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People navigate life more successfully and find more joy when they are able to regulate emotion in healthy ways. Teaching and helping clients regulate emotion in healthy ways is an important part of many psychotherapy approaches. In this paper, we focus on the emotion of anger from a theistic therapy perspective, arguing that understanding the nature of God's anger and human anger in the scriptures can inform theistic therapy practice. To establish this understanding, we analyzed cases of the word anger in the scriptures through content analysis (e.g., quantitative) and hermeneutic analysis (e.g., qualitative). Findings revealed that, while God was tied to more expressions of anger, humans were the main recipients of anger. God's anger was connected to His obligation to enact justice as a consequence to disobedience and unrighteousness. Human anger was often connected to the influence of Satan and revolved around interpersonal conflict. Additionally, we noted that God and His prophets experience anger—that is they do not suppress it, but use it to inform action and do not cultivate, vent, complain, or give place to it. Other references included warnings of future anger or teachings about how humans should express and experience anger. We discuss how these analyses of anger provide insights that theistic therapists can apply when helping clients process anger in therapy.
Keywords: anger, emotion, therapy, scriptures, content analysis, hermeneutic analysis

Emotions act as a signaling system that helps individuals decide how to respond in a given situation (Whelton, 2004). The ability to tolerate, regulate, and communicate about emotions is associated with many positive outcomes, such as healthier relationships (Kolak & Volling, 2007), fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety (Schäfer, Naumann, Holmes, Tuschen-Caffier, & Samson, 2017), and goal attainment in the workplace (Wong, Tschan, Messerli, & Semmer, 2013). Because of its impact on overall well-being, therapeutic approaches often centrally or peripherally focus on emotional awareness and regulation. In this paper, we explore the emotion of anger and its role in human experience from a Judeo-Christian perspective. We are particularly interested in how scriptural texts that reference anger inform our understanding

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of anger and how both the texts and our understanding can influence theistic therapy practices.

Anger in Therapy

Anger, generally felt as a negatively valenced emotion with medium to medium-high arousal (Warriner, Kuperman, & Brysbaert, 2013), is a commonly felt emotion. Research suggests individuals feel anger several times a day to several times a week (e.g., Averill, 1983). Cummins (2003) defined anger "as *an* emotional experience of invalidation" (p. 84, emphasis added). Both Cummins (2003) and Novaco (2016) highlight that anger can be connected to experiences of perceived threats (e.g., threat to self-concept). Gleave (1999) speaks of the tendency to respond to pain with a "call for justice or a striking out against the cause of our injury" (p. 82). This pain may be related to unmet expectations. All of these conceptions of anger highlight the frequent relational nature of this emotion, involving interpersonal interactions where one party feels hurt, let down, or wronged by others.

Warner (1986) provides another perspective on the relational dynamic that can occur during a conflict that leads to feelings of anger when he describes "self-betrayal" (p. 40). He argues that people sometimes turn to anger in selfish justification (i.e., self-concern) of thoughts or behaviors. In such cases, individuals act in ways that betray personal values and, instead of correcting their own mistaken perspectives, individuals feel anger and blame it on some other person or object. Anger and blame then create contention that can plant the seed for ongoing relational conflict. In line with this, Cummins (2003) found that although individuals perceive some advantages of anger (e.g., feeling powerful, controlling fear, and protecting self), they also recognize the disadvantages of poor anger management (e.g., increased stress, hurt relationships, and poorer health).

Behavioral expressions of anger can take many forms and have been connected to negative patterns of interactions (Johnson, Hunsley, Greenberg, & Schindler, 1999; McCullough & Andrews, 2001), implicating that anger is sometimes associated with maladaptive emotional responses, regulatory behaviors, communication strategies, etc. For instance, what Gleave (1999) describes as "striking out" may manifest as some form of physical or verbal aggression (p. 82). Although some have viewed the venting of emotion as inevitable and helpful (e.g., through a cathartic release), venting in the form of aggression is not beneficial (Mayne & Ambrose, 1999; Whelton, 2004). Rather, research has shown that expression of anger in an aggressive form or outburst leads to increased feelings of anger (Bushman, 2002). Warner (1986) would likely describe this as adding another layer of self-betrayal. Conversely, the suppression of anger is also associated with negative outcomes (Hosseini, Mokhberi, Mohammadpour, Mehrabianfard, & Lashak, 2011; Quartana & Burns, 2007).

Thus, while the expression of anger may be important, the form it takes is critical. Therapists play an important role in helping clients recognize that it is normal and healthy for anger to be felt and experienced, but there are distinctions to be made between adaptive (e.g., healthy assertion) and maladaptive (e.g., aggression) responses. Therapists vary in their underlying philosophies of therapy and their conceptualizations of emotion and, thus, apply different approaches to addressing anger with clients.

Several therapeutic approaches encourage regulating anger as part of treating psychopathology (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010). Others focus specifically on expressing anger and alleviating the distress associated with feeling this emotion (Cox & Clair, 2005; Fitzgibbons, 1986; Vannoy & Hoyt, 2004; Zarshenas, Baneshi, Sharif, & Sarani, 2017). Therapists coming from a cognitive-behavioral perspective view emotion, especially negative emotion, as cognitively disorganizing, leading to distress and disruptive behavior (Whelton, 2004). The treatment of anger based on this theory involves combining different techniques such as relaxation, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, and stress inoculation in individual or group settings (Beck & Fernandez, 1998; Mayne & Ambrose, 1999). Therapy may also include identifying certain stimuli or "triggers" that elicit an angry reaction and learning to reframe the situation, replacing these angry thoughts with more constructive, relaxed ones (Beck & Fernandez, 1998). Other techniques include modeling and rehearsing appropriate behavior, using rewards to modify behavior, helping clients identify emotions, and monitoring their anger arousal (Sukhodolsky, Kassinove, & Gorman, 2004).

The underlying assumption of emotionally focused couples therapy (EFT) is that relationship struggles within couples are largely due to ongoing distressed emotions arising from habitual ways of responding during conflict (Johnson et al., 1999). Similarly, McCullough and Andrews (2001) theorize that many mental health disorders arise out of affect phobias, or conflicts about feelings. In other words, individuals are uncomfortable with or fear experiencing emotions, and this manifests in maladaptive emotion regulation, thinking, and behaviors. McCullough and Andrews suggest individuals are susceptible to affect phobias surrounding anger and summarize three key outcomes of emotion-based therapies. First, therapists can facilitate defense restructuring, or helping individuals recognize and give up maladaptive defensive behavior patterns. Second, therapists can facilitate affect restructuring, or helping individuals achieve adaptive-emotional experiencing and expression. Third, therapists can help their clients restructure maladaptive constructs of self and others so that relationships with self and others improve. These outcomes seem particularly appropriate for anger, given its relational connections and the potential negative consequences of maladaptive regulation of this emotion.

Anger in the Context of Theistic Therapy

The authors of this paper come from a theistic background in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and hence reference doctrines and scriptures that pertain to this Christian denomination throughout. Extending beyond secular practices outlined above, therapists who incorporate theistic perspectives into their work naturally look to moral values and religious foundations to inform their psychotherapy practices (e.g., Richards & Bergin, 2005). Operating under a spiritual worldview that takes into account our embodied and situated mortal conditions, theistic therapists characterize individuals as moral agents with contextually constrained free will to navigate life's choices (Hansen, 2017). Anger is an interesting emotion to examine within a theistic and therapeutic context because of several potential paradoxes that call upon us to consider its biological, cognitive, and spiritual manifestations.

