

Research Article



Mormon Metaphors of Restoration: Pathways to Identity and Understanding

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Abstract | The important role of metaphors in interfaith understanding has received significant attention. The pervasiveness of certain metaphors in the lives of members of a religious community is especially significant when they are incorporated into sacred texts. This would seem to be the case not only for Judaism, Islam, and mainline Christianity, but also for Mormonism, a distinctive branch of Christianity. Officially known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), Mormonism shares some root metaphors with other Christians but differs in important ways in its development and use of these metaphors. In this paper we discuss the journey, battle, and container metaphors in relation to LDS doctrine and scripture and some crucial implications that grow from these metaphors. The discussion considers the relationship of these metaphors to such matters as an open canon of scripture, the relationship of grace and works, the doctrine of the eternal progression of human beings, and the vital nature of covenants. As part of the discussion, the metaphor of restoration is identified as the overarching Mormon metaphor to which the others are subordinate.

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Introduction

The important role of metaphors in interfaith understanding has received significant attention. As Tracy notes, “That all major religions are grounded in certain root metaphors has become a commonplace in modern religious studies” (1978, 89). Nielsen has explained that theology comes from the “reinterpretation of central metaphors” (2003, 26), or, as we shall say in this paper, “root metaphors.” And Wells has suggested that when it comes to interreligious understanding, rather than “seeking conceptual, theoretical expressions of a common core,” our time would be

better “spent in the fruitful engagement of another’s metaphor, another’s knowing” (1993, 33). Such a recognition of the powerful role of metaphors on religious understanding is consistent with some scholarship by cognitive linguists, most notably Lakoff and Johnson. In their influential book, *Metaphors We Live By*, they consider metaphors in general and explain that metaphors shape the way people “perceive and experience much of the world” (2003, 239).

The pervasiveness of certain metaphors in the lives of members of a religious community is especially significant when they are incorporated into their sacred

texts. Indeed, it might be argued that one of the powerful functions that a sacred text could provide is to focus the thinking and ways that a faith community perceives the world through metaphor. Tracy observes:

For not only is every major religion grounded in certain root metaphors, but Western religions are also “religions of the book”—books which codify root metaphors through various linguistic and generic strategies. For Judaism, Christianity, and Islam certain texts serve not only as charter documents for the religion but as “scripture” in the strict sense: that is, as *normative* for the religious community’s basic understanding and control of its root metaphors and thereby its vision of reality. (1978, 90)

An approach that examines the metaphors of a religion not only through the sermons and discourse of its adherents, but also through the metaphors in its foundational scriptures would seem to yield significant insights into that religion. This would seem to be the case not only for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but also for Mormonism, a more recent Christian “religion of the book,” officially known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose adherents are commonly known as Mormons or Latter-day Saints (LDS).

In this paper, we identify and discuss a few of the root metaphors within LDS doctrine and some crucial implications that grow from these metaphors. We will focus on a trio of fundamental metaphors—the journey, the battle, and the container—and show how they are part of a master metaphor of restoration. The discussion considers the relationship of these metaphors to such important doctrines as an open canon of scripture, the relationship of grace and works, the doctrine of the eternal progression of human beings, and the vital nature of covenants. We also show that these root metaphors are significantly developed within the LDS scriptures, notably the foundational volume of scripture, the *Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*. We also refer to metaphors in the religion’s other canonized scriptures: the *Bible*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*¹, and the *Pearl of Great Price*². An important implication of this paper is that the influence of the scriptural canon on LDS members is not merely in the doctrines and teachings but in the metaphorical lens it imports to Church members, shaping their overall perception of life and their relationship to God.

Mormonism and Metaphors: Some Initial Observations

As we begin to consider some prominent Mormon metaphors, it becomes apparent that some of the root metaphors that Latter-day Saints commonly use are in fact shared with other Christians. The Mormon metaphors, however, are often infused with distinctive elements, which promote differences in the way that Latter-day Saints view certain aspects of life. This distinct understanding of shared metaphors is analogous to what some have observed about contrastive understandings that Latter-day Saints sometimes have when it comes to religious vocabulary. In a landmark book of interfaith dialogue between a Mormon and an Evangelical we find the following observation:

Latter-day Saints and Evangelicals generally employ the same theological terms, but we usually define them differently, and this quite often makes communication more difficult than if we spoke different religious languages entirely. The similarity of terms makes us *think* we are communicating, but when all is said and done both sides go away with the feeling that nothing quite added up, and this raises suspicions of deception. (Blomberg and Robinson 1997, 13)³

What that book notes about vocabulary, we might also note with regard to metaphors. When comparing different religions, people seldom, if ever, think to examine differences in metaphors. Yet such differences can be crucial in understanding other faiths.

Before considering some specific LDS metaphors, we should acknowledge a larger interpretive frame that the Book of Mormon provides to Latter-day Saints viewing the world around themselves: “And all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him” (2 Nephi 11:4; cf. also Moses 6:63 in the *Pearl of Great Price*). Thus Latter-day Saints not only encounter religious metaphors in their scriptures but also have a scriptural mandate that encourages the use of metaphorical interpretation for the very elements around them, as a way of knowing God.

Moreover, related to this, we should consider the common attitude of Latter-day Saints when interpreting scriptural events or situations with both literal and metaphorical possibilities. Although very sensi-

tive to the symbolic aspects of scripture, Mormons are very alive to the literal possibilities in their own lives of even the most remarkable or dramatic biblical events. Some of this tendency to see both the literal and the figurative likely comes from direct exposure to the historical memory shared among members of the Church, detailing miraculous events accessible through numerous pioneer journals and family histories of those who witnessed miraculous events in Mormon history that parallel similar marvels in the Bible. The comparisons can be striking.

For example, Shipps claims that “when Brigham Young led the Saints across the plains, he led them not only out of the hands of their midwestern persecutors but backward into a primordial sacred time” (1985, 122). Shipps, who notes Lakoff and Johnson’s work in metaphor, describes the LDS view of themselves as a modern-day Israel (1985, 60-61). One can’t help but see how the Mormon trek west was reminiscent of the earlier exodus of the Israelites under Moses. She observes:

Historical accounts of the corporate movement of the Saints from Nauvoo to the Great Basin are rarely written without mentioning that the Saints who followed Brigham Young westward resolved themselves in a Camp of Israel organized into companies with captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens over them, as had the ancient Israelites during their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land in Palestine. But the real extent of the Exodus-like character of the Saints’ journey from Illinois to the Great Salt Lake Valley is only fully disclosed when it is remembered that an ice bridge over the Mississippi River facilitated the Mormon departure from Nauvoo. It is neither so wide nor so deep as the Red Sea, but at Nauvoo the river is more than a mile broad, and “running ice” had made crossing difficult in the days before the main body of Mormons was ready to leave. The fact that many Saints walked across the river without getting their feet wet is enough to serve as a means of separating the Mormon trek from all the other pioneer companies who left for the west from St. Louis, Quincy, and the other cities and towns along the river’s edge, especially as more than one group of starving and desperate Saints reported miracles in which quail and a manna-like substance called honey-dew kept them from per-

ishing. Moreover, even as it continued in some ways for virtually forty years, while Saints from across the world traveled through the wilderness to the valleys of the inter-mountain region, this LDS exodus led directly to the building up of a latter-day Zion in the tops of the mountains, a kingdom with a religious leader at its political helm and a temple at its center. (1985, 59-60)

When arriving, they discovered a topography that paralleled closely with what the children of Israel had encountered under Moses’ direction, including a great inland salt sea served by a river flowing from a fresh water lake. The analogy with the biblical Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee was quickly drawn, and the river connecting the two was named the Jordan River. Now when a Latter-day Saint draws an allusion or uses a metaphor of an exodus to a Promised Land or Zion, that allusion or metaphor can carry multiple layers of meaning, including a very literal and personal one. Indeed, many Latter-day Saints not only have actual written documents of ancestors describing their exodus but also live amidst the same physical topography that further inspired the comparison with ancient Israel’s arrival in the Promised Land.

