# SEARCHING FOR ORIGINS: JOSEPH SMITH AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

## Marley Krok

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### STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original and the result of my own research, except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that no part of this work has been previously submitted for a degree at this, or any other institution.

Marley Krok

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Joseph Smith was an American religious leader of the Second Great Awakening who emerged as the founder of the Latter-Day Saint Movement. He was renowned as a charismatic leader who claimed to receive direct revelation from God, garnering him thousands of followers in his lifetime who called the man their prophet. By the power of God, Smith claimed to have translated and received new scripture, comparable to the Bible, which would form the foundation of his religious legacy. This thesis undertakes a close examination of the early writings of Smith in order to determine whether or not they amount to a theology in order to answer the question: can Mormonism have a systematic theology?

#### INTRODUCTION

I belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. I was baptised at 8, completed seminary at 16, and served a mission at 21. I was raised to love my faith, nurture it like a seed and feed it with daily scripture study and prayer. I was taught to fear God, revere Christ, and adhere to the Holy Spirit. While these were all supernatural beings, we were also told to hold Joseph Smith, the founder of the church, in similar esteem. This veneration included learning his life story, memorising his words, and defending his calling as a prophet of God. While I was taught from the King James Bible, priority was given to the words and works of Smith, as they were the most correct books and contained the fullness of the Mormon doctrine (Smith, 1902, p. 461). I pored over his words until a crisis of faith led me to wonder about the revealed nature of such things. This did not stall my study, rather the opposite as it saw me expand my focus to greater theology and philosophy in an attempt to understand how these words came to be.

Joseph Smith is the founder of the Latter-Day Saint (LDS) movement, which now boasts a membership numbering greater than 16 million across more than 100 denominations worldwide (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2021). Smith paradigmatically encapsulates the Second Great Awakening and the spirit it embodies. Much like the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe, the various Great Awakenings in the United States held at their core a desire to correct contemporary Christian theology. Religious reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin endeavoured to return to the pristine religion through a realignment of doctrine, creating a greater harmony between theology and the words of the New Testament (McLean, 2012). Smith, along with other notable theologians such as William Miller and Ellen White, continued this tradition in the New World (Commager, 1982, p. 20). These thinkers were faced with different challenges to their faith than the reformers that came before

them. The discovery of the New World ignited distinct and radical questions about the history of mankind and the perceived superiority of Eurocentrism rooted in Biblical historical traditions. Combined with the emerging freedoms afforded by the establishing doctrines of the United States, the Great Awakening saw a proliferation of independent and specialised religious conclusions (Brodie, 1995, pp. 5-6, 45). This led to many pressing their investigations further after failing to find sufficient answers in the established theologies of their time. These movements saw a reinvigoration of the Old Testament and Hebraic traditions of Christianity which they concluded made sense of their novel reality (MacKay, et al., 2020, p. 5).

Smith, like many other Second Great Awakening thinkers, demonstrates through his writings a theology based on an exploration of Christian doctrine in light of the traditions of the Old Testament. He cast himself in the role of prophet, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Smith, 1912, p. 273). Patterning himself after Isaiah he summed his mission with the call, "repent ye of your sins and prepare the way for the coming of the Son of Man; for the kingdom of God has come unto you". Prolific during his life, Smith produced thousands of pages between the years of 1828 and 1844 expounding his emerging interpretations of faith, God, and religious practice (Bushman & Jessee, 2008). These writings have formed the scriptural foundation of the LDS movement since their initial publication (Vogel, 2004; Vogel, 1990; Allen, 1980; Bushman, 1992). The canon of LDS scripture includes the Book of Mormon (1830), the Doctrine and Covenants (1835), and the Pearl of Great Price (1851), in conjunction with the Bible (the last, in a deuterocanonical sense).<sup>2</sup> Smith is attributed with contributing the majority of the LDS specific scripture, with only a handful of sections of the Doctrine and Covenants penned by later authorities. The Book of Mormon supersedes the authority of the Bible, which Smith asserted had been corrupted by the hands of men throughout time (Smith, 1855, p. 1755). It follows a similar structure to the Old Testament, providing a historical narrative of a new chosen people and their promised land in the New World. It also provides a second testimony of Christ's role in salvation and includes several key sermons from the New Testament accounts of his life. The Doctrine and Covenants comprises a collection of revelations received by Smith either on behalf of individuals or the church as a whole. They include admonitions from God, letters, instructions for behaviour, records of divine callings or ordinations, and the early structure and establishing documents of the Church of Christ. The

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Compare Isaiah 40

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This canon may also be supplemented by the words of prophets in a line from Smith to the present-day leader of the LDS Church Russel M. Nelson.

Pearl of Great Price is a small collection of books, two of which are attributed to the early patriarchs: Abraham and Moses, extracts from Smith's translation of Matthew and an autobiographical account of Smith's life and mission.

Smith has been described as an "eclectic, syncretic innovator, not a systematic theologian" (Van Wagoner, 2016, p. viii). Following this tradition, the field of Mormon studies lacks either a definitive or historically progressive categorisation of LDS theology. However, I would disagree with this reading of Smith. Thomas Aquinas defines theology as the science of talking about God: encompassing the topics of salvation and the nature of Christ (Aquinas, 1911, pp. Pt. 1, Q. 1, Art. 7), both of which feature prominently in the discourses of Smith. Recently, there was an attempt made to trace the development of selected LDS theological doctrines throughout time by Charles R. Harrell (2011). However, Harrell's work was met with considerable criticism for being overly ambitious in its scope and lacking proper primary source analysis, preferring rather to rely on a variety of secondary historical-critical research sources (Bowman, 2011, pp. 209-10). Bowman titled his critique: Can Mormonism Have a Systematic Theology? reiterating the paradigm that Smith, while considered a prophet by Mormons, is not a theologian. Further Bowman echoes the sentiment of LDS leadership that Mormons shouldn't approach scripture in the same way that critical researchers do (2011, p. 211). Mormons interpret their faith under the assumption of a cumulative unity of doctrine, where present teachings dictate the interpretation of past scripture (Alexander, 1980, p. 24). This means of interpretation hinders the furtherance of the field, which suffers through this stagnation.

The aim of the present study is therefore to contribute to the field through a cataloguing of early theological sources of Mormon theology as presented by Smith in the original sources. At the heart of this endeavour will be the question of whether or not Smith is a theologian and if there can be a systematic theology within Mormonism. As such, this study will focus on the early writings of Smith, evaluating his doctrine in keeping with Aquinas's definition of what theology entails. I have taken a multidisciplinary approach based on the nature of this work, that involves drawing on the fields of history, literary criticism, and theology. I will begin with a close examination of the primary sources, using predominantly textual hermeneutics to identify Smith's theology. This data will then be collated and analysed to provide a more holistic understanding of the foundational principles upon which Smith established his church.

I will focus on the texts produced by Smith in the formative years (1820-30)<sup>3</sup> of the LDS movement, namely the Book of Mormon and the Book of Commandments, an early precursor to the Doctrine and Covenants.

The following study is separated into four chapters in order to further explore the question discussed above. The first chapter will introduce the issues surrounding the definitions used by Smith and his followers. This will lead to a discussion about sources, identifying and clarifying the choices made in undertaking the present study. The following chapters will focus on the question of theology in Smith's early writings working with Aquinas' definition. The second chapter will therefore focus on the first of these theological concepts, Smith's Christology, specifically Christ's role in the Godhead and relationship with God. This will be followed by a discussion of soteriology and the early formation of Smith's innovation known as the 'Plan of Salvation'. Finally, the fourth chapter will examine Smith's eschatology and how that relates to the 'plan' laid out in the previous chapter.

Reflecting back on my own origins, the question may be asked of my own objectivity in such an endeavour. This research is motivated by a personal conflict, one that has spurred me on for nearly a decade. Personally, the stakes are high, and yet they also place me in the enviable position of knowledge from both within and without. It is because of my experience that I am individually suited for the work. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to the developing field of knowledge that is LDS scholarship by categorising the early writing of Smith in a way that has yet to be explored. Simultaneously, I am presented with the opportunity to understand my own personal history. The act of religious studies emerged as a response to individual and communal interests dedicated to the cultivation of the self (Benson, 1987, p. 89). I think this venture fits the brief.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Church of Christ was officially organised by Smith on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1830.

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## CHAPTER 1 – IDENTITY, TERMINOLOGY, AND THE SELECTION OF SOURCES

In my personal experience, when I mention my history with the LDS Church I am typically met with blank stares, or other times people respond by telling me of someone they know who is a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church or the Jehovah's Witnesses. In more recent years, mentions of Mormons or Joseph Smith may bring a sly grin from those familiar with *South Park*, the *Book of Mormon* musical, *Big Love*, or other mainstream media depictions of the Church. With that in mind, I intend to first address the definitions and concepts that underpin this investigation. I will begin with a brief overview of the man who started it all, Joseph Smith. This will not be a complete biography of the man; such works have already been explored by others before me.<sup>4</sup> Rather this section will highlight those necessary elements that will come into play as this study progresses. The chapter will then turn to a discussion regarding the terms used to describe the movements and traditions that accompany Smith's works. Finally, this chapter will provide a brief outline of the sources used, the problems they have raised for the faithful and critical alike, and the need for a hermeneutic approach to these sources.

#### 1.1 WHO IS JOSEPH SMITH?

Shortly before his death, Joseph Smith stated to a gathered crowd of ten thousand, "No man knows my history," (Anon., 1844, p. 14) and still nearly 200 years later, there is hardly a consensus. In no small part, this confusion comes from the sources, especially those penned by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Examples include: Edward W. Tullidge (1878), *Life of Joseph the Prophet*; Lucy Mack Smith (1902), *History of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by His Mother, Lucy Smith, as Revised by George A. Smith and Elias Smith*; Fawn M. Brodie (1945), *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*; Dan Vogel (2004), *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*; and Richard Lyman Bushman (2005), *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*.

Smith, that were written with their audience in mind. Born in 1805 in Vermont in the newly formed United States of America, Joseph was the fourth child of Joseph Smith Snr and Lucy Mack Smith. A series of unsuccessful farming ventures led the family to Palmyra, New York. Smith's family was soon swept up in the same excitement of religion that had taken hold throughout the Burned-over district. Their beliefs ranged from unitarian understandings of the nature of the Godhead, the right and responsibility of individual congregations to selfadminister, the need to seek the pristine religion through new prophets, mingled with a Methodist reliance on the scriptures and simple worship, and the egalitarianism of presbyterian congregations (Brodie, 1995, pp. 4-5). This was also a time where belief in folk magic combined with amateur archaeology in a bid to uncover the secrets of the land's unknown past (Tucker and Gilbert 1825; Brodie 1995, 16-20).

Notably, Smith was not the first of his line to claim visions and visitations or even to establish a new church.<sup>5</sup> It is also not clear from the sources if it was even his original intention. His first written description of hierophany came in 1832 (more than a decade after the supposed event) when he spoke of receiving a remission of his sins (Smith, 1832, p. 3). There is confusion among the early sources regarding the precise details for which this event would later become renowned, namely the number and form of the visitors, the date, and the topics discussed (Brodie 1995, 21-7; Allen 1966; Vogel 1989). However, what these reports illustrate is the story of an emerging narrative that would establish Smith as founder of a revolutionary form of Christianity (Brodie, 1995, p. viii). Smith called himself a prophet and claimed to be the first man to have received the fullness of God's doctrine since the death of Christ and his apostles. Smith's rhetoric centred on a worldwide apostasy, which he would bring to an end with the establishment of God's true church on the Earth once more (Bushman, 1984).