As described above, research shows that expressing anger as aggression is detrimental (Bushman, 2002) but so is suppressing anger (Hosseini et al., 2011; Quartana & Burns, 2007). Scriptures such as "be ye angry and sin not" (Eph. 4:26, King James Version) suggest that anger does exist, sometimes accompanied by sin and other times not. Even God expresses anger regularly throughout the scriptures (e.g., "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them" [Num. 12:9]). Conversely, other scriptures such as "whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment" (3 Nep. 12:22, The Book of Mormon) reflect that lingering anger is problematic and should be worked through. If adaptive anger is both possible and beneficial, a balance appears to be needed between restraint (e.g., avoiding aggression) and expression (e.g., avoiding anger phobia). Understanding the nature of God's anger and what it means for humans may inform why and how this balance should occur or whether a balance is a good way to understand emotion regulation of anger.

Additionally, distinctions need to be made between righteous anger and unrighteous anger. Some angry behaviors seem societally condemned, such as violent crime, self-harm, and abusive discord in relationships. However, anger and violence may be warranted when defending oneself against a crime. Additionally, not all anger is tied to hostility or other reactions that are harmful or negative (Cummins, 2003). Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, and Gramzow (1996) found that individuals who were more prone to feel guilt (as opposed to shame) were more likely to report adaptive responses to anger, such as constructive intentions, corrective action, and nonhostile discussion with the target of the anger.

God through His omniscience may express anger and judge the morality of human anger perfectly (i.e., based on truth), but human moral judgments are often imperfect. On the one hand, humans can contextualize feelings and actions; we can judge what is appropriate given different situations (e.g., abuse vs. self-defense). On the other hand, we are heavily influenced by how we have learned to think and act and may not always recognize when our anger is based on reality and when it is based on misperception. For example, yelling may feel like a right to a parent who is angry at a child's

misbehavior, but perhaps God perceives the child's incomplete understanding of expectations and, thus, sees the parent's response as less optimal. As other examples, some may have been taught to immediately suppress or deny anger, while others may have been taught to acknowledge it and even cultivate its presence by repetitively thinking about it or acting on it. These comparisons further highlight the need to better understand appropriate expressions of and responses to anger from a theistic perspective.

In sum, theistic therapists addressing anger with their clients want to understand how to work with anger, not just on a cognitive and emotional level but on a spiritual level, taking into account the complexities (restraint vs. expression, rightness vs. wrongness, truth vs. misconception) that accompany anger's acknowledgement, assertion, and transformation. They need to help clients take responsibility for their agency and create possibilities to be blessed and avoid negative, agency-limiting consequences. Secular, science-based theories and research about anger can inform theistic therapeutic practices, but the spiritual lens will come into greater focus by examining what the scriptures have to say about anger. Here, we find God's own expressions of anger, sermons on anger, and human expressions of anger. We believe that we are created in God's image (see Gen. 1:26–27)—physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Thus, examining God's expressions of emotion can act as a model for our understanding of the nature of human emotion and how it was intended to be experienced and expressed intrapersonally and interpersonally. Sermons and examples of human anger can point to characteristics common to the human condition across time, allowing theistic therapists to draw connections between scriptural narratives and therapeutic practices.

Present Study

Although religious scholars have examined emotions and specifically anger in the scriptures (Elliott, 2006; Schlimm, 2011; Spencer, 2017; Whitehead & Whitehead, 2003), these discussions largely take a general approach rather than analyzing each case of a particular emotion within the scriptures (although see Properzi [2015], who does explore emotions case by case but does not address anger). None to our knowledge have examined anger in a granular way or drawn direct connections between anger representations in the scriptures and therapy contexts. The present study sought to fill this gap for theistic therapists by developing a corpus and analyzing each case of anger in the scriptural canon of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our aims were twofold. First, we sought to establish an overview of how anger is represented in the scriptures by analyzing the frequency/percentage of several variables (e.g., who expresses anger and who is the recipient of the anger). This aim was accomplished through a content analysis of each instance of the word anger in the scriptures. Against this backdrop, our second aim was to identify more specific patterns within the scriptures related to how anger is experienced and expressed by Deity and humans. This aim was accomplished through a hermeneutic analysis (Paterson & Higgs, 2005), which derived contextualized interpretations and meaning from each case where the word anger appeared.

Combining these two analyses (i.e., content analysis and hermeneutic analysis) of anger provided a breadth and depth of perspective that will help theistic therapists understand how to better work with anger in therapy. More specifically, we expected these analyses to shed light on why anger occurs in God and humans, what anger based on truth looks like, how agency plays a role in anger and contributes to its moral valence, and how scriptural narratives highlight best practices for expressing and restraining anger. We also predicted a distinction between God's anger and human anger because of Satan's influence and the fallen nature of mortals.

Methods

Corpus Development

Our data set was developed from the scriptural canon of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which includes the King James Version of the Bible (Old and New Testaments), the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), the Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of various Bible verses. A large corpus containing occurrences of 127 emotion words in this canon was originally created and analyzed in the process of

developing an exhibit for the Education in Zion Gallery at Brigham Young University.[1] The first author was a cocurator in this exhibit. The corpus was composed of every conjugation of each selected emotion word, except for cases where a nonhuman was the subject of the expressed word/emotion (e.g., the earth raged). For the exhibit analysis, two independent coders went through and identified who was expressing or feeling the emotion in each case (Deity: God, the Lord, their angels; humans; or the adversary: Satan). Disagreements were resolved by two exhibit coders who discussed each case and the surrounding context. For the purposes of this study, we analyzed the instances of anger that were included in this corpus. Throughout this paper, Deity are referenced collectively (i.e., as Deity) or individually (e.g., God, the Lord). We describe the methods for the content analysis first and then for the hermeneutic analysis.

Content Analysis

From the previous exhibit's analysis, we already had data about who (Deity, human, adversary) was feeling anger in each situation where the word appeared in the scriptures. The one speaking was not necessarily the one coded as feeling the anger. For example, if a prophet was speaking of his own anger, it was coded as human emotion, but if a prophet was explicitly speaking of God's anger or was speaking Messianically about anger, the instance was coded as Deity emotion. We selected content analysis as the means to quantify additional themes from the corpus of verses that contained anger. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined content analysis as a "research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). We used this method in a directed and conventional way, in that we started with several content themes based on our background research and questions about anger and then added other content themes through an iterative process.

We started with the following initial themes that could help inform how and when anger is expressed in the scriptures: who the anger was directed at, whether humans that felt anger were righteous or not, and whether human recipients of anger were righteous or not. Two coders began independently coding a small subset of anger references in the scriptures with these themes. After doing so, the coders met to discuss any additional themes that were emerging. The coders also examined agreement within the themes they had coded to calibrate their analysis and ensure they were coding the anger references in consistent ways. This process was repeated with approximately 10% of the dataset until no additional themes were identified. Many of these themes were designed to capture the scriptural context surrounding anger and its expression. The coders then went through all of the anger references and independently coded them according to all of the themes. If coders identified something of interest not captured in the content themes, they made note of it as they coded. After coding was finished, one coder and the first author went through all cases of disagreement and reached a consensus by examining the context of each reference and comparing the current reference against the coding of similar references. The final themes coded for in the content analysis are presented in Table 1 (see page 98).

Hermeneutic Analysis

The qualitative hermeneutic analysis was conducted by the second and third authors. We used collaborative hermeneutic interpretation (CHI) as our method to interpret the instances of anger in the scriptures (McKenzie et al., 2013). While hermeneutic interpretation eschews the notion that an objective universal truth can be ensured by method, it does not resort to relativism. Rather, this approach aims to incorporate historical and cultural knowledge in an effort toward truth that is universal by virtue of consensual interpretations (cf. McLeod, 2011, pp. 27–34). This method is based in Gadamer's (2004) philosophy and assumes that understanding and truth are products of dialogue. In this study, the dialogue took place between the researchers and text and between the researchers themselves. Our assumptions and procedure are outlined below.

