Consecration, Holy War, and the Poor: An Apocalyptic Approach to Doctrine and Covenants 42

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For reasons that will become clearer as my argument progresses, I aim here to provide an apocalyptic interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 42. But what does this mean? In an article proposing a Latter day Saint perspective of "apocalyptic theology," LDS theologian James Faulconer claims that "the Apocalypse does not so much refer to the end of the world . . . as it refers to the moment when the nearness of the kingdom of God is revealed to the believer and the believer's life is oriented by that kingdom rather than by the world."\(^1\) If this is right, and apocalyptic scriptural themes should be understood as a means of helping the reading community orient itself to God's kingdom rather than to the world, then it is obviously of utmost importance to understand what "the world" refers to. This is a central question for any interpretation of section 42, focused as it is on marking boundaries that differentiate the Zion community from the world.

What, then, is the world? One popular interpretative possibility for a modern audience is to understand the world primarily with reference to secularism—the world is the secular world. Certainly, in debates between secularists and religionists there is often a lack of consensus regarding first principles. But there are reasons to be suspicious of any claim that religion has nothing to do with the secular world. Secular German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, for instance, has suggested that a human rights framework comprises a "general and rationally motivated" basis for moral principles, amenable to the "universalism of morality as natural law" adhered to by religions.\(^2\) Religious natural law theorists, for their part, argue that the apparently religious principles from the second tablet of the Decalogue can be recognized or discovered by anyone, religious or secular, who is willing to follow the dictates of rational thought.\(^3\) Such points of contact make it difficult to draw too sharp a distinction between religion and the so-called secular world.

Doctrine and Covenants 42, in the course of presenting divine law, focuses heavily on supposedly secular concerns—to the point that it lists second tablet injunctions against murder, stealing, lying, and adultery, but without any mention of first tablet commandments (those that regulate the relationship between the spiritual community and its God). The vision of the New Jerusalem presented in section 42 does not seem primarily concerned with differentiating itself from secularism, at least not from versions of secularism that are friendly to the humanistic values found on Moses's second tablet.\(^4\)

How else, then, might one understand the world? Interpreting another apocalyptic text, Stephen Robinson has argued that the great and abominable church in 1 Nephi 11–14 in the Book of Mormon refers primarily to hellenized Christianity.\(^5\) While Robinson's interpretation is useful and interesting, as far as it goes, he never actually gives a direct account linking hellenized Christianity to the characteristics he finds associated with the great and abominable church in Nephi's vision (and the "Mother of Harlots" in the book of Revelation).\(^6\) Moreover, even if readers were able to successfully link historical hellenized Christianity to the characteristics of Nephi's great and abominable church, a theological interpretation of the world in apocalyptic scriptural passages would require the additional interpretive step of identifying the beliefs, practices, and institutions in modern culture that best match the relevant characteristics of hellenized Christianity.

This last point is especially important. It is, in fact, altogether too easy to misunderstand both the original meaning and the modern significance of apocalyptic texts. The value of the ancient genre of apocalyptic texts, for the
reading community who considers certain apocalyptic texts as canon, is its ability to have a powerful transforming effect in the present. Better, it is in the process of interpretation—especially in the most challenging and uncertain moments of interpretation—that the community becomes oriented by the kingdom of God rather than by the world. Although it may be possible to give a full-bodied historical interpretation of what apocalyptic texts have to say about the world, I will pursue a more theologically motivated interpretation of what Nephi calls the great and abominable church. In light of our contemporary situation, I will identify the world with the unmitigated pursuit of power, especially as it can be obtained via wealth. My wager, in other words, is that the New Jerusalem envisioned by the text of Doctrine and Covenants 42 is best understood against the backdrop of our own situation: a world of beliefs, practices, and institutions that fosters a desire for power and wealth in a manner that fails to serve a legitimate higher good—such as caring for the poor.

Naturally, certain passages in LDS scripture might make one hesitate to jump too quickly on an interpretive bandwagon that, at first blush, offers a highly politicized, anticapitalist reading of section 42. A well known example is Jacob’s admonition in the Book of Mormon: “Before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God” (Jacob 2:18). Although this verse warns about seeking riches, it is often pointed out that there is no actual ban against seeking riches. And in fact, Jacob makes a startling promise in the next verse: “And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good” (Jacob 2:19). Instead of giving an unrestrained condemnation of wealth, Jacob gives riches an explicitly articulated place in the life of a Christian disciple; nevertheless, Jacob clearly condemns improper pursuit of wealth. Any traditional LDS understanding of the world must account for Jacob’s nuanced condemnation of the pursuit of riches.

The double temptation in a modern capitalist society to misinterpret Jacob’s teachings regarding wealth—that is, as either completely approving or completely disapproving—mirrors the temptation to misinterpret the implications of apocalyptic metaphors regarding modern secular society. A careful reading of Doctrine and Covenants 42, one that is sensitive to textual, historical, and scriptural themes, reveals possibilities for redeeming the world—possibilities that are often missed. The purpose of the analysis that follows is to identify such possibilities. First, I will consider the boundary markers in D&C 42 between the world and the Zion community. I will then consider the textual and thematic links between the practice of consecration in D&C 42 and the Holy War ban in ancient Israel. Finally, I will apply all these insights to the question of caring for the poor.

Community boundaries
In early church history, Doctrine and Covenants 42 was referred to as “The Laws of the Church of Christ,” or the Law, and it served in a crucial way to draw out the nature of the boundary between God’s people and the world. As is increasingly recognized, the law functioned in a similar way among ancient Israelites as a community marker that distinguished Israelites from their non-Israelite neighbors. Moreover, apocalyptic texts are also concerned with a differentiating boundary between God’s community and the world in which God’s community lives. In light of these boundary-marking roles consistently played by God’s word, it is interesting to note the clearly apocalyptic resonance that the term New Jerusalem has in LDS scripture. Interestingly, prior to the restoration, the word pair New Jerusalem was found in scripture only in the book of Revelation. In restoration scripture, however, New Jerusalem occurs seventeen times: eight in the Book of Mormon (only in the books of 3 Nephi and Ether), once in the Book of Moses, and eight times in the Doctrine and Covenants—with half of these last eight occurrences in section 42 (vv. 9, 35, 62, and 67). The apocalyptic focus of D&C 42 is already clear from these details alone.