This was a young man full of charisma and drive. He is esteemed amongst his contemporaries, the religious reformers and early American fathers, for his religious innovations and the westward expansion his followers undertook at his behest. Smith was undoubtedly a product of his environment. His doctrine holds dear the American ideals of freedom, self-determination, and a divinely appointed destiny. 6 However he also left a legacy at odds with the emerging American identity of his time, preaching for a rigid separation of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1 'The Gods are among the People', Fawn M. Brodie (1945), No Man Knows My History, for a fuller discussion regarding the religious genealogy of Smith.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See John M Mecklin (1934), The Story of American Dissent, pp 37, 123.

church and state, a dismissal of private ownership of property, and the expansion of marriage customs to include polygamy and bigamy. In his time leading the Church of Christ, Smith published a handful of religious texts, established two cities, a bank, printing presses, was charged with a litany of diverse crimes, led two militias, and even ran for president. His lynching at the hands of an angry mob in 1844 transformed the man into a martyr, arguably catapulting his sect into the global religion it is today (Brodie, 1995, p. 397).

#### 1.2 TERMINOLOGY

When Smith first established his church on April 6th 1830, it was given the name 'Church of Christ' (D&C 20:1). Smith was appointed the official title of "a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of [the] Lord Jesus Christ" (D&C 21:1). While Smith was particular about keeping the association with Christ, many outside the church referred to those within by the nickname 'Mormons' which was derived from the seminal book published by Smith in March of 1830. However, the sentiment around this term was notably derogatory (Cowdery, 1832). In an attempt to move away from this nickname, and to avoid confusion with other similarly named churches, Smith's church was officially renamed in 1838 becoming 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (D&C 115:4). For the purposes of this study, the Church of Christ will be used to refer to the church established and maintained by Smith through his lifetime. When referring to the greater movement which Smith inspired, the term LDS movement will be used. This term will refer to the more expansive reach that Smith has achieved. This includes the various splinter denominations established during the life of the prophet and in the years subsequent to his death. The other term most commonly used in this field of study is that of Mormonism or Mormon studies. These terms typically encompass the unique teachings and doctrines of the LDS movement with the understanding that Mormonism is the amalgamation of Smith, his contemporaries, and his successors (Smith, 1954, p. 1:118).

#### 1.3 SOURCES

This study will focus on two texts authored by Smith prior to the establishment of the Church of Christ in April of 1830, namely the Book of Mormon and the first 20 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. This date represents the shifting from Smith as a writer toward his assuming the mantle of religious leader. These texts then represent his theology prior to the lived tradition and any alterations that may have been made during the transition. These texts also provide insight into the kind of doctrines that drew the initial converts to Smith's congregation. This early period provides an opportunity to pinpoint the genesis of Smith and his theology. Precedence has been given to those sources which Smith chose to publish, promote, and preach during this timeframe over other documents written or dictated by Smith during this timeframe. Many of these unpublished documents have only been made publicly accessible within the last two decades. Smith chose not to divulge the content of these supplementary texts during his lifetime. The question of what was kept on the cutting room floor is an intriguing one, but better kept for another time given the limitations of the study at hand.

#### 1.3.1 The Book of Mormon

The primary source at the heart of this study is the Book of Mormon. Written between the years of 1820 and 1830, it was first published in the month prior to the establishment of the Church of Christ. The book follows the story of several tribes and their dealings with one another and the Godhead, beginning with the story of two families escaping Jerusalem prior to its destruction at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 BC. Mirroring the events of Exodus, and led by the patriarch and prophet Lehi, the families wander through the desert and cross the sea in order to reach a new promised land. Once there, the families fracture into two tribes, split by their commitment to following the commandments of God. The story continues by outlining various wars between the tribes, the calling of new prophets, and incorporates the emerging theology of Smith through the sermons of these various mouthpieces. This story is interpolated with accounts of other holy men similarly brought to the promised land by the providence of God. The climax of the story involves a post resurrection visitation from Christ tying to the proclamation in John 10 of 'other sheep' (Brodie, 1995, p. 48). This section includes a sermon analogous with the Sermon on the Mount, and establishes a pattern of restoration which is externally expounded by Smith. The book ends circa 400 AD with a cataclysmic battle between

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See the Joseph Smith Papers Project at https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/

the two tribes with the righteous obliterated by the wicked. The text is said by Smith to be the historical account of native peoples of the Americas preserved on a collection of golden plates which he dug out of a mound convenient to his home in New York state in 1827.

It was the claim of Smith that, armed with the power of God and seer stones, he translated the Book of Mormon from a variation of Hebrew written in reformed Egyptian characters into the English language (JS-H 1:62).8 Smith's narrative involved a mandate from God to keep the plates hidden, lest adverse forces pervert the sacred. Three witnesses testified publicly to have seen the plates and corroborated Smith's claim of translation, with each credited as scribes for the project. In the years since however, alternative narratives have arisen as to the authorship of the Book of Mormon. The first theory follows an Ockham's razor approach suggesting that Smith alone authored the Book of Mormon. The second supposes that two of the hired scribes, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery, contributed to the composition of the book. Both men were preachers in their own right, however the book's title page during its first publishing run, credits Smith alone as the author of the text. Of course the debate regarding authorship rages on; however, the commonly held belief is that the work is that of Smith, either through translation of the original text, or a translation of ideas circulating at the time of authorship (Van Wagoner, 2016, p. viii). With this in mind, I will be referring to the text as the work of Smith, and by extension as a primary source of his theology.

While there have been subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon, this study will refer to the original 1830 printing. This edition does not include the later additions of chapter and verses. While these are useful for pinpointing passages, the aim of this study remains to examine the primary sources. As such I have made the decision to only provide the references to the pages of the original printing of Smith's book in 1830, and have, where necessary, provided excerpts from the original text to facilitate a better understanding of the basis of my findings.

#### 1.3.2 The Book of Commandments

The Book of Commandments contain the earliest published collection of Smith's revelations. Published in 1833, the full title read "A Book of Commandments, for the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> In an attempt to validate his own work, Smith sent contemporary scholars copies of the script found on the plates (Brodie, 1995, pp. 51-3).

government of the Church of Christ, organised according to law, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 1830." While not still in common use, many of the revelations were included in the later publication, the Doctrine and Covenants, albeit in a revised form. First published in 1835, the revised name refers to the two sections that originally existed. The first section contained a sequence of lectures outlining the basic tenets of Mormon doctrine, with the second comprising a compilation of the revelations also called 'covenants' issued to Smith on behalf of individuals and the collective church. When comparing the two publications it becomes evident that in addition to many superficial changes, the latter text also contains significant redactions, revisions, and the inclusion of new material to augment the former revelations.

The Book of Commandments reads like a collection of blessings, admonitions, and prayers and provide further context to the events that parallel the compilation of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of Smith's church. In keeping with the time period previously established, this study will restrict itself to those sections which were recorded in the years preceding the founding of the church. These sections are an important companion piece to the Book of Mormon and clarify the theological discussions that take place in Smith's seminal text.

#### 1.3.3 Hermeneutics and Primary Sources

Recently there appears to be a shift away from hermeneutics as an approach to reading texts within the field of religious studies. However this approach of interpreting sources is fundamental to the following study. Hermeneutics recognises that in order to understand a text, context is crucial (Green, 2009, p. 417). Texts must be read with an appreciation and a consideration of the historical understandings of the writers and readers. It is therefore an acceptance and acknowledgement of the prejudices that take place during the process of interpretation. The aim in pursuing a hermeneutic approach is to minimise the distance between ourselves and the texts, relying on the original words and the message Smith intended to communicate. Where possible this study will stick solely to the two sources outlined above, only referring to secondary sources when necessary for further development of context.

#### 1.4 THE BEGINNING OF A NEW STUDY

Smith was paragon of the reformers of the Second Great Awakening. During his short life he cemented a legacy as a religious innovator, prolific author, and civic pioneer. His writings are a reflection of his milieu integrating the emerging ideals of American society. These texts are fundamentally rooted in early American exceptionalism, redefining religious observance for the western gentleman. The Book of Mormon and the Book of Commandments provide early renderings of this doctrine, and will therefore serve as the sources for the present study. This investigation is by no means exhaustive. I have chosen to limit myself to three areas of interest that establish the foundation upon which Smith built his church. These areas naturally follow on from one another beginning with Smith's understanding of the nature and purpose of Christ, the role he plays in salvation and redemption, and finally how this affects the eventual fate of men and the world. My hope is to add to our understanding of Smith and his theology, and to provide a source of knowledge with more credibility than an episode of *South Park*.

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#### CHAPTER 2 – CHRISTOLOGY

In 1982 the LDS church first printed the Book of Mormon with the subtitle: Another Testament of Christ. This new name was intended to highlight Smith's original purpose for publishing the Book, to testify "that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God" (Smith, 1830, Title Page). However, the Christ that Smith writes about appears to vary from the orthodoxy of Christianity. The question then becomes, what did Smith write about Christ and whether or not his words amount to a theological discussion. With that in mind, the first subject that will be examined in this chapter will consider the nature of Christ within Smith's texts; his place within the Godhead, and those attributes and distinctions afforded him by his nature. From here the discussion will turn to the doctrine of Christ's incarnation: his pre-mortal existence, the prophecies regarding his first coming, and the fulfillment of these prophecies within the Book of Mormon. Subsequent to this will be a consideration of Christ's appearance in the Book of Mormon, the significance it holds within Smith's theology and for the establishment of his church. All these sections will ultimately lead to the discussion of Christ's role in the Plan of Salvation in chapter three.

#### 2.1 NATURE OF CHRIST

Jumping straight into Christology may feel like skipping a few steps theologically speaking, I have chosen to begin my examination of Smith's texts here, knowing that it provides the fundamental concepts of Smith's teachings. Mormon doctrine regarding Christ tends to be where the theology diverges from mainstream Christianity, specifically on the question of the Trinity. In Smith's later retelling of his original hierophany, he mentions being visited by two separate beings both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ (Smith, 1839, p. 2). It is important to note however, that this account is written almost a decade after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and has undergone several refinements and amendments prior to its canonisation

(Allen, 1966, pp. 42-3). The focus of this study then is to understand the founding theology as it exists within the earlier sources. While Smith's theology regarding the relationship of Christ to the Father may not be perfectly constructed in these early texts, it is possible to create a brief rendering of the foundation for his subsequent conclusions.

#### 2.1.1 Relationship to God the Father

The most extensive treatise on the correlation between the nature and relationship of the members of Smith's Godhead focuses primarily on the connection between Father and Son:

I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people; and because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God: and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son; the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son: and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of Heaven and of Earth; and thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God. (Smith, 1830, p. 185)

Through his incarnation God becomes the Son, as all flesh is subject to, and created by, the will of God. However, God is also the Father having been conceived by his own power. It is also clear from the text that while in the flesh, God maintains both of his natures being simultaneously Father and Son. They are one God, Father and Son only by analogy. This is further stressed through the statement that "God himself" will descend to live among his children. Smith therefore defines the entities of God the Father and God the Son through the acts of the Son. Similarly Smith uses the term 'condescention' [sic] in relation to the incarnation:

And he [the spirit of the Lord] saith unto me, Knowest thou the condescention of God? And I said unto him, I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me, Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh. (Smith, 1830, p. 24)

These two acts define the function and nature of God within Smith's theology. The Son is God who descends to dwell among his people. Smith's Christ states at other times in the texts "I am the Father," and "I am in the Father," (Smith, 1830, p. 473 and 546). These statements follow much the same language as in the gospel of John where Jesus states, "I and my Father are one" (10:30) and "I am in my Father" (14:20). It is because of their wills that the two are unified, with Christ's will described as having been swallowed up in the will of the Father (Smith, 1830, p. 185). They are united even when they are separated by the condescention and the incarnation. However without this separation, God would have remained a singular entity. All the language

in these texts ultimately describe the nature of Christ and the Father as the one God who becomes two as the Son became flesh.