Investigator assumptions and background. As theorists and psychotherapists, we have both been interested in anger for some time. Kristin's perspective has been that all the emotions are fundamental but that some have excitatory and some have inhibitory

1 Further information about the corpus and exhibit can be found here: http://educationinzion.byu.edu/exhibition/jesus-wept/

functions. She believes anger, as an activating emotion, can be used in adaptive and maladaptive ways (McCullough et al., 2003). Aaron's perspective has been that anger is generally a negative human experience and that it typically serves to mask the more basic human experiences of fear or pain (cf. Kelly, 1979). We assumed that some diversity in our perspectives would enrich our interpretation. Both of us take a postmodern stance on science and assume that all attempts at understanding are interpretive.

Although hermeneutics has historically been used to analyze meanings of biblical texts (Byrne, 2001), we recognize the difficulty of understanding God's anger. Beyond acknowledging that our reading of the scriptures is interpretive and influenced by our individual perspectives, we also acknowledge that striving to understand God will always be limited by what we cannot see and by our limited natures (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:12). Despite these limitations, research illustrates that hermeneutic analysis can help researchers extract nuanced meaning from the scriptures, particularly as it relates to questions of literalism and inerrancy (e.g., Bartkowski, 1996). We argue this will also be the case with understanding God's anger, particularly as we apply our beliefs that the scriptures are the word of God and that God is an embodied being who feels emotion and has a familial relationship with humankind, His children (see Givens & Givens, 2012).

Procedure. We each took a slightly different approach to our initial analysis after first discussing what we would do. Kristin's approach was to read through the entire New Testament and Book of Mormon carefully, searching for themes related to anger. She then repeatedly reviewed the scriptures containing references to anger that had been preidentified in the New Testament, Book of Mormon, D&C, and Pearl of Great Price and reviewed the context around most of these scriptures. She also analyzed many, but not all, of the scriptures containing references to anger found in the Old Testament. Aaron's process was to review these same books of scripture in their entirety (not including the Old Testament) while attending to the question of anger and then go back and analyze the preidentified verses (including those in the Old Testament). Hermeneutic interpretation is described as a spiral that deepens by moving back and forth between the specific, or the parts of a text, and the whole (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The process is to repeatedly question and seek to refute or refine one's interpretation with these progressive cycles. This involves

> (a) gaining a sense of meaning of the whole text, and then using that as a framework for understanding specific parts of the text; and (b) analyzing the possible meanings of small sections of the text, and using these to refine or reinterpret the overall sense of the text. (McLeod, 2011, p. 33)

Once we had each come to our individual interpretations, we met to compare and synthesize our interpretations. Interestingly, our interpretations were fairly similar, and Kristin synthesized them into a common interpretation that we each felt was consistent with our individual interpretations.

Results

Anger Corpus

After removing one case of nonhuman anger (D&C 88:87; the source of the anger was the stars), there were 476 instances of the word anger and its conjugations found in 448 verses across all of the works of scripture analyzed. The majority of these verses were found in the Old Testament (257 verses; 57.4%), followed by the Book of Mormon (141 verses; 31.5%), the D&C (25 verses; 5.6%), the New Testament (12 verses; 2.7%), the JST of the Bible (7 verses; 1.6%), and the Pearl of Great Price (6 verses; 1.3%). However, when the number of verses containing the word anger and its conjugations were compared to the total number of verses in each work, most were found in the Book of Mormon (2.1% out of 6604 verses), followed by the JST of the Bible (1.6% out of 440 verses), the Old Testament (1.1% out of 23,145 verses), the Pearl of Great Price (0.9% out of 635 verses), the D%C (0.7% out of 3,654 verses), and the New Testament (0.2% out of 7,957 verses). To distinguish between results from the different analyses reported, themes are referred to separately as content themes or hermeneutic themes.

Content Analysis

For the purposes of the content analysis, each instance of the word anger was coded (rather than by verse). Across all of the content themes, the average

percent agreement between coders was 92.2%, with a range of 82.1% (for the theme *If the anger is directed at a human, is that person righteous?*) to 99.8% (for the theme *Who was the anger directed at?*). Coders identified only one instance of anger being expressed by the adversary and directed toward Deity ("And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him" [Abr. 3:28]). Because of the rarity of this case, we do not further analyze it below. However, it is included in the total count of instances when calculating percentages. Throughout the description of content theme results, example verses are given to showcase how anger was represented in the scriptures. To mirror the expository style of the hermeneutic results, we also comment on how these results provide a broad overview of instances of anger in the scriptures.

Who is feeling the anger, and who is the anger directed at? Across all instances, anger was coded as being expressed by Deity 60.1% of the time and by humans 39.7% of the time. "I, the Lord, was angry with you yesterday, but today mine anger is turned away" (D&C 61:20; Deity anger toward humans). Across all instances, anger was directed the most toward humans (97.7%), then Deity (1.9%), and then nonhuman things (0.4%; e.g., Num. 22:27, human anger toward donkey; Hab. 3:8, Deity anger toward rivers). Of the nine instances of anger directed at Deity, eight of these were expressed by humans and included Jonah expressing anger against God, people expressing anger against Jesus, and people expressing anger against God's truth. "If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?" (John 7:23; human anger toward Deity). Of the 465 instances of anger directed toward humans, 61.2% of these were expressed by Deity and 38.7% were expressed by humans. Although more explanation is needed to differentiate God's anger and human anger, therapists can use this data to help put clients at ease (e.g., normalize emotion) by knowing humans are similar to God in that both experience anger.

If humans are feeling or receiving anger, are they righteous? Humans feeling anger were coded as unrighteous 55.0% of the time and righteous 12.7% of the time. The remaining instances were classified as a specific person/group (22.2%) or general humanity (10.1%) where righteousness was unclear. The cases of a righteous human expressing anger involved circumstances ranging from anger at those causing war (e.g., Moro. 55:1) to anger at wickedness (e.g., Ex. 32:19) to anger in a family conflict (e.g., Gen. 30:2).

Human recipients of anger were coded as unrighteous 50.5% of the time and righteous 19.8% of the time. The remaining instances were classified as a specific person/group (17.6%) or general humanity (12.0%) where righteousness was unclear. Of the cases where the recipient of the anger was coded as unrighteous, 88.1% of the anger came from Deity and 5.5 % came from righteous humans. Of the cases where the recipient of the anger was coded as righteous, 69.6% came from unrighteous humans and 19.6% of the cases came from Deity. The cases of Deity's anger toward a righteous human involved circumstances ranging from actual feelings of anger (e.g., Deut. 1:37) to supplications that Deity not be angry (e.g., Ether 3:2) to indications that Deity's anger was turning away (e.g., Hel. 11:17).

The following verses illustrate different cases of anger as coded by righteousness. "But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me . . . then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ezek. 20:8; Deity anger toward unrighteous human). "And now it came to pass that when Moroni, who was the chief commander of the armies of the Nephites, had heard of these dissensions, he was angry with Amalickiah" (Alma 46:11; righteous human anger toward unrighteous human). "The people repented not of their iniquity; and the people of Coriantumr were stirred up to anger against the people of Shiz; and the people of Shiz were stirred up to anger against the people of Coriantumr" (Ether 15:6; unrighteous human anger toward unrighteous human). "And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me, and also with my father; and also was Lemuel, for he hearkened unto the words of Laman" (1 Ne. 3:28; unrighteous human anger toward righteous human).

By coding the righteousness of humans involved in cases of anger, we see that the majority of humans feeling or receiving anger are unrighteous. Particularly, when God expresses anger, it is largely directed at the unrighteous. This confirms that He is not capricious;

rather, there is a pattern to why He expresses anger. Human anger, being more closely tied to unrighteousness, seems to be distinct from God's anger and needs to be more closely examined, which is accomplished in the hermeneutic analysis. Interestingly, the only case of the word anger being mentioned between righteous humans was an explanation that one person was in fact not angry at another (see Alma 61:9).

