'Satan Mourns Naked upon the Earth': Locating Mormon Possession and Exorcism Rituals in the American Religious Landscape, 1830–1977

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Introduction

Joseph Smith believed in the Devil. His public ministry began with a dramatic case of possession and exorcism. The term translated "exorcism" in English comes from the Greek *exorkizō* (ἐξορκίζω) and means "to bind with an oath" or "to adjure" (e.g., 1 Thess. 5:27). From antiquity Christians have used the term to refer to rituals that drive evil spirits out of human beings. My use of the term in the context of Mormon ritual practice is potentially problematic and controversial and requires brief justification. "Exorcism" is something of a fraught term because, since the Middle Ages, it has been closely associated with the specific Roman Catholic ritual. Protestants typically use the term "deliverance" rather than "exorcism" in an effort to distance themselves from Catholic practice. Mormons have no term that is equivalent to either "exorcism" or "deliverance." A denominationally neutral term for the practice of casting out devils and demons is "dispossession." I have elected, however, not to use the term "dispossession" when referring to such Mormon rituals and have chosen instead to use "exorcism" despite the particular association the term has with Catholicism. Because Mormonism does not have a term for this particular ritual act, there is no emic vocabulary upon which I can rely. My choice, then, is between two etic terms: "exorcism" and "dispossession." I have chosen the former because "exorcism" is a more widely recognized and generally less awkward term than "dispossession."

But whatever term we apply to it, in April of 1830, Smith, the twenty-four-year-old founding prophet of Mormonism, entered a small log home in rural New York to find a young friend, Newell Knight, in agony. Knight's "visage and limbs [were] distorted and

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twisted in every shape and appearance possible to imagine." Knight then levitated and was thrown violently around the room. To Smith, it was clear that this was the work of Satan. Word of the strange happenings quickly spread and a handful of neighbors and family members gathered in astonishment. Eventually Smith was able to get close enough to Knight to grasp his hand, at which point Knight "requested with great earnestness that I should cast the Devil out of him, that he knew that he was in him, and that he knew that I could cast him out." Joseph Smith then "rebuked the Devil, and commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from him." Knight then claimed to see Satan leave his body and "vanish from his sight."

Satan did not vanish for long, however. From Smith's day until the present, Satan, and the belief that he and his "angels" can and do possess the bodies of human beings, have been regular fixtures in Mormon thought. Despite what one scholar sees as the "cooling of the demonic throughout Mormon culture" after the nineteenth century, the ideas remain alive and well. In 2005, the LDS church's official magazine, the *Ensign*, published a talk from LDS Apostle Marion Romney reaffirming Smith's early teachings on the subject.[1] "We Latter-day Saints need not be, and we must not be, deceived by the sophistries of men concerning the reality of Satan," Romney warned. "There is a personal Devil, and we had better believe it."[2] This is not to suggest that Mormon ideas have not changed in the nearly two centuries since the Knight exorcism. "Casting out evil spirits" was frequently spoken of by church leaders in the nineteenth century. Today the practice still exists, but it has dropped from official discourse. Eric D. Huntsman, a scholar of ancient history and member of BYU's department of ancient scripture who writes from a devotional LDS point of view, recently published a book by LDS-owned Deseret Book Company on the subject of the miracles of Jesus. Huntsman dedicates an entire chapter to the exorcisms performed by Jesus and concludes that "demonic possessions occurred and Jesus had the power to deliver those who were held captive in that way. Although both can also occur today, Satan has other effective tools [such as addiction and abuse] adapted to our time to lead people into bondage and make them miserable."[3] Although, as Huntsman's work makes clear, possession and exorcism have taken a backseat to other explanations for certain behaviors, for Mormons they remain, to use William James's famous phrase, "live options" in the twenty-first century.[4]

Despite such a pervasive and enduring belief in the reality of the Devil and of his propensity for possessing human bodies, very little is known or understood about Mormon possession/exorcism events. Despite the existence of many such accounts, scholarly studies of

Mormon exorcism are extremely scarce.[5] Most studies of Mormonism have focused on the official beliefs and practices as articulated and undertaken by leaders and other prominent Mormons. Casting out evil spirits, however, has no official ritual standing within Mormonism. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mormon officials spoke openly about possession and exorcism, but there is no prescribed exorcistic ritual, nor is there any official guide to diagnosing a demoniac. In a religion that has become as highly centralized and allows as little room for ritual innovation as does Mormonism, it is unusual to find a practice that is both practiced and not officially described.[6] The absence of any mention of possession or exorcism in official modern church materials accounts, in part, for how the subject of Mormon exorcism has eluded scholars. Despite official silence on the subject, Mormons have a long, and continuing, history of casting out evil spirits.

This article looks beyond the official invisibility of possession and exorcism and explores how Mormons in different times and places translated their beliefs into ritual action. This is not an attempt to excavate the causes of possession. I agree with Fernando Cervantes's position that "for the historian . . . the interest in [possession and exorcism] is not so much to be found in the way in which they point to pathological states or psychiatric complexes, but rather in the fact that they allow some understanding of the spirituality of the time [and] the contemporary ideological climate" and contexts in which the events occurred.[7] Following that philosophy, the article has one overriding goal: to situate Mormon belief and ritual practice dealing with possession and exorcism within the larger context of American culture and religion. Instances of possession and exorcism function for Mormons as performances that accomplish a wide variety of cultural and religious goals, from supporting Mormon truth claims to providing an avenue for women to express themselves, to expressing late-twentieth century Mormon attitudes about the sacredness of hierarchy*. Finally, I argue that exorcism accounts reveal in fine-grained detail the constant engagement with, and adaptation to, larger religious and cultural forces at work in the American context.

Satan in Early Mormon Doctrine

Joseph Smith's understanding of the nature and purpose of the Devil is summarized best in a revelation that he dictated in early 1832 indicating that "satan [is] that old serpent even the devel who rebelled against God and saught to take the kingdom of our God and his christ wherefore he maketh war with the saints of God and

encompasseth them round about, [and] he made war."[8] Of particular importance for Mormons are the elements of this story dealing with the warfare between Satan and "the saints of God." From the earliest days of Smith's ministry, Mormons were taught to believe that this was a literal, physical war in which the Devil and his angels sought to possess the bodies of those on earth.[9] In order to understand why possession and exorcism became entrenched in Mormon practice at a time when Evangelical Protestant denominations to which Mormonism was closest culturally were leaving the practice behind, it is necessary to understand that the notion of possession was, for Mormons, thoroughly grounded in their theology of the body.

Smith famously taught that embodiment was a reward for those spirits who had successfully "kept their first estate," by which he meant those who had sided with Christ in the war in heaven and had elected to come to earth. The time spent on earth was to be the continuation of the cosmic test, but no matter how poorly an individual performed, all would be the beneficiaries of a bodily resurrection. Satan and those who followed him were denied the sublime blessing of embodiment, and thus they sought to get a body, even temporarily, through possession.

In 1841, Joseph Smith taught that "we came to this earth that we might have a body.... The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The Devil has no body and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle [body] of a man and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine showing that he would prefer a swine's body to having none."[10] Two years later, he again addressed the subject, vividly linking possession with the disembodiment of Satan.

> When Lucifer was hurled from Heaven the decree was that he Should not obtain a tabernacle nor those that were with him, but go abroad upon the earth exposed to the anger of the elements naked & bare, but ofttimes he lays hold upon men binds up their Spirits enters their habitations laughs at the decree of God and rejoices in that he hath a house to dwell in, by & by he is expelled by Authority and goes abroad mourning naked upon the earth like a man without a house exposed to the tempest & the storm.[11]

These sermons, considered together, tell us several important things that aid in understanding the theological underpinnings of Mormon belief in possession and exorcism. First, the Devil is being punished through his own disembodiment. He, along with those who followed him, are exposed in some way to suffering and pain as a

result of lacking the shelter provided by a mortal body. Second, part of the general war that Satan is waging against people in general, and the "saints" in particular, is to attempt to deprive them of their own body by literally taking it over. Smith's reference to swine in his 1841 sermon is a gloss on the story of the "Gerasene demononiac."[12] Jesus, asking the name of the demon, is told that their collective name is "legion for we are many." Upon realizing that they are about to be cast out, the demonic legion requests that Jesus cast them into a herd of swine grazing on a nearby hillside. The biblical accounts offer no explanation of why the demonic spirits make this request, but Smith fills in the gap by linking this event with his own notions of the joy of embodiment, even if that embodiment is brief and unclean.

It is not clear just when Smith came to these conclusions about the Devil, his angels, and the human body. All one can say with certainty is that, by the early 1840s, Smith had settled on them, and that they remained with the church for many decades. In an 1856 discourse, Brigham Young, Smith's successor as LDS church President, said that "the Devels were cast out of heaven to this earth & they are still around us. Their condemnation is that they can never have a tabernacle but they seek to get into the tabernacle of all men they can."[13] A 1909 editorial in the church-owned *Deseret Evening News* echoed these sentiments, proclaiming that "there are numerous instances of possession by evil spirits." Such events, the author claimed, represented attempts by "the evil one" to "imitate the greatest of all miracles—the miracle of incarnation."[14] Gordon B. Hinckley, who served as LDS church President from 1995 to 2008, said that the story of the possessed boy and the herd of swine was designed to demonstrate "the worth of a human body."[15]

The connection between embodiment and possession lives today also in Mormon ritual life. The LDS temple endowment ritual contains a drama which enacts the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In the LDS version of this story, it is Satan himself who convinces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and it is Satan who is cast out and cursed by God, but not before Satan threatens to "take the spirits that follow me, and they shall possess the bodies thou createst for Adam and Eve."[16] The drama thus clearly indicates that possession is Satan's goal and that it he and his never-embodied followers should be expected to make good on the threat.

