"I Will Pour Out My Spirit upon All Flesh": A Study on Joseph Smith's Reception of Joel 2:28–32

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“I Will Pour Out My Spirit upon All Flesh”: A Study on Joseph Smith’s
Reception of Joel 2:28–32

Jared Heaton Davis

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

“I Will Pour Out My Spirit upon All Flesh”: A Study on Joseph Smith’s Reception of Joel 2:28–32

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In 2001, President Gordon B. Hinckley, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced in an opening statement at General Conference, “The vision of Joel has been fulfilled wherein he declared,” he then quoted the KJV of Joel 2:28–32. Throughout the remaining six and a half years of his life, he provided no commentary on the fulfillment of this passage. Fulfillment of the passage is also referenced in the standard works for The LDS Church in Joseph Smith—History (JS—H 1:41) and in the New Testament (Acts 2:17–21). An array of publications before and after President Hinckley’s statement, comment on the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. This thesis is not another voice commenting on the fulfillment of Joel’s ancient message. However, in the many statements made on the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 a gap exists, in that, no study has been conducted looking specifically at the perceptions and all of the statements of Joseph Smith on the fulfillment of this passage. This thesis seeks to fill that gap.

In this thesis I contend that Joseph Smith did not believe that Joel 2:28–32 had ever been fulfilled prior to his lifetime, and that Joseph utilized the prophecy and its fulfillment as a form of motivation for his followers to preach, gather, and build up Zion. Chapter one summarizes some of the history of Christianity’s view of fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. Because Joseph Smith was not raised in a vacuum, chapter two unfolds the Christian commentary on Joel’s prophecy found in Bibles produced in the antebellum era that Joseph Smith lived in. Chapter three elucidates the beliefs about the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy which two contemporary Christians had—Alexander Campbell and William Miller—to show how distinct Joseph Smith’s teachings and beliefs were in his time-period. Chapter four provides every documented statement Joseph Smith made on Joel’s prophecy, and every primary allusion that points back to Joel 2:28–32. It provides analysis to show what connections Joseph did and did not make with fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 and shows that Joel 2:28–32 was one of the several primary scriptural texts for the restoration. Chapter five demonstrates that other early leaders within Joseph’s church also saw the fulfillment of Joel taking place in their day and as a part of their experiences.

This thesis shows that Joseph Smith did not consider the fulfillment of Joel on a single occasion, as many of his predecessors and contemporaries had, but through publications and sermons he produced a more thorough structure of belief’s regarding its place in the world and especially his church than any other up-start evangelical Christian leader in the antebellum era. He produced a number of revelations, which quote the unique language of Joel. He also pointed people to the ongoing fulfillment of the passage multiple times between 1830 and 1839, showing that he did not believe that fulfillment would come in a specific singular event.

Keywords: Joseph Smith Jr., Alexander Campbell, William Miller, Joel’s prophecy, Joel 2:28–32, Acts 2:16–21, spirit, pneumatology, all flesh, Angel Moroni, 1823 vision, moon to blood, remnant, day of the Lord, antebellum
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Dr. Jan J. Martin’s helpful feedback prompted a thorough study of Bible’s from the early nineteenth century that enhanced this study. Her background in European reformers and Bible translation improved the contextual elements of my lengthy historical chapter. Andrew C. Reed pointed me to several terra firma sources that enabled me to understand the religious context Joseph Smith was living in. His feedback helped produce a polished thesis.

Dr. Daniel L. Belnap has shown thorough attention to the details of this work. Early on he helped narrow down the scope of my study to a manageable topic and time frame. His thorough attention to detail has greatly improved the tone, relevance, and length of this work. Most importantly, his feedback has improved my ability to research, write, and present credible arguments persuasively. I appreciate the large amount of time that he has invested in this paper and the quality of feedback that enabled me to produce a much better product for the rest of my committee to review and enhance even further.

The greatest contribution has come from my wife, Kassie. Not only has she carried the load of having only a part-time husband and father for the last four years, she has spent countless hours reading, editing, and rereading this work. Her continual sacrifice, encouragement, and support has made completion of this thesis possible. My sons Aiden and Braksen have graciously permitted me to continue this process. The welcoming of two daughters (Cienna and Emberly), has added to the sacrifices and support my family has given me through this process.
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Introduction:

A Peculiar Approach to Joel’s Prophecy

“While I was thus in the act of calling upon God,” wrote Joseph Smith, “I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor” (Joseph Smith—History 1:30, hereafter cited as “JS—H”). This angelic messenger gave an explanation of an ancient record and the tools of translation that were buried with it, he then proceeded to quote and expound multiple biblical passages, which were significant for the work, which as Joseph reported, “God had…for me to do” (JS—H 1:33).

Although many in the academic, religious, and apologetic communities have debated the verity of this angelic visit in 1823,¹ this miraculous appearance became the pinnacle vision upon which many early Saints based their conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.²

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¹ In 1867 Pomeroy Tucker wrote regarding the appearance of the Angel Moroni, “About this time Smith had a remarkable vision. He pretended that, while engaged in secret prayer, alone in the wilderness, an ‘angel of the Lord’ appeared to him…” (Pomeroy Tucker, Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism (New York: Appleton, 1867), 27–37). Most of the attempts to undermine this vision have been focused on Joseph Smith’s days as a money digger and not based upon his theological interpretations of these passages. For examples see Mark Ashurst-McGee, “Moroni as Angel and as Treasure Guardian,” The FARMS Review, vol. 18, no. 1 (2006), 35–100; see also Adam P. Hock, “‘Behold An Angel of the Lord Came and Stood Before Me’: A Cultural Examination of Joseph Smith’s 1823 Visions of Moroni,” (unpublished master’s thesis, Provo: BYU, 2013). However, Joseph’s interpretation of passages like Joel 2:28–32 heavily conflicts with traditional Christian outlooks. This conflict has led individuals like B. H. Roberts to attempt to defend the Prophet’s visionary experience by interpreting Joel 2:28–32 as being a millennial prophecy, as found in his introduction to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1902), 1:XXXI–XXXIV (hereafter cited HC). See also Lynne Hilton Wilson, “A New Pneumatology: Comparing Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Spirit with His Contemporaries and the Bible,” BYU studies quarterly, vol. 51, no. 1 (Provo: BYU, 2012), footnote #133 on p. 240.

² Richard L. Bushman compares how much Joseph Smith shared about his early vision of the Father and Son in comparison to the visitation of the Angel Moroni summarizing, “He was less reticent about the visit of Moroni—a visionary story, albeit one without parallel among the visionary accounts. Still he held back information about Moroni, too. Although Joseph told family and friends about the angel’s appearance, the preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon says nothing about the angel…” In his article, Bushman cites many of the scholars who have been led to believe that “no narration of the first vision existed until his 1839 history,” because Joseph did not elaborate on the details of his vision until the Church was established (Richard L. Bushman, “The Visionary World of Joseph Smith,” BYU Studies Quarterly, vol. 37, no. 1 (1997–98), 194–195). Of these early visions, however, an explanation of the origination of the Book of Mormon led into exploration of Joseph’s visits by the Angel Moroni, before his First Vision was more fully divulged (see Oliver Cowdery Letters IV–VI (Feb.– Apr. 1835) to W. W.
Joseph Smith’s 1838 history gives a clear window into his interpretations of the biblical passages taught by the Angel Moroni on that occasion. Although Joseph did not share every biblical passage taught to him explaining, “[the angel] quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here” (JS—H 1:41), he did mention the passages of Malachi 3–4, Isaiah 11, Acts 3:22–23, and Joel 2:28–32. In his history, Joseph captured the main intent of the Angel Moroni for sharing the prophecies of Isaiah, Moses (Acts 3:22–23), and Joel by announcing that they had not yet been fulfilled, but would be fulfilled sometime following this angelic visitation (see JS—H 1:40–41). Although it was fifteen years after the vision that he wrote this commentary in his history,3 these interpretations have greatly impacted The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Out of the four Biblical prophecies referenced in Joseph Smith’s 1838 history, perhaps the most peculiar is Joseph’s perception of Joel 2:28–32 as it varied drastically from contemporary American evangelical Christians in the antebellum era (the time-period between the War of 1812 and the Civil War in the 1860s).4 Joseph Smith and his contemporary leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differed from the American evangelical Christian denominations of their day by (1) teaching that Joel 2:28–32 had not been fulfilled; by (2) teaching Joel 2:28–32 as a motivator to gather and build Zion and that fulfillment would come as

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3 There are at least two significant times when Joseph Smith utilized Joel 2:28–32 in an interpretative way between 1823 and 1838, which will demonstrate that this prophecy was on his mind prior to 1838 and that he relied upon it to teach and instruct the Saints. One of those instances occurred in 1830 when a sister experienced a prophetic dream (see JSP, H1:416) and the second occurred in a meeting held in 1834 when Joseph instructed an entire congregation in regards to Joel 2 (see HC 2:128–129). Both experiences will be examined further in chapter four.

4 This perception of Joel 2:28–32 and its development is thoroughly outlined in chapter one.
they did so, and by (3) using additional scripture and revelation to expand the meaning of Joel 2:28–32.

Joel 2:28–32 (KJV)⁵

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, 

that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:  

29 And also upon the servants and upon the hand–maids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.  

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.  

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.  

32 And it shall come to pass, 

that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

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⁵ The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: with original notes, practical observations and copious references, vol. 4 (New York: Williams and Whiting, 1810), there are no page numbers in Whiting’s volumes. Mark Noll captured the popularity of the King James Version in the antebellum era writing, “The surprising degree of homogeneity that America’s heterogeneous religious landscape could produce is indicated by the predominance of the Authorized, or King James, Version in this sea of American Bibles. Fully 90% of the 1,784 separate editions of Scripture published in America from 1776 to 1865 were of the King James Version. Only 6% were Catholic translations, most Douay-Rheims; the rest represented unsuccessful efforts by Protestants to improve upon the King James. The prevalence of this one translation was even greater than these figures suggest, since the larger print runs and the most often reprinted editions were almost always of the Authorized Version” (Mark A. Noll, America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln (New York: Oxford, 2002), 372). See also Kent P. Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible: The Historical Context of the Bible Used in the Joseph Smith Translation,” BYU Studies Quarterly, vol. 40, no. 1 (2001), where Jackson summarizes the expansion of publishers printing the King James Bible in large numbers following the break from England in 1776. Furthermore, out of the twenty–two Bibles (published in the years 1609, 1769, 1796, 1809, 1810, 1816, 1827, 1828, 1830, 1831, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1844, and 1846) I have examined and compared, all twenty–two are KJV’s and render this passage virtually the same. The only notable differences include variations in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Though differing interpretations may at times be given through commentary, chapter headings, and footnotes as to the specific meaning of phrases within the overall passage, the actual published translation of this passage does not change in content throughout the texts I have found and compared thus far. Thus, when examining the options of what individuals read when studying Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21, the content of the passages, which they started from is consistent. Furthermore, the footnotes for these passages are very consistent across the many versions of the Bibles I have examined. All original bible manuscripts, which were viewed can be found in the L. Tom Perry, Special Collections Library at BYU in Provo, UT and at the Church History Library (hereafter cited “CHL”); specific citations to many of these Bibles can be found in the footnotes throughout this thesis.
Current LDS Scholar’s Approach to Joel’s Prophecy

The visitation of the Angel Moroni, the passage Joel 2:28–32, and Pentecost–like experiences in LDS Church history have each received much attention over the years by both member–scholars and non–member scholars. However, the relationship between Joel 2:28–32, JS—H 1:41, and Acts 2:16–21 has not received an in–depth cultural and contextual treatment, though some LDS scholars have claimed an array of fulfillment(s) of Joel’s prophecy.

For example, Alan K. Parrish argued that the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 began in the experiences surrounding the dedication of the Kirtland temple. Parrish argued that fulfillment did not occur on the Day of Pentecost, but it would be a large–scale event similar to that which was observed in AD 33. Parrish saw the start of Joel’s fulfillment in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple by Joseph Smith and the experiences surrounding that dedication. “If the days surrounding the dedication of the Kirtland Temple are not the fulfillment of the prophecy,“

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6 For a comprehensive view into Joseph Smith’s experience with the Angel Moroni see Adam Hock, “Behold an Angel of the Lord Came and Stood Before Me,” 1–13. Hock’s article also defends Joseph Smith’s account of his experiences with the Angel Moroni in the context of treasure seeking. For a comprehensive Latter–day Saint perspective on the Book of Joel including Joel 2:28–32 see Sidney B. Sperry, “Moroni Expounds Old Testament Scriptures,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 4, no. 1 (1995). Available at: http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol4/iss1/31. Although more recent exegetical commentaries written by Latter–day Saint scholars do exist, (D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, Verse by Verse: The Old Testament, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013)) Sperry’s article is the most complete examination of Joel 2:28–32 in the context of Joseph’s angelic visitation in 1823. Sperry states, “Moroni’s statement to the Prophet that these verses were not yet fulfilled is of more than passing interest to us, because they were also quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost….“ Sperry shows surprise that Joel 2:28–32 has only received minimal attention within Church scholarship: “It has always been surprising to me that after one hundred and ten years of Church history, our people have made few, if any, serious attempts to expound the book of Joel and determine its full meaning. It stands to reason that the prophecy must be of great importance, or Moroni would not have quoted parts of it to the young prophet” (Sperry, “Moroni Expounds Old Testament Scriptures,” 281). For an examination of Pentecost–like experiences within the Latter–day Saint context see publications on the dedication of the Kirtland Temple such as Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844, ed. John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 327–371.


8 Parrish wrote, “Though some claim Peter meant that that day was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, it need not be so interpreted. It may simply be a clarification of the type of things that would happen when the prophecy was fulfilled” (“Your Daughters Shall Prophesy,” 279). The many claims to fulfillment in AD 33, according to Parrish were uprooted by an angel from heaven declaring to a modern prophet, “that it was not yet fulfilled” (279).

9 Referring to the Kirtland temple dedication (109:23, 35–37, 78), Parrish writes, “Joseph’s prayer is a virtual plea for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel” (282). Parrish adds, “It is difficult to pinpoint when Joel’s prophecy began to be fulfilled, but serious consideration must be given to the year 1836” (279).
certainly they marked the beginning of it."\textsuperscript{10} Although Parrish never claimed clear fulfillment specifically spoken or written by Joseph Smith, he presents two different options of fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Fulfillment could have come in the experiences surrounding the dedication of the Kirtland temple or those experiences could have been a starting point for the fulfillment of this prophecy. In his conclusion Parrish favors the latter, “While it is easy to see that Joel’s prophecy has been in the process of fulfillment in our dispensation, it is increasingly difficult to show that the great outpouring of the spirit has been extended [to everyone]…. The outpouring Joel prophesied was to be available to all worthy sons or daughters of the restoration. It is my belief and profound hope that the outpouring of the Spirit continues today.”\textsuperscript{11}

Although Parrish’s article displays a moving string of accounts that shows the readiness of early Church members to liken their spiritual experiences to the Day of Pentecost as a sign of a legitimate restoration of the New Testament Church, not one contemporary account of the outpouring experience refers to Joel’s prophecy nor its fulfillment. Additionally, if Joel 2:28–32 was not fulfilled in the experiences found on the Day of Pentecost (see JS—H 1:41), then it stands to reason that a Latter–day copycat experience wouldn’t fulfill the extents of the prophecy either.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Parrish, 283.
\textsuperscript{11} Parrish, 303.
\textsuperscript{12} Many other LDS scholars have given their views into the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner advocate in both their Old Testament (Joel 2:28–32) and New Testament (Acts 2:16–21) commentaries that Joel’s prophecy would receive multiple fulfillments or duel fulfillment (see Ogden and Skinner, \textit{Verse By Verse: The Old Testament}, 156–158; see also Ogden, Skinner, \textit{Verse By Verse: Acts through Revelation} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 36). Unlike Parrish, they believe that Peter was declaring the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and that the prophecy would be fulfilled again, after Joseph Smith’s experience with the Angel Moroni. Ellis T. Rasmussen believed that fulfillment began on the Day of Pentecost and has continued since that day with increasing fulfillment since Joseph Smith became a prophet (see Ellis T. Rasmussen, \textit{A Latter–day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 640). Hock wrote that the angel Moroni “viewed the passage as an unfulfilled prophecy” in his thesis “Behold an Angel of the Lord Came and Stood Before Me,” 98. These and other LDS perspectives on the Prophecy of Joel will be more fully treated in the conclusion.
This example demonstrates a lack of in–depth treatment of the passage Joel 2:28–32 and how the Prophet Joseph Smith, and other contemporary Mormon leaders consistently taught it. This thesis will discuss other less–well–known accounts of commentary on Joel 2:28–32 as taught by Church leaders. This thesis also contrasts Joseph Smith’s statements on the prophecy with those of evangelical Christians in the antebellum era (1812–1860s), namely, Alexander Campbell and William Miller.

Due to the nature of this passage and its relationship with larger theological debates, some clarifications must be shared that will help the reader understand primary and secondary materials presented throughout this thesis. Joel’s prophecy presents three major ideas or topics within the prophecy overall: (1) an outpouring of Spirit yielding dreams, visions, and prophecies (Joel 2:28–29), (2) large–scale destructions and astronomical signs (Joel 2:30–31), (3) in the face of the first two topics of this prophecy, Joel recognizes that deliverance will come to those who call upon the name of the Lord and are gathered in Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, or with a remnant of believers. While the term “Joel’s prophecy” refers to all five verses and all three key points, the passage was rarely addressed in its entirety by evangelical Christians in the antebellum period.

Of these three topics the outpouring of the Spirit was addressed far more often than the other two, especially in view of the spiritual conversion that was commonly desired during the Second Great Awakening (1801–1840s).13 This topic from the prophecy (Joel 2:28–29) has been linked in primary and secondary sources to studies on dreams, visions, and prophecies during

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13 In comparing the pneumatology of Joseph Smith and his evangelical Christian contemporaries, Lynne Wilson noted “a general early American religious interest in the Holy Spirit.” Wilson showed that a “keen interest in the Spirit grew during the First Great Awakening and erupted during the Second Great Awakening” (Lynne Wilson, “Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Contrasted with Cartwright, Campbell, Hodge, and Finney,” Unpublished Dissertation, Marquette University (2010), 13). Wilson also quoted a missionary from the early nineteenth century who stated, “‘There is, also, much earnest prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit upon their souls, and upon all those who hear or read the Gospel’” (25–26).
this period. Many in Joseph’s day pointed to this topic in the prophecy as a sign that humankind was living in the age of the Spirit, and thus, the spread of Christianity post AD 33 was evidence that Joel’s prophecy had received fulfillment.

The second topic in this prophecy on apocalyptic signs is referenced in millennial teachings and beliefs that were held during the Second Great Awakening. Although many

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14 There was a greater degree of acceptance for dreams and visions or sorts during the Second Great Awakening as observed by Nathan Hatch:

Scores of preachers’ journals, from Methodists and Baptists, from north and south, from white and black, indicated a ready acceptance to consider dreams and visions as inspired by God, normal manifestations of divine guidance and instruction (Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 10).

More specific examples link dreams and visions to Joel 2:28–32. Adam Hock found instances in his research of Angel Moroni’s visit to Joseph Smith, when some non–Mormon contemporaries believed their personal experiences were, at least in part, the fulfillment of Joel’s promise that “old men shall dream dreams” (Joel 2:28).

The words of Joel 2:28 prefaced Ebenezer Adams account of seeing three angels in one night, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old Men shall dream Dreams, and your young Men shall see Visions.’ Nathan Culver’s guide quoted a similar passage, but misattributed the scripture to Joel 11:28, ‘And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall prophesy; your old Men shall dream Dreams; your young Men shall see Visions.’ Each visionary prominently placed the scripture in the publication or narration to imply that their vision fulfilled this Biblical prophecy (Hock, “Behold an Angel of the Lord Came and Stood Before Me,” 98).

15 “pneuma” is the Hebrew word for Spirit and pneumatology is the modern–day term for the study on the Spirit. A renowned scholar James G. Dunn identifies that most studies on “pneumatology” occur in comparisons between the differences in Old and New Testament writings (James G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A re–examination of the New Testament teaching on the gift of the Spirit in relation to pentecostalism today* (Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1970), 3). Dunn, however, focuses on “pneumatology” in the sense of identifying acceptable spiritual expressions that could be found in modern–day Pentecostalism. Lynne Wilson also broke the mold of pneumatological studies in her dissertation “Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Contrasted with Cartwright, Campbell, Hodge, and Finney.” Both Dunn and Wilson analyze Joel 2:28–32 as part of their findings.

16 One 1846 Bible commentary compared the generations before and after the Day of Pentecost when this passage was fulfilled: “I will pour out of my Spirit; Before the Spirit was given in lesser measures, and comparatively but by drops, here a little, and there a little; now more largely, even to overflow” (Annotations on the Holy Bible, Wherein the Sacred Text is Inserted, and Various Readings Annexed: Together with the Parallel Scriptures: the more Difficult Terms in Each Verse are Explained, Seeming Contradictions Reconciled, Questions and Doubts Resolved, and the Whole Text Opened, vol. 3 (London: Henry G. Bonn, 1846.), 388). Another New Testament showed the common belief that God had now given the Spirit to the Church in a spiritual age: “Let us adore the divine goodness, which has poured forth the Spirit like a refreshing dew upon his church” (Philip Doddridge, *The Family Expositor; or, a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament; with Critical Notes; and a Practical Improvement of each Section*, vol. 3 (London: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1831), 372).

Christians viewed their spiritual experiences as part of a pre–millennial experience in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the apocalyptic signs in this passage are only retained in biblical commentaries.

The third topic in Joel’s prophecy was found almost solely in pastoral invitations when people were to call on the name of the Lord for salvation. In antebellum practice the significance of locations in this passage are lost (i.e. Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, remnant). In this way, this verse primarily became an Old Testament reminder of the need to rely, through prayer, on the grace of Christ for salvation.

Historically, this passage was not treated as a unified whole, but was broken into three primary traditions; whereas Joseph Smith understood the passage as a unified whole. Because Joseph Smith included and explained the entire prophecy harmoniously, it is difficult to compare his interpretation of Joel’s prophecy with that of his contemporaries, who followed the historical tradition of segmenting the prophecy. However, the fruits of this study will show that Joseph Smith utilized Joel’s prophecy as one of many primary biblical sources for his teachings.

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18 Grant Underwood defines the differences between pre–millennialism and post–millennialism and the hasty conclusions scholars have arrived at with regards to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter–day Saints, (see Grant Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 3–8.

19 In an 1810 KJV bible published in New York by Williams and Whiting, their extensive commentary skips any significance to Jerusalem and Mt. Zion defining remnant as “the Jews who embraced Christianity in the primitive times: yet it may also include all, whether Jews or Gentiles to the end of time” (vol. 4, no page numbers). Other commentaries teach that mention of Jerusalem and Mt. Zion are symbolic of the Church or believers anywhere in the world such as in Henry G. Bonn, Annotations on the Holy Bible (London: Bonn, 1846).
Chapter 1:
From Joel to Joseph: A Historical View of Christian Perceptions

Joel’s poetic and apocalyptic message is perhaps one of the most mysterious books in the Old Testament. Scholars in recent decades have debated most aspects of the book. In Jewish Bibles, Joel 2:28–32 is even divided from chapter two to form its own chapter. The first major quotation of Joel 2:28–32 comes in AD 33 by the apostle Peter (see Acts 2:16–21).

Following the outpouring of the Spirit and the reception of the gift of tongues, on the Day of Pentecost, some onlookers accused the Apostles of being drunk. Peter arose and rebuked that attack by quoting Joel 2:28–32. Peter’s version of Joel 2:28–32 does not match entirely the Old Testament Hebrew version or the Septuagint version. Peter’s quotation of Joel contains several alterations, but only a few of them seem to be major changes. One of those changes is his alteration of “And it shall come to pass afterwards” (Joel 2:28, emphasis added) to read “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God” (Acts 2:17, emphasis added). Many scholars and

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22 Michael Barrett helps solidify that Peter’s use of “the last days” is a new addition by comparing it to the ancient Hebrew and Septuagint editions of the text that Peter could have had at his disposal. “Interestingly, Peter interprets the ‘after thus’ of the Hebrew text and the ‘after these things’ of the Septuagint text to mean ‘in the last days’” (Michael P. V. Barrett, “Pentecost and Other Blessings,” Biblical Viewpoint, 1995, 31). A survey of English translations of the Septuagint confirm Barrett’s insight. For example see *The Septuagint Bible: The Oldest Version*
Christians have painted Peter’s quotation of Joel 2:28–32 as a declaration that the prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. This position is based on the belief that Peter and other New Testament writers like Paul were living in the “last days” (see 1 Pet. 1:5, 20; see also 2 Pet. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2).23 Another reason many have viewed Peter’s quotation to be a statement of fulfillment is his explanation of the Spirit manifest at Pentecost to the prophecy of Joel, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16).24 While this perception of fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost became what James Crenshaw would refer to in his commentary on Joel as the “primary claim to fame for Christians,” which “rests on a single passage…as the long–

of the Old Testament (Indian Hills, CO: Falcon’s Wing Press, 1954), 1366. In addition to this change, Peter’s other changes include: added the phrase, “and they shall prophesy” to Joel 2:29 (Acts 2:18). Peter added that “signs” will be seen in the earth and “pillars of smoke” became “vapours of smoke” (Joel 2:30; Acts 2:19). The Septuagint renders it “smoky vapours.” Peter rendered the “great and terrible day of the Lord” as the “great and notable day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20), which is closer to the “illustrious day” found in Septuagint translations. Finally, Peter omitted any reference to deliverance being found in Mount Zion and Jerusalem and any reference to a remnant, which the Lord would call.