If the anger is human to human, what type of conflict is it? Of all instances of anger in the corpus, 37.8% involved human-to-human interactions. Among these, 54.1% of the instances involved general disagreements between two humans or groups, 29.3% involved wartime conflicts, and 16.6% involved familial conflict. "And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old" (1 Ne. 1:20; general disagreement: unrighteous human anger toward righteous human). "And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them" (Alma 43:48, wartime conflict: unrighteous human anger toward righteous human). "But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him" (Esth. 1:12; familial conflict: specific human anger toward a specific human). This data and the accompanying examples illustrate patterns in human nature and that conflict is common within interpersonal relationships, even in families, and between groups of people. This provides a backdrop for individuals to see the scriptures are relevant and relatable.

Is the anger a reference to future emotion or a sermon? Across all instances of anger, 22.7% were coded as a reference to future emotion or a sermon. Of these, 64.8% referred to anger that might occur in the future, and 35.2% talked about anger in the context of a sermon or discussed the nature of anger. Interestingly, looking at just the cases of Deity feeling anger, approximately 20% of these fall under the category of being a warning of anger in the future (i.e., a call to repentance) or a sermon about anger. Coders also noted many cases where humans supplicated Deity to turn away His anger or where the anger of Deity was being turned away. "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:9; future Deity anger toward unrighteous humans). "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26; sermon about general human anger to general human). "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath" (Ps. 78:38; Deity turning away anger). These themes illustrate patterns related to God's relationship to humans. God sends His prophets to warn His children when their iniquity puts them in danger of justice and also to teach about the use and expression of anger. When humans turn back (i.e., repent) and supplicate Him, God turns His anger away. This portrays God as a teacher and mentor motivated by love and mercy.

Hermeneutic Analysis

There are several themes that emerged from our hermeneutic analysis. These include scriptures associated with the characteristics and reasons for God's anger, the association between Satan and anger, scriptures associated with the characteristics and reasons for human anger, and insights into what to do about anger. We will describe these different themes, their relevant subthemes, and provide prototypical scriptural examples. We acknowledge that there are many more subtle themes that there is not space to address or that we may have overlooked or failed to address. Whereas the content analysis set a backdrop of overarching quantified themes, the following hermeneutic themes parallel these results while adding meaning and greater depth.

Theme 1: Characteristics and reasons for God's anger. Throughout the standard works, God gives commandments to His people and consequences for not following His commands. These consequences are declared and delivered in a very matter-of-fact way as in the following example where He commands His people not to be angry:

> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:22)

God's anger and even His fierce anger are referred to when His people do not meet the expectations and standards He has set for them. Whether He feels angry

first, at the same time, or after, we do not know. But it does seem that His anger comes from a longing for us to choose to meet His expectations so we can enter into the kind of loving relationship with Him that He wants to give us.

Some examples of unmet standards include people demonstrating a lack of trust in Him (Ex. 4:14), not acknowledging His power (Mark 3:5), not confessing His hand in all things (D&C 59:21), provoking Him to jealousy (Deut. 32:16; Josh. 23:16; Judg. 2:12), and not hearkening unto Him or obeying His commandments (Luke 12:21; 1 Ne. 18:10). He especially seems displeased with rude behavior toward righteous individuals, hypocrites, "those who speak folly" (Prov. 14:29), the unrepentant, and those who commit abominations and whoredoms. The following example illustrates anger toward the unrepentant and proud:

> Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it . . . And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. (Isa. 13:9, 11)

This next example indicates that the Lord is not pleased with hypocrisy:

> Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for every one of them is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. (2 Ne. 19:17)

God is angry at those who don't understand His mercy through the Atonement. "For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son" (Alma 33:16).

It is as though those who do not meet God's expectations cause a response in Him that requires Him to act in ways He does not want to but by which He is bound or has chosen to be bound. This relates to parental discipline. Parents have agency to not follow through on a promised consequence when their children violate a family rule or expectation, but when parents fail to do so, children may learn to be permissive and inconsistent in their behavior. God has agency too, but unlike human parents, He disciplines consistently and perfectly judges the time for justice and the time for mercy. Although He is not lenient (e.g., D&C 1:31–32), it is often the case that He repeatedly warns His people and calls them to repentance before executing justice (e.g., D&C 58:47). Indeed, God frequently has reason to be angry with His children, and yet He defers it because of His love for His people (e.g., read Jacob 5 in this light). He knows He asks hard things from us, and He wants to give people their best chance (e.g., Isa. 48:9–11). In Psalms 145:8 we read: "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."

God's prophets often issue calls to repentance, which are an extension of His love and mercy.

> Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God . . . and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. (Jer. 3:12–13)

Nephi fears God's justice and warns his brethren:

> And I, Nephi, began to fear exceedingly lest the Lord should be angry with us, and smite us because of our iniquity, that we should be swallowed up in the depths of the sea; wherefore, I, Nephi, began to speak to them with much soberness; but behold they were angry with me, saying: We will not that our younger brother shall be a ruler over us. (1 Ne. 18:10)

John the Baptist warns the people to repent and "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt. 3:3). In His mercy, God will even use the anger of others to stir His people up unto repentance. "But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you" (Rom. 10:19).

While God is protective of all His children, He is especially protective, as a loving parent would be, of His disciples who are willing to speak on His behalf. This is seen in many places, but especially in His anger at those who kill the prophets.

> And they that kill the prophets, and the saints, the depths of the earth shall swallow them up, saith the Lord of Hosts; and mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder. (2 Ne. 26:5)

In a sense, in killing the prophets, God's children are also destroying God's attempts to be merciful unto them, which is especially violent toward a God who has already sent His Son to Gethsemane and the cross on their behalf.

Nevertheless, when people demonstrate qualities such as submissiveness, repentant hearts, and gratitude toward God, we see that He turns away His anger. "I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones, for mine anger is not upon them that rejoice in my highness" (2 Ne. 23:3). God's turning away of anger (e.g., justice) is equated with His blessing of the people. There is a sense that anger and joy are part of a whole and are oppositional in nature. The following example illustrates that blessings follow when God turns away His anger:

> And it came to pass that in the seventy and sixth year the Lord did *turn away* his anger from the people, and caused that rain should fall upon the earth, insomuch that it did bring forth her fruit in the season of her fruit. (Hel. 11:17, emphasis added)

The next verse shows God's compassion and mercy, along with a return to promised covenants, taking the place of His anger:

> And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may *turn from* the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers. (Deut. 13:17, emphasis added)

God's ability to apply mercy is limited by the agency of humans. God wants to bless His people, but He cannot allow sin. We are taught that no unclean thing can dwell in God's presence (Moses 6:57). King Benjamin warns his people,

> If ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved . . . the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples. (Mosiah 2:36–37)

The scriptures also tie anger to not seeing the face of the Lord. The Lord frequently refers to how, in His anger, He hides His face from His people (see Deut. 31:17; Jer. 32:31, 33:5; Ps. 27:9; JST Ex. 33:20, 23). We learn in D&C 84 that Moses "sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God" (verse 23), "but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness" (verse 24). Earlier in this section, we learn about priesthood power, the administration of the gospel, ordinances, and the power of godliness, which are all interconnected and necessary "to see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (verse 22). We see in these verses a connection between God's love in wanting us to see His face and partake of eternal life and His anger when we sin and break our covenants.

King Benjamin emphasizes that human choices bring the consequences of sin and covenant breaking:

> Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever. (Mosiah 3:26)

God has infinite mercy, but He will not apply it when humans do not choose to repent and partake of His Atonement. Consequences for the unrepentant often sound quite dreadful, as in this Old Testament passage: "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp" (Num. 11:1). The scripture "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10) suggests that when God is not bound to apply mercy because of human agency, the consequences that follow may often be the natural playing out of poor choices.