For Smith, ideas about the Devil and possession were not simply abstract speculations. He claimed to have performed exorcisms for at least a decade before giving the January 1841 sermon. The New Testament prompted Joseph Smith and his followers to place the practice of casting out evil spirits among the gifts and signs that would follow the "true church" of God. A revelation dictated by Joseph Smith in late

1830 stated, "I am God and mine arm is not shortened and I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all who believe in my name and whoso shall ask it in my name, in faith, they shall cast out Devils."[17] For Mormons, this revelation was a reiteration in modern times of the promises given to the followers of Christ in antiquity.

This is an example of "traditionalism"—the act of linking a group's current practice with older practices in an effort to claim a special connection with the earlier group.[18] For Mormons, exorcism was part of a constellation of traditionalistic acts intended to link Mormon authority and practice with ancient Christianity. Eventually, the power to cast out devils would come to be viewed as a male priesthood duty, although cases of women given permission to cast out devils did occur. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormons unabashedly believed and taught that casting out devils was part and parcel of the signs that follow believers and, therefore, a sign of the true church. Eventually, the performance of exorcism came to be viewed as a duty that fell under the umbrella of the Mormon higher priesthood. The issue of priesthood authority is one in which Mormons differed from Catholics as well as Protestants. There are a wide variety of Protestant views on priesthood and authority that vary from group to group. Luther, for example, believed that while "the power of the keys belonged to all believers, he confined its use to church officers." Calvin argued that there was a qualitative difference between the "extraordinary" powers manifest by Christians in the apostolic era the modern "ministry of the church [which was] ordinary in nature . . . . one not of special powers but of preaching of the word." Unlike most Protestants who insisted on the idea of an informal "priesthood of all believers" and tended to reject the need for special authority to mediate between God and human beings, Joseph Smith believed that such God-given authority was an absolute necessity, that this priesthood had to be conferred by the laying on of hands, and that Smith himself had been ordained to the priesthood during visits from John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John.[19] Smith argued that Roman Catholicism wielded a perverted and powerless priesthood authority, and he further distanced himself from Catholics, as well as most Protestant groups, on the issue of priesthood by creating a lay priesthood and rejecting a professional clergy.

From Jesus to Joseph Smith: Tracking the Mormon Understanding of Possession and Exorcism

In Erik Midelfort's foundational article on possession cases in sixteenth-century Germany, he proposed that scholars had for too long

been satisfied with generalizations regarding belief systems. When studying possession, he argued, "we need to ask exactly whose beliefs we are studying."[20] In the case of Mormon possession, we have to begin with the faith's founding prophet. Joseph Smith's ideas and beliefs about the Devil and demonic possession derive from three sources: first, the synoptic gospels in the New Testament, second Roman Catholic tradition, and finally Anglo-American Puritan folk belief. Possession and exorcism are key events in the narratives of Jesus' ministry and are clearly linked in the stories with Jesus' godly authority. Only with the rise of Jesus and the Jesus movements did exorcism become a centrally important component of any Near Eastern religious system.[21]

The New Testament synoptic gospels all "agree that exorcism was an important aspect of Jesus' ministry and go so far as to suggest that Jesus' dealings with the demon-possessed is of central significance in understanding Jesus and his ministry."[22] The New Testament contains approximately fifty references to exorcisms performed by Christ or his followers. These cases, particularly the five most detailed examples, "provided scripts that demoniacs and exorcists followed" for centuries.[23] One of the chief reasons for the rise of exorcism as a centrally important practice within Christianity is the concomitant rise of a being who represented the personification of evil. No such figure exists in the Hebrew Bible, but by the time the New Testament gospels were written such a figure had emerged and was given the name Satan, the Hebrew word meaning "obstacle."[24] And as the figure of Satan emerged, so did the notion that he had with him an army of disembodied spirits. The writers of the New Testament gospels each used the character of Satan to meet their own rhetorical needs, elaborating the character as required.[25]

Smith's second source for his tripartite demonology was Proto-Orthodoxy/Roman Catholicism, which influenced Smith in two ways: the diagnosis of possession and the belief that diabolical attack and possession were evidence of God's favor. The "symptoms" of possession manifested in nearly every Mormon account match with the Roman Catholic diagnostic lists that developed completely outside of the biblical context. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament, however, reveals that Satan's role, and the role of demons, possession, and exorcism, remain rather vague and only hint at a fuller cosmology that is never completely articulated in the earliest Christian texts.

By the medieval period, Roman Catholicism placed great emphasis on the practice of casting out demons, which remained multiform until the sixteenth century. The Roman Catholic church finally produced an official manual of exorcism, the Ritual Romanum, in 1614.

This publication was, in part, an effort to reclaim exorcism from the hundreds of freelance exorcists who had been casting out demons among Catholics for centuries. By the early modern period, a constellation of symptoms that Roman Catholics in particular found persuasive had emerged. Things such as levitation, contorted limbs, knowledge of previously unknown languages, changes in the voice, stiffness of limbs, and extraordinary strength formed the core of the diagnostic criteria used by Catholic exorcists.[26] Although Joseph Smith probably did not know the Catholic origin of possession symptoms, the ideas were so potently transmitted into Western culture that they became part of his cultural inheritance.[27]

Catholicism also provided another source for Joseph Smith's ideas about the Devil. The second-century Christian apologist Justin Martyr argued that Satan and his demonic legions were responsible for the persecution of Christians. The demonic forces accomplished this goal by tricking Jews, Pagans, and heretics into attacking Christianity. Justin thus emphasized the notion that the intensity of persecution against Christians served as an index of the tradition's "truthfulness." Also, Justin's diabology served as a boundary-maintenance device as he began to "articulate a distinctly Christian identity, the borders of which are defined against" the Devil and his "angels."[28] Given the importance of the demonic presence to early Christian identity, it is not at all surprising to find that a ritual of exorcistic combat emerged as well. One of the ways in which these early Church Fathers incorporated exorcism into the liturgical life of the early Christians was by attaching exorcism to baptism. By the early fourth century, for example, there is evidence that candidates for baptism were first given a "prebaptismal anointing" with explicitly "exorcistic" purposes.[29] Despite the inclusion of an exorcistic element in the baptismal rites, Christians from the time of Justin Martyr continued to place the ritual dispossession of adults near the heart of the Christian experience. Joseph Smith adopted an almost identical posture as Justin Martyr: demonic attack was a sign that God's true church was interfering with Satan's nefarious plans. Smith did not derive these ideas directly from Justin. By the nineteenth century, they were deeply embedded in Christian thought. For the purposes of contextualization, however, it is helpful to identify Justin as one of the originators of an idea that came to figure so prominently in Joseph Smith's thought.

Finally, Smith inherited the particular diabological views of his Puritan forbears and the Anglo-American folk culture, including the rich vein of "cunning folk" tradition that they brought with them to North America. The Protestant Reformation marked an important turning point in the history of Christian diabolism. Although Protestants

carried a very strong belief in a literal Devil and in the reality of possession and exorcism, they eventually made the political decision to cede exorcism to the Catholics where it could take its place among other "superstitions, like consecrations, blessings, and holy water."[30] Centuries of lived tradition proved tenacious on this point, however. Despite the fact that the Anglican church abolished the office of exorcist in 1550, recent studies have indicated that this "termination did little, if anything, to curb the belief in demonic possession" which persisted intact in Europe as a facet of "lived religion" into the eighteenth century.[31] English Puritans held to the belief that "signs and wonders" had not entirely ceased, but their disdain for ritual meant that miracles connected with healing or exorcism had to be dealt with via less obviously ritualistic methods.[32]

In the American context, Catholic-style possession and exorcism dropped away and were replaced by a new, Puritan style of imagining and combating evil. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New Englanders believed strongly in a literal Devil, one that, as in Europe, worked most often through the agency of human beings, but belief in possession was less widespread. Seventeenth-century New Englanders used the phrase "diabolical possession" to describe instances in which the Devil manipulated human beings in a wide variety of ways. Puritans thus conceived of "possession" in a much broader sense than the Catholics did and Mormons would. To early New Englanders, possession suggested that the Devil could enter into a contract in which he took possession of a person, in much the same way that one would take possession of a piece of property, whom he could then use to do his bidding.[33]

Frequently, the Devil was believed to enlist the help of humans who would sign a pact with him and, thenceforth, would be granted supernatural powers that allowed them to afflict other human beings.[34] As in Europe, these beliefs contributed to the prosecution and execution of accused witches. Almost always, "diabolical possession" cases were believed to be caused by witchcraft and, therefore, not met with exorcism, but with a quest to identify and punish the witch. Unlike Catholic and, later, Mormon approaches to the problem, Puritans tended to define the combat between the forces of good and the forces of evil locally, rather than cosmically. "Diabolical possession" served as a warning of witchcraft in the community, and it was the latter that was seen as the true threat and which generated community action.

The symbolic expulsion of evil is important to any religious community, and in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New England, "diabolical possession" served the larger project of the witch-hunt. In fact, one of the most common acts of a possessed person in

seventeenth-century New England was to produce specific witchcraft accusations.[35] Puritans invested witch-hunting with all of the symbolic value that other communities placed in exorcism. They found the solution to the "Devil problem" not in ritual expulsion, but in an increase in godly living on the one hand and the detection and destruction of witches on the other.

Most American Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, from the early colonial period through Joseph Smith's lifetime, shared "a belief in spirits and a belief that the boundaries between the human and spirit realm are permeable to these entities and can be penetrated by them."[36] They differed greatly, however, on the nature of these spirit beings, the types of things that these spirits did once they "penetrated" the human realm, and what humans could, and should, do to get rid of them. In general, Catholics experienced a more ritually dense religious life than did their Protestant contemporaries, and the ritual density of Catholicism provided more evidence to Protestants of the spiritual bankruptcy of Catholicism. Given this history, it is unsurprising that relatively few Protestant American religious figures in Joseph Smith's lifetime believed in possession and exorcism in the narrow sense of bodily possession and ritual expulsion. Even Catholics, who in Europe championed the practice of exorcism, found themselves shying away from the practice in the American context. American Catholics, from the mid-nineteenth- century until the papal condemnation of "Americanism" in 1899, found themselves dealing with a tsunami of practical, logistical, and educational challenges and internal schisms resulting from the collision of Irish, Italian, Polish, and German Catholicisms.[37] As if this were not complex enough, Catholics also had to face the horrors of Nativist persecution. All of this shifted exorcism to a much lower level of priority than it enjoyed among Catholics in Europe.

Belief in a literal Devil waxed and waned among the most dominant American religious groups of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the practice of exorcism was almost unheard of. The most fundamental reason for this was the phenomenon of "cessationism," the belief propounded by leading Protestants that miracles had ceased after the death of Christ and the original apostles. Protestants argued that Catholics hid Christ in a thicket of "superstitious," miracle-inducing rituals; Protestants claimed to strip such things away and so leave their rational and reasonable Christ unobscured. One Protestant cum Catholic wrote in 1870 that Protestants "rejected miracles. . . . not because they were miraculous, but because they were *Romish*. They had no choice. If the miracles were real, the

doctrines were true."[38] Protestants would certainly disagree with those stated reasons, but there is no question that mainstream American Protestants generally shied away from a belief in miracles. Historian Jenny Franchot argues that Protestants saw "a dangerous exhibitionism [that] hovered over Catholic ritual" and that the "Roman church staged magnificent theatricals to bedazzle and manipulate its flock." This theatricality offended Protestant sensibilities because "the priest's sacramental enactments, in making visible the invisible workings of spirit, violated the privacy of God's gaze, profaning his theatrical space with that of the human gaze."[39]

In the mid-eighteenth century, however, a major shift developed in American views of the Devil. The rise of Evangelical Christianity, occurring in tandem with the First Great Awakening and its new emphasis on emotion, created a different type of space in which the idea of the nature and purpose of the Devil could grow and change. The new Evangelical understanding of God as a presence who actively sought to be a part of the emotional inner life of the Christian necessitated a corresponding reimagining of Satan as a being who fought against individual Christians in order to keep them from feeling God's love.

As with any type of religious belief, Evangelical notions about Satan spanned a continuum, the center of which shifted over time. At the most liberal end of the spectrum were those few who "spoke of Satan purely in a figurative sense, as an emblem of the human heart's sinful inclinations." An equally small number of people who believed that "the Devil could take visible form and even inflict violence" occupied the opposite end of the continuum. The majority of Evangelicals in the eighteenth century, however, "regarded Satan as an actual, but invisible entity, who raised evil impressions on the minds of those awake or asleep."[40] The Second Great Awakening, which began around 1800, changed that landscape dramatically. For a time, the new dominance of Arminian theology and a belief in a very raucous form of religious emoting pushed the belief in a violent Devil into the Evangelical mainstream. From 1800 until about 1830, the belief that the Devil or his evil spirits could physically attack human beings was extremely common among the new Evangelicals populating the pews in Baptist and Methodist churches.[41]

As time passed, however, and the clergy became increasingly educated, ministers sought to "tone down" diabolism as part of a broader shift among Evangelicals away from such "superstitious beliefs" as witchcraft, divination, dream reading, and so forth.[42] After 1830, Evangelicals reported that the Devil most typically manifested

himself in the thoughts of those seeking to commune with God. It is important to note that, although cases of possession were reported by Methodists and Baptists during this period, they were uncommon, and Evangelicals unsurprisingly sought to perform no ritual acts of exorcism, which most Evangelicals still viewed as carrying the "taint" of tyrannical Catholicism. Methodists at the highest level had long since characterized exorcism as irredeemably "popish" and, as such, something to be avoided and even mocked. The first Methodist bishop, Thomas Coke, wrote a deeply anti-Catholic letter to John Wesley in 1784 that featured the topic of possession and exorcism.[43] Encoded in the letter are all of the most salient pillars of Protestant anti-Catholicism that were common to the transatlantic world. Catholicism is never more obviously corrupt, according to this line of thought, than when one looks at exorcism. Coke seemed to revel in the absurdity of exorcism; he relished the unmasking of false rituals and the ridiculous and fraudulent dramatics of the woman "pretending" to be possessed. In the letter we encounter a view of exorcism shared by many American Evangelicals. It was a distillate of the essential elements of Catholicism: corrupt clergy, bizarre rituals involving the body parts of saints, deception, forms of religion devoid of pious content, and a fundamental cynicism.

As the nineteenth century progressed, tension grew between liberal Evangelical theologians, who found even the concept of a personal Devil increasingly less useful, and conservative Evangelical voices. In May 1829, one year before Smith's exorcism of Newel Knight, the *Christian Secretary*, a periodical published by the Connecticut Baptist Convention, included an article that sought to fight the increasingly common Evangelical belief that the cases of possession and exorcism in the Bible were not literal. The paper had picked up the story from an English publication, *the New Baptist Miscellany*, published by the conservative Particular Baptist movement.[44] The article was clearly aimed at liberal Evangelicals as well as "the wise men of the world" and argued quite pointedly that "infidelity alone can refuse credit to the numerous passages which a perusal of holy writ affords in support of" possession and exorcism.[45] The conservative and defensive tone of the piece suggests that mainstream Evangelicals were moving away from literal belief in possession.

Even the most conservative of Evangelicals faced a dilemma, however. On the one hand, they believed that the exorcisms performed by Jesus were real. On the other hand, they had to reject modern possession and exorcism because of the Catholic overtones that those terms had acquired since the Reformation. In 1857, *the Methodist Quarterly Review*, a major publication of the Methodist Episcopal

church, published a translation of an article that originally appeared in Germany entitled "The Demoniacs of the New Testament," what hints at this tension and also suggests a way to resolve it. The article points out that "the most remarkable miracle wrought by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the cure of demoniacs; both because their state as being possessed by evil spirits is in itself most enigmatical, and because similar phenomena both before and after the time of Christ, are either wanting altogether or extremely rare."[46] According to this line of reasoning, the very fact that possession and exorcism were phenomena apparently reserved for the time of Christ serves to make Christ's acts that much more powerful and miraculous. This approach cleverly accounted for a literal belief in the stories of the Bible, while simultaneously providing a devotional explanation for dismissing contemporary possession claims and rejecting exorcism as a relic of an important, but bygone, era.

It was into this world of mainstream Evangelical retreat from a strong belief in the physical power of the Devil to possess human bodies that Mormonism was born. Joseph Smith not only disagreed with the dominant Evangelical view of possession and exorcism, he used their stance as a foil for his argument that Protestant rejection of exorcism was part of the larger problem of relegating miracles to the past. In Mormon belief, any attempt by Protestants to deny the modern presence of the promised biblical signs that would follow the true followers of Christ, including exorcism, signaled a state of Christian apostasy. Smith, therefore, flatly rejected the belief that the Devil lacked the power to physically afflict, much less possess, human beings.

The Smith family was divided over the topic of religion, with some members of the large family choosing to become Presbyterians, while others favored the Methodists. Joseph Smith, as a young teenager, was in crisis over both the religious fissures in his family and the inability to settle on a faith for himself. Seeking to find some relief from this stress, Smith said that he retired to a grove of trees near his family's home to pray. Smith gave multiple versions of the experience that he said followed that prayer. At least two details are present in enough accounts to give us a general sense of what he was claiming to have experienced. The first is that he was physically attacked by Satan, and the second is that he was saved from this attack by at least one divine being.

The first mention of a demonic or satanic attack connected with Smith's "First Vision" is found in the second of his accounts of the event, which he produced in 1835. Smith wrote that he had retired to the woods to pray and ask God "who was right and who was wrong."

Just as he attempted to speak his prayer, Smith's "tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter." At the same time, Smith "heard a noise behind me like the sound of some one [*sic*] walking toward me. I strove again to pray, but could not; the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer."[47] Smith then sprang to his feet and looked around but could see no one. He then attempted to pray again, at which time he was able to speak the prayer that brought about his vision. Joseph Smith's early stories of his First Vision bear the marks of Methodist conversion narratives from the first third of the nineteenth century, including the struggle with an evil force.[48] In an account of the vision that Smith dictated in 1838, the version that is now accepted as the "official" account of the vision, Smith added something significant. After describing the encounter with evil, Smith noted that he had feared that he was going to be destroyed not by anything "imaginary," but by "the power of an actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any other being."[49]

The vast majority of Methodist conversion narratives, and, indeed, Evangelical conversion narratives in general, describe experiences with the Devil and with God in heavily qualified terms that suggest the experience, while real, was not necessarily physical. Smith, however, moves the other way and, in the case of his encounter with the Devil, seems to be setting his experiences in sharp contrast with antebellum Evangelical ideas. Smith wanted the world to know that the Devil was an "actual" being that was not part of an "imaginary" or mystical world but one that had aggressively intruded into the physical plane of existence. The belief in an incorporeal yet physically powerful Devil who came with an army of disembodied spirits who had sided with him in the war in heaven became a significant Mormon view that served to set Mormons apart from most manifestations of contemporary Protestant Christianity.

Case 1: Newel Knight

The remainder of the article examines four cases of possession and exorcism, culled from the hundreds that I have collected. The cases span a very wide historical range in order to sample instances over the course of time rather than look in detail at historical change. Such work must be left for future projects.

This article opened with a brief look at "the first miracle which was done in this Church, or by any member of it." This was the exorcism of Newel Knight in which the Devil himself was claimed to have been cast out, an act described by Joseph Smith as being "done by God

and by the power of Godliness."[50] This occurred in April of 1830 in Colesville, New York. Smith was staying with the family of Joseph Knight, a man who had earlier assisted Smith during his translation of the Book of Mormon. The Knight family were "Universalists" but they enthusiastically opened their home to Smith, which he used as a base for his own missionary efforts in the region. Joseph Knight's son, Newel Knight, was particularly impressed with the young visionary and had become close to Smith, and the two often engaged in conversations about the importance of eternal salvation. According to Smith, the younger Knight had finally consented to join Smith's church and to pray vocally at the next meeting. When the appointed time came, however, Knight refused to pray in front of the others but promised Smith that he would pray in the woods. Knight's trip to the forest did not go as smoothly as he may have hoped because he "made several attempts to pray, but could scarcely do so, feeling that he had not done his duty, but that he should have prayed in the presence of others." Upset by his inability to pray, even in isolation, and plagued by guilt over his failure to perform publicly the prayer at the previous night's meeting, Knight began to feel mentally and physically unwell. By the time he reached his home, his "appearance was such to alarm his wife very much." Knight's wife sent for Smith, who found the young man behaving strangely. Also, noted Smith, Knight's "visage and limbs distorted and twisted in every shape and appearance possible to imagine."

Knight's possession experience began, much as Smith's did, with an attempt to pray in the hopes of eliciting a divine manifestation. Knight's encounter with the Devil soon expanded well beyond the story Smith told of being bound by an unseen, but very real, being. According to the account, Knight's body was both levitating and contorting. Both of these phenomena are widely reported as part of possession experiences worldwide. What is more interesting, in the case of Knight, is that the Devil's chief aim in possessing Knight's body is not the possession of a body *per se*, but rather the possession seems to act as a means by which to administer abuse to the body. The satirical *Palmyra Reflector* account supports the idea that the most salient element of the event was the pain that the Devil inflicted upon Knight. The *Reflector* quoted Knight as saying that his "flesh was 'about to cleave from my bones'—the muscles, tendons &c. could no longer perform their different functions—the habitation of Satan, was about to be laid open to the light of day, when the prophet interfered."[51]

If one reads these accounts in light of the 1841 and 1843 sermons given by Joseph Smith, the two notions—that the Devil seeks a body as a pleasure and a refuge that has been denied him and the fact

that Devil inflicted such severe physical pain upon that body—are clearly in conflict. As we will see, very few Mormon accounts of possession that occur later, especially in the 1840s and after, contain any mention of physical harm done by the possessing spirit to the possessed body. In fact, LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff recorded in 1840 an incident in which he claimed the Devil struck him on the head and tried to choke him. He later went back and re-edited the entry to downplay the pain inflicted by the Devil.[52] It would be irrational to expect Knight to have any idea what Smith would eventually conclude about the nature of possession. When considered in that light, it is not surprising that we find a disconnect between Knight's behavior as a possessed man and what Smith later taught about the nature of possession. In religious cultures, such as that found in Roman Catholicism, in which the expectation of behavior of both the possessed and the exorcist are clearly and repeatedly articulated, one finds relative consistency of both elements of the exorcistic performances over time. Although Mormonism shares with Catholicism a belief in bodily demonic possession, within Mormonism, only the basic pattern of exorcism remains constant; the nature of possession consists of a kind of "free-lance" performance in which the possessed individuals behave according to their own socialized beliefs in possession. Over time, the act of exorcism remains relatively stable, while the possessed persons' behaviors follow a widely variable script.

In addition to the issues surrounding the body, the Knight account also reveals the basic pattern that would form the basis of most Mormon rites of affliction, both exorcistic and the much more common healing rituals. In Newel Knight's case, the ritual actions consisted of the following: Joseph Smith touching Knight (in this case by grabbing his hand), Knight demonstrating sufficient faith to be delivered of the spirit of the Devil, and the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ to accomplish the deliverance. With a few notable exceptions, Mormon exorcism accounts generally do not describe any particular ritual action being performed, and there is no official rite of exorcism. Early accounts tend to emphasize the power of the invocation of the sacred name of Jesus. By the twentieth century, the ritual of exorcism was usually performed in the same way that healing rituals are, namely by holders of the higher or Melchizedek Mormon priesthood laying their hands on the head of the afflicted and commanding the evil spirit to depart in the name of Jesus and by the power of the holy priesthood.

It is difficult to tell what this experience meant to Newel Knight because he left no account of it, and Smith's account is potentially unreliable given the obviously propogandistic purpose for which it was recorded. Presumably, based on his subsequent baptism into the

Mormon faith, the exorcism provided evidence both of the reality of Satan and the power of Joseph Smith to fight the Devil and win. It is worth noting that in August of 1830, Knight himself diagnosed his aunt as being possessed by the Devil, and he exorcised her, using the same method that Smith had used on him only a few months earlier.[53]

It is somewhat easier to surmise what this event, and its retelling, meant to Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith was interested in establishing the kingdom of God on earth, in imitation not only of Jesus and his early followers as described in the New Testament, but also as a "restoration" of all holy practices authorized by God from the beginning of time. Smith was adamant that Satan and his host of angry and disembodied followers were particularly interested in fighting the truth, and the more opposition Smith faced, the more obvious it was that he was God's true prophet. In fact, Smith explained his own possession experience just before the First Vision as evidence that Satan hated him personally. "It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?"[54]

Smith apparently saw his fight with Satan not as a contemporary Evangelical may have, as a personal struggle for an individual soul, but rather as a battle set against a cosmic backdrop in which two individuals with special powers fight over the fate of humankind. Historian Neil Forsyth demonstrated that these sorts of stories are as old as humanity itself, and they formed much on the basis of the ancient Christian combat myths that developed around the battle between God and/or Christ and Satan. Probably via the New Testament stories, Smith saw himself in the role not only of kingdom builder, but of kingdom destroyer. The exorcism of Newel Knight, or at least Smith's 1838 telling of the story, signals this not least of all through the presence of Satan himself. Knight is not simply afflicted by an evil spirit. Knight claimed that he saw Satan himself leaving his body. He had, in some sense, an experience that was an inversion of Smith's First Vision. This story was important enough to Smith to warrant a prominent place in the church history. He began dictating in 1838 precisely because it represented, in miniature, the entire claimed purpose of the "restoration of the Gospel of Christ": to drive Satan from the world through the special authority invested by God exclusively in Joseph Smith and the church he founded.[55]

The prominence granted to exorcism in the New Testament, coupled with Smith's own self-understanding as the prime embodiment of God's power on earth, led Smith and his followers to view

possession and exorcism as a natural, and even necessary, component of their collective mission. In fact, aside from the Knight account, the other exorcisms performed by Smith in his lifetime were either not reported at all or reported in a completely offhand manner, without further commentary, as if their reality and symbolic value were both obvious. In a March 1831 letter to his brother Hyrum, Joseph Smith wrote that "this morning after being Colled out of my bed in the night to go a small distance I went and had an awful strugle with satan but being armed with the power of God he was cast out and this woman is Clothed in hir right mind the Lord worketh wonders in this land."[56] In the letter, Smith intentionally echoed the language of Mark 5:15, in which the Gerasene demoniac was "clothed and in his right mind" after being exorcised by Christ. In this case, as with the Newel Knight exorcism which had occurred less than a year before, Smith's mission of establishing the kingdom of God was enacted, bodily, in the form of an exorcism.

Case 2: The Pomfret Branch

Joseph Smith was not the only Mormon exorcist at work in the 1830s. In 1839, the same year that Smith recorded his exorcism of Knight for his official history, a newly baptized sixteen-year-old Latter-day Saint named Lorenzo Brown participated in a very dramatic series of exorcisms. Brown joined the church in 1838, although his family's association with Joseph Smith began several years earlier, when Smith and fellow LDS leader Sidney Rigdon hid in the family's house for several days. Brown's father, Benjamin, joined the church in 1835, but Lorenzo waited three more years. In early 1839, while the majority of the Mormons were in a temporary settlement in Quincy, Illinois, Brown and his family and a handful of other members of the LDS church constituted a very small and isolated branch of the church in Pomfret, New York, a village in far-western New York situated along the shores of Lake Erie. The branch consisted primarily of Brown and his extended family, with nearly the entire branch being related either through blood or marriage. The branch met for church services in the Brown home, and these meetings were the scene of an unusually large number of charismatic events, especially healings and glossolalia. "We were blessed spiritually with the gift of tongues, through which, and the interpretation, we learned many things." Brown recalled that several hymns were revealed via glossolalia, "one of which was given through myself and interpreted by Sister Esther Crowely."[57]

While the practice of glossolalia was not uncommon in early Mormonism, this branch seems to have had more than a passing interest in various "gifts of the spirit." Brown himself made a point of recording that his father's was "a family that often had things in the future made known to them and were singular in this respect. My grandfather predicted the day, hour, and minute of his death, for some years previous. A certain individual, of veracity, has certified to the fact of standing by his bedside with a timepiece to compare time and found it exact. Also, his son John was said to have great spiritual exercises in mind."[58] Family lore preserved other similar stories, including one in which Lorenzo Brown's father "one night after he had got his clothing damp, was sitting with his back to the fireplace drying his clothes and thinking about religious matters when an angel appeared to him and told him to join none of the churches because the true church was not on the earth but would be in the near future. Some time later he heard Mormonism preached and recognized it as the true gospel. It was through him that the Browns, the Crosbys, and the Mumfords joined the church."[59] The charismatic gifts attributed to Benjamin Brown played a major role in converting to Mormonism all of the persons involved in the exorcism events reported by Lorenzo. The members of the Pomfret branch thus not only shared tight familial connections, but also an interest in charismatic spiritual gifts as described in the New Testament.

It is not surprising to find out that the members of the Pomfret branch also found an opportunity to cast out evil spirits. According to an affidavit that Benjamin Brown wrote in 1839, and which was signed by various witnesses to the event,

> On this day passed a marvelous scene before the Elders of Israel viz., Benjamin Brown, Henry More and Melvin Brown who was called to cast out Devils which had entered Sister Crosby after praying and fasting 17 hours by the power of the Holy Ghost one was cast out which was seen and felt for he attacked all of us shook Br. Brown on the side and in the face seized Br. More on the arms which made them sore for some time also Brother Melvin on the shoulders and arms so that he could but just stand his arms was sore for some time the Devil was seen in the room for some time at length entered into Brother Melvin while [illegible] with such power that it seemed as he would be pressed to death. He could not speak but made signs when we [?] and laid hands on him and cast him out in the name of Jesus Christ when he came out he came snarling like a dog. On the 18th we cast out 37 [demons] in a variety of forms and noises some like dogs cats hogs pigs

> and snakes. These was seen by many of the saints and heard and the room became darkened like a mist and the smell was like brimstone and more filthy it affected our eyes so that we had to wash them also our mouths much affected some heard noise like thunder and saw it lightening some were punched in the face others in the arms others heard him gnash with his teeth, so this was many witnesses both men and women in the Lord Jesus Christ.[60]

This account is a nice example of the confluence of Mormon belief in the role of the priesthood authority, which allowed most adult Mormon males to act in a sacerdotal role, and charismatic folk beliefs that newly baptized members of the church often brought with them into the church.[61] Most Evangelical Protestant sects with which the members of the branch would have been familiar did not believe in priesthood authority, and thus they relied primarily on prayer to drive away evil. Mormons, by contrast, believed that ancient apostles had restored the authority of the Holy Priesthood, which could be conferred on male members of the church, and which was an important component in most healing and other rituals that involved the laying on of hands. According to Brown's journal, most of the males in the branch had been ordained to the priesthood in January 1839, which would place those events very close in time to the exorcism. The link between priesthood power and exorcism was not definitively linked at this point. However, the fact that only men who had been ordained to the priesthood acted as exorcists in this case suggests that, in the minds of the members of the Pomfret branch at least, the priesthood was a vital component of the ritual.

Whereas primitivists and revivalists of the early nineteenth century, in the vein of Barton Stone, would have certainly seen "struggles with Satan, sometimes of a very physical variety, as a precursor to their own conversion" and would thus have been prepared to accept the affliction of Crosby as a manifestation of the power of Satan, they would have responded to the possession with prayer and fasting.[62] The members of the Pomfret branch, however, as newly minted Mormons, felt that they had authority to lay on hands and cast the Devil out by the authority of God. The event Brown describes represents a hybrid event in which standard, familiar, and culturally acceptable interpretations of "demonic affliction" were met with a new and unusual view of lay priesthood authority that involved not only fasting and prayer but also the laying on of hands and the declaration of the authority to act in the name of Jesus Christ. Like the Knight exorcism, of which these persons were almost certainly unaware, the participants in the Crosby event

were pitting their newfound faith and their belief in their power and authority as ordained representatives of Jesus Christ against the power of the Devil who was manifesting in ways that would have been familiar to them and to most of their neighbors. Brown's description represents a far more chaotic scene and of much larger scope than most Mormon exorcism accounts. While the exorcism began as a relatively simple case of casting the Devil out of one person, it soon spun out of control, involving more than thirty-seven demons. It is possible that this chaos and scope have their roots in the lack of a strong institutional leader who could have dictated the pace of the events. Foucault argues that at the center of the scene of possession is the "confessor, director, or guide," an individual who orchestrates a scene of barely controlled chaos through skillfully wielding "the powers of direction, authority, and discursive restraint."[63] Such a figure is absent from the 1839 account. With little experience of Mormonism, and Mormon priesthood organizational structures, outside what was essentially their own extended family group, the members of the branch seemed to lack an authoritative center. Thery had, in effect, many "priests" but no "Priest."

In addition to the very prominent physical violence of the events, it is important to note that there appears to be a strong mimetic element to the events described in this account. On the first day, Satan was cast out of Melvin Brown, and when he left he "snarled like a dog." The next day, the events resumed, and in like manner, the thirty-seven demons exorcized from the various participants only left after they had caused the possessed person to move and make the noises of a variety of animals, including "dogs cats hogs pigs and snakes." The association of Satan with the animals described by Brown was an old one that had persisted in European and American folklore since the Middle Ages. According to Jeffrey Burton Russell, "[The Devil] was frequently identified with or associated with animals, sometimes following earlier Judeo-Christian tradition and sometimes because animals were sacred to the pagan gods, whom the Christians identified with demons."[64] The members of the Pomfret branch who were possessed by these demons were thus probably following a typological model that had informed the cultural worldview of their families for generations.

In 1853, Benjamin Brown published another account of his experience in the Pomfret branch, which is important both for what it omits from and what it adds to the 1839 account.[65] The 1853 account completely drops any mention of anyone having seen Satan and any mention of smoke, nor does it include any discussion of animalistic behavior among the possessed. In recalling the incident decades later, Brown remembered it as a much less chaotic event that precipitated an

open battle between a host of demons that identified itself as "Legion" and the power of the Priesthood. In the later account, Brown rebuked the evil spirits in the woman, which resulted in the woman rising "up from the bed on her feet without apparently bending a joint in her body, as stiff as a rod of iron." The possession event continued for nearly a week, but it reached a flashpoint when, according to Brown, one of the demons "reviled our priesthood. . . . saying to us, 'O! you have the priesthood have you? Well, then, cast me out, command me to come out,' trying to shake our faith, and thus incapacitate us to rebuke him successfully." Finally, after another round of laying on of hands, the demons fled. In this version, the action seems much more orderly, as if Brown had introduced a level of order into his revised narration that was absent from the 1839 account.

The 1839 account depicts a worldview in which Satan existed, possessed human bodies out of jealousy and rage, and could only be countered successfully by the restored priesthood of the only true church. A slight shift in worldview is evident in the 1853 account, however, where the behavior of the possessed, and the manifestation of folkoric elements such as animalistic behavior, were apparently less important than the fact that she represented a threat to the order of the church as represented by the priesthood. The 1853 telling of the event seems less like a cosmic struggle than an effort to maintain order in an organization. The period between 1850 and 1890 was a particularly tumultuous for Mormons in Utah. The U.S. government was cracking down on plural marriage, and the growing number of non-Mormons in Utah troubled church leaders. A general zeitgeist that centered on a fear of disorder prevailed. Apostle Joseph F. Smith, for example, wrote, "They [the American government] do not want us to be, religiously or otherwise, a separate and distinct people from the rest of the world. They want us to become identified and mixed up with the rest of the world, to become like them, thereby thwarting the purposes of God."[66]

The resistance to being "mixed up" with the world, of chaotic and confusing identity melding, could be remedied most thoroughly through a firmer reliance on priesthood order. It is suggestive that, as Christopher Blythe notes, 1882 saw the republication of a pamphlet that was most famous for its account of demonic obsession and possession of church leaders in England in 1837.[67] Brown's 1853 account, too, was republished in the early 1880s. In late 1879, Salt Lake Stake President Angus M. Cannon addressed a meeting of local church leaders in which "he dwelt upon the iniquitous practice of Church members going to law against their brethren, instead of submitting disputes to the tribunals of justice instituted by the almighty among his people."[68]

Cannon was referring to ecclesiastical courts, which in the nineteenth century handled disputes of all kinds among church members. The notes of this meeting were published in the *Deseret News*, giving them a wide readership. It is plausible that the tense atmosphere contributed to Brown's later recollection. What is beyond dispute, however, is that by the 1850s, the power to exorcize was closely tied to the Melchizedek priesthood, but not yet to any particular hierarchical position. This would change in the late twentieth century.

Case 3: The Devil, the Female Voice, and Polygamy in the Southern States Mission

The mission fields have always provided many cases of possession and exorcism. An event that occurred in the Southern States Mission in the late 1880s illustrates some of the unexpected perils that participating in the theatrics of exorcism entailed. In 1888, a Mormon woman reported that she was possessed by "a devil," and she requested that the local missionaries perform an exorcism. The missionaries happily complied, laying hands on her head and casting the evil spirit from her. The missionaries reported that the exorcism was successful. It appears that she followed the script when the priesthood power cast the Devil out, thus reaffirming the truth claims of the LDS church and the power of the missionaries over Satan and his forces. However, she then improvised on the script when she began to claim to be receiving divine revelation for the missionaries. These revelations appeared benign at first. She "revealed many truths to them pertaining to their labors, informing them how to avoid danger that threatened them, which they did."

She also predicted that a sick child in the area would be cured, and when that turned out to be true, the missionaries began to take the prophetic claims of this woman very seriously. Unfortunately for the missionaries, the woman's revelations became much more grave. She claimed that God wanted one of the missionaries to take her as a plural wife and to take her back to Utah with them when they returned in the fall. The missionaries took this so seriously that they wrote to LDS church President Wilford Woodruff to ask his advice about the situation. Their chief concern was how to avoid being arrested for polygamy once the woman was taken as a plural wife. Woodruff did not respond to the missionaries directly, but rather sent their letter, along with a letter of his own, to the mission president. The mission president then investigated the matter, released the conference president, and gave the missionaries a "severe rebuke." The mission

president concluded that the woman had been possessed *the entire time*, explaining that a second demon must have entered her immediately after the first one had been cast out. The mission president explained:

> The object of this evil spirit was to get these Elders to commit adultery with this woman. They had no right to receive revelations through this or any other woman. If the Lord had any thing to reveal to them, pertaining to their duties, it was their privilege to receive the revelation. The Elders are not sent out here to get wives, they are sent to preach the Gospel; and strictly commanded to let women alone. These Elders debased their priesthood in making it subject to the Devil, through this woman. This was a married woman, and had three children, which alone should have been sufficient for the Elders to know that they were being deceived.[69]

This is an example of possession being used for multiple purposes by different actors. First, the woman in the case used her possession to get the attention of the missionaries, who duly, and, to their understanding successfully, performed the ritual expulsion of the evil spirit from her. This allowed her then to begin giving the missionaries "revelations." It is clear that this woman was attempting to convince one of the missionaries to take her as a plural wife and take her back to Utah, either in spite of or because of the fact that she was married with three children. One might reasonably conclude that she presented her revelations on this subject in the hopes that the missionaries would believe they were divine, which they apparently did. The idea of possession was not re-introduced into the scenario until the mission president arrived, clearly angry and no doubt still stinging from the letter he had received from Woodruff. The mission president then deployed the concept of possession to marginalize the "revelations" that the woman had received, causing the author of this account to retrofit the narrative to include a second possession.

It is important to recognize that the mission president could have chosen other ways to explain the situation. He could, for example, have simply asserted that the unnamed woman was lying in a rather transparent attempt to begin a relationship with one of the missionaries. The fact that he chose instead to explain the entire event as the result of demonic possession demonstrates not only the strength of belief in the phenomenon among Mormons in the late nineteenth century, but also the usefulness of possession as an explanation for failed or otherwise objectionable and unauthorized "revelation," something that had posed problems for Mormonism since its earliest days.[70]

Compounding the problem of unauthorized revelation, at least from the standpoint of the mission president, was that the false revelations were coming from a woman. Among the revelations that the woman dictated to the elders were several dealing with polygamy. She "revealed many truths pertaining to plural marriage. Told them it was of God; that it was pleasing in His sight when his servants entered into that order, that they would be blessed for so doing. & many other things pertaining to this holy order of marriage told them that this woman was a favored woman of the Lord." Although the mission president later asserted unequivocally that it was "the Devil . . . giving these revelations through this woman," the pattern of the revelation and its subject matter would have been familiar to the missionaries. In fact, this very type of revelatory process had been used by men to convince women to enter into plural marriages with them from the time of Joseph Smith. The sources themselves are not explicit enough on this point to parse the issue with any certainty, but knowing that, within Mormonism, women are ecclesiastically subordinate to men raises questions about the gendered subtext of this entire encounter.

Case 4: The Routinization of the Devil

The final case examined in this article comes from the 1970s, a decade during which popular interest in possession and exorcism was intense. The 1973 release of William Friedkin's film *The Exorcist*, based on the best-selling book of the same name by William Peter Blatty, had wide-ranging cultural influence. Sociologist Michael Cuneo notes that in the 1960s "exorcism was all but dead and forgotten," but that by the mid-1970s it had "sprung back to life [and] exorcism was in hot demand."[71] American Catholics, who had been the major keepers of exorcistic practice among Christians for centuries, had shied away from the practice. Especially after the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), American Catholics wanted to do away with the practice altogether. Very few exorcists even existed within the dioceses of the United States. Cuneo links the publication of William Peter Blatty's book and the popularity of the film upon which it was based to the possession boom. Cuneo even coined a phrase to describe this: "the Blatty Factor." What is interesting about this is that, in addition to a renewed demand for exorcism among American Catholics, American Protestant groups, too, began to show tremendous interest in the practice for the first time in centuries. Protestants called their dispossession rituals "acts of deliverance" and "deliverance ministries," began to spring up with the sole purpose of detecting possessed persons and, via prayer, verbal

and physical interaction with the demon, and the use of apotropaic objects, expelling the demon from its host. *The Exorcist* influenced the ways in which people behaved when possessed. Cuneo notes that the emergence of the "hero priest" as well as a resurgence in the behaviors described in the Roman Catholic diagnostic lists formed a major part of the new possession claims that emerged in the 1970s. Even the Protestant deliverance ministries followed these trends.

Mormonism was not immune to the Blatty Factor. In 1977, then-church historian Leonard Arrington attended a dinner for a handful of people in Salt Lake City. Present at the dinner, and slated to address the group, was a man named M. Russell Ballard. Ballard had recently returned from serving as a mission president in Toronto, Canada, and had since been called as a general authority of the LDS church. Ballard's remarks that evening focused on an experience he had while a mission president in which he performed an exorcism.[72]

According to Ballard, a woman who lived within the mission boundaries began to exhibit "signs of possession" during a group trip to the LDS temple in Washington, D.C. She was behaving strangely on the trip down but was perfectly fine within the temple only to resume her behavior once she got out. Ballard eventually heard about this case from the missionaries who had been visiting the woman and trying to cast out whatever evil presence had possessed her, and he decided to visit her himself. When he arrived, even before he entered the house, the woman shouted, "Don't let that man in, don't let that man in!" This is an example of what Cuneo calls the "hero-priest" phenomenon. In *The Exorcist*, the demon that is possessing the young girl both fears and longs to fight with a *specific priest*. When that priest arrives at the house where the possessed girl lives, the demon cries out the priest's name in a tone of both agony and expectation, and, as Cuneo describes it, the presence of the heroic priest yields "an almost palpable sense of relief and gratitude."[73]

In the Ballard case, the possessed woman behaves in a remarkably similar fashion. The possessed woman recognizes that this particular individual is to be feared far more than any of the other priestly functionaries who had been involved up to this point. Additionally, she announces that fact in a loud voice just as Ballard arrives. This is very close to the scene portrayed in *The Exorcist*. I do not believe that Ballard ever read or saw *The Exorcist*. It is entirely possible, however, that the possessed woman had seen the film and was using it, as so many others did during this time frame, as the accepted typology for possession.

Despite the demonic objection, Ballard entered the home and "saw a face that was contorted in such a way that she was

unrecognizable. She spoke with a completely different voice than her regular voice, a deep voice. She spoke in a different manner than she had ever been known to do previous to these attacks." Ballard accepted these signs as genuine. He instructed the woman's Stake President to lay his hands on her once again. This blessing, unlike the ones performed by the missionaries, did have some impact. Ballard, who had by this point identified the possessing spirit as Satan himself, claimed to feel Satan leave the woman but remain in the room. Soon, however, the Devil returned and again took possession of the woman. At this point, Ballard took over the exorcism himself. He laid his hands on the woman's head and carried on a "dialogue" with the Devil for twenty to thirty minutes before eventually casting him out for good, "not only from the body of the woman but from the room completely."

After telling this dramatic story, Ballard offered his interpretation of the events. The Devil possessing the woman had not wanted Ballard to enter the home because Ballard "was the ultimate Church authority in the region." This was also the reason that "the Stake President was not able to use his authority to banish the demon" completely. Ballard thus saw the entire encounter as one not of priesthood authority (because all of the men holding the Melchizedek priesthood have the same authority) but of Satan's respect for hierarchical bureaucracy. At various levels of ecclesiastical administrative authority, the Devil seemed to respond differently. He apparently could ignore the missionaries completely, but he had to respond in a limited way to the adjurations of the Stake President. Only Ballard, "the ultimate authority in the region," however, could command Satan to leave permanently.[74]

In addition to providing yet another example of Cuneo's "Blatty Factor" at work, this story has important implications for how late twentieth-century Mormonism was coming to draw an increasingly sharp distinction between hierarchical position and priesthood power. It is unclear why the Devil, who seemed to wield considerable volition in this episode, did not continue to possess the woman until being cast out by the President of the LDS church himself. The logic of the situation would seem to dictate that course of action. Naturally, there are practical problems with something like that. The Devil thus acquiesced to the highest ranking church functionary *who could conveniently present himself*. This is an important component of the story because it suggests that Ballard, at least, believed that the Devil had to respect not only the authority of the Mormon priesthood, but also the logistics of the hierarchy.

It is true that Mormons had, since the 1830s, observed rather authoritarian hierarchies. In this case, however, there seems to be a

conflation of two Mormon concepts: priesthood and priesthood "keys." According to LDS doctrine, the authority to lay on hands for physical blessing and the power to command evil spirits in the name of God are conferred upon every person ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood, regardless of hierarchical position. Priesthood keys are specific rights given to individuals who hold a certain position within the church. The President of the LDS church is the only person on the earth authorized to hold and exercise all such keys. These "keys" give individuals the authority to perform specific tasks. For example, someone who performs sealings (marriages) in an LDS temple holds the Melchizedek priesthood and the keys to perform this sealing ritual. Simply holding the priesthood is not enough. Similarly, the Bishop of a ward has the Melchizedek priesthood, but he also holds the keys that allow him to hear confessions, call people in his ward to certain positions, and authorize the performance of rituals such as communion and baptism for those within his ward boundaries. A member of that Bishop's ward who holds no keys is still equal to the Bishop and, in fact, the President of the church, in his rights to invoke the power of the priesthood to perform ritual blessings, of which exorcisms seem to be a subset.

Doctrinally, since the 1831 Hiram Page incident, revelation is similarly hierarchical in nature. That is, an individual is only permitted to receive revelation pertaining to that sphere over which he or she is responsible. A Bishop cannot receive revelation about the governance of a stake, and no one but the President of the church may receive revelation pertaining to the church as a whole. However, the priesthood is not completely hierarchical. All worthy Melchizedek priesthood holders theoretically have the same amount of "power," but they do not hold the same "keys." It has never been part of LDS doctrine or policy that invoking the priesthood to cast out evil spirts is associated with any special priesthood keys, but rather it is part of the general "power" bestowed on those ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood. In this story, Ballard holds the "keys" associated with being a mission president. That affords him certain types of authority over missionaries, but it does not, doctrinally speaking, give him any greater power to evict the Devil than anyone else who holds the Melchizedek priesthood, although he seems to think that it does.

Perhaps coincidentally, this story was told at a time when the LDS church hierarchy was expanding more rapidly than it had for more than a century. In October 1976, LDS President Spencer W. Kimball significantly expanded the third-highest body of LDS General Authorities, known as the Quorum of the Seventy. In 1975, the First Council of the Seventy consisted of seven members. In 1976, the First Council was

dissolved and replaced by the First Quorum of the Seventy, a group that had thirty-nine members, one of whom was M. Russell Ballard. The reasons for this expansion, according to Kimball, were "the accelerated, worldwide growth of the Church" the pressing need "to handle efficiently the present heavy workload and to prepare for the increasing expansion and acceleration of the work."[75] At the same time, the church was working hard to create uniformity in everything from building design to Sunday School lessons. Called "correlation," this effort shifted control over local affairs to church headquarters and thereby increased the importance and power of General Authorities vis-à-vis local leadership. Ballard's story of possession and exorcism, while only a single data point, fits well into the 1970s context that combined an increased popular interest in particular modes of possession and exorcism, an increasingly important and large church bureaucracy, and a tilt away from local autonomy to a more fully articulated model of uniformity and centralized control.

Conclusion

By combining approaches from ritual studies with documentary materials dealing with possession and exorcism accounts from Mormon history, it becomes possible to locate Mormonism in the American religious landscape over an extended period of time. It becomes clear that Mormons in the American context drew on a wide range of intellectual, theological, and ritual precedents to construct a diabology and exorcistic ritual practices that differed from both Catholic and Protestant approaches to the Devil. Despite official silence on the subject of possession and exoricism, Mormons have maintained for nearly two centuries a vibrant mythos and ritual system that both acknowledges the possibility of possession and provides a ritual for remedying that possibility. Acknowledging the richness of Mormon exorcistic ritual action allows us to view possession accounts in a more nuanced, sophisticated manner. For Mormons, possession and exorcism function on multiple levels, from the cosmic to the practical. This study also shows that each case, while sharing general traits, also requires local contextualization in order to understand the unique and complex dynamics at work. Thus, Mormon possession and exorcism accounts reveal broad beliefs, like the ongoing cosmic warfare between God and the Devil, but they also illumine more pedestrian trends, such as the shift toward standardization and the sacralization of bureaucracy. Similarly, cases reveal sub rosa social tensions, such

as the fear of women stepping "out of their places." When considered within a properly broad context, the cases also illustrate the interaction, often unspoken, between Mormonism and American popular and religious culture.

Notes

* At the top of the LDS Church hierarchy is the First Presidency, which consists of the President and two counselors. Next in authority is the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles which consists of men who are designated as "special witnesses of Christ." These are lifetime appointments. Below them are the various Quorums of the Seventy. Members of these three groups are known as "General Authorities" (as opposed to lay "Local Authorities" such as Stake Presidents and Bishops) and they are full-time, paid employees of the LDS Church.

1. Christopher J. Blythe, "Vernacular Mormonism: The Development of Latter-Day Saint Apocalyptic, 1830–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2014).

2. Marion G. Romney, "Satan, the Great Deceiver," *Ensign*, February 2005. https://www.lds.org/ensign/2005/02/satan-the-great-deceiver?lang=eng. Retrieved January 30, 2015.

3. Eric D. Huntsman, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014), 85.

4. William James discusses his theory of live options in his 1896 lecture "The Will to Believe." The category is explicated at length in John H. Whittaker, "William James on 'Overbelief' and 'Live Options,'" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 14 (1983): 203–16.

5. Blythe offered the first rigorous and interpretative exploration of exorcism and possession as a method of nineteenth-century Mormon identity formation in the first two chapters of his excellent dissertation. Blythe, "Vernacular Mormonism."

6. There are very few rituals that, particularly in the nineteenth century, evaded official description. Exorcism is one example and another is "deathbed dedication."

7. Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 104.

8. Vision, Hiram, Ohio, February 16, 1832; in Revelation Book 2, pp. 1–10; handwriting of Joseph Smith and Frederick G. Williams; LDS Church Archives. Holograph available as a digital image at http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76?p=3.

9. In Smith's teachings, the Devil's angels were those spirits who chose to follow him when he was cast out of heaven. They are, then, of the same heavenly family as human beings, but without physical bodies.

10. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, in L. John Nuttall, "Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book," pp. 7–8, Vault MSS 790; Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904; 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Hereafter referred to as BYU.

11. Joseph Smith Sermon, May 21, 1843, recorded by Howard Coray. MSS 1422; Coray family papers; 19th Century Western and Mormon Manuscripts; BYU.

12. See Mark, 5.

13. Entry June 22, 1856, in Wilford Woodruff Journal, v. MS 1352, Box 2, Folder 3, LDS Church Archives. In this, as in many other things, Young was in disagreement with LDS Apostle Parley Pratt. Pratt argued that it was not the spirits who had followed Lucifer to earth who possessed humans, but rather it was the "spirits of the departed, who are unhappy, [and who] linger in lonely wretchedness about the earth. The more wicked of these are the kind spoken of in Scripture, as "*foul spirits*," "*unclean spirits*," spirits who . . . sometimes enter human bodies, and will distract them, throw them into fits, cast them into the water, into the fire, &c. They will trouble them with dreams, nightmare, hysterics, fever, &c. They will also deform them in body and in features, by convulsions, cramps, contortions, &c., and will sometimes compel them to utter blasphemies, horrible curses, and even words of other languages." Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 115.

14. "Spirit Possession," *Deseret Evening News*, July 3, 1909, 4.

15. Truman G. Madsen, *The Sacrament: Feasting at the Lord's Table* (Provo, Amalphi Publishing, 2008), 135.

16. Joseph Smith introduced the "endowment" ritual in 1843, but it is unclear when the lines regarding possession were added because no reliable script of the ritual exists before 1984. Summaries of the ritual date

to the 1840s, but none purport to be actual transcripts. The relevant line regarding possession was included in the 1984 version and remains there.

17. Revelation, December 7, 1830, Manuscript Revelation Book 1, in Robert Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*, Revelations and Translations, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012), 384. Hereafter referred to as JSP.

18. Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 145.

19. David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 8–11.

20. H. C. Erik Midelfort, "The Devil and the German People: Reflections on the Popularity of Demon Possession in Sixteenth-Century Germany," *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Steven Ozment (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Publishers, 1989), 103.

21. Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among the Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 27.

22. Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Story of the Historical Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1993), 3.

23. Brian P. Levack, *Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 33. The five most detailed exorcisms in the New Testament are found in Mark 1:21–28, Matthew 8:28–32, Mark 7:25–30, Mark 9:14–29, and Mark 3:22–27.

24. Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 10.

25. For a detailed discussion of the role of the Satan character in the New Testament, see Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage, 1995).

26. Levack, *Devil Within*, 6–15.

27. Parley Pratt produced the same type of diagnostic list in 1855 in *Key to the Science of Theology*, 115–16.

28. Annette Yoshiko Reed, "The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (June 2004): 154.

29. Maxwell E. Johnson, "The Apostolic Tradition," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 39.

30. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 91.

31. Ryan Stark, *Rhetoric, Science, and Magic in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 28.

32. On the issue of cessationism and its effects on Protestants of all stripes, see Ralph Del Colle, "Miracles in Christianity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, ed. Graham H. Twelftree (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 235–51.

33. See, for example, the case of the possession of Hartford, Connecticut, resident Ann Cole. Cole's "possession" led to no dispossession ritual, but it did launch the second-largest witch hunt in New England history. A wide range of primary source material dealing with the Cole case is published in David D. Hall, ed., *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638–1693* (Boston: Northeastern University Press), 148–69.

34. W. Scott Poole, *Satan in America: The Devil We Know* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 3–32, *passim*. There is some debate among scholars about the frequency of demonic possession in Colonial America. Poole argues, as I do, that the occurrences were so infrequent and so insignificant in comparison to the reports of witches' contracts with Satan, that they cannot be properly understood as a live element of the early Puritan worldview. Others, like Richard Godbeer, attribute much greater significance to the possession accounts from the period. Although the issue remains disputed, it has highlighted the need for greater scholarly study of the subject. For Godbeer's perspective see his *The Devil's Dominion: Religion and Magic in Early America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

35. For a detailed discussion of "possessed accusers," see Alison Games, *Witchcraft in Early North America* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 65–71.

36. Amanda Witmer, *Jesus, The Galilean Exorcist* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 23.

37. Patrick W. Carey, *Catholics in America: A History* (London: Praeger, 2004), 55.

38. James Kent Stone, *The Invitation Heeded: Reasons for a Return to Catholic Unity* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1870), 76. For a discussion of Stone, see Robert Bruce Mullin, *Miracles and the Miraculous in the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 109.

39. Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 188–89.

40. Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 57. It is worth noting that even at the height of American Evangelical belief in a physically violent Devil, the notions of bodily possession and exorcism were largely ignored.

41. Poole, *Satan in America*, 58.

42. Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 73.

43. Thomas Coke to John Wesley, April 17, 1784, Typescript, Papers of Dr. Thomas Coke, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester, U.K., PLP 28.5.16a. I am indebted to Christopher Jones for bringing this document to my attention.

44. Information on this publication is found in Rosemary Taylor, "English Baptist Periodicals, 1790–1865," *Baptist Quarterly* 27 (April 1977): 62. Taylor notes specifically that this publication's "reputation for conservatism was justified."

45. "Diabolical Possession," *Christian Secretary*, May 29, 1829, 8:19, 76.

46. "The Demoniacs of the New Testament, [After the German of Dr. Ebrard by Professor Reubelt]," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, July 1857, 9:405.

47. Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Histories, 1832–1844*, Histories, vol. 1, JSP, 116.

48. Christopher C. Jones, "The Power and Form of Godliness: Methodist Conversion Narratives and Joseph Smith's First Vision," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Spring 2011): 88–113.

49. JSP, *Histories*, 1:214.

50. Joseph Smith History, Draft 2, ca. 1838–1841, in JSP, *Histories*, 1:384. For reasons that are unclear, Knight did not offer his own account of the possession/exorcism in his autobiography. Instead, he simply reproduced Smith's account of the events. It must be noted that there are two potential problems with the document because the account of the Knight exorcism is recorded eight years after the event itself. The first is the simple, and common, tendency for events to be misremembered as time passes. There is no question that Smith performed an exorcism in 1830, because the *Palmyra Reflector*, a New York newspaper that mocked Smith and his followers relentlessly, published a piece in the June 30, 1830, edition that satirized the event. Second, and more complex, is the possibility that Smith, having developed and refined his theological notions on the subject of Satan, the body, and God between 1830 and 1838, may have read the newer ideas back into the earlier event. Despite the potential for problems with this source, it is the only extant first-person record of the event.

51. Dogberry, *Palmyra Reflector*, June 30, 1830.

52. For a discussion of Woodruff's retrofitted journal entry, see Benjamin E. Park, "'A Uniformity So Complete': Early Mormon Angelology and Microhistorical Theology," *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 2 (2010): 30.

53. Knight's aunt had taken to her bed and was in tremendous pain. Knight became convinced that the woman was possessed by the Devil when she claimed that she was about to die "for the redemption of this generation, as Jesus-Christ had died for the generation in his day." Knight concluded that "Satan had . . . put a lying spirit in her mouth." Newel Knight, "Autobiography," MS 19156, fd1, 189–94, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

54. Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, vol. A-1, created June 11, 1839–August 24, 1843; Digitized image of original holograph available at http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1–23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=139&highlight=annoyer.

55. Non-Mormon observers bristled at the use of the Knight story to strengthen Smith's prophetic bona fides. In response to the

1909 *Deseret News* article mentioned above, a Catholic newspaper, *the Intermountain Catholic*, published a piece entitled, "The Obsession of Newel Knight." Although the author of the article accepted the reality of both possession in general and the possession and exorcism of Newel Knight in particular, he rejected the belief that the exorcism was evidence that "God approved of the teachings of Joseph Smith." Rather, he argued that "the expulsion of the evil spirit derived its effect from the name of Jesus, not from any grace inherent in the Mormon Prophet." "The Obsession of Newel Knight," *The Intermountain Catholic*, July 17, 1909.

56. Joseph Smith to Hyrum Smith, March 3–4, 1831, original in Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives. Digitized scan of original holograph available at the Joseph Smith Papers Project, http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-hyrum-smith-3-4-march-1831?p=2.

57. MSS 497; Lorenzo Brown diary and autobiography, January 29, 1839; 19th Century Western and Mormon Manuscripts; BYU. Brown also notes that his first exposure to Mormonism involved seeing "an elderly man speaking in tongues."

58. Lorenzo Brown Autobiography, January 1, 1856, 1. MSS 497, BYU.

59. George H. Crosby, Jr., "What I Remember of the Benjamin Brown Family," n.p., 1933, copy in author's possession. While stories of various supernatural experiences persisted in Brown family lore, the story of the exorcism apparently dropped out since it was included neither in Crosby's 1933 account nor in Lorenzo Brown's own 1856 summary of his life.

60. Benjamin Brown, "Account of the Healing of Sister Crosby," MS 5645, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah. Although the document is undated, the event must have occurred in early 1839, before the members of the branch relocated to Nauvoo, Illinois, to join with the main body of Mormons.

61. The issue of gender and blessings for health or exorcism is controversial. In 1842, Joseph Smith told members of the LDS church's women's organization, the Relief Society, that the signs that follow believers, and he explicitly mentioned the power to cast out devils "follow[s] all that believe whether male or female." "Minutes of the Proceedings of

the Sixth Meeting of the Society, 28 April 1842," Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, LDS Church History Library, MS 7238, 33. Notwithstanding this admonition, exorcisms performed by women must at this point have been rare; I found none in my research. There is, however, much more evidence of a long history of Mormon women laying on hands for the healing of the sick.

62. Poole, *Satan in America*, 42

63. Foucault, *Abnormal*, 206.

64. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 67.

65. Benjamin Brown, *Testimonies for the Truth*, (Liverpool: S.W. Richards, 1853); republished in *Gems for the Young Folks* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881), 72–73.

66. "Discourse, Given by Elder Joseph F. Smith, in Paris, Idaho, 19 August 1883," *Deseret News*, Semi-Weekly, October 2, 1883, 1.

67. Blythe, "Vernacular Mormonism," 71.

68. "Priesthood Meeting," *Deseret News*, November 5, 1879, 10. A Stake President is a lay ecclesiastical leader who presides over several congregations. A Stake is roughly equivalent to a Catholic diocese.

69. James G. Duffin Journal, Southern States Mission, 211–13. MSS 1696, BYU.

70. See, for example, the 1830 case of Hyrum Page and his seer stone.

71. Michael W. Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), xiv.

72. All quotes from this section are from Leonard J. Arrington's Journal, August 1977, MSS 10, Box 33, fd 1, Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Utah State University Special Collections, Logan, Utah.

73. Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 9.

74. A similar dynamic occurred during the possession of Nicole Aubrey in Laon, France, in 1566. In that case, it was the "demon" within the possessed person who demanded that only a Catholic Bishop could

successfully complete the ritual. See the Jonathan L. Pearl, *Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France, 1560–1620* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 44.

75. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Reconstitution of the First Quorum of the Seventy," October 1, 1976. https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1976/10/the-reconstitution-of-the-first-quorum-of-the-seventy?lang=eng. Accessed January 22, 2015.

ABSTRACT Since its inception in 1830, an important feature of Mormonism has been its belief in a literal Devil and in the ability of the Devil to possess human beings. Despite the pervasiveness of these beliefs and practices, Mormon possession and exorcism is a largely unstudied phenomenon. What follows is a careful study of four historical accounts of Mormon exorcism rituals dating from 1830, 1839, 1888, and 1977, and their narrative presentations. This article traces the development of Mormon possession/exorcism beliefs and practices and situates them within their larger historical contexts. The article also describes the relationship between Mormon dispossession rituals and the dispossession rituals of Protestant and Catholic groups in American history and presents through a consideration of the impact of broader American cultural trends on the theory and practice of Mormon exorcism from 1830 to 1977.

Keywords: Mormon, exorcism, demon, ritual, cult