistically significant group, came from that end of the spectrum.\textsuperscript{26}

SEEKERS

Beyond Anglicanism, Dissent, and Methodism were the denominational nomads for whom institutional Christianity was in its darkest day. These "seekers," as they have often been called, had "pondered long over the scriptures, especially the prophecies and promises of the coming of Christ's kingdom." Many of them "had already had some form of inner-light experience, and all were ready to be influenced by visions and dreams. They longed for some authority who would confirm and sanctify these experiences, and who would also cut through the conflicting claims of all the churches. Only the Saviour himself, or at least his directly appointed messenger, could fulfill such longing."\textsuperscript{27}

"I was earnestly looking out," wrote one of these individuals, "for some one to be visited by the Spirit to revive the work, and raise up the cause of God ... I went everywhere that I heard of any one being visited by the

\textsuperscript{26}This is readily apparent from an examination of English Mormon diaries and from the Millennial Star.

Spirit of God to prophesy, in hopes of finding the truth." Such seekers often made their way to the site of a Mormon sermon and then made their way into the Church. Postulating the dismal and "dead" state of institutional Christianity, their faith was, as another put it, that "something would turn up, either the gospel would be introduced, or afflictions would come upon the nation." Is it any wonder, then, why Mormonism was so successful among this group? It seemed to match seeker hopes and expectations almost precisely.

MILLENNARIANISM

Interest in Biblical prophecies was an aspect of the English religious milieu that seemed to penetrate every social class and religious group, and that was particularly helpful in preparing the soil for ready germination of the "Gospel seed" carried by Mormon missionaries. England had had a long line of significant students of, and commentators on, the ancient prophecies. Names like Sir Isaac Newton, Joseph Mede, and Samuel Horsley remind us that the scholarly study of prophecy was both an old and venerable tradition.

\[28\text{cit. in Harrison, } The Second Coming, \text{ p. 153.}\]

\[29\text{cit. in Valenze, } Prophetic Sons and Daughters, \text{ p. 87.}\]

\[30\text{W.H. Oliver, } Prophets and Millenialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s (Auckland, 1978); and Harrison, } The Second Coming.\]
Particularly the French Revolution, a half century before the Saints arrived, generated a new surge of interest in eschatology. As huge armies marched across the continent and regimes toppled, the Revolution excited an atmosphere of millennial prophecy and expectation unparalleled since the Civil War.\textsuperscript{31}

Serious study of the prophecies reached high tide in England in the late 1820s and 1830s, symbolized by the 1835 publication of Joshua Brooks's massive Dictionary of Writers on the Prophecies, and involved a vigorous theological debate between pre- and postmillennialists. The Saints, of course, had much to say on such matters and, as we have already pointed out, kept themselves far more abreast of the prophecy literature than has hitherto been assumed. As only one example, in July of 1840, apostle Willard Richards made note in his journal that he had picked up a "new work on the dispersion & history of the Jews, cleansing of the Sanctuary 2 Coming of Christ Reign with his Saints and End of the World by Samuel Kent."\textsuperscript{32} He then proceeded to fill several pages of his diary with notes from this book.

When one compares this surge of apocalypticism in


\textsuperscript{32}Willard Richards, Journal, Volume 12, page 4 (typescript, Church Archives).
the decade preceding the arrival of the Mormons with the Saints' own heavily millennial teaching, one can again sense the relevance of the "message of the Restoration." The flurry of millenarian interest at this time on both sides of the Atlantic was so pronounced that it caused historian Ernest Sandeen to ask, "Is it only a coincidence that the excitement over the imminent second advent and the dawning millennium broke out in both Britain and America during 1828-1832? Is it only a coincidence that a return to apostolic simplicity and power was being sought in both countries just at this time or that speaking in tongues and healing should become local sensations?" 33

Exactly how English millenarianism served as a midwife to Mormonism becomes more clear as we shift from the general to the particular. One apparently significant source for early English converts was the "Christian Society" of Robert Aitken. 34 The group was based in Liverpool and was not yet two years old when Elders Kimball and Fielding arrived there in 1837. Aitken was a disappointed Anglican who sought ordination


34 Very little is known about Robert Aitken beyond what is published in the British Dictionary of National Biography 1:206. Some information is contained in Gowland, Methodist Successions. Malcom Thorp has begun a comprehensive study of the man and his movement.
in the Wesleyan connexion, was rebuffed, mingled temporarily with the schismatic Wesleyan Methodist Association, and eventually broke away to create his own society. He had moved steadily toward the evangelical, almost pentecostal, end of the religious spectrum, and had therefore earned the usual caricature of "Ranter." Edward Tullidge likened him to George Whitfield of Great Awakening fame whose evangel had been so effective it even stirred the thrifty Benjamin Franklin to empty his pockets into the contribution plate.