Theme 2: The association between Satan and anger. In contrast to God wanting His people to turn away from anger so they can be blessed, Satan inspires them to become angry. It is one way he binds people and causes their spiritual death.

> For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish; For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the

> children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good. (2 Ne. 28:19–20)

The Book of Mormon teaches that those hearing or reading truth that get angry have the spirit of the devil. "Wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil" (2 Ne. 33:5).

Through people's anger, Satan inspires others to become angry so he might gain power over their souls as shown in the following two examples:

> For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. (3 Ne. 11:29)

And:

> For behold, his [Zerahemnah, an unrighteous leader] designs were to stir up the Lamanites to anger against the Nephites; this he did that he might usurp great power over them, and also that he might gain power over the Nephites by bringing them into bondage. (Alma 43:8)

Another characteristic of both Satan and angry people is that they will turn on their own. "And it came to pass that he [Amalickiah, an unrighteous leader] was exceedingly angry with his people, because he had not obtained his desire over the Nephites" (Alma 49: 26).

Quarreling and contention are part of what brings war and destruction upon people.

> And we see that these promises have been verified to the people of Nephi; for it has been their quarrelings and their contentions, yea, their murderings, and their plunderings, their idolatry, their whoredoms, and their abominations, which were among themselves, which brought upon them their wars and their destructions. (Alma 50:21)

Indeed, anger is a precursor or corollary to violence for humans and can turn into people killing each other. "But behold, their [Laman and Lemuel's] anger did increase against me [Nephi], insomuch that they did seek to take away my life" (2 Ne. 5:2). Eventually, the wicked destroy each other.

> And it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and seventh year, the Nephites being angry because the Lamanites had sacrificed their women and their children, that they did go against the Lamanites with exceedingly great anger, insomuch that they did beat again the Lamanites, and drive them out of their lands. (Mor. 4:15)

Anger is a characteristic of the unrepentant. The two seem to go hand in hand. Just as the unrepentant cannot be saved in God's kingdom, so cannot the angry. The unrepentant are either cultivating anger or not working to transform it.

> But Ammon stood forth and said unto him [Lamoni's father, who is about to slay his son Lamoni]: Behold, thou shalt not slay thy son; nevertheless, it were better that he should fall than thee, for behold, he has repented of his sins; but if thou shouldst fall at this time, in thine anger, thy soul could not be saved. (Alma 20:17)

Theme 3: Characteristics and reasons for human anger. The scriptures reference both righteous and unrighteous humans, which means either those turned toward or away from God (and in Satan's power), respectively. Righteous individuals can become unrighteous, and the unrighteous can repent and become righteous. Both the righteous and unrighteous alike experience anger. This is not meant to simplify the complexity of the human journey and the pathway to exaltation if so desired, but the scriptures make numerous links between anger and whether we are turned toward or away from God. Intent, whether individuals are trying to be righteous or not, turning toward God or not, matters. According to Nephi, the righteous recognize that it is not good to hold on to anger. For example, he laments at the anger he continues to have toward his rude, wicked brothers:

> And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy? (2 Ne. 4:27)

Mormon comments on many occasions about people who understand how to be turned toward God and act righteously (like Captain Moroni in Alma 48:17) versus those who are not oriented in this way, get stirred up to anger, and seek to destroy righteous individuals or those faced toward God.

Anger often seems to signal the presence of sin, unrighteousness, and the lack of fulfilling righteous expectations, and it can also come with a belief that one is justified in his or her anger. We have already given many examples where God, who is perfectly righteous

and justified, is angry over humans not meeting His expectations. However, there are also many cases where humans become angry over misperceptions and misunderstandings of being wronged. Even anger itself can distort perceptions. This is true for both the righteous and unrighteous.

Some examples of the misperceptions of righteous individuals leading to anger include both the obedient brother's anger at his wayward (prodigal) brother's seemingly unmerited reward (Luke 15:28–32) and Moroni's anger at Pahoran when Moroni thinks Pahoran is intentionally holding back supplies his army needs (Alma 59:13; 61:9). Though a righteous person, Moroni misperceives another's intentions. In both cases, the obedient brother of the prodigal son and Moroni are teachable and open to learning about their misperceptions. In contrast, many unrighteous individuals either tell lies and then believe them, which causes them to be angry, or simply believe the misperceptions they have been told. Some examples include Laman and Lemuel misperceiving historical events, stirring them and future generations up to anger at the Nephites (1 Ne. 16:38); the Lamanites incorrectly thinking that the people of Limhi had stolen their daughters and becoming angry (Mosiah 20:6); and Lamoni's father being angry at his son because of his misperceptions and prejudices against the Nephites (Alma 20:13). Some anger comes about because of misperceptions and misunderstandings about God's work. For example, the wife of Lamoni's father, the queen, is angry that her husband appears dead when in actuality he is being converted to the gospel (Alma 22:19).

Humans also become angry over loss. For example, Nephi's family is angry because they are hungry in the wilderness when Nephi's bow breaks (1 Ne. 16:18), and the Nephites are angry over the loss of their brethren during war (Mosiah 21:11).

Human anger is often corollary with unrighteous judgment and unrighteous dominion. For example, Laban is angry when thinking Nephi might rob him of his possessions (1 Ne. 3:13), and Laman and Lemuel are angry that their brother has power over them (1 Ne. 3:28).

Complaining against God is considered to not be good.

> And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did speak much unto my brethren, because they had hardened their hearts again, even unto complaining against the Lord their God. . . . And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came unto my father; and he was truly chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord, insomuch that he was brought down into the depths of sorrow. (1 Nephi 16:22, 25)

Humans become angry at God's words spoken through the prophets, as seen in the following two examples:

> And ye [Laman and Lemuel] have murmured because he [Nephi] hath been plain unto you. Ye say that he hath used sharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his sharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities. (2 Ne. 1:26)

And: "Now there were many of the people who were exceedingly angry because of those who testified of these things" (3 Ne. 6:21).

Theme 4: What do the scriptures teach about what to do about anger? Though anger seems to be something we will experience, anger is not good to cultivate; we should find ways to turn away from it.

> Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Eph. 4:31–32)

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Ne. 11:30). The scriptures give us some ideas about what to do about anger. There are a number of ways we noted: repenting, thinking hopeful thoughts, enduring persecution, using soft words, avoiding stirring up anger in others or yourself, working it out with others, and not fearing men's anger.

Repenting. We are taught that letting go of anger is part of the repentance process, which includes turning to the Lord.

> And it came to pass that the Lord was with us, yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them, and did chasten them exceedingly;

> and after they were chastened by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger, and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food, that we did not perish. (1 Ne. 16:39)

Thinking hopeful thoughts. Fierce anger instills fear but can be countered with hopeful thoughts and messages of the gospel.

> And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them. And Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage. (Alma 43:48)

Enduring persecution. Fighting can be motivated by righteous and unrighteous intentions. Generally, the righteous are not to instigate a fight nor fight back unless directed to act in self-defense. In Matthew 5:39 we read: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." And in 3 Nephi 6, righteous individuals do not turn and revile but endure persecutions against them.

> Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; some did return railing for railing, while others would receive railing and persecution and all manner of afflictions, and would not turn and revile again, but were humble and penitent before God. (3 Nephi 6:13)

In the following example, the Lamanites act from a place of anger, and we can see that alongside the anger are unrighteous motivations. In contrast, the Nephites fight only to protect themselves for righteous reasons when commanded by God to do so.

> And thus the Lamanites did smite in their fierce anger. Nevertheless, the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church. And they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God; for the Lord had said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies. And again, the Lord has said that: Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed. Therefore for this cause were the Nephites contending with the Lamanites, to defend themselves, and their families, and their lands, their country, and their rights, and their religion. (Alma 43:44–47)

Also, we noted that in many cases where the Saints are brought into bondage and are persecuted, the Lord makes a way for their escape. This was the case with the children of Israel who were enslaved to Pharaoh of Egypt; with Joseph of Egypt, who was sold into slavery by his brethren; and with the people of Alma, who were enslaved by the Lamanites and afflicted by Amulon. The Lord seems to allow this because He "seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith" (Mosiah 23:21) and then shows them "that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God" (Mosiah 23:23).

