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Ann Booth's Vision and Early Conceptions of Redeeming the Dead among Latter-day Saints

Christopher James Blythe

On October 5, 1840, Joseph Smith addressed the general church body in Nauvoo on the subject of baptism for the dead,¹ an ordinance he had introduced less than two months previously.² On this historic occasion, the Prophet referenced a vision or dream that has until now escaped thorough study by Church historians. The vision was received by Ann Booth, a recent convert in Great Britain, and included images of John Wesley accepting the restored gospel and being baptized in the spirit world through the administration of David W. Patten. Booth's revelation had garnered attention of missionaries in England and among

1. The official minutes state only that Joseph "delivered a discourse on the subject of baptism for the dead, which was listened to with considerable interest, by the vast multitude assembled." "Minutes of the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Held in Nauvoo, Hancock County, Ill., Oct., 3rd 1840," *Times and Seasons* 1 (October 1840): 186. The details of this sermon have been pulled from unofficial reports in contemporary correspondence.

2. Joseph first introduced the doctrine on August 15, 1840, in a sermon preached at Seymour Brunson's funeral. Journal History of the Church, August 15, 1840, page 171, CR 100 137/v0012, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, available online at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE492736. See also "Letter to Quorum of the Twelve, 15 December 1840," Church History Library, available online at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-quorum-of-the-twelve-15-december-1840/6>. However, this general conference was likely the first time that many of the Saints learned of the ordinance.

some of their families and friends in Nauvoo. According to Vilate Kimball, Joseph explained during his October 5 sermon that the dead “will have the Gospel preached to them in Prison but there is no such thing as spirrits being baptised. He does not wholly discard sisters Booths Vishon; says it was to show her the necessity of being Baptised.”³ Phebe Woodruff quoted the Prophet as stating that “John Wesley can receive this work but how can his spirit be baptize[d] in water[?]”⁴

Thus, Joseph used the vision to articulate truth—the dead may receive the gospel—and to correct error—spirits will not be baptized but must depend upon vicarious ordinances. This article contributes to the growing literature on the early history of baptism for the dead by documenting a vision that preceded Smith’s teaching on baptism for the dead and awakened interest in the topic.⁵ Latter-day Saints were prepared for the new revelation of vicarious ordinances by a preexisting optimism concerning the redemption of the dead. Members of the Church, like Joseph himself, were already wrestling with how people could meet the Savior’s mandate to be baptized if they had not had the opportunity to embrace the restored gospel in the flesh, a conflict that the Prophet had already articulated.

3. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, October 11, 1840, Vilate M. Kimball Letters, Church History Library, available online at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE1960774, image 3.

4. Phebe Woodruff to Wilford Woodruff, October 6, 1840, Wilford Woodruff Collection, Church History Library.

5. This growing literature includes Alexander L. Baugh, “‘For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House’: The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 3 (Spring 2002): 47–58; Alexander L. Baugh, “Blessed Is the First Man Baptised in This Font,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 3 (Fall 2002): 253–61; Richard E. Bennett, “‘I Mean to Be Baptized for Scores More’: Baptisms for the Dead among the Latter-day Saints, 1846–1867,” in *An Eye of Faith: Essays Written in Honor of Richard O. Cowan*, ed. Kenneth L. Alford and Richard E. Bennett (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 2015), 139–57; M. Guy Bishop, “‘What Has Become of Our Fathers’: Baptism for the Dead in Nauvoo,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23 (Summer 1990): 85–97; David L. Paulsen, Kendel J. Christensen, and Martin Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead: Tender Mercies, Turning of Hearts, and Restoration of Authority,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 1 (2011): 28–51; Ryan G. Tobler, “Saviors on Mount Zion: Mormon Sacramentalism, Mortality, and the Baptism for the Dead,” *Journal of Mormon History* 39 (Fall 2013): 182–238.

The “Remarkable Vision”

The earliest extant recording of Ann Booth's vision is in a letter Brigham Young penned in Manchester, England, to his wife, Mary Ann, in Nauvoo, dated May 26, 1840. Young wrote that he had personally heard Booth recount the vision “in company with Brothers [Heber C.] Kimball, P[arley] P. Pratt, and J[ohn] Taylor.” Yet while he acknowledged that she shared “much that I can not wright in this letter,” he transcribed the vision from a manuscript copy, rather than an oral account. The document was titled “Remarkable Vision” and began with a sentence describing the author. “I Ann Booth, Wife of Robert Booth of the Town of Manchester, England, had the following vision of the 12 day of march in the year of our Lord one thousand and forty <1840>.”⁶

Young added only a brief note from his interview with Booth, “Sister Booth sayes she heard a voice saying she must goe to Paridice. then she was cared away in the vision.”⁷ Continuing from his transcription:

6. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Ronald O. Barney, “Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife: Brigham Young to Mary Ann Angell Young, 1839–1841,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 178. I have used Barney's published transcript throughout. Brigham Young's original letters are available at the Church History Library. Both the record of the vision in Brigham Young's letter and the record in Wilford Woodruff's journal, cited in note 18 below, give the title “Remarkable Vision.”

7. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, “Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife,” 178. Here the subsequent vision of imprisoned spirits was correlated with “paradise.” This word appeared as a reference to a realm in the afterlife in Christ's promise to the thief while on the cross, that “to day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Three years later, on June 11, 1843, Joseph Smith would explain that “the commentators make or translators make it out to say Paradise but what is Paradise it is a modern word it does not answer at all to the original that Jesus made use of, their [*sic*] is nothing in the original in any language that signifies Paradise, But it was this day I will be with thee in the world of spirits & will teach thee or answer thy inquiries.” Wilford Woodruff, Journal, June 11, 1843, cited in *Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 213; compare “History, 1838–1856, Volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843],” 1573, Church History Library, available online at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/218>.

Being caried away in a vision to the Place of departed spirits I saw 12 Prisons, one abova nother, verry large, and buield of soled stone. on ariveing at the <dore of the> upermost Prison I behe[l]d one of the 12 apostles of the Lamb who had ben martered in America, standing at the dore of the Prison holding a key in his hand with which he opned unlocked the dore and went in and I fol[low]ed him. he appeard to be of large sise, thick set, darke hare, darke eyes, and eyebrows of a smiling count[e]nan[c]e, and on <his> head was a crown of gold or somthing brighter. he was dresed in a long, white robe, with the sleeves plated from the sholder down to the hand. upon his brest ware fore [four] stares [stars] apparently like gold <or briter> and a golden girdle about his Loins. his feet was bare from above the Ancles down<w>ard and his hands were also bare. as he entred the prison he seemed to stand about 3 feet from the floor (which was of Marble) as if the place was not worthy for him to stand upon. a verry brilient and glorie<u>s light surrounded him, while the res[t] of the prison was dark. but his light was peculiar to him self and did not reflect upon others who was in the prison who ware surounded with a gloom of darkness.⁸

In the vision, John Wesley greeted the angelic messenger with a shout of praise and announced to those surrounding him that “Deliverance has Com.” With the attention of the entire assembly, Patten proceeded to preach baptism and confirmation. Hearing the good news, hundreds followed Wesley’s lead in shouting praise. “The marble floor was then removed and a River of watter clere as Cristall seemed to f[l]ow in it[s] place.” Patten and Wesley entered the pool together, and the father of Methodism was the first to be baptized. Then Patten ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and Wesley baptized the rest of the prisoners. Booth identified the initial baptisms as those of Methodist ministers she had known and then her grandfather, an uncle, a sister, and her mother. “All these had lived and died Methodest.” Following their baptisms, Patten confirmed them members of the Church and bestowed the gift of the Holy Ghost. “Then instantly the darkeness dispersed and they ware all surrounded & envelopd in a Brilint light, such as surround’d the Apostle at the first.”⁹

The vision concluded with a brief reunion between Booth and her departed loved ones. Her grandfather blessed her and asked, “Art thou

8. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, “Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife,” 178–79.

9. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, “Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife,” 179.

come to see us deliverd?" Then, just before she "awoke out of [the] vision," her mother embraced her, kissed her three times, and offered her a blessing similar to her grandfather's, "The Lord Almighty Bless the[e] for ever and ever."¹⁰

Once awake, Booth roused her husband and together they "provedenically" opened the Bible three times, each time discovering a passage related to her revelation. The first was Isaiah 24:22, "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited." The second passage was John 1:5, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Finally, she turned to 1 Peter 3:18–20, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."¹¹ This series of references narrated her experience and served as a set of proof texts of the doctrine the vision imparted.

In her written statement, Booth testified that the information from the dream extended beyond her own knowledge, specifically that "at the time I had the vision I had never hered of the deth of David Patten whome I have sence lerned was one of the twelve Apostles of the Later day Saynts in America and was martered in the late percution in the fall of 1838. but in <the> vision I knew it was an Apostle who had ben slane in America." Closing her account, she wrote, "I here by sollemly testfy that I actually saw and hered in the vision what I have related and I give my name and set my seal in witness to same, well know[ing] that I must stand before the Judgment seet of Christ and ancer to this testimony, amen & amen."¹²

The Vision's Appeal and Circulation

In the nineteenth century, believing Christians often shared revelatory experiences and visions with one another and even published them for

10. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, "Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife," 179–80.

11. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, "Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife," 180.

12. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, "Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife," 180.

public edification.¹³ It was not uncommon for early Latter-day Saints, including men and women of all ecclesiastical positions, to share what they believed to be revelatory dreams and visions. Often Saints found comfort in hearing their fellow members' experiences with the gifts of the Spirit.¹⁴ On the other hand, sharing personal revelations occasionally led to problems with Saints wondering if they were bound to accept another's vision as authoritative. In 1833, Joseph explained that when Church members "<have a vision> heavenly or a visitation from an heavenly messenger it must be for their own benefit and instruction."¹⁵ Such manifestations took on no official status, and Joseph would make clear at various points in his ministry that Church members could be deceived when assuming a revelation came from a divine source.¹⁶ However, when a vision did not oppose a revealed doctrine or attempt to direct the Church, early Saints found no reason to see the manifestation as threatening. It is significant that, in the case of Booth's vision, even Apostles considered a manifestation received by a member of no ecclesiastical rank meaningful enough to record and share with others.

Word of the vision traveled to Nauvoo through Young's May 26 letter to his wife. The Saints often treated letters and news from missionaries as quasi-public documents and shared them throughout the community. On this occasion, Young specifically requested that Ann Bentley, Patten's widow, be shown the letter as soon as possible.¹⁷ How wide

13. Richard Lyman Bushman, "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 37, no. 1 (1997–98): 183–204.

14. Early Church history is replete with personal visions, including Lyman Wight seeing the Savior in 1831 (Ezra Booth to Reverend Ira Eddy, October 31, 1831, in *Ohio Star* 2 [November 3, 1831]); Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde seeing evil spirits in Preston, England, in 1836 (Joseph Fielding, Journal, 23, Church History Library); and Orson Hyde seeing the sites of his future mission across Europe and Jerusalem in March 1840 ("Letter from Elder O. Hyde," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 2 [October 1, 1841]: 553).

15. "Letter to John S. Carter, 13 April 1833," Church History Library, available online at Church Historian's Press, *Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-john-s-carter-13-april-1833/2>; Gerrit J. Dirkmaat and others, *Documents, Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834*, vol. 3 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2014), 61.

16. See, for example, D&C 28; "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 1, 1842): 743–48.

17. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, "Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife," 180–81.



Brigham and Mary Ann Angell Young and Their Children, by William Warner Major. Oil on board, circa 1845–51, Church History Museum. Brigham left his wife and six children behind while he served his 1839–41 mission in England, where he met Ann Booth.

the vision spread by word of mouth is unknown. The sole hint at its influence in Nauvoo is that Joseph spoke of it in his October 5, 1840, sermon. In England, the Apostles who listened to the experience firsthand shared its contents with others. Wilford Woodruff learned of the document after meeting with Young, Pratt, and Kimball on July 1, 1840. He spent the next day recording a personal transcript of the “Remarkable Vision” in his journal.¹⁸

18. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, July 2, 1840, Wilford Woodruff Journals and Papers, 1828–1898, Church History Library; Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–84), 1:475–77. It is also possible that Parley P. Pratt's conception of the spirit world may have been influenced by the content of Booth's vision. In an April 7, 1853, sermon, Pratt presented the image of a spirit prison in which only portions would be opened at a time. There were those who “have

Ann Booth's vision proposed one possibility about the fate of the dead. Young was impressed with the image of the righteous continuing their work in the afterlife, as well as the salvation of his departed kin. "I <think> Brother David [W. Patten] has as much to doe as thou[gh] he had steded [stayed] here along with us. it is glorious to me to think that our fore Fathers who have lived according to the light they had. I think I shall see my Dear Mother ther and my sister that died about 1808 for they boath lived and died in full faith of a glorus rescercscion in and thru the name of Jesus Christ. ther is menny things that causes me to rejoic<ce> in the last days."¹⁹ While the vision's message encouraged hope, it was not the first time Latter-day Saints would have considered redemption for the dead. The appeal of the "Remarkable Vision" was likely based on its intersections with conversations that were already occurring among the Latter-day Saints and Christians more generally about postmortal salvation. In the next section, we will position Booth's vision in this larger milieu of Christian theology on the state of the soul previous to the resurrection.