There is another interesting reading that can be made from the former quote above, that is that the Spirit is not a separate entity of the Godhead but rather a name used synonymously with God the Father. Smith describes the flesh as subject to the Spirit followed immediately by the analogy of the Son who is subject to the Father (Smith, 1830, p. 185). From the phrasing in this passage, the Spirit corresponds with the Father in the same way that the flesh identifies the Son. This seems to be further confirmed by the language in the Book of Commandments where God refers to 'my Spirit' when talking about himself (Smith, 1833, pp. 5, 10, 14, 18, 28-9, 34, 37, 38, 40, 41). It is likely that Smith is establishing his own form of binitarianism, where God consists of two aspects which share one substance. This also seems supported by pronouncements made by Christ in the Book of Mormon which tie the glory and substance of God and Christ as one, without mention of a third (Smith, 1830, pp. 472-473). The mere absence of the Spirit in these passages is not enough to conclude Smith's early theology as binitarian. Elsewhere however, a more typical trinitarian formulation can be found:

Verily, verily I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me, believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me; for he will visit him with fire, and with the Holy Ghost; and thus will the Father bear record of me; and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me: for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost, are one. (Smith, 1830, p. 478)

Contrasting the two formulations highlights just how radical the former reading may be. It becomes even more interesting if we take into consideration a series of lectures given by Smith in 1834-5. Here the Godhead is explicitly stated as consisting of two personages: the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the term given to the mind of God the Father (Smith, et al., 1835, pp. 52-3). However, given the strict parameters regarding the timeframe dealt with in this study, this later source cannot be relied upon to provide conclusive evidence of Smith's original conception of the Godhead. It is only mentioned here to potentially make sense of the binitarian analogy discussed earlier, and provide further evidence that Smith's theology regarding the nature of the Godhead was not concrete at this early stage.

As discussed above, it is by the will of the Father that Christ dwells in the flesh (Smith, 1830, p. 507). However, it is the problem of flesh that appears to upset Smith's theology regarding the nature of Christ during mortality and the dynamics between God the Father and

the Son. Commenting on his baptism, the Book of Mormon notes that Christ humbled himself before the Father according to the flesh:

But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men, that according to the flesh, he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments; wherefore, after that he was baptized with water, the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove (Smith, 1830, pp. 117-118).

While the doctrine earlier potentially established the relationship between Father and Son as a type of *homoousios*, Smith provides an alternative account of the relationship when describing Christ's life on Earth, conspicuously placing Christ at the will of the Father. In this baptism narrative, Christ is distinctly lower than the Father resulting from his incarnation. Through his choice to become flesh, he must by necessity take upon himself the limitations and directives of the mortal condition:

The Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth. And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers, she being a Virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed, and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God; and he shall go forth, suffering pains, and afflictions, and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith, He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. (Smith, 1830, p. 239).

In Smith's doctrine the flesh is subject to God as his creation (Smith, 1830, pp. 62-3). Therefore, during his mortal life, the flesh of Christ was subject to the Father with the same mandate given to all men so far as they must humble themselves and submit to his will (Smith, 1830, p. 160). This is typified in Christ's speech after his resurrection, claiming that he submitted to the will of the Father in all things, culminating in his ultimate sacrifice where he laid down his body of flesh (Smith, 1830, p. 476).

Ultimately, Smith's doctrine regarding the relationship between Christ and the Father is still very much under construction in these early texts. It appears to vacillate between the ideas of either a binitarian or trinitarian formulation, while at other times espouses a distinct form of subordinationism, wherein Smith places Christ subject to the will of God. For the purposes of the remainder of this study, the question of the relationship between God the Father and Christ will be placed to the side as it there is insufficient evidence in these early sources to provide a definitive systematic theological summary. For now it is enough that we have explored Smith's early attempts at defining the relationship between Christ and God the Father.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> This topic will be further discussed below and in Chapter 3 Soteriology.

This is an integral element to any Christian theology that although not fully formed in these early texts, provide an exploration of Smith's foundation for future theological statements.

#### 2.1.2 Attributes of Christ

Smith's early theology establishes for Christ many of the same attributes of God that are found in greater Christianity given that he uses the two titles interchangeably in line with his conception of the Godhead. It is sometimes difficult to separate the attributes of either the Father or the Son, however given their shared nature, it can be assumed that aspects given to the one, are intended to also describe the other. For example, Christ is said to be "infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting," (Smith, 1833, p. 48). Similarly, Smith compounds the natures of the Father and the Son, especially when referencing his infiniteness:

[The Son of God] is the very Eternal Father of Heaven and of Earth, and all things which in them is; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. (Smith, 1830, p. 252).

This complicates any conclusion made regarding Smith's Christology, as it is impossible to separate the attributes of one from the other.

Smith's Christ is immutable, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Smith, 1830, pp. 22, 110, 115, 585). This detail further supports the question at the heart of the section above. By designating Christ as immutable like God the Father, Christ is elevated to the station of Godhood, existing eternally. It is an acknowledgement that on some level, Christ has always existed rather than having been adopted by God as the Messiah at some stage during his mortal existence. Both Father and Son possess the same glory which explains why the two share many of the same attributes in Smith's texts:

The Son of God shall come in this glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people, and to answer their prayers. (Smith, 1830, p. 246)

Christ similarly maintains his designation as the source of all goodness because of his intrinsic connection with the Father:

And whatsoever thing pursuadeth men to do good, is of me: for good cometh of none, save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good... for behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world. (Smith, 1830, p. 546).

This interchangeability in Smith's texts is perfectly demonstrated in the following passage, where the Lord is said to be the same God who created the created the Earth, rules in Heaven, and "covenanted" with the patriarchs of the Old Testament, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

Behold, the Lord hath created the earth, that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children, that they should possess it. And he raiseth up a righteous nation, and destroyeth the nations of the wicked. And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes. He ruleth high in the Heavens, for it is his throne, and this earth is his footstool. And he loveth them which will have him to be their God. Behold, he loved our fathers; and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Smith, 1830, p. 44)

The continual amalgamation of the attributes of God and Christ within Smith's writings serves to support the theory that God and Christ are one and the same. However as we established in the previous section, this is complicated by the act of incarnation. We will therefore now explore how this act impacts Smith's conception of Jesus Christ.

#### 2.2 INCARNATION

The descriptions of the nature of Christ in Smith's texts lay the foundation for the crowning event in Christianity, that of the incarnation. As outlined above, it is this event which spurns any distinction between the members of the Godhead, giving the analogies by which, we can classify the individual persons. As such the discussion will now turn to the treatment of the incarnation by Smith, focusing on his unfolding Christology within this period.

#### 2.2.1 Preincarnate Form of Christ

There is only one mention of the preincarnate form of Christ in the Book of Mormon, towards the end of the text in the book of Ether. This book chronicles a family who was preserved by God prior to the scattering and confusion of tongues that came with the fall of the tower of Babel (Smith, 1830, pp. 538-40). The family is led by two brothers, one of whom is never named, known simply as the brother of Jared. While preparing to flee from the impending calamity to the safety of the 'promised land', the family is faced with a dilemma which the brother of Jared, brings before the Lord in prayer. In answer to his prayer the Lord is said to have stretched forth his hands and performed a miracle with the touch of his finger. This event

mentions that the veil was lifted from the eyes of the brother of Jared, allowing him to perceive the pre–Incarnate Christ:

The Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones, one by one, with his finger; and the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him, Arise, why hast thou fallen? And he saith unto the Lord, I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me: for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood. And the Lord said unto him, Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast: for were it so, ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this? And he answered, Nay, Lord, shew thyself unto me. And the Lord said unto him, Believest thou the words which I shall speak? And he answered, Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord shewed himself unto him, and said... Behold, I am he which was prepared from the foundation of the world, to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light, and that eternally, even they which shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters. And never hath I shewed myself unto man whom I have created, for never hath man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created, in the beginning, after mine own image. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit, will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Smith, 1830, p. 543)

Within Smith's theology then, even prior to his incarnation, Christ possessed a form like that of a human being. Of course it is important to note that Christ does not yet possess a body only that his pre-incarnate personage bears the likeness of a human body through the use of the analogy "like unto flesh and blood". Christ clarifies this at the end of the passage saying that "which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit." There is mention here of a body of spirit and that the pre-incarnate form of Christ is distinctive from the body of the flesh that he will one day possess. Consequently, this passage also addresses the similarity between the body and the spirit by stating that the bodies of men are created in similitude of the appearance of the spirit body of Christ, which further substantiates the earlier claim of Christ's immutability, given that his pre-incarnate form possesses the same likeness as his body incarnate. As previously mentioned, this is the only mention in Smith's texts of Christ existing in the spirit prior to existing in the flesh. Smith would later expand upon this theology in both mid 1830s and 1844 as he expanded upon his Plan of Salvation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See D&C 93:21-29; Abr 3:22-28; Smith (1844), "Discourse, reported by William Clayton", p 16; Smith (1844),

<sup>&</sup>quot;Discourse, reported by Thomas Bullock", p17.

#### 2.2.2 Prophecies of the Condescention of God

While there is only one story outlining the nature of Christ prior to his incarnation, there are a multitude of prophecies depicting the future coming of the Lord peppered throughout the Book of Mormon. The role of a prophet, for Smith, is to preach of Christ (Smith, 1830, pp. 104, 128-9). It therefore comes as little surprise that nearly every prophet in the Book of Mormon testifies to having received a vision of the Christ. For those prophets preaching prior to the incarnation, their words are taken to be predictive, justifying their calling through the account. From these various narratives we learn about the events which will occur within the life of Christ that will demonstrate his mission, the significance of the physical appearance of the Lord, his replacement of old religious symbols, and the signs which would testify of his condescention.

The most comprehensive prophecy of Christ's condescention in the Book of Mormon borrows heavily from Isaiah 53. This passage references the suffering and sacrifice of the Messiah, and provides us with one of the few descriptions of his mortal body. He is described as a man without beauty nor physical desirability (Smith, 1830, p. 184). While not allencompassing, passages like this one that provide descriptions of the physical appearance of Christ, serve more to delineate the theological significance of the Lord. He is described in another passage as wearing a 'white robe' (Smith, 1830, p. 18), aligning Christ with the descriptions of him in the gospels during the Transfiguration (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29). There is another similarity to the depiction of the Transfiguration in connection with the description of Christ's body emanating light, with Christ in the Book of Mormon described as having the "lustre above that of the sun at noonday" (Smith, 1830, p. 6). These physical representations not only identify the figure of Christ in the narrative, but through their intertextual allusion, illuminate the nature of Christ as the meeting place between the eternal and mortal. It is during the miracle of the Transfiguration that Christ's disciples recognise his true nature. Christ is mentioned as appearing in his glory, which for Smith, Christ appears to have in perpetuity. By portraying Christ in luminous white, Smith's is emphasising that his glory exists beyond the bounds of time. Christ did not earn his glory by merit of his incarnation, but it exists as an eternal and inherent attribute of his nature.

These depictions of Christ also make specific mention of his flesh. Earlier, I outlined the problem of the flesh as it relates to the relationship between the members of the Godhead. Now the discussion will turn to the depiction of the flesh and the wider consequences of Christ's

incarnation. As discussed above, the pre-incarnate Christ existed in similitude with his mortal body, only in a spiritual form. Through the condescention God became flesh, the spirit and body joining together as one in the Son (Smith, 1830, p. 186). The act of incarnation was necessary to bring about the great mission of Christ, for without a mortal body, Christ would have remained immortal:

For behold, the time is not far distant, that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people... and he shall go forth, suffering pains, and afflictions, and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith, He will take upon him the pains and sicknesses of his people; and he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which binds his people... nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh, that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions, according to the power of his deliverance. (Smith, 1830, p. 239)

Cloaked in flesh, Christ is enabled to suffer according to the mortal condition. The mentions of flesh in this excerpt act to tie mortality, specifically human nature through the metonym of the flesh, to the need for redemption through the atonement. According to Smith, it is our flesh which holds us ransom and cut off from the presence of God:

And by the law, no flesh is justified; or, by the law, men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law, they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law, they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever. (Smith, 1830, pp. 62, 76)

However, it is also through the flesh of Christ that all men are saved. The sacrament of bread and wine, blessed and partaken in remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, acts to "justify and sanctify" those who participate (Smith, 1833, p. 53). The bread and the wine are said to be emblems of the flesh and the blood of Christ (Smith, 1833, p. 50). There will be a further discussion of the significance of the sacraments and the sacrifice of Christ in subsequent sections, however the importance of Christ's body being described in terms of flesh is in the anticipation of the mission of Christ and his eventual sacrifice.