23 See Barrett, “Pentecost and Other Blessings,” 31, which states, “the expression ‘the last days’ marked the beginning of the new era that commenced with the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh”; see also Stanley M. Horton, The Book of Acts (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 38, which states, “Even Peter himself probably did not see how long it [the age of the Messiah] would be. … Peter makes one apparent change in the prophecy. Under the inspiration of the Spirit he specified what the word ‘afterward’ in Joel 2:28 means…he recognized that the last days began with the ascension of Jesus. …We are in the last age before the Rapture of the Church, the restoration of Israel, and Christ’s millennial reign.”; Roberts, HC 1:XXXI. Nearly all Bible commentaries published early on in the antebellum period make connection between Peter’s usage of “last days” as being in the days of the Savior. One commentary even asserts that this alteration proves fulfillment better than Peter announcing “this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,” (Acts 2:16). “But there is another and better way of accounting for this. The times of the Messiah are frequently called The last days” (The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Translated Out of the Original Greek and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised (Southwark: Published by William Wright, 1839), 314. See also The Holy Bible, Williams and Whiting, 1810; Bonn, Annotations on the Holy Bible, 338; The New Testament of our Lord… Sheldon & Goodrich and Simeon L. Look, 1816), 558; Philip Doddridge, The Family Expositor, 371; The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments, ed. Adam Clarke, vol. 4 (New York: J. Collard, 1827), 396; Thomas C. Brownell, The Bible class and family expositor, or, a familiar guide to the study of the New Testament: Being a condensed summary of the most valuable commentaries (Hartford Conn.: T. Belknap, 1833), 264.

24 In Philip Doddridge’s 1831 printing of the KJV the commentary for this phrase in Acts 2:16 reads, “But this which has occasioned so much admiration, and which you know not how to account for, is that great event which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, chap. ii. 28—32.” (Philip Doddridge, The Family Expositor, 371. Additionally, he recognized that everyone didn’t agree with this conclusion but felt that it was clearly implied by Peter’s words. “Some have explained this prophecy as referring, in its original sense, to the pouring forth the Spirit on the Jews at their last general conversion…. But, from attending to the context, I am led to conclude, for reasons too long to be here stated, that the prophecy is here applied in its most direct sense…” (371). It is interesting that on other occasions, Peter is far clearer about declaring a scripture fulfilled (see Acts 1:16, see also Acts 3:18). As a gospel writer, St. Luke is very clear in declaring the fulfillment of scripture. His habits of making those declarations follow a clearer pattern on other occasions (see Luke 4:21; 21:22, 24, 32; 22:16; 24:44; Acts 13: 25, 27, 29, 33).
awaited fulfillment of Joel’s prediction,” others have rejected fulfillment of the Prophecy of Joel on the Day of Pentecost for some specific reasons within the New Testament account. The most frequented reason used to reject fulfillment comes in the interpretation of the context surrounding Peter’s quotation. This argument claims that Peter was likening the spiritual outpouring to the description of Joel in order to dissuade the naysayers who claimed that the disciples were drunk and not to declare fulfillment.25 Another reason some deny fulfillment is for the same reason others claim it, that is Peter’s reference to “the last days.” If the last days began with Jesus’ mortal life and lasts until he returns again, then the term “last days” is too broad to have started with Christ’s life.26 Another reason some struggle to accept Peter’s quotation as a declaration of fulfillment is because the Hebrew word for “all flesh” actually means all people and can even include animal life. This term appears to be far more expansive than the scene recorded in Acts 2.27 Another reason used to argue that the prophecy wasn’t fulfilled at Pentecost

25 Stanley Horton recognizes this popular argument in his commentary. “One writer actually says Peter did not really mean ‘This is that,’ but rather, ‘This is something like that.’ In other words, the Pentecostal outpouring was only similar to what will happen when Israel is restored at the end of the age (see A. C. Gabelein, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (New York: Our Hope, n.d.), p. 34)” (Horton, *The Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 38). B. H. Roberts holds this same argument (see Roberts, *HC* 1:XXXII).

26 Stanley Horton also recognizes this argument explaining, “Even Peter himself probably did not see how long it would be” referring to the “Messianic Age,” which was the “time span between the first and second comings of Christ” (Horton, *The Book of Acts*, 38). Marshall also feels the need to separate the last days into “the ‘end’ of the last days, rather than to their ‘beginning’” because of the length of the time period (I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 73–74).

27 Hebrew scholar Elie Assis writes at length about the problem that arises with the biblical term “all flesh,” “The term ‘all flesh’ is also difficult because in the Hebrew Bible this term refers to all humanity or even to all living creatures. … In these verses, Joel predicts the propheying of the masses, a phenomenon that will involve the entire population” (Assis, *The Book of Joel*, 202). As a Jewish scholar, Assis doesn’t believe in the claims of Peter, but it is insightful to note that he also struggles limiting this verse to just Israelites in Jerusalem just prior to the day of YHWH (see Assis, *The Book of Joel*, 202–203). See Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 67 and Horton, 38–39 for examples of the debate between “all flesh” meaning everyone and “all flesh” being a select group. John Barton demonstrates the gap between the conclusions of most Christian scholars and the text in Joel. “The general consensus of commentators has been ‘all flesh’ here does not mean ‘all humankind’ but ‘all Israel’ (in practice, ‘all Judah’)…. This, however…..would put this reference at odds with all other uses of the phrase ‘all flesh’ (*kol bāšār*) in the Old Testament. There are forty or so occurrences of the phrase, and the main difference in meaning from one to another is between ‘all human beings’ and ‘all living beings’. There seem to be no other places where the meaning is clearly ‘all Israelites.’ Yet it is difficult to see just what would be implied by an extension of the outpouring of YHWH’s spirit beyond the bounds of Judah, which would make this prophecy one of the most ‘universalistic’ in the Old Testament…. It would presumably mean that knowledge of YHWH would be available to
is that there isn’t evidence of fulfillment of the rest of these verse, which Peter quotes (Acts 2:18–21).  

Joel 2:28–32—A Vital Scriptural Passage for Christianity in AD 100–400

Fulfillment of Joel Meant Early Christians Were Experiencing the Last Days

Regardless of whatever intention Peter had in quoting Joel’s prophecy originally, the teachings of Christian leaders and scholars between AD 100 and 300 cemented a popular interpretation that has lasted throughout much of Christian history. The clear references made by the apostles to the last days (1 Pet. 1:5, 20; see also 2 Pet. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2), the specific reference Peter made to final days within his quotation of Joel 2:28, and with the broader dispensation of the Holy Ghost to all Church members, the early opinion was that Joel 2:28–32 had been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. This, coupled with Peter’s placement of Joel’s prophecy in “the last days” caused Christians to think that they were living in “the last days”.


Homer Hailey, A Commentary on the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 53–54. Hailey argues that fulfillment of Joel’s words began on the Day of Pentecost and were completely fulfilled in the experiences that followed with the destruction of Jerusalem. Gerhard A. Krodel, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Acts (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 81. Krodel also separates fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy claiming that everything beyond the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit will happen at the “End itself” (81). Barrett also divides the prophecy, “it becomes clear that aspects of this prophecy were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and others wait to be fulfilled when the Lord returns at the end of the age” (Barrett, 30). Barton agrees with this conclusion writing that, “it does not seem probable” that these remaining verses are in chronological order with the Spirit’s outpouring on the Day of Pentecost (Barton, Joel and Obadiah, 97). James Limburg also notes that the “interpretation of Acts 2:19–20 is debated” concluding that “One thing is clear from this first apostolic sermon: The age of the fulfillment of prophecy has begun.” (James Limburg, Hosea—Micah (Atlanta: John Know Press, 1988), 72). Graham S. Ogden directly denies the idea of fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy writing, “In Acts 2:16–18, Peter at Pentecost quotes Joel 2:28–29, giving the impression that what Joel had in mind was specifically the Pentecost event. … From several points of view it is clear that Joel’s original intention and what the early Church understood it to be are not identical. Therefore, to say that the latter ‘fulfils’ the former, in the sense that it is the direct result of a word spoken earlier by Joel, is inappropriate” (Graham S. Ogden, A Promise of Hope—A Call to Obedience (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 38).
“Early Christian experience was dominated by the belief that the last days had already arrived,” acknowledged Christopher Rowland, noting that:

This was indicated by the return of the eschatological spirit as a dominant feature of the lives of the early Christians. The point is made most clearly in the Pentecost speech of Peter where Joel 2.28ff. is cited. The coming of the spirit at Pentecost is regarded by the author not only as a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, but also a sign that the last days have arrived (Acts 2.17). The words ‘in the last days’ are here added to the quotation from Joel to demonstrate that the barren time without the Spirit of God had now been brought to an end by the dawn of a new era dominated by the Spirit.29

Justin Martyr (AD 100–165), Irenaeus (AD 130–202), Tertullian (AD 160–220), Origen (AD 184–253), and Novatian (AD 200–258) all stressed that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in “the last days”.30 In the late second century, in his treatise Against Heresies Irenaeus quoted Acts 2:15–17. He then explained, “The God, therefore, who did promise by the prophet, that He would send His Spirit upon the whole human race, was He who did send; and God Himself is announced by Peter as having fulfilled His own promise.”31 Tertullian also wrote extensively on the belief that early Christians were experiencing the last days, and that Joel’s prophecy was proof of that. Tertullian in his treatise Against Marcion stated,

But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4)—the God, of course, who is the Lord of that very succession of times which constitutes an

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29 Christopher Rowland, The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity (London: SPCK, 1982), 69. Although the quote strengthens the argument of this study, it is not the focus nor a main argument of his book. It appears that Peter’s treatment of Joel’s passage has failed to garner more central attention in the scholarly community, due to the lack of disputes anciently. Because Marcion, Gnostics, and Jews apparently did not debate the prophecy of Joel as a main point of their argument, its frequent usage by second and third century Christian authors has gone largely under-analyzed. Thus, only fleeting or occasional reference can be found to this passage that was relied upon heavily by theologians like Tertullian as he takes on Marcion as will be demonstrated in the next section. This detail also shows the significance of Rowland’s brief mention as dictated above.

30 See Justin Dial. 87 (The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325: Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, vol. 1, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), hereafter cited ‘ANF, vol. #’); see also Iren. Haer. 3.11.9, 3.12.1, 3.17.1, 4.33.15, 5.12.2 (ANF, vol. 1); Tert. Res. 52.22, 63.1 (ANF, vol. 3); Tert. Marc. 5.8, 5.9, 5.17 (ANF, vol. 3); Orig. Hom. Lev. 1.1.1 (ANF, vol. 4); and Novatian On the Trinity 29.2 (ANF, vol. 5) for examples of early Christian writers who use references to the last days when teaching or conveying the fulfillment of the Joel 2:28–32. As mentioned earlier, “the last days” found in Pet’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy is a unique addition by Pet. The ancient Hebrew manuscripts we have render it “afterwards” or “after thus” and the Greek Septuagint renders it “after these things,” so when ancient apologists or theologians quote the passage saying, “the last days” but give Joel credit for passage, they have incorrectly given attribution to Joel’s passage rather than Peter’s improvement.

...who furthermore both predetermined and predicted that the revelation of His Son should be postponed to the end of the times. “...and in the last days I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17) as Joel says. It was characteristic of Him (only) to wait patiently for the fulness of time, to whom belonged the end of time no less than the beginning.32

Irenaeus and Tertullian believed they were living in the last days as marked by the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy on Pentecost.

Evident by the writings of the earliest post–apostolic period, the belief that Joel 2:28–32 was fulfilled came primarily with the belief that they lived in the final years before the day of the Lord. Armed with Peter’s clarification of fulfillment “in the last days,” and the evident reception of the Spirit by converting gentiles, early Christians were settled on a belief that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled and that they were enjoying the last days. While, this belief is evident in the writings of these early Christians their interactions with opponents was sure to solidify the belief of fulfillment even more.

The Fulfillment of Joel at Pentecost Used in Debate

The pioneering centuries of Christianity saw brutal face–offs between the perceived heresies and schisms of some of its members, and with competing religions like Judaism. Not possessing a highly developed ecclesiastical hierarchy with established precedent to maintain order, and not even possessing a standard of canonical texts that was universally accepted by Christians until later centuries, early Christian writers relied on connections between ancient scripture and modern texts for debate against former members of their own church, among them—Joel 2:28–32. This passage and its New Testament reference in Acts 2:16–21 was consistently used by early Christian writers to support their theological claims. A Day of

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32 Tert. Marc. 5.6 (ANF 3.436).
Pentecost fulfillment not only helped validate these early Christian claims, but it also helped some Christians to demonize those who they considered heretics and others who held to religious traditions such as Judaism.

For example, Tertullian utilized his belief that “now was absolutely fulfilled that promise of the Spirit which was given by the word of Joel” in the experiences on the day of Pentecost to reject the claims of a fellow Christian named Marcion (AD 85–160). Marcion “saw the antagonism which he supposed to exist…between the Old Testament God and the New Testament God,” which led to his later rejection of the entire Old Testament text and the Old Testament God, which he believed to be a separate god from that of the Father of Jesus. Tertullian connected the promise of spiritual gifts in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28–32) and Christ’s promise of the spirit to his disciples with his understanding of the fulfillment of both promises on the Day of Pentecost. Tertullian saw the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 on the Day of Pentecost as proof that both the Old Testament and New Testament writings were both valid scriptural texts and spoke of the same God, and so he used this fulfillment to reject Marcion’s teachings. Although Tertullian’s argument that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled did not immediately stop or halt the rapid spread of Marcionism’s Old Testament rejection, which lasted

34 Wilson, Marcion, 52–53.
35 Before claiming fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy on the Day of Pentecost to connect the Old Testament with the New, Tertullian wrote: “Now, on the subject of ‘spiritual gifts,’ I have to remark that these also were promised by the Creator through Christ; and I think that we may derive from this a very just conclusion that the bestowal of a gift is not the work of a god other than Him who is proved to have given the promise” (Tert. Marc. 5.4). Here Tertullian clearly makes the following connection with Joel’s fulfillment, which he then shared about proof of the same God in the Old and New Testaments to reject Marcion’s doctrine of different gods.
36 See Tert. Marc. 5.4 (ANF 3.436), for other connections Tertullian makes between the Old and New Testaments. Wilson summarizes how Tertullian and others came to view Marcion: “It is evident…that in the second half of the second century Marcion was regarded as a heretic who had dealt the orthodox church a deep and lasting wound” (Wilson, Marcion, 43).
for a couple more centuries among some groups, the tradition that Joel 2:28–32 was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost was strengthened by his reasoning.

Other Christians used similar logic as they claimed that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost to win debates. A contemporary to Tertullian, known as Justin Martyr, relied on fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy in his debate with Trypho. This portion of the debate began by Trypho quoting Isaiah 11:1–2, a passage Christians had applied to Jesus. Trypho asked, if Jesus was a God before his mortal life, why did Christ need the Spirit to help him as a mortal? Justin’s answer was that Jesus did not need the Spirit, but it did descend on him just as it had the prophets of old. He continued by teaching that the Spirit ceased from the Jews and was not given as a gift to anyone while Jesus lived, however, “as had been predicted, [it has] become gifts which, from the grace of His Spirit’s power, He imparts to those who believe in Him, according as He deems each man worthy thereof. I have already said…that it had been prophesied that this would be done by Him after His ascension to heaven.” Following this statement Justin quoted Joel 2:28–29. Fulfillment of Joel’s vision was viewed as a substantial claim to Jesus’ authenticity. The claim was evident as Justin described it, “to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God.” Although it was evidence of the Spirit working in Christians that Justin felt proved the truthfulness of the Christian gospel to Trypho, in his explanation, it was the long-awaited fulfillment of Joel 2:28–29 that welcomed these spiritual gifts into the lives of those who believed in Jesus.

In similar fashion to Tertullian and Justin Martyr, Irenaeus utilized his belief that Joel’s prophecy had been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost to reject the doctrine of the Montanists, who

37 Wilson, Marcion, 43.
38 Justin Martyr, Dial. 87 (ANF 1:242–3).
39 Justin Martyr, Dial. 87 (ANF, 1.243).
denied the gifts of the Spirit in Irenaeus’ day. Irenaeus wrote, “Others, again (the Montanists), that they may set at nought the gift of the Spirit, which in the latter times has been, by the good pleasure of the Father, poured out upon the human race…,” and then connected the Montanists error with Peter’s quotation at Pentecost, “God Himself is announced by Peter as having fulfilled His own promise.”

Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Justin Martyr all relied on a belief that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost to advance their theological perspectives on the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit. These early statements on the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy are the earliest secondary accounts on Peter’s use and quotation of Joel’s prophecy on the Day of Pentecost. While modern scholars and exegetes debate the fulfillment of Joel’s words as mentioned above, these written accounts show a strong Christian tradition of fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy on the day of Pentecost.

Joel 2:28–32 Between AD 400 and 1400

While theologians and clergymen perceived the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy as one of the necessary ways to bolster Christianity’s authenticity in the second and third centuries, the fourth century met new circumstances for the no longer nascent Church. Christians no longer faced persecutions and misunderstandings because Emperor Constantine’s adoption of Christianity led to a widespread acceptance of Jesus Christ. The once poor, persecuted Church became the pinnacle of the Roman Empire as Constantine flooded the Church with money and

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40 Iren. Haer. 3.11.9 (ANF 1.429).
41 Constantine gained complete control of the Roman Empire by AD 324. Seeing contention and disunity in the leaders of the Church he called together the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Constantine died in AD 337.
buildings. Thus, a scripture passage like Acts 2:16–21 (Joel 2:28–32), which Christian apologists relied on throughout the two preceding centuries was no longer used.

These major changes, which came at the beginning of this time-period appear to have affected the teachings and commentary on fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy in two ways. First, the reference to Joel’s prophecy was rarely even referenced by key theologians. Second, the belief that Christians were living in the “last days’ faded.

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) rarely referred to Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28–32/Acts 2:17–21) in his writings, and when he did, he was silent on any comments directed towards its fulfillment. Instead he used phrases from the passage to teach and highlight other principles such as grace.

When, in consequence of grave sin, the human race was afflicted with misery and stood in need of the divine mercy, the Prophet, foretelling the time of God’s grace, said: ‘And it shall come to pass that every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved’ (Joel 2:32). Hence prayer. But the Apostle, when, in order to commend this very grace, he had cited the witness of the Prophet, immediately added: ‘How then are they to call upon him in whom they have not believed’ (Romans10:14)?

In the example above, the more pressing matter in Joel’s words was to invite his audience to display greater faith through prayer so that they might receive the grace of God and be saved.

This rare reference to Joel by Augustine demonstrated that Christians, at least Roman Catholics, did not need to lean on the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28–32) for theological purposes. The Church was prosperous and was not fighting for survival and

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protection from Gnostics, Marcionites, nor Jews. The example provided above by Augustine is rare because reference to the Joel passage in his personal writings as well as in all the Christian writings between AD 400 and 1400 is difficult to find.\footnote{I have searched the English translations of many of the venerated Saints and monks who followed after Augustine, related studies in pneumatology and spirituality for this time period, and I have searched through many data bases for any mention of Joel’s prophecy and the passages Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:17–21 in these centuries. In my many attempts to find any commentary on Joel’s prophecy in this time–period from key figures like Saint Benedict of Nursia (AD 480–587) and several others, I have yet to find any quotation of Joel’s prophecy or comment on its fulfillment. Furthermore, I have read over 40 modern books and commentaries on these two passages and not one of these sources mentioned Christian commentary or teachings from this large time period on the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.} It is likely that Joel’s prophecy was entirely in the background of Christianity in these centuries, due to the lack of commentary on it.

As to the second point, the Christian perception of living in the last days faded by this time period. In the second and third century many still believed that they and their children were truly living in the “last days” (Acts 2:17). They believed that any day Jesus might return and take vengeance upon the wicked, while saving the righteous.\footnote{See Tert. \textit{Marc.} 5.6, translation from ANF 3.436.} This perception brought great power and excitement regarding the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy; however, in the decades before Constantine, Christians no longer thought of themselves living at the end of the world.\footnote{MacCulloch, \textit{Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years}, 118. MacCulloch clearly places the end of the “last days” expectation very early. As seen in the quotes by post–Apostolic figures above, there was clearly some expectations lingering into the second and third centuries.} While the experiences recorded on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 were still considered to be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, it became less a proof that they were in the “last days.”

Paula Fredriksen summarized the shift in outlook during the fourth and fifth centuries.

In the story of the Western church’s efforts, Tyconius and Augustine hold pride of place. Earlier theologians had responded to the Apocalypse either by affirming the approach of the End while accounting for its delay, or by allegorizing any historical and temporal reference out of the prophecy, or by repudiating the text altogether.\footnote{Paula Fredriksen, “Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity: From John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo,” \textit{Vigiliae Christianae}, vol. 45, no. 2 (Jun. 1991), 151.}
Fedriksen went on to explain that Tyconius and Augustine reinterpreted books like the Revelation of John not literally, but allegorically, which freed Christians from trying to explain why the “End” had not come yet, but would do so shortly.49

Over the next one thousand years following Augustine, perceptions of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21 are extremely difficult to find. However, during the middle ages two outlooks on the end–of–time scenario described by Joel developed as captured by Derk Visser who concluded that belief in the Apocalypse during the Middle Ages revealed,

…the existence of a dichotomy between a negative, or ‘apocalyptic’ and a positive, or ‘utopian’ mentality. The first focused on the fearful reign of Antichrist and the horrors of hell. The other, instead, looked forward to the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of salvation at the end of time when the paradise of the first creation will be restored. …

The fearful reign of Antichrist, however, also loomed large in medieval thought and modern scholars have traced its influence in literature and art.50

The standard of the utopian mentality in Visser’s book is Berengaudus of Ferrières (AD 840–892), who held differing views from other apocalyptic writers during the Middle Ages such as Autpert Ambrose (AD 730–784) who believed that God, through predestination, had already chosen the elect, whose names were written in the book of life that would be opened on judgment day;51 and Joachim of Fiore (AD 1135–1202), who was known for his figures and application of names and events in a destructive ending focused on the reign of an antichrist.52

Although these important individuals and others produced many of the apocalyptic beliefs that


lasted through the Middle Ages, their writings do not include any known references or interpretations on the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32.

While these individuals and their successors produced writings that turned hearts towards an end–of–time scenario, other major events in Europe led individuals and groups to believe that the apocalypse was knocking on their door because of the apocalyptic signs they were witnessing. The events which caused many to believe that the end had arrived in the fourteenth century are captured by John Aberth:

By 1348 this disease, known to contemporaries as the ‘great mortality’ or ‘pestilence’ but which later historians christened the ‘Black Death,’ had found its way to Western shores [of Europe]…. Within the next two years it engulfed nearly the whole of Europe, striking down nearly half its population, and returning again and again throughout the rest of the century and into the next. …

Even before the plague, however, bad weather and bad harvests had brought devastating hunger to northern Europe during a Great Famine that lasted from 1315 until 1322. Shortly thereafter followed the start of a destructive conflict between England and France, the so–called Hundred Years War…. And above all, there loomed the image of Death, ever present and unconquerable, a constant figure in much of the art and literature of the later Middle Ages.

Is it any wonder, then, that late medieval men and women believed that the Apocalypse, the end of the world, would soon come to pass?53

This example demonstrated the great tribulations Christians felt they were living through. Despite the sorrow of these events, “the medieval view of millennial history” included the perception that “Antichrist was the leader of all that was unchristian, who would reign for a brief time before the final victory of God’s forces and the Last Judgment at the end of the world.”54

Brief eras, like this, in the Middle Ages reflect the great excitement Christians had for an end–of–time glorious display of God’s power. Although these brief end–of–times excitements were passionate, Joel’s prophecy wasn’t important enough to comment on. Scholarship on these times

53 John Aberth, From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1. Aberth shares a vast array of quotes from European writers living through the fourteenth century that the famines, wars, plague, and death were the long–promised apocalyptic signs given in the book of Revelation.

54 Aberth, From the Brink of the Apocalypse, 2.
reflects only interest on apocalyptic books such as Revelation and Daniel.\textsuperscript{55} If anything, the passage seemed to always be in the shadows after the early centuries of Christianity.

Centuries of Great Change for Christianity

The Late Middle Age (1300–1453) and Early Modern Period (1453–1789) brought with them a drastic change for Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church. The renaissance resulted in new thinking that challenged the Roman Catholic Church, which declined in favorability from about the fourteenth century on, especially in northern Europe. Reformers began to influence the common man against the Church through efforts like John Hus’ (1369–1415) popular teachings in Bohemia against the “many unfaithful shepherds who led people to perdition,”\textsuperscript{56} Martin Luther’s actions of posting his 95 theses on the door of the Church in Wittenberg, Germany (1517),\textsuperscript{57} and Huldrich Zwingli’s pastoral teachings in Zurich “where he began to preach ideas on reforming the Catholic Church, rejecting the veneration of saints and questioning the power of excommunication” (1518),\textsuperscript{58} and John Calvin’s (1509–1564) “shift of allegiance from the Church of Rome to the Word of God,”\textsuperscript{59} that fueled the reformation in Geneva (1531–1536). Due to the invention of the Gutenberg Printing Press (1440), the tracts, commentaries, and Bibles of these and other reformers gained traction with the common man leading to the widespread religious changes all over Europe.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{57} MacCulloch, Christianity, 604–616.
\textsuperscript{59} Bruce Gordon, John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 33.
\textsuperscript{60} MacCulloch, Christianity, 627. MacCulloch points out, “It is the ancestor of all Bibles in the English language, especially the ‘Authorized’ or ‘King James’ version of 1611 (627; see also 649–650).
While most of these major changes in ideology focused on the saving grace of Jesus and the role the Church may or may not have in salvation, if any, the view and interpretation of Joel 2:28–32 remained, at least at first, unchanged from the conclusions of the past. In 1521–1522 Martin Luther’s colleagues, led in part by Karlstadt, succeeded in reforming the church in Wittenberg Germany. On 24 January 1522 the town adopted articles of religious reformation and Martin Luther felt that it was now safe to return to his home in Wittenberg, doing so on 6 March 1522. Luther then proceeded to establish the new rules under the reformation and slowed the pace of reformation as he often preached from the Town Church in Wittenberg. As the years began to pass, Luther was extremely popular and crowds often attended his sermons, though he humbly “still considered himself a pastor of Wittenberg Christians.”