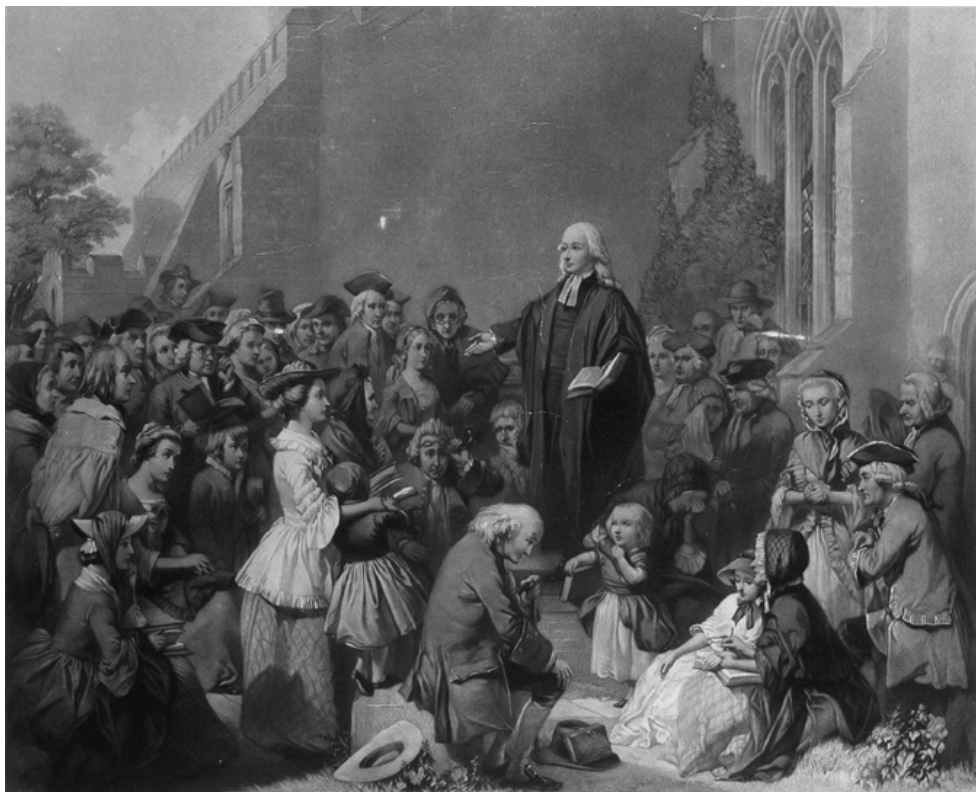
Preaching to the Spirits in Prison and the Redemption of the Dead

Theological disputes over the fate of the nonbeliever and the possibility of postmortal redemption have a long history.²⁰ By the time of the Protestant Reformation, the conflict centered on the concept of purgatory, a state in between death and the entrance to heaven in which souls could be purged of their sins. Theologians disagreed on the nature of

lived in parts of the spirit world . . . where the key has not yet been turned nor the gospel preached . . . being left in their darkness . . . without even a clear hope of resurrection." The image of a series of prisons opened individually could have had its origin in Booth's vision. Parley P. Pratt, sermon, April 7, 1853, transcribed by LaJean Purcell Carruth from the shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, Church History Library, quoted in Terry Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 251. The transcripts from which Givens quotes are restricted at the Church History Library; however, a version of this sermon appears in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 2:43–47 (April 6, 1853). (The George D. Watt document dates the sermon April 7, 1853, but the *Journal of Discourses* states it was given April 6, 1853.)

19. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, "Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife," 180.

20. Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).



John Wesley preaching outside a church. Engraving. Wellcome Library, London, at <http://catalogue.wellcomelibrary.org/record=b1546309>.

this middle state, presenting it both as a location of punishment and suffering or of opportunity and instruction for the redemption of the sinner. Eventually, as scholar Jerry Walls has argued, the concept went through a process of “infernalization,” in which it was almost exclusively portrayed as a temporary hell—a place of fear rather than hope.²¹

21. “Some theologians saw it as closer to hell, and accordingly emphasized the pain and terrors of purgatory as administered by demons, with the apparent motive of frightening sinners into reforming their lives while still alive in this world. By contrast, others represented purgatory as closer to heaven, and the element of hope comes to the forefront, with good angels serving as guides. That is, purgatory represents the hope of salvation for a broader range of sinners and emphasizes the glory that ultimately may be achieved by those consigned to it.” Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