Furthermore, Aitken became an avid student of the prophecies and a premillennialist. As Tullidge remembered, "his themes on the ancient prophecies and their fulfillment in 'these latter days' were very like" those of "eloquent Sidney Rigdon, before as well as after he became a Mormon" and included "glorious outbursts of inspiration when he dwelt upon the prospect of a latter-day church rising in fulfillment of the prophets."35 In a published sermon entitled "The Second Coming of Christ," Aitken declared that "the doctrine of our Lord's advent is a key to the prophetical Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament." To those who chided his interest in prophecy, he remarked, "There is life or death, destruction or salvation, in the taking heed to, or in

35Cit. in Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball (Salt Lake, 1945), pp. 149-150.
the despising of unfulfilled prophecy."  What it showed him in standard apocalyptic fashion was the overwhelmingly apostate condition of the "Gentile churches." In reasoning that resonated for Mormons, Aitken remarked,

And now, if we want a standard whereby to judge of the apostacy of the present churches, we must take the church of Christ when the apostatizing spirit was least manifested—that is to say, in the apostolic age. With this pattern in our eye, where, I ask, are the gifts of the spirit—where the miraculous power—where the gift of healing—where the gift of prophecy—where the signs that were appointed to follow them that believed? What has become of the angel messengers who so frequently appeared to the primitive Christians?...Where is the persecution that all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall endure—and where is the being hated of all men for Christ's name's sake? Alas! alas! my brethren, the gifts of the spirit are gone, and, I fear, most of the graces have gone with them; and, as to suffering and reproach, to which the Church is called, such things have long been matters of history.  

By the end of the decade, Aitken's Society had expanded to a number of urban centers, including London, where Wilford Woodruff first heard him. Woodruff readily recognized a doctrinal kinship, and wrote that Aitken had "presented some of the most sublime truths that I had ever herd delivered by a sectarian priest." He was delighted that Aitken had "come out against the sexts" but noted that "he has got as far as he can."  

37 Ibid., p. 11.
later reported that "there was some little prospect of the Rev. R. Aitken's A.M. receiving & embracing the work which will open doors to many souls so I felt to rejoice."\textsuperscript{39}

Actually, "Aitkenism" had already opened doors, though Aitken himself never joined and eventually returned to Anglicanism. In the published journal of his 1837-38 mission, Heber C. Kimball wrote, "Soon after our arrival in England, great many of the AITKENITES embraced the gospel."\textsuperscript{40} The nucleus of the first branch in Liverpool raised up by John Taylor and Joseph Fielding in early 1840 were converts from Aitken's Hope Street Chapel.\textsuperscript{41} Prominent English convert and one-time president of the Staffordshire Conference, Alfred Cordon, had previously been an Aitkenite class leader and was responsible for the conversion of other Aitkenites including an entire congregation in Doncaster, Yorkshire during his missionary labors.\textsuperscript{42} And John Greenhow, president of the large Liverpool Conference, told of his former experience as an elder in the Christian Society, describing how there was a "general consciousness prevailing" among the Aitkenites "that something was

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 512.

\textsuperscript{40}Kimball, Journal, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{41}Fielding, "Diary," pp. 51-58, 98, 111.

\textsuperscript{42}Alfred Cordon, "An Abridgement of His Journal," (typescript, BYU Library); MS 2:126.
wanting."\(^{43}\) When the Mormon elders arrived, that something was discovered.

Another adventist sect from which English Mormonism may have drawn a small contingent was the "Christian Israelites."\(^{44}\) John Wroe, an eccentric zealot from Bowling, managed to convince a number of former Southcottians in the 1820s that he should be regarded as prophet and successor to Joanna Southcott. A generation earlier, prophetess Southcott had gathered around herself a significant lower-class millenarian, enthusiastic movement.\(^{45}\) Wroe added to these elements a Judaizing attempt to revive Old Testament law, liturgy, and priesthood, and called his group the Christian Israelites. Mosaic codes were to be fulfilled to the letter, including circumcision, the eating of kosher food, the wearing of beards, and even the learning of Hebrew. He also accepted the "British-Israel" notion that the English were actually the lost tribes of Israel but did not know it. He promptly assigned converts a tribal lineage, and called these "invisible" as well as

\(^{43}\) Millennial Star 3:30.

\(^{44}\) G.R. Balleine, Past Finding Out: The Tragic Story of Joanna Southcott and her Successors (New York, 1956) has a chapter on this group. Oliver, Prophets and Millenialists, and harrison, The Second Coming, deal with Wroe as well.