Under these circumstances, just months after his arrival in Wittenberg, Luther commented on Joel’s prophecy as an example of 1 Peter 1:11 in a lecture on 1 Peter 1. The larger point Luther continued to drive was that “we [reformed Christians] must ignore the good-for-nothing babblers who despise the Old Testament and say that it is no longer necessary,” explaining further that “the difference between the Old and the New Testament…is this, that the former pointed to Christ, while the New Testament now gives us what was promised and prefigured in the Old Testament.” Luther continued to show several types in the Old Testament of Christ, then after introducing the text for 1 Pet. 1:11, he writes

St. Peter wants to say: Although the prophets had no knowledge of a fixed and definite time, they nevertheless indicated in general all the circumstances of time and place, as, for example, how Christ would suffer, how He would die, and how the heathen

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61 Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven: Yale Press, 2015), 119–129. “Luther’s return to Wittenberg signaled the end of Karlstadt’s leading role in the evangelical movement” and Karlstadt did not preach or publish in the town thereafter (131).
62 Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, 132.
64 Luther’s commentary quotes 1 Peter 1:11 thus: “They inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them” (Luther, “The Catholic Epistles,” 22).
would believe in Him. …Thus the prophet Joel also prophesied concerning the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit when he said: ‘And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh’ (2:28). St. Peter quotes this verse in Acts 2:17 and shows that Joel was speaking about that time and about definite persons.

Martin Luther used, what he believed to be a statement of fulfillment of Joel 2:28 by Peter on the Day of Pentecost to connect the Old Testament with the New. He explained further:

> “From all this you see how painstakingly the apostles always pointed out the basis and the proof of their preaching and teaching. Today the councils and the pope come along and want to deal with us only without Scripture. They command us to believe them because we owe obedience to the church, and they threaten us with excommunication if we refuse to believe.

Although this commentary’s purpose is to show the necessity for followers to not set aside the sacred texts of the Old and New Testament’s, it was the earliest evidence that Luther believed Joel 2:28 was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

Just two years later Luther lectured on Joel’s writings in Wittenberg and spoke more directly on the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.⁶⁵ The favored manuscript for Luther’s commentary on the Minor Prophets comes from “Luther’s friend George Spalatin.”⁶⁶ Martin Luther’s lengthy commentary on this passage is replete with declarations of fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost. “This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost,” wrote Luther, adding later, “This prophecy of Joel, then, is a prophecy about the public revelation of the Holy Spirit. After all, the Holy Spirit has always been in the devout from the beginning of the world, which no one can deny, but He has not been publicly manifested.”⁶⁷ Although Martin Luther held to fulfillment on

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⁶⁵ “From a letter of Spalatin’s we learn that Joel was being commented on in July, and the Alten burg text records August 9 as the day on which Luther finished Joel (Luther, “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” Luther’s Works, vol. 18, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), xi).

⁶⁶ Luther “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” x. The introduction explains Luther’s commentary: “The manuscript is too deliberate, critical, and careful to represent notes taken down in the lecture hall. It shows a good deal of editorial activity and seems to have been prepared for someone on order, perhaps on the basis of more than one earlier manuscript” (x). It is believed that the recipient of the manuscript may have been Spalatin (x).

the Day of Pentecost, his commentary sheds light on some other perceptions he desired the people to believe concerning this prophecy.

Writing about Joel 2:28 and the spirit being poured out upon “all flesh,” Luther wrote, “To be sure, that pouring out of the Spirit is made on all flesh, but the gift itself is not the same, for the whole world saw that manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the apostles when they taught and preached the Gospel. But the gift did not come to all.” Luther goes on to explain that Jews were present from all nations when this experience occurred and they witnessed the miracle. Luther justified that this is what Joel intended when he prophesied that “all flesh” would be affected by the miracle.

According to Luther, this demonstrated that one could see the spirit at work and not possess it, an accusation that he makes against the church leadership: “Therefore it is nothing that our prophets [referring to Catholic leaders] are looking for support for their own error from this text when they say that they have the Holy Spirit and that it is necessary that a person feel the Holy Spirit, although they themselves have not yet given evidence of the Spirit.” Luther’s challenge to this spiritual claim strikes at the authenticity of hierarchal leadership in the Church, similar to his claims just two years earlier. Luther wrote further, “They must not establish some new kind of doctrine which they pretend to establish by the authority of the Holy Spirit.” Luther challenged the Catholic leaders who attempted to establish new doctrine, when he felt

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68 Luther, “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” 108 (emphasis added).
70 Luther, “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” 107 (emphasis added).
71 Luther’s commentary on Joel does not provide an example of what “doctrine” he is referring too. It is possible, however, that he is indirectly referring to those which were rejected when reformers gained control of Wittenberg just two years earlier. Among those practices Luther and the other reformers asked to be abolished, were:
   1) unhindered preaching of God’s word; 2) no compulsory public masses; 3) no relics, processions, vigils, lay brotherhoods, or private masses; 4) wine for the laity at the Lord’s Supper; 5) shuttering taverns; and 6) closing the houses of prostitution (Hendrix, Martin Luther, 123–124).
Of these six demands Hendrix focused primarily on numbers 2–4 in the pages that followed (123–129).
that none was needed. By claiming that this new doctrine came by the Spirit, they felt that their new doctrines were as valid as those manifest after Pentecost. Luther, however, challenged this claim due to the drastic astronomical signs in Joel 2:30, which he felt accompanied the fulfillment of Joel in the apostolic age.

30. And I will give portents in the heavens. That is, ‘I will give My Spirit in such a way that I shall confirm this with very clear and very firm witnesses—namely, signs, so that no one may be able to doubt.’ We shall detain our prophets [referring to Catholic leaders] for a long time with this text. We shall not trust their spirit unless they themselves also show clear signs and wonders to confirm the presence of the Spirit. This is something that will never happen.72

Luther demanded that true “prophets,” referring to the Church leaders of his day, demonstrate through undeniable signs that they possessed the Spirit of the Lord, something Luther believed would “never happen.” Luther admits, “I do not know for certain when all those signs occurred, nor do I know for sure whether it was written that they all did occur.”73 Despite this admission, however, Luther was sure that the fullness of this prophecy, including astronomical signs, found fulfillment in the events on the Day of Pentecost.

Luther’s contemporary John Calvin (1509–1564) also affirmed fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy on the day of Pentecost. Calvin was born in Noyon, France in 1509. His father first wanted him to study theology, but later preferred that his son be trained in the law. Calvin

73 Luther, “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” 109. Luther’s commentary on fulfillment of this passage does differ from the post–Apostolic Christian Fathers, because he specifically includes the later verses of Joel’s prophecy like verse 30 in fulfillment. However, it is difficult to compare the two, because the early Christian comments on Joel’s fulfillment came in treatises which were topically based works, while Luther’s view is found in a scripture–based commentary, where he is commenting on each verse from the beginning to the end of the book of Joel. Both Luther and early Christian writers utilized Joel to prove their points against other groups, but the format of their approaches makes it difficult to compare their thoughts on fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, other than to say it was fulfilled.

It was clear in Luther’s mind that fulfillment must have included every portion of Joel 2:28–32, something that was not established so clearly by theologians in the second and third centuries. “I would simply want this to be applied to the time the Holy Spirit was sent—namely, that all these signs accompanied the Holy Spirit sent on the Day of Pentecost, and that that great day was the day the Gospel was revealed” (Luther, “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” 110).
honored his father’s wishes and began to study law in the 1520s.\textsuperscript{74} In 1531 following the death of his father Calvin traveled to Paris and began to study Greek and turned from law back to theology.\textsuperscript{75} His involvement in the reformation at Geneva in the 1530s is what Calvin is most known for.

John Calvin’s commentary on the fulfillment of Joel is found in a commentary on Acts, which he wrote for \textit{“THE LORD NICHOLAS RADZIWILL, DUKE IN OLIKA.”}\textsuperscript{76} The place and date for this edition of his commentary reads: \textit{“At Geneva, the 1st of August, 1560.”}

Nicholas Radziwiłł “The Black” is known as a “Lithuanian statesmen and one of the leaders of the Reformation in Poland and Lithuania.”\textsuperscript{77} Radziwiłł “corresponded with John Calvin and other Protestant leaders and was instrumental in establishing the first Reformed congregation in Lithuania. In 1564, Nicholas commissioned the publication of…the first Polish translation of the Scriptures….”\textsuperscript{78} Calvin claimed that this was his second edition of this commentary and that his intended audience for the first publication did not accept it, explaining, “I did hope for more courtesy than I found.”\textsuperscript{79} Calvin saw in the previous letters from Radziwiłł a fellow reformer and took courage that he would respond favorably to his commentary.\textsuperscript{80}

\begin{quote}
“Peter, in Acts 2,” wrote Calvin in his commentary on Joel 2:28–32, “says, that this prophecy was fulfilled when the Spirit was sent.”\textsuperscript{81} Calvin recognized that some believed that Joel’s prophecy had not been fulfilled on the day of Pentecost because “all flesh” had not
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item 74 Bruce Gordon, \textit{John Calvin’s Institutes}, 1, 18.
\item 75 Gordon, \textit{John Calvin’s Institutes}, 31–32.
\item 76 John Calvin, \textit{The John Calvin Bible Commentaries: The Books of Joel, Amos and Obadiah}, translated by J.O. Thrussington (Altenmunster, Germany: Jazzybee Verlag, 1846), xv.
\item 78 Sužiedelis, \textit{Historical Dictionary of Lithuania}, 245.
\item 79 John Calvin, \textit{The John Calvin Bible Commentaries}, xvi. I cannot find any extant copies of his 1st edition.
\item 80 Calvin explained, “neither do I fear but that my book shall find the same friendship at your hands, which you did vouchsafe to declare towards me in your most gentle letters” (Calvin, \textit{Bible Commentaries}, xvi).
\item 81 Calvin, \textit{Bible Commentaries}, there are no page numbers but this is under the section Joel 2:28–32.
\end{footnotes}
received the spirit, but he responded to that claim by comparing the Old Testament days with the days beginning at Pentecost:

To give a reply to this is not difficult: let us only remember, that the Prophet speaks comparatively, as the Scripture is wont to do. He affirms not in express terms that all would be partakers of this gift, but that in comparison with the ancient Church, this gift would be as it were common, and that it was so well know: for if any one compares the ancient Church with that abundance which God vouchsafed to his people after Christ’s advent, he will certainly find true what I say—that the Spirit of God, who was given only to few under the law, was poured out upon all flesh. True then is what the Prophet says, provided this contrast is to be understood—that God was much more bountiful towards his new Church than formerly towards the fathers: for the Prophets then were not many, but they were many under the gospel.82

Calvin felt that in comparison to the ancient Church when only a few felt the Spirit, the contrast made it obvious that Joel’s words were indeed fulfilled. Although this answer differed from that of Luther who felt that “all flesh” was represented in “devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) who were present and witnessed the miracle, Calvin also felt that the term “all flesh” did not preclude fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost.83

Calvin also wrote, like Luther, that Joel’s prophetic words broke apart the Catholic leaders claims to authority and the Spirit. Concerning Joel 2:32, Calvin wrote about a “remnant whom the Lord shall call”:

When therefore we speak of the salvation of the Church, we ought not to gather into one bundle all who profess themselves to be the children of God; for we see that hardly one in a hundred worship God in truth and without hypocrisy, for the greater part abuse his name. We see, at this day, how dishonest is the boasting of the Papists; for they think that the Church of God dwells among them, and they scorn us because we are few.84

Calvin and Luther both held to a tradition of the fulfillment of the Prophecy of Joel in AD 33. Both claimed that Peter had stated that it was fulfilled and both saw the outpouring of the Spirit

82 Calvin, Bible Commentaries, under section for Joel 2:28.
84 Calvin, Bible Commentaries, under section for Joel 2:32 (emphasis added).
as the sign that accompanied that fulfillment. Furthermore, Calvin and Luther believed that this fulfillment gave scriptural evidence for uprooting the acclaimed spiritual authority of Roman Catholic leaders.

While these examples from the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin demonstrated the tone that some Protestant Christians possessed regarding this prophecy, both examples shared by Luther and Calvin were part of their regular scriptural exegesis. Commentary on Joel’s prophecy was not a primary source for reformation debate, and was likely not shared repeatedly from the pulpit as one of their key scriptural points.

Joel 2:28–32 remained in the background of major Christian developments during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. References to the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy are difficult to find. Although Joel remained in the dark, the Christian world underwent several drastic changes during these centuries. In the sixteenth century, King Henry VIII’s conflict with the Pope over his annulment with Catherine of Aragon led to the creation of the Church of England and a series of drastic changes in the decades that followed that propped up protestant Christianity in northern Europe and America. Two hundred years later the decision of Americans to revolt from the reign of Great Britain mingled politics with religion in a new way that would bring theological change and zeal in America.85 The major religious and political changes that took place in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in England and America helped pave the way for an explosive evangelical movement in America just decades after the Revolutionary War.86

85 Amanda Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt, 10–12, 15. Porterfield explains that while Thomas Paine’s Common Sense combined the logic and the religion to fuel the fire of the American Revolution (20), his later pamphlet entitled The Age of Reason led the religious community to reject Paine and any notion of “reason,” which in turn led to a national trend towards strict adherence to the Bible (22–23).

86 See Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt, 4–10; see also Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 3–5; Noll, America’s God, 161–170.
The sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries yielded mostly passing references to phrases found in Joel 2:28–32, but did not produce significant commentary on its fulfillment, especially from key figures surrounding major events like the First Great Awakening. Frequent reference was given to an outpouring of the Spirit, comparing many experiences to the outpouring on Pentecost, but remarks on the fulfillment of Joel and detailed remarks on the overall passage are difficult to find. For example, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), who is noted because of his major impact on Christian theology in America, spoke often of the Spirit, but did not appear to comment on the fulfillment of Joel. At a Yale commencement in 1741 his remarks were directed to help individuals “Distinguish [the] Marks of the Spirit of God.” Although Edwards utilized the events at Pentecost to help his listeners discern the difference between authentic spiritual experiences and satanic mimics, his lengthy address in this forum and other publications is silent on the specifics of Joel’s prophecy and its fulfillment.

Other key Christian figures like George Whitefield, a co–founder of the Methodism movement, also spoke about the Spirit being poured out and Pentecost, but was silent on the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. In The Great Awakening, Joseph Tracy publishes what he felt was a typical account of Christians who hoped and prayed for an “outpouring” of the Spirit similar to the Day of Pentecost. In the many accounts like these mentioned above, frequent reference is made to the Spirit being poured out and in comparisons to the experiences on the Day of Pentecost, but specific reference to Joel and the fulfillment of his prophecy are not found.

87 See Brnd Engler, Joerg O. Fichte, Oliver Scheiding, Millennial Thought in America (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2002), 22. See also Noll, America’s God, 22–23, 29; Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt.
89 See a letter published by George Whitefield in The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, vol. 1, 401, dated March 4, 1742. See also a letter dated April 22, 1742; and George Whitefield, The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, vol. 4, 10–11. These examples show his use of terms such as “pour out” and “outpouring” and also his comparison to the Spiritual outpouring on the Day of Pentecost, with no reference to Joel’s prophecy or fulfillment.
90 Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston: Charles Tappan, 1845), 159–161.
A Summary of the Historical Perceptions of the Fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 (AD 33–1700s)

The examples of interpretation of Joel 2:28–32 throughout Christian history can be summarized in three key points. First, Joel 2:28–32 together with Acts 2:16–21 has been interpreted as being fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost to win theological arguments. In the early centuries, apologists and theologians wielded the passage as a sword to cut through Gnosticism, Marcion’s teachings, and Jewish skepticism. Luther and Calvin both found that they could once again justify their denial of Roman Catholic authority. These individuals focused on the Christian arguments of their day and felt that Peter’s quotation of Joel 2:28–32 coupled with the outpouring of the Spirit justified the arguments they were making.

Second, mainstream Christianity held to a tradition of fulfillment growing out of the second and third centuries. To avoid an oversimplification of 1800 years of Christian history on one single passage of scripture—of course, there has been diversity in beliefs regarding this passage, however, the citations, references, and the use of this passage have led modern day

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91 Of course, there were other people who disagreed with the interpretation that it had been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and many may have disagreed on how it was exactly fulfilled. As mentioned previously Martin Luther believed that all aspects of Joel 2:28–32 were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in AD 33. However, most Bible commentaries found in the beginning of the nineteenth century held to the claim that the Spirit’s outpouring was fulfilled in AD 33 on Pentecost, but the astronomical destructions mentioned in Joel 2:30–31 were fulfilled in AD 70 during the destruction of Jerusalem and foreshadowed the destructions at the end of the world. Referring to Joel 2:30–31: “This day was the day of Jerusalem’s destruction, and burning of the temple, and slaughter of the Jews, for their violence against and murder of the Messiah, for their sins against the gospel” (Bonn, Annotations on the Holy Bible, 893). Other religious scholars have proposed that the Pentecostal outpouring was not limited to New Testament times, or the First and Second Great Awakening’s (see Christine F. Cooper–Rompato, The Gift of Tongues: Women’s Xenoglossia in the Later Middle Ages (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2010)). Cooper–Rompato argues that experiences with the gift of tongues was a frequent experience in the Later Middle Ages against common consensus. See also Jeff Oliver, Pentecost to the Present, in 3 vols. (Newberry, Florida: Bridge Logos, 2017), 7–8. Oliver’s books, though doubling as a historical study guide for modern Pentecostals, focuses on historical evidences of an ongoing age of spiritual gifts and outpourings. He focuses on individuals throughout Christian history who had the same perception. Despite these arguments by Cooper–Rompato and Oliver, for the majority of Christian history Joel 2:28–32 has retained a straightforward belief of fulfillment utilized for arguments sake or the passage has been primarily ignored.
scholars to claim a strong tradition of fulfillment from Peter on, throughout mainstream Christianity. James Crenshaw wrote in his commentary on the Book of Joel that,

“The last five years or so have been devoted to a tiny book in the Minor Prophets, one whose primary claim to fame for Christians rests on a single passage—the announcement of an outpouring of the divine spirit on all flesh. The author of Acts interpreted the unusual events associated with Pentecost recorded in the second chapter of Acts, as the long-awaited fulfillment of Joel’s prediction.”

James G. Dunn asserts fulfillment of “the Joel prophecy,” without any mention of a possible reinterpretation in his published dissertation writing about the experience on the Day of Pentecost: “The sermon starts by identifying the Pentecost experience, particularly the ecstatic praise and/or proclamation (‘the mighty deeds of God’) in tongues (2:11), as the fulfillment of the Joel prophecy—the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit ‘in the last days’ (2:16-18)….“ So although some have claimed a differing interpretation, as John Calvin mentioned in his commentary, or have pointed to differing evidences, mainstream Christianity has adopted whole–heartedly an interpretation of fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost.

Third, the overall passage Joel 2:28–32 has been severed in the development of Christianity and emphasized the outpouring of the Spirit. Hebrew scripture presented the prophecy as a unit. Peter presented the same passage as a unit; however, in the two hundred

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93 James G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, 10 (emphasis added).
94 As will be shown hereafter, typically the second half of the passage was reserved for millennial teachings, especially during the first and second Great Awakenings. However, this passage was typically not as popular as writings found in the Book of Revelation, the Gospels, and the book of Isaiah. Reference to these passages were far more frequent in antebellum Christianity and in the writings of modern secondary sources that focus on millennialism. See Brnd Engler, Fichte, and Scheiding, Millennial Thought in America; see also Grant Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism; Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997); and though the following books are not millennial in nature, when approaching the topic in their broader historical lens, they too focus on other passages.
years of Christian history that followed Peter the passage was presented in two or three pieces and not as a unit, with few exceptions. Those exceptions typically came in the exegetically driven writings such as Martin Luther’s exegesis of the passage, where he admitted that he wasn’t even sure how everything was fulfilled, but asserted that it must have been.95

These three points of how Joel 2:28–32 had been perceived and interpreted throughout Christian history separate Joseph Smith from his Christian predecessors. As will be shown in the remainder of this thesis, these same three distinctions also separate Joseph Smith from his evangelical Christian contemporaries like Alexander Campbell and William Miller.

95 Luther, “Lectures on the Minor Prophets I,” 109; Noll, America’s God; Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt.
Chapter 2:
Christianity and the Bible in Antebellum America

Joseph Smith and early Latter-day Saint converts did not emerge in a vacuum. They were born and raised in a changing religious and political landscape that has led many scholars to brand them as the product of their time. This chapter will give brief background for the massive change in the religious landscape of America and introduce the reader to the different readings and commentary of Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21 that are found in the Bibles that were published, bought, and read in antebellum America. The study aids for these Bibles will show that the interpretation of Joel’s prophecy received new light in the religious fervor of the nineteenth century. These new interpretations of the prophecy in many ways align with the variety of Evangelical Christian views common in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Evangelical Christian Background

The beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by massive expansion. “As the American population soared from 3.9 to 7.2 million,” wrote Amanda Porterfield, “and four new states entered the union between 1790 and 1810, evangelicals participated enthusiastically in the inventiveness and expansion of the American society.” As Porterfield acknowledged, population was not the only major expansion in the young country, so was Christian Evangelicalism. This growth was not shared in the traditional episcopal faiths because “between 1780 and 1820, while the American population multiplied threefold, the number of Episcopal

96 See Engler, Fichte, and Scheiding, Millennial Thought in America, 31; see also Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism, 2–4; Wilson, “A New Pneumatology,” 140.
97 Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt, 10. See also Noll, America’s God, 120; Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 4.
churches increased by only 50%, and while falling further behind the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, it was also overtaken in numbers by Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics.”98 Noll compares these faiths further. “The religious wonders of the age were the more aggressively evangelical churches—Presbyterians advancing at or slightly above the rate of the general population growth, Baptists and the new Disciples/Christian Churches far above, and the Methodists off the chart in a class all of their own.”99

The growth of evangelical Christians also brought with it an increased focus on their key doctrines, like their emphasis on the soon approaching millennium. Millennial expectations soared especially during the Second Great Awakening, which lead to a national expectation of exciting times.

The constant interplay of eschatological views and the objective of community-building produced a particular American kind of millennialism in which the spiritual and the mundane were inseparably joined. Eventually, this gradual process of an ‘Americanization’ of eschatology led to an employment of millennialist discourse as a means of constructing a national identity.100

Nathan Hatch summarized this new trend writing, “common folk in America at the dawn of the nineteenth century came to…champion an array of millennial schemes.”101 Due to the pervasiveness of these millennial ideas, Joel’s prophecy and its apocalyptic elements are often construed in a millennial light in the commentaries of antebellum Christians. Descending from a strong fulfillment–on–Pentecost Christian tradition, Christians grappled with new ways to view the prophecy. So not only did the number of evangelical Christians grow, so did the interpretations of Joel’s prophecy.

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98 Noll, America’s God, 120.
99 Noll, America’s God, 167. See also Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt, 9; Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 3; Wilson, “A New Pneumatology.”
100 Engler, Fichte, and Scheiding, Millennial Thought in America, 9. See also Porterfield, Conceived in Doubt, 85–86.
101 Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 80.
The unprecedented growth in the numbers of evangelical Christians appeared to be completely consistent with Joseph Smith’s experience in upstate New York who reflecting upon the years prior to his First Vision in 1820 wrote, “there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people…” (JS—H 1:5). Joseph noticed that “the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible” (JS—H 1:12, emphasis added). And even if these “teachers of religion” understood the fulfillment of a single passage to be the same event, they varied drastically in their applications and practices of the passage—even a passage like Joel 2:28–32.

Antebellum Bibles

Mark Noll identified four areas, by which American evangelical Christianity differed from European Christianity. At the top of his list he identified “biblicism (or reliance on the Bible as ultimate religious authority).”102 Historians have previously identified the patterns of obtaining Bibles pre and post–Revolutionary War. Prior to 1776 Bibles were mostly procured from England, due to cost and efficiency. Kent Jackson explains:

Even though the majority of European colonists were English speakers, English–language Bibles were not printed in America during the colonial period but were imported from Britain. The reasons include both politics and economics. By British law, only printers who were granted a royal franchise were allowed to print the King James translation. Additionally, the well–established English and Scottish presses could produce Bibles much less expensively than could American presses, and their Bibles were of

102 Noll, America’s God, 5.
superior quality. There was no market for American English–language Bibles because colonial printers were not in a position to compete with those of the mother country.\textsuperscript{103}

After the American Revolutionary war, however, American printers were free to challenge the economic advantage European publishers had on the market. This change, led to a huge increase in religious publications in America. And while the number of publishers grew dramatically as an array of styles, sizes, and study options became available, the vast majority of printers still printed the authorized 1611 King James version.\textsuperscript{104} A study of 27 Bibles, New Testaments, and Bible Commentaries from this time period, reveal the same evidence that the KJV was in reality the King of Bibles in America during the Antebellum period.

The variety of practices in printing appear to render Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21 the same—as will be shown hereafter. These observations in the practices of publishing Bibles simplify this study in two ways. First, when evangelical Christians turned to the passages of Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21, their base text was almost universally the same. Second, more focus can be placed on the variety of footnotes, chapter headings, commentary, and essays to demonstrate the popular trends in the perceptions of fulfillment, ongoing significance, and millennial expectations. This comparison will also illustrate and re–enforce the uniqueness of Joseph Smith’s revelations and teachings about the prophecy of Joel.

\textsuperscript{103} Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible,” 42. Mark Noll explained “[b]ecause printing of the Bible during the colonial period was restricted by copyrights held in Britain, Scripture publication began slowly in the new nation.” Noll records that only “22 editions of the Bible appeared before 1790” (Noll, America’s God, 371). Although the first fourteen years of the new country saw little increase in the production of Bibles, the 1790s and the decades that followed, saw a huge increase. “The numbers of editions doubled every decade for thirty years and then leveled off to an average of about 27 new editions each year from 1830 to 1865. In the decade of the 1830s, new editions of the Bible were printed in fourteen different states, led by New York (100 editions), Pennsylvania (65), Massachusetts (58), and Connecticut (57). Thereafter the total number of editions dropped slightly, but larger print runs meant that more actual Bibles were being produced” (Noll, America’s God, 371–372).

\textsuperscript{104} Noll used the KJV for his book on this time period explaining that it “was the Bible of choice for almost all Americans throughout the decades treated in this book” (Noll, America’s God, 18). In referring to the largest Bible publishers in Joseph Smith’s day, Jackson observed: “Whatever the origin of all these Bibles may have been, it is safe to say that the texts of American Bible makers such as Collins, Elihu White, and Phinney descended from a respectable and mainstream King James tradition” (Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible”, 55.).
A Sample of 27 Bibles and Commentaries

In trying to comprehend how evangelical Christians in antebellum America viewed Joel 2:28–32, I surveyed 22 Bibles and 5 biblical commentaries, which contained an assortment of chapter headings, essays, cross references, and commentary. Some of these Bibles simply contained the King James Version text of the Old and New Testaments, while others contained extensive cross references and commentary, the origin of which is often unknown. For example, in a 1816 New Testament printed in Hartford Connecticut by “Sheldon & Goodrich and Simeon L. Look,” one finds the exact same commentary for Acts 2:16–21 as is found in an 1810 Bible printed in New York by Williams and Whiting. The contents of the Bibles and Commentaries is given below (see figure 5.1). The structure of the table below helps the reader identify the content that is found in the various bible’s and commentaries. For example, number one, is a 1796 New Testament published by William Burkitt. It does not contain the Old Testament nor does it have any cross references throughout the entire New Testament, however, it does contain a commentary for the New Testament.

Table 1: Content Present in Biblical Sources from the Antebellum Era

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Name*</th>
<th>OT</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>Cross Ref.</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>Bible Name Cont.</th>
<th>OT</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>Cross Ref.</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1796 Burkitt</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1836 Kimball</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

105 Two of the Bibles I examined were produced several decades before this time period, and though they were kept by Mormon families who lived through this time period, I have omitted them from the findings in this section.
106 Kent Jackson observed that with “all the borrowing that took place from one publisher’s Bible to another, it is difficult to determine the immediate source of the features in any given Bible” (Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible”, 52).
108 The Holy Bible (Concord, N.H.: Roby Kimball and Merrill, 1836).
The first several pages are missing. Available in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. MS 13505.

E. Phinney, 1840). Former Translations, Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty's Special Command

Numerous Notes Reconciling Seeming Contradictions, Rectifying Mistranslations, &c

The Acts of the Apostles; With Notes, Chiefly Explanatory; Designed for Teachers in Sabbath

The English Version of the Polyglott Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Marginal Readings

The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments, together with the Apocrypha (Cooperstown, N.Y: H. & E. Phinney, 1840).

The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments together with the Apocrypha (Cooperstown, N.Y: H. & E. Phinney, 1840).


The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments together with the Apocrypha (Cooperstown, N.Y: H. & E. Phinney, 1840).

The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments together with the Apocrypha (Cooperstown, N.Y: H. & E. Phinney, 1840).


The English Version of the Polyglott Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Marginal Readings (Brattleboro: Fessenden & Co., 1836).

Vinson Knight Family Bible, circa 1800. This Bible is falling apart and only a fragment of the title page is in existence, waded up and stuck before Genesis chapter 1. The Old Testament, Translation out of the Original Hebrew: ... Publication information is found at the beginning of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1810). Available in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. MS 27160.


The Old Testament, Translation out of the Original


The English Version of the Polyglott Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Marginal Readings (Brattleboro: Fessenden & Co., 1836).

Vinson Knight Family Bible, circa 1800. This Bible is falling apart and only a fragment of the title page is in existence, waded up and stuck before Genesis chapter 1. The Old Testament, Translation out of the Original Hebrew: ... Publication information is found at the beginning of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1810). Available in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. MS 27160.


The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: with original notes, practical observations and copious references, in 6 vol. (New York: Williams and Whiting, 1810).

The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments (Philadelphia: Hogan and Thompson, 1838).

The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Translated from the original Greek, with original notes and practical observations (Hartford, Conn.: Sheldon & Goodrich and Simeon L. Look, 1816).

A History of the Holy Bible, from the Beginning of the World to the Establishment of Christianity: With Numerous Notes Reconciling Seeming Contradictions, Rectifying Mistranslations, &c. (Glasgow: Blackie & Son)


The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Translated out of the original Greek and with the former translations diligently compared and revised (Southwark: William Wright, 1839).


The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments together with the Apocrypha (Cooperstown, N.Y: H. & E. Phinney, 1840).

John Whitmer Bible (1830–1845). Several pages at the front of the Bible are missing, including publication information. Available in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. MS 13505.

James Polly Brown Family Bible, 1842. The first several pages are missing. Available in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. MS 10041.

Philip Doddridge, The Family Expositor; or, a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament; with Critical Notes; and a Practical Improvement of each Section, in 3 vol. (London: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1831).

The Holy Bible, 1844. Edith Hallenbeck rincey Bible. The first pages, including the title page are missing. Available in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. M221.1 B582.


Annotations on the Holy Bible, Wherein the sacred text is inserted, and various readings annexed: together with the parallel scriptures: the more difficult terms in each verse are explained, seeming contradictions reconciled, questions and doubts resolved, and the whole text opened, in 2 vol. (London: Henry G. Bonn, 1846).
KJV Textual Comparison of Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21

A textual comparison of all twenty–two Bibles, published in various states and even a few brought over from England reveal that when the typical evangelical Christian opened to the book of Joel 2:28–32, they read virtually the same text. The 1827 Clarke Bible’s reading of Joel 2:28–32 is an example of the dominant arrangement of the text, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation that is found in almost every Bible I examined.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.


131 The Holy Bible, a Polyglott edition published in 1836. A page is either missing, or publication information is missing. Access Bible in Salt Lake City, Church History Library. MS 22278, Pettigrew collection, Box 1, Folder 2.

132 Two of the Bibles above were originally the property of Joseph Smith himself. The 1828 Smith Bible is a smaller Bible. It does not seem to contain any prominent markings throughout the book, neither did it have any footnotes or commentary of any kind. Inside the front cover “JOSEPH SMITH HOLY BIBLE 1842” was written by hand in block letters with his signature below the note.

The 1840 Phinney Bible contained the following handwritten note inside the front right cover, “The Book of the Jews and the property of Joseph Smith Junior and Oliver Cowdery Bought October the 8th 1829 at Egbert B. Grandine Book store Palmyra Wayne County New York.” At the bottom of the page an additional note read “Price $3.75” and beneath that note “Holiness to the Lord.”

133 Only two variations in punctuation exist throughout this passage in the Bibles and one variation of word choice. The 1838 Hogan Bible is the only Bible which added the word “of” and reads “…I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh…,” 787, emphasis added. Most of the Bibles utilize a semi–colon after the word “flesh” and a colon at the end of the verse. A few Bibles like the 1838 Hogan Bible already mentioned uses a colon after “flesh” and a period at the end of the verse. Most Bibles capitalize “Spirit,” however there are some exceptions such as the 1846 Bonn Bible.

134 Only the 1810 Williams Bible places an en dash in the middle of the word “hand–maids.”

135 The majority of the Bibles use the word “shew,” but some render the word as “show” as seen in the 1830 Whitmer Bible.
31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.
32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.  

Only one of the Bibles I surveyed used a single differing word then those found in all other Old Testament publications of Joel 2:28–32 from this time–period. The 1838 Hogan Bible includes the word “of” in verse 28. This word is similarly found in nearly every publication of Acts 2:17 when Peter’s quoted Joel 2:28. Hogan’s publication of Joel 2:28 reads:

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.  

Other than this addition of one word and subtle variations of punctuation and capitalization every Old Testament I surveyed from the antebellum period reads the same. This reveals that the common American Christian living in this period would read the same passage, which focused on an outpouring of the Spirit, destructive and astronomical signs, and a promise of deliverance for those who would call upon the name of the Lord in Jerusalem, Zion, and the remnant. Although the text of Joel 2:28–32 was practically the same, the assumptions and bias readers brought to the text was vastly different, which led to a variety of conclusions as we will witness in the commentaries examined below.

Antebellum Bible readers would likewise find consistent similarities when reading the sister passage Acts 2:16–21. Though there are triple the inconsistencies in the punctuation and spelling found in this passage, the overall unity of the content of this passage is extremely consistent. The 1810 Williams Bible is a good example of the majority of texts I reviewed:

136 1827 Clarke Bible, 396–397.
137 1838 Hogan Bible (emphasis added).
16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 138
17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit
upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men
shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 139
18 And on my servants, and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my
Spirit, and they shall prophesy: 140
19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and
fire, and vapour of smoke:
20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and
notable day of the Lord come: 141
21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be
saved (Acts 2:16–21). 142

Overall, the various publications of the KJV, which were available in the first half of the
nineteenth century render this passage extremely similar to one another. All the Bibles examined
highlight the key differences between Peter and Joel’s original prophecy. Peter renders this
passage very similarly to Joel. The most unique differences include his placement of this
prophecy in “the last days.” This notation captures more attention in the nineteenth century than
any of the other significant differences. Those differences also include the alteration of some key
words. “Pillars of smoke” is changed to “vapour of smoke” and the “great and terrible day”
became the “great and notable day of the Lord.” Peter also omits most of Joel 2:32, which
omission is rarely noted in Joseph Smith’s day.

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138 The punctuation at the end of the verse varies, but predominantly closes with a colon. In one Bible the phrase is rendered differently reading, “But this is what was spoken by…” (see the 1809 Taylor Bible).
139 The punctuation at the end of verse 17, as well as, following the word “flesh” also varies. The majority of the Bibles place parenthesis around “saith God,” while several omit them. Most Bibles include the word “of” as seen here in verse 17.
140 This verse varies the most of these six verses. The arrangement above is by far the most common, but some Bibles arrange the verse differently such as “And in those days I will pour out of my spirit upon my servants, and upon my handmaids, and they shall prophesy:” (see the 1839 Wright Bible). On one occasion “men–servants” and “maid–servants” is used instead of handmaidens.
141 In this verse “notable” is sometimes replaced with words like “illustrious” or “signal”.
142 1810 Williams Bible, vol. 5.
Antebellum Era Biblical Commentaries on Joel’s Prophecy

The commentaries for Joel’s prophecy found in these Bibles reflect the religious winds of that same time period. This era is known for the Second Great Awakening, the Great Disappointment due to a general increase of millennial expectations, the numeric advance of Evangelical Christians, the explosion of religion in the press, and a changing political landscape. Although this time period produced an array of new interpretations on Joel’s prophecy, some overarching conclusions can be made about the antebellum approach and how it varied from that of Joseph Smith. In the Old Testament Bible commentaries differences included (1) the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 was always viewed through a New Testament lens of Peter’s quotation on the Day of Pentecost, and (2) the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy took place in the last days, which was defined as the times of the Messiah, speaking almost exclusively of events that occurred in AD 33–70.

Fulfillment Viewed through a New Testament Lens

All four Old Testament commentaries that I studied view fulfillment of this passage through a New Testament lens. The 1810 Williams Bible comments on Joel’s prophecy stating:

The apostle Peter quoted almost the whole of this passage, in addressing the Jews on the day of Pentecost, as a prediction of those events which then began to take place. … This promise began to be accomplished on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles, and on the assembled multitude, of whom great numbers were converted; and it was continued in the converting grace and supernatural gifts, conferred on the Jews and Gentiles through many nations. Then the sons and daughters of the Jews became prophets, and exercised many miraculous powers; both old and young men were favored with prophetic dreams and visions; and even servants and hand-

143 See Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism for a summary of prevalent millennial ideas held in the antebellum period and an in depth comparison of Joseph Smith and William Miller. Underwood makes a useful general comparison between Joseph Smith and the larger Evangelical Christian Contemporaries.

144 Although they disagree on the conclusion of this prophecy taking place in Peter’s day or in a future day to come, fulfillment is approached from the New Testament lens, as observed in the examples which follow.
maidens, though in a state of slavery, were made partakers of the sanctifying grace, and the extraordinary gifts, of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{145}

Several references to Peter and the spread of the gospel, which occurred as the apostles preach demonstrate that this Bible commentary viewed fulfillment through a New Testament lens.

Rather than treating the passage independently in an Old Testament lens by comparing it with the words of other Major and Minor Prophets like Zechariah, it consistently and solely was tied back to Acts 2:16–21. Prior to the Book of Joel a section entitled, “Author’s Note” affirms a New Testament reading:

But the most remarkable prophecy in Joel, is that which the apostle Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost, and which is more than once referred to in the New Testament. (Comp. II. 28–32. Acts II. 16–21 Rom. x. 13–16.) The effects of the Gospel, as the ministration of the Spirit, both among Jews and Gentiles; and the consequences of opposing it, to the Jewish nation in particular, are here foretold in the fullest and plainest manner: and the event to this day fully attests Joel’s divine inspiration.\textsuperscript{146}

In a section following the book of Joel entitled “PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS” this author concluded that fulfillment “hath beyond doubt already taken place,” but the quotation also reaffirms a New Testament lens to interpret the passage.

We have at present, no scriptural ground to expect, that he will pour upon us or our children the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, or that they shall see prophetic dreams and visions; yet we may hope and pray for the pouring out of his Spirit on us and on ours, as the Author of all holiness, wisdom, and consolation. … Let us therefore seek for and rejoice in this salvation; and let us still pray for the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh, in still greater abundance than in the primitive times, that the earth may be filled with truth and righteousness; encouraged by that fulfillment of these prophecies and promises, which hath beyond doubt already taken place.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{145} 1810 Williams Bible, there are no page numbers in this printing, but this commentary can be found on the same page as Joel 2:28–32.

\textsuperscript{146} 1810 Williams Bible, there are no page numbers in this printing, but this quotation precedes the book of Joel.

\textsuperscript{147} 1810 Williams Bible, there are no page numbers in this printing, but this quotation follows the book of Joel.
This similar approach to interpreting the Old Testament texts of the Bible is found in the other three Old Testament commentaries. A few more examples include the chapter heading for Joel 2 in the 1827 Clarke Bible reads,

Joel then makes an elegant transition to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, 28—30; for so these verses are explained by one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. See Acts ii, 16—21. Prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which was shortly to follow the opening of the Gospel dispensation, 31. Promises of safety to the faithful and penitent; promises afterwards remarkably fulfilled to the Christians in their escape to Pella from the desolating sword of the Roman army, 32.148

The commentary for Joel 2:28–32 in that Bible further demonstrates a New Testament lens to understanding fulfillment.

…we have the testimony of St. Peter, Acts ii, 17, that this prophecy relates to that mighty effusion of the Holy Spirit which took place after the day of Pentecost. Nor is there any evidence that such an effusion took place, nor such effects were produced, from the days of this prophet till the day of Pentecost. … Thus we have Divine authority for saying, that was the fulfillment of this prophecy by Joel.149

Even the briefest 1836 Fessenden Bible commentary views fulfillment from a New Testament lens reading, “An Exhortation to keep a public and solemn fast; with a promise that God would remove their calamities, on their sincere repentance; and also, that he would pour out upon them generally, his Holy Spirit; (ch. ii. 12 ad fin.) a promise which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. See Acts ii. 17–21.”150

Although an array of ideas about fulfillment are present in the quotes above, all of them view fulfillment through the experiences beginning on the Day of Pentecost. This varied entirely from the approach of Joseph Smith who never directly speaks of fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy in conjunction with Peter’s quotation and the events on the Day of Pentecost. Rather, Joseph

148 1827 Clarke Bible, 396.
149 1827 Clarke Bible, 396.
150 1836 Fessenden Bible, 678.
consistently spoke of fulfillment in terms of the time-period he was living in, as will be seen in later chapters.

The Time of the Messiah – The Last Days

The Old Testament biblical commentaries also conclude in their commentaries for Joel 2:28 that the “last days” Peter spoke of in the New Testament is the time or days of the Messiah. In relation to this prophecy that time-period begins sometime around the death and ascension of Christ. For example, the 1846 Bonn Bible commented:

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\text{It shall come to pass, most certainly This shall be done, afterward; in the latter days, after the return out of Babylonish captivity, after the various troubles and salvation by which they may know that I am the Lord, their God in the midst of them, when those wondrous works shall be seconded by the most wonderful of all, the sending the Messiah, in his day and under his kingdom.151}
\]

The 1827 Clarke Bible also shared this belief in the timing for fulfillment: “Verse 28. Shall Come to pass afterward] (Hebrew word), “after this;” the same, says Kimchi, as in the latter days, which always refers to the days of the Messiah; and thus this prophecy is to be interpreted.”152 “After the events, before more expressly foretold, or ‘in the latter days,’ the times of the Messiah,” states the 1810 Williams Bible commentary, “the LORD promised to ‘pour out his Spirit upon all flesh.’”153

The fulfillment of the various aspects of this prophecy in the “last days” was placed in the events between AD 33 and 70. The 1810 Williams Bible not only explained the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–29 by the experiences on the Day of Pentecost, it also explained the fulfillment of Joel 2:30–31 through the experiences on and leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

151 1846 Bonn Bible, 893.
152 1827 Clarke Bible, 396.
153 1810 Williams Bible, there are no page numbers in this Bible.
But it is predicted, that about the time God would begin to show signs of his awful displeasure against the Jewish nation; and that extraordinary appearances in the heavens and upon the earth, would be presages of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish church and state; which would be attended with immense bloodshed, terrible conflagrations, and pillars of smoke, such as ascend from the flames of burning cities. Then would the sun, moon, and stars be darkened, or be turned into blood: this foretold either the tremendous appearances in the heavens which preceded these calamities: or the total in hinging of the Jewish constitution, the subversion of all rule and authority in church and state, and those horrid intestine convulsions and massacres, which made way for the final destruction of the city and temple; by the just judgment of God, who on that great and terrible day of vengeance, poured his wrath on the devoted Jews by the hands of the Romans.\textsuperscript{154}

The entire commentary for v. 30–31 is found in the quotation above and clearly demonstrates that the author of this commentary believed that the destructive forces mentioned in Joel’s prophecy were experienced in and around Jerusalem leading up to a climax of destruction in AD 70.

It is in this context that the author finishes this commentary by explaining v. 32: “it is remarkable that those who embraced Christianity…separated from the unbelieving Jews, before the siege of Jerusalem, and were preserved from the miseries here predicted: while the unbelieving Jews, though they professed to ‘call on the name of the LORD,’ were overwhelmed by [the Romans].”\textsuperscript{155}

The 1810 Williams Bible clearly viewed fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy in events between AD 33 and 70. Similar patterns can be seen in the other Old Testament commentaries I surveyed. For example, the 1827 Clarke Bible comments:

\begin{quote}
Verse 30. Wonders in the heavens and in the earth] This refers to those fearful sights, dreadful portents, and destructive commotion, by which the Jewish polity was finally overthrown, and the Christian religion established in the Roman Empire.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{154} 1810 Williams Bible, there are no page numbers in this Bible, but this commentary can be found on the same page as the passage Joel 2:28–32.

\textsuperscript{155} 1810 Williams Bible, there are no page numbers in this Bible, but this commentary can be found on the same page as Joel 2:28–32.
Before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.] In the taking and sacking of Jerusalem, and burning of the Temple, by the Romans under Titus, the son of Vespasian. This was, perhaps, the greatest and most terrible days of God’s vengeance ever shewn to the world; or that ever will be shewn, till the great day of the general judgment.

...

Verse 32. Whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD] (Hebrew phrase) col asher yikra be-shem yehovah, “All who shall invoke in the name of Jehovah.” That Christ is the Jehovah here mentioned appears plain from Rom. x, 15, where the Reader had better consult the Notes. “This refers,” says Bp. Newcome, “to the safety of the Christians during the Jewish and the Roman war.”

This 1827 Clarke commentary likewise applies fulfillment to events that occurred between AD 33 and 70—beginning with the Day of Pentecost and ending with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. This pattern is consistent throughout antebellum Bible commentaries that I studied. These statements demonstrate how antebellum biblical commentators believed the “last days” began at or before the Day of Pentecost as it relates to this prophecy, and that the signs of this prophecy could be found in the history of the apostolic times.

These two insights are never taught by Joseph Smith. He never directly connected Joel’s writings with the Day of Pentecost through a New Testament lens and he never interpreted the fulfillment of v. 30–32 of the prophecy with the signs that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, as will be seen in later chapters.

New Testament Bible Commentaries

Among the New Testament commentaries that I surveyed, the same patterns mentioned in the section above dominated the antebellum New Testament commentaries on Acts 2:16–21. The earliest example of interpreting the “last days” as the days of the Messiah is found in the

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156 1827 Clarke Bible, 396–397.
157 While fulfillment of this prophecy is consistently and constantly viewed through a New Testament lens and the events between AD 33 and 70, many of these antebellum Bible commentators did vary in their conclusions. Some Bibles like the 1810 Williams Bible clearly advocate for an apostolic day fulfillment, other Bibles like the 1846 Bonn Bible viewed an AD 33–70 fulfillment as a first fulfillment or type of fulfillment that would come at the end of the world just preceding the Second arrival of Christ (see 1846 Bonn Bible, 893–894).
1831 Doddridge Bible: “...where it is written, ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days,’ or in the times of the Messiah, saith the ever-blessed God…”158 Similar to this Doddridge Bible example, some of the other New Testament commentaries do not offer any explanation for this interpretation, such as the 1833 Brownell NT Commentary. “17. in the last days,] In the times of the Messiah, I will pour out an effusion of my Spirit ‘upon all flesh’ i.e. upon some of all ranks and orders, heathens as well as Jews.”159

Other Commentaries, such as the 1834 Barnes New Testament, give credit for this definition of the “last days” to the Jews:

“In the last days…. The expression then properly denoted the future times in general. But, as the coming of the Messiah was to the eye of a Jew the most important event in the coming ages, the great, glorious, and crowning scene in all that vast futurity, the phrase came to be regarded as properly expressive of that. And they spoke of future times, and of the last times, as the glad period which should be crowned and honoured with the presence and triumphs of the Messiah.”160

While the Barnes is the longest explanation, which claims a Jewish tradition of interpreting the “last days” most other commentaries were as brief as the 1844 Ripley New Testament: “17. In the last days. This is one of the expressions which were employed by the Jews to signify the times of the Messiah.”161

A select few gave alternate explanations, such as the 1839 Wright Bible: “17. The times of the Messiah are frequently called The last days, the gospel being the last dispensation of divine grace.”162 Although this commentary does vary slightly from the other examples above, similar to every other example the “last days” are consistently considered to be the time of the Messiah.

158 1831 Doddridge Bible, 371.
159 1833 Brownell NT Commentary, 264.
160 1834 Barnes NT Commentary, 34.
161 1844 Ripley NT Commentary, 29.
162 1839 Wright Bible, 314.
The other similar pattern seen between the New and Old Testament commentaries on this prophecy is that of viewing fulfillment through events which occurred in AD 33–70. Many of the clearest statements of fulfillment are directly linked to the events that occurred on the Day of Pentecost in AD 33. “But this which has occasioned so much admiration,” explained the 1831 Doddridge Bible, “and which you know not how to account for, is that great event which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, chap. ii. 28—32. The 1833 Brownell New Testament Commentary likewise found fulfillment in the events in AD 33: “I will pour out an effusion of my Spirit “upon all flesh”…. How wonderfully this part of the prophecy of Joel, ii. 28–32, here cited, was fulfilled, is abundantly attested in the New Testament;”

To emphasize the fulfillment of all the verses of Joel 2:28–32, other Bibles pointed towards the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which occurred in AD 70:

19. And I will shew prodigies in heaven above, and signs in earth beneath...

Terrible indeed were those prodigies in particular, which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem: Such as the flaming sword hanging over the city, and the fiery comet point down upon it for a year; the light that shone upon the temple and the altar in the night, as if it had been noon-day; the opening of the great and heavy gate of the temple without hands; the voice heard from the most holy place, Let us depart hence; the admonition of Jesus, the son of Ananus, crying for Severn years together, Wo, Wo, Wo; the vision Of contending armies in the air, and of intrenchments thrown up against a city there represented; the terrible thunders and lightning a, and dreadful earthquakes, which every one considered as portending some great evil. all which, through the singular providence of God, are particularly recorded by Josephus. Blood—War and slaughter. Fire—Burning of houses and towns, involving all in clouds of smoke.”

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163 1831 Doddridge Bible, 371.
164 1833 Brownell NT Commentary, 264. The commentaries provide the same conclusion. For example the 1838 Blackie NT Commentary reads: “Hereupon the apostles all stood up, and Peter, as president of the assembly, took upon him to confute this injurious calumny, by showing the audience, ‘that then it was early in the morning, not above nine o’clock, and consequently no proper time to have eaten or drunk any thing; that the present effusion of the Holy Ghost, was a full completion of that famous prophecy in Joel, where God had expressly promised it” (1058–1059).
165 1839 Wright Bible, 314.
When speaking of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 (see also Acts 2:17–21), these New Testament commentaries repeatedly pointed to the events which occurred around AD 33 and AD 70 for grounds of fulfillment. This interpretation was not unique to the antebellum period as seen in Chapter One. These patterns of interpretation varied drastically from the comments Joseph Smith applied to this passage, as will be seen later.

Cross References for Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21

A study of the cross references found in footnotes of these antebellum bibles will help to explain what other biblical passages Christians viewed in conjunction with Joel’s prophecy. These bibles consistently created a similar web of references that tied other biblical passages to Joel 2:28–32. A comparison of these common trends shows additional variance with the connections of Joseph Smith and other Church leaders, shared in later chapters.

Popular cross references to the outpouring element in Joel’s prophecy (see Joel 2:28; see also Acts 2:17) included passages such as Isaiah 44:3, John 7:38–39, and Zechariah 12:10. The Isaiah and Zechariah references are other Old Testament passages, which spoke of a future outpouring of the Spirit. These examples demonstrate how these cross references may have caused antebellum evangelical Christians to possibly connect all verses on outpourings together.