When Joseph Smith received the Law, the Second Great Awakening was well underway, a movement infused with the language and ethos of apocalypticism. In an overview of the history and scholarly literature pertaining to American apocalypticism, Stephen Stein suggests, “The most useful categories for dealing with apocalypticism in the American historical experience are ‘religious apocalypticism’ and ‘secular apocalypticism.’” The key distinction,
for Stein, is as follows: “The former involves in some fashion the quest for salvation, righteousness or wisdom, however defined; the latter is by definition limited to temporal goals reflected in society, politics, or aesthetics.” Although this distinction is helpful for understanding various religious and social movements in American history, it is not as obviously helpful for understanding Mormon apocalypticism. After all, the spiritual and the temporal are so deeply interfused in LDS theology that it is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between religious and spiritual or secular and temporal implications. There is, nevertheless, a negative sense in which this distinction can be applied to the church’s history. If apocalypticism is understood as simply “defensive against” or distinctly “pure from” modern, secular institutions, then this risks a mistaken, overly fundamentalist understanding of Mormonism; if, on the other hand, apocalypticism is understood as merely “relevant to” the world, in a strictly accommodating manner, then this risks a mistaken, overly syncretic, overly secular understanding of LDS beliefs.

If the spiritual and the temporal in Mormonism are bound together so that one cannot be understood without the other, it is nevertheless important to understand the hierarchical nature of the relationship of the spiritual and the temporal. In line with Jacob’s words quoted above, claiming that an “intent to do good” must govern any seeking for riches, LDS theology requires the spiritual to orient the temporal, rather than vice versa. And this relationship is always precarious. Temporal concerns can debase and crowd out spirituality; spiritual concerns can be misconstrued in overly mystical or fundamentalist ways that have no temporal relevance. This ongoing tension is reflected in human society by means of competing beliefs, practices, and institutions that orient individuals and communities toward different ends. Such ends include greater economic efficiency, power, or wealth on the one hand, but greater compassion, honesty, or equality on the other.

An important function of scriptural texts—and apocalyptic texts in particular—is to bring this tension between the world and the religious community to light in a transformative way. The transformative potential of scriptural texts is realized in the act of reading, especially when the community is required to interpret tensive, multivalent symbols. Christian theologian Ellen Charry, in the context of persecution themes, suggests that the ambiguity of apocalyptic writing can produce a “search for the truth” that is common to both the persecuted and the persecutor. This kind of transformative ambiguity is a crucial—not merely an accidental—characteristic of apocalyptic writing. Leonard Thompson also argues that ambiguous symbols and “soft boundaries” lead, ideally, to processes of interpretation that are transformative. In a description that surprisingly resonates with Latter day Saints, Thompson writes:

[In the book of Revelation] there is no spatial or temporal dualism between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. God creates and sustains all things. Transformations and changes permeate every boundary and break down every distinction because there is an underlying dynamic system into and out of which all distinctions fold and unfold. . . . This monistic flow of divinely ordered being can never quite be compartmentalized into creature and creator, God and Satan, this age and the age to come, or heaven and earth. That is the unbroken world disclosed through the language of the Apocalypse. . . . Revelation discloses in its depth or innerness a wholeness of vision consonant with the intertexture found at the surface level of his language. At all levels, signifiers, signifieds, deep structures, and surface structures form homologies, not contradictory oppositions. The logic of the vision does not progress from oppositions to their resolution. Rather, in all its aspects the language speaks from unbroken wholeness to unbroken wholeness.

From a Latterday Saint perspective, Thompson’s understanding of the homologous nature of the book of Revelation, with its “not contradictory oppositions,” has important resonance with Lehi’s teaching about opposition
Lehi says that oppositions not only exist, but they exist in all things. To think otherwise is to misunderstand the nature of the world and the plan of salvation that God initiated. To recognize this always-present, noncontradictory opposition is to recognize the importance of agency—the always-present possibility of sin on the one hand and repentance on the other. At a more communal level, the implication of an always-present, noncontradictory opposition underscores the ongoing danger of sin among those in the covenant community and the ongoing possibility of repentance among those in worldly society. To understand Doctrine and Covenants 42, it is important to keep in mind this ever-present battle between the world and the New Jerusalem, and the porous boundary that marks their separation.

This porous boundary marking the opposition between the New Jerusalem and the world is on display in Doctrine and Covenants 42 by the repeated use of the phrase “shall be cast out.” The uniqueness of this phrase manifests itself when other scriptural passages that enumerate second tablet commandments are compared to D&C 42. Regardless of whether the “shall be cast out” phrase has intentional structural significance, it is nevertheless interesting to see what emerges when the structural occurrences of this unique, boundary-marking phrase are analyzed. Doing so reveals two points worth noting.

First, the phrase “shall be cast out” occurs six times in verses 20–28 and then again a seventh time in verse 37 after a digression regarding matters of economics, consecration, and the poor. From an apocalyptic perspective, this delay between the sixth and seventh occurrences is reminiscent of the delay between the sixth and seventh seals in Revelation 7:1–17 and the sixth and seventh trumpet blasts in Revelation 10:1–11:13. According to at least one biblical exegete, the purpose of this delay between the sixth and seventh trumpet blasts, with its accompanying numerical reversal, is to “bring the nations to repentance of idolatry and conversion to the true God.” A similar invitation to repent, extended to the nations, can be seen at work in Doctrine and Covenants 42, particularly in the historical changes made between the 1833 and 1835 renderings of the text. In the 1833 version, what is now verse 39 reads, “For it shall come to pass that which I spake by the mouth of my prophets shall be fulfilled for I will consecrate the riches of the Gentiles unto my people which are of the house of Israel.” Early Latter-day Saints understood this verse to mean that righteous members would obtain the riches of the wicked gentiles, an attitude that was used to justify retaliations against their enemies. However, Joseph Smith changed the wording of verse 39 for the 1835 edition to the following (changes appear in italics): “For I will consecrate of the riches of those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles, unto the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel.” These changes (coupled with similar changes in verses 30, 37, and 38) cast the gentiles/nations in an explicitly redemptive role, rather than the more antagonistic role conveyed by the earlier text.

