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Twelve Diatribes of Modern Israel

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This essay serves as a testimony to modern Israel – the Latter-day Saints – that we are beginning to resemble God’s ancient covenant people in ways that conflict with our high ideals. Some parallels between the two peoples provide a yardstick by which we can judge ourselves. Unfortunately, these parallels paint a dismal picture of where we are headed and what is in store.

If the type or pattern we draw from the parallels holds true,¹ then by following the parallels through to their conclusion we will know what to expect in our generation. Next to actual prophecy, scriptural types provide the most reliable guide to the future, particularly to the last days. Indeed, all true prophets prophesy, more or less, using types and shadows from Israel’s ancient past to predict the future. By familiarizing ourselves with the ancient types, we will know both a sickness and its cure; we will recognize our present condition and know what its outcome must be.

Because biblical parallels do not directly threaten us, we could keep ourselves aloof from their message. Such aloofness, I would point out, is out of character with the man whom I salute in this essay: Hugh Nibley exemplifies one who comes to terms with hidden errors, who searches out the truth, who speaks the unspeakable. He frankly criticizes the Saints, warning and admonishing as well as

teaching and instructing them. He serves as a perfect example of the Lord sending “prophets, *and* wise men, and scribes” to his people (Matthew 23:34; emphasis added). Many times he has laid his reputation on the line, with strong reactions, both positive and negative, to his scripturally based arguments. He has served as conscience of his people, a role that has borne much good fruit in the lives of Latter-day Saints.

In seeking to apply the parallels of biblical history explicitly to ourselves, I have chosen the term *diatribe* to express their message. Some may think that in so doing I am even more severe than Brother Nibley. One has but to recall his “How Firm a Foundation?” and “Forty Variations on an Unpopular Theme,” however, to recognize that this essay falls firmly within the Nibley tradition. If all is not well in Zion, then what is not well? An answer to this question is idolatry.

I therefore discuss in these pages twelve kinds of idolatry that have become as prevalent among ourselves as among so-called Gentiles. (Of course, by adopting the customs of the Gentiles, Israel always jeopardized her status as a chosen people. When ancient Israel did not repent of the idolatrous practices she learned from the Gentiles, the Lord cut the people off from his presence and destroyed them. In one instance, he removed the gospel from a certain group of people and gave it to another.) By choosing these twelve categories of idolatry, I do not mean to limit the parallels to them. There exist other forms as well as subforms of idol worship, but I point to these twelve as some of the more obvious or pernicious.

When speaking of idolatry, we often think of people venerating statues, bowing down before “dumb idols,” or perhaps participating in processions with icons raised on portable pedestals. People still perpetuate these ancient kinds of idolatry, though not the Latter-day Saints. Idolatry nonetheless assumes many forms besides these, less tan-

gible than statue worship perhaps, but just as virulent. All idolatry diverts the attention from the true God and his law to a counterfeit. Much of such idolatry is a corruption of what is sacred. The final test in the scriptures of whether a god is true or false is whether he saves his people in the Lord's day of judgment.² The ancient prophets made sport of those who, having rejected the Lord God, clung to false gods for deliverance in the time of trouble.³

The first of the Ten Commandments acknowledges the existence of other gods by saying, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me" (Deuteronomy 5:7). It then qualifies idolatry as anything less than loving the Lord God "with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5; compare 5:10). Israel's earliest history is full of admonitions to refrain from "going after the gods of the peoples round about" (Deuteronomy 6:14; 13:1-18; Joshua 23:6-8). These ground rules let everyone know that true worship exists within an extremely narrow compass. Idolatry thus becomes identical with the broad way, the way of the world and nations who surround Israel. God's covenant people maintain their special status so long as they worship God alone.⁴ In the biblical pattern of the conquest of Canaan, God will ultimately destroy and dispossess those who indulge in idol worship.⁵

Speaking of Latter-day Saints as idolaters may seem contradictory. Surely, of all peoples on the earth we know best "how to worship, and . . . what [we] worship" (D&C 93:19). Yet it was necessary for the Lord to restore the pure knowledge of God in all dispensations of the gospel. And every dispensation entered on its pathway to apostasy when the people compromised the worship of God with the conventions of men. To love and serve God – to worship him alone – at all times meant keeping his commandments,⁶ not in isolation from the world, but in puritanical contrast to universal and prevailing custom.⁷ The scriptures from the beginning mark the Gentiles – all nations

except Israel – as idolaters.⁸ Among the Gentiles, worship of the true God was either nonexistent or perverted, rendering it ineffectual.⁹