In the example of Alma's people at Helam, when the people cry to the Lord because of the heavy tasks put upon them, He eases their burdens and makes them light (Mosiah 24:13). We are told He does this so that "ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions" (Mosiah 24:14). The next passage reads:

> And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord. (Mosiah 24:15)

Clearly, the people of Alma must have felt angry because of the tasks that Amulon put upon them, but the Lord wanted to show His power to bring them out of bondage and to teach them about submission to an all-knowing, all-powerful, chastening, refining, and loving God.

Using soft words. We also can turn away wrath with "a soft answer but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

Avoid stirring up anger in others or yourself. Colossians 3:21 warns that fathers should not get angry at their children so as to avoid discouraging them. There are always other ways than anger to approach interpersonal problems and disagreements. We are taught to put off our anger (see also Matt. 5:22): "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8).

Working it out. "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26–27). Scriptures like these make it clear that we will feel anger but that the righteous should figure out what is causing it so it can be resolved. We are to work out anger. When we cannot work it out, we must either change the situation or turn to the Lord and allow Him to make our burdens light. However, we should not return and get angry unless commanded to "fight" as occasionally happens in the Book of Mormon (e.g., Alma 43, which is mentioned earlier).

Nephi's process to deal with anger in himself. When Nephi is angry, he describes a process to deal with his anger. In 2 Nephi 4, he prays to God, cries unto God, complains about his weaknesses and frustrations, asks God to help him not give place for anger, expresses his gratitude, says he knows he can trust God, and finally, has faith that God will give him what he has asked for if he did not ask amiss:

> And by day have I *waxed bold in mighty prayer before him*; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and angels came down and ministered unto me. . . . O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions? . . . Awake, my soul! *No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. . . . Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say: O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation. . . . O Lord, I have trusted in thee*, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh . . . Yea, *I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss*; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. (2 Ne. 4:24, 26, 28, 30, 33, 35, emphasis added)

Nephi's process to forgive others of things that have the potential to cause anger in him. This includes trying to plead with those who have committed the wrong to soften their hearts and make them aware of their error and encouraging them to repent to both the wronged and to God.

> And it came to pass that they [Laman and Lemuel] were angry with me [Nephi] again, and sought to lay hands upon me; but behold, one of the daughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael, *did plead with my brethren*, insomuch that *they did soften their hearts*; and they did cease striving to take away my life. And it came to pass that *they were sorrowful*, because of their wickedness, insomuch that they did bow down before me, and did *plead with me that I would forgive them* of the thing that they had done against me. And it came to pass that *I did frankly forgive them* all that they had done, and *I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness*. And it came to pass that they did so. (1 Ne. 7:19–21, emphasis added)

Not fearing men's anger. While we should fear the Lord's anger, we are taught not to fear the anger of others because God is in charge. Isaiah is to tell Ahaz, King of Judah, to not fear the King of Israel or Syria, who are going to battle against Judah:

> And say unto him [Ahaz]: Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. . . . Thus saith the Lord God: It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. (2 Ne. 17:4, 7)

Discussion

The present study analyzed the use of the word anger in the scriptures using both content analysis and hermeneutic analysis. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine anger in this kind of in-depth, case-by-case manner. Through content analysis, our aim was to quantify how often the word anger occurs in the scriptures and then code each case to characterize the broad nature of who is feeling anger and who is the recipient of anger in the scriptures. Through hermeneutic analysis, our aim was to identify deeper themes illuminating the nature of anger in Deity and how this informs God's relationship with his children, how this sheds light on the nature of anger in humans, and what this means for our interpersonal relationships. Our overarching aim was to use these findings to inform theistic therapy practices.

The Nature of God's Anger

Our content analysis findings showed an approximate 60/40 split with Deity feeling anger more than humans. However, humans were the recipient of anger in almost all cases. Coding the content themes

that were related to the righteousness of the persons involved allowed us to identify that, although Deity expresses proportionally more anger in the scriptures, the large majority of these cases are directed at unrighteous humans. Under this examination, Deity's anger appears to be a reaction to behavior that is contrary to His will (see Elliott, 2006). Our content analysis also showed that not all instances of the word anger reflected the emotion being felt or experienced in the present. Almost a quarter of all cases of anger were related to future anger (e.g., Deity warning that His anger will come if X occurs) or guidelines about anger (e.g., put off anger). Many other instances were noted as supplications to Deity to turn away anger or instances where Deity's anger was being turned away. Hermeneutic themes paralleled these findings.

From the content and hermeneutic analyses, a pattern of anger arose where Deity warns of His impending anger if people do not repent, expresses His anger if people do not heed the warning, and then turns His anger away if people repent. This pattern of anger parallels patterns of justice and mercy and highlights the nature of God's relationship to His children. He sets laws and makes covenantal promises with His children. Obey, and be blessed. Disobey, and be cut off. When humans begin to stray, He warns of impending justice and stirs His people up to repentance, working through prophets and other earthly tools (e.g., famine, see Helaman 11). If they continue to be unrighteous, justice is manifest. When His children turn back to Him and supplicate for forgiveness, He extends mercy. Scriptures like "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18) illustrate that while justice must be rendered, mercy (i.e., God's love and Christ's Atonement) patiently and persistently waits for the penitent spirit and repentant heart.

Anger, punishment, and justice are aligned in opposition to love, blessings, and mercy. God sets His commands and His expectations and then operates within these opposing bounds rationally and with absolute clarity. Because He is all-knowing and all-powerful, He does not misperceive human intent or human behavior. His anger is manifested when commands are broken or expectations are not met, and His anger is removed when people turn back to Him. He "cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:31–32). God is the perfect purveyor of justice and mercy. This is not to say that God's emotions and actions are deterministic, that He cannot help but be angry and enact justice. Rather, in His perfect morality, character, and execution of agency, operating under eternal laws, His anger is always based on truth and sound judgment (see Properzi [2015] for more discussion of how God's character is supernal but is a blueprint for our own).

God's expressions of anger also demonstrate His relationship to us as our Father. He is fully invested in our eternal upbringing and long-term potential (e.g., Moses 1:39; Elliott, 2006) and is ultimately motivated by love (see 1 Jn. 4). His parameters are purposefully set on a covenantal path that provides the optimal course to eternal growth. When His children forget to acknowledge Him or when they deviate from the covenant path, He disciplines in wisdom, and His anger and justice are manifested and appropriately tailored to individual trajectories. Just as we cannot be lenient as parents around certain conditions that will cause future difficulties for our children, God is not a boundary breaker. He does not try to make us happy with His behavior toward us, but, rather, He sees the bigger picture and must use His agency to set firm limits. His unwavering intent is to bring His children back to His love and presence. In His mercy, He continues to warn us again and again until we turn to Him or sadly lose this opportunity through our own unrepentant sin (see the allegory in Jacob 5 of His tender care and continual involvement in trying to help us return to Him).

The Nature of Human Anger

As humans are created in God's image, they seem to feel anger for similar reasons. Relationships involve formal and informal contracts, promises, and expectations, which are often violated, broken, or left unmet. As God feels anger under these same circumstances, so do His children. However, whereas God's anger is situated within His perfect laws, motivations, and

knowledge of all things, human anger is clearly situated in humankind's fallen state. Prone to unrealistic expectations and misperceptions, human anger is closely tied to contention, Satan's influences, and selfish motivations (Warner, 1986). Our content and hermeneutic findings support the idea that human anger is closely connected to an unrighteous state and interpersonal conflicts. In the scriptures, humans expressed anger toward each other within group disagreements, war, and family relationships. More specific reasons for human anger included anger toward prophets preaching the word of God, anger because of loss (e.g., of power), and anger because of false perceptions. Our summation here is that, while it is natural for humans to feel anger, it is largely undesirable and tied to sin.