Recognizing that the belief in purgatory was connected with the sale of indulgences and the authority of the papacy, most Protestants rejected the notion, preferring the idea that one was immediately consigned to heaven or hell upon death. A minority maintained the concept of an intermediate state based on a belief in the immortality of the human soul and the future resurrection of the dead (Rev. 20:11–15). Often this temporary abode, referred to as Hades, was divided into distinct regions based on a reading of the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man.²² John Wesley, for example, held that Hades was separated into the “region of hades where the souls of wicked men reside” and paradise, or “the ante-chamber of heaven.”²³ Yet Wesley rejected the idea that the wicked dead who suffered in prison could eventually find their way to paradise or heaven. Almost universally, Protestant ministers declared, as did Presbyterian Heman Humphrey, “You cannot alter the condition of the dead. It is too late. Their account is sealed up to the day of judgment.”²⁴

Skeptics of the intermediate state disregarded the surface reading of 1 Peter 3:19—that Christ literally preached to the spirits in prison—even while they sometimes admitted the scripture’s difficulty. Martin Luther suggested that the passage should “be understood spiritually.”²⁵ After his death, Christ was not in his body and therefore preached through the ministry of his Apostles to the spiritually captive. This was a fairly common explanation, with some, such as Methodist Adam Clarke,

22. For example, “The Sermons of John Wesley—Sermon 112, The Rich Man and Lazarus,” on Northwest Nazarene University, *Wesley Center Online*, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-112-the-rich-man-and-lazarus/> (accessed July 28, 2015).

23. “The Sermons of John Wesley—Sermon 112, The Rich Man and Lazarus.”

24. Quoted in Kathryn Gin Lum, *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55.

25. Martin Luther confessed, “A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means. At first sight, the words read as though Christ had preached to the spirits, that is, the souls who were formerly unbelieving at the time Noah was building the ark; but that I cannot understand and I cannot explain it. And there has been no one who has explained it. Yet if anyone is disposed to maintain that Christ, after he had suffered on the cross, descended to these souls and preached to them, I will not dispute it. It might bear such a rendering. But I am not confident that Peter meant to say this.” Martin Luther, *Commentary on Peter and Jude*, trans. and ed. John Nichols Lenker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2005), 166, 167.

arguing that Peter referred to Christ's ministry through Noah.²⁶ Even John Wesley had shared this viewpoint, acknowledging the middle state but refuting this passage as a proof text presumably because it implied a message of salvation to those consigned already to eventually spend eternity in hell.²⁷

Universalism, a theological position that rejected notions of eternal punishment, stood in contrast to these orthodox positions. For Universalist thinkers, hell was no longer a permanent location where its inhabitants were eternally consigned. Instead, the Universalist hell had much in common with the Catholic purgatory. Sinners would suffer, but they would also eventually be welcomed into heaven. George de Benneville, an eighteenth-century Universalist, published an account of a vision or "trance" he experienced while lying in his sickbed. Accompanied by two angels, he toured "seven habitations of the damned" and "five celestial mansions." In the paradisiacal portion of his vision, he witnessed spirits in the act of praising Jesus because they had been "lately delivered from the infernal prisons."²⁸ Thus, he saw that imprisoned spirits could eventually be redeemed and join the happy spirits of paradise.

Another eighteenth-century visionary, in this case an anonymous woman who may have been affiliated with Methodism,²⁹ recorded a vision that she received in response to her long-held anxiety "relating to the spiritual state of the Indian nations," who had died without a knowledge of Christ. Her guardian angel led her to paradise, which, mirroring the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, was partitioned into two regions by a great gulf. Once taken to the other side, she witnessed Indians being instructed in Christianity. When the visionary asked her angel who it was that served as teachers of the deceased, she was told that they were "the Saints who are redeemed in time and such as are set apart for

26. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 2 (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 823.

27. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, new ed., vol. 2 (London: Thomas Cordeux, 1813), 314. For a further discussion of this and the two previous references, as well as many others on the subject, see Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 240–55.

28. George de Benneville, *Life and Trance of George de Benneville* (Schwenksville, Penn.: N. Bertolet Grubb, 1882), 26, 30, 42.