Second, if the “shall be cast out” phrase is considered in terms of thematic development, the following chiastic structure can be discerned:

A Property: “Thou shalt not steal; and he that stealeth and will not repent shall be cast out” (v. 20). B Language: “Thou shalt not lie; he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out” (v. 21). C Chastity: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else. And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repenteth not, he shall be cast out. Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that commiteth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out. But he that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive; But if he doeth it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out” (vv. 22–26). B´ Language: “Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor, nor do him any harm. Thou knowest my laws concerning these things are given in my scriptures; he that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out” (vv. 37–38).
27–28). A Property: “And it shall come to pass, that he that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out of the church, and shall not receive again that which he has consecrated unto the poor and the needy of my church, or in other words, unto me’ (v. 37).

When the text is arranged in this way, a thematic movement can be discerned from the most mundane, “object”-based concept of property in the beginning and ending chiastic units to the most sacred, relation-based concept of chastity at the central chiastic unit, passing along the way by the intermediate case of language. Also, the second occurrence of each chiastic unit can be understood as giving the concepts in the first half a “higher” inflection: the place of lust in the first half of the chiastic unit is replaced by forgiveness to the repentant adulterer in the second half; the injunction against lying in the first half is replaced by an injunction against speaking evil of one’s neighbor; the prohibition on stealing in the first half is replaced by the concept of consecration in the second. Accordingly, property is first conceived in these verses merely as a temporal object that can be stolen—and thus idolatrously desired and individually grasped—but later becomes spiritually inflected as something that can be offered as a sacred gift to the poor. This transformation of property from a worldly object to a sacred gift typifies the redemptive, transformative possibilities made manifest in apocalyptic texts.

In considering the context of the Doctrine and Covenants as a whole, the phrase “cast out” occurs sixteen times in the current edition. Most of these usages draw a holyunholy boundary where the casting out can be understood as a consequence of transgressive action.¹⁷

This larger context underscores the function that D&C 42 plays in the establishment of a new community—one again based on stark differences (relative to the world) but with porous boundaries. Implicit in the community envisaged by section 42 and its associated scriptural resonances is what might be called a conditional tolerance for sin, where the condition of possibility for this tolerance is repentance. Repentance mediates the oppositional boundary between the world and the covenant community. Inasmuch as repentance is a real possibility that can be hoped for, redemption within the world is possible. Secular society, inasmuch as it tolerates religious communities, seems to be redeemable in this important sense. Also in this sense, as I hope now to show, secular society can be usefully contrasted with the conditions under which the ancient Israelite practice of the Holy War ban arose.

Consecration and the Holy War ban
The term consecration, as used in modern restoration scripture, has linguistic ties to the Hebrew term cherem, which is used in the Old Testament to refer to the Holy War ban. Exploration of this linguistic tie can be further motivated by first considering the use of the term consecration in modern restoration scripture.

Consecration is used seven times in the current edition of Doctrine and Covenants 42, whereas the term appears only three times in the 1833 Book of Commandments version of the text.¹⁸ The four additional occurrences appear in the revised text in verses 32–33. In the original text of what is now verse 30, members are required to consecrate all their property: “Thou shalt consecrate all thy properties, that which thou hast unto me, with a covenant and deed” (emphasis added). This was changed in the 1835 edition to read, “Thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties” (emphasis added). As noted by Michael Marquardt, “The altered portion weakened the requirement. . . leaving the percentage—all or part—ambiguous. In fact, it seemed to imply that the amount might be a matter of personal preference.”¹⁹ A key difference between the 1833 “all” and the 1835 “of” version of D&C 42 is the mediating role the church plays between individual members of the community and the larger context of worldly society.²⁰ This difference should not be understood as a simple lessening of what is required by the Law.²¹ Rather, the textual change makes the relationship between the individual and the poor
more immediate and less regulated by the institutional structures of the church. By reducing the institutional claim on the individual, the text grants the individual a larger extramural presence in—and engagement with—worldly society.

Doctrine and Covenants 42:39 reads, “For I will consecrate of the riches of those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles unto the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel” (emphasis added). This verse bears close resemblance to Micah 4:13, which is also quoted by Christ in 3 Nephi 20:19. In the King James Version of the Bible, this reads: “I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth” (emphasis added). The Hebrew term translated here as “consecrate” is cherem. Although other Hebrew terms in the King James Version are more frequently translated as “consecrate” in English, the word cherem is worth considering quite carefully—not only because of the similar phrasing in Micah and the repeated use of this phrase in the Book of Mormon, but also because the term cherem has interesting theological import pertaining specifically to the question of community society boundaries.

The term cherem is most frequently translated by the King James Version as “destroy.” At first glance, the terms consecrate and destroy seem more like antonyms than synonyms, so it is surprising they are used to translate the same Hebrew term. However, the connection between these terms can be understood by exploring the nature of Holy War and the associated practice of the Holy War ban in the Old Testament. For example, the three consecutive chapters in Joshua 6–8 prominently feature the topic of Holy War. Chapters 6 and 8 contain positive stories, where the rules of the Holy War ban—laid out in Deuteronomy 20:10–18 and Joshua 6:17–19—are properly followed. As a consequence of this obedience, Israel successfully takes the city of Jericho and conquers the Canaanites. The Holy War ban required that all captured animals and humans be put to death, and that all wealth be consecrated by being put into a sanctuary for God. As the Old Testament theologian Gordon McConville explains, the joint rationale for these practices “derives from ‘holiness’ ideas; in animal sacrifice, the animal is regarded as having become ‘holy’ in a technical sense. Similarly, the slaughter of a city’s population in Holy War is a kind of sacrifice to God. Further, since it is seen in this way, it is not optional but an absolute obligation.” Although the similarity in logic thus expressed between Holy War and sacrifice is a common interpretation, I will make a different argument below.