We do not argue that humans are incapable of righteous anger based on true perceptions and understandings. God does place the responsibility to learn how to judge righteously on His servants (e.g., D&C 58:17–20, JST Matt. 7:1–2). However, the scriptures regularly teach humans to remove or put off anger (e.g., Col. 3:8). Even in righteous judgment or anger, we are in a sense asked to use anger as a tool to understand when to apply justice. Any administering of justice must be in the context of love as evidenced in the following admonition: "reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterward an increase of love" (D&C 121:43). We must always acknowledge that God's ways are higher than our ways (Isa. 55:9). In our present state, surrounded by examples of unrighteous anger, we may not be able to fully understand God's perfect anger, but we can learn to align our motivations, emotional responses, thoughts, and behavior with His love and righteous judgements.

Drawing Connections to Theistic Psychotherapy

While anger appears to be connected to several apparent paradoxes identified in the introduction (such as expression vs. restraint, rightness vs. wrongness, and truth vs. misconception), our findings call us to consider a more complex picture of anger that goes beyond an either/or solution to these paradoxes. Instead, we found that God always acknowledges His anger, but He does so based on the righteous applications of justice and mercy—and thus, His anger is full of truth. He does not cultivate it, complain, or murmur. He knows how to perfectly express anger proportionate to what the recipient has earned. He seems to feel sorrow at delivering His righteous anger, but this, too, He delivers only after extending many attempts to call His people to repent and turn to Him. He, therefore, does not suppress His anger. His anger is a righteous judgment and is delivered with exact timing. We see numerous examples of His prophets attempting to follow and live within this Divine pattern.

In contrast, human anger is prone to unrighteous applications and misconceptions, which God is mercifully aware of. While humans can only approximate God's truth (we are mortals after all) and incompletely apply justice and mercy, theistic therapists can, in following the scriptural pattern, help their clients (a) acknowledge their anger (i.e., avoid suppression), (b) try to understand where it is coming from (i.e., avoid misperceptions or unrighteous angry judgements), (c) learn about the appropriate expressions of anger (i.e., assertion vs. aggression), (d) work out conflicts, (e) avoid maladaptively expressing anger or dwelling on anger that cannot be worked through with the recipient (i.e., avoid venting), (g) cope and heal when they are a recipient of unrighteous anger or abuse, and (f) rely on spiritual resources with appropriate informed consent and respect for their agency (see Hansen & Richards, 2012). Theistic therapists have a unique opportunity to apply and teach lessons about anger from scriptural examples (e.g., learning more about the nature of God's anger as it relates to justice and mercy, human anger, Satan's role in anger, and observations about how to work through conflicts with others). Theistic therapists can also help clear up believing clients' misconceptions about God and human anger and utilize gospel truth in their work with clients.

There are many conditions under which our clients will experience anger that are consistent with the anger literature and the findings from our scriptural analysis. These include anger due to injustices caused by others' unrighteous actions (e.g., domestic violence), unrighteous expectations of others (e.g., a boss whose demands exceed one's timeframe to complete them), and misperceptions of unmet expectations of others (e.g., anger at a friend missing a lunch date when it was due to the friend getting in a car accident on the way)

(see Cummins, 2003). Some feelings of anger may be a form of self-betrayal when clients fail to acknowledge mistaken perspectives (Warner, 1986).

We can help our clients recognize that it is part of our nature to experience anger. We can also help them recognize the different conditions under which we will experience it. We can point out that God feels anger for similar reasons (e.g., unmet expectations)—although His reasons are always built on true understandings (e.g., John 2:13–16), and thus, His anger is often different from human anger. Still, religious clients who have focused only on the negative side of anger or who are concerned that their personal worthiness will be diminished when they feel anger can be taught that anger is a signal to understand violated or incorrectly made expectations. Therapists can show clients that the experience of human anger is helpful to motivate the correction of misperceptions, guide behavior (either toward or away from a particular person or situation), form clearer judgements, and work on improving intimacy in relationships. Therapists can strengthen their case by explaining the research that shows that it is unhealthy to suppress anger (Hosseini et al., 2011; Quartana & Burns, 2007).

Once experiencing anger is accepted as purposeful, is it useful to explore anger in therapy? Our findings suggest that it depends. While anger should be acknowledged on the one hand, it should not be cultivated on the other hand, since it is associated with giving a place to Satan and driving away God's Spirit (our connection to receiving Heavenly guidance so that we stay on course). Thus, theistic therapists play an important role in helping their clients acknowledge anger. It is important to explore anger in ways that will lead to the expression of adaptive anger, whether it is based on actual injustices, misperceptions, or unrighteous judgements and expectations. The work of McCullough et al. (2003) shows that adaptive forms of expressing anger bring relief. This is particularly helpful in clients who have been abused. Research shows that a client's expression of adaptive anger over abuse will not only lead to emotional relief but can also lead to the relief of cognitive and behavioral symptoms (McCullough, personal communication, March 10, 2004). Interestingly, when looking at the model offered by Nephi, we see that he first cries unto the Lord and expresses his anger to Him (see 2 Ne. 4:17–35), then he asks for help with his anger, and finally he expresses gratitude, trust, and faith in the Lord. His example is useful for Latter-day Saint clients to help dispel fears that it is wrong to even express anger. Jesus's anger at the money changers in the temple is also another good example for Christian clients that shows the righteous expression of anger (John 2:13–16).

As theistic psychotherapists, our goal is to help our clients move into a place of knowing what to do about their anger after first acknowledging it and discovering where their anger is coming from. We can help our clients understand the idea that anger can help us better understand ourselves and our relationships with others—it can lead to more joyful intimacy in our relationships. Even in clients where anger is caused by misperceptions or unrighteous expectations, defenses may be employed, such as passive-aggressive behavior, to deal with anger because often there is a fear of experiencing or acknowledging it. For this reason, it is very important to help our clients acknowledge anger rather than engage in further unrighteous or self-betraying behaviors to cover or deny it.

Once anger is acknowledged and expressed adaptively, our scriptural analysis lends insight into the next steps. Therapists can help clients work out their anger in psychologically healthy ways (e.g., assertion and clear communication rather than aggression). Therapists can teach clients interpersonal skills that will help them discern misperceptions and identify ways their clients may misuse power (e.g., to gain control, feel important, or hide past wounds) or be on the receiving end of others' misuse of unrighteous judgments and dominion. When dealing with other individuals turned toward God, we should encourage our clients to work out their anger expeditiously and to not let time continue to pass with an unresolved disagreement.

Our scriptural analysis suggests that if the therapist and client determine that attempts to resolve anger are not working or are unsafe, and it is not due to a lack of communication skills or misperceptions on the part of the client, therapists can help clients look for additional ways to improve a relationship, pray for another person to have a softened heart, or avoid the relationship in cases where reconciliation is futile or safety is in question (e.g., see 2 Ne. 5). Given an

inability to reconcile, the therapist can also help the client grieve this loss, find ways to not give place to justifiable anger (e.g., by focusing on compassion for self and others, shifting attention onto other activities, or focusing outward through serving others) and can give the client hope by teaching him or her to look for God's hand in sustaining, uplifting, and compensating him or her for the injustice. Individuals are to endure challenges and allow vengeance to be the Lord's. The scriptures give examples of people who are expected to bear their afflictions with patience: If they turn to the Lord, He will make their afflictions feel light (see Mosiah 24). However, He also makes a way for their escape. In our day, therapists have the tools and skills to help a client who is "in bondage," to use the scriptural term, escape the effects of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Therapists have an obligation to help clients remove themselves from unsafe situations.