29. Although Methodists after the age of John Wesley, and especially American Methodists, placed credence in visions, Wesley himself would likely have been more circumspect.

the work take it in their turns for Three Months (that is Angels Months).” By the end of the vision, she had taken her turn behind a pulpit preaching to the Native dead. While this vision embraced Universalist notions of posthumous redemption, it did not reestablish Catholicism’s purgatory in which the living could benefit the dead with the performance of masses or prayers. Although the visionary performed a brief service of spiritual preaching, the angel made it clear that this evangelism was primarily the work of the already departed.³⁰

Ann Lee, the Shaker prophetess and a contemporary of the above visionary, shared many of the same ideas but suggested mortals could also participate in the work of postmortal redemption. Lee once professed to have seen “an angel [understood as the righteous deceased] go out of heaven, and release souls who had been confined in prison for a long time.”³¹ One Shaker recounted his experience of spiritually spending six hours in “the belly of hell,” while he physically spent the evening in “excessive sufferings.”³² On another occasion, Ann Lee saw “a number of the dead who were willing to hear” this same Shaker deliver a discourse before an assembly of non-Shakers.³³

Whether Ann Booth was influenced by these earlier theologians and visionaries is unknown, but her vision was a part of this broader conversation on eschatology, universalism, and angelic ministries to the departed. Raised Methodist, she would have already been familiar with the concept of a middle state. Rejecting Wesley’s claim that judgment would have taken place before a person entered the middle state, her vision echoed Universalist sentiments that redemption was still available to the departed. As in other examples of contemporary visionary literature, Booth’s vision showcased an angelic ministry present to make this possible. Although a recent convert to the LDS Church, Booth would have also likely been aware of these discussions occurring among Church members.

30. Rachel Cope and Bradley Kime, “‘The Vision’: A Dream Account Collected and Preserved by Mary Bosanquet Fletcher,” *Wesley and Methodist Studies* 8, no. 1 (2016): 52–66.

31. *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee . . .* (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1888), 187.

32. *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee*, 192.

33. *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee*, 190.

From the beginning of the Restoration, Joseph Smith had gradually revealed teachings on the state of the unconverted dead.³⁴ The Book of Mormon acknowledged a spiritual state between death and the final judgment, including both a paradise and “outer darkness” or hell, yet, as in Wesley’s theology, there was no discussion of redeeming the dead or of the wicked moving from hell to paradise (see Alma 40:9–14). However, one of Smith’s earliest revelations, dictated in 1829, explained that the scriptural phrase “endless torment” did not mean “that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written *endless torment*,” suggesting the possibility that this would not be a permanent state of being (D&C 19:6, 10–12; italics in original). In 1832, as part of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon’s open vision of the three degrees of glory, this concept was fleshed out when the Saints learned that “the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel” would be resurrected in a “terrestrial world.”³⁵

In 1836, prior to the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph saw another vision in which his deceased brother, Alvin, was present with the righteous in the celestial kingdom. Joseph was confused because Alvin had not been alive at the organization of the restored Church. It was then that Joseph heard the Lord explain, “All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God” (D&C 137:6–7). Thus, by 1836, Joseph had developed an understanding that somehow the righteous who were prevented from hearing the gospel in this life would have the same opportunity as those who had. It is less clear when the Prophet came to understand how this would happen. It seems unlikely that Joseph had articulated the particulars of his later teachings on this matter before 1840.

In 1838, Joseph Smith had explained that “all those who have not had an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and being administered to by an inspired man in the flesh, must have it hereafter, before they can

34. For a detailed discussion of the unfolding of this doctrine, see the chapter “Salvation for the Dead,” in Charles R. Harrell, *“This Is My Doctrine”: The Development of Mormon Theology* (Sandy, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 343–71.

35. D&C 76:71, 73. This vision also presented a novel piece of eschatology when it separated spirit prison from hell or outer darkness. Thus, the limited hell was not the residence of those who were in prison and simply ignorant of the gospel but of more committed sinners who rejected Christ. Even their hell would eventually lead to a degree of heaven. See D&C 76:81–84, 103–5.

be finally judged.”³⁶ While Joseph may have meant that there would be ministers in the spirit world or even that ordinances could be performed for the dead,³⁷ there is no corroborative evidence to suggest that the Saints understood this was the case. Rather, the Saints were still left without a clear idea of how salvation of the dead would come to pass.

Booth’s vision was deeply entrenched with questions of the time—questions shared by Latter-day Saints and broader Christianity. For her Mormon audience, her vision introduced two new components to what Joseph had already revealed. First, she personalized the redemption of the dead in the spirit world by suggesting that a latter-day Apostle had opened this work, which will be discussed in more detail below. Second, she included the image of spiritual baptisms taking place on the other side of the veil. The idea that the dead could be redeemed—even admitted into the celestial kingdom—had been explained, but the Saints lacked an explanation for how they could get around the requirement for baptism. Thus, one of the reasons that Booth’s vision was so attractive was that it fleshed out a solution to what must have been a common concern at the time.