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166 An enumeration of all cross references for each verse of scripture and how many Bibles they appeared in is found in the Appendix (see figures 1–3).
167 Fourteen of the twenty-five bibles I surveyed contained cross references. When a bible contained cross references, a little letter or number was given either after a word or after an entire verse. That same letter would be found in one of three places depending on the Bible—in a margin at the bottom of the page, in a margin at the side of the page, or in a narrow space created between the two columns of scripture text in the middle of the page. In one of these margins or columns a list of cross references would be given sharing suggested passages the reader should study when coming to the indicated letter or number found in the verse. This similar practice, though formatting varies, is still used in many study bibles today.
168 After reading and searching through dozens of sources of religious fervor in the antebellum era on outpourings of the Spirit, I could find many examples of people praying for an outpouring of the Spirit, claiming and outpouring of the Spirit, and teaching about an outpouring of the Spirit. However, I could rarely find any minister or other key
Other common cross references associated with Joel’s prophecy are shown below:

| Joel 2:29 | “And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” | Galatians 3:28  
Colossians 3:11 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Joel 2:30–31 | “And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.” | Revelation 6:12–13  
Mark 13:24–25  
Malachi 4:1–6  
Joel 3:14–15 |
| Joel 2:32 | “…whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered…” | Romans 10:12–14 |

The most popular of all these footnotes, other than Joel and Acts referencing one another was Romans 10:12–14. In this passage Paul speaks of the need to call upon the Lord for deliverance, a phrase which reads word for word with a portion of Joel 2:32. Paul’s application is that those who believe and pray to the Lord will be saved. In antebellum America, this was perhaps the most unified message that was taught out of Joel 2:28–32, which was reflected in the cross references found in the bibles possessed during that era. While Joseph Smith similarly taught that individuals should call upon the name of the Lord and that the Lord would deliver the righteous, he uniquely applied this verse with a significance placed upon the location of the righteous, which was very different from his contemporaries.

Some of these same cross references received attention in the commentaries shared previously, and reflect the interpretations of fulfillment commentators held for Joel 2:28–32. Although Joseph Smith did produce a translation—of sorts—of the King James Bible, he did not produce notations or a cross reference system to accompany that bible. However, on some occasions Joseph Smith did connect other scriptures and prophecies with Joel 2:28–32 directly and others were alluded to, as will be shown in later chapters. With the exception of Revelation Christian figure connecting the idea of an outpouring to Joel 2:28–29, and the majority of the time there was no connection to a biblical passage at all. Searching through these many primary and secondary sources conveys that Christians were less concerned about connecting their experiences and teachings to a specific passage, especially Joel 2:28–29, then they were about the experience of the outpouring itself.
6:12 and Malachi 4:1–6, there is no direct evidence that Joseph Smith connected Joel’s prophecy with any of the other same passages as his contemporary biblical cross reference compilers had.
Chapter 3:
Alexander Campbell and William Miller on Joel’s Prophecy

Previous chapters have shown how the Bible study aids cast the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and how the Christian historical view of fulfillment developed. However, specific examples of how contemporary Evangelical Christians taught and utilized the passage will create further separation and distinction from Joseph Smith. Alexander Campbell and William Miller were religious leaders of upstart faiths during the same antebellum time-period and in the same general geographic region within the United States as Joseph Smith. Furthermore, these religious leaders were aware of one another and in some cases addressed one another through sermons and publications. All three religious leaders weighed in on Joel’s prophecy and its fulfillment.

Alexander Campbell (1788–1866)\textsuperscript{169}

As an immigrant from Ireland, Alexander Campbell came to America in 1808 in the upswing of religious fervor. Campbell was known for his desire to “return to the primitive church of the New Testament,”\textsuperscript{170} and left the Baptist faith to create his own restoration movement during the same years Joseph Smith was publishing the Book of Mormon and founding The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In these early years of Campbell’s movement a large group of his followers defected to Joseph Smith’s Church. Lynne Wilson summarizes best the event:

When Campbell separated from the Baptists, Sidney Rigdon and his group of followers became the third group to join Campbell’s restoration movement. Rigdon’s eloquent preaching and biblical scholarship ingratiated himself to Campbell, and he soon became a leader in the movement. In 1830 Rigdon’s convert, Parley P. Pratt, came across

\textsuperscript{170} Wilson, “A New Pneumatology,” 81.
a copy of The Book of Mormon, read it, believed it was the word of God, met Joseph Smith, was baptized, and soon thereafter was called to serve as a missionary. He returned to Ohio to tell Rigdon about his new faith. That fall Rigdon and several of his followers received Joseph Smith as a prophet and were baptized. Alexander Campbell lost hundreds of members but losing the leadership of Rigdon was even more significant. They lost hundreds of members but losing the leadership of Rigdon was even more significant.

It is most likely this bitter experience in the eyes of Alexander Campbell that led him to brand “Mormonism” as the standard for fraud, deception, and disbelief. Seven years later Campbell would in his “Mormon memory” describe “Sidney Rigdon…exceedingly fond of new ideas, and always boasting of originality, he sought distinction by his lucubrations [sic] on the Prophecies.”

Alexander Campbell on the Prophecy of Joel

Alexander Campbell’s commentary on fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 is found in a publication called “The Christian System.” Campbell explained in the preface to this publication the efforts of the European reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin led their successors to create creeds and other formal religious promulgations that drew people away from the scriptures.

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171 Wilson, “A New Pneumatology,” 40, see footnote #102; see also 83, 89.
172 In the mist of refuting a Roman Catholic Bishop in Campbell’s Millennial Harbinger, Campbell stopped to liken the deception of the Bishop as “being as perfect a fraud as the Book of Mormon” (Alexander Campbell, The Millennial Harbinger, vol. 1—EXTRA, no. 7 (Bethany, VA, July 1837), 323). On another occasion when sarcastically mentioning the “novelties of Mormonism,” Campbell stopped to give “The introduction of this religion [which] affords another illustration of the truth of the remark that Satan always adapts his counterfeits to times and circumstances.” “The ‘Book of Mormon…’ explained Campbell, “became the means of seducing many of different sects, and some even of those who had clean escaped from error.” (Alexander Campbell, The Millennial Harbinger, vol. 3, no. 3 (Bethany, VA), 72–80.)
173 Alexander Campbell, The Millennial Harbinger, vol. 1, no. 1 (Bethany, VA, December 1837), 578. Campbell and Smith debated various theological points year after year, which is insightful for a few reasons. First, both Campbell and Smith were aware of one another’s movements and teachings. Second, both men found the perfect medium for debate through publications in newspapers, and both felt that it was effective means to their theological ends. Third, beginning in 1834 there appears to be a correlation with the content of Smith’s and Campbell’s publications and dates they were published, which reveals strong evidence for a written debate that lasted potentially into the 1840s.
The purpose of this book was then explained as the fruits of him and others who rather sought the primitive church through the “Bible alone.”

The object of this volume is to place before the community in a plain, definite, and perspicuous style, the capital principles which have been elicited, argued out, developed, and sustained in a controversy of twenty-five years, by the tongues and pens of those who rallied under the banners of the Bible alone. The principle which was inscribed upon our banners when we withdrew from the ranks of the sects was, ‘Faith in Jesus as the true Messiah, and obedience to him as our Lawgiver and King, the ONLY TEST of Christian character, and the ONLY BOND of Christian union, communion, and co-operation, irrespective of all creeds, opinions, commandments, and traditions of men.’

The structure of the book contained several topical headings organized into three different chapters. After each heading an explanation of the principle followed, which consisted of Campbell’s commentary on key doctrinal points from Campbell’s reading of the New Testament. It also contained many of Campbell’s previous publications, which were published earlier in The Millennial Harbinger, a newspaper published from 1830 to 1870. Campbell’s commentary on Joel is found in a section titled “CORONATION OF THE MESSIAH.” In this section, Campbell uses various Old Testament prophecies to explain that following his resurrection, “God had made that Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ.”

Alexander Campbell fell in line with the predominant Christian belief that Joel 2:28–32 found fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost. Campbell taught that the “first act of [the resurrected Christ’s] reign was the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, according to the Prophecy of Joel and his own promise.” Thus, in Campbell’s mind the prophecy had long been fulfilled as Jesus

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175 Campbell, “The Christian System,” 8. Campbell felt confident in these principles because they had been, “maturely considered, and have passed through a long, complicated, and vigorous opposition” (10).
176 Campbell was the editor of the paper until he sold it in 1863. See The Millennial Harbinger: Abridged, ed. Benjamin Smith, iii.
178 Campbell, “The Christian System,” 178. This information was originally published the year before “The Christian System” in August 1834 in the Millennial Harbinger. The second publication reaffirmed Campbell’s belief in the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy on the Day of Pentecost. In this article Campbell refers to “Pentecost/Pentecostians” 30 times.
“poured out the blessings of his favor upon his friends.” Campbell didn’t just see this as the fulfillment of Joel’s promises, but also the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth. The following quote immediately followed Campbell’s declaration of fulfillment for Joel 2:28–32.

[Christ] received pardons and gifts for them that did rebel, and shed forth abundantly all spiritual gifts on the little flock to whom it pleased the Father to give the kingdom. Thus commenced the Reign of Heaven, on the day of Pentecost, in the person of the Messiah, the Son of God, and the anointed Monarch of the universe. Under him his people, saved from their sins, have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken nor removed.

…

Some of them not only saw ‘the Son of Man enter upon his reign,’ and the Kingdom of God commence on Pentecost, and carry his conquests over Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth; but they saw the Lord ‘come with power’ and awful glory, and accomplish all his predictions on the deserted and devoted temple, city and people. 180

Campbell saw this presence of God’s kingdom on earth, as the explanation for how the Spirit worked in his day and age. He believed that “[t]he Spirit of God inspired all the spiritual ideas in the New Testament, and confirmed them by miracles.”181 Because those miracles were sufficient to convince the world of the gospel’s truth, the Spirit was not needed in the same way and is only “ever present with the word that he inspired,” or in other words, “He descended from heaven on the day of Pentecost, and has not formally ascended since.”182 Thus, while Campbell could preach and advocate for miraculous spiritual gifts found in the New Testament, he denied them in his day.

This narrow view did not come without difficulties. While arguing in favor of one receiving the Spirit prior to baptism, Campbell admitted that Pentecost wasn’t the only day that this phenomenon occurred. He explained that “in Cornelius’s case, it appears that God determined to make no difference between the Jews and Gentiles in receiving them into his

kingdom.” This exception had to be made since, “says Peter, ‘he gave them the same gift which he gave to us Jews at the beginning,’ (never since Pentecost.)”

According to Campbell, Joel’s prophecy and promises occupy little more than justification for the events on the Day of Pentecost and proof that those events differed from those that would follow through the Christian centuries leading up to that day. Campbell focused instead on helping his followers understand what to expect from the Holy Ghost in their personal discipleship.

Interestingly, Joseph Smith countered nearly every point of these interpretations in the years following Campbell’s publication—“The Christian System”. Though Campbell is not always directly mentioned, it appears, from their debate in the press that his ideas and teachings were the primary target for Joseph Smith. For example, on an occasion of preaching at the temple two questions were raised, which the prophet felt inclined to respond to. “Some say the kingdom of God was not set up on the earth until the day of Pentecost,” spoke Joseph Smith, “but I say in the name of the Lord, that the kingdom of God was set up on the earth from the days of Adam to the present time, whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed his word and gave power and authority to administer in his name.”183 Joseph taught that the kingdom of God did not come along with fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, but that it existed whenever “a minister who has power and authority from God” was available “to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel, and officiate in the Priesthood of God.”184 It was the lack of this Priesthood that proved Alexander Campbell’s claims as being false, in the mind of the Prophet.

183 HC 5:256 (see also Joseph Smith History, 1838–1856, volume D-1, addenda, 6 at Josephsmithpapers.org). Sermon given January 22, 1843 from the unfinished Nauvoo Temple.

184 HC 5:256 (see also Joseph Smith History, 1838–1856, volume D-1, addenda, 6 at Josephsmithpapers.org).
Since the great apostacy from primitive Christianity, all the reformers of which we have any knowledge have fallen into this one inconsistency, viz: of patching new cloth on to old garments; and thus the rent has been made worse. For instance, the Protestants have sought a reformation in doctrine without a recommission and a new administration of ordinances. The Wesleyans sought a reformation in practice, with a reformation of doctrine. The Irvingites sought to graft the gifts of the spirit on to a corrupt church, without a change of ordinances or priesthood. *The Rev. Alexander Campbell has attempted to restore the ordinances without the priesthood, or gifts of the spirit.*\(^{185}\)

Not only did Joseph Smith reject the notion that the Kingdom of God only came on Pentecost and that the gifts of the Spirit ceased following the miraculous events described therein, he also rejected Campbell’s notion that miracles disappeared following the initial rollout of the New Testament church.

Faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the holy Spirit, with signs following those who believe, was then the gospel which the apostles preached, of which Paul said, if we or an angel from heaven preach any other, let him be accursed. But you said there had been no miracles since the days of the apostles, I think this sentence must inadvertently escaped from your lips, as it can be shown from good authority that miracles did not cease in the first century and even Mr. Alexander Campbell although diametrically opposed to the continuance of miracles, admits they did not wholly disappear with the apostles. You very briefly noticed the subject of spiritual gifts, as they appeared in the first Christian church.\(^{186}\)

Denying the discontinuance of miracles was essential to Joseph Smith’s interpretations of passages like Joel, because Smith advocated that spiritual gifts and miracles were on display within the restored Church of Christ, which he presided over.

Alexander Campbell’s pneumatological views grew out of his interpretations of the Day of Pentecost including his perception of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. His publication of “The Christian System” in 1835, which copied this content a year earlier in his August 1834 issue of *The Millennial Harbinger* boldly outlined his views on gifts of the Spirit, miracles, the

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\(^{185}\) *Times and Seasons*, (Nauvoo, Hancock Co., IL) 15 June 1842, vol. 3, no. 16, 816.

\(^{186}\) Elders’ Journal, Kirtland, Ohio, Oct. 1837, vol. 1, no. 1, 10. Available at the Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
reception of the Spirit prior to Baptism, and his belief that Joel’s words had found fulfillment. Joseph Smith, who on several occasions argued against Campbell’s views as captured in the quotes above, worked with scribes just years later in 1838–1839 to dictate his history, which shared his encounters with the angel Moroni. Within these encounters with the angel Moroni, Joseph Smith shares the angelic teachings that Joel’s prophecy had not been fulfilled. Although it is unknown if Joseph Smith is directly responding to this publication in his dictation of JS—H 1:41 that speaks of Joel’s prophecy, this may give one reason for why Joseph Smith chose to include the angel’s remarks about the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 in his history, when he clearly omitted other biblical passages that were shared (see JS—H 1:41).

William Miller (1782–1849)

While Alexander Campbell’s interpretation of Joel’s fulfillment was integrally connected to his views on the working of the Spirit and spiritual gifts, William Miller utilized the prophecy to paint a Millennial winding up scene in the mid–antebellum period. The Mormons and the Millerites were what Grant Underwood called possibly “the two most successful millenarian groups in mid–nineteenth–century America.” Underwood observed that they “flourished at roughly the same time and in roughly the same area, and a close comparison of the two can produce a more nuanced understanding of Mormon millenarianism.”

William Miller grew up in Low Hampton, New York. Shawn Callihan notes that “[e]ven in his youth William was an avid reader, and when he moved from home to Vermont

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187 Additionally, Joseph Smith and Alexander Campbell both used their access to the printed press to battle–out their conflicting ideas. Joseph wrote his history “to disabuse the public mind” (JS—H 1:1). Judging by the consistent points made between these two men, it is likely that some of the content in Joseph Smith’s 1838 history was motivated by the arguments of Alexander Campbell, including Joel 2:28–32.
188 Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism, 112.
with his new wife, Lucy Smith, he divided his time between farming and reading.”191 Although Miller was invested in Deism early on in life, following the War of 1812, he “had a dramatic evangelical conversion experience.”192 Following Miller’s move to Vermont and conversion to Christianity, Miller turned his keen reading eye to an intense study of the Bible, especially on topics of the Second Coming and millennium. After roughly two years of study, Miller “concluded that rational scripture study could reveal all truth,”193 including the date of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, which he believed would occur between 1843 and 1844.

Miller’s calculations were based upon several assumptions or “rules” as documented in his 1843 publication Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1843. These assumptions included (1) “God in his wisdom has so interwoven the several prophecies, that the events foretold are not all told by one prophet,”194 (2) “events, visions, and prophecies which have had their fulfillment, every word and every particular has had an exact and literal accomplishment,”195 (3) “There are two important points to which all prophecy seems to centre, like a cluster of grapes upon its stem—the first and second coming of Christ,”196 and (4) “Almost every prophecy given by Christ and his apostles may be found, in the Old Testament prophets, represented by figures, which were familiar to the writers and readers of those times.”197 Miller insisted that in all Old Testament prophecies, the number of days, really referred to years, which was essential to his calculations. Although this publication did not emerge until two years before the anticipated arrival of Christ, Miller had preached and

conveyed these truths for almost a decade before this publication. As Underwood noted, while
“Smith was learning new truths through visions and revelations, Miller felt that, by careful study
of the Bible, he was discovering the keys to prophetic interpretation. … Miller arrived at this
insight around the same time that Joseph Smith had his “First Vision,” but he did not publicize it
beyond a small circle of family and friends until 1831.” Miller’s conclusions did not gain
much traction either until Joshua V. Himes assisted Miller in publishing and presenting his
conclusions to antebellum America. Though the start of Millerism was small, the millennial
outlooks of his message would outgrow Joseph Smith and most other millenarian prophets of
that age.

As the time approached for the end of the world and Second Coming of Christ, Miller
chose an exact date of 22 October 1844. Unfortunately, for Miller, the “predicted date came and
went silently,” in what is now called “The Great Disappointment.” Shawn Callihan
summarizes the result of the disappointment, writing, “the Millerite movement dwindled and
eventually vanished after the date passed. This humiliating letdown became the subject of
ridicule soon thereafter, and for many years Americans associated Millerism with insanity,
superstition, and gullibility.”

198 Shelley Bruce, “The Great Disappointment,” 32.
201 Callihan, “Reactions to the Millerite Movement,” 19.
202 Callihan, “Reactions to the Millerite Movement,” 19.
William Miller on Joel 2:28–32

Although Miller seemed to fade in the public square, as quickly as he came to the attention of the nation, his interpretation of Joel 2:28–32, which was integrally related to his end-of-times scenario was not often challenged by millions of Americans who bought into his predictions. Greater debate focused on his calculations of prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

According to Miller’s own rules of interpretation, his declarations of fulfillment regarding Joel 2:28–32 seem both traditional and conflicting at the same time. Miller had written that visions, like Joel, “had an exact and literal accomplishment,” in fact, wrote Miller, “no two events have ever happened, that I can learn, which will exactly apply or fulfil the same prophecy.”203 In Miller’s mind, prophecies would not have duel fulfillments. The prophecies were straight forward and once identified, they could be relied upon for mathematical conclusions. However, his predictions regarding the prophecy of Joel seems to break his own rule. On multiple occasions Miller published twenty-one signs or prophecies that confirmed the first coming of Christ. Miller’s twentieth point read:

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of pentecost. Joel ii. 28, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” The apostle told them that this scripture was fulfilled at the day of pentecost, and this transaction was well known to the Jews.204

Miller asserted fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost, feeling that Peter had declared, the prophecy fulfilled, but on multiple occasions he also listed the prophecy as having future fulfillment as in Signs of the Times on 15 May 1840. “God has revealed things to come,”

203 Miller, Evidence from Scripture, 5.
204 Miller, Evidence from Scripture, 287. See also William Miller, Signs of the Times, vol. 1, no. 1 (Boston: 20 March 1840), 4.
persuaded Miller, and then in listing several Old Testament prophecies, he also listed “Acts. ii.
17. And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out my Spirit upon all
flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shalt dream dreams.” Miller more strongly proclaimed this duel fulfillment
in the events, which he predicted would follow the Second Coming of Christ. Utilizing his 2,520
year fulfillment pattern, he started from the decree of King Darius in 520 BC and added 2, 520
years to come up with the year AD 1930. It was in this year, felt Miller, that

…the Jews must begin to understand fully the spiritual nature of Christ's
kingdom, and nothing will ever bring them to such all understanding but the fulfilment of
Joel ii. 28, 29.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh;
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your
young men shall see visions; And also upon the servants and the handmaids in those
days will I pour out my Spirit.

The first fruits of this was realized at Jerusalem, A. D. 33, by Jews and Israelites
‘out of every nation under heaven.’ (See Acts ii.) That was a token of the glorious
harvest, this will be the final consummation.

This apparent contradiction within Miller’s mathematical conclusions appeared to go unnoticed
by many of Miller’s followers. The notion that Joel 2:28–32 had duel fulfillment, however, did
not. Otis A. Skinner wrote a lengthy rebuttal of Miller’s Theory in The Theory of William Miller,
Concerning the End of the World in 1843, Utterly Exploded. Skinner believed that the
prophecy of Joel referred to Peter’s day and was fulfilled at the latest by AD 70. “Let us see what
the apostles thought about the last days” wrote Skinner. He then quoted Joel 2:28–32 and

206 William Miller, Signs of the Times, vol. 1, no. 6 (Boston, June 1840), 42. Although Miller spoke of this event as
the first fruits on this occasion, he had previously declared the prophecy fulfilled in earlier sources. This later
explanation denotes either, a shift in perception, or an adoption of duel fulfillment within Biblical prophecies, a
position he had rejected earlier.
207 Otis A. Skinner, The Theory of William Miller, Concerning the End of the World in 1843, Utterly Exploded
(Boston: Thomas Whittemore, 1840). See also Callihan, “Reactions to the Millerite Movement,” 19.
208 Otis Skinner, Utterly Exploded, 49.
commented: “Now, St. Peter applies this to his own times, to the last days of the Jewish
dispensation.”209 Skinner then quoted Joel 2:15–21 and noted,

Thus does he teach, that Joel prophesied of the times in which Peter then lived,
and of events that were to transpire at the approaching coming of Christ. Observe how
this agrees with what we have quoted. He speaks of wonders in heaven, and signs on
earth, blood, fire, vapor, and smoke; of the sun turning to darkness, and the moon to
blood. Why, this is stronger language than any we have found. Well, Peter says, that Joel
referred to his times, which he calls the last days; so that Peter considered, that he lived in
the last days.210

Interestingly, Miller was a proponent of the past and future fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. In
this sense, Miller seems to align more closely with Joseph Smith than most other evangelical
Christians did in antebellum America. Although Miller saw future significance for this prophecy,
in every other aspect his theological interpretations of Joel 2:28–32 did not even begin to
approach the level of exegetical thoroughness, which can be found in the writings of Joseph
Smith. Miller did not appear to outline his views on much of the other portions of the prophecy,
and while he referenced the ongoing outpouring experienced in revivals, he did not use the
prophecy prescriptively like Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith was well aware of William Miller and his teachings, however, he did not
have nearly as many things to say and exchange with Miller as he had Alexander Campbell. As
the much awaited 1843 was just barely underway, Joseph Smith had recorded in his journal the
following account:

Sunday feb 12, 1843. some 7 or 8 young men called to see me part of them from
the city of N. York they treated me with the greatest respect I shewed them the fallacey of
Mr William Millers data. concerning the Millnim Millennium & preachd them quite a
sermon. shewed them, that the error is in the Bible or translation. & that Miller is in want
of information The prophecies must be fulfilld sun be turnd into darkness & moon into
black & many more things before Christ come.

210 Otis Skinner, *Utterly Exploded*, 50–51. Later in his rebuttal, Skinner labeled “The day of the Lord” as the time
period when Jerusalem was destroyed (AD 70)(see 183).
In this account Joseph Smith gives some indication of the reasons for denying Miller’s theory, including errors in Biblical translation and astronomical signs, as well as other signs Smith did not mention. It may have been this experience along with the national excitement displayed over Miller’s theory that led Joseph to share his personal insights on the date of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, just one month later.211 As shared earlier, by March of 1843, Joseph claimed that he had spent a lot of time praying about the date of the Second Coming and was only promised that if he lived to be age 85 he would see the face of the Savior. Joseph concluded that the Second Coming wouldn’t occur before that date, and that the “coming of the Son of Man never will be, never can be ’till the judgements spoken of, for this hour, are poured out,” including the same signs given in Joel, namely, “signs in the heavens above, and on the Earth beneath; the Sun turned into darkness and the moon to blood.”212

As Joseph Smith taught the 85 year old minimum prediction, which he had received through revelation on the matter, he reaffirmed that the greater signs in Joel hadn’t come to pass in 1843. The reasons Joseph shares for not expecting the Second Coming that year seem more than coincidental when considering the millennial expectations that many shared in 1843 that led to “The Great Disappointment” in 1843–1844. Underwood also noted this focus on the other signs, such as the prophecy of Joel, which had not come to fulfillment in the mind of the prophet:

One of the most common was that the Millerite calculation left insufficient time for all the necessary precursor events to take place. The gist of Rigdon’s argument against Millerism was that ‘the prophecies which are to be fulfilled before the Savior’s coming would not allow of so short a time as is specified.’ Or, as Joseph Smith told his young visitors from New York, ‘The prophecies must be fulfilled; the sun must be

211 Underwood noted: "again the next winter as it was about to end.” (Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism, 118) Mormon leaders responded to Millers claims in the heat of the moment in 1843 and 1844. Joseph’s heightened focus on the Second Coming and signs that would precede it, clearly grow out of the Millerite craze which swept millions of homes in the nation.