Joshua 7 contains the negative story of a man who violates the Holy War ban and causes the Israelite armies to be defeated. When this man, Achan, is discovered to be the culprit who violated the ban, he offers the following explanation of his behavior: “When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it” (Joshua 7:21). Money and the economically valuable (“goodly”) garment play a central thematic role in this passage and comprise the central motive for Achan’s disobedience of the Holy War ban. The Hebrew term translated “covet” in this verse is chamad, which is the same word used in the second tablet’s injunction against coveting (see Exodus 20:17). Although the term covet does not occur in Doctrine and Covenants 42, three of the seven “cast out” phrases occur during the discussion of adultery; moreover, in Christian society—especially in America during the 1830s—adultery is understood as being closely related to covetousness, partly because of the connection made in the Sermon the Mount (Matthew 5:27–28).

Achan’s violation of the Holy War ban uncomfortably entails con sequences for his entire family, and this detail has major implications for how the Holy War ban should be understood. Philip Stern argues that “the biblical conception of collective responsibility illustrated by Numbers 16:20–22” governs the destruction of Achan’s family, but this stands in contrast to sacrificial motifs, since “the family of a malpracticing sacrifice was never
punished." As previously noted, scholars have generally proposed an understanding of the Holy War ban that is similar to the concept of sacrifice. Stern, however, argues that "to apply the term sacrifice to the war ban is to mischaracterize it profoundly" and, moreover, that "mass killing in battle was never viewed as sacrifice in the ancient Near East—not in Egypt, not in Assyria, not among the Hittites." Besides sacrifice having more individualistic connotations, Stern argues that the consecration-based logic of the Holy War ban is rooted more deeply in a concept of exchange. This interpretation is surprising since one natural understanding of the distinction between sacrifice and consecration is the exact opposite of Stern’s. Whereas sacrifice entails giving up something good in exchange for something better, consecration requires a more selfless attitude where what is given up is not linked to hopes of getting something in return. Stern’s claim, however, hinges on the concept of a guarantee. What makes the Holy War ban a stricter mode of exchange than sacrifice is the stronger and more precise guarantee that adherence to the Holy War ban implies. With sacrifice, it is easy to doubt the sufficiency of the sacrifice and the possibility that it will be rewarded. With the Holy War ban, however, this kind of doubt vanishes: if the requirements of the ban are fulfilled, then victory is the sure reward.

The sure nature of the Holy War guarantee can be understood, in LDS terms, in the context of an eternal covenant and the wholehearted, other-abiding nature in which covenants are made. The problem with the logic of sacrifice, at least as typically conceived, is that desires do not necessarily change (see more on this below in the context of caring for the poor). One who hopes for something in return for a sacrifice can remain under a certain economic cast of mind. Under the logic of consecration, however, all preconceived personal agendas are given up in kenotic fashion in a genuine willingness to do whatever is asked. When consecration occurs, a true change of heart also occurs. Only this kind of consecrated way of relating can guarantee a fullness of spiritual blessings.

To better understand the scriptural linkages between covetousness, consecration, desire, and community, the Apostle Paul’s discussion in Romans 7:7–13 is worth consideration. James Dunn argues that Paul’s discussion of lust and covetousness is a "semiallegorical reading of Genesis 2–3 . . . [where the] command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2.17) is read as a particular expression of the commandment, 'You shall not covet.'” Dunn goes on to suggest that in Romans 7, Paul may have been “deliberately meshing in the story of Israel . . . [who] experienced sin provoking covetousness by means of the commandment given on Mount Sinai,” a sin that is reminiscent of a link between idolatry and slaughter. Dunn’s reading of Paul gives precedent in Christian scripture for understanding desire as a central concept of community and violence that links the first story in the Old Testament with Israel’s subsequent historical memory and relationship with God—a relationship in constant turmoil because of Israel’s idolatrous desires. Against this scriptural background, the emphasis and linkage in Doctrine and Covenants 42 between the themes of covetousness/adultery and idolatry/consecration manifests the importance of protecting the covenant community against the incursion of unrighteous worldly desires.

In Old Testament history, sacrificial practices were not particularly successful at staving off idolatrous desires. Condemnation of impure desires associated with ritual sacrifice is a common theme in the writings of the latter prophets, the Psalms, the Gospel of Mark, and, most importantly—because of its intersection with the theme of the Holy War ban—1 Samuel 15. On Meir Sternberg’s reading of 1 Samuel 15, the command given to Saul to smite Amalek begins in verses 1–3 with textual references to the repeated wrongs previously committed by the Amalekites in order to "eliminate all traces of arbitrariness from the divine command but also evoke a long and eventful history of onesided aggression." The text then goes on to offer an elaborate account of Samuel posing a series of questions to Saul, whose responses establish an incriminating case for his failure to adhere to the conditions of the Holy War ban. Sternberg argues that the purpose of this elaborate story is to help the reader
learn that Saul is in fact guilty and that Saul refuses to take advantage of the repeated opportunities Samuel presents for him to confess and repent of his misdeeds.\textsuperscript{34}

Switching to Samuel’s part in the dialogue, Sternberg argues that, acting as God’s agent, Samuel suggests that Saul’s fate is not predetermined, but “indeterminate, contingent on moral choice.”\textsuperscript{35} The narrative, after all, begins with God repenting of the fact that he has “set up Saul to be King” (1 Samuel 15:11). Moreover, the emphasis is on Saul’s “past misdeed (‘he has turned back from following me’) and [God’s] present emotion (‘I repent’) more than the future scenario typical of a forecast. And the sense of an open future gains further support from the built-in reminder that God is quite capable of changing his mind with the change of circumstance. Having started by repenting, he may well finish by repenting this repentance.”\textsuperscript{36} According to Sternberg’s reading, then, Samuel’s prolonged discussion with Saul not only provides the latter with repeated opportunities to make an immediate confession—like Achan in the past, Jonathan in Saul’s present, and David in a future generation, each of whom “promptly confesses his sins once charged”\textsuperscript{37}—but it also has the effect of drawing the reader in, inviting the reader to participate in a moral evaluation of Saul’s behavior. The biblical narrator is, in effect, inviting the reader to participate in the narrative and therefore to repent. This invitation has the potential of effecting a disruption and transformation of time and place inhabited by the reader. This invitation also has the potential of disrupting the reader’s actual, present desires, including the desire to be obedient to God’s commandments. Obedience, after all, is what Samuel tells Saul is called for, not mere sacrifice. In this sense, the story of Saul has the potential to change the reader’s attitude toward his or her own religious actions. Thus, readers may gain a genuine desire to listen and obey in a wholehearted, consecrated way, rather than in a doubleminded, superficial manner focused on achieving an extrinsic reward.\textsuperscript{38}