David W. Patten: A Portrait of a Martyr

Brigham Young experienced “joy inexpressible” at Booth’s vision’s portrayal of “David W. Patten’s ministry in the world where he has gone.”³⁸ Patten was already given the reverence due a martyr. His death was portrayed as a holy scene in which he willingly embraced his fate.³⁹ Yet Patten’s afterlife had yet to be envisioned by the Latter-day Saint faithful.

While Latter-day Saints had an awareness of the continuing ministries of the righteous dead in the form of Moroni or John the Baptist, they had yet to think of one of their own in such an exalted status. In fact, in Booth’s vision, the martyr performed a role traditionally played by Christ. The narrative opened with Patten entering his own “harrowing of hell,” as the scene in 1 Peter 3:19 has been termed, to announce the gospel message to the spirits in prison. The key Patten holds reminds

36. Joseph Smith, “In Obedience to Our Promise . . .,” *Elder’s Journal* 1 (July 1838): 43.

37. Baugh, “For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House,” 47.

38. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, May 26, 1840, in Barney, “Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife,” 178.

39. See, for example, Parley P. Pratt, *Late Persecution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (New York, N.Y.: J. W. Harrison, 1840), 73–74.

us both of his position as an Apostle and Christ's appearance to John the Revelator while bearing the "keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). Patten also wears a similar white robe and golden girdle as the Savior in this scene (Rev. 1:13).

It is interesting that the death of Seymour Brunson, whose funeral sermon would be the setting for introducing baptism for the dead, was a scene in which these same teachings of postmortal ministry were displayed. In his dying moments, Brunson announced that he saw David Patten in the room. The martyr acted as psychopomp, beckoning Brunson to the other side.⁴⁰ Vilate Kimball reported that Brunson turned to Joseph and asked him "not to hold me any longer," because, speaking of Patten, "he wants me and the Lord wants me and I want to go."⁴¹

The image of Patten in the spirit world touched Latter-day Saints, as it did Brigham Young, because it was a glimpse of their beloved leader who died too soon. A twentieth-century commentator speculated that Booth's vision was also a message to the Apostles about a prophecy that seemed unfulfilled. In 1838, Joseph had dictated a revelation that urged Patten to prepare for his journey with the Apostles to England (D&C 114:1-2). Historian Douglas R. Patten speculated that the vision illustrates that "Elder Patten really did go to England or rather the England in the spirit world."⁴² Whether the Apostles had made this connection is unknown.

As noted above, the early Church had already embraced angelomorphism as one element of their views on the afterlife. Humans would continue to serve God throughout the eternities. Yet Booth's vision was the first image of a Latter-day Saint priesthood leader's service in the spirit world, presenting specific expectations of what that postmortal work might look like. Although Joseph likely first contemplated this idea before reading Booth's vision, the Prophet would not articulate the concept until after introducing baptism for the dead. When he finally wrote the Twelve Apostles about baptism for the dead on December 15, 1840, he explained, "The Saints have the priviledge of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, who they feel to believe would have

40. Phebe Woodruff wrote, "He said that David Patten was calling him and desired brother Joseph to let him go for he needed him." Phebe Woodruff to Wilford Woodruff, October 6, 1840, Church History Library.

41. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, [September?] 6, 1840, Church History Library.

42. Douglas R. Patten to Linda Shelley Whiting, January 12, 1999, in Linda Shelley Whiting, *David W. Patten: Apostle and Martyr* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2003), 125 n. 23.

embraced the gospel if they had been privileged with hearing it, and who have received the gospel in the spirit through the instrumentality of those who may have been commissioned to preach to them while in the prison.”⁴³ A belief that the righteous would serve missions in the spirit world has become a common tenet in contemporary Mormonism, but it had rarely appeared before the summer of 1840.

The Conversion of John Wesley

One aspect of this vision that should not be overlooked is its emphasis on John Wesley. The founder of Methodism was not simply the first to be baptized in this portrayal of spirit prison, but, as Latter-day Saint readers will have noted, the appearance of David Patten to John Wesley in Booth’s vision bears close similarities with the 1829 appearance of John the Baptist to Joseph Smith. Both Patten and John the Baptist bestowed the Aaronic Priesthood and charged the newly ordained priests to proceed with baptizing their flocks. Wesley was held in high esteem in both Great Britain and the United States. While Protestants did not add to the canon of ancient saints, there is little question that for many Wesley stood as the most prominent of a pantheon of revered religious dead.⁴⁴ Brigham Young recalled that while on missions, he was frequently asked the question “Do you believe that such a man as John Wesley will be damned?”⁴⁵ On another occasion, Young said that honest people would frequently object to the gospel based on the Saints’ insistence that the true church was only restored with Joseph Smith. They would ask, in sincerity, “I wish I knew the truth about this. Our beloved brother and father in the Gospel, the father of the Methodist Episcopal Church, John Wesley, was he not a good man? Tell me that he is not saved!”⁴⁶

43. “Letter to Quorum of the Twelve, 15 December 1840.”

44. In addition to the vast influence of his teachings and publication of his sermons and diaries, relics associated with Wesley’s life were increasingly popular during the nineteenth century. See Frederick Hockin, *John Wesley and Modern Wesleyanism*, 3d ed. (London: Swift and Co., 1876), 80; Christopher M. B. Allison, “Holy Man, Holy Head: John Wesley’s Busts in the Atlantic World,” *Common-place: The Interactive Journal of Early American Life* 15 (Spring 2015), <http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-15/no-03/lessons/#.VcoXzvLH8fg> (accessed August 8, 2015).

45. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:288 (October 9, 1859).

46. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:55 (May 3, 1874).

Latter-day Saints also held Wesley in high regard.⁴⁷ Several historians have begun to emphasize early Mormonism's prominent Methodist roots. While similarities between the two faiths led to conflict as is the case with many closely related religious movements, many Mormon converts were drawn to the Restoration in part out of a nostalgia for an earlier era of Methodism. Historian Christopher Jones has documented how Methodists-turned-Mormons often presented a positive view of Wesley even while sometimes disparaging the present incarnation of the faith.⁴⁸ It made sense for such individuals to view Wesley as "a Latter-day Saint," as Parley P. Pratt did, when publishing one of Wesley's sermons in June 1841.⁴⁹ Wesley was revered as a great reformer who paved the way for the light of the Restoration.

Conclusion

Ann Booth's vision was one of several known visions received by early Church members. It stands out because it was shared and considered respectfully among Church members and leaders. It was also part of a larger conversation in Christianity that asked not only if the unconverted could be saved, but how they would be saved. While Joseph Smith was aware of Booth's experience and its propagation among his flock, there is no evidence he was influenced by the vision. Instead, the

47. Young's own views on Wesley are interesting given that they seem as if they are in conversation with Booth's vision and Wesley's reception of the priesthood. "I never passed John Wesley's church in London without stopping to look at it. Was he a good man? Yes; I suppose him to have been, by all accounts, as good as ever walked on this earth, according to his knowledge. Has he obtained a rest? Yes, and greater than ever entered his mind to expect; and so have thousands of others of the various religious denominations. Why could he not build up the kingdom of God on the earth? He had not the Priesthood; that was all the difficulty he laboured under. Had the Priesthood been conferred upon him, he would have built up the kingdom of God in his day as it is now being built up. He would have introduced the ordinances, powers, grades, and quorums of the Priesthood: but, not holding the Priesthood, he could not do it. Did the Spirit of God rest upon him? Yes, and does, more or less, at times, upon all people." Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:5 (July 3, 1859).

48. Christopher C. Jones, "We Latter-day Saints Are Methodists: The Influence of Methodism on Early Mormon Religiosity" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009).

49. "John Wesley, a Latter-day Saint, in Regard to the Spiritual Gifts and the Apostasy of the Church," *Millennial Star* 2 (June 1841): 23.

importance of this obscure vision is that Joseph used it rhetorically as a means of clarifying his own revelation. The vision was likely a comfort to David Patten's family and the many Saints who were saddened by his death.

Long after Latter-day Saints were fully conversant with the doctrines of the redemption of the dead and three degrees of glory, Brigham Young's sermons employed the image of Wesley in the spirit world just as Joseph pointed to him in his first conference sermon on the subject of baptism for the dead. While Ann Booth's vision found appeal largely for its propositions on theological questions about the redemption of the dead and the work of deceased Saints, its description of the baptism and ordination of John Wesley would have pleased those who pondered the status of pre-Restoration reformers. Echoes of this concern with Wesley's eternal destiny and also his place as one of a revered group of forerunners to the Restoration is evident in the vicarious ordinances that Wilford Woodruff arranged to be performed in 1877.⁵⁰

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50. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, August 21, 1877. Historian Stephen Fleming has noted that John Wesley was also one of only three of these prominent men to be ordained a high priest, suggesting that "the special distinction granted to Columbus, Franklin, and Wesley suggests that they perhaps played a particularly important role." Stephen J. Fleming, "John Wesley: A Methodist Foundation for the Restoration," *Religious Educator* 9, no. 3 (2008): 131–50.