\(^{45}\) The most authoritative study is James K. Hopkins, A Woman to Deliver Her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution (Austin, TX, 1982).
the "visible" Jews to gather to the New Jerusalem to be built in Ashton, a little town just outside of Manchester. There they constructed a lavish "Sanctuary" able to hold several thousand. The Biblically prescribed walls around the Holy City, however, were never completed since Wroe was run out of town in 1831 for indiscretions with young virgins, given David-like to "cherish" him.

The movement continued for a while, but by 1842, the sanctuary had been sold and, according to William Cooke Taylor on tour that year of Lancashire manufacturing districts, some Ashton Israelites had been absorbed into Mormonism. The case of James Wood is perhaps typical of the ideological connection. Wood lived in Wroe's new headquarters in Wakefield, Yorkshire and had been impressed with Wroeite sermons on the "second advent." This in turn heightened his receptiveness to the "Restored Gospel," for when he received from Ashton friends a copy of Parley Pratt's apocalyptic Letter to the Queen, he wrote to Pratt that Mormonism "if I am not greatly mistaken" is "that Church I have long wished to see established in the earth."47

46Harrison, The Second Coming, pp. 147-148.

47MS 2:54. The tract referred to is Parley P. Pratt, A Letter to the Queen, Touching the Signs of the Times, and the Political Destiny of the World (Manchester, 1841).
NEW TESTAMENT RESTORATIONISM

Undergirding the charismatic and millenarian aspects of the English religious milieu which we have been examining was the nineteenth-century renaissance on both sides of the Atlantic of what has been called New Testament restorationism or Christian primitivism. Under the maxim "no creed but the Bible," a widespread interest in recasting Christianity along Biblical lines spawned groups like Alexander Campbell's Disciples of Christ and Barton Stone's Christian Church in America, or the Plymouth Brethren and the Universal Christian Society in England. Especially interesting within this tradition was the English penchant for speaking of the "everlasting gospel," also a favorite term with the Mormons. The early nineteenth century poet William Blake illustrated the notion when he declared, "All had originally one language and one religion: this was the religion of

Jesus, the Everlasting Gospel."⁴⁹

The Saints profited from primitivism by their own admission. In response to the assertion that Campbellism produced Mormonism, English convert and Millennial Star editor Thomas Ward replied, "This is an error...but if he would say that the principles propagated by Alexander Campbell prepared the way in the minds of many for the reception of the fulness of the gospel, we will accede the point at once."⁵⁰ What was true of Campbellism particularly was true of English Christian primitivism generally. Even a superficial reading of the spiritual autobiographies of English converts found in journals, reminiscences, and the Millennial Star reveals the overwhelming presence of primitivist thinking which paved the way for conversion.

So common in society generally was Biblical restorationism that one recent student found it necessary to distinguish "between ecclesiastical primitivism, wherein the forms and structures of the apostolic church are of paramount concern; ethical primitivism, wherein the lifestyle of the ancient Christians is the chief concern; and experiential primitivism, wherein the apostolic gifts of the Spirit are of ultimate concern."⁵¹ Mormonism spanned all three types and

⁴⁹Harrison, The Second Coming, p. 82.

⁵⁰Millennial Star 3:197.

precisely because of such comprehensiveness managed to respond successfully and lastingly to Christian primitivism in England.

IRVINGITES

One other group, however, approached Mormonism in the nature and intensity of its ecclesiastical and experiential primitivism, as well as in its millenarianism--the Catholic Apostolic Church, or more popularly, the Irvingites.\textsuperscript{52} Joseph Smith once remarked that the Irvingites "counterfeited the truth perhaps the nearest of any of our modern sectarians," but he might have said, had he had a different purpose in mind, that they anticipated "the truth" closer than any others.\textsuperscript{53}

In the 1820s, Edward Irving, a Scot, was ministering to a Scottish Presbyterian congregation in London and had


attracted considerable attention with the eloquence of his sermons. His interest in Biblical prophecy brought him into contact with Henry Drummond who invited him to a series of prophetic study conferences held annually during the late 1820s at Drummond's palatial estate in Albury. These conferences resulted in the publication of the three-volume *Dialogues on Prophecy* which represents the high point of premillennial discourse in England.54 The Albury group believed that England had become an "apostate nation." As with the Tractarians, who were almost contemporary in origin, and unlike the Mormons, this was a fundamentally conservative reaction on the part of well-to-do individuals appalled at the unraveling alliance between Church and State. It, however, also grew out of an ecclesiastical primitivism which saw the "falling away" as something antedating recent events, as well from their apocalyptic millenarianism which by definition pronounces the present derelict beyond human reform.