Twice Smith uses the metaphor of Christ dwelling in a "tabernacle of clay" when expanding upon the condescension (Smith, 1830, pp. 159, 582). Clay is a reference to the creation of man in the Genesis account (2:6-7), while the tabernacle of the Old Testament is known as the dwelling place of God amongst the Israelite camp (Exodus 25:8-9). It acts as the place of meeting between God and Moses, where they speak face to face (Exodus 33:7-11). While the words in Hebrew are different (*oleh* and *misqah*) Smith grew up studying the King James translation into English where both terms have been translated as 'tabernacle'. If we take

the combined meaning and compare it to the reference of Christ incarnation the metaphor deepens. Christ becomes the new tabernacle in the flesh, is this sense superseding the previous tabernacle. His body is the meeting place between the divine and the mortal, just as the tabernacle of the Old Testament (Exodus 29:42-43). The tabernacle was also the location of certain anointings, which links to the name Messiah, or anointed one. Sanctifying acts including sacrifices took place within the tabernacle (Leviticus 17), just as the atonement takes place through the body of Christ, through which all are sanctified. These many parallels link Smith's theology back to the Old Testament and by extension the Law of Moses. Smith makes sure to have Christ mention that his mission was to fulfill the Law of Moses (Smith, 1830, pp. 479, 484), something which is certainly emphasised through this reference back to the original tabernacle of the Israelites.

The final prophecies which will be discussed here are those which speak of the signs of Christ's coming, his birth, death, and resurrection, and how they will be manifest among the Nephites. These signs are mentioned at various points throughout the first half of the narrative, and more generally include the approximate date of his birth, and the socio-political struggles of the nations of the Book of Mormon. The date given in the Book of Mormon for the birth of Christ is 600 years after Lehi's exodus from Jerusalem, dating it to the turn of the first century AD. In the space of these 600 years, the Nephites would experience great wars and contentions, eventually culminating in the signs of the coming of Christ (Smith, 1830, p. 105). In the years immediately preceding the birth of Christ, a prophet testifies of a sign which will be given to the Nephites to signify the event:

Behold, I give unto you a sign: for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name. And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in Heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh, there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day; therefore there shall be one day and a night, and a day, as if it were one day, and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun, and also of its setting; therefore they shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born. And behold there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you. And behold this is not all: there shall be many signs and wonders in Heaven. (Smith, 1830, p. 444)

This new star undoubtably corresponds to the star mentioned in the gospel of Matthew (2:2-9), which led the wise men to the town of Christ's birth. This prophecy is then notably fulfilled

five years later, with the account of the night without darkness and the appearance of the new star (Smith, 1830, p. 453).

The signs of Christ's death similarly appear in the Book of Mormon account:

But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign, a sign of his death: behold, in that day that he shall suffer death, the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon, and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead; yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost, there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble, and the rocks which is upon the face of this earth, which is both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time is solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up; yea, they shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams, and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth; yea, both above the earth and both beneath. And behold there shall be great tempests, and there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places, which are now called valleys, which shall become mountains, whose height thereof is great. And many highways shall be broken up, and many cities shall become desolate. (Smith, 1830, pp. 445-6)

This prophecy continues with the warning that the Lord God would visit all the House of Israel on that day, with varied consequences dependant on the righteousness of his people. Those deemed worthy would receive his voice, which would bring with it great joy and even salvation. Alternatively, others would experience great destruction, through tempests, fires, smoke and other darkness causing vapours, earthquakes and great seismic disturbances listed above. These signs are even given an explanation in one source as being in similitude of the great suffering of God at the death of his son (Smith, 1830, p. 50). As with the signs of his birth, these signs of darkness and destruction are fulfilled 34 years later (Smith, 1830, pp. 469-71). These signs theologically mirror and are the ultimate foil of one another. The signs of Christ's birth bringing light and creation within the sky, however with his death, that light is taken away and the earth experiences cataclysmic destruction. Similarly, it is Christ who is the bringer of all light and creation, with darkness and destruction therefore indicating his absence.

#### 2.3 RESURRECTED CHRIST

Having sufficiently outlined the theological conclusions drawn from Smith's treatment of the incarnation, we will now turn to the depictions of the resurrected Christ in the Book of Mormon. What follows will focus primarily on the consequences of including references to his

resurrection in the early texts as a more in-depth examination will follow in the subsequent chapters. Therefore, the following sections will focus specifically on the purpose of Smith's inclusion of Christ into the narrative of the Book of Mormon.

#### 2.3.1 Prophecies of Christ's Visit after His Resurrection in the Book of Mormon

The prophecies of Christ's condescension in the Book of Mormon conclude with Christ's death and triumph through his resurrection. While many of these prophets take their cue from the words of Isaiah, there are several additions made by the Book of Mormon prophets. One such interpolation is the detail that after his death, Christ would appear to the Nephites. This future event is spoken of in the same breath as many other prophecies of Christ's life and its fulfilment is seen as the climatic event of the Book of Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981). These early prophecies of the future event, propose that after Christ's resurrection, he will visit people other than those at Jerusalem (Smith, 1830, p. 33). These prophecies lay the foundation for the direction in which the narrative continues and builds toward Christ's climactic visitation to the Nephites.

#### 2.3.2 Christ's Visit to the Nephites

Sometime in the year after Christ's resurrection, he is noted as visiting and ministering among the Nephites. The Book of Mormon account appears to act as a corroboration with the New Testament accounts of Christ's post-resurrection appearances. In the Book of Mormon, Christ's appearance precedes with a voice speaking from heaven, in much the same description of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, causing a "burning within the hearts" of those who heard it (Smith, 1830, p. 475). It is the voice of God, identified in Christ's introduction with the words: "my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name" (Smith, 1830, p. 475). Then Christ is seen descending from Heaven, settling amid the congregation. In this instance Christ appears to the Nephites in a perfected form denoted by the white robe which he wore. Echoing his post-resurrection appearance in the Bible, Christ invites the crowd forward, to feel the imprints of the nails, and the mark of the spear in his side. These imperfections in the otherwise perfected body of Christ, signify his sacrifice and allow the faithful to recognise their saviour. The narrative tends to read more like a summary of the gospel accounts with Christ healing the sick, instituting the sacrament, calling disciples, and delivering a sermon comparable to the sermon on the mount. However, it is important to note that the actions of Christ in this visit act more to legitimise Smith and his church, than to add any more depth to the theology. The primary motivation behind Christ's appearance to the Nephites therefore appears to be the legitimisation of Smith, his book, and his church. These elements will be discussed briefly in this next section, only so much as to note how Smith uses the authority of Christ as a means of diverting religious authority from the old world to the new, and by extension from the Bible to his Book of Mormon.

This visitation from the resurrected Christ appears to perform the act of legitimising the priesthood of the Nephite spiritual leadership through a restoration of sorts, which would mirror the establishment of the Church of Christ by Smith. Christ calls and ordains a council of twelve, giving them the power and authority to act in the name of Christ, baptising, ministering, and imparting the gift of the holy ghost (Smith, 1830, pp. 477, 478, 492). Following this mandate, Christ clarifies the doctrine which is his mind has been corrupted through the process of time. Just as in the gospel accounts, the teachings of Christ appear to disrupt many presumptions of the law of Moses, instead providing the deeper meaning at the heart of many of the specific laws. Christ came to fulfill the law and provide the new means by which his people would follow him. In the Book of Mormon, Christ repeats many of these innovations in a long litany following the calling and ordination of his new disciples. This pattern must be established for Smith to rely upon later as he establishes the Church of Christ. Just as Christ followed this pattern in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, he followed it again in the latter days as he establishes his church once again through Smith (Smith, 1833, pp. 10, 34-8). It is Christ's authority which provides Smith with legitimacy in the organisation of his church.

Smith similarly uses Christ's visit to the Nephites as a means of substantiating his claims in relation to the dedication of the American continent as the new wellspring of religious primacy. Despite conjecture, the land inhabited by the Nephites in the Book of Mormon is understood to be the American continent, and the more specifically the land of Smith himself (Brodie, 1995, pp. 35-7). When speaking of the land of the Book of Mormon, it is often referred to as the 'new promised land' (Smith, 1830, pp. 8, 58-9, 540). Smith goes so far as to have his prophets designate the land as one of 'liberty' (Smith, 1830, pp. 58-9, 83-4, 218, 540), no doubt echoing the newly adopted Declaration of Independence of the United States. All of this stands to legitimise Smith's claim as a prophet, firstly through his connection to the ancient record, and through an establishment of his home land as the new place of God's divine

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> It is also interesting to note the strong anti-king sentiment throughout the Book of Mormon. This may be either a reference to the adoption of a king by the Israelites (1 Samuel 8), or more likely, another means of connecting the land of the Book of Mormon with that of the recently established democratic United States of America.

providence. This is an important shift in Smith's theology, by changing the promised land from the old world to the new, and therefore adding greater legitimacy to his own prophetic claims. What is of significant note to the current discussion comes from Christ's visitation to the Nephites. Here Christ is shown to establish a new covenant with the land and the people who inhabit it:

And it shall come to pass that I will establish my people, O house of Israel. And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your Father Jacob; and it shall be a new Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you. (Smith, 1830, p. 496).

Christ speaks of the covenant made with Jacob, also known as Israel, and the blessing of the land under the old covenant. This speech continues with a discussion of the corruption which has taken place of the original covenant due to the behaviour and attitude of the Jews (Smith, 1830, p. 498). Christ therefore sets up the need for the new covenant and a new covenant people, and designates those who possess the land of the Nephites as those covenant people. This new covenant goes so far as to call the land the new Jerusalem, promising that the powers of heaven will be manifest among the people there. This promise however is said to be kept secret, and that even the land would be kept secret, so as to protect the purity of the Lord's doctrine, until the day when the Father would again establish a righteous and 'free people' upon the land:

That when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles, that they may know concerning this people which are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people which shall be scattered by them; verily, verily, I say unto you, When these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father from them unto you: for it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel. (Smith, 1830, p. 499).

These continuous references to the land as free from the rule of kings within the narrative further justify Smith and his American church.

This idea is carried on in a revelation in the Book of Commandments where Smith discussed the manuscript prior to its publication. Smith states that the people of the Book left a blessing on the land that would extend to any nation that would come after them:

12 Now this is not all, their faith in their prayers were, that this gospel should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land [of the Nephites]; and thus they

did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel, in this land, might have eternal life; yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people, they may be.

13 And now, behold, according to their faith in their prayers, will I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people. Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up.

14 And for this cause have I said, if this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them. Now I do not say this to destroy my church, but I say this to build up my church: therefore, whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven: but it is they who do not fear me, neither keep my commandments, but buildeth up churches unto themselves, to get gain; yea, and all those that do wickedly, and buildeth up the kingdom of the devil; yea, verily, verily I say unto you, that it is they that I will disturb, and cause to tremble and shake to the centre. (Smith, 1833, p. 25)

Smith promises, here and above, that Christ will establish his church on that same land as was inhabited by the Nephites, and subtly implies its superiority through a comparison with the faith and understanding of those at Jerusalem.

This same comparison is given by the resurrected Christ to the Nephites during his visit. In this episode Jesus commands his Nephite disciples to kneel and pray echoing his instructions to his Jewish disciples at Gethsemane:

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire. And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them, as they did pray unto him, and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance, and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof. (Smith, 1830, pp. 493-4)<sup>12</sup>

In the gospel accounts, Jesus instructs his disciples to watch with him while he prays, but returns three times to find them sleeping. Contrasting this, in the Book of Mormon, when Christ returns from praying, he sees the disciples have remained faithfully praying without ceasing. The cycle similarly repeats three times and each time the Nephites are shown to be more faithful to the Lord's instructions than his original disciples in Jerusalem.

Each of these inclusions in Smith's writings emphasise the supremacy of the new covenant Christ established with the people and land of the Book of Mormon. The Nephites are more faithful in every way than their brethren in Jerusalem, and their record therefore contains

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Compare Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46.

the most correct and pure teachings of Jesus Christ. In this way, Smith uses the authority of Christ to bolster the claims of his newly emerging church. It is Christ alone who has the power to covenant with his people and organise his church, and this pattern is initiated in Christ's visit to the Nephites and then is confirmed through Smith's founding narrative of the Church of Christ.