212 HC 5:337. See also josephsmithpapers.org, History, 1838–1856, volume D–1, 1520. April 6, 1843. This quote could potentially reference Joel’s signs in Joel 2:31, but it could also be referencing Revelation 6:12. As will be shown hereafter, Joseph’s revelations allude to a combination of Joel 2:31 and Revelation 6:12 as being the same prophecy.
darkened and the moon turned into blood, and many more things take place before Christ would come."213

Due to their close proximity Alexander Campbell and William Miller provide excellent comparisons with Joseph Smith in perceptions of Joel 2:28–32. These two men provide us with somewhat unique perspectives into Joel 2:28–32, especially in how they viewed them with regards to other related topics such as spiritual gifts and millennial expectations, however, these related topics seem to dominate their perception and interpretation of Joel 2:28–32, just as other topics dominated the perception of the prophecy in the minds of early Christians as found in chapter one.

Joseph Smith, on the other hand, provided both a unique view of the prophecy and connected it with topics, which were consistent with the book of Joel itself. At times, Joseph did refer to portions of the prophecy, like his reference to deny the 1843 prediction of the Second Coming, by William Miller.

213 Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism, 120
Chapter 4:

Joseph Smith’s Fresh Take: Key References and Allusions to Joel’s Prophecy

In this section, direct and specific references to Joel’s prophecy by Joseph Smith will be presented first, followed by quotations from Joel’s prophecy within revelations received by Joseph, followed by smaller, less cohesive allusions to the passage. A brief summary of context will precede each source, and a synthesis of each source will follow showing how each source demonstrates the three overarching points of this paper. These points show how Joseph’s use and interpretation of Joel differed from other Christian leaders in antebellum America in that (1) he taught that Joel 2:28–32 had not been fulfilled, (2) he taught Joel’s prophecy as a motivator to gather and build Zion and that fulfillment would come as they did so, and (3) he used additional scripture and revelation to expand the meaning of Joel beyond his Christian contemporaries.

Key Quotations and Specific References to Joel’s Prophecy by Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith utilized Joel 2:28-32 several times throughout his life. A close study of his journals, sermons, and publications yields at least four key examples of when the prophet spoke about Joel’s prophecy and its fulfillment attributing it specifically to Joel.214

Source #1 – Joseph’s 1838–39 History

The most well-known example is found in Joseph Smith—History published in the Pearl of Great Price which is taken from the history that Joseph dictated in 1838–39. In this history Joseph Smith shared one of his earliest prophetic experiences with the prophecy of Joel (Joel

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214 Most references to Joseph Smith’s experiences and teachings associated with the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy come from the histories written during the last six years of his life.
which took place on the night of 21 September 1823, when the Angel Moroni visited him. Regarding this experience Joseph dictated, “[The angel] quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in.” (JS—H 1:41). This message was repeated twice more that night and once more the following morning (see JS—H 1:45–46, 49).

Although Joseph’s experience with the Angel Moroni was only divulged, at least formally, 16 years later and published 19 years after the experience, the repetitive nature of the vision must have impressed Joseph’s mind with the content of the angels’ message. If Joseph Smith was aware of the passage, prior to this experience, it was not recorded or has not been preserved. Although it is nearly impossible to discern if Joseph’s understanding of this passage in 1839 was the same as when he originally had the experience in 1823, Joseph’s claim in this document shows that this passage became significant to him in the early years of his personal religious experiences.

The 1828 edition of Webster’s Dictionary defined the word fulfilled as “participle passive Accomplished; performed; completed; executed.” Joseph’s account of Angel Moroni’s comment conveys that Joseph believed that Joel 2:28–32 had not been completed or finished as of September 1823, which supports the first point in this theses. Although this belief did not

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215 Prior to Joseph’s 1839 history there had already been several publications on the appearances of an angel bringing a gold bible. Most of these publications were based upon opinion, rumors, and bias, rather than solid first-hand sources. (see Donald Q. Cannon, “In the Press: Early Newspaper Reports on the Initial Publication of the Book of Mormon,” in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 16, no. 2, 2007, 5–15, 92–93 for a brief overview of early articles on Joseph receiving and translating the “Gold Bible.” See also Alexander Campbell, Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832) 1–16; E. D. Howe “The Gold Bible fever …” Painesville Telegraph (Painesville, Ohio) (29 March 1831). However, under the direction of Joseph Smith Oliver Cowdery, in eight letters to W. W. Phelps, attempted to write the first full account of the Angel Moroni and the message, which he declared (see JSP, H1:38–89)).

appear to coincide with the traditional reading of Acts 2:16–21 throughout Christian history as shown in Chapter 1, it did pave the way for new insights into the fulfillment of this biblical passage by Joseph Smith. Although the definition of the word ‘fulfilled’ alludes to this stance on the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, Joseph’s quotation of the Angel Moroni in this passage alone does not clearly define Joseph’s understanding of when the prophecy would begin and when it would end; other than to say that Joseph believed in 1838–1839 that Joel’s prophecy had not been completed by the year 1823 when he saw the Angel Moroni.

One example from this history of how new revelation expanded the meaning of Joel’s prophecy is seen in how Joseph Smith’s history above linked Joel’s prophecy with another prophecy. The next phrase of Joseph’s history is often not clearly recognized with the passage in Joel though the prophet’s language seems to attach it to the Prophecy of Joel: “And he further stated that the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in.” This phrase leads us to believe that in Joseph’s mind the “fulness of the Gentiles,” was connected to fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. Furthermore, both Joel’s prophecy and the fullness of the Gentiles “was soon to be” or in his other words “was soon to come in.” In this sense the time frame of the two passages appears to be tied together. This is just one example of the third point of this thesis that Joseph used

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217 The term “fulness of the Gentiles” is a biblical phrase as well, found in Romans 11:25 and a similar concept is relayed in Luke 21:24, though it is not identical. Luke 21 is a record of Christ teaching his apostles the signs prior to his second coming. Although Joseph could have attributed this quote to Romans 11:25 for scriptural validity, just as he did the previous passages in his history, he did not. The phrase “fulness of the Gentiles” is found two times in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 15:13; 3 Nephi 16:4; see also D&C 45:25, 30), a record, which Joseph was not yet familiar with in 1823. However, this account was not written until 1839, so it is impossible to know if Moroni foreshadowed these Book of Mormon teachings as rendered in the history, or if this citation demonstrated a later understanding Joseph Smith arrived at connecting it with an original statement made by Moroni. Additionally, it is unclear why Joseph Smith did not give attribution for this scriptural prophecy when all other biblical scriptures were attributed to an original source within the Bible. Monte Nyman defined the term in relation to these references writing that, “in the last days the restored gospel will ‘go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first’” (D&C 90:9). Nyman concluded that “When the Gentiles reject the gospel, ‘the times of the Gentiles [will] be fulfilled’ (D&C 45:29–30)… and [Christ] will take his gospel from among them (3 Ne. 16:7–10)” (Monte S. Nyman, An Ensign to All People (Salt Lake City, 1987), 49–56; see also Daniel H. Ludlow, Encyclopedia of Mormonism (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 541–542).
additional revelation to expand the meaning of Joel beyond his Christian contemporaries, even if Joseph did not speak further about this connection throughout his lifetime.

This experience also opened the door for Joseph’s followers to see their own personal experiences within the Church as part of an ongoing fulfillment, which would take place—“soon” (JS—H 1:41). We have no specific declaration made by Joseph Smith that this prophecy had ever been fulfilled, prior to the nineteenth century or that it was fulfilled in his lifetime. While it may seem strange that Joseph never recorded the significance of Joel’s prophecy as taught to him by an Angel, it is likely that Joseph did not record this experience for the same reason he did not record other significant experiences. At the time they happened he may not have fully understand their significance or he may have felt they were too sacred to record.218 We also have other examples of Joseph Smith specifically commenting on this passage over a number of years, beginning in 1834, which will demonstrate that the significance of Joel 2:28–32 was not just an after–thought by the prophet.

Source #2 – Joseph’s Explanation of Sister Knights Dream

A second and lesser–known key example of how Joseph specifically used this prophecy is found in the first draft of Joseph’s 1838–39 history,219 which speaks of an event that took place in 1830. Just weeks after the organization of the Church, Joseph and Oliver traveled to Colesville to visit with the Saints living there. Upon arrival, they discovered that a mob had

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218 Joseph Smith did not record or publish his experience seeing God the Father and Jesus Christ until many years later. Two published accounts and two unpublished accounts were produced in 1832, 1835, 1838, and 1842. Joseph Smith claimed that the vision was seen in the spring of 1820 (see www.lds.org/topics/first-vision-accounts; see also http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/primary-accounts-of-first-vision to read those accounts; Steven C. Harper, Joseph Smith’s First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014)).

219 “After several early attempts, Joseph Smith and his clerk, James Mulholland, began this history at Commerce, Illinois, on June 10, 1839. Originally titled “The History of Joseph Smith,” it began with a first – person account of Joseph Smith’s early visions…, which had been written in the spring of 1838” (Ludlow, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 647).
assembled and so they fled from the city, barely evading the mob who chased them throughout the night.\textsuperscript{220} Upon returning to Harmony, Joseph recorded in his journal the following account:

Notwithstanding however all the rage of our enemies, still we had much consolation[sic], and many things occurred to strengthen our faith, and cheer our hearts amidst our trials, and persecutions. After we had returned home after our trial, the church at Colesville, were, as might be expected, very anxious concerning our again visiting them, during which time, Sister [Sarah (Sally) Coburn] Knight, (wife to Newel Knight) had a dream which enabled her to say that we would soon visit them that day, which really came to pass, for a few hours after she had told her dream we arrived and thus was our faith much strengthened, concerning the things of the last days mentioned by the Prophet Joel. [O]f dreams & visions—\textsuperscript{221}

This source does not provide lengthy commentary on Joel’s prophecy, but it is important for showing the perception of the prophet in terms of fulfillment. While the first source comments in hindsight that fulfillment had not been reached as of September 1823, this source shows that Joseph believed that Joel’s prophecy was in the process of being fulfilled by the summer of 1830 just months after the Church was organized. Although the earliest extant version of this account is found in a later history produced by Joseph Smith, this source is significant because it is Joseph’s claim of the earliest evidence he tied to fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32.\textsuperscript{222} This source supports the first point of this thesis, in that Joseph didn’t believe the prophecy was fulfilled prior to 1823.\textsuperscript{220}

\textsuperscript{220} Church History in the Fullness of Times, 73.
\textsuperscript{221} JSP, H1:416 (emphasis added). Though an exact date is not given for this experience, it must have occurred during the first week of July 1830 based on additional information in this journal account (see Church History in the Fullness of Times, 73). This account is retained in two additional drafts of his history (see JSP, H1:416–417).
\textsuperscript{222} Joel 2:28–29 promised that “old men would dream dreams” and “young men” would “see visions.” Though some might conclude that Joseph’s First Vision and later visions with the angel Moroni were part of a definite fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, Joseph Smith never attached the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy with these experiences.
Source #3 – Joseph Reading Joel 2 and then Preaching

A third key quotation came in a meeting called for the Elders of the Church in April 1834 “at the dwelling house of bro. Carpenters at 10 o’clock A.M.,” the meeting “opened by singing, ‘How firm a foundation,’” and then “Bro. Joseph Smith Junr. read the 2nd chapter of the prophecy of Joel.”223 Following prayer, Joseph gave a sermon in which he taught about the themes present in Joel chapter 2 and especially verses 28–32. The complete record of that sermon reads:

It is very difficult for us to communicate to the churches all that God has revealed to us, in consequence of tradition; for we are differently situated from any other people that ever existed upon this Earth: Consequently those former revelations cannot be suited to our condition, because they were given to other people who were before us; but in the last days,224 God was to call a remnant, in which was to be deliverance, as well as in Jerusalem, and Zion. Now, if God should give no more revelations, where will we find Zion and this remnant? He said that the time was near when desolation was to cover the Earth, and then God would have a place of deliverance in his remnant, and in Zion, &c. He then gave a relation of obtaining and translating the Book of Mormon, the revelation of the priesthood of Aaron, the organization of the Church in the year 1830, the revelation of the high priesthood, and the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the church, &c. Take away the book of Mormon, and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none; for without a Zion and a place of deliverance, we must fall, because the time is near when the sun will be darkened, the moon turn to blood, the stars fall from heaven and the earth reel to and fro; then if this is the case, if we are not sanctified and gathered to the places where God has appointed, our former professions and our great love for the bible, we must fall, we cannot stand, we cannot be saved; for God will gather out his saints from the gentiles and then comes desolation or destruction and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered, &c.”225

Of the four specific citations for Joel that Joseph Smith shares, this is perhaps the most detailed and complex source. It was the earliest extant source written of the four and it contains

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224 Use of the phrase, “in the last days” may be directly taken from Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:16–21). Joel never places this prophecy “in the last days,” but Peter does.

225 JSP, D4:15 (emphasis added). This account of Joel chapter 2 is the earliest written account of Joseph Smith teaching on Joel’s prophecy, dated April 21, 1834.
the most information. All of the information in this text is not based solely on Joel 2, but Joel 2 is the base text for this sermon. Joseph began the meeting by reading the entire chapter and several phrases scattered throughout the content above are found in Joel 2. For example, Joseph referred several times to three places or groups that would receive deliverance—Jerusalem, Zion, and a remnant (see Joel 2:32). The impending signs of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood are also found in Joel’s prophecy (see Joel 2:31; see also Revelation 6:12). Joseph also gave a summary of how the “gift of the Holy Spirit” had been poured out on the Church. This likely came in conjunction with Joel 2:28, and denotes that Joseph often viewed the operation of the Spirit among his followers and ascribed each experience, at least in this sermon, as the fruits of Joel’s prophecy, similar to the experience of Sister Knight shared above. The last theme throughout this sermon that is found in Joel 2 is that of gathering. Although Joel 2:32 does not stress gathering to Jerusalem, Zion, and in the remnant, the invitation to do so had already been extended in Joel 2:15–16, “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet (emphasis added)." This invitation had been given earlier in Joel 1:14–15 and creates the setting for Joel’s prophecy in 2:28–32, and the deliverance that would come to those who had gathered. Joseph Smith speaks specifically to gathering saints out from the gentiles prior to their destruction. Although he does not specifically mention the “fullness of the gentiles” as he does later when writing his history. This concept may be connected to the fulfillment of that sister-prophesy as outlined in the first source.

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226 It is likely that Joseph Smith’s call for his followers to sanctify themselves and be pure in heart are also taken from Joel’s words in 2:15–16.
227 In speaking of the fullness of the Gentiles, the Book of Mormon repeatedly speaks of repentant gentiles being numbered with the House of Israel and avoiding destruction after the Gentiles eventual reject the gospel. It is
A scriptural phrase from this sermon not found in Joel comes from Isaiah, “the earth reel to and fro” (Isaiah 24:20; see also D&C 45:48; 49:23; 88:87). “The stars fall from heaven” is a phrase almost identical to one in Revelation 6:13. Joseph combines these astronomical signs in Joel, Isaiah, and Revelation to create a larger picture of the “desolation” that will come upon the earth. The reference to desolation is also scriptural and could come from a number of places, however, D&C 29:8–9 bears the most resemblance with this quote (see also 45:33; 63:37; JS—M 1:32; JS—H 1:45; Isaiah 24:6). Joseph Smith frequently combines the language of all these scriptural passages when teaching specific points in Joel’s prophecy, as will be seen in the next section of this chapter.

Joseph Smith’s use of these passages is what creates a complexity that goes beyond that found in Joel 2. Joseph began this sermon recognizing that “those former revelations [could not] be suited to [their] condition.” Multiple times throughout his sermon Joseph mentioned the necessity of receiving further revelation so they could “find Zion and [the] remnant.” The consequence of not learning the location of Zion and then gathering to it as sanctified individuals was given twice—“we must fall.”

This sermon directly confirms the second two aspects of this thesis. First, Joseph Smith believed and taught that Joel’s prophecy would be fulfilled as members of his Church gathered to revealed locations known as Zion or a remnant. In this sermon, Joseph taught that “God will gather out his saints from the gentiles and then comes desolation or destruction and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered, &c.”

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possible that Joseph Smith believed, from the evidence of this sermon, that the fulfillment of Joel would precede that destruction of the Gentiles after the righteous had been gathered out from among them.

228 D&C 29:8–9 appears to be a parallel of this sermon because it also speaks of (1) gathering to a specific place and (2) desolation being sent at an appointed time. There are other references to sweeping desolation in the Doctrine and Covenants, but these passages came after the date of this sermon (see D&C 112:24).
Second, Joseph Smith provides new insight into Joel 2:28–32 by combining it with other biblical passages and adding his own revelatory insights. For example, where Joel 2:32 promises deliverance in physical locations, namely, Jerusalem, Zion, and a remnant, Joseph here speaks more to the means of gathering individuals to those places. In Joel 1:14–15 and 2:15–16 there is a standing call to gather “into the house of the Lord your God” (Joel 1:14; see also Joel 2:15–17), but in this source Joseph placed that gathering element firmly in God’s hands. God will gather his Saints to those locations and then deliverance will come from the destructions, while they are gathered in those places. Joseph also blends signs in Joel, Isaiah, and Revelation to produce heightened motivation for his followers to gather together and sanctify themselves. These three passages appear to be combined over and over again throughout the Doctrine and Covenants as will be shown in a later section.

Source #4 – Decisions for the Land of Missouri

The fourth key reference to Joel’s prophecy came in a meeting of a high council in July 1834, which was called together by Joseph Smith to make decisions in the land of Missouri. In this meeting Joseph Smith lectured on a number of scriptural passages including Joel 2:32. Joseph Smith connected these passages together saying:

The holy prophets had declared, ‘that it should come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house should be established in the top of the mountains and should be exalted above the hills, and all nations should flow unto it. And many people should go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem’ [see Isa. 2:2–3; 2 Ne. 12:2–3]. And again it was said by Joel, seemingly to strengthen the faith of the Latter Day Saints in the above, ‘that whosoever should call on the name of the Lord should be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call’ [Joel 2:32]. The Book of Mormon, which we hold equally sacred with the Bible, says, ‘that a new Jerusalem shall
be built up on this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for the which things there has been a type’ [Ether 13:6].

In this council, Joseph Smith was trying to “strengthen the faith of the Latter Day Saints” in the promise of Isaiah to establish the Lord’s house that all nations would flow unto. This is another example of how Joseph created new insight by linking Joel’s prophecy with other passages, in this case, Isaiah 2:2–3 and Ether 13:6. Joseph gives purpose for why it seems that Joel’s words were written and preserved, and that specifically Latter-day Saints would have the faith necessary to make Isaiah’s passage a reality, due to Joel’s words. Joseph also felt justified in applying these Old Testament passages to a future existence of a New Jerusalem in America because of a prophecy of Ether that a New Jerusalem would be built somewhere in the America’s. While all three of these passages mention a Zionist city (i.e. Zion, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, New Jerusalem), Joel’s prophecy plays the role in this scripture chain of being the motivator for the Saints to gather and build an American Zion.

Perhaps the most significant implication of this lecture is the linking of Joel’s prophecy with the establishment of the Lord’s house. The Saints were laboring to build a temple in Kirtland during this period of time, but the temple spoken of here would rest on Mt. Zion. Here Joseph Smith utilizes Joel’s prophecy to convey that there is still a temple, which needed to be built in Zion and Joel’s words should help the saints have the faith necessary to perform this prophecy. The previous source focused on the need for continuing revelation to learn the place

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229 HC 2:128–129, 7 July, 1834 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, History, 1838–1856, A–1, 517, emphasis added).

230 This teaching came at a difficult time. The saints who had gathered in Missouri had been evicted from Jackson County Missouri years earlier and were building up small settlements in places like Far West, Adam–ondi–Ahman, Haun’s Mill, and DeWitt. Joseph’s arrival in Missouri the year following this high council meeting would heighten the contentious circumstances in Missouri and eventual lead to their expulsion from the state (see Alexander L. Baugh, “Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri,” in Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer, ed. Richard N. Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 291–346.).
of the Zion the saints would have to build and this lecture highlighted the necessity to build a temple within that Zion for a place of deliverance.

These four key examples provide a backbone for our insight into Joseph Smith’s perception of the prophecy of Joel. These examples alone convey that Joseph believed Joel’s prophecy had not been fulfilled as of 1823, when Moroni instructed him so. Joseph also used the impending signs and dangers found in Joel’s prophecy to motivate the saints in their efforts to gather and build Zion. In the last quotation, Joel’s prophecy included motivation to establish a temple. Finally, Joseph combined Joel’s prophecy with other biblical passages to create a more thorough interpretation than his contemporaries. Although these examples are sources originating from the prophet that specifically cite Joel, other sources from the prophet use specific and unique language of Joel 2:28–32 while they don’t actually give a direct reference to Joel. These sources include several of the revelations Joseph received and published as the Book of Commandments and later as the Doctrine and Covenants, as given below.

Revelations Including Portions of Joel 2:28–32

The following examples, found in revelations produced by Joseph Smith, do not specifically mention Joel as the original author, but use the same language as Joel’s prophecy. Several of these passages also refer to phrases like the moon being turned to blood, which is not solely unique to Joel. However, in the comparisons below, one will see far more extensive use of Joel’s language then later passages like Revelation 6:12–13.231

231 Many modern scholars tie Joel 2:31 to Matthew 24:29 (see also Mark 13:24; Luke 21:26) and Revelation 6:12 (see Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 101; see also Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 54; David Allan Hubbard, *Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter–Varsity Press, 1989), 71). In all the passages from the Doctrine and Covenants and in Joel given in this section, the sign of the moon being turned to blood is directly associated as a sign that will occur prior to great and terrible day of the Lord and marks that scriptural event. However, in Revelation the sign appears to follow the opening of the sixth seal. Although Joseph did not give
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<td>14 But, behold, I say unto you that before this great day shall come the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath;</td>
<td>30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.</td>
<td>12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.</td>
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In this section of the Doctrine and Covenants, originally given to six Elders in September 1830,232 Joseph Smith described the great and terrible day of the Lord: “For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand” (D&C 29:11). Joseph then relayed in verse 14 that before that day, the signs listed in Joel 2:30–31 would be given prior to the day of the Lord.

In this revelation several biblical teachings and modern revelations are blended together to produce motivation for Elders to preach and gather, similar to Joseph Smith’s sermon in 1834, shared in the section above. Many of the same Joel 2 themes can be found in this revelation that would be present three years later in the aforementioned 1834 sermon. For example: “Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when

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232 See Section Heading for D&C 29.
tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked” (D&C 29:8). Both of these points are found almost verbatim in Joseph’s 1834 sermon, which followed his reading of Joel 2.233

This revelation supports the call for these Elders to preach and gather individuals to the Church by motivating them by the signs and destructions that lie shortly ahead (see D&C 29:9–21). The signs in the heavens and on earth—in the sun and moon that originate in Joel 2:30–31, are just a few of the scriptural scenes foreshadowed to produce a reason to preach. Other scriptural language is included in D&C 29 and helped to provide motivation for these men to preach the gospel. For example, Malachi 4:1 (see also Joel 2:5; Isaiah 47:14) records how the wicked would be burned as stubble at the day of the Lord is shared in D&C 29:9. The combination of several Old Testament passages like Malachi 4:1 and Joel 2:30–31 strengthen the need for these men to preach.

Another example, is found in the familiar language of Revelation 20:2–7 about Christ being revealed from heaven, who will reign on earth for a thousand years (see also Moses 7:64–65). This instruction is used in D&C 29:11, and again shows how these revelations combined scriptural scenes to motivate action.

Finally, the description of a trumpet blown in Zion on the day of the Lord when the earth shakes, which is taken from Joel 2:1 and is used in D&C 29:13. Joel was not the only scriptural reference used by Joseph Smith to produce motivation for the people to preach, gather, and prepare for the day of the Lord, however, it was among the primary texts that were utilized time and time again in sermons and revelations produced by Joseph Smith. This additional scripture

233 See JSP, D4:15. While this reference to “gather” appears to originate from a Joel 2:32 scenario, the earlier references to gathering found in this section more closely resemble other scriptural passages like Matthew 23:37 (see also Luke 13:34; 3 Nephi 10:4–6) as in D&C 29:2. And in D&C 29:7 the call to gather resembles Matthew 24:31 (JS—M 1:27, 37) and Moses 7:62. It seems that Joseph’s revelation is bringing multiple scriptural uses of the term gather to reiterate the need for these Elders to “declare [Christ’s] gospel” (D&C 29:4).
combined together in a revelation expanded the meaning of Joel and motivated individuals to go out and preach and gather followers.

Just two months later in a brief revelation for Orson Pratt, Joseph Smith again dictated a revelation about the “great day at the time of [Christ’s] coming,” This revelation again alludes to events similar or identical to those found in Joel:

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<th>Doctrine and Covenants 34:9</th>
<th>Joel 2:31</th>
<th>Revelation 6:12–13</th>
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<td>9 But before that great day shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood; and the stars shall refuse their shining, and some shall fall, and great destructions await the wicked.</td>
<td>31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.</td>
<td>12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.</td>
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This revelation is parallel to D&C 29, in that a call to preach and gather is extended to Orson Pratt (34:5–6). That call is followed by instruction that the return of Jesus Christ would be soon, and that before that day, the signs of Joel would need to be fulfilled. Many of the other biblical illusions that are found in D&C 29 are not found in this revelation, however, Joel’s prophetic signs are still preserved. Just as in the revelation before, the portion of Joel that alluded to in this quote acts as a literary device to motivate Orson in his efforts to preach and gather. This is the third quotation where the specific language of Revelation talking about the stars falling from heaven are combined with specific Joel language like before the great day of the Lord comes. It seems that Joseph Smith combines these references together each time he speaks of a blood moon, which infers that Joseph Smith saw Joel 2:31 and Revelation 6:12–13 as the same prophecy. While this specific connection to Joel is not unique to Joseph Smith in his time period, the use of these passages together as a strong motivator to preach and gather is unique.
Just four months later on March 7, 1831 Joseph dictated another lengthy revelation including apocalyptic signs like those found in Joel, which would precede the coming of Christ. On this occasion, Joseph’s revelation claimed to be patterned after the sermon that was shared by Jesus Christ to his disciples the week he was killed (see Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and JS—M), “I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them, saying: As ye have asked of me concerning the signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of heaven, to fulfil the promises that I have made unto your fathers” (D&C 45:16).