Through the concept of the Holy War ban and the term \textit{cherem}, the ancient Israelite theological struggle to preserve its communal identity amid a worldly society is linked to the concept of consecration presented in Doctrine and Covenants 42. In both cases, the practice of consecration cannot be properly understood merely as a sacrificial act; rather, it requires a transformation of desire. The call of ancient and modern scriptural texts requires readers in the community to recognize the tension between the ends pursued by the covenant community and those pursued by the world. Worldly desire is scripturally typified in the context of the Holy War ban by the avarice displayed by Achan and the self-deceptive, merely sacrificial obedience exhibited by Saul.

\textbf{Care for the poor}

After a discussion of community marking, secondtablet commandments, Doctrine and Covenants 42 moves to the economically inflected themes of consecration and the poor. As discussed above, the term \textit{consecration} is usefully understood against a scriptural background in which God repeatedly attempts to purify the avaricious desires of his covenant community. To understand these concepts as they might function and resonate in modern society, it is useful to contrast the way that poverty is understood and discussed in modern, secular society with the way that LDS scripture conceives of the problem of caring for the poor. This is not to say that the two conceptions are inimical to each other, but that the scriptural conception offers an important and useful spiritual supplement to purely temporal, secular conceptions.

In the original version of the revelation, an injunction to remember the poor was present; however, in that version, the term \textit{poor} actually occurred only once in what is now verse 34: “the residue shall be kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and needy.” In 1835, the term \textit{poor} was added several times, for a total of six occurrences, a change preserved in the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. At first blush, these changes might be viewed as having no particular theological significance, since they reflect practical and legal expediencies from the
time. Grant Underwood, for example, argues as follows: “Because charitable donations were legally safeguarded in
a way that communal resource sharing was not, in several places in the Law, wording was added to similarly clarify
that the poor were the specific beneficiaries of consecrations.”

But even if legal pressures fully explain the wording changes, this does not imply that the changes are not also theologically important.

There are at least two reasons to think these textual changes were theologically significant. First, a similar emphasis on the poor around the same time characterized Joseph Smith’s work on the New Translation of Genesis, where Melchizedek is described as “the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor” (Genesis 14:37–38 JST). This change in a tangential scriptural text is poorly explained simply by legal pressures of the 1830s. Second, the institutional action taken by the church itself to accommodate the legal particularities of the time requires theological explanation. The fluctuating tension between the early Mormon community and the US government could have been handled in a different, perhaps more confrontational way. Understanding why the church took this accommodating course of action, in the face of legal circumstances and political pressures, has important implications for understanding political and religious boundaries today—questions that, in turn, have important implications for understanding the role of the poor in section 42.

To reach a modern, apocalyptically inflected understanding of the poor, it is important to recognize that in ancient contexts, secular space did not exist in the way it does today. The separation of church and state is, for the most part, a modern concept. Wes Howard Brook and Anthony Gwyther write,

[The book of] Revelation casts a critical eye on Rome’s economic exploitation, its politics of seduction, its violence, and its imperial hubris or arrogance. To oppose the Roman Empire necessarily involved a rejection of the spirituality that helped the empire run like a well-oiled machine. Yet the rejection of that spirituality, manifest in the imperial cult, was part of a total rejection of the empire. This is a consequence of the inseparability of religion and politics in antiquity.

Howard Brook and Gwyther go on to argue that applying the meaning of Revelation to a modern context requires that readers understand today’s empire as global capitalism, a recognition further suggesting that the faithful must engage in some form of political resistance to capitalism.

On the one hand, there is something very right about this interpretation, especially in the way that it captures various despiritualizing tendencies arising from forces of social and political—but especially economic—globalization. On the other hand, this politicized approach to understanding the “total rejection of the empire” in apocalyptic texts risks obscuring the boundaries between church and state as they exist in modern, secular societies. One way to justify resistance to an overly politicized understanding of the message contained in scripture (especially apocalyptic) is to consider Jesus’s response to the question about whether it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21). Jesus’s response can be understood as a recognition of the protosecular, limited scope of the Roman empire at the time and the possibility of living simultaneously according to both the dictates of God’s kingdom and the limited demands of political economy at the time. This teaching, in a sense, represents the culminating repudiation of the practice of Holy War, which was only necessary during less secular times: whereas previous generations had viewed foreign cultures as anathema (literally, since this is the ancient Greek translation of cherem), times had changed, and relatively peaceful coexistence by the time of Christ was a real possibility. And the consequence was—and is—that a rather different practice of consecration comes into play.
One implication of this historical change is that it effectively gave members of the religious community a responsibility to promote values consistent with second tablet commandments in the extracommunal world. For modern Latter day Saints, this kind of activism pertains not only to property, language, and sexual relationships, but, as the revised text of Doctrine and Covenants 42 makes clear, the responsibility of caring for the poor. There is an important danger here, however, to construe this kind of activism in merely social or political terms. Modern church leaders advocate involvement in society and politics, but the call to Christian discipleship cannot be construed merely in terms of social or political activism. Not only does this risk bringing political disputes into the church community, a space that is supposed to be free of contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29), but it effectively allows temporal concerns to orient spiritual concerns, rather than vice versa. Being anxiously engaged in a political or social cause is spiritually laudable, but the zeal with which these causes are pursued must be suspended by a higher spiritual awareness that recognizes the ever present opposition between the imperfect nature of temporal concerns and the divine nature of spiritual concerns. Thus, if the spiritual is to be given primacy over the temporal, then primary spiritual concerns—such as faith and repentance—should be given primacy over political concerns. If this ordering is followed within the church, then it is possible for unity to be preserved in the midst of political activism and pluralism.