The practices of the world deceive the heart (Deuteronomy 11:16). The whole heart must be preoccupied with the things of God and must constantly “remember” his commandments in order to maintain true worship (Numbers 15:39-41). When the Lord’s people experience a change of heart because of idolatry, they alienate themselves from the Lord so that they will not hear (Deuteronomy 30:17). They allow themselves to believe that the scriptures, particularly in addressing the wicked deeds of the Lord’s people, do not apply to them (cf. Alma 21:6). We feel that prophecies having negative connotations must refer to the Jews or to the Gentiles, surely not to us. In short, idolatry forms an inductive practice: once we get caught up in it, the habit carries its own momentum and supplies its own rationale.

The Lord gave Israel a special charge, therefore, never to depart from his commandments “to the right hand or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:32). In observing these commandments, Israel should “not add thereto, nor diminish from [them]” (Deuteronomy 12:32). The worship of God must not merely encompass everything, but must retain its purity to be acceptable. It leaves no gray areas of life unaccounted for by divine law. Worship does not function when customs alien to the law of God sully it. Every dispensation of the gospel, whether it taught a higher or a lesser law, demonstrates this kind of apostasy. Israel’s righteousness has ever been synonymous with observing to “do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded” (Deuteronomy 6:25). Given such a charge, there is no room for saying, “All is done” (2 Nephi 31:19), “It is enough” (cf. 2 Nephi 28:30), or “All is well” (2 Nephi 28:25).

In pointing to parallels of idolatry between the Lord’s

people anciently and today, we must not presume that people worship false gods exclusively. Among the Lord's people, worship of the true God is rarely done away with. Rather, as a rule people worship the true God alongside the false gods. They maintain a careful equilibrium in order to preserve an identity with the national God, the God of Israel or the fathers. At the same time, the people follow their own gods as they please. This happy medium enables people to satisfy both their carnal instincts and their spiritual aspirations. It causes the Lord's prophets to cry in anguished tones, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15), and "How long will ye halt between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21).

In some instances of idolatry, worship of the true God and the false becomes fused. Then the concept of the true God gets distorted, while the false gods assume the authenticity and endorsement that belong to the true God. Of all idolatry, the Lord finds such syncretism or fusion most intolerable. It epitomizes the idea of "philosophies of men mingled with scripture." Things incongruous with true worship thereby acquire an aura of sanctity. For the Lord's people, syncretism lies but one step away from severing spiritual roots. It forms the final stage of apostasy before the Lord brings on judgment.

Ironically, appearances of true worship persist in every stage of apostasy. A symptom of all phases of alienation is the stress that people lay on outward observance. Since false gods are the order of the day, people must scrupulously nurture the exterior of true worship, or all is lost. When people reach this point, they confuse righteousness with actively congregating and religiously performing ecclesiastical duties. In such worship, institutional convention soon becomes the enemy of spontaneity, resulting in dead, stereotypical devotion.

The writings of Isaiah, pertinent to our day,¹⁰ commence with his indictment of those who actively attend

religious meetings, who multiply sacrifices at the temple.¹¹ Because the outward form of worship remained strong in Jerusalem, Laman and Lemuel, in the hour of Judah's exile, asserted, "We know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments" (1 Nephi 17:22). Laban was an elder of the church (1 Nephi 4:22, 26), but his heart lusted after riches (1 Nephi 3:25). In actuality, the people of Jerusalem had "changed their gods" (Jeremiah 2:11). Their land was desolated because they were committing abominations, whoring after their idols (Ezekiel 6:9).

In biblical history, each experience of idol worship precedes a divine judgment, such as cataclysm, plague, famine, war, destitution, and desolation. In the last days, therefore, when all biblical types repeat themselves,¹² we may expect "the great day of the Lord" (D&C 43:17-22) — a period of judgment upon all nations of the earth — to commence when these ancient forms of idolatry reappear among the Lord's people. There exists no biblical type or precedent of the Lord bringing on a universal judgment until his own people wallow in apostasy. Their righteousness can stay such a judgment from the earth, but their wickedness constitutes its catalyst when the balance tips in favor of wickedness.¹³ Hence the scripture, "upon my house shall it begin" (D&C 112:25).

1. Images

The first of the Ten Commandments prohibits the Lord's people from having "other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). The expression, "before me" (Hebrew *al panāy*), however, literally means "before my face" or "in my presence." It signifies that idolatry cuts us off from the presence of the Lord; an idolater cannot behold his face.