There are many differences between the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ sermon on the signs of the times. There are also several differences with this revelation received by Joseph Smith. Although scholars have often linked the sun being darkened and the moon being turned to blood in Joel 2:31 with Matthew 24:29, D&C 45:40–44 clearly borrows more phrases and themes from Joel then any of the other accounts biblical accounts.

The comparison shown in the table below illustrates that the fulfillment of Joel’s words played a great role in Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation. Furthermore, the addition of several details from Joel 2:28–32 give further insight into how Joseph Smith saw the fulfillment of certain aspects of Joel’s prophecy. The combination of these biblical signs and events as shown in this revelation demonstrate the chronology of events that Joseph believed would come. This supports the first and third points of this thesis. The first because this revelation reaffirms that fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 was still in the future. The third point because the comments on the remnant being gathered produce new insight for how one receives the promises of Joel’s prophecy.
|--------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 40 And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.  
41 And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke.  
42 And before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fall from heaven.  
43 And the remnant shall be gathered unto this place;  
44 And then they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off. | 30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.  
31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.  
32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. | 29 ¶ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:  
30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.  
31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. | 24 ¶ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,  
25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.  
26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and glory.  
27 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. | 24 …and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.  
25 ¶ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;  
26 Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.  
27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.  
28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. |

234 “Vapors of smoke” is the same terminology used by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:19). This is the only known occasion when Joseph Smith’s teachings or revelations copied this portion of Joel’s prophecy (see Joel 2:30).

235 Joseph claimed that Moroni taught the fulfillment of the “fullness of the Gentiles” (JS—H 1:41) in similar terms as the fulfillment of Joel, and as mentioned previously the two appeared to be tied together. Although a clear quotation of Joel 2:28–32 is not found in Luke 21, when paired with this sister-passage conveying the same sermon, Luke’s teaching on the “times of the Gentiles” appears to be related to other passages like D&C 45:40–44 that does specifically quote from Joel. This coincidental evidence appears to support Joseph Smith’s linking of the two prophesies in JS—H 1:41, though a direct connection cannot be claimed.
In this revelation, the message places special focus on “the remnant” being gathered to a specific place. Joseph conveyed a similar interpretation of Joel in his 1834 sermon following his reading of Joel 2 and also in his 1837 council to determine what to do in Missouri. Joseph’s teachings and revelations consistently teach a fulfillment of Joel’s words including a specific gathering of Church members who will receive deliverance from destructive forces. Each time this gathering is taught alongside Joel’s prophecy, the completion of the gathering precedes the coming of the Lord as seen above. Thus the expanded idea relating to Joel has to do with the importance of gathering. While Joel 2:32 emphases the idea of the deliverance that would come, Joseph Smith’s teachings and revelations emphasize the gathering, which must precede the deliverance.

In the following year on December 27–28th 1832, Joseph Smith gave another revelation to a group of High Priests on the subject of building the kingdom. The clear emphasis of this revelation was on missionary work for the purpose of gathering. These brothers were taught that the Lord “sent [them] out to testify and warn the people,” because “it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor” (D&C 88:81). These men were now instructed to “tarry” so that they could “be perfected in [their] ministry to go forth among the Gentiles” (D&C 88:84) in order that, “their souls may escape the wrath of God” (D&C 88:85). In this context, Joseph again appears to quote either Joel 2:31 or Revelation 6:12–13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctrine and Covenants 88:87</th>
<th>Joel 2:31</th>
<th>Revelation 6:12–13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87 For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves</td>
<td>31 <em>The sun shall</em> be turned into darkness, and <em>the moon</em> into <em>blood</em>, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.</td>
<td>12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and <em>the moon</em> became as <em>blood</em>; 13 And <em>the stars</em> of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a <em>fig tree</em> casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This passage aligns more closely with Revelation 6:12–13 than the earlier citations given. It is unclear if Joseph was thinking of Revelation 6:12–13 or Joel 2:31, however, previous citations convey a marriage of details from both verses and it is possible that Joseph connected the two in his mind each time he received these revelations.

Similar to D&C sections 29 and 34 the invitation surrounding this verse was to go and preach so that those who would listen and accept the invitation to gather could avoid the judgments of God that would come in many forms as listed in D&C 88:88–91. It was the call to preach and gather to avoid the destructive elements enumerated and suggested in Joel’s prophecy, as well as, Revelation 6:12–13. What this revelation also did was place the responsibility to preach on the shoulders of Church members in the face of the ensuing destructions that would come. Hence, this is another example of how Joseph taught the signs from Joel’s prophecy as a motivator for his followers to gather.

Six months following this revelation (D&C 88), which culminated in a commandment to build a temple (see D&C 88:119), Joseph gave further insight about why a temple was needed, by quoting from Joel 2:28. Previous to D&C 95 the nascent Church struggled to do what the Lord had asked in the previous section and had not started working on building a temple. This revelation came as a chastisement and a recommitment for them to build a temple in Kirtland Ohio. In correcting the saints, Joseph’s dictation included one significant reason why it was to be built:

236 This use of familiar language in this passage clearly resembles Revelation more than Joel as found in the other passages found above. In this case, Joseph’s words could represent either Joel or Revelation or it could be molding the two together and combining it with the focus of this revelation to preach the gospel. The specific application is not entirely known.
Joseph Smith taught in 1834 that Joel’s prophecy would be fulfilled as the righteous were gathered out from the Gentiles into specific physical locations. This revelation expands the cause and effect relationship Joseph Smith taught just a year earlier to include the construction of a temple. In Joseph’s revelation above, building a temple appears to be required before the Lord could pour out his Spirit upon all flesh and fulfill the prophecy of Joel. This relationship with the prophecy of Joel is unprecedented. Not only had Christians at large considered this prophecy fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in AD 33, there is no evidence that I can find among Joseph’s contemporaries where the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 was dependent upon parameters like gathering and building a temple so that God could pour out his Spirit on all flesh.

In the first section of this chapter on two occasions Joseph spoke about the Spirit being poured out on members of the Church as foretold by Joel, but Joseph’s revelation conveys that a much larger audience would need to receive the outpouring for completion of the prophecy. The majority of scholars conclude that the fulfillment of the Spirit being poured out on “all flesh” in Joel 2:28 refers only to Israel and would happen only in Jerusalem and the surrounding region. Mention of “all flesh,” which is unique to Joel’s prophecy, in this revelation conveys that Joseph believed in a larger fulfillment of Joel’s words because Joseph Smith and his followers were not Jews and they were not living in Jerusalem. “All flesh” most likely meant everyone to the American prophet, or at least this is who this phrase appears to apply too. This is another example of how Joseph’s revelations expanded the meaning of Joel’s prophecy to include a

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larger number of people in the fulfillment of “all flesh” than Christians and scholars had previously believed.

These passages in the Doctrine and Covenants placed Joel 2:28–32 promises in specific restoration contexts: such as the establishment of Zion and the building of the temple. These passages and the key quotations given earlier were not the only sources that demonstrated Joseph’s fascination with the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. There are other allusive quotations and the use of themes that have varying degrees of evidence connecting them with Joel 2. While these allusions and connections of themes that are found in Joel 2 are not independently as clear as the examples above, these examples which have already been shared strengthen the allusive evidence that Joseph Smith differed in his teachings of Joel by (1) reaffirming that Joel 2:28–32 had not yet been fulfilled, (2) teaching signs from Joel’s prophecy as a motivator to gather and build Zion welcoming in an ongoing fulfillment as they did so, and (3) using additional revelation and commentary to expand the meaning of Joel.

Allusive Connections to Joel and the use of Parallel Themes

“I Will Pour Out My Spirit Upon All Flesh” (Joel 2:28)

Joel’s prophecy promised that the day would come when God would “pour out [his] spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28) resulting in prophecy, prophetic dreams, and visions. The idea of God pouring out his spirit upon individuals or a limited group of people such as only members of the House of Israel is not unique to Joel biblically, however, modern scholars agree that Joel’s application of that spirit being poured out on “all flesh” is entirely unique.238

238 See page 11, footnote 26 for terra firma sources that all agree to this point, for example, Assis, The Book of Joel, 202.
And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;

Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon created additional quotations similar to Joel 2:28. These Book of Mormon references speak of three different types of outpourings. (1) Examples of an individual asking that the Lord would pour out his Spirit such as when Alma the Elder baptized Helam in Mosiah 18:12, “And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart” (see also Alma 8:10 for an example of Alma the Younger’s prayer for the city of Ammonihah). (2) Examples of an individual or group who had received an outpouring of the Lord’s Spirit, such as when Jacob debated a man named Sherem who denied the existence of Christ. “But behold, the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul, insomuch that I did confound him in all his words” (Jacob 7:8, see also Mosiah 4:20; Mosiah 25:24; Alma 16:16, 19:36; and Helaman 6:36). (3) The sole
example in the Book of Mormon that Jesus Christ himself prophesied of a time when the Father would pour out his Spirit upon the Gentiles, “And after that ye were blessed then fulfillleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed—unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel” (3 Nephi 20:27). While the majority of these Book of Mormon references give examples of people asking or receiving an outpouring of the Spirit, the majority of Old Testament references refer to a future time period when the Spirit will be poured out upon Israelites.

This multiplicity of references on the outpouring of the Spirit makes it difficult to know if and when Joseph Smith may have been referring to an outpouring of the Spirit on him and other Church members as a reflection of Joel or another Bible passage or Book of Mormon passage. Joseph’s style of writing in his journal reflects more closely the way Book of Mormon writers claimed an outpouring of the Spirit, in that he is recording experiences when the Lord poured out his Spirit upon them. However, in the first section of this chapter on two different occasions he directly associated similar outpourings of the Spirit as being part of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Additionally, the fulfillment of God pouring out his Spirit would result in visions, dreams, and men and women prophesying. These gifts are found in abundance in the examples below, which may reflect more strongly an allusive connection to Joel rather than other scriptural examples.

6 April, 1830, “The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree. Some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord and rejoiced exceedingly.”

239 Those two examples were when Sister Knight had a prophetic dream, which happened hours later; and when Joseph read Joel 2 and then relayed the several ways the Spirit had been poured out upon members of the Church since its organization (see JSP, H1:416; see also ).
240 JSP, H1:336. An earlier account of this same occasion described the scene this way: “We then laid our hands on each individual member of the Church present, to confirm them members of the Church of Jesus Christ, and that
1 June 1830: “On the first day of June 1830, we held our first conference as an organized Church. Our numbers were about thirty, beside whom, many assembled with us…. Much exhortation and instruction was given; and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon us in a miraculous manner many of our number propheced, whilst others had the Heavens opened to their view, and were so over come that we had to lay them on beds, or other convenient places…. Such scenes as these were calculated to inspire our hearts with joy unspeakable, and fill us with awe and reverence for that Almighty Being, by whose grace we had been called to be instrumental in bringing about for the children of men, the enjoyment of such glorious blessings as were now at this time poured out upon us.241

August 1830: “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen (D&C 27:18).

August 1830: “We partook together of the sacrament, after which we confirmed these two sisters into the church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, we praised the Lord God, and rejoiced exceedingly.242

September 1830: “Conference at length assembled…. We now partook of sacrament— confirmed and ordained many, and attended to a great variety of Church business— on, that and the following day. During which time we had much of the power of God manifested, The Holy Ghost poured out upon us and obtained the following revelations”243

22–23 January 1833: “Conference opened with prayer by the President, after prayer the President spake in an unknown Tongue he was followed by Br Zebede Coltrin and he by Bro William Smith after this the gift was poured out in a miraculous manner until all the Elders obtained the gift together with several of the members of the Church both male & female Great and glorious were the divine manifestation of the Holy Spirit, Praises were sang to God & the Lamb besides much speaking & praying all in tongues.”244

21 April 1834: “He then gave a relation of obtaining and translating the Book of Mormon, the revelation of the priesthood of Aaron, the organization of the Church in the year 1830, the revelation of the high priesthood, and the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the church, &c.”245
27 September 1835: “I attended meeting. Elders Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball Preached, and broke bread. The Lord poured out his spirit and my soul was edified.”\textsuperscript{246}

16 October 1835: “Robinson Baptized. Friday 16th. was called into the printing office to settle some difficulties in that department, at evening I baptized Ebenezer Robinson. The Lord poured out his spirit on us and we had a good time.”\textsuperscript{247}

25 October 1835: “At evening I attended prayer–meeting, opened it, and exhorted the brethren and sisters about one hour. The Lord poured out his Spirit and some glorious things were spoken in the gift of tongues and interpreted, concerning the redemption of Zion.”\textsuperscript{248}

7 January 1836: “Our meeting was opend by singing and prayer, the Bishops father & mother were bless[ed], and several others with a patriarchal blessing. We then received a bountiful refreshment furnished by the liberality of the Bishop; the company was large and respectable. Before we parted the Lord poured out his spirit upon us in mighty power, and some of the songs of Zion were sung, and our hearts were made glad while partaking of an antipast of those joys that will be poured upon the heads of the saints when they are gathered together upon mount Zion, to enjoy eachothers society forever; even all the blessings of heaven and earth, where there will be none to molest or make us afraid.”\textsuperscript{249}

One may argue that these citations do not contain enough specific language in Joel to reflect commentary on Joel’s prophecy, however, it is possible that Joseph Smith may be eluding to experiences that proved an ongoing fulfillment as specifically and clearly stated in other citations given above. If these references do reflect Joseph Smith’s belief that fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy would be seen as the saints gathered and built a temple, it would be another evidence of the second point of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{246} HC 2:283 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, History, 1838–1856, B–1, 610).
\textsuperscript{247} HC 2:290 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, History, 1838–1856, B–1, 629).
\textsuperscript{248} HC 2:292 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, History, 1838–1856, B–1, 629-630).
\textsuperscript{249} JSP, H1:168–169 (see also HC 2:362–363).
“The Sun Shall be Turned Into Darkness, and the Moon Into Blood, Before the Great and the Terrible Day of the Lord Come” (Joel 2:31)

As mentioned previously Joseph Smith reaffirmed a future fulfillment of this portion of Joel in a sermon given in 1834. Five of the six references from the Doctrine and Covenants (dictated between 1830–32), which show strong evidence that they are quoting Joel’s prophecy, also speak of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood. As stated previously, the evidence of these citations conveys a connection between Joel 2:31 and Revelation 6:12–13 by Joseph Smith’s revelations and 1834 sermon. In light of this background, there were several other occasions when Joseph Smith spoke in similar ways about the moon being turned to blood. In all of these occasions, found below, Joseph uses this sign to motivate his followers to prepare for the final desolations and destructions prior to the Second Coming of Christ, and as a motivation to gather together, build up Zion, and construct temples.

For example, in March of 1839 Joseph and his fellow captors penned a letter from Liberty Jail that included this sign.250 Joseph wrote,

Dearly and beloved Brethren we see that perilous times have come,251 as was testified of, we may look then with most perfect assurance for the rolling in of all those things that have been written, and with more confidence than ever before, lift up our eyes to the luminary of day and say in our hearts, soon thou wilt vail thy blushing face, he that said let there be light,252 and there was light, hath spoken this word. and again thou moon, thou dimmer light, thou luminary of night shall turn to blood, we see that every thing is fulfilling, and the time shall soon come, when the Son of Man shall descend in the clouds of heaven,253 our hearts do not shrink neither are our Spirits altogether broken, at the grievous yoke which is put upon us. 254

250 Other portions of that letter became the text found in D&C 121–123.
251 “perilous times” is a phrase most likely borrowed from 2 Timothy 3:1.
252 See Genesis 1:3
253 This portion of Joseph’s quote may be patterned after Daniel 7:13, Matthew 24:30, or D&C 45:44. D&C 45:40–44 uses a lot of Joel language as shown earlier.
254 HC 3:291 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org. JS, History, 1838–1856, C-1, 901–902, March 20, 1839 emphasis added). When Joseph writes “the rolling in of all those things that have been written,” and then uses biblical language to describe certain signs, he is referring to either Joel 2:31 or Revelation 6:12–13, which were likely connected in his mind, anyway. This letter invited the saints to look forward to the fulfillment of biblical signs, potentially including Joel’s prophecy about the sun and the moon, which would precede the return of Jesus Christ.
Later in this same letter Joseph wrote:

Men profess to prophecy. I will prophecy that the signs of the coming of the Son of Man are already commenced,— One pestilence will desolate after another— we shall soon have War and Bloodshed. The moon will be turned to Blood— I testify of these things and that the coming of the Son of Man is nigh even at your doors,— If our souls and our bodies are not looking forth for the coming of the Son of Man and after we are dead if we are not looking forth &c we shall be among those who are calling for the rocks to fall upon us &c— The hearts of the children of men will have to be turned to the Fathers and the Fathers to the children living or dead, to prepare them for the coming of the son of man. 255

Another example comes from 1843, near the end of Joseph’s life, when he wrote a letter directly challenging the claims of Hiram Redding that he had “seen the signs of the son of man in heaven, as foretold in the 24th of Matt.” Joseph wrote in response that Mr. Redding

has not seen the sign of the son of man, as foretold by Jesus; neither has any man, nor will any man, till after the sun shall been darkened and the moon bathed in blood, for the Lord hath not shown me any such sign, and, as the prophet saith, so it must be: Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. (See Amos 3:7). Therefore, hear this, O earth, the Lord will not come to reign over the righteous, in this world, in 1843, nor until everything for the bridegroom is ready.256

The last example occurred less than two months later in a conference held on April 6, 1843, Joseph Smith spoke about the specific timing of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Joseph announced that he had once been “praying earnestly upon this subject, and a voice said unto me, ‘My Son if thou livest until thou are 85 years of age, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man.’” Not knowing if this referred to the date of the Second Coming or some other

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255 HC 3:390 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, History, 1838–1856, C-1, July, 1839, 12 addenda, emphasis added). Similar to examples shared about the blood moon prophecy would precede the coming of Christ as mentioned in Joel 2:31. Additional biblical language from Matthew 24 is also present in this quotation.

256 HC 5:291 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, Letter, [Nauvoo, Hancock Co., IL], to the editor of Times and Seasons, Nauvoo, Hancock Co., IL, 28 Feb. 1843; Times and Seasons, 1 Mar. 1843, 113. Letter written 28 Feb. 1843. Mr. Redding resided in Illinois. When Mr. Redding originally made his claim the editor of The Chicago Express directed his statement at Joseph Smith stating, “‘that Jo Smith has his match at last’” (HC 5:291). This example may be tied to Matthew 24:30 rather than Joel 2:31 because Mr. Redding’s claim comes directly out of Matthew 24, however, the sign of the moon being bathed in blood more closely resembles Joel 2:31 than Matthew 24:30. While again, the relationship between Matthew 24:30 and Joel 2:31 in Joseph’s mind is not clearly known, a conclusive opinion on Joseph’s use of a blood moon here cannot be reached. D&C 45:40–44 is the only evidence that Joel 2:28–32 are linked with Matthew 24:30, but that link is only alluded to in the revelation.
revelation, “I was left to draw my own conclusions concerning this,” wrote Joseph, “and I took the liberty to conclude, that if I did live to that time, he would make his appearance; but I do not say whether he will make his appearance, or I shall go where he is.” Although Joseph still wasn’t certain when the Second Coming was he continued to explain:

The coming of the Son of Man never will be, never can be ’till the judgements spoken of, for this hour, are poured out, which judgements are commenced. … Judah must return, Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the Temple, and water come out from under the Temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed: It will take some time to build the walls of the City and the Temple &c. and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make his appearance. There will be wars and rumors of wars, signs in the heavens above, and on the Earth beneath; the Sun turned into darkness and the moon to blood; earthquakes in divers places, the Seas heaving beyond their bounds; then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in Heaven  

The previous examples of Joseph Smith teaching the blood moon sign looming in the future as of 1843, but before the sign of the coming of the Son of Man and the return of Jesus Christ are consistent with his revelations in D&C 29:14; 34:9; 45:42; and 88:87. Some have confused Joseph Smith’s use of this sign by combining it with his revelations and mentions of a different sign when the moon will be darkened during the sign of the coming of the Son of Man or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (See 2 Nephi 23:10; D&C 133:49; and JS—M 1:33).

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257 HC 5:337 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org. JS History, 1838–1856, D–1, 1519–1520. April 6, 1843, emphasis added). This quote displays a conglomeration of biblical signs that preceded the day of the Lord, including an allusion to either Joel’s prophecy about the sun and moon or an allusion to Revelation 6:12–13. The sign of the Son of Man is most likely a reference to Matthew 24:30. Additionally, these quotations consistently show that Joseph Smith believed that fulfillment of these biblical had “commenced” or began as seen in the quotation above. This thought aligns with other quotes when Joseph spoke specifically about the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. Joseph’s sermons and revelations also align with biblical scripture. See Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20; and Rev. 6:12–13 for all the references to the sign where the moon turns to blood prior to the Second Coming of Christ or day of the Lord. There is no mention of a blood moon at or after the Second Coming in biblical scripture.

258 For example, John Tvedtnes, in his article on plagiarism, quoted several of the scripture citations with a darkened moon and blood moon as if prophets were all speaking of the same prophecy. Tvedtnes tried to refer to these citations as moments when individuals quoted the content but did not give attribution, however, in the context of the passages he cited prophetic authors were clearly not all speaking of the same sign (“Was Joseph Smith Guilty of Plagiarism?” Farms Review, vol. 22, no. 1 (2010)), 267–270. Joseph Smith always conveyed a blood moon sign as coming before the Second Coming and he also conveyed a darkened moon for the actual return of Jesus to the earth or the sign of the coming of the Son of Man. The confusion in these signs, most likely comes from their similarities. In nearly every case the blood moon is accompanied with the darkening of the sun and stars. A darkened moon is also accompanied with the darkening of the sun and stars. The blood moon becomes a key identifier for the two different prophecies. The context in every case agrees with the separation of these prophecies as found in the
Although the sign of the moon being darkened is shared by several Old Testament prophets—like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Joel—Joel is the only Old Testament prophet that prophesies the blood moon sign. John is the only New Testament author that identifies the same sign in Revelation 6:12–13. Joel specifically placed the sign “before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come” (Joel 2:31). While it is clear that Joel, John, and Joseph Smith saw this event occurring before the day of the Lord, Joseph Smith believed that the event still hadn’t happened as of 1843.

Joseph Smith viewed the blood moon mentioned in Joel’s prophecy as a future event, which would occur before Christ’s return. One may ask why Joseph Smith would focus more on this aspect of the vision then other aspects of the prophecy. The answer to this question is unclear, however, when Joseph Smith utilized the blood moon in his sermons, publications, and in his revelations, regardless of whether it was specifically attributed to Joel or not, his teachings consistently conveyed three things. First, the sign would occur before the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, as well as, the coming of the Son or Man. This supports the point of this thesis that Joseph believed that Joel’s prophecy had not yet been fulfilled. Second, it marked a point in the future when Church members needed to be gathered together to Zion or a remnant, before destructions and desolations would be poured out on the wicked all over the world. Third, it was always given as a sign for his followers to look for as they performed the essential operations of preaching, gathering, and building up places of Zion, which supports the second overall point of this thesis. It was probably the desire of Joseph Smith to have his followers perform this third implication that led him to quote this portion of the prophecy more than others.

teachings of Joseph Smith. This confusion has led to an overgeneralization that Joel’s prophecy is a millennial prophecy associated directly with the Second Coming (see JSP, D4:13). See Matthew 24:29; Isaiah 13:9–10; Isaiah 24:23; Ezekiel 32:7–8; Joel 2:10; 3:15; Amos 5:18, 20 for all biblical references that share the sign of the moon being darkened. All of these instances include the sign associated with the sign of the coming of the Son of Man or the Second Coming of Christ (the day of the Lord).
Because these three themes are present in almost every example of Joseph Smith referring to a blood moon, both when it was attributed to Joel and when it was not, it is likely that Joel 2:31 and Revelation 6:12–13 were the same prophecy in the mind of Joseph.

Furthermore, from the evidence of the extant teachings we have, Joseph probably cared more about teaching the sign as a precursor to destructions and the return of Christ then he did about exegetically unfolding a cohesive teaching or interpretation of the passage Joel 2:28–32.260

260 When comparing Joseph Smith’s teachings of this prophecy with Martin Luther and John Calvin’s commentaries in Chapter One, Luther and Calvin appear to state their position more clearly and concisely, as you would find in a biblical commentary. All three religious figures show their beliefs and biases through their teachings on Joel 2:28–32, but Joseph Smith’s is scattered and combined with different biblical passages than these other more exegetical examples.
Chapter 5:
Other Mormon Leaders on Joel 2:28–32

Joseph Smith’s revelations, sermons, and published materials were not the only evidences that Joel 2:28–32 was being taught differently than in other Christian religions. Other church members and leaders also wrote about the prophecy and its significance in their conversion to the LDS Church and their subsequent spiritual experiences. The evidences these other leaders shared align with the interpretation and uses Joseph Smith displayed in the previous chapter. The examples in this chapter highlight the belief early Latter-day Saints had, that they were observing the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy as they experienced and saw the reception of prophecy, dreams, and visions. They also felt that fulfillment came in their observations of celestial signs in the heavens. Each example focused on different events and aspects of the Church and show that there was not one specific moment or event that fulfilled Joel’s prophecy. Rather, these men believed they were living in a time of fulfillment with a variety of signs and wonders all around them.