In Irving's analysis, much as in Mormon thought, the deaths of the ancient Apostles resulted in the apostasy of the Church, and if ever Christianity were to be restored to its original faith and unity, it would again require a foundation of twelve apostles. "We cried unto the Lord," declared Irving, "for apostles, prophets,

54So argued in Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, pp. 99-149.
evangelists, pastors, and teachers...because we saw it written in God's Word that these are the appointed ordinances for the edifying of the body of Jesus."55 The first apostle was called by prophecy in 1832, and by 1835, the same year the LDS Quorum of the Twelve was reconstituted in Kirtland, the full number of twelve Irvingite apostles had been commissioned. This apostolate and a never-fully-constituted quorum of "seventies" had the universal oversight for the whole Catholic Apostolic Church. The rest of the Irvingite ministry was essentially episcopal—a supervising bishop, or "angel" as they were called, who presided over a local church or region, a council of elders, and a group of deacons to assist with temporal affairs.

Spiritual gifts were the experiential aspect of Biblical Christianity for which the Irvingites felt to pray. When various gifts broke out in Scotland in 1830, it caught the attention of Irving and his London congregation. At the final prophetic conference in Albury that year, the chairman made it clear that not only did they have the "responsibility" to "inquire into the state of those gifts said to be now present in the west of Scotland" but that "it is our duty to pray for the revival of the gifts manifested in the primitive Church."56 Within a year, tongues and prophecy were

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55 Cit. in Shaw, Catholic Apostolic Church, p. 34.
56 Ibid., p. 32.
prominent in Irving's congregation, and healings occurred as well. This prompted the actual break in 1832 with the Presbyterian church and the formation of the new Catholic Apostolic Church.

Such primitivist and millenarian similarities led to a number of contacts between Mormonism and Irvingism. There was, for example, the episode involving Irvingite envoy, John Hewitt, and the LDS brethren in Kirtland. In June 1835, only a few months after the Mormon Quorum of the Twelve had been organized, Hewitt arrived in Ohio, ostensibly to "examine the work." From what the Irvingites had been able to read in a Mormon periodical they considered themselves and the Saints united in "the Apostolic cause," and they promised much needed temporal assistance from affluent emigrants if Hewitt brought back a favorable report. But despite a follow-up effort on the part of the Kirtland brethren, Hewitt never completed his mission and instead settled down in the neighboring town of Painesville to teach school.57

What might be called the "Canadian connection" provides an even better glimpse at how Irvingism played the role of precursor. Joseph Fielding, then residing near Toronto, described thus his state of mind prior to

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57HC 2:230-234. Hewitt apparently became Preceptor of the Painesville Academy. His connections to Irvingism and his visit to the Mormons, however, caused him problems with the Congregational minister in Painesville. See Painesville Telegraph, 26 February and 4 March 1836.
hearing the Mormon elders: "I had for some time been much interested in the subject of the millennium, etc., which had been revived by Edward Irving, a Scotch minister in London, and partly from his writings, etc., and partly by reading the Word of God, I was fully convinced the Christian world as it is called was in a very different state to what (it was) supposed. As to the second coming (of) Christ it (was) almost entirely denied or misunderstood."58 When he finally agreed to listen to Parley Pratt, he wrote, "I soon discovered that he had the spirit and power of God and such Wisdom as none but God himself could have given to man, by which he could explain those prophecies of which the Preachers of the Day were ignorant, showing the great design and connection of the Scriptures throughout."59 Fielding joined. His neighbor, John Taylor, who also appears to have imbibed Irvingite doctrine, had already been converted through Pratt's instrumentality.60 The trajectory into the LDS church in either case seems clear. Primitivist impulses, both experiential and ecclesiastical, coupled with a pronounced millenarianism—Fielding wrote, "I could not but speak of the Second

59 Ibid., p. 2.
Coming of Christ"—were given impetus by Irvingism and fulfillment in Mormonism.

CONCLUSION

What should be obvious by now is that the religious milieu of early Victorian England was highly conducive to the transatlantic establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Brigham Young and Willard Richards wrote to the First Presidency during the Quorum of the Twelve's 1840 mission to England that "we find the people of this land much more ready to receive the gospel than those of America."\(^{61}\) A major share of the credit, as we have seen, must go to the pronouncedly primitivist, charismatic, and millenarian nature of early Mormonism which capitalized on similar influences in England. One student, recognizing the responsiveness of the English milieu, went so far as to say that "there was nothing in [Mormonism] that had not been anticipated over the preceding half-century."\(^{62}\) The appeal of earliest Mormonism was not its foreignness, but its familiar spirit. What it did was to unite into the "fullness of truth" those scattered and isolated insights embedded in the English environment. Unfortunately, some could not


see beyond the fragments:

When we arose to preach unto the people repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, the cry of "Baptist, Baptist," would be rung in our ears. If we spoke of the church and body of Christ being composed of Prophets and Apostles, as well as other members, "Irvingites, Irvingites," would immediately dash into mind. If in the midst of our remarks, we even once suffered the saying to drop from our lips, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," "O you belong to Johanna Southcote," would be heard from several places at once. If we spoke of the second coming of Christ, the cry would be "Aitkenites." If we made mention of the Priesthood, they would call us "Catholics." If we testified of the ministering of angels, the people would reply, "The Irvingites have their angels, and even the Duke of Normandy is ready to swear that he has the administering of angels every night."63

And yet, for those thousands who perceived that something larger was afoot, the religious environment of England was felt to pave the way. "We know," wrote editor Thomas Ward, "that the minds of many of our elders were prepared for the worl. through the belief and reception of many of the principles propagated by Campbell [and we might add, just as appropriately, the numerous other primitivist, millenarian, and charismatic groups in early nineteenth century England]; it was our own case, and we shall not cease to be grateful for being permitted to come in contact with them, which as far as we received them, we believe them still; and we will go even further and acknowledge that the Lord permitted the propagation of those principles as a forerunner to the fulness of the gospel, though its advocates knew it

63 History of the Church 4:222-223.
not."64 As Orson F. Whitney summed it up, such individuals and movements "shed the lustre of advanced thought over the pathway soon to be brightened by the beams of eternal truth."65 That the beloved Mormon hymn, "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee," was actually an adaptation by Parley Pratt of a century-earlier Charles Wesley hymn by the same title, therefore, is merely symbolic of the numerous ways in which the religious milieu of England was anticipatory of the Restoration.66 Yet, whereas Wesley and countless other seekers, prophets, and millenarians wrote in hope and foretaste, Pratt and thousands of English converts actually lived to see the "dawning of a brighter day, majestic rise upon the world," English as well as American.

64 Millennial Star 3:197.
65 Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, p. 146.
66 The hymn is cited in Turner, Conflict and Reconciliation, p. 47.
CONCLUSION

In the end, the brighter day majestically rising upon the world was to take longer than enthusiastic Latter-day Saints first expected. Indeed, it has yet to arrive in full splendor. Nonetheless, one cannot understand the dynamics of early Mormonism without taking cognizance of the pervasive way in which eschatology illuminated and energized so much of what these people did. Observers have long debated how American or how "mainstream" or how normal the Mormons are and were. What they were in this earliest period of their history was a decidedly apocalyptic and millenarian movement. Whether an apocalyptic worldview makes one a realist or a renegade is, of course, an entirely subjective matter. Millenarianism has provided a comprehensive cosmology for popular religious movements like the Mormons for centuries, and this study has shown that among the Latter-day Saints it achieved a sophisticated degree of articulation.

Only gradually did Mormonism develop in ways that removed it from the apocalyptic orbit. By the early twentieth century, in part as a result of their
integration into the larger national culture, the social and soteriological features of their earlier apocalypticism were significantly diminished. But if they now lived more fully "in the world," residual millenarian mentalities reinforced that they were still not "of the world." While they had greatly expanded their use of scripture beyond eschatological exegesis, these ways of thought as well as the numerous earlier expressions of such ideas by revered predecessor prophets and apostles were readily available to explain tumultuous times.

In short, the temptation to look at the history of Mormonism as the classic shift from sect to church in Troeltschian sense overlooks the degree to which millenarian constructs of thought remain. That millenarianism has been domesticated rather than destroyed should hardly be surprising, though, when one reflects on what this study has made clear—the profound way in which millenarianism penetrated and empowered so much of Mormon thought and behavior.

In a sense, millenarianism functioned like a dialect. It had its own words, to be sure, and it certainly reflected a particular set of values. Yet, above all, it was an accent that disclosed to the discerning ear that regardless of what was being said it was unique. Thus, primitivism within Mormonism grew out of a millenarian philosophy of human history, and
millenarianism influenced the very content of that primitivism. Similarly, communitarianism also was expressed with an obvious millenarian accent, as was their charismatic ideology.

In the final analysis, millenarianism provided early Mormons with a satisfying worldview. As they utilized it, it made sense of their experience in the world and gave them hope for the future. It reinforced their commitments to each and to the grand enterprise on which they had embarked. Above all, in their eyes, it linked them to the Lord and to life eternal, and such has always been the Christian’s raison d’être.
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