To better understand the relationship between spiritual and temporal concerns, as pertaining to specifically economic matters, it is worth considering the episode recorded in John 12 where Mary anoints Jesus with expensive ointment, after which Judas asks, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" D. A. Carson offers the following insightful commentary on Judas’s question: "The objection Judas raises has a superficial plausibility to it. . . . Judas displays a certain utilitarianism that pits pragmatic compassion, concern for the poor, against extravagant, unqualified devotion. If selfrighteous piety sometimes snuffs out genuine compassion, it must also be admitted, with shame, that social activism, even that which meets real needs, sometimes masks a spirit that knows nothing of worship and adoration." The distinction that Carson makes here between "social activism" and "worship and adoration" suggests a translation of Judas’s complaint into modern economic terms, that the expensive ointment used to anoint Christ has an associated opportunity cost that cannot put the monetized value of the ointment to use in caring for the poor. Judas’s question, in this sense, is blind to the spiritual aspect of Mary’s act of anointing.

Judas’s question can also be understood in terms of its underlying logic of economy and sacrifice. In order to anoint Jesus, the end result of actual alleviation of poverty is sacrificed. A sacrificial view of obedience entails a mindset of giving up something valuable for something more valuable (as discussed above regarding consecration, sacrifice, and obedience). Whatever is considered more valuable, on this logic, effectively provides extrinsic motivation for action. In contrast to this sacrificial view, a consecrated approach to obedience entails a wholehearted approach where actions are harmoniously aligned with desires, and behavior is intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated. From a perspective that is not merely economic, the action of anointing Jesus can be properly understood in a manner that outstrips the logic of sacrifice, and Judas’s understanding of Mary’s act can be inverted. The great economic value of the ointment gives Mary’s act of anointing more, rather than less, significance, making it more beautiful and meaningful than if a less expensive ointment were used. It is true that a certain number of poor people might have been helped by selling the ointment and using the economic proceeds to feed the poor. However, such a view is narrow and myopic, rooted in an economically focused interpretation of the anointing act that is blind to the diachronic, transeconomic, desire transforming significance of Mary’s act. From an economic, merely secular perspective, the anointing shows itself as an extravagant and wasteful act; but from a consecrated, religious perspective, the anointing shows itself as a spiritually meaningful act that deepens Mary’s commitment to values she holds sacred.
Endemic to modern secular inquiry—and the discipline of economics in particular—is a similar tendency to ignore or devalue religious meanings. Economists, for example, usually model agents’ actions as manifestations of stable, exogenously given preferences, without considering interdependencies between actions and desires or the possibility of changing preferences. Similarly, political scientists typically assume an all-against-all, conflict-of-wills framework. Although somewhat less guilty, the disciplines of psychology and sociology also have a tendency to embrace methodologies that value objective, empirical measurement and verification in a way that makes it difficult to capture the significance of apocalyptic texts. The possibility of repentance thus plays little to no role in social scientific inquiry. Although the scientific methods used in social science are very useful and appropriate for many practical social questions, a theological perspective must explicitly consider the possibility of change, including the feedback effects between institutions, practices, and desires. In this sense, the significance of processes of desire formation, character development, and religious rituals poses a peculiar challenge to scientific modes of statistical analysis, since such practices are deeply rooted in dynamic, subjective narratives that poorly conform to quantifiable measurement and testing. Consequently, the process of reading and interpreting scriptural texts is not only a substantive form but also a crucial methodological form of resistance to the cultivation of avaricious desires.

Conclusion
The revelation now comprising Doctrine and Covenants 42 recapitulates the second tablet of the Decalogue given to Moses. An important function of these laws given in ancient times was to mark a boundary between the world and the Israelite covenant community. Later, apocalyptic texts functioned as a reminder to the Israelites of the need to overcome covetous desires to obtain power or wealth. Although the violence underlying the practice of the ancient Holy War ban is difficult to understand in our modern context, the revelation given in D&C 42, when read in light of Old Testament passages such as Joshua 7 and 1 Samuel 15, draws out the overarching points of similarity between the second tablet of the Decalogue, apocalyptic texts, and the ancient practice of the Holy War ban. These similarities form an important background to LDS theological conceptions of community, consecration, and desire.

In modern secularism, church and state are conceived separately—a separation that began to emerge during the Roman Empire of Jesus’s time. This secularism is reflected in most academic discourse rooted in the values of scientific rationality. Although these values of secular discourse are not antithetical to consecration, there is a tendency of these values to crowd out practices, beliefs, and institutions that sustain noncovetous desires. The religious call to care for the poor thus needs to be understood differently than the merely secular, social-scientific goal of alleviating poverty. The effective separation between spirituality and temporality promulgated by the secularism of modern society ultimately works against the interfusion of the temporal and spiritual in Latter-day Saint theology. Although many varieties of secularism do not maintain a principled separation of temporal and spiritual goods, even these varieties of secularism tend to enact a practical separation. This practical separation results in a need to foster spiritual practices, beliefs, and institutions that spiritually orient temporal concerns.

For devout Latter-day Saints, spirituality is not a Sundays-only affair. No action or practice can be safely cordoned off as having merely temporal or merely spiritual significance. But this does not mean that Mormonism must maintain an antagonistic relationship to secularism—or to capitalism. Rather, in the midst of these worldly practices, beliefs, and institutions, redemptive possibilities must be attended to. The apocalyptic resonances of Doctrine and Covenants 42, when properly understood, suggest a precarious relationship of spiritual concerns amid the tendencies of modern secularism and capitalism to appropriate spiritual language and practices to the pursuit of power and wealth. Too often, these individualistic and factional pursuits of power and wealth crowd out
the pursuit of communal goods such as caring for the poor. Even when efforts to alleviate poverty are enacted by political institutions, these efforts lack the religious meaning and significance associated with a consecrated response to the needs of the poor. There is cause for celebration when progress is made in combating poverty. However, inasmuch as this progress is attained without an accompanying transformation of desire, members fail to comply with the call in the scriptures to remember and care for the poor and to consecrate their riches to them.