But the first commandment specifies a particular kind of idolatry: the making of "graven images" and "like-

nesses" (Exodus 20:4). The Hebrew words for these terms (*pesel*; *tāmūnāh*) possess the additional connotations of "statue" and "picture." Israel must not make for herself graven images or statues, nor make likenesses or pictures of anything in the heavens above or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below the earth (Exodus 20:4). The scope of the prohibited imagery Moses defines as "any figure . . . male or female," including the likeness of any beast, bird, reptile, or fish (Deuteronomy 4:16-18). The purpose of this prohibition is that no one's heart "turn away" from the Lord to images (Deuteronomy 29:18), that the Lord's people do not bend down to them nor serve them (Exodus 20:5; 23:24).

Despite the great miracles of deliverance Israel's God wrought for his people, they quickly turned to other gods. The Old Testament is full of examples of the Lord's people making images for themselves after they inherited the promised land. They made images of the god Baal and set them up in a house of Baal (1 Kings 16:32; 2 Kings 10:26-27). They set up images in their own houses (Judges 17:4; 18:30) as well as in the houses of their gods (Nahum 1:14). They made images of men and "committed whoredoms" with them (Ezekiel 16:17). They "doted" upon images of the elite of Babylonian society, images in color, images of people in splendid attire (Ezekiel 23:14-16). In homage, as it were, to a urim and thummim, Gideon made an image of an ephod, and "all Israel went whoring after it" (Judges 8:27). The worship of cleverly fashioned images became a way of life, preoccupying the craftsman and patron alike (Hosea 13:2).

Common to all this sort of idol worship was an infatuation with the *image* of a thing rather than its reality. Images require time, energy, and materials to conceive and produce. When made, images represent the fruits of men's labors, something to admire and "dote" over. Meanwhile, people get distracted from what is real. God no longer

forms the center of their thoughts, and they have taken the thing they emphasize out of context. Even if they realize their error, however, people still want a return on their investment. They cannot simply discard the idol. Once they make it, it is hard to get rid of. Throughout this preoccupation, people “bend down” toward their idols—away from the Most High God. The word “serve” in Hebrew (*abad*)¹⁴ also means “work.” Whatever people *work* at—spend time and resources on, set their hearts upon—that they *serve*.

In effect, an obsession with unreality of one kind or another forms the crux of idolatry. For those on a low spiritual plane, something tangible or corporeal, such as an image, possesses more appeal than something intangible and incorporeal. Even the golden calf supposedly represented the Lord himself.¹⁵ Aaron called the orgy that attended the calf’s dedication a “feast unto the Lord” (Exodus 32:4-5).

When we neither see nor experience God, an image which *represents* him makes him much more real to us. The image brings him down to our level, limits him to our notion of him. God becomes something we can comfortably deal with, something we can sketch, sculpt, or paint, and mass produce. We can thus manipulate him according to our own image of him, until the idea of God no longer threatens us. Moreover, now that we have created a false god, our void is filled. Our “minds” or “hearts” (Hebrew *lebab*) are diverted, and we can the more easily leave off pursuing the real God.

Those who alienate themselves from the Creator find a ready diversion in images of the creature. They exchange the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, and beasts (Romans 1:23). They change the truth of God into a lie, worshiping the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). Such substitution leads directly to all kinds of lusts and wickedness (Romans 1:24, 26-32).

When we deviate from God's way to the right or to the left, we render ourselves vulnerable to sin, cut off from God's saving grace. Thus we find every form of moral perversity, from fornication to homosexuality, associated with idol worship.¹⁶

Because a deference to images leads to these abominations, the images themselves are "abominations" (Deuteronomy 27:15).¹⁷ Their substance of silver or gold – now polluted – also constitutes an "abomination," something that must be burned with fire (Deuteronomy 7:25) or ground to powder (Exodus 32:20; 2 Kings 23:6, 16). By the Lord's standard, even the idolaters themselves become "abominations" (Isaiah 41:24) and "pollutions" (Mormon 8:38). The end result of their life-style is to "perish quickly from off the good land" the Lord gave them (Joshua 23:16).¹⁸

Those who worship images thus participate in a grand subterfuge, one that endangers not only themselves but an entire people. As many biblical examples show, idolatry is contagious. Once an individual or group gets caught up with it, others tend to follow.¹⁹ Then, within a short time, everyone is doing it. But the idolaters do not recognize what happens to them. They become spiritual imbeciles and mindless without being aware of it (Jeremiah 51:17). Before they become aware, calamitous judgments fall upon them.²⁰ In the end, people deem the images to which they ascribe power to shape the course of history (Isaiah 48:5) as worthless, mere objects of mockery (Jeremiah 10:15).