Some scholars have examined the Book of Mormon and concluded that it doesn’t provide much that is new by way of distinctive LDS doctrine. Bloom, for example, says “it has only a very limited relationship to the doctrines” of the Church (1992, 82). And Givens, who recognizes the book’s contribution to doctrinal understanding, nonetheless also observes that its significance to the new faith wasn’t so much in the “theological novelty of its teachings” but rather in the importance it had in signaling “a new Christian dispensation” (2009, 105-106)⁴, with the book being a concrete evidence of the prophet Joseph Smith’s revelatory role (2009, 105-106). He further explains that the greater doctrinal differences were introduced through the other books of scripture brought forth by Joseph Smith: the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price (2009, 107). But even if it is true that the Book of Mormon didn’t contain much that was doctrinally distinctive in its religious discourses, this may overlook a substantial metaphorical network that provides a distinctive prism by which the book’s believers interpret and understand their lives.

In the discussion that follows, we shall identify and discuss several of the root metaphors within the LDS

scriptural canon, especially in the scriptures revealed through Joseph Smith, and some crucial implications that grow from or are integrally connected with these metaphors.

The Journey Metaphor

One of the foundational metaphors in the doctrine of the Church is the journey metaphor. Arrington, who analyzed an early hymnal of the Latter-day Saints, explains that while other metaphors were present, including a conflict metaphor, the “expressions related to the *journey* were most prevalent” (2006, 27-28).

The journey metaphor is repeatedly illustrated in the Book of Mormon⁵, with reference to literal journeys that people had to take as they sought to obey the Lord’s will. Indeed, almost from the beginning of the book we see Lehi’s family leaving the wickedness of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. for a promised land. In that instance, the young prophet Nephi compares his family’s exodus to the earlier exodus by Moses and the children of Israel from Egypt (1 Nephi 17:23-29, 43-44). As Boehm points out, the “continuing exodus” theme in the Book of Mormon is a metaphor for our spiritual lives (1994, 203). The journey and exodus metaphor is further reinforced for members of the Church in their own church history as the early Latter-day Saints encountered opposition and were forced from their homes in unsuccessful attempts to establish their Zion in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, eventually making an epic trek to establish a new Zion in the Rocky Mountains. The journey metaphor is very much a part of LDS consciousness today, as the previous scriptural and historical examples are overlaid with a more recent pioneer legacy, whether the modern context is applied to recent converts to the church who are the first in their family or community to embrace the gospel or to life-long members who must continue to endure to the end.

The metaphor that sees life as a journey is one that is shared with other faiths. Christians speak of the strait gate and narrow way that leads to God (cf. Matt. 7:13-14), a journey which culminates in a blessed state or perhaps even a heavenly “new Jerusalem” (cf. Rev. 3:12; Rev. 21). In Proverbs we read how the Lord will “direct [our] paths” if we trust in and acknowledge Him (3:5-6). But the LDS use of the journey metaphor differs in some ways that provide a uniquely LDS perspective.

Some Distinctive Features of the LDS Journey Metaphor

Three of the most important and distinctive features of the LDS journey are 1) the word of God as a crucial factor in the forward progression on the path leading to eternal life in God’s presence, 2) the understanding of the journey’s destination, and 3) the enabling power of covenants in the journey. These distinctive features carry some implications of their own, which we shall also consider.

The Crucial Role of the Word of God in Forward Progression. A very important feature of the journey metaphor for Latter-day Saints is the considerable importance placed on the word of God as necessary for their forward progression. It is true that other biblically-based faiths associate the word of God with the journey metaphor. We can, for example, note the Psalm that says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (119:105). But the Book of Mormon gives significant prominence to the important connection between the word of God and forward progression on the journey, even incorporating it into the narrative itself. In a vision recorded in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi saw people pursuing a path that eventually led to a Tree of Life whose fruit was “desirable above all other fruit.” Those who wished to journey successfully to the Tree of Life and partake of its fruit had to grasp and hold firmly to an iron rod, which represented the word of God. If they did not hold onto it, they would be overcome by a mist of darkness, causing them to “lose their way” (1 Nephi 8; cf. also 1 Nephi 11 and 1 Nephi 15:21-36 for the interpretation of the vision).

This Book of Mormon teaching about the iron rod and the necessity of holding it tightly is emphasized in one of the Church’s official hymns, a portion of which is included below:

While on our journey here below,
Beneath temptation’s pow’r,
Through mists of darkness we must go,
In peril ev’ry hour.
*Hold to the rod, the iron rod;
‘Tis strong, and bright, and true.
The iron rod is the word of God;
‘Twill safely guide us through.* [Italics ours]
(Townsend 1985, Hymn #274)

The vital nature of the word of God in the journey

metaphor is evident not only in the scriptural account of Lehi's vision, but also in the fact that the Lord commanded Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass, which contained the "record of the Jews," including the writings of the prophets (1 Nephi 3:2-4; cf. 1 Nephi 5:10-16). This was a dangerous errand, but the Book of Mormon makes it clear that without the brass record containing God's words, Lehi's descendants would "perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

The importance of the iron rod or word of God is further emphasized in the beginning of the Book of Mormon when Lehi's family has another experience that serves as a type or foreshadowing of what is to come. Before pursuing their journey further, which would ultimately take them to the American continent, they woke up one morning and found a "ball of curious workmanship" outside their tents. This ball, or compass, called the Liahona⁶, would point the direction they should go and would display written instructions for them. But it only worked as they were faithful and obedient (1 Nephi 16:10, 28-29). The symbolism of this on a larger level was noted by a later Book of Mormon prophet, Alma:

And now, my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual.

For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land.

And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. (Alma 37:43-45)

In this teaching of Alma, Latter-day Saints learn that the words of Christ point to the Promised Land, serving a purpose like the iron rod in Lehi's dream. But the words of Christ, as understood by Latter-day

Saints, are not limited to those recorded in ancient prophetic writings but also include the words of living prophets and church leaders, and personal inspiration or revelation.

The Distinctive Destination of the LDS Journey

Metaphor: The LDS journey metaphor differs from other Christian journey metaphors in its view of the ultimate destination. According to LDS doctrine, God has a plan for His children that involves not only returning to His presence but becoming like Him. This is achieved through a plan that is referred to by various names in the Book of Mormon, including "the great plan of happiness" (cf. Alma 42:8), "the plan of salvation" (Jarom 1:2), and "the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:30). Joseph Smith taught that "happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it" (1938, 255). At the center of this plan of happiness is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The growth and development that Latter-day Saints expect and strive to undergo is reminiscent of the biblical injunction, "Be ye therefore perfect" (Matt. 5:48). In the Book of Mormon's record of Christ's ministry among the people in the Americas we find Him teaching the people not merely to follow His example of conduct but to become like Him, using what even seems like a kind of word play on His name or title "I AM" to reinforce this idea: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

The LDS journey metaphor is thus not just about accepting Christ, repenting of sins, and being cleansed, though these are crucial elements. It is also about sustained efforts to learn about and achieve a nature and state similar to His. Elder Oaks explains that "to be admitted to [the Lord's] presence, we must be more than clean. We must also be changed from a morally weak person who has transgressed into a strong person with the spiritual stature to dwell in the presence of God" (2002, 127)⁷. Elsewhere, Oaks notes:

To come unto Christ is not satisfied by a mere confession or declaration of belief in Him. It means to *follow* Him in order to become as He is. As we seek to follow in His footsteps, we are reminded that He "received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" ([Doctrine and Covenants]

93:13). So it must be with us, His followers. (1998b, 75-76)

Wilcox emphasizes the connection between this kind of change and the grace of Christ: “Christian friends ask me if I have been saved by grace. I always answer, ‘Yes—absolutely.’ Then I occasionally ask them if they have been *changed* by grace. We must never be so content to be saved by grace that we overlook the fact we must also be redeemed by grace” (2009, 74).

One significance of a journey in which someone becomes more like God is, as Mormons might see it, that such a person can begin to have a greater understanding of God and His ways, and this relates to eternal life (cf. [John 17:3](#)).

The Enabling Power of Covenants in the Journey:

Latter-day Saints believe the process of becoming like God involves making and keeping covenants, or two-way promises with God. Some covenants, as Elder McConkie has observed, are a part of particular commandments such as Sabbath day observance (cf. [Exod. 31:16](#) and [Doctrine and Covenants 59:9-20](#)), the payment of tithes ([Mal. 3:7-12](#)), and the Word of Wisdom [the LDS health code that among other things includes abstention from coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco] ([Doctrine and Covenants 89](#)) (1966, 167). But other very significant ones are formalized as part of essential priesthood ordinances such as baptism, as well as later ordinances with their associated covenants that are performed in Latter-day Saint temples. Although many Christian churches maintain the necessity of certain covenantal ordinances, the role and extent of covenants among the Latter-day Saints are integral to their view of the journey. Elder Hunter, who later became president of the Church, taught that “the ordinances and covenants are the means to achieving that divine nature that will return us into [the Lord’s] presence again” (1997, 218). It should be noted here that he didn’t merely express the necessity of performing certain ritualistic ordinances for salvation but instead tied the performance of covenantal ordinances to achieving a divine nature that enables individuals to return to God. The role of covenants in forward progression has an ongoing significance by which Latter-day Saints’ conduct and progression is regularly measured and renewed. Each week, for example, the members of the Church renew covenants as they partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. And attendance at the temples of the Church

(distinct from the weekly houses of worship) requires adherence to covenants church members have previously made.

The Book of Mormon tells us to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” ([Moroni 10:32](#)). In relation to the forward progression that is enabled through the making and keeping of covenants, it is perhaps etymologically significant that the Latin root “-ven-” in *covenant* means “come.” The connection between covenants and spiritual progression in each person’s journey could also be symbolically reinforced for Latter-day Saints through a detail of the pioneers’ historical trek west. Before leading the Saints West, the prophet Brigham Young revealed that the people should covenant to live the Lord’s commandments:

The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West:

Let all the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and those who journey with them, be organized into companies, with a covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God . . .

And this shall be our covenant—that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord. ([Doctrine and Covenants 136: 1-2, 4](#))

In this scriptural instruction, covenants were required for the Saints to progress towards their Zion destination. This has symbolic significance for the earthly journey.

One of the features of covenants that are associated with specific ordinances in the Church is that they are made available according to the worthiness and preparation of those who would make those covenants, with some ordinances and covenants being preliminary to others. Thus for example, one who wishes to be baptized and make the covenants associated with that ordinance must demonstrate a commitment to the doctrine and basic commandments of the Church. The temple covenants and ordinances associated with eternal marriage are not available for new members of the Church but require a period of demonstrated commitment to gospel teachings and commandments and further preparation. Elder McConkie explains that “the more faithful and devoted a person is, the more of the covenants of the Lord he is enabled to

receive, until he receives them in full” (1966, 167). This framework by which Latter-day Saints progress through covenants seems evident in the instruction of Elder Packer, who uses a journey metaphor to convey the idea: “Be faithful to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. Qualify for those sacred ordinances step by step as you move through life” (2008, 87).

Implications

We shall now consider some implications of the journey metaphor as it is developed in the LDS scriptures and the words of church leaders.

The Book of Mormon’s development of the journey metaphor fosters the idea that people should regularly have contact with the word of God. This is apparent not only in the previously mentioned vision of Lehi in which he saw people pressing forward to the Tree of Life by grasping the iron rod (the word of God), but is also reinforced through more overt doctrinal exhortation: “Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

The personal commitment that each person should demonstrate in continually “feasting upon the word” (holding to the iron rod) and pressing forward is also supported by another Book of Mormon metaphor about planting and nurturing a seed, which is identified as “the word.” In Alma chapter 32 we read the words of the prophet Alma, who invites the people to try “an experiment” by planting the seed and nourishing it. In the metaphor, he explains that they must nourish the seed (and subsequent tree) regularly to see whether it is a good seed. If they don’t, it will not grow, and they will never know whether the seed was a good one or not. If they nurture the seed (and subsequent tree) and it grows, they will then know that it was a good seed, and if they continue to take care of the tree in faith, being patient and diligent, it will grow to a point that they will be able to eat of the fruit, which is precious above all fruit (32:41–42).

The close relationship this seed metaphor has with the journey metaphor in Lehi’s dream, more particularly with regard to the rod of iron, has been noted by at least one church leader (cf. Bateman 1992, 28). But this connection is also evident in the fact that the seed metaphor refers to the potential plant as one that can grow into a “tree springing up unto everlasting life”

(Alma 32:41). It should be recalled that the Tree of Life and its fruit were the desired goal of those who were pressing forward with the iron rod. In both metaphors, personal responsibility and ongoing efforts are required.

The Church teaches that people should foster their spiritual strength and inspiration by praying and reading their scriptures daily. But even if this instruction were not overtly given, the journey metaphor and the related seed metaphor in the Book of Mormon teach this in a memorable way.

Personal revelation is available to each person as a guide on the journey but requires individual preparation. The Book of Mormon shows that each person has the opportunity for spiritual confirmation of truths they have received. This opportunity is in fact a significant part of the message that LDS missionaries share with those whom they teach. When Lehi had his dream and his son Nephi also wanted to have the same vision, that desire was soon granted (1 Nephi 11:1–6). This kind of opportunity for revelatory confirmation is also evident at the end of the book when the last prophet writer, Moroni, invites the reader to ask God whether the contents of the book are true (Moroni 10:3–5). In fact, Givens explains that “the Book of Mormon served to initiate susceptible readers into a new paradigm of personal revelation” (2002, 228)⁸. Although other religions of Joseph Smith’s time had the notion of personal revelation, the Saints had this doctrine in their book of scripture (2002, 231), which didn’t limit that type of experience to prophets “acting in the role of national leadership,” as we see in the Old Testament, but to anyone who would ask for it (2002, 220–21). Speaking on this topic Givens explains:

That may well be the Book of Mormon’s most significant and revolutionary—as well as controversial—contribution to religious thinking. The particularity and specificity, the vividness, the concreteness, and the accessibility of revelatory experience—those realities both underlie and overshadow the narrated history and doctrine that constitute the record. The “knowability” of all truth, the openness of mystery, the reality of personal revelation find vivid illustration within the record and invite reenactment outside it. (2002, 221)

Givens reminds us that Joseph Smith himself had ear-

lier experienced personal revelation in his own “first vision” as a fourteen-year-old boy (2002, 233-34).

The Book of Mormon also makes it clear, however, that personal inspiration and revelation require preparation and obedience. This is evident in the earlier mentioned example of the Liahona, but it is also seen in a conversation between Nephi, the righteous son of Lehi, and his wicked brothers who commented to him that the Lord hadn’t revealed certain things to them. To these brothers Nephi explains:

How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?

Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you. (1 Nephi 15:10-11)

Modern revelation to Joseph Smith also confirms that what individuals are able to learn in spiritual matters is dependent not only on diligence but obedience as well (Doctrine and Covenants 130:19).

The journey to the Tree of Life takes ongoing faithfulness, effort, and time. It is not completed by a mere confession of faith. As important as faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism are, they also require that individuals continue in the path and endure to the end. In the LDS view, their efforts must be regular and constant. A Book of Mormon passage explains the following (a portion of which we quoted earlier):

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

(2 Nephi 31:19-20)

Spencer W. Kimball, who served as the president of the Church, comments on the length and ongoing commitment that the journey would require from individuals:

Perfection is a long, hard journey with many pitfalls. It’s not attainable overnight. Eternal vigilance is the price of victory. Eternal vigilance is required in the subduing of enemies and in becoming the master of oneself. It cannot be accomplished in little spurts and disconnected efforts. There must be constant and valiant, purposeful living—righteous living. (1982, 29)

Similarly, the Latter-day Saints generally view personal religious conviction as something that is ongoing through regular and continued experiences that reinforce understanding and belief (testimony). It is true that, as Givens notes, when Latter-day Saints refer to their conversion, they are generally speaking about a specific moment when they received a spiritual confirmation of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith or that the Book of Mormon or the Church is true (2007, 26). But that experience only serves as a beginning to a lifetime of effort to grow in their testimony.

The idea of an extended journey also entails that there would be time for people to reflect on their progress in the journey, including their direction and personal momentum on the path (cf. Arrington 2006, 129-30). President Heber J. Grant, another modern prophet, said:

The all-important thing for you and me is to discover whether we are walking in the straight and narrow path that leads to life eternal, and if we are not, wherein have we allowed the adversary to blind our minds and to cause us to depart from that path which will lead us back into the presence of God? Each one should search his own heart to find out wherein he has failed, and then he should diligently seek our Heavenly Father for the assistance of His Holy Spirit, that he may come back into the straight path. (2002, 31)

The notion of an extended journey also includes the idea that there are others passing along the same path, some at the same time, and others farther ahead or

behind. Given the difficulty of the journey and some of the inherent risks associated with it, it is important to help others. Henry B. Eyring, a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, explains: “So you and I can expect a nearly continuous opportunity to help travelers among God’s children . . . through the mists which sin and Satan create” (2010, 22). This might, for example, involve missionary efforts in helping someone to find the path, or it might involve parents teaching the gospel to their children. In [Proverbs 22:6](#), we find the instruction to “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Eyring also notes the powerful role of families in putting children’s feet “firmly on the path” (2010, 23). Rosemary M. Wixom of the Primary General Presidency expressed her concern for children when she said, “For children all over the world, we say: ‘Take my hand. Hold on tight. We will stay on the path together back to our Heavenly Father.’” She explained to the adults that “We begin to make the plan known to our children when we hold tight to the iron rod ourselves” (2010, 9).

The concern for others also relates to the vast initiative of temple work for the dead, wherein members of the Church do ordinances such as baptisms as proxies for those who have died without the opportunity for the necessary ordinance. Mormons believe that the beneficiaries of these ordinances have the personal choice as to whether they will recognize and accept such ordinances on their behalf.

Because of the enabling power and necessity of covenants and their associated ordinances to forward progression, Latter-day Saints are motivated to make any necessary sacrifice to receive them and make them available to others. The history of the Church is replete with examples of those who have travelled great distances at great personal cost and sacrifice to complete ordinances and make covenants that can only be made in temples. Others have sacrificed earthly honors, position, or wealth to honor covenants they have already made. But their efforts don’t end with their efforts for themselves and their own families. Their belief in the importance of the gospel and its ordinances and covenants prompts them to make the necessary efforts and sacrifices to share these blessings with others through missionary work and even through temple work in behalf of those who have died before having an opportunity to receive the necessary ordinances and covenants.

Both grace and works are necessary for people to reach their divine destination. A close examination of the Mormon journey metaphor can also yield a greater understanding of the role of works in their doctrine and theology. Despite Latter-day Saints’ assertion that their view of salvation recognizes the necessity of the Savior’s grace, other Christians are sometimes suspicious of this professed belief because it doesn’t seem to account for the heavy emphasis in the Church on works. Unfortunately, the debate is often cast in terms of whether salvation is dependent on either grace or works. But the debate is perhaps incorrectly cast because it is framed within two separate metaphors: the evangelical metaphor involves a journey to a destination in which someone has been cleansed and allowed to live with God and Christ; the Mormon metaphor involves a journey back to God and Christ that includes not only cleansing but also personal change, growth, and development. The Book of Mormon teaches that the humble who have faith in Christ will see their “weak things become strong unto them” through the grace of Christ ([Ether 12:27](#)). Furthermore, as Church members are taught, the Bible explains that people can know of the doctrine of God by doing the will of God ([John 7:17](#)). In the LDS view, efforts to live in accordance with the Lord’s teachings and commandments, as previously noted, have the benefit of opening up the channels of personal revelation and inspiration, sources of the word of God that can further direct people along the path. Thus the transformation individuals experience on the journey results from turning towards Him and doing the kinds of things He did, not to earn but to learn—and to become like Him. Wilcox expresses this view well when he observes: “Scriptures make it clear that our works are a significant factor in where we end up. However, this is not because of what our works earn us, but because of how they shape us” (2009, 112).

The Battle Metaphor

As with many other Christians, the Mormons have battle metaphors, evident for example, in a few songs with military metaphors such as “Onward Christian Soldiers” in their hymnals. Both the Book of Mormon and the Bible contain literal descriptions of battles, and both books present battle metaphors that teach the need to act valiantly in resisting evil and defending goodness. We can see Paul’s famous example in Ephesians of putting on “the whole armour of God” (6:11-17) and the Book of Mormon’s instruction to

“put on the armor of righteousness” (2 Nephi 1:23). We also see a parallel between the Book of Mormon prophet Alma, who saw that the word of God would have a “more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword” (Alma 31:5), and Paul’s metaphor in which the sword of the Spirit is actually identified as the word of God (Eph. 6:17). In the Book of Mormon the word of God is also identified metaphorically as a sword but one that allows forward progression on the path to God (cf. Rust 1997, 189) (thus similar to what was shown with the iron rod in the journey metaphor):

Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked. (Helaman 3:29)

The word of God in the Book of Mormon journey metaphor is thus linked with the battle metaphor. And whether we speak of the word of God as the iron rod or a sword, both must be grasped tightly.

Given the Book of Mormon’s interweaving of the journey and battle metaphors in regard to forward progression, the Apostle Paul’s letter to Timothy, which also seems to connect the two metaphors, acquires an added significance: “I have fought a good **fight**, I have finished my **course**, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7) [Boldface ours]. Integral to keeping the faith is the freedom to worship God. And in another significant aspect of the battle metaphor, some of the highlighted battles in the Book of Mormon are, at least in part, about preserving religious freedom⁹.

Some Distinctive Features of the LDS Battle Metaphor

The Mormon use of the battle or war metaphor is framed around agency (the freedom to make choices). The Latter-day Saint view doesn’t merely acknowledge that people use their agency in making choices in this life, but instead also sees agency as one of the very issues over which the battle has been fought since before this earthly existence. The Book of Mormon teaches that as part of the Lord’s plan everyone in this life encounters opposition from a real being, the Devil (2 Nephi 2:16-18; 2 Nephi 28:19-23; cf. also Doctrine and Covenants 29:39), who seeks to enslave us

through sin (2 Nephi 2:27; 2 Nephi 28:19-22).

The nature of Satan’s opposition to the plan is clarified further in the LDS scriptural book, *the Pearl of Great Price*. In its Book of Moses and Book of Abraham, we are told about the great pre-earthly council in heaven that led to the war in heaven mentioned in the book of Revelation (12:7-12). Very importantly, we learn that at that time, Satan had proposed an alternative plan that would deprive people of agency, the freedom to choose (Moses 4:1-4). The Book of Abraham explains that human beings existed as spirits before their life on earth and that the Lord’s plan involved their coming down to earth to be tested “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:22-28). Moreover, as part of everyone’s test, they have had a veil cast over their mind that has caused them temporarily to forget their previous existence, and prevents them from seeing God, which allows them to develop faith (cf., for example, Ether 3:19-20; 12:19).

Implications

We shall now consider some implications of the LDS battle/war metaphor.

One important implication in the LDS battle metaphor is that key figures and events in the Lord’s plan would encounter intense opposition from Satan. The devil and his hosts have a recollection of the council in heaven, the plan that was prepared for those who would inhabit this earth, and the key figures who would help carry out that plan. The Book of Revelation actually warns the “inhabitants of the earth” that “the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (12:12). While it is commonly assumed that the Devil and his supporters would oppose all who strive to do what is right, it is also reasonable to assume that there would be key events, individuals, and institutions that would be especially targeted. These would be crucial parts of the Lord’s plan and would already be known to the forces of evil as a threat to their evil designs. Such targets would especially include those major prophets of the past who opened each new dispensation of the gospel. Elder Romney, at that time a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, observed that “at the opening of every dispensation [Satan] has made a frontal attack against the advent of truth” (1971, 24). We can see this, for example, in the “first vision” account that the prophet Joseph Smith

provides about how in his initial prayer for guidance he was assaulted by a being to such a degree that until the heavenly light with the personages of the Father and the Son appeared and he was rescued, he thought he would die (Joseph Smith—History [[Pearl of Great Price](#)], 15-17). Joseph's life's mission, as Mormons recognize it, included restoring the Lord's church and priesthood authority, which had been lost from the earth, and revealing additional scripture. He was ultimately martyred after completing his work. Of course the greatest threat to Satan's plans comes from the Savior Himself¹⁰ as he paid the necessary price to rescue humanity and make salvation possible. Elder Callister notes:

With merciless fury Satan's forces must have attacked the Savior on all fronts—frantically, diabolically, seeking a vulnerable spot, a weakness, an Achilles' heel through which they might inflict a “mortal” wound, all in hopes they could halt the impending charge, but it was not to be. The Savior pressed forward in bold assault until every prisoner was freed from the tenacious tentacles of the Evil One. (2000, 130)

It might also be expected that Satan would wish to interfere with the institutional Church that teaches about the Lord's plan, carries His priesthood authority, and performs His ordinances with their associated covenants that enable people to progress back to the Lord's presence. Mormons view the persecution of the early Christian church and the persecution endured by the Latter-day Saints as similarly motivated. Historically, we can see some startling examples of persecution directed towards the Church and its members, including an extermination order issued by the governor of the state of Missouri, where Latter-day Saints were living at the time ([Whitman 1992](#)). With regard to covenants, which are so crucial to forward progression, and which church leaders have indicated provide protection when kept (cf., e.g., [Benson 1988, 150](#); [Bednar 2009, 99-100](#)), from an LDS viewpoint it would make sense that temples, where particularly sacred ordinances and covenants are solemnized, would occasion particularly intense opposition or persecution¹¹.

The word of God is vital to people's spiritual survival against an enemy that would otherwise have an advantage against them. Latter-day Saints believe that with the veil that has been placed over every person's

memory and caused them to forget their previous existence, including the knowledge of the Lord's plan for His children, people are dependent on the word of God, for what they know about the pre-earth life, the Lord's plan, and their role in that plan. Such knowledge, which is available to them through the scriptures and the inspired words of church leaders, is essential for them to prevail in the battle. Without it they are at a disadvantage. Elder McConkie in his book, *Mormon Doctrine*, explains: “As part of the testing incident to mortal existence, man for the moment has forgotten the great truths which were commonplace to him in pre-existence [pre-earth life]. Thus Satan's power over men is a result of his superior knowledge” (1966, 195).

This is not to say that Satan has the ultimate or lasting advantage, but it does seem to indicate that the word of God would be essential in vanquishing him, just as the book of Revelation indicates that Satan was defeated in the war in heaven by “the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” ([Rev. 12:11](#)). As previously noted with regard to the Armor of God metaphor in Ephesians, the word of God is provided as a synonym for the sword of the Spirit. Willful ignorance of the Lord's word leaves people vulnerable. Elder Packer provides a related metaphor that seems to strengthen the implication about the necessity of accessing the word of God. He likens the situation of someone in this life who is without an understanding of the Lord's plan to a disoriented person in a play with three acts (corresponding roughly to pre-earth life, earth life, and the after-life), whose vulnerability to “the disease of doubt and despair and depression” in this life, could be reduced if that person were aware of the Lord's plan for His children:

In mortality, we are like one who enters a theatre just as the curtain goes up on the second act. We have missed Act I. The production has many plots and sub-plots that interweave, making it difficult to figure out who relates to whom and what relates to what, who are the heroes and who are the villains. It is further complicated because you are not just a spectator; you are a member of the cast, on stage, in the middle of it all! (2008, 3)

Elder Packer's metaphor, though different from the battle metaphor in some respects, emphasizes the same implication about each individual's need for the protective benefit of the word of God. Ignorance of His word, if left unmitigated, makes people vulner-

able to destructive influences. Elder Packer has also noted that “there is no greater protection from the adversary than truth, to know the plan of salvation” (2008, 213). Significantly, the battle metaphor’s implication of the vital role of the word of God further connects the battle metaphor with the iron rod within the journey metaphor.

One important implication in the LDS battle metaphor is that good works are insufficient by themselves for salvation. It has been a common claim by some outside the Church that Latter-day Saints think they can be saved by works, or at least that their beliefs about salvation attach too much significance to the role of works (cf., for example, [Blomberg and Robinson 1997, 175-76](#))¹². While it is true that some works figure into the LDS doctrine of salvation (for example, ordinances such as baptism must be performed, and people must strive to keep the Lord’s commandments), the doctrine of the Church nonetheless teaches the necessary role of grace in salvation. Significantly, with regard to the LDS battle metaphor, the Latter-day Saints’ recognition of the futility of Satan’s plan of compulsion to do what is right as a means to salvation is evidence of their view that works in themselves are not sufficient for salvation (cf. [Wilcox 2009, 79](#))¹³. The Book of Mormon confirms the necessity of grace when it teaches that “it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). This grace is not only important in cleansing people from sin but, as we have noted, in enabling them to make personal improvements in their lives.

Another important implication of the battle metaphor is that people must be wary of threats to their freedoms or personal agency, whether through repressive governments or addictive substances. The drama of life is not viewed as merely the conflict between good and evil, but rather a conflict with an organized adversary whose evil plans and designs precede their mortal existence and who has tricks and stratagems to enslave and destroy them. Elder Lee of the Quorum of the Twelve, who later became a president of the Church, discusses agency both with regard to governments and personal addictions and the role Satan has in enslaving people:

His mission, then, was to destroy the agency of man. I think when I see the hand of dictatorship laid bare and the ugly monster that would subvert all mankind to the will of such dictator-

ship, I fancy I see in that nation thus guided the evidence of that power of this one who would thus destroy agency. When I see in an individual one who has been overcome largely because of habits or because of his becoming a slave to his passions or his appetites, I realize as well the person thus enslaved likewise has succumbed to the dominion of Satan’s power. (1996, 183)

Elder Packer has provided a similar warning about narcotic addiction (2008, 206), but the principle would clearly apply to any seriously addictive influences.

But the framing of the battle metaphor is not exclusively found in the issue of agency. Agency is just one part, though a very important part, of the Lord’s plan of happiness for His children. Other key parts of the plan, such as an understanding of the Savior and His atonement, are also seen by Latter-day Saints to be particularly targeted. Under the Church’s website entry on “Satan,” we find the following:

He directs his most strenuous opposition at the most important aspects of Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness. For example, he seeks to discredit the Savior and the priesthood, to cast doubt on the power of the Atonement, to counterfeit revelation, to distract us from the truth, and to contradict individual accountability. He attempts to undermine the family by confusing gender, promoting sexual relations outside of marriage, ridiculing marriage, and discouraging childbearing by married adults who would otherwise raise children in righteousness¹⁴.

A resulting logic from the way the battle metaphor is framed is the need for people to take sides and exercise their agency proactively in furthering the Lord’s cause, whether through missionary efforts on behalf of others of God’s children, furthering various righteous initiatives, or engaging in positive acts of service. For Latter-day Saints to acknowledge the importance of agency and respect the right of others to make their own choices is not to say that Latter-day Saints are to take a passive stance in the midst of evil or destructive forces in the society or world around them. Elder Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve has explained:

We must realize that we are at war. The war began before the world was, and it will continue.

The forces of the adversary are extant upon the earth. All of our virtuous motives, if transmitted only by inertia and timidity, are no match for the resolute wickedness of those who oppose us. (1988, 99)

The importance of people's exercising their agency in the furtherance of good is emphasized in one of the most quoted passages of scripture in the Church, which explains that people are "agents unto themselves" and that they should be "anxiously engaged in a good cause" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 58:27-28).

In a general conference address given by Elder Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve, priesthood holders, including the youth, were specifically admonished to prepare themselves spiritually for the battle they would wage through missionary work:

We are at war, and for these next few minutes, I want to be a one-man recruiting station . . . we want battalions who will take as their weapons "every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (2011, 44-45)

The significance of the battle metaphor and the pervasive descriptions of battles in the Book of Mormon have led many to look for spiritual symbolism and significance even in some of the details of the Book of Mormon battle accounts. One popular youth speaker, for example, has published an entire book that discusses the war chapters from the Book of Mormon, showing the various spiritual lessons that we can gain from those chapters (*Bytheway* 2004).

The Container Metaphor

In Lakoff and Johnson's classification, a significant root metaphor is the metaphor of the container. The term "container" includes not only objects with physical edges, shapes, and boundaries, but also other activities, events, or states that have boundaries of one kind or another with respect to which someone or something may be considered to be inside or outside (2003, 29-32).

The container metaphor has at least two different aspects to it. It may be discussed in ways related to a container's capacity, or it may be used with reference to people or entities that move in or out of a container. Both of these aspects of the container metaphor are

used by Latter-day Saints and other Christians. For example, both groups view the physical body as something that can be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Indeed, the Bible refers to people's bodies as temples of God that must not be defiled:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

The container metaphor is also used for other blessings that the righteous and obedient may receive. In *Malachi* 3:8-10, the obedient who pay tithes (and offerings) are promised a blessing so great that "there shall not be room enough to receive it." And elsewhere those who are obedient are promised a fullness of joy:

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (*John* 15:10-11)

The other aspect of the container metaphor, the movement of people or elements with regard to the container, is evident, for example, in the desire of Latter-day Saints and other Christians to "enter into the kingdom of heaven" (cf. *Matt.* 7:21; 18:3).

Some Distinctive Features of the LDS Container Metaphor

Mormon doctrine is distinctive in the way it develops the container metaphor. The LDS metaphor of containers, whether speaking of revealed truth, the institutional church, or even the potential development of individuals, often conveys an unlimited capacity for expansion. With regard to the development of individuals, Smith observed that "all the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement" (1938, 354). The metaphors of expanding containers can be framed in relation to the journey metaphor's idea of progression whereby each person can gradually increase their measure of divine attributes, becoming like God.

The expanding container is also related to the LDS notion of the scriptural canon. In the Book of Mor-

mon the Lord chastises people for assuming that the scriptural record is finite and complete:

And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. (2 Nephi 29:9)

It isn't too hard to imagine that among those of other churches who regard the Bible as the sole word of God, this passage from the Book of Mormon would be alarming. David F. Holland has noted "a natural antagonism between the guardians of canon and those who would breach its border" (2011, 145).

Another aspect of the container metaphor is related to the covenant relationship that members of the Church perceive themselves to have with God. They do not merely see themselves as entering the Church organization and the metaphorical flock but into covenants as well. President Joseph Fielding Smith, speaking to members of the Church said, "We are brothers and sisters, the children of God, who have come out, as I have said, from the world to enter into covenants" (2013, 256). We noted earlier that covenants are connected in the journey metaphor with forward progress. Thus the container notion of entering covenants is vital.

Implications

We shall now consider some additional implications of the LDS container metaphor.

The LDS metaphor of an expanding container is suggestive of a view that salvation and damnation are not about whether individuals achieve a static condition but rather whether they achieve a dynamic condition. Although on one level the LDS use of the term *salvation* is comparable to the way other Christians use the term, for Latter-day Saints one sense of the word *salvation* refers to exaltation (Oaks 1998a). This blessed state involves not only life with God but also living as He lives, a dynamic condition that allows a continuation of families and increase, a continued progression of sorts. On the other hand, damnation is a static condition in which any forward

progression or increase is stopped.

The LDS view of an expanding container suggests an interaction of grace and works. In the Doctrine and Covenants we find container metaphors that provide further support for an implication already noted with the journey metaphor: Both grace and works (phrased here as "obedience") are necessary for salvation in the fullest sense. Once again, their relationship is crucial in the development of each individual:

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. (Doctrine and Covenants 130:18-19)

For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace. . . . And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments. (Doctrine and Covenants 93:20, 27)

That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. (Doctrine and Covenants 50:24)

This is a further indication of the view that the LDS emphasis on works should not be construed as denying the salvific power and transforming grace of Christ, but instead acknowledges that the Lord has a plan for the highest possible development of His children, which also requires their active participation in self-improvement. The grace of Christ enables this improvement.

The LDS container metaphor suggests continued increase in the Church's doctrinal understanding and its growth. Latter-day Saints believe that the Lord's gospel, priesthood authority, and church were restored to the earth in a prophesied "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:20-21) that was foretold as the "dispensation of the fulness of times" in which the Lord would "gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). In the LDS view, this restora-

tion includes doctrines, powers, covenants, and blessings from previous eras (or “dispensations”) in which the Lord revealed His will to man (Maxwell 1992). One of the Articles of Faith of Mormonism states that “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (the Pearl of Great Price, 60). Although church members would probably view the Church’s doctrinal and organizational framework as now largely complete, they also recognize that their church is guided by a prophet who can receive additional revelation and guidance for the Church.

Furthermore, the organizational structure of the Church anticipates expansive membership growth. Indeed the Church uses the ecclesiastical organizational term “stake” based on Isaiah’s metaphor of ancient Israel as a tent (Isa. 54:2), a metaphor and scriptural passage that is repeated by the Savior in the Book of Mormon: “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes” (3 Nephi 22:2). This metaphor is suggestive of a structure that can be dramatically expanded and increased. And the extensive missionary effort of the Church unfolds within this dynamic.

The Restoration as the Master Metaphor

Perhaps the most significant LDS scriptural metaphor is the metaphor of restoration. This metaphor is of such primary significance that many other metaphors are subsumed under it. The central metaphor of restoration encompasses other semantic hyponyms or sub-metaphors, indeed a complex web of ideas that includes not only such concepts as redemption and resurrection, but also restitution, regeneration, recovery, repentance, recompense, reward, and remembering. All of these words and concepts, as the prefix *re-* manifests, involve a notion of movement toward or acquisition of some state again.

It might initially seem odd to consider the notion of “restoration” as a metaphor since we can visualize the notion of a restoration as a target concept that can itself be illuminated by other metaphors. But it seems that within the LDS scriptural canon, the notion of a restoration is itself sometimes used as a source concept to better understand other target concepts and thus operates metaphorically. The restoration meta-

phor is at the heart of the journey metaphor but also relates to the battle and container metaphors.

The Atonement of Christ as *Restoration*

The idea of restoration is centered in the mission of Jesus Christ, without whose atoning sacrifice and grace no salvific restoration or journey back to God’s presence would be possible. In the Pearl of Great Price we learn that the Lord’s plan for us is to provide immortality [a restoration from physical death] and eternal life [a redemption from spiritual death, a reversal of our separation from the presence of God] (cf. Moses 1:39).

In Mormon doctrine the death that each person experiences, which was introduced through Adam’s Fall, was a necessary part of the plan, for each person’s ultimate progression required that he or she experience mortality and a temporary separation from the presence of God. This latter condition allows, among other things, the development of faith. But without an atonement that would undo the effects of these two types of death, no one could ever return or be restored to dwell in the presence of God. Elder Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve explains that as we exercise faith and come unto Christ, the Lord’s grace “cleanses our garments, sanctifies our souls, saves us from death, and **restores** us to our divine origins” [Boldface ours] (1997, 338–39).

The resurrection, which the Book of Mormon calls a “restoration,” is not only literal (Alma 11: 42–44) but necessary for God’s children to experience a “fulness of joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:33–34). And Joseph Smith revealed that both the Father and the Son have physical bodies of flesh and bone (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Moreover, LDS doctrine teaches that everyone’s eventual resurrection with a body of flesh and bone was not only an essential part of the plan for people to become like God but also, as the Book of Mormon shows, to become less like Satan. For to live eternally without a physical body of flesh and bone would make individuals subject to that evil one whose rebellion in the pre-earth councils consigned him forever to a disembodied state (cf. 2 Nephi 9:8–9). In this regard we can see a compelling reason for the Savior’s grace in rescuing people’s physical as well as spiritual condition.

The belief in a literal resurrection has far-reaching effects. The prophet Joseph Smith explained that “the

fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (1938, 121). Elder Oaks explains that "this hope [of the resurrection] changes the whole perspective of mortal life. The assurance of resurrection and immortality affects how we look on the physical challenges of mortality, how we live our mortal lives, and how we relate to those around us" (2000, 15).

We have looked at Christ's role in providing a restoration from physical death. Now we shall briefly acknowledge His role in providing a restoration from spiritual death, which restoration not only allows people to become clean enough to enter God's presence again but also to become perfect beings. The Book of Mormon prophesied that "the Lord surely should come to redeem his people, but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins" (Helaman 5:10). As Hafen and Hafen have observed, "the Atonement is fundamentally a doctrine of human development, not a doctrine that simply erases black marks" (1994, 79). In considering the development of each individual as he or she overcomes opposition and death and presses forward to a limitless potential, we can see an integration of the journey metaphor, battle metaphor, and the expansive container metaphor, all within the larger restoration metaphor.

Divine Support as *Restoration*

Another aspect of the restoration, which gets less attention but is a distinctively LDS doctrine taught in the Book of Mormon, is how the Lord not only redeemed people from sin and death but also took upon Himself their infirmities, sadness, and sorrows. Elder Holland speaks of this in terms of a "rebirth" and "renewal" (1997, 224). This restoration is reminiscent of the scriptural passage in the New Testament: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28) and the Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament in which Isaiah prophesies that "surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4). But the Book of Mormon makes this restorative gift of the Savior even more clear and explicit in a prophecy:

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.

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind 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 succor his people according to their infirmities. (Alma 7:11-12)

Elder Bateman explains that "the Atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us" (2005, 76).

The Final Judgment as *Restoration*

The Book of Mormon also teaches that another important restoration will be the final judgment itself. That judgment will involve placing people where they belong, in large part because of the kind of person they are. In a discourse between the prophet Alma and his wayward son, we see this explanation:

And now behold, is the meaning of the word restoration to take a thing of a natural state and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature?

O, my son, this is not the case; but the meaning of the word restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful.

Therefore, my son, see that you 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. (Alma 41:12-14)

It is in this same chapter, verse 5, that we learn that each person will be restored to happiness and good or to evil according to one's desires for these. These passages help us understand the observation that Wilcox makes when he explains: "Scriptures teach that no unclean thing can enter into God's kingdom (see 3 Nephi 27:19), but no unchanged thing will even want

to” (2009, 76).

The Church as *Restoration*

The view of restoration also applies to the Lord’s Church, doctrines, and priesthood authority to act in the Lord’s name. The Church does not see itself as a reformation but instead a restoration in the sense that it has brought back elements that had been lost from the earth during a time of great apostasy. Barlow explains that the Mormons’ use of the term “restoration” differed from other “primitive gospel movements.” For example, the Campbellites’ use of the term was to indicate “a return to New Testament Christianity; Mormons meant a restoration of the truths, ordinances, and priesthood of all eras or ‘dispensations,’ including Old Testament ones. This distinctive direction bore fundamental implications for Smith’s view of the Bible and for future Mormon theology” (1991, 18). We have previously noted the significance of the prophesied “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:20–21) in relation to the container metaphor. Their connection is well illustrated in an observation that Mouw makes about the return of the “prophetic office,” which he connects with the notion of the open canon:

What we also need to see is that in restoring some of the features of Old Testament Israel, Mormonism has also restored the kinds of *authority patterns* that guided the life of Israel. The Old Testament people of God were not a people of the Book as such—mainly because for most of their history there *was* no completed Book. Ancient Israel was guided by an open canon and the leadership of the prophets. And it is precisely *this* pattern of communal authority that Mormonism restored. (2004, 11)

Another important part of the restoration were the covenants (1 Nephi 13:26, 35–40), with their blessings and special power to enable progression, a vital part of the journey metaphor.

Of course, the restoration metaphor also relates to the official name of the Church. In a name bestowed through revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 115:4), the Church is distinguished from the ancient Church and its members, who were then known as “Saints” (cf., for example, Eph. 1:1; Philip. 1:1). The title of the Church in this later era of restored knowledge, blessings, and authority is called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As part of the restoration of all things, special priest-

hood keys or authority were restored by those who had anciently held those keys. In the Doctrine and Covenants, for example, we learn that Moses appeared to Joseph Smith and restored the keys of the gathering of Israel (Doctrine and Covenants 110:11), part of the Lord’s “restoration of his people upon the earth” (2 Nephi 30:8; cf. also Doctrine and Covenants 84:2). The ancient prophet Elijah also returned to restore the keys of sealing powers by which families may be bound together for eternity (Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16; 138:46–48), a crucial restoration that anticipates the modern-day family history and temple work performed by Latter-day Saints for the living and the dead. This fulfilled the prophecy by Malachi that Elijah would be sent before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” and that “he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4: 5–6).

Mormon doctrine teaches that because of the restored priesthood keys, the ordinance work that is performed in temples in this life is recognized as valid in the next. The importance of this joining of the generations is revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants, which teaches that in the salvation of the human family, progenitors and their descendants are dependent on each other (cf. 128:15).

Webb has observed an important dimension of restoration in the temple activity of Latter-day Saints: “Temple sealings bring us back to Smith’s ambition to integrate everything that the world seems determined to disintegrate. It is as if Mormonism is fighting a rearguard action against the second law of thermodynamics, which states that even the most ordered parts of nature tend toward disorder” (2013, 156).

In the LDS view, the restoration of the Church with its associated doctrines, scripture, covenants, and priesthood authority is an important part of the Lord’s plan for the latter-days. We earlier noted the Book of Mormon explanation that “all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him” (2 Nephi 11:4). Few things given of God could be more significant than the restoration of His church. In this light then, we can see a metaphorical connection between the resurrected Lord and the LDS scriptural reference to the restored church as a “living church” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30).

The Symbol of the Cross and the Restoration

A consideration of the LDS restoration metaphor provides insights into a tradition that some outside the faith have found unusual for a religion that professes to be Christian. Some have wondered why the LDS iconographic tradition doesn't display the cross as other Christian churches often do with their sanctuaries, apparel, and other outward manifestations of faith. Latter-day Saints often respond to this by pointing out that they wish to emphasize the resurrection and the "living Christ" (cf., for example, Millet and Johnson 2007, 83-84)¹⁵ rather than foregrounding the implement associated with His death and suffering. While we agree with the view embodied within this response, we wish to explore this issue a little further, noting its possible relationship with the overarching theme and metaphor of restoration.

First of all, it should be clarified that the Latter-day Saints believe in the importance of the Savior's atoning sacrifice that occurred on the cross at Calvary, though they believe that His payment for people's sins, while culminating on the cross, began earlier in the garden of Gethsemane, where His inner torment actually caused Him to sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18). The absence of the cross in the iconography of the Latter-day Saints is not because they are unmindful of His immense suffering on the cross. The most important part of the weekly Sunday worship service is the partaking of the bread and water (symbols of his body and blood) to renew their covenants with Him as they commemorate His selfless sacrifice. As part of this sacrament service, one of the hymns that is commonly sung is one that is composed by an LDS poetess, who designed each stanza to begin with "upon the cross":

Upon the cross of Calvary
They crucified our Lord
And sealed with blood the sacrifice
That sanctified his word.

Upon the cross he meekly died
For all mankind to see
That death unlocks the passageway
Into eternity.

Upon the cross our Savior died,
But, dying, brought new birth
Through resurrection's miracle
To all the sons of earth. (Raile 1985, Hymn #184)
Moreover, Millet notes the variety of hymns in the

LDS hymnal that "focus specifically on our Lord's suffering and death" (2007, 111-12).