#### 2.4 CHRIST'S ROLE IN SALVATION

This chapter has focused on the defining elements of Smith's Christology drawn from his early texts. Smith discussed the relationship between Father and Son, the attributes which defined Christ, the importance of his incarnation, and the appearance of the resurrected Christ in the New World. Smith presented a revolutionary Christology that inspired his American church. This new interpretation of Christ and his relationship to both his Father, and his followers, appears as an attempt to amalgamate the various ideologies of his time. Similar to the other movements of the Great Awakening, Smith's definition of Christ does not match the paradigms that came before, but rather seeks to establish a new paradigm of Christianity. While it has been hinted at in this chapter, there has been a glaring omission, the role of Christ in salvation. This topic is presented at length in Smith's writings and as such deserves further treatment in order to determine Smith's theological understanding of Christ. The following chapter will build upon the foundations laid here in the Christology expanding upon Christ's purpose, the atonement, and the means of salvation.

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# **CHAPTER 3 – SOTERIOLOGY**

Continuing forward from the previous discussion of Smith's Christology, we will now delve further into the purpose of Christ's incarnation. The chapter will look at the way that Smith framed Christ's role in salvation. This is an essential doctrine within Christian theology, similarly, pursuing salvation is a message repeated again and again within Smith's texts. In order to answer the question at the heart of this study, this chapter will examine what Smith says about salvation, and whether it amounts to a cohesive theological discussion. Therefore this chapter will begin with an introduction to Smith's soteriological doctrine often called the Plan of Salvation, including a breakdown of the two key terms: redemption and salvation. The chapter will then follow a chronological approach of sorts, beginning with the inception of sin on Earth through the Fall of Adam and the consequences that followed as a result. Following a discussion of Smith's definition of sin, the chapter will introduce the remedy of repentance as it relates to these early texts. This will then conclude in an exploration of the Atonement, the theories Smith appears to subscribe to, their relation to our earlier understandings of salvation and redemption and the way that Smith uses the complimentary concepts of justice and mercy to illustrate the means by which men may be saved.

### 3.1 SMITH'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Smith outlines his soteriology in a series of references to the plan of God, for which there are many names, the plan of redemption, the plan of salvation, the plan of happiness, the plan of mercy, and the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death. The first two names of God's plan mentioned; namely the plan of redemption and the plan of salvation are the most common terms used within the texts and will feature prominently in the following discussion. While they may be used almost synonymously, the terms redemption and salvation provide

particular nuance within Smith's soteriology. Therefore, this section will turn to a summary of Smith's definitions of these two terms before continuing the discussion in greater detail through the rest of the chapter. This section will then turn to the articulation of the plan and the importance it holds for Smith's theology.

# 3.1.1 Redemption

Smith uses the term redemption to refer to Christ's power to reclaim man from the effects of death through resurrection:

All men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awoke by the power of God... being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death. (Smith, 1830, p. 535)

It is through the resurrection that men are redeemed. This is repeated throughout Smith's texts where redemption appears alongside resurrection (Smith, 1830, pp. 184, 332, 337-8, 530). Resurrection is presented as the antidote to what Smith calls 'temporal death', or the separation of the spirit from the physical body at death. Christ's death is then presented as the redeeming act that overcomes the effects of temporal death (Smith, 1830, pp. 252-3). It is this act of individual sacrifice provides the subsequent triumph of Christ displaying his power over death, and to therefore allows for the resurrection of all mankind (Smith, 1830, p. 186).

The term redemption often appears along with Christ's moniker of the Messiah, or the anointed one. Twice in the New Testament narrative, Christ is anointed, both of which are specifically tied to his death. In the first event Christ states that the anointing is done in preparation for his burial which would soon take place (Matt 26:7-12; Mark 14:3-8; John 12:3-7). The second reference mentions the women who were to anoint Christ's body at the tomb, but who are hindered by Christ's resurrection (Mark 16:1-11; Luke 23:52-24:10). In both instances, Christ's death and resurrection are linked to the act of anointing. Similarly, Smith links the title of Messiah to that of Christ's purpose to overcome death (Smith, 1830, p. 62). It was his death which allowed for his resurrection, without which there would be no resurrection of men. His death allowed for his victory over the grave, which all will also take part in. Redemption is therefore equated with the Messiah's sacrifice for all mankind.

#### 3.1.2 Salvation

With redemption clearly tied to the resurrection, what then does Smith mean when he writes about "treasuring up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God" (Smith, 1833, p. 30)? There are several passages which clearly seek to distinguish salvation from redemption:

Behold [Christ's] death bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord; yea, behold this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death... But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord; yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth, the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not, is hewn down and cast into the fire, and there cometh again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness; (Smith, 1830, p. 445)

As previously mentioned, the temporal death refers to the death of the physical body and the separation of body and soul. This temporal death is spoken of here as the "first death," which Smith follows up by mentioning a "second death" or a "spiritual death". It is this second death which Smith ties to salvation. Highlighting this separation, the passage declares that although redemption is given to all mankind, deliverance from the second death is conditional on individual repentance. This link to repentance is further compounded through the text where salvation is repeatedly associated with the concept of atonement, and as a relief from effects of sin and iniquity (Smith, 1830, pp. 159-60, 184, 295, 536). This concept will be explored in further depth below, for now it is enough to highlight the distinction between the way Smith uses both terms. Redemption and salvation serve two separate functions within the texts, however they ultimately come together as fundamental processes of God's plan.

#### 3.1.3 The Plan

There are many names given by Smith to the plan of God. Each of these appears to reveal a different element of the same plan rather than denoting a collection of separate plans. Each name represents a function or consequence, each linked to "bring[ing] about [God's] eternal purposes in the end of man," (Smith, 1830, p. 63). Smith uses the varied names to highlight which element of the plan his words are seeking to express. <sup>13</sup> The Plan is fundamental to understanding Smith's theology. It provides the definitions of sin and goodness, as such it also outlines the need for justification through repentance. The Plan teaches of Christ's Atonement as the fulfillment of justice, and the role of personal agency and free will. In short,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> For the sake of clarity, this study will refer to the plan as the Plan, except where the name will add further insight to the topic being discussed.

the Plan demonstrates the consequence of human nature and the means by which man may overcome it.

# 3.2 THE INTRODUCTION OF SIN

## 3.2.1 The Fall

The Plan acts as the remedy for the two maladies of mortality; namely spiritual and temporal death. The introduction of these two afflictions is attributed to the Fall of Adam:

That old serpent did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall: which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devlish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil. Thus all mankind were lost. (Smith, 1830, pp. 187-8)

Because of the disobedience in Eden, sin entered the world. Moreover, it was the precipitation of mortality:

Now we see that Adam did fall by partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, that all mankind became a lost and fallen people. And now behold, I say unto you, that if it had been possible for Adam for to have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death, and the word would have been void, making God a liar; for he said, if thou eat, thou shalt surely die.- And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea... which is the temporal death. (Smith, 1830, p. 256)

The Fall of Adam founded the need for a plan that would save humanity from the consequences it thrust upon them. This plan was established from the foundation of the world, with Adam setting the wheels in motion. However, Smith does not frame the Fall as a negative, rather a necessary part of the plan:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen; but he would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery: doing no good, for they knew no sin. But, behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of Him who knoweth all things. Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (Smith, 1830, p. 64)

The Fall is framed as essential for man's progression. Even the consequences are fundamental to existence. Men are made to feel joy, but joy can only exist if it's opposite, misery also exists. Even goodness cannot exist without its counterbalance sin. Adam was always fated to fall:

Now we see that Adam did fall by partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, that all mankind became a lost and fallen people. And now behold, I say unto you, that if it had been possible for Adam for to have partaken of the fruit of

the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death, and the word would have been void, making God a liar; for he said, if thou eat, thou shalt surely die.- And we see that death comes upon mankind... which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man, in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state, which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead. Now if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could be no resurrection of the dead; but there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken. And now behold, if it were possible that our first parents could have went forth and partaken of the tree of life, they would have been miserable, having no preparatory state; and thus the plan of redemption would have been frustrated, and the word of God would have been void, taking none effect. But behold, it was not so; but it was appointed unto man that they must die; and after death, they must come to judgement; even that same judgement of which we have spoken, which is the end. (Smith, 1830, p. 256)

Adam's transgression necessitates the invocation of the Plan. As sin entered the world, the Plan would provide the means to overcome its effects. One important thing to note, is that Smith taught against the doctrine of original sin. Adam alone is held accountable for his role in the Fall (Smith, 1830, p. 63). In a discourse denouncing the practice of infant baptism, the "curse of Adam" is said to have no power over little children (Smith, 1830, p. 580). Children enter the world whole and innocent, free from the impediments of the sin of others. Apart from the consequences the flesh, namely sin and mortality, Adam's transgression bares no more intrusion on his offspring. These two consequences of the Fall which Smith choses to maintain within his theology will each be dealt with in turn. The first of these, spiritual death, will be further explored through the remainder of this chapter. Temporal death will be discussed in the subsequent chapter Eschatology.

## 3.2.2 Definition of Sin

Adam's transgression as outlined above led to the fall of man. This fall describes the separation of man from God which is caused by sin (Smith, 1830, p. 188). Smith states that by man's very nature they must fall (Smith, 1830, p. 160). It was the fall which made men "carnal, sensual, and devlish," (Smith, 1830, p. 188). This state is referred to as the "natural man" which is also called an "enemy to God" (Smith, 1830, p. 160). In man's natural state, he will by his carnal nature continue to sin and rebel against God, therefore remaining in his fallen state. The

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Eve is notably absent from discussions of the Fall, which place Adam as the central figure within the narrative. Eve is mentioned as being spoken to by the Devil and partaking of the fruit with her husband (Smith, 1830, p. 63). Beyond this Adam is given sole credit for the Fall through his transgression.

natural man is also said to be subject to the power of the Devil (Smith, 1830, p. 188). The Devil plays a large part in the introduction and definition of sin:

Wherefore, all things which are good, cometh of God; and that which is evil, cometh of the Devil: for the Devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually; and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. (Smith, 1830, p. 576)

To sin is to subject oneself to the Devil. Satan is described as having hold over the hearts of those who sin against God and that which is good. The purpose of the Devil being to lead the souls of men toward destruction through sin, ultimately destroying the work of God (Smith, 1833, p. 22).

Despite so much responsibility given to the Devil, yielding to sin is described as choice, it involves deliberate action. Man is capable of sin because of the flesh, however in order to sin, man must give in to temptations or else allow evil to enter into his heart. Smith continues explaining the consequences of sin, asserting that it will destroy one's peace, and afflict their soul. The effects of sin are described as emotionally affecting the soul, causing it to droop from the weight and even causing contentious emotions such as anger to arise (Smith, 1830, p. 69). Sin is an affliction, which cannot be hidden from God (Smith, 1830, p. 87), with the Lord said to be unable to "look upon sin with the least degree of allowance," (Smith, 1830, p. 348).

Smith's early writings provides a short restating of the ten commandments; however he chooses not to elaborate nor provide any further list of prohibitions that may supplement one's understanding of how to live righteously. It appears therefore, that Smith never intended for his writings to supersede or eliminate the authority of the Bible given his repeated referencing to the commandments of God within his texts:

I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin: for there are divers ways and means, even so many, that I cannot number them. But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe to keep the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. (Smith, 1830, p. 164)

Rather Smith uses the stories within his texts to demonstrate morality as he understood it.<sup>15</sup> One such story details the sins of a King named Noah. Noah is presented as the foil to a righteous

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> There are a few collections of sinful acts laid out in the text, however they are not presented as commandments, rather they are included to condemn the characters in the text who commit these sins. See Smith (1830), *Book of Mormon* pp. 80-1; 177-8; 486.

prophet and as such he is introduced alongside a bevy of sins. Noah is given the epitaph of "not keep[ing] the commandments of God, but he did walk after the desires of his own heart," (Smith, 1830, p. 177). What follows is a list of all the sins of King Noah, including excessive taxation for his own gain, interrupting the affairs of the church, laziness, idolatry, whoredoms, various iniquities, pride, vanity, riotous living, drunkenness, and greed. When placed in historical context, this list reads as a condemnation of foreign kings, most likely the English monarchy who had been defeated in the American Revolutionary War four decades prior to Smith penning this story. The King's two greatest sins, given precedence by their prominence in the text, are noted as firstly having many wives and concubines, and likely related to this, causing other people to also sin. A similar passage condemning polygamy<sup>16</sup> can be found in an earlier sermon:

This People begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the Scriptures: for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David and Solomon his Son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. (Smith, 1830, pp. 125-6)

It appears from these passages that the sin of polygamy is so despicable in the sight of the Lord because it causes others to participate in the sin. While sinning is evil of its own accord, it would appear that inducing others to sin is a greater abhoriation.

Several terms are used in Smith's texts to describe acts of rebellion like sin. The two most common of these after sin, are transgression and iniquity. While at times it may appear that Smith uses these terms synonymously (see Smith, 1830, pp. 246, 292, 301, 503), more commonly Smith adheres the traditional definitions of these terms. To transgress is to act against the law (Smith, 1833, p. 48). Similarly, transgression is used with reference to the commandments of God, which is why Adam's act in the garden is described as a transgression (Smith, 1830, p. 285). Consequently, the term often appears alongside references to the fall and man's natural state (Smith, 1830, pp. 64, 78, 146), as both of these evoke images of rebellion against an established rule. Iniquity likewise aligns with its mainstream definition given its link with gross immorality within Smith's texts. Immorality, according to Smith, is a perversion of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> This is an interesting sin for Smith to single out given the later amendments he made to the doctrine, appearing to backflip in a revelation made in 1843 where David and Solomon's polygyny is proclaimed to not be a sin (D&C 132:38). For further discussions on the history of this alteration of doctrine see Todd Compton (1996), "A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-three Plural Wives", in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 29(2) 1-38; and Brian C. Hales (2013), *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*.

the ways of God (Smith, 1830, p. 309), or acting against the established good (Smith, 1833, p. 22).

# 3.2.3 Overcoming the effects of Sin

While it may appear from the passages above that man is doomed to sin and suffer spiritual death by nature, it is important to note that Smith's theology allows for and expects man to overcome their nature:

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever; but if he yeildeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Smith, 1830, p. 160)

The Plan provides the means by which man can subdue their carnal nature. Smith's remedy includes an early iteration of what will later be packaged as the "laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Smith, 1842):

We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.<sup>17</sup>

We believe that these ordinances are 1st, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; 2d, Repentance; 3d, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; 4th, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Smith, 1842, p. 709)

This same pattern is reflected in the earlier passage:

1830 Book of Mormon Version	1842 Times and Seasons Version
becometh as a child willing to submit to	Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
all things which the Lord seeth fit to	
inflict upon him	
putteth off the natural man	Repentance
becometh a saint, through the atonement	Baptism by immersion for the remission of
of Christ, the Lord	sins
yeildeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit	Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy
	Ghost

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Verse included for context.

Although the two versions alter the order of the ordinances, they both establish the steps required for overcoming man's base nature and aligning oneself to God. These are the first steps of salvation, the remedy for sin. However, given the time frame that constrains this study, this process will not be considered in its entirety, rather the discussion will now turn to the elements which are more fully considered by Smith in his early texts: repentance, and the Atonement of Christ.

#### 3.3 REPENTANCE

Repentance is a term that Smith seemingly expected his audience to understand. Overwhelmingly, Smith includes the term in his writing as a declaration, warning and calling his audience to repent, rather than adding to the theological meaning of the word. It is clear from the texts that repentance is an essential message, given the repeated use of the term along with the admonition, given him by God, which he was commanded to declare (Smith, 1833, p. 13). With that in mind, the following section will piece together the sparse references that elaborate on the expectation and process of repentance according to Smith.

Repentance is a commandment of God (Smith, 1830, p. 64). It requires that all men "repent of [their] sins and forsake them, and humble [themselves] before GOD, and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive [them]," (Smith, 1830, p. 162). This sincerity is often described as a mighty cry unto God for forgiveness and in demonstration of one's apologetic sorrow (Smith, 1830, p. 67).

In keeping with the traditional understanding of repentance, Smith exhorts his audience to repent by forsaking their sins, or rather through the cessation of the offending action (Smith, 1830, p. 331). However Smith continues by insisting that his audience should actively work to rectify the sin, either by undoing the offense and restoring the consequences of the sin (Smith, 1830, p. 48), or pursuing good works equally the negative effects of the sin (Smith, 1830, p. 247). Salvation is described as something freely given to all men (Smith, 1830, p. 107); however Smith does not adhere to the protestant understanding of justification through faith alone. Rather it is faith that brings about repentance, or rather the adoption of new behaviour, which allows men to participate in salvation (Smith, 1830, p. 160).

In conjunction with this, baptism is described as the first step toward repentance:

And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith, unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; and the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart. (Smith, 1830, p. 581)

It is through baptism that one comes unto Christ, which appears to be an essential element of repentance (Smith, 1830, p. 114). Both baptism and repentance require the same fundamental components; faith, humility, and a willingness to obey the commandments of God:

And if they will not repent and believe on his name, and be baptised in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned. (Smith, 1830, p. 80)

Similarly, Smith links the Lord's Supper with repentance through baptism. In a sermon given by Christ after the institution of the sacrament during his visitation, Christ instructs his disciples to regularly hold communion with the faithful:

And this shall ye always do unto those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it *in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you* [emphasis added], that you may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. (Smith, 1830, p. 490)

This same sentiment is then echoed in the sacramental prayers:

O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it *in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them* [emphasis added], that they may witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen. (Smith, 1833, p. 53)

Both sacraments are to be done in remembrance of the blood of Christ, which symbolises the sacrifice Christ made for the salvation of men. They are acts of repentance, signifying the humility and faith of repentance through obedience to the commandment. This connection with the blood of Christ will directly relate to the Atonement and as such will be further explored in the subsequent section. While this paper will not delve further into Smith's sacraments, it is sufficient to understand that both baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper are required for one to receive the full blessing of Christ's sacrifice.

Repentance is continually called for in Smith's texts and is not considered a single use balm of Gilead. The Lord expects his faithful to continually practice the act of repentance, seeking forgiveness for any wrong doings, promising to confirm one's forgiveness for any act of sincere repentance. In these early texts, this requires the sinner to confess their sins before both God and his servants on earth:

Whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he hath committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also; yea, and as often as my people repent, will I forgive them their trespasses against me. And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses: for verily I say unto you, He that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses, when he saith that he repenteth, the same hath brought himself under condemnation. (Smith, 1830, pp. 209-10)

Also of note here is the requirement for the penitent to forgive those who injure them through sin, or else risk suffering God's condemnation. This condemnation is further elaborated on in Smith's description of the unrepentant:

Therefore, if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of Divine Justice doth awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flames ascendeth up forever and ever. (Smith, 1830, p. 158)

Those who fail to obey God's commandment to repent, negate the effects of the Lord's sacrifice, causing them to suffer eternal damnation. Smith refers to this consequence as justice, which he elaborates further:

For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such: for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it hath its claim. (Smith, 1830, p. 187)

Justice is presented as a divine concept, something which both stems from and binds the actions of God. God, being the source of all things just, must uphold the consequences of sin, or else fail to be God:

But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature, and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God. But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works; according to the law and justice; for behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved. What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which was prepared from the foundation of the world. (Smith, 1830, p. 338)

This is the natural consequence of sin, which is done away with by the mercy of the Messiah. Smith offers his audience the choice to either allow God's mercy to save them or they must unavoidably suffer that second death brought about by individual sin. Mercy then becomes the central element to repentance.

## 3.4 THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST

Justice was present in the Plan from the very beginning. Knowing that man was fated to fall, God prepared a way to overcome its effect:

My soul delighteth in his grace, and his justice, and power, and mercy, in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death. (Smith, 1830, p. 85)

Smith's Plan mentions both grace and mercy as reliefs from the consequence of justice. The question that then arises concerns the definition and distinction between mercy and grace. Both are used by Smith in his early theology however the usage at times seems convoluted. In order to better understand how Smith frames mercy within the context of the Atonement of Christ, first I will explore his use of grace.

## 3.4.1 Mercy or Grace

Perhaps the most extensive treatise on grace in Smith's early writings is found in the founding Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ. This is the latest text written in the time period established for this study, and it lays out the governing principles and early statements of affirmation held by the infant church:

And we know, that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, of they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

And we know, that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is just and true;

And we know, also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength, but there is a possibility that men may fall from grace and depart from the living God. (Smith, 1833, p. 49)

Both justification and sanctification are said to exist through the grace of Jesus Christ. While Smith refers to sanctification throughout his texts and most notably in his sacramental prayers (Smith, 1833, p. 53), interestingly this is the only use of the term justification in these early

texts. Perhaps this shows the first steps of an evolving theology, something which is also supported by the remaining references to grace. Grace is frequently used by Smith as a synonym for blessing, something received from God (Smith, 1830, pp. 192, 211, 238, 564; Smith, 1833, pp. 44, 47). It is something which men receive after baptism (Smith, 1830, p. 191), and as such is also used as a synonym for repentance (Smith, 1830, p. 520). Grace is also the term used to describe the power of God which fills the gap caused by human frailty (Smith, 1830, pp. 129, 563). However most commonly, grace is used in a series of epithets attributed to God (Smith, 1830, p. 246). It is clear that Smith's theology includes grace, however it is not held in the same esteem as mercy, nor is it given a definitive definition within these early texts.

Mercy is the name given to the power of God to forgive the repentant. Throughout the texts, Smith frames mercy as the cure for guilt and all other afflictions which men suffer as a consequence of sin (Smith, 1830, pp. 69, 158, 188, 228). It is mercy which relieves the torment of the penitent in life:

Nevertheless, after wandering through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God; my soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvellous light of God. My soul was wrecked with eternal torment; but now I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more. (Smith, 1830, p. 213)

And mercy is also the power of God which is given the designation of snatching back souls from spiritual death and captivity by the Devil:

O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster, the Devil, and death and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment. (Smith, 1830, p. 79)

Mercy is spoken of with reference to the physical body of Christ; his flesh, and bowels:

He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people; and he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which binds his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to suffer his people according to their infirmities. (Smith, 1830, p. 139)

Here Smith is attributing God's ability to show mercy to his experience of mortality. It is the power which connects him to his creation, allowing him to experience their pain so as to know how best to take it away. Similarly, it is through his blood that man receives forgiveness:

O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ, that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified. (Smith, 1830, p. 161)

This connection to the body and blood of Christ is again echoed in the sacramental prayers instituted by Smith over the Lord's Supper. Body and blood facilitate Smith's twofold miracle of the Atonement, providing the means by which man can overcome both the physical and spiritual death that came by way of the Fall. In this way, Smith has framed Christ's incarnation as the keystone of the Plan with these connections to mercy. Without mercy man is fated to suffer the consequences of their sins, and without the Incarnation, Christ cannot extend his mercy.

Smith portrays mercy as one arm of a scale, perfectly balanced with the concept of justice:

And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law; every whit a pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God; yea, Infinite and Eternal; and thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of the last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exerciseth no faith unto repentance, is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore, only unto him that hath faith unto repentance, is brought about the great and Eternal plan of redemption. (Smith, 1830, p. 318)

While mercy may be described as the foil of justice, Smith is quick to point out that justice must still have her own:

Do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. (Smith, 1833, p. 338)

Given then that for God to fulfill his own purpose and laws, mercy cannot remove the consequences of justice. The Plan requires that disobedience to God's law must result in the dispensing of affixed penalties. Repentance through mercy allows for those penalties to be transferred or rather assumed by another. This is where Christ's role as saviour fits into the Plan:

...yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father; and thus God breaketh the bands of death; having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men; having ascended into heaven; having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion toward the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the

bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions; having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice. (Smith, 1830, pp. 185-6)

This passage also raises the question of how Smith defined the Atonement. There appears in this passage to be references to both the classic and the objective paradigms of atonement, each of which will be further discussed in the following section.

## 3.4.2 Smith's Theories of Atonement

While Smith has yet to fully articulate his theory of atonement in these early texts, there appear to be elements of both classic and objective paradigms amongst the discussions of salvation and redemption. The classic paradigm follows the patristic understanding of Christ's sacrifice redeeming humanity from captivity caused by the Fall. This theory is evident in Smith's discussions of death and specifically his role in the redemption of mankind from the effects of physical death (Smith, 1830, pp. 78, 335). Interestingly though, rather than adhering to the ransom theory of atonement, Smith presents an earlier iteration of *Christus Victor* which would later be discussed by Aulen (1969 [1931]) 100 years later:

And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death, that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting there could be no resurrection. But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ. (Smith, 1830, p. 188)

Christ's death and resurrection are seen as a victory over the very concept of death. This theory however does not encompass all aspects of the Fall as laid out by Smith's texts. For Smith, the Fall represents the introduction of both physical and spiritual death, and while *Christus Victor* explains the means by which Christ may overcome the effects of physical death, Smith's choice to do away with the inherited and innate original sin restricts the Christ's victory to the grave. There must needs be another aspect of atonement to explain how Christ overcame spiritual death.

When speaking soteriologically, Smith favours the idea of vicarious atonement in the form of the penal substitution theory. This theory, popularised by the reformation theologians, supposes that through sin, man subjects himself to the justice of God. However, rather than the individual suffering the penalty of their own sins, God's mercy, through repentance, allows for that suffering to pass to Christ (Oxenham, 1865, p. 119). Christ's Atonement pays the penalty for all those who accept Christ and follow the steps for repentance outlined earlier in this

chapter. Smith's theory holds that because God gives men laws, men are bound to either obey or suffer the consequence of disobedience according to the principle of justice. Should men repent that suffering will be taken away from them through Christ's mercy. However, as mentioned above mercy cannot deny justice, meaning that there must still be someone who suffers the consequences (Smith, 1830, pp. 62-3). The purpose of Christ's incarnation was to facilitate the means by which he could "take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he [should] atone for the sins of the world" (Smith, 1830, p. 318). Smith expands the Atonement to include more than just Christ's death and resurrection, in keeping with his twofold understanding of the Fall, the Atonement also comprises two events. Redemption comes through the resurrection, while salvation comes through the blood of Christ:

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death: for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people. (Smith, 1830, p. 159)

This is directly referencing the agony of Christ experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke's description of Christ praying in the garden mentions Christ in agony, sweating under the strain, likening the sweat to great drops of blood (Lk 22:42-44). In the years immediately following the publication of the Book of Mormon, Smith set about compiling a commentary on the Bible which he referred to as a translation which would insert his own interpolations to the Biblical text. One such interpolation is found in this same passage in Luke where Smith changes the wording from metaphoric to literal blood sweating out of Christ during this agony. This is further supported by Smith's description of the event in a revelation dated to 1829 in the Book of Commandments:

For behold, I God have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent, but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I:

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, both body and spirit:

And would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink:

Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (Smith, 1833, pp. 39-40)

This small change provides the greatest divergence of Smith's soteriology from the widely accepted Protestant theology of the time, where Gethsemane joins Golgotha as locations for the Atonement. By expanding the locations, Smith effectively delineates the twofold mission of Christ with Christ overcoming spiritual death through his blood, and physical death with his flesh:

He will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection. (Smith, 1830, p. 317)

Smith's Plan consistently pairs redemption and salvation. Both hold individual value, and are highlighted separately, while together they explain Christ's purpose and provide for the eventual fate of mankind. Just as the Fall brought sin and death into the world, Christ alone has the power to remove their consequences from mankind. This will be further explored in the eschatological discussion in the following chapter.

# 3.5 THE BEGINNING OF THE END

As a missionary, I taught about the Plan of Salvation using cartoon images representing the fullness of this doctrine as the LDS Church understands it today. Reflecting on this chapter, Smith's original doctrine has undergone substantial refinement and expansion so that is now stretches from the inclusion of a premortal existence and concluding with an extensive illustration of the afterlife and eternal progression of man. However what we have seen here, although not as comprehensive, it nonetheless focuses on the essential elements of salvation, providing a concise and fairly complex discussion of human nature and the remedy it requires. Having concluded our examination of this topic, we will now turn to that next step in the Plan, death, resurrection, the afterlife, and the eventual fate of the universe.

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# **CHAPTER 4 - ESCHATOLOGY**

Eschatology is the study of ends. When it comes to Mormonism today, this can refer to either an individual end, or the collective end of the world. The ideas of man's individual end discussed below are a continuation of Smith's Plan of Salvation that we examined in the previous chapter. The concept of the collective end poses a different question. Growing up in Mormon culture, we were warned constantly of the immanent end of the world, preceded by the second coming of Christ (Smith, 1981, pp. 106:4-5). It is such a big part of Mormon culture that should you enter any Mormon's house, you will find food storage and supplies stored away in anticipation of a global collapse that will herald the end of the world. This is such a fundamental doctrine in Mormonism that it is referenced in the name of the church: The Church of Jesus Christ of *Latter-day* Saints. The question for this chapter is how much of that rhetoric exists in the formative texts. What follows will be divided into two sections, the first examining the fate of men individually, and what the early texts teach regarding the fate of men collectively.<sup>18</sup>

# 4.1 THE FATE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

#### 4.1.1 **Death**

While the previous chapter had much to say about spiritual death, this chapter will begin with a brief outline of temporal death. Temporal or physical death is the first step an individual takes along Smith's eschatological journey. Smith teaches that fear of death is something which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> While contemporary sources refer to humanity as a more gender-neutral identifier of persons, the original text uses the gendered 'men' and 'mankind'. The purpose of this study is to understand the words of Smith in their context, and as such will stick to the historical use of men both to reflect the historical milieu and Smith's own understanding and use of a gender hierarchy. See Smith, 1830, pp. 213, 241, 305, 314, 405, 446.

should not disturb the soul of the righteous, rather only the wicked feel that 'awful fear' (Smith, 1830, p. 528). This fear of the wicked is justified as after death, they are destined to endure an "everlasting gulf of death and misery" (Smith, 1830, p. 296). Alternatively, those who repent and accept God's mercy have no need to fear. Christ has power over death therefore "the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory" (Smith, 1830, p. 285). Smith's later theology is replete with discussions regarding the destination of the dead during the separation of body and spirit prior to resurrection. However there is one passage of interest in these earlier texts that attempts to answer this question:

Now concerning the state of the soul between death and resurrection. Behold it hath been made known unto me, by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body; yea the spirits of those which are righteous, are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise; a state of rest; a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles, and from all care and sorrow. And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, which are evil; for behold, they have no part nor portion of the spirit of the Lord; for behold they choose evil works, rather than good; therefore the spirit of the Devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house; and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and this because of their own iniquity; being captive by the will of the Devil. Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked; yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for of the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection. (Smith, 1830, pp. 333-4)

Smith's interpretation of the afterlife sees deceased souls undergo a sort of preliminary judgement between those who were righteous and those who were evil in life. Given the discussion of morality raised in the last chapter, it may be assumed that those who were repentant in life will be those who are sent to paradise, while those who died without having repented would be sent to a state of outer darkness. Having been thusly divided, souls will wait until the time of the resurrection.

## 4.1.2 Resurrection

According to Smith, because the Fall, which brought death to all men, was an essential element in the Plan of God, mercy demands that God must also provide a means of overcoming its consequences. All men must die, and unlike spiritual death, it is not because of our individual choices that we must suffer temporal death. Therefore, according to mercy, God must provide all men with the means by which they may be restored (Smith, 1830, p. 78). Smith condemned the teaching of original sin because it unfairly placed the consequences of another's sin onto the innocent (Smith, 1830, p. 581). However, all men die because of the sins of Adam, and so,

Smith uses mercy to circumvent this potential contradiction. Through the atonement, Christ overcame the effects of physical death, allowing all men the same privilege. Just as Christ appeared after his resurrection, all men too will have their souls restored to their body:

I say unto you, that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body; that is from death; even the first death, unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can see no more corruption. (Smith, 1830, p. 253)

The resurrection reunites the soul with the body, while also transforming the body into an immortal state, wherein the body will no longer be degraded as a mortal body by sickness or age. These early texts do not provide any further clarity regarding the state of resurrected immortal beings only echoing the New Testament writers:

The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost, but all things shall be restored to its proper and perfect frame. (Smith, 1830, pp. 334-5)<sup>19</sup>

Rather, Smith talks of the resurrection as the means by which men will be brought back into the presence of God for the purpose of receiving their final judgement (Smith, 1830, p. 338). This is the purpose of the resurrection within Smith's theology; to fulfil the Plan through redemption in order to facilitate the Final Judgement and salvation.

# 4.1.3 The Final Judgement

Smith presents this judgement as a pivotal event in both the eschatological journey of individuals, and in the ultimate fate of the world. Smith preaches of the final judgement as a future and universal event, a designated day upon which all men would be judged (Smith, 1830, p. 37). Judgement however remains individual, with each man being brought before God to be judged of their actions in life:

For the day should come that they must be judged of their works, yea even the works which were done by the temporal body in their days of probation; wherefore, if they should die in their wickedness, they must be cast off; also as to the things which are spiritual, which are pertaining to righteousness; wherefore they must be brought before God, to be judged of their works. (Smith, 1830, p. 37)

The purpose of this judgement is to ensure that justice is fulfilled, meaning that each person will receive their eternal reward according to the choices they made during mortality:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Compare Luke 21:18.

And the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works; according to the law and justice; for behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved. (Smith, 1830, p. 338)

The divide between the righteous and the wicked hangs on the person's penitence for their actions during mortality. Those who repent are cleansed by the Atonement of Christ, making them righteous according to the Lord and allowing them to partake in salvation. Those who reject the opportunity to repent, deny the power of the Atonement and will be found wicked at the final judgement (Smith, 1830, p. 78).

Through the resurrection, all men will be restored both in body and mind. Just as our body will be restored to its 'proper and perfect frame', the resurrection will restore our minds to a remembrance of our life on earth and the choices we made:

O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are the living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us, in the flesh; save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect; wherefore we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness. (Smith, 1830, p. 79)

Here Smith mentions that our knowledge will be like it was during our temporal existence, and yet goes further stating that our knowledge will be made perfect. It is less clear whether he means that we will have a perfect recollection of the knowledge we gained during mortality, or rather that we will receive a perfected knowledge, akin to the transformative power of the resurrection on the body which makes it immortal. It may be possible that the power of the resurrection brings with it a form of understanding not possible with the temporal mind. Both readings are possible from the early texts and greater investigation of the later theology of Smith would likely bring clarification on the subject. It is enough to mention here and acknowledge that whatever the transformation that may occur to the mind through the act of resurrection will provide men with the knowledge to recognise the consequences of their actions, and receive the justice they deserve.

Interestingly, Smith does not place the entirety of the mantle of judgment upon God the Father. With Christ's incarnation providing him with the capacity for mercy, he is cast as the intercessory, an advocate on behalf of mankind:

Wherefore, he [Christ] is the first fruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him, shall be saved. And because of the intercession for all, all men cometh unto God; wherefore they shall stand in the presence of Him, to be judged of Him, according to the truth and holiness which is in Him. (Smith, 1830, p. 62)

It is Christ who will both "standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people," (Smith, 1830, p. 87). Similarly, Smith also states that the apostles of the Lord, both those from Jerusalem, and those chosen among the Nephites, will serve as judges on that day (Smith, 1830, p. 26). Men will be judged against the words of the prophets, therefore it is fitting that those same prophets will be called upon to assist in the judgement of mankind (Smith, 1830, p. 151). Furthermore, Smith mentions that we will receive a judgement that reflects the justice and mercy we showed unto others during our lifetime:

Therefore, my son, see that ye are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things, then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again: for that which ye doth send out, shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore the word restoration, more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all. (Smith, 1830, p. 336)

Smith's concept of the final judgement consistently hangs upon the concepts of mercy and justice at the heart of his formulation of the atonement. They are essential elements of the Plan, equitably meting out the righteous ending due to men according to the law of God.

# 4.1.4 Man's Ultimate End

Smith's Plan so far has provided the means by which men may prepare for their eschatological destination. His texts are replete with dire warnings to all mankind, warning them of the awful fate that awaits the unrepentant. Interestingly, there is less provided regarding the destination of those judged to be righteous. After the judgement discussed above, resurrected beings will be allocated to their eternal inheritance, the righteous to a state of righteousness, and the wicked to a state of wickedness:

that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good; and if their works are evil, they shall be restored unto him for evil; therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order; every thing to its natural frame; mortality raised to immortality; corruption to incorruption;

raised to endless happiness, to inherit the Kingdom of God, or to endless misery, to inherit the kingdom of the Devil; the one on one hand, the other on the other; the one raised to happiness, according to his desires of happiness; or good, according to his desires of good; and the other to evil, according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long, even so shall he have his reward of evil, when the night cometh. And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness.— These are they that are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness; and thus they stand or fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. (Smith, 1830, p. 335)

This is the most common representation of the final destinations of men in Smith's early texts. The righteous will inherit the Kingdom of God, a place of eternal happiness (Smith, 1830, p. 79). Beyond this Smith relies on his audience to envision the eternal resting place based on their previously held understanding. He does not seek to elaborate on this concept. Instead, his focus when speaking of individual eschatology, appears to be to prepare his audience by stressing the horror that is prepared for the wicked:

...and if their works be filthiness, they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy, it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God; if so, the kingdom of God must be filthy also. But, behold, I say unto you, the kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God; wherefore there must needs be a place of filthiness prepared for that which is filthy. And there is a place prepared, yea, even that awful Hell of which I have spoken, and the Devil is the preparator of it. (Smith, 1830, p. 37)

Smith's Hell is described as "a state of misery and endless torment... a lake of fire and brimstone," (Smith, 1830, p. 161). It is a place prepared by the Devil and therefore in every way the foil of the Kingdom of God. It is a continuation of God's justice, that those who choose sin and destruction receive it eternally. This justice would not allow a guilty conscience to reap anything other than what they have sown. Hell is therefore also described as a tormenting of the soul with guilt:

Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with [God] under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of your guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold I say unto you, that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell? For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Smith, 1830, p. 534)

This twofold punishment is what awaits all sinners. Hell is both physical and mental torment. It is an eternity of remembrance of one's sins and the knowledge that you are receiving your due.

And so concludes Smith's eschatological journey. At every stage it is clear that the guiding principles behind Smith's theology are justice and mercy. God made men, and knowing their weaknesses provided a means by which they may overcome the consequences of their nature. Smith speaks of his mission to preach this doctrine so that he may bring salvation, as he understands it, to all men (Smith, 1833, pp. 44-6).

#### 4.2 THE FATE OF THE WORLD

Now that we have reached the end of man's destiny, this chapter will turn instead to what Smith wrote in his early texts regarding the end of the world. I must admit that when I began researching this section, I assumed I would find a wealth of references to millennialism, dispensationalism, or really anything associated with the second coming of Christ. I had fallen into the trap of believing that the things I was taught about the 'latter days' were a fundamental part of my faith. I was surprised that there were very few references to any of those ideas in the early texts of Smith. There are a few passages which may be read eschatologically. Many contemporary churches around Smith preached of the immanent return of Christ (Harrison, 1979, p. 5), it is therefore possible that Smith anticipated his audience would receive these passages in much the same way. However, given the uncertainty evident in the primary texts, I have chosen to comment only on the effect of these passages on Smith's founding theology.

# 4.2.1 The Last Days

Predominately, Smith uses the term 'the last day' to refer to the day of judgement discussed earlier (Smith, 1830, p. 81). When used in the singular, it is clear that the last day is a synonym for the individual end. However, there are two references in the Book of Commandments where Smith speaks premillennially. They occur within the commencement sermon of Smith's church:

The rise of the church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh;

...And also, that God doth inspire men and call them to his holy work, in these last days as well as in days of old, that he might be the same God for ever. Amen. (Smith, 1833, pp. 46-7)

The language in these verses communicate Smith's predisposition to assume that time was nearing its conclusion. Alternatively, when Christ speaks of himself with the Book of

Commandments, listing his accomplishments, and declaring a future demonstration of his power, the dispensationalist reading of the language is less prominent:

YEA, even I, I am he, the beginning and the end: Yea, Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord, the Redeemer of the world:

- 2 I having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father:
- 3 Having done this, that I might subdue all things unto myself:
- 4 Retaining all power, even to the destroying of satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof, every man according to his works, and the deeds which he hath done. (Smith, 1833, p. 38)

Despite the reference to the end of the world, this section uses the singular 'last day' in reference to the final judgement. This then frames the reference to the defeat of Satan at the end of the world as a function of the power of Christ in connection with his role in salvation. Soteriologically speaking, Christ's power at the final judgement is a defeat of wickedness, and by association Satan. No longer will there be sin and wickedness because the righteous will be saved from the grasp of Satan through Christ's Atonement. This is the sentiment that predominantly comes through the early texts when Smith refers to the 'last day'.

The possibility still remains that Smith intended his texts to be understood as referring to an apocalyptic future series of events. However, in the same vein as Smith's inclusion of Christ's visitation in the Book of Mormon, his allusions to the end of time appear to legitimise his role as a religious figure and furthermore the Book of Mormon as a revelatory text. Smith intentionally included many passages in his texts that were taken almost directly from the writings of the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Smith has his prophet Nephi preach the words of Isaiah, testifying of their worth, and the supposed difficulty of people to understand his meaning (Smith, 1830, pp. 101-2). These Isaiah passages are intermingled with Nephi's prophecies of the future. They speak of "the last days" calling them "the days of the Gentiles", or rather a future time when the Jews will no longer be considered the people of God:

But, behold, in the last days, or in the days of the Gentiles; yea, behold all the nations of the Gentiles, and also the Jews, both they which shall come upon this land, and they which shall be upon other lands; yea, even upon all the lands of the earth; behold, they will be drunken with iniquity, and all manner of abominations; and when that day shall come, they shall be visited of the Lord of hosts, with thunder and with earthquake, and with a great noise, and with storm and tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire. (Smith, 1830, p. 108)

This passage mentions a visitation from Christ that appears to align with the prophecies associated with the visitation of the resurrected Christ to the Nephites which was also marked

by a great natural destruction. It is the first half of the passage that potentially places this prophecy as referring to a different visit from Christ. The mentioning of "all the nations of the Gentiles" coming to the land of the Book of Mormon more aptly fits with Smith's own time, when sections of the American continent were claimed by various European empires. This reading gives further prominence to a subsequent passage that appears to reference Smith's work in publishing the Book of Mormon:

And it shall come to pass, that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you, the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered. And behold, the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world, to the ending thereof. ...But the book shall be delivered unto a Man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of they which have slumbered in the dust... For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed, shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth: for, behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world, unto the end thereof. And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed, shall be read upon the house-tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ: and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever hath been among the children of men, and which ever will be, even unto the end of the earth. Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book, and the things therein. And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few, according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men: for the Lord God hath said, that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead. Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book; and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good, will he establish his word: and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God. (Smith, 1830, pp. 109-10)

Smith is describing the coming forth of the Book of Mormon here, down to the mandate that no one else must view the hidden book except for those three witnesses.<sup>20</sup> Rather than predicting the future, this passage acts to legitimise Smith and his book, framing it as the fulfilment of a prophecy. This is supported by a similar prophecy which speaks of a seer who will be called by God to bring about his work and words:

For Joseph truly testified, saying: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment, that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers. And I will give unto him a commandment, that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes: for he shall do my

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> The Testimony of Three Witnesses is included at the conclusion of the original publication of the Book of Mormon. It states that Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris witnessed the golden plates from which Smith claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon (Smith, 1830, p. 588).

work. And he shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel. And Moses will I raise up, to deliver thy people out of the land of Egypt. But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins; and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them. Wherefore, the fruit of my loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. And thus prophesied Joseph, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him, shall be confounded: for this promise, of which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of thy loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise. And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation. (Smith, 1830, pp. 65-6)

This passage contains several references to Smith and his calling. Smith claimed he was called by God to translate the ancient record of God's covenants with the ancient people of America (Smith, 1833, p. 6). The prophecy mentions that the seer's name would be Joseph like the man who gave the prophecy, and that he would share that name with his father, just as Joseph Smith Jnr who was named for his father Joseph Smith Snr. There is also a reference to the Book of Mormon as a companion to the writings of the posterity of Judah, a reference to the Bible. This new book which Smith was commanded to share with the world would come forth in the 'latter days' so as to further testify to the teachings of the Bible. These two prophecies about the publication of the Book of Mormon serve the primary purpose of validating Smith's own work. They are less focused on expounding Smith's eschatological vision.

While Smith's early texts contain allusions to the last days, they act more to legitimise the calling of Smith than to expound millennialist doctrines. The texts do support the notion above that there is a future time set apart when all men will be judged. In this early time frame, Smith does not make millennialism nor dispensationalism a priority, despite its prevalence in his later works.

## 4.3 THE END OF ENDS

It seems fitting to conclude this study with an examination of eschatology. While the sources in these early texts demonstrate a satisfying conclusion to Smith's Plan of Salvation, there is a great deal left unsaid. The texts show the burgeoning doctrine of Smith, something that he would continue to expand upon in his life and that would be picked up by subsequent leaders of the movement. While this may not be an expansive area yet, the early threads flesh out Smith's establishing principles, and provide greater insight into an imagined future. Of course the question was not how the two doctrines compare, but whether there is enough in Smith's texts to establish a systematic theology. Smith's eschatology logically presents an explanation of the final fate of mankind, and while not as extensive I expected, it is sufficient.

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# CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to answer the question can Mormonism have a systematic theology? My answer in short is yes. I chose to limit my exploration of this question down to three fundamental topics: Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. I began with the premise that to do theology was to talk about God, which Smith does throughout these early texts. In immersing myself in his narrative, I was able to collate a cohesive theological presentation of Smith's foundational doctrine, upon which he established his first congregation named the Church of Christ. Smith's theology is inherently rooted in his cultural milieu, espousing a fundamentally American ideology and interpretation of their historical narrative. The Book of Mormon and the Book of Commandments compliment the religious landscape and promote Smith's emerging theology. Smith's writings explore a new paradigm for interpreting Jesus Christ, his relationship to the Father and his relationship to his people. This extends to the bimodal presentation of salvation and redemption within Smith's texts, culminating in the eschatological vision to be shared universally. These doctrines are deeply imbedded in Smith's texts and provide the benchmark for further comparative studies.

I approached this study hermeneutically which allowed me to confront my own biases which was a concern when I first attempted this research. I was able to critically distance myself from the data, facilitating my questioning of the source of particular doctrines I had been taught during my membership in the LDS Church and understand how they materialised. I learned to re-evaluate my presuppositions and allow the texts to speak for themselves. I have gained an appreciation by our ability to continually reinterpret texts, at times twisting the meaning to support our prejudices. This is not limited to Mormonism alone, but rather a means by which we all interpret the data around us to better understand our place within the world. When I left the LDS Church I assumed I would never again study its sacred texts. As I found myself re-

immersing myself in the words of Smith I came to learn that it was possible to set aside my prejudices and allow the texts to speak of their own accord.

I regret that I was limited in the areas of theology that I chose to focus on in this study. However this was always intended to inspire a greater dialogue, urging further exploration of this kind not only of the founding texts, but an examination of these same topics throughout the lifetime of Smith and his subsequent movement. This is an area of research that is sorely underdeveloped. It requires further critical research and the removal of biases. The study of religion requires a delicacy in the handling of the sacred, in combination with the critical vigour given to any other area of inquiry. The LDS movement provides researchers with an extraordinary opportunity to study the progression of religious thought and practices, which so far has been ignored as the field suffers from claims over authority.