Although it has been noted that anger should be acknowledged on the one hand, our scriptural analysis makes it clear that it should not be cultivated. While anger is a tool to help us recognize injustices or unmet expectations, whether truthful or not, helping clients vent without getting to the type of anger that brings relief and compassion towards others may actually be encouraging clients to engage in sin. Therapists must become better skilled at distinguishing between acknowledging true anger and venting (i.e., defensive anger). Therapists, therefore, can lead clients toward adaptive expressions (i.e., that which bring relief) and away from maladaptive expressions (i.e., that which keep a person stuck) of anger (McCullough et al., 2003). This is consistent with research showing that venting in the form of aggression is not beneficial (Mayne & Ambrose, 1999; Whelton, 2004) and that expressing anger in an aggressive form or outburst leads to increased feelings of anger (Bushman, 2002). Research shows that if anger is felt alongside other emotions (e.g., guilt as opposed to shame), it can influence individuals to choose more appropriate expressions of anger (Tangney et al., 1996). Recently, some therapists are encouraging the expression of anger through body work, such as yoga, to help clients work through anger (see van der Kolk, 2014).

While it would be unethical for therapists to usurp religious authority (Richards & Bergin, 2005) and explicitly encourage clients to repent, therapists are in the business of change. Likewise, clients come to therapists, in most cases, because they need assistance either making changes in their lives or healing from the effects of others' actions toward them. Soft-hearted clients who are repentant and wanting to draw closer to God can be assisted in exploring ways their anger might be connected to the violation of spiritual laws, and can be encouraged to turn to Christ and use the healing power of the Atonement. While taking care to respect the clients' agency (Hansen & Richards, 2012), theistic therapists can encourage clients to experiment with making changes that are more aligned with gospel teachings and to observe the outcomes. For example, based on the findings of the hermeneutic analysis, therapists could help clients explore some of the following themes in relation to God: Are they trusting Him? Are they acknowledging His power? Are they confessing His hand in all things? Are they seeking after idols or other "gods"? Are they obeying His commandments? Are they acting unkindly toward others (e.g., casting out prophets or suppressing the voices of those who may teach them something they did not already know about God)? Are they hypocrites (e.g., have behavior, in word and/or action, that is not aligned with their intentions)? Are they unwilling to learn, grow, and be open to aspects of their behavior that might need changing or refinement? Are they careless (i.e., speak folly)? And are they not forgiving or appreciative of His mercy through the Atonement? As clients think about these kinds of questions, sensitively explored by the therapist, and alter thoughts and behaviors, they will likely see connections to increased positive feelings and greater recognition of God's mercy and His blessings. Therapists can share Nephi's scriptural process of dealing with anger, already mentioned, and his model of forgiving another's anger: The one injured can plead with the injuring one to soften his or her heart and consider his or her error. If both are repentant and humble, then the injured one will be motivated to forgive, and the injurer will be motivated to ask for God's forgiveness.

Spiritually open clients can be taught to observe their own responses to anger and work with the therapist in a type of discernment process to better understand the meaning of any anger they feel. They can be taught to apply mindfulness skills to the observation of all of their emotions, especially anger. They can also be taught to

observe the outcomes in their lives and relationships as they acknowledge anger, try to understand its source, express it, and act in response to their anger. Practicing discernment and mindfulness may help them better understand, whether made clear or not, their expectations for others and others' expectations toward them. They may also more clearly learn about God's expectations for them and how to be more teachable or open to God. Through these processes of mindfully discerning patterns of emotion in their lives and how emotions become associated with various expectations, clients will likely come to a clearer understanding of areas where they can change.

Conclusion

Through this study, we were able to contrast expressions of anger from Deity and humans. We see in God an example of a being who is perfectly aware of His anger, patient in executing His judgments, and merciful as He teaches and warns of the consequences of unrepentant disobedience. God's anger is His legitimate emotional reaction to wanting His children to succeed and having to watch them choose contrary to His expectations. God's anger and lack of anger (e.g., turning away anger) illustrate His justice countered by His continual offering of mercy. His anger is truthful and never misconceived. He is always motivated by love and His eternal goals for His children. Human anger, while it may be righteously derived at times, is often associated with unrighteous and unrepentant motivations, misconceptions, and inappropriate expressions. Because we understand that we are created in God's image, Christian clients can better navigate feelings of anger by following His example, setting righteous expectations for themselves and others, humbly working through anger with others, and acknowledging—but not cultivating—anger when expectations are not met. Therapists and clients can explore together not only how to acknowledge and utilize anger for improving their lives and relationships but also how their emotions help them understand how God may be communicating to them and directing them in their lives. The scriptures can be used as a guide, illustrating unrighteous anger, ways to work through and transform anger, processes that lead to forgiveness, and so forth.

The major limitation of this study is that we did not have a Hebrew or Greek expert on our research team and thus were unable to identify and discuss meaningful connections related to the translation of scriptural texts. It is likely that we missed contextual and cultural cues related to the translation that inform when and why anger occurs. This is an area where future research could build on the present findings. One question that remained after our analyses, though many more continue to arise (as is the case with analyzing scriptures), was whether God enacts justice and then feels anger, feels anger and then enacts justice, or whether these occur simultaneously. This is analogous to research exploring the order of physiological and cognitive components of emotional processes (e.g., the theories of James-Lange & Schacter Singer). Also, although God is agentic, it is not clear if He is simply choosing to enact justice in His anger when humans are unrepentant or, if by covenants He has chosen to make, He is bound to act in certain ways.

In conclusion, while we will experience anger and benefit from letting it inform us when it occurs, it is not a good thing to foster. God directs us away from anger toward love, hope, and repentance. We are counseled to not give place to anger and instead control how we speak (e.g., use "soft words"), resolve conflict, and diffuse contention, even by enduring persecution. Thus, the righteous try to work things out and learn to be more loving and more intimate with each other. The unrighteous and unrepentant give place to the evil one (Eph. 4:26) and are stirred up to anger (Ether 15:6). Adaptive anger, and the ability to transform anger into compassion, comes through recognizing anger, understanding the underlying reasons why we feel anger, communicating appropriately about those reasons, and nurturing our ability, often through spiritual means, to return to feelings of love and forgiveness. Therapists are in a position to help individuals, no matter their circumstances, develop healthy ways to experience and express anger in the service of improved relationships or to disengage from destructive and harmful relationships.

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Table 1

Content Analysis Themes, Codes, and Descriptions

Theme	Codes and Descriptions
Who is feeling the anger?	Each case of anger was coded as H = human; D = Deity; or A = adversary
Who is the anger directed at?	Each case of anger was coded as H = human; D = Deity; or A= adversary
If a human is feeling the anger, is the person righteous?	Each case of anger was coded as R = righteous; UR = unrighteous; S = specific person/group with unclear righteousness; or G = general reference to humanity, thus, righteousness cannot be ascertained
If the anger is directed at a human, is that person righteous?	Each case of anger was coded as R = righteous; UR = unrighteous; S = specific person/group; or G = general reference to humanity
If the anger is human to human, what type of conflict is it?	Each case of anger was coded as W = wartime conflict; FC = familial conflict; or GD = conflict between nonfamilial groups that is not associated with a war
Is the anger a reference to future emotion or a sermon?	Each case was coded as 1 = yes or 0 = no and then coded as SM = anger is being referenced in the context of sermonizing or teaching; or F = anger is being referenced as something that might occur in the future (e.g., as a warning) but not in the form of a sermon

Note. Righteousness was determined by examining the content of the verse and the surrounding context to identify whether the person was keeping God's commandments or instructions given by Him in the given situation (notwithstanding the anger). The future code was intended to capture cases where anger was being referenced but was not present in the moment.