Latter-day Saints also understand that they must bear the cross of Christ. This is clear to them not only through the biblical injunction in Matthew 10:38 but also in a latter-day revelation that says, "And he that will not take up his cross and follow me, and keep my commandments, the same shall not be saved" (Doctrine and Covenants 56:2). But taking up the cross, of course, is not understood to be done through displaying an outward ornament or design but rather through an inward commitment to follow Him. Elder Schwitzer explains:

The Savior was clear when He stated that in following Him we should take upon ourselves a cross—not the Roman cross that was the instrument of death but our *own cross*, whereby we present a sacrifice to the Lord of our own heart to be obedient to His commandments.

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me," Jesus said, "is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). (2011, 27)

In this regard then, an important part of everyone's journey is bearing the cross, though the Bible and the Book of Mormon show that the burdens people bear because of Him are made to be light through Him (Matthew 11:29-30; Mosiah 24:14-15).

If Mormons don't make an outward display of the cross, what do they use to manifest their faith and devotion to Him? President Gordon B. Hinckley has provided the following explanation:

And so, because our Savior lives, we do not use the symbol of His death as the symbol of our faith. But what shall we use? No sign, no work of art, no representation of form is adequate to express the glory and the wonder of the Living Christ. He told us what that symbol should be when He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

As His followers, we cannot do a mean or shoddy or ungracious thing without tarnishing His image. Nor can we do a good and gracious and generous act without burnishing more brightly the symbol of Him whose name we have taken

upon ourselves. And so our lives must become a meaningful expression, the symbol of our declaration of our testimony of the Living Christ, the Eternal Son of the Living God. (2005, 6)

Thus although Latter-day Saints do not display the cross as an icon, it is still an important part of their symbolism. But their chosen way of displaying devotion to the Savior and His sacrifice is in their adherence to His teachings.

Now we shall return to the matter of the restoration and how this might also relate to the Latter-day Saint iconographic behavior with regard to the cross. We have noted the importance of the restoration metaphor to crucial Mormon doctrines. And as we reflect on the two parts of the Savior's atonement, specifically His suffering and death on the cross, as well as His resurrection, it becomes clear that of the two parts, the resurrection more closely and directly corresponds to the restoration metaphor. Indeed, the resurrection is that part of the atonement to which the various restoration ideas we have discussed relate symbolically. And in the Book of Mormon account of the resurrected Savior's visitation to the Americas we see that even as He teaches about His crucifixion on the cross, He draws a parallel between the cross and that part of the atonement that relates more directly to the restoration. More specifically, he compares His being lifted upon the cross to the way all people will one day be lifted up or resurrected to stand before Him and be judged:

And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. (3 Nephi 27:14)

It will be recalled that the Book of Mormon not only identifies the resurrection as a restoration (Alma 11:43-44), but it identifies the judgment as a restoration as well (Alma 41:3, 12-14). The restoration occurs in the final judgment as people are restored to the kind of state to which they belong. Thus the imagery of the cross is tied up in and points to the larger and more inclusive metaphor of restoration. We would therefore argue that given the LDS doctrinal emphasis on the concept of restoration and its pervasive metaphorical

integration into their belief system, it is quite natural that as Latter-day Saints remember and appreciate His atoning sacrifice, their focus would be more directly given to His resurrection. Thus while images of the cross are not generally displayed in LDS chapels and temples, paintings of the living Christ are. And while images of the cross are not commonly worn by members of the Church, they seek to symbolize their appreciation of the Lord's sacrifice and their devotion to Him through the way they live their lives.

Conclusion

Our discussion of LDS metaphors shows a broad-reaching conceptual framework that could help foster greater interfaith understanding of core LDS beliefs or customs that may seem peculiar or unorthodox to people in other faiths. The master metaphor of restoration integrates a web of sub-metaphors, including the journey, battle, and container metaphors in significant ways. The journey's destination is ultimately the restoration of each person. This journey, which strives to follow the plan of happiness designed by God, intersects with the battle metaphor in its reliance on the word of God (also known as the sword of the Spirit) and the need to exercise agency righteously in overcoming the opposition that stands in the way. Central to people's success and salvation is the atonement of Christ. The journey also relates to the container metaphor in the way that it relies on the word of God, including continuing revelation to Church leaders, and personal revelation to each individual, a paradigm that allows for an expanding canon of scripture for the general membership of the Church, and personal insight and understanding for individuals. The pursuit of the journey also involves the container metaphor as we recognize the need to enter covenant relationships, with the ultimate destination being a state of continued progression. These metaphors have their own implications and logic, at least a couple of which are repeated and reinforced in more than one metaphor, such as the importance of the word of God and the necessity of grace in addition to works.

The metaphors we have considered here provide a small sample from the great variety of metaphors in the LDS tradition. Many other interesting ones could be noted and discussed. Among these we could note the commonly used metaphor that speaks of the gospel restoration as daybreak; mortal life in terms of school; the chains of hell; the veil that separates us from the

earlier pre-earth and later existence after death; the metaphor of people who are instruments in the hand of God; the metaphor of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone or elsewhere as the Lamb of God; the metaphor of the Book of Mormon as the keystone of our religion (crucial to holding up an arch); the mantle of the prophet; and the idea of the field being white, all ready to harvest in missionary work. As with earlier metaphors that have been discussed, these ideas have logical consequences for the way that Latter-day Saints view the world and act. The extent and use of metaphorical understanding in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is indeed complex and pervasive. Some of these metaphors and associated doctrines are themselves a part of the modern-day restoration and can be seen as a renewal and an amplification of Christian metaphors, brought forth by the restoration of the gospel in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

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Endnotes

- [1] Revelations given primarily through the prophet

Joseph Smith, though containing revelations and inspired writings by a few of his prophet successors.

[2] A book of miscellaneous prophetic writings, including accounts attributed to Moses and Abraham that were revealed through the prophet Joseph Smith.

[3] The format of this book involves alternating author contributions. This quotation is from Robinson.

[4] In a similar vein, cf. Barlow 1991, 44-45. But cf. also Givens 2002, 198-99, where he discusses original doctrinal teachings in the Book of Mormon.

[5] For a review of some articles discussing the significance of the journey (exodus) metaphor in the Book of Mormon, cf. Boehm 1994.

[6] The name of this compass is provided later in the text, in Alma 37:38.

[7] Dallin H. Oaks is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As with other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or the Quorums of the Seventy, which are high level governing bodies of the Church, he will be referred to hereafter in this paper with the title of "Elder." In another point of clarification, we shall note here that Elder Oaks is not the same person as the first listed author of this paper, though the two are relatives.

[8] Givens discusses both the example of Nephi and Moroni. Cf. 2002, pages 221-23, 227-28.

[9] Cf. Alma 43:45-47; Alma 46:10-20; Alma 51:6; and Alma 61:14.

[10] In his discussion of Satan's attacks on "the advent of truth," Elder Romney mentions attacks on Joseph Smith and the Savior (1971, 24).

[11] For a discussion of some examples of opposition to temple building, cf. Hinckley 1986, 43-44; Hinckley 1985, 54.

[12] Blomberg, an Evangelical, explains that "Evangelicals fear that Mormons believe in salvation by works (or by faith plus works), attempting to earn salvation through personal merit rather than giving God all the credit for the process from start to finish." He does acknowledge, however, that "at the same time, we perceive various tensions within Mormon teachings on the topic" (1997, 175-76).

[13] Our point is similar to one made by Wilcox, though our terminology differs here, as he carefully distinguishes the terminology of *saved* and *salvation* from *redeemed* and *redemption*. Elder Oaks has addressed the issue of the varying uses of the words *saved* and *salvation* (cf. 1998a, 55-57).

[14] Article on "Satan" at <http://www.lds.org/topics/satan> (Accessed 08 Sept. 2015).

[15] This citation relates to a discussion by Robert L. Millet in answer to a question about the absence of "crosses in or upon LDS churches." His answer is not limited to the single point we attribute to him here, but he does conclude, "In short, we celebrate the living Christ" (Millet and Johnson 2007, 83-84). This succinct statement is also consistent with what President Gordon B. Hinckley has said on that topic (2005, 3).