NOTES


4. This is not to say, however, that accepting certain secular first principles is without danger. David Novak, for example, criticizes what he calls “radical secularity” as “regard[ing] the members of the society as having no religio-moral background at all.” Novak supports a form of “moderate secularity,” where religious adherents are required to explain how a “policy is for the good of any human society and not just the members of his or her traditional community.” In contrast, radical secularism is rooted in a conception of individual autonomy that fails to acknowledge the role that traditional values play in the exercise of moral agency and cultivation of desire for moral goods. David Novak, “Secularity without Secularism: The Best Political Position for Contemporary Jews,” Hedgehog Review 8/1–2 (2006): 108–9.


6. Robinson lists five characteristics of the great and abominable church: (1) it is drunk with the blood of the Saints, (2) it seeks great wealth, (3) it is characterized by sexual immorality, (4) it has dominion over all the earth, and (5) it will be destroyed. It remains unclear exactly how each of these is to be directly linked to hellenized Christianity.


11. Ellen T. Charry writes, “Daniel and John integrate two elements that display the ambiguity of apocalyptic and bring them to bear on the interpretation of the suffering of God’s people. First, selfexamination is required, even on the part of those being persecuted. Second, God’s rescue of the faithful is cause for selfexamination among those who have persecuted. Thus, victim and oppressor are joined together in a common search for the truth about themselves and about God who is in the midst of their struggle.” Charry, “‘A Sharp TwoEdged Sword’: Pastoral Implications of Apocalyptic,” in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William P. Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 352–53.


15. For more on the historical context of these textual changes, see Underwood, “‘Laws of the Church of Christ,’” 108–41. The historical situation could also be understood as a juncture between the two different paths represented by the more violent and antagonist text of 1 Maccabees compared to the more peaceful apocalyptic visions recorded in Daniel, Revelation, and other Old Testament prophetic texts. For more on the peaceful nature of the apocalyptic texts canonized in the Bible, see HowardBrook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 46–86, 136–56.

17. Eight of these occurrences are in Doctrine and Covenants 42, already discussed. A ninth occurrence is in section 41, which anticipates the use and meaning of the phrase in section 42. Three others appear in the context of casting out devils (D&C 35:9; 84:67; 124:98). In another occurrence, D&C 101:1–2 reads, “Concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance— I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them… in consequence of their transgressions.” In D&C 101:40, the imagery of salt that has lost its savor is said to be “good for nothing only to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men” (cf. D&C 103:10), an expression taken directly from Matthew 5:13 and used in 3 Nephi 12:13 and 16:15. One other occurrence is in D&C 29:41 with reference to Adam being “cast out” of the Garden of Eden. The thick Mormon conception of the plan of salvation—including a premortal life, agency, judgment, and resurrection—can be more tightly connected to the “cast out” phrase by considering two other scriptural chapters where the phrase “cast out” occurs: First, in the Book of Mormon, Alma describes how the wicked will be “cast out” of God’s presence “because of their own iniquity” (Alma 40:13) and “consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil” (Alma 40:26). Second, in Revelation 12:9, “the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”


22. Grant Underwood suggests that the scriptural allusion here is to Isaiah 61:6, and he explores the significance of this passage in Mormon history. Interestingly, 2 Nephi 2:2 and 2 Nephi 33:4 also use language of God “consecrating” something (afflictions and prayers, respectively) for “gain.”

23. Note that the context of both Micah’s and Christ’s prophecies are related to Holy War imagery. In the context of Micah’s apocalyptic prophecy, the nations have gathered together in order to destroy Jerusalem (Micah 4:11), but the Lord, who has arranged this, effects a reversal of what the nations expect, so that Israel ends up thrashing the nations. In the context of Christ’s prophecy among the Nephites, Christ is specifically prophesying that a remnant of the house of Jacob will go forth among the gentiles and destroy those who have hardened their hearts against the fullness of the gospel (see 3 Nephi 20:27).

24. Given the discussion above regarding the possible significance of seven occurrences of the phrase “cast out” in section 42, it is interesting to note how the number seven also plays a significant role in the account here, including
what might be construed as a delay in the narrative between the sixth and seventh days of marching in Joshua 6:15–19.


26. The term translated “lust” in the KJV version of Matthew 5:28 is the same Greek word epithymēō translated in the LXX as “covet” in, for example, Exodus 20:17.

27. Philip D. Stern, “Isaiah 34, Chaos, and the Ban,” in Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine, ed. Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 394. Regarding the punishment of Achan’s family, Trent Butler acknowledges that Achan’s punishment “is now interpreted as meaning [destruction of] his family and possessions.” Butler, Joshua (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 86. Susan Niditch explains, “The shocking list of that which is to be annihilated includes Achan, what he has stolen, his sons and daughters, oxen, donkeys, sheep, and all he had (Josh 7:24). The text veers from singular to plural in vv. 25–26 in referring to those who are killed, a scribal oscillation perhaps stemming from discomfort with the totality of the destruction, but it is clear that at least one tradition, the one that links up best with v. 24, imagines Achan and all that belongs to him burned with fire and stoned.” Niditch, War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 59.


29. “The war ban is also an exchange in a way a sacrifice normally is not. . . . In contrast to sacrifice, in which nothing is guaranteed in return, in the war ban, God always assures the victory! There is no instance of the use of ban terminology when Israel . . . lost to the foe, in contrast to the sacrifice in which the outcome was uncertain or in which the sacrifice was simply an act of piety.” Stern, “Isaiah 34, Chaos, and the Ban,” 392.

30. In modern scripture, a similar logic of “guarantee” can be found where guaranteed blessings follow whole-hearted obedience. For example, Doctrine and Covenants 121:45 reads, “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, . . . and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God.” Here, the guarantee of confidence is contingent upon a description of a heart and mind that invokes phrases suggesting full consecration: “full of charity”; “towards all men”; “let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.”


34. Regarding Saul’s part in the dialogue, Sternberg writes, “As far as concerns the aims of the tale . . . the vital part of the dialogue centers on the speeches made by Saul, who is meant to condemn himself by his incessant shifts and turns. And this structure of repetition makes excellent sense in dramatic (psychological, situational) as well as rhetorical terms: Saul has every reason to conceal or whitewash his sin, and he retreats only step by step, version by defensive version.” Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 501.


37. Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 509.


40. The New Translation is in fact referenced in Doctrine and Covenants 42:56. See Underwood, “‘Laws of the Church of Christ.’” 125. Interestingly, Genesis 14 also touches on themes regarding the Holy War ban, avant la lettre.

41. Howard Brook and Gwyther, Unveiling Empire, 116.

42. The phenomenon of globalization can be understood in political, economic, and social terms: “In the political field the term refers to the increasing role of international governmental and nongovernmental organizations in organizing access to rights, identities, and material benefits; in the economic field to the increasing role of multinational corporations, and the interlocking of global financial institutions; and in the social field to changes in the volume and types of immigration and cultural flows.” The phenomenon of neoliberal globalization can be understood in terms of “the new power of owners of large, multinational corporations that benefit from economic policies associated with innovation, trade liberalization, reduced government spending on entitlements and decreased state restrictions on labor, health, and environmental hazards of production…. The term ‘neoliberalism’ is used here to describe ideologies and practices that have also varied widely over time and across countries but have a family resemblance on three issues: a tendency to prefer markets over governments as instruments of policy (via privatization or, where regulatory policies are deemed necessary, via regulatory interventions that use marketplace mechanisms such as capandtrade systems); to favor trade liberalization over protectionism (with reductions in tariffs, subsidies, floating currencies, and regional and global trade agreements); and to approach poverty from the vantage point of selfresponsibility, decentralized publicprivate partnerships, enterprise development, and other orientations to economic development expected to produce overall increases in the standard of living rather than redistributive change.” Both of these definitional quotes come from Kelly Moore, Daniel Lee Kleinman, David Hess, and Scott Frickel, “Science and Neoliberal Globalization: A Political Sociological Approach,” Theory and Society 40/5 (2011): 505–32.

43. For instance: “The design of the Pharisees to entrap Jesus failed because he was able to transcend the dilemma they forced on him. And in so doing, Jesus was at the same time able to articulate a fundamental principle by which the disciples could chart their existence as the people of God’s kingdom living in a yet imperfect world governed by secular authorities. This logion served as the beginning point of what was to be elaborated centuries later in the Lutheran twokingdom theory. The later New Testament writers regard the ruling powers as instituted by God and as worthy of honor, faithfulness, support, and intercession (e.g., Romans 13:1–17; 1 Peter 2:13–17). It is right to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s. Jesus was no Zealot or revolutionary who advocated the overthrow of the Roman government. But neither did he put priority upon loyalty to secular government. If one rendered to the
state its restricted due, all the more was one to render to God his unrestricted due—the totality of one's being and substance, one's existence, was to be rendered to God and nothing less. Loyalty to Caesar must always be set in the larger context and thus be relativized by the full submission of the self to God. The bottom line for the disciple of Jesus is to 'render to God the things that are his.' Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 637.


48. As one group of economists expressed it, "the big questions in political economy . . . are not amenable to formal modeling or traditional econometrics, but instead demand a combination of philosophical and historical reasoning." Peter Boettke, Peter Leeson, and Daniel Smith, "The Evolution of Economics: Where We Are and How We Got Here," *Long Term View* 7/1 (2008): 21.

49. The idea of fully consecrated obedience can also be related to the apocalyptic language by way of the message to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3: “I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm . . . I will spue thee out of my mouth” (vv. 15–16). Although traditionally the term lukewarm here has been understood simply in terms moral vacillation, scholars have suggested this may refer to the local water supply and the ineffectiveness of lukewarm water when compared to hot water, which is useful for cleaning, or cold water, which is useful for drinking. To be effective, obedience requires wholehearted fidelity, in the same manner that Jesus warned against trying to serve both God and mammon (see Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; 3 Nephi 13:24). In the first part of the message to the Laodiceans, John uses three titles to refer to Christ: "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). The first title, "the Amen," seems to be a quotation of Isaiah 65:16, where God is referred to as “the God of truth” where the Hebrew word for "truth" is *aman*, the etymological root of *amen*. From this allusion to Isaiah 65, and the corresponding allusion of the third title (“beginning of the creation of God”) to the subsequent verse in Isaiah (“behold, I create new heavens and a new earth,” Isaiah 65:17), Jan Fekkes suggests that John is linking Christ’s faithful nature with his unique manner of prefacing new teachings with the word *amen* in the phrase, "verily [amen] I say unto you." Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 139. The allusions here to the faithful and creative nature of God, and his word, can be understood as suggesting the sense in which God’s transformative, repentance-inducing word can take effect only when responded to in a likewise faithful manner. Giorgio Agamben, in his philosophical interpretation of Paul, provides a similar account of the creative power of

50. See, again, Givens, *People of Paradox*, 37–52. In light of this uniting of the temporal and the spiritual, Giorgio Agamben provocatively argues the etymological roots of the term *religion* come, not from *religare*, meaning “that which binds and unites the human and the divine,” but from *relegere* meaning “the stance of scrupulousness and attention that must be adopted in relation with the gods … that must be observed in order to respect the separation between the sacred and the profane.” Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 74–75. For Agamben, the term *profanation* is used to describe what can be profitably understood in terms of a Mormon mixing of the sacred and profane in a consecrated way. To recover a positive meaning of the term *religion* based on the etymology Agamben advocates, the stark differences and coincident soft boundaries in apocalyptic literature suggest a way forward for thinking about this fusion-separation issue.