Meanwhile, no one expects such a drastic result. Among idol worshipers no clear perception exists of impending calamity (Isaiah 57:1). Of God's hand in the affairs of men, idolaters are "unaware and insensible; their eyes are glazed so they cannot see, their minds are incapable of discernment" (Isaiah 44:18).²¹ Nor, in the end, can idolaters free themselves from the sudden catastrophe that overtakes them (Isaiah 47:11-14). They have long ceased

to deal spontaneously with spiritual verities (Isaiah 57:11-13). Their behavior when all was well conditions their behavior in the time of crisis (Isaiah 45:16, 20). They are not prepared for the bizarre reward of being unprofitable servants of the Lord (Isaiah 42:17-25).

Not much imagination is required to see parallels of image worship in the modern gentile culture, and thus among the Latter-day Saints. While statues and pictures of deity play their part, "images of the creature" appear much more prolifically. The greater part of today's entertainment industry comes to us in the form of images via television, movies, and videos. These comprise images of people, of birds and beasts, images in color, of male and female.

We put up the graven and molten apparatuses which transmit these images in our own houses as well as in houses set apart for that purpose. Upon these images we dote, preoccupied for hours at a time with our telestial urim and thummim. In order for the images to entertain us, we must bend ourselves down toward them. Preferably, we worship in the dark, like imbeciles mindless of one another. When a social need arises, we resent its intrusion. Our behavior toward one another is colored by what our images dictate. Their power, somehow, diverts our whole attention.

Moreover, to acquire an apparatus that transmits these images, we must spend precious resources, laboring for "what is not bread" (Isaiah 55:2). We set our hearts on the privilege of possessing such an apparatus as we would on a worthy goal. In this, too, there exists an element of competition with, and thus alienation from, others. Those of us who invest more resources than our neighbor will enjoy bigger and better images. Of course, we justify this investment on the basis of personal enjoyment. Make no mistake, the images are there for our self-gratification. When we invite others to view them with us, it palliates

our soul to know that they share the same interests. It normalizes an abnormal pastime.

Recent studies, for example, amply document the abnormal effects of watching television. The images our eyes see are stored permanently in our minds. There they mingle with images of the real world, confusing our perception of reality and affecting behavior. Watching television accustoms people to the sensational, the artificial, the novel, so that they begin to require a regular diet of these things to maintain their interest.²²

The answer to this need lies in watching more television, until its addictive and narcotic effect on people enslaves them. Because their minds and hearts dull toward quiet, normal, everyday happenings, reality appears drab and uninteresting.²³ Television advertising in part compensates for this by creating unnatural wants or needs in people. People satisfy these wants by selfishly indulging in consumer goods.²⁴

But more than this, television teaches a false social code, enculturating people, especially children, into norms of divorce, disrupted family life, the supremacy of the peer group, affluence, unisex, alcohol consumption, fast food or junk food habits, coercive health practices, and so forth. Closely linked to this chaotic social structure is television's false morality. While television defines no clear-cut standard of right and wrong and denies the concept of sin, it accepts immorality as normal. Because the finer human emotions are not portrayed well on this medium, television inculcates a national taste for what is depraved, coarse, and unintelligent.²⁵ It not only vulgarizes the use of language, but stunts its development, discouraging reading and intellectual growth.²⁶

That the effects of television, to name but one medium of modern imagery, parallel exactly those of ancient image worship – turning men's minds and hearts away from God, alienating people through a diet of permissiveness, car-

nality, and servility to a false moral code – we cannot deny. The prophet Micah foretells that images would prevail among the Lord’s people in the last days. Micah uses the common rhetoric of “graven images” and “standing images” in predicting that men will worship the works of their hands (Micah 5:13). Jesus affirms that Micah’s prophecy relates to the last days when he says that those who will not repent in that day will be cut off from the house of Israel (3 Nephi 21:17, 20).

John the Beloved saw that the ultimate human image will be that of the Antichrist, a tyrannical world-ruler who rises up in the last days.²⁷ John prophesies that all except a very few will worship the Antichrist’s image, an image that will “speak” and command worship (Revelation 13:4, 14-15). For this, the Lord will severely punish people (Revelation 14:9-11; 16:2). Only those who resist worshiping the image, on pain of death, will merit salvation (Revelation 15:2; 20:4). Of course, in order to worship the Antichrist, those now worshiping images will not switch to anything really new. His worship will merely climax a saga that even now is in full play.