In 1835 Joseph’s good friend and the primary scribe for the translation of the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery attempted to write a faithful comprehensive history of the rise of the Church in eight letters to W. W. Phelps to be published.\textsuperscript{261} Although these letters were written by Oliver, the majority of their content, four entire letters,\textsuperscript{262} is focused on divulging Joseph’s personal experiences with the angel Moroni on the night of 21 September 1823. Since Oliver was not in attendance for that sacred occasion, the information included in the letters was most likely

\textsuperscript{261} “I will hereafter give you a full history of the rise of this church” (\textit{JSP}, H1:44). Letter 1, Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, written 7 September 1834 in Norton Ohio. The letters spanned from September 1834 to October 1835 (see \textit{JSP}, H1:38–89).
\textsuperscript{262} \textit{JSP}, H1:54–79. Letters 4–7 of Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, February–July 1835.
obtained from his good friend the Prophet. 263 These letters contain several more details than
Joseph’s official history published eight years later. Though Cowdery does not treat individual
biblical passages on the basis of simply fulfilled or not fulfilled like Joseph does in his later
history, Cowdery interweaves many scriptural passages in his relation of “the conversation of the
angel” 264 including excerpts from Joel 2:28–32. Throughout his re–construction of the angelic
sermon, Cowdery did not give attribution for the majority of biblical references he included, as
was common in that day, 265 however, he does use direct phrases from Joel throughout his letters.
For example:

In the last days, to fulfill the promises to the ancient prophets, when the Lord is to
pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, he has determined to bring to light his gospel, to the
Gentiles, that it may go to the house of Israel. (quoting Joel 2:28) 266

…he will bring to the knowledge of the people the gospel, as it was preached by
his servants on this land, and manifest to the obedient the truth of the same, by the power
of the Holy Spirit; for the time is near when his sons and daughters will prophesy, old
men dream dreams, and young men see visions, and those who are thus favored will be
such as embrace the gospel as it was delivered in old times, and they shall be blessed with
signs following. (quoting Joel 2:28) 267

Most clearly was it shown to the prophets, that the righteous should be gathered
from all the earth: He knew that the children of Israel were led from Egypt, by the right
hand of the Lord, and permitted to possess the land of Canaan, though they were
rebellious in the desert but he farther knew, that they were not gathered from the east, the
west, the north and the south, at that time; for it was clearly manifested that the Lord
himself would prepare a habitation, even as he said, when he would lead them to a city of
refuge In that, David saw a promise for the righteous, when they should be delivered
from those who oppressed them, and from the hand of strange children, or the enemies of
the Lord; that their sons should be like plants grown up in their youth, and their daughters
like corner–stones, polished after the similitude of a beautiful palace. It is then that the

263 Cowdery worked for months with Joseph to record the translation of the Book of Mormon. They also
experienced the restoration of the priesthood in May 1829 and baptized one another. While Oliver Cowdery could
have gleaned some of the details from Joseph’s family, it is more likely that the unique details shared in this lengthy
account of the Angel Moroni’s visit came from Joseph to Oliver Cowdery.

264 JSP, H1:73. Letter 7, Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, July 1835.

265 “The critics typically apply twentieth– and twenty–first–century standards and norms to the time of Joseph Smith
to demonstrate that he was a ‘false prophet.’ In his day, newspapers frequently reprinted articles published in other
newspapers, sometimes with attribution and sometimes without. Latter–day Saint publications borrowed from other
periodicals and vice versa” (John A. Tvedtnes, “Was Joseph Smith Guilty of Plagiarism?” Farms Review, vol. 22,

266 JSP, H1:63. Letter 5, Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, March 1835.

267 JSP, H1:63–64.
sons and daughters shall prophesy, old men dream dreams, and young men see visions. (quoting Joel 2:28)\textsuperscript{268}

Therefore, as the time draws near when the sun is to be darkened, the moon turned to blood, and the stars fall from heaven, the Lord will bring to the knowledge of his people his commandments and statutes, that they may be prepared to stand when the earth shall reel to and fro as a drunken man, earthquakes cause the nations to tremble, and the destroying angel goes forth to waste the inhabitation at noon–day: for so great are to be the calamities which are to come upon the inhabitants of the earth, before the coming of the Son of Man the second time, that whoso is not prepared cannot abide; but such as are found faithful, and remain, shall be gathered with his people and caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds, and so shall they inherit eternal life. (quoting Joel 2:31, Rev. 6:12–13)\textsuperscript{269}

Cowdery’s pen reveals some insights into how fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel would come. The first quotation highlighted the role of the gentiles in the “last days,” who would receive the gospel and then take it to the House of Israel so Joel’s words could be fulfilled. The second quotation taught that the full effects of this prophecy had not arrived, “for the time is near,” but it would be a fruit of the gospel as it went forth among individuals who would “embrace the gospel” and be “obedient.” The third quotation showed that Cowdery held that the prophesies, dreams, and visions would come after “the righteous should be gathered.” The fourth quotation closely resembles earlier revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants 45:40–44 and 88:87, which blend together phrases from Isaiah, Joel, and Revelation. This last quotation again, uses the signs and destructions as a motivator to gather and prepare for the Second Coming.

\textsuperscript{268} JSP, H1:66. Letter 6, April 1835.
\textsuperscript{269} JSP, H1:70. See also Doctrine and Covenants 29:14; 45:40–43; 88:87 (hereafter cited ‘D&C’), which in context and content also appears to be the Lord quoting Joel 2:31. Though these quotations from the revelations of Joseph Smith predate the authorship of Cowdery’s letters to W. W. Phelps, here Phelps is trying to relay the message delivered by the Angel Moroni, which came years prior to any of these revelations. Note that all three revelations add the detail about the stars falling from heaven. Modern scholarship has also failed to distinguish between this sign and that of the sun, moon, and stars not giving their light at the return of the Lord, as taught by Joseph Smith and contained in the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Mormon (see 2 Ne. 23:10 and D&C 133:19 compared against D&C 29:14; 34:9; 45:42; and 88:87). Joel’s sign comes “before the great and terrible day of the Lord,” while other passages detail the sun hiding its face in comparison to the glory of the Lord at his coming (Matt. 24:29; Isa. 13:9–10; 24:23; Ezek. 32:7–8; Joel 2:10; and 3:15). In both ancient and modern scripture there is a clear contextual difference between the two.
The first major gathering of the Saints in Kirtland, resulted in several revelations including the location of what Joseph Smith called the New Jerusalem, the completion of the first temple, and a steadily growing Church membership that grew from tens to thousands in Ohio. There were many different reasons individuals and families were drawn to the Church. One common reason was what individuals felt as they personally studied the New Testament including Peter’s quotation of Joel 2:28–32 on the Day of Pentecost.

For example, John Corrill, who joined the LDS Church in January 1831, wrote of his search for truth prior to his conversion:

I found, on searching the Scriptures, that from the commencement of time, through every age, God continued to send prophets to the people, and always when God had a message for the people, he chose a special messenger to send it by…. Now, if God did these things formerly, why not now? … But I was told that the prophets continued until the Saviour came, but since that we have had no need of them. On searching the New Testament, I found that the church had prophets in it after Christ as well as before, and the Apostle said that God had placed them in it for its benefit. And the Apostle Peter, in explaining the prophecy of Joel, said, ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days,’ (saith God) ‘I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and on my handmaidens, I will pour out, in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophecy.’

Instead, therefore, of there being no prophets after Christ, it looked to me as if God meant there should be many; for the assertions are positive, ‘that your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,’ and this should be in the last days. Now, if the last days are past and gone, then we may give up looking for prophets; but if not, then the promise stands good for more prophets…”

Corrill saw the prophecy of Joel, renewed by the Apostle Peter, as apostolic instruction that he should look for prophets and multiple people prophesying. He concluded that “the person of Joseph Smith, jun’r., might as well be a prophet as any one else” on the basis that “it is well known to every man who is acquainted with his Bible, that God always endowed his prophets

270 JSP, H2:135–136 (John Corrill, A Brief History, 10). While Joseph Smith and some other Church leaders clearly focus on the Old Testament promises of Joel, many early comments shift gears and favor the New Testament renewal of the prophecy by Peter.

271 JSP, H2:136 (John Corrill, A Brief History, 11).
with the gift of prophecy, and through them revealed his will. As, however, God never called a
servant without having something for him to do, the question was what did he want with Smith?
What great work had he to perform?272 Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy helped propel
Corrill to investigate and join the Mormon faith. His observations of the faith in action told him
that these promises were ongoing in 1831.273

Just five years later Corrill would again link the events of the Church to the fulfillment of
this prophesy. Corrill was in Kirtland for the temple dedication and several of the experiences,
which followed. Of that experience and the ones that followed Corrill wrote:

> Every man’s mouth was ful of prophecyaying[sic], and for a number of days or
weeks, their time was spent in visiting from house to house, making feasts, prophecying,
and pronouncing blessings on each other, to that degree, that from the external
appearance, one would have supposed that the last days had truly come, in which the
spirit of the Lord was poured out upon all flesh, as far as the church was concerned; for
their sons and their daughters were full of prophecying.274

Corrill again saw fulfillment of this prophecy, not primarily through the original author’s word,
but through the New Testament quotation by Peter. Peter, not Joel, placed fulfillment of this
prophecy in “the last days,” and this experience marked “that from the external appearance, one
would have supposed that the last days had truly come,” or at least they had come from Corrill’s
perspective. Although, one may debate whether this quote accurately reflects the fulfillment of
Joel or not, Church members like Corrill interpreted their personal religion experiences as being
an ongoing fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, even if they linked it to Peter’s quotation of Joel,
rather than the original source.275

272 JSP, H2:136 (John Corrill, A Brief History, 11).
273 See JSP, H2:133–135 (John Corrill, A Brief History, 7–9).
274 JSP, H2:136 (John Corrill, A Brief History,).
275 While Joseph Smith often taught and portrayed Old Testament prophesies of the last days and apocalyptic signs
in his sermons, publications, and revelations, many of his followers who left other Christian faiths to join him
clearly preserved the New Testament lens over that of the Old Testament, as noted here by John Corrill and the
example that will follow.
Another individual motivated to investigate the Church through Peter’s quotation of Joel 2:28–32 was John Taylor—future president of the LDS Church. Remembering one point he had questioned a missionary on at the time of his conversion in 1831, he spoke:

I remember that on these points I questioned the Elder who brought the Gospel to me. I asked, What do you mean by this Holy Ghost? Will it cause your old men to dream dreams and your young men to see visions; will it bring to pass the scripture which saith: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy?

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘and if it will not, then I am an impostor.’ Said I, That is a very fair proposition. Finding the doctrine to be correct, I obeyed, and I received that Spirit through obedience to the Gospel which gave me a knowledge of those principles which I simply believed before, because they were scriptural, reasonable and intelligent….276

Like Corrill, Taylor searched for a faith that could produce the gifts of the Spirit recorded in the New Testament Church. He looked for the operations of the Spirit, which Peter taught through the promise of Joel. John Taylor found his answer within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Both Taylor and Corrill gave a portion of credit for their conversion to Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy. These two accounts are powerful examples of the motivation that Joel 2:28–32 (Acts 2:17–21) provided early members of the Church to join and live the gospel taught by the Prophet, Joseph Smith. Whether Joseph sensed the ability of this passage to motivate individuals, or felt inspired to focus some of his remarks on this prophecy and its promises, is unknown. However, the influence of his teachings led individuals to view the promises of Joel 2:28–32 as existing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in antebellum America.

On one occasion the Bishopric of Kirtland wrote a letter, which supported Joseph’s teachings of Joel as a motivator to gather and build up Zion. This letter further explained Joel’s

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prophecy by defining the group known as “remnant” in Joel 2:32 as “stakes.” Bishop Newel K. Whitney and his councilors Reynolds Cahoon and Vinson Knight signed this letter written to the Church and dated 10 September 1837. An excerpt from that letter reads:

The saints of God will rejoice in all that the Lord does, and in doing all that the Lord requires. The sacrifice of righteousness which the Lord requires will be offered with a willing heart, and ready mind, and with great joy, because they are counted worthy to offer up sacrifice for his name. In making this appeal to the benevolence of the saints of God, we do not only take into consideration the situation of the poor, the embarrassments of the stake of Kirtland; but also their own interests; for every saint has an equal interest in building up of the Zion of our God; for it is after the Lord has built up Zion, that he will appear in his Glory—Psalms—102:16. We all look for the appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ but we shall look in vain, until Zion is built; for Zion is to be the dwelling place of our God when he comes Joel 3:21. Any one who will read this Chapter with attention will see that it treats of the last days, and of the Zion of the last days. How then is the Lord to dwell in Zion, if Zion is not built up & this question we leave the Saints to answer.— The salvation of the Saints one and all depends on the building up of Zion; for without this there is no salvation; for deliverance in the last days is found in Zion, and in Jerusalem, and in the remnant whom the Lord our God shall call, or in other words, in the stakes which he shall appoint—Joel 2:32.277

This source specifically stated that Jesus could not come back until Zion is built, because that is where he will dwell when he returns. They reiterated the teachings of Joseph that deliverance in the last days would be found in three locations—Zion, Jerusalem, and the remnant. With this elucidated meaning of the remnant being any stake of the Church, multiple places of protection could be found on the earth for the poor and needy saints, with whom the Bishop is concerned for.278

Another example of early Church leaders who interpreted their experiences through the prophecy of Joel was Wilford Woodruff. On 25 January 1837 he recorded in his journal:

At early Candlelight the heavens began to show forth the signs in fulfillment of the Prophecy of JOEL recorded in the 2nd Chap 30th vers[e] of the Book of Joel. The clouds

277 HC 2:516 (See also JSP online at josephsmithpapers.org, JS, History, 1838–1856, B–1, 8 addenda, 17–18 September 1837, emphasis added). The quotation above is found in an appeal letter written by Newel K. Whitney, Reynolds Cahoon, and Vinson Knight and was dated 10 September 1837.

278 It is unclear where this expansion of defining a remnant as a stake came from. It may have been something Joseph taught or said on a different occasion that was not recorded. It may have been the Bishopric’s interpretation of these biblical passages, or revelation that may have come to the Bishopric.
of fire & blood began to arise in the N. E & reached unto the N. W which principally
covered the horizon. The reflection of the Clouds upon the earth which was covered with
Snow presented a vary red appearance. It commenced at 6 oclock & continued untill 10
or past <when the heavens were covered with pure red>.279

Joel 2:30 speaks generally of “wonders in the heavens and in the earth.” Woodruff viewed these
astronomical signs as part of the fulfillment of Joel. The passage was etched in his mind, when it
came to signs he observed in the heavenly skies. Six years later Woodruff observed a series of
signs from the “rays of Light” that “were in the form of a Broadsword” to a “half ring [that was]
hung from [two] Balls sumthing in the shape of a horse shoe extending outside of the first ring
with one line running through the centre of the moon”280 Woodruff wrote several comments in
his journal between March 10th and March 25th about these “signs in the heavens,” which led
Woodruff to conclude “that the signs that Joel & Jesus spoke of are making their appearance.”281

Whether these heavenly epiphanies were in actuality the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy or not is
unknown, however, Woodruff’s reliance on Joel’s prophecy in the years 1837 and 1843
demonstrate that Wilford Woodruff believed that the prophecy’s fulfillment had commenced and
that it would find fulfillment over a number of years, and in an array of experiences. This
conclusion aligns with Joseph’s statements on the prophecy, which ranged throughout his
ministry from 1830 to 1843.

These examples, demonstrate the attention and focus that the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28–32) received from the mouth Joseph Smith’s fellow Saints. John Taylor remembered the passage
as being a considerable reason for joining the Church that could provide modern fulfillment of it.
John Corrill also placed a lot of weight on a Church that could produce the effects of the passage,

279 Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1:123, emphasis added. Journal account was dated 25 January 1837.
280 Wilford Woodruff, Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript, vol. 2, editor Scott G. Kenney (Midvale,
281 Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 2:221.
and believed that at least partial fulfillment might have come through the experiences
surrounding the Kirtland Temple dedication. Oliver Cowdery referred to it several times in his
history about the start of the Church written in a series of letters to W. W. Phelps. Wilford
Woodruff wrote detailed accounts of those euphoric experiences, which he deemed part of the
fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32.

These examples also support the points of this thesis by, (1) showing that these converts
also believed that Joel 2:28–32 had not been fulfilled, but was being fulfilled in experiences they
were having, and (3) they expand the meaning of Joel beyond their Christian contemporaries by
defining a remnant as a stake of Zion as well as interpreting specific astronomical observances as
fulfillment of “wonders in the heavens” (Joel 2:30).
Conclusion

Millions of evangelical Christians in the antebellum era of the United States were tantalized with greater expectations of experiences with the Spirit, the occurrence of millennial and apocalyptic signs, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—all three of which are found in Joel 2:28–32. Due to this spike in general Evangelical Christian religiosity, which seemed to fade after only decades, scholars and historians have often grouped Joseph Smith and his teachings with this general change in the religious landscape of America.282 Under this lens many may be tempted to write off Joseph Smith’s interpretation of Joel 2:28–32 as merely a product of his time and the harsh external influences of life in western New York. However, the evidence throughout this thesis demonstrates that Joseph Smith differed significantly in his interpretation of Joel 2:28–32 in several ways.283

One of the major ways Joseph Smith differed from his evangelical Christian contemporaries was in his prescription of action. According to Smith, Joel’s prophecy could only receive fulfillment after church members preached, gathered Israel, and built up Zion and temples. On multiple occasions Joseph Smith taught that the fulfillment of this prophecy could not receive fulfillment until the Lord’s Latter–day Church preached, gathered, assembled, and built up Zion including a temple. In the earlier years of Joseph’s teachings, these prescriptions were first taught as a way for converts to avoid the destructions and desolations that would be

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282 See Engler, Fichte, and Scheiding, Millennial Thought in America, 31–32. See also Noll, America’s God, 182, 184;
283 In related studies such as Lynne H. Wilson, “Joseph Smith's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Contrasted with Cartwright, Campbell, Hodge, and Finney,” Unpublished Dissertation, Marquette University (2010) and also in Grant Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism, Latter–day Saint scholars thoroughly demonstrate how Joseph Smith varied from the contemporary upstarts of his time period in his beliefs and practices surrounding the Spirit and in his expectations for the arrival of the millennium to draw distinction from his contemporaries. Richard L. Bushman demonstrates similar distinctions (see Bushman, “The Visionary World of Joseph Smith”). The overgeneralization of scholars to define Joseph Smith as a mere product of his time finds similar discord with the findings of this study.
poured out upon the Saints. But as the years rolled on, Joseph Smith made it clear that these things must happen before God could send the final desolations and destructions upon the earth.

Not only did Joseph Smith teach that fulfillment would come as Saints acted on his vision of gathering and Zion building, but that individuals could witness the fulfillment of this prophecy in the experiences of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith specifically applied Sister Knights prophetic dream in 1830 as part of the fulfillment of Joel’s words, and he often spoke of the outpourings associated with the actions he prescribed. His followers also found their experiences as signs that the prophecy was being fulfilled. Wilford Woodruff interpreted miraculous shapes and lights in the night sky as fulfillment, and John Taylor discerned the promises in the prophesy as he observed the spiritual experiences found in the Church.

The extant materials found in this thesis demonstrate how Joseph Smith invited his followers to act. They also show his promises to his people that fulfillment of this prophecy would occur as they faithfully did so. Furthermore, the records left by other leaders of the early Church show that they similarly believed that fulfillment was ongoing throughout the early years of the Church. It shows how Joseph Smith held Joel’s prophecy as a primary source for the restoration of the Church he founded. These early Latter-day Saint leaders engaged Joel’s prophecy to a degree that did not exist in their contemporary evangelical teachings.

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284 See *JSP*, D4:15. This was a meeting of Elders in 1834. Joseph read Joel chapter 2 and spoke at length about the gathering that God would perform. Although his anxiety for the saints to preach and gather seemed to target their desires to avoid destruction, his language clearly demonstrates that Joseph believed God would perform this gathering before he sent destruction.

285 In D&C 95:4, Joseph dictated a revelation that stated that the Lord could not pour out his spirit upon all flesh until they had built a temple and held a solemn assembly within it (see D&C 95:7).

286 See *JSP*, H1:416 for Joseph Smith’s views on Sister Knights experience. Wilford Woodruff wrote about Joseph’s view of heavenly signs as part of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (see *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:221).

Alexander Campbell held to the tradition that fulfillment came in the days of the apostles and that believers might only experience the fruits of the Spirit. Other than his singular statement on the fulfillment of the prophecy, which he published twice, Campbell did not interact Joel’s prophecy as intimately as Joseph had. Although William Miller held to fulfillment at Pentecost, he also predicted an additional fulfillment that was occurring generally in his time-period. Unlike Smith he did not use this prophecy to prescribe actions that were found in Joel 2 preceding the prophecy like Joseph had. Other than convincing thousands of hopeful Christians to believe that the return of Christ would occur soon, his work did not produce anything close to a Church government, the construction of buildings and cities, and the temple worship and euphoria that Joseph Smith’s leadership achieved.

While many biblical commentaries taught different aspects of fulfillment for Joel’s prophecy, their teachings generally coincided with the evangelical highlights of their day including salvation by grace through prayer and millennial expectations. The commentaries only prescription was to pray for an outpouring and deliverance, and looked forward generally to the destructions that would immediately precede the return of Jesus Christ. They did not prescribe that Joel 2:28–32 would receive fulfillment as believers acted in the way that Joseph Smith advocated.

Another way Joseph Smith differed from his contemporaries was in what modern scholars would call his exegesis of Joel’s prophecy. Joseph Smith published statements of

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289 Joseph Smith’s exegesis of this prophecy is far different than exegetes that preceded and post-ceded him because the format of his scriptural interpretation is vastly different. For example, Martin Luther’s commentary on Joel’s prophecy presents his thoughts on the prophecy in one place (see chapter 1). Biblical commentaries from Joseph’s day renders interpretations of the passage the same way. Individuals like Alexander Campbell taught their insights about Joel’s prophecy and its effects on the day of Pentecostal in a single sermon. Joseph Smith on the other hand often taught this prophecy and the signs within it with other themes and topics. On some occasions, he addressed the entirety of the prophecy such as JS—H 1:41 and in an 1834 sermon, but on many other occasions he addressed specific portions of the prophecy and expounded upon their meanings and Latter-day implications. Joseph Smith seemed to care far more about the details of a sign or prophecy then he did attribution seeing as many of his
interpretation. These, he claimed, came from the mouth of an angel (see JS—H 1:41), and from the voice of the Lord (see D&C 29:14; 34:9; 45:40–43; 88:87; 95:4). In comparison to Alexander Campbell, William Miller, and other evangelical Christians, Joseph Smith also taught and wrote about Joel’s prophecy frequently throughout his years as prophet, adding to the insights he had shared previously. From these various sources, he ascribed as different forms of revelation, Joseph Smith associated fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy with other themes and teachings found in the Book of Joel, unlike all of his contemporaries. His teachings also demonstrated a cohesion and an application that is not adopted by any known contemporaries. These expressions of prophetic interpretation in the form of new scripture and revelation set Joseph Smith apart drastically.

In light of these differences, Joseph Smith distinctly taught an ongoing fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 in order to motivate members of the Church. Fulfillment of the prophecy was being experienced by Church members and it was occurring over many years. Joseph Smith always taught the signs of the prophecy as pre–Second Coming and premillennial. The outpouring of the Spirit would occur as members preached, gathered, and built temples to worship in; the moon would be turned to blood before Jesus came back to the earth; and people would need to gather in Jerusalem, Zion (in America), and the remnant (Stakes of Zion) all before the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31). There is no extant document known by the author, where Joseph Smith clearly declared the prophecy entirely fulfilled, and his record which accounts for the Angel Moroni’s instruction that it had “not been fulfilled, but soon would be” (JS—H 1:41) came after the dedication of the Kirtland temple and the series of solemn assemblies held within references lack attribution to Joel, however, there is consistency in the way he taught the different signs in Joel (see chapter 3). Though this makes study of his insights more difficult, it is clear that Joseph Smith specifically utilizes the specific language and signs of Joel on numerous occasions in a consistent and coherent way.
it. Thus, while many sources provide several of Joseph Smith’s insights to the prophecy, a complete understanding of the parameters of his definition of fulfillment is at this time entirely unknown.


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APPENDIX

The following tables show information regarding the relationships between biblical passages that were cross referenced to Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21 in Bibles produced during the Antebellum Era of the United States. These tables compliment the findings in chapter two of this thesis.

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| Ezekiel 11:19 | 3 |
| Genesis 49:1 | 2 |
| Isaiah 2:2 | 2 |
| Daniel 10:14 | 2 |
| Hosea 3:5 | 2 |
| Micah 4:1 | 2 |
| James 5:3 | 2 |
| Psalms 72:6 | 2 |
| Proverbs 1:23 | 2 |
| Isaiah 32:15–16 | 2 |
| Ezekiel 29:29 | 2 |
| Titus 3:3–6 | 2 |
| Genesis 6:12 | 2 |
| Psalms 65:2 | 2 |
| Isaiah 40:5 | 2 |
| Isaiah 49:26 | 2 |
| Isaiah 66:23 | 2 |
| Zechariah 2:13 | 2 |
| Luke 3:6 | 2 |
| John 17:2 | 2 |
| Acts 11:28 | 2 |
| 1 Corinthians 14:26–31 | 2 |
| Acts 21:4, 9–10 | 3 5 6 |
| 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28 | 1 2 5 |
| 1 Corinthians 7:21–22 | 2 |
| 1 Corinthians 14:1 | 2 |
| Galatians 3:28 | 2 |
| Colossians 3:11 | 2 |
| Joel 2:30–31 | 3 |
| Zephaniah 1:14–18 | 2 |
| Malachi 4:1–6 | 2 |
| Mark 13:24 | 11 |
| Matthew 24:29 | 8 |
| Luke 21:25 | 8 |
| 2 Peter 3:7, 10 | 5 |
| Isaiah 13:9–10, 13 | 2 |
| Isaiah 24:23 | 2 |
| Amos 8:9 | 2 |
| Matthew 27:45 | 2 |
| Revelation 6:12 | 2 |
| Revelation 16:8 | 2 |
| Isaiah 2:12–21 | 2 |
| Isaiah 34:8 | 2 |
| Joel 2:1 | 2 |
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### Table 4: Popular Cross References Shared in Joel and Acts

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