2. Violence and Sex

The Lord, on many salient occasions, warned the Israelites through his prophets about their carelessness in letting their neighbors’ Baalism influence them.²⁸ Baalism itself, however, we have not understood well. The cult centers around a myth or fictional account of a life-and-death struggle between the gods. In this story, Baal, the hero, overpowers several rivals. He celebrates his prowess by having intercourse with Anath, his female partner.

The fullest available account of the myth comes from the Baal-Anath Epic of Ugaritic literature.²⁹ Its alternating scenes of violence and sex – reenacted in real-life dramas that took their cue from the Baal myth – become explicit in their descriptive detail. Pornographic and violent im-

agery, carved or painted, accompanied reenactments of the story. The myth so incited Israelites who exposed themselves to the Baal cult that forthwith they "played the harlot" with non-Israelite women, losing all awareness of their chosen status (Numbers 25:1, 6).

In the Ugaritic myth, Baal obtains permission from a higher authority, El, to command the gods Yamm (Sea) and Mot (Death) to comply with Baal's rule or face him in a confrontation. Yamm and Mot represent forces of chaos or disorder that will make trouble for Baal and for the world if Baal does not subdue them. They resist Baal's authority and each fights him to the death.

Sundry emissaries and cohorts assist Baal and his rivals in their life-and-death struggle. The versatile craftsman Koshar fashions the weapons Baal uses against his enemies. These weapons can kill, injure, or maim from a distance. As the central figure of the drama, Baal himself literally kicks up a storm, he being the "lord"³⁰ of thunder and lightning. Baal nonetheless suffers reverses and at one time appears dead. But with the timely aid of his violent consort, Anath, he escapes the clutches of death and wins the victory at the last. The myth thus credits Baal with restoring order in the world, everyone profiting from his extraordinary prowess. Sexual relations between him and Anath, hitherto hampered by adversity, now receive full expression in a lustful orgy.

In comparing the Baal myth with anything in today's culture, we recognize readily the basic plot that inspires so many movies and dramas in our media. Their very success lies in the amount of violence and sex they contain. The hero and his cohorts get authorization to kill and do anything they please, so long as they subdue the enemy and restore order. They do battle using weapons that kill and injure from a distance, weapons that strike swiftly like lightning, that clap aloud like thunder.

In fulfilling his bizarre task, the hero nonetheless ex-

periences setbacks, receives the wounds of battle, stares death in the face. But help always arrives in the nick of time, often by a woman driven to violence. In these stories, sexual aberrations abound – as they do in the Baal myth. Their scenes of sex and violence appear both subtle and explicit – as they do in the Baal myth. The many variations of their crude plots match ancient counterparts. In the biblical narrative we thus find Baal-Peor, Baal-Berith, Baal-Zebub, and other Baals.

The spilling over of violence and sex from fictitious dramas into real life is as well attested today as it was among the Canaanites.³¹ By making carnality legitimate in their culture, the Canaanites – and later the Israelites who conquered them – marked themselves ripe for destruction. Through the media that constitute an everyday part of our lives, we let characters enter our homes and minds to perform acts we abhor in real life.

The pornographic images our media depict – the licentious manner of the characters, their distorted standard of values, their predisposition to murder and violence – all subvert and pollute our minds and hearts. Once there, they become a part of us and we of them. By indulging such images we do the contrary of “stopping our ears at the mention of murder, shutting our eyes at the sight of wickedness” (Isaiah 33:15). Yet this forms the standard – an uncompromising standard – that the Lord makes a prerequisite of salvation.

3. Rock Music

The Lord commanded not just ancient Israel but every covenant people to keep themselves unspotted from the world.³² This commandment applied as much in the days before the Flood as it does in the latter days. One account of the period leading up to the Flood³³ tells how the people of the covenant, who lived on a high mountain plateau,

lost their chosen status: they let the people of Cain, who lived on the plain, entice them down the mountain.

From the days of Adam, the first man, the Lord commanded the children of the covenant “not to mingle with the children of Cain, and not to learn their ways” (2 *Adam and Eve* 19:4). In the days of Jared—whose name means “going down”—the children of the covenant nonetheless mingled with them and soon became as they were. When the Flood came, it swept away both, the people of Cain and of the covenant alike. Only Noah and his immediate family, as a type of things to come,³⁴ preserved their covenant status and were spared (Genesis 6:17-18).

Whether the account that the books of *Adam and Eve* give is accurate, or whether it represents but a folk memory, does not matter a great deal.³⁵ What matters is the thing it describes, a phenomenon that could occur among any chosen people.

The scriptures predict that the Flood and the apostasy that preceded it represent something that will repeat itself in the last days.³⁶ The kind of wickedness and corruption that filled the earth before the Flood (Genesis 6:5, 12) should therefore serve to forewarn us. We cannot—in the last days—presume to be on the side of Noah when we live the law of the people of Cain. Those whom the Lord preserved through the Flood anciently not only abstained from wickedness, but actively resisted its influence.³⁷ When, at the Flood, the Lord baptized the earth with water, Noah and his family alone merited deliverance. So also, in the last days, when the Lord cleanses the earth in a flood of fire, only those purified “as with fire” will be delivered.³⁸

The books of *Adam and Eve* identify drunkenness, licentiousness, hatred, murder, and secret combinations as existing among the children of Cain (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:4-10). With this, all known scriptural accounts of the period before the Flood concur.³⁹ Prophecies of the last days tell

us that these same evils will precipitate the Lord's judgments⁴⁰—until “the elements . . . melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12). In describing the period before the Flood, the books of *Adam and Eve* attempt to spell out what the scriptures say perfunctorily.

In brief, what enticed the people to come down from the Holy Mount and mingle with the children of Cain was the appeal of a certain kind of music. This music possessed the power to ravish people's souls (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:3). Once the people descended from the mount, all manner of lusts overcame them. The music had conditioned them for this (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:20, 30-32). The music transformed people who had kept the divine law, who had regularly prayed and fasted, from children of God into children of the devil (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:15-16, 27, 35).⁴¹ The music robbed people of their self-control, and thus of a measure of their agency (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:3, 9). The music's intensity and momentum, when played at all hours by impassioned musicians, inflamed people's hearts and won them over. A godly habit of life gave way to the abominations that were the commonplace of the Cainites (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:2, 4, 12-13).

The account relates how a man called Genun, whom Satan inspired, made various kinds of trumpets, horns, stringed instruments, cymbals, psalteries, lyres, harps, and flutes and “gathered companies upon companies to play on them” (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:2, 4). When Genun and his companions played the instruments, “Satan came into them, so that [out of] them were heard beautiful and sweet sounds that ravished the heart” (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:3). When the bands played, the children of Cain “burned as with fire” among themselves, and as a consequence Satan “increased lust among them” (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:4).

As the music became a part of everyday life, the bands gathered at the foot of the Holy Mountain for the purpose of letting the covenant people hear it (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:11).

After about a year of exposure to the music, many of the covenant people came regularly to look down at the musicians (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:12). Satan then again entered Genun. Satan “taught him to make dyeing-stuffs for garments of divers patterns, and made him to understand how to dye crimson and purple” (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:13). To those of the covenant people who came to be entertained, the Cainites “shone in beauty and gorgeous apparel, gathered together at the foot of the mountain in splendor, with horns and gorgeous dresses” (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:14).

When Satan revealed to Genun a way down from the Holy Mountain, Jared admonished his people that if they went down, God would not permit them to return (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:26). Over a period of time, however, company after company descended until but few remained (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:30; 21:1). For “when they looked at the daughters of Cain, at their beautiful figures, at their hands and feet dyed with color, tattooed in ornaments on their faces, the fire of sin kindled in them” (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:31). Moreover, “Satan made them look most beautiful,” so that the people lusted after each other like ravenous beasts, committing abominations and falling into defilement (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:32-34).

When, in remorse, some tried to return up the mount, they were unable. Having “come down from glory,” they had forsaken their purity and innocence (2 *Adam and Eve* 20:33-34). Through transgressing—to which the music incited them—the covenant people estranged themselves from being the people of God (2 *Adam and Eve* 21:4-5).

What strikes us about this story is how it resembles our society today. When we recognize the physical descent from the Holy Mount as symbolizing a spiritual descent, the account reads like a contemporary happening. Today, as then, the younger generation of the covenant people has commenced yielding to the enticement of this music.

If there exists any doubt that rock music ravishes the soul, inflames the heart, or sets on fire the lusts of the flesh, we have but to witness a concert by any well-known rock group. The spectacle they create – its fantasy, frenzy, and hysteria – appeals to the very basest of human emotions, and the physical appearance of the musicians – their gaudy and glittering attire and their lewd and suggestive gestures – parallel in every way the Cainites that the books of *Adam and Eve* describe. As Isaiah foresaw, “the look on their faces betrays them: they flaunt their sin like Sodom; they cannot hide it” (Isaiah 3:9).

We cannot explain away the fact that rock music today exemplifies what is “carnal, sensual, and devilish” (cf. Mosiah 16:3; Moses 5:13). Its origin in primitive jazz and soul music, and its “maturing” into hard, punk, and porno rock, mark it as “the way of Cain,” as “a corruption” and “a riot” (cf. Jude 1:11; 2 Peter 2:12-13). Its development into a modern cult, with its attendant rituals of liquor, prostitution, and drugs, attests to its satanic nature. In many instances, the musicians themselves confess to pacts with Satan, admitting that he inspires their music and lyrics.⁴² Scott Temple, a former hippie, calls the spirit of the music the “unholy ghost.”

Studies show that even milder kinds of rock music are but stepping stones to hard rock.⁴³ The principle holds true that once people wallow in the mire, they become the “servants of corruption” (2 Peter 2:17-22). Attempts to use rock music – a telestial medium – to convey the celestial message of the gospel constitute, at best, an abomination. Syncretism has ever sought to prostitute what is holy and sanction what is profane.

Since rock music entered Western culture in the 1950s, moral decline in Christian nations has reached an unprecedented low. Latter-day Saints who tolerate the cult are discovering, to their dismay, that their moral level is no higher than that of other Christians. Latter-day Saints have

perhaps taken longer to make the "descent," but moral problems of equal magnitude now plague Latter-day Saints and sectarian Christians.

As in the Babylon of Daniel and his companions, when we hear the sound of horns, flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, dulcimers, and all kinds of music, we worship at the shrine of its creators (Daniel 3:3-15). If any of us, therefore, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, would walk through the fire in the day of burning (Daniel 3:25),⁴⁴ it will be because, like them, we refuse to yield to an idolatrous music.

4. Organized Sports

A second propitious diversion that the Cainites used to entice the covenant people, mentioned only briefly, however, consists of organized sports (*2 Adam and Eve* 20:14). A much more telling example of organized sports, of a kind that swayed the Lord's people in another age, were the popular Greco-Roman games (cf. *1 Maccabees* 1:14; *1 Corinthians* 9:24-25). In the intertestamental and New Testament periods, the single greatest cultural seduction of the Lord's people was the influence of Hellenism. Those who immersed themselves in Greek and Roman culture, including the games, were thus called Hellenizers or Hellenists. Among the Jews these principally comprised the Sadducees, an aristocratic priestly class (although Hellenism affected all Jews to some extent).⁴⁵ Among the Christians, Hellenists formed the bulk of the Church's members from the second century of its existence.⁴⁶

In Palestine, the only legitimate repudiators of Hellenism, either Jewish or Christian, were the Dead Sea sectaries.⁴⁷ These formed an early type of the "church in the wilderness" when they left their urban brethren to dwell apart. Among the Christians, all ended in apostasy, with Hellenism as the chief cause.⁴⁸ Both Hellenizers and Jewish sectaries play an important role as types.

Interestingly, the Greco-Roman games appear to have originated in religious ritual associated with the ancient Near Eastern fertility cult.⁴⁹ An idolatrous amusement—one that turns men's hearts from the law of God to the law of the brute—organized sports had their heyday among the Romans. Although the early Romans adopted many aspects of Greek culture, including gymnasia, athletics, and rigorous disciplining, the Roman appetite far more than the Greek tended toward the sensational, spectacular, and barbaric. Historians link the very decline of Roman civilization to an inordinate disposition the general populace displayed for brute sports.⁵⁰

Participants nonetheless executed such sports with all the finesse and sophistication civilization could bring to bear. Elaborate stadiums, housing as many as 200,000 spectators, with gladiators disciplined and groomed for contests of skill combined with raw strength, characterized sports Roman style. The distinction between the Greek and Roman games coincided, in the main, with the amateur and professional status of the players. While the Greek games were more subdued, nonprofessional events, the Romans went all out in expenditure, professional training, and fanfare.⁵¹

The games, professional or nonprofessional, consisted of chariot races, running, discus throwing, spear throwing, boxing, wrestling, swordsmanship, and hunting. Men practiced for their contests in special barracks or athletic compounds, using primitive forms of weight training and exercise. Sports events followed set schedules in the yearly calendar, advertised by posters in every inhabited region. Contests took place in the gymnasia, amphitheaters, and circuses that were common to every city. All classes of society, drawn from both city and neighboring towns, attended the games.⁵²

Stadiums typically contained multiple entrances, stairways, tiers, and blocks of seating. Admission was facili-

tated by prepurchased tickets or, as in the case of officials, by virtue of reserved seats. Spectators not seated in the immediate proximity of a contest used a primitive form of field glasses. Great bands of musicians, organized in festal processions, blared on trumpets before and at intervals during the games.⁵³

Individual contestants often grew popular. They became household names, whom people knew by their personal statistics and professional records. Women adored certain gladiators almost as gods. People made predictions on the outcome of the games, betting with one another on the results. Vast, unruly crowds frequented the contests, waving handkerchiefs, shouting advice, approval, and insults, rising up from their seats during moments of suspense. When contests neared their conclusion, the fervor of the crowds often reached a dangerously feverish pitch, accompanied by calls for blood. People debated the results of the games long after the event.⁵⁴

As the decline of Roman civilization set in, the games became the total preoccupation of the elite as well as the masses; people made no pretense at anything higher in life. They devoted exorbitant resources to the games, so much that charitable programs rated a poor second.⁵⁵ Of all peoples in the Roman Empire, it seems only pious Jews shunned the games, considering them a heathen pastime.⁵⁶

In our own culture, a widespread and rapidly growing preoccupation with sports—whether football, basketball, baseball, athletics, boxing, wrestling, car racing, horse racing, hunting—must make us ask whether we, too, like the Romans and Hellenists, find ourselves in a state of moral and civil decline. Although our laws prohibit bloodshed, so explicit appear the parallels of human behavior that we cannot say that we are different. The abandon and frenzy of the human spirit at such events, the foul language, anger, and even bloodlust reflect the kind of coarse disposition the Romans displayed.

So all-consuming have today's games become that they govern people's very thoughts, moods, and actions. In the cause of sports, men desecrate the Sabbath. Family life suffers to the point that we hear of "sports widows and orphans." Upcoming events are no longer victories we ourselves win in working out our salvation, but the next game or the one after.

The fanfare and pageantry we impose on the games, the vast resources of money and man-hours we devote to organized sports, betray an entrenched cult, a full-blown diversion from life's real contest. It is of absolutely no consequence to us, in the eternal perspective, whether so-and-so wins a match, or whether such and such a team retains its ranking. Our all-absorbing quest to become Number One in sports means that we become second-string players, or perhaps mere bench warmers, in our quest for Zion. When we love sports with all our might, mind, and strength, as we do, we are indeed damnable idolaters. Once we catch its infectious spirit, it will not leave us alone. We must ever be following the progress of a team, making that, not the gospel, our daily talk, the focus of our thoughts. To be a "fan" of, or "faithful" to, something other than God means that we entertain a substitute for true worship.

The type we outline teaches us that few, if any, involvements with organized sports exist—in their modern embellished form—that are not idolatrous in nature, that do not divert the mind and heart from being preeminently involved with things of the spirit. This, of course, does not include our individual pursuit of excellence while magnifying our talents. But where sports form an end in themselves, where they become an all-consuming quest for excellence for its own sake—or for the sake of money or becoming popular with the world, beating the world at its own game—then we overstep the bounds on the side of idolatry. The total abstinence by pious Jews from the games

cult that swept away a civilization, and with it the early Church, surely constitutes a type and shadow of a latter-day contest.

5. Human Idols

The idea of human idols flows naturally out of other forms of idolatry. Indeed, many ancient gods of myth and ritual had human beginnings, some claiming divine parentage or ancestry.⁵⁷ The Hebrew prophets refer to various individuals as false gods. Jeremiah calls an apostate ruler in Judah “a despised broken idol” (Jeremiah 22:28). The Lord punishes this ruler by “writing” him childless (Jeremiah 22:30) – the covenant curse of having no posterity. Zechariah describes false prophets as idols who speak folly and singles out a certain “idol shepherd” who forsakes the flock (Zechariah 10:2; 11:17). Instead of feeding the flock, this religious leader consumes the flesh of the fattest (Zechariah 11:16). The Lord punishes him by smiting him in the arm and blinding him in one eye (Zechariah 11:17), in mock imitation of a marred statue. This punishment renders him ritually blemished and his ministry illegitimate.

Isaiah, through a subtle play on words, identifies prominent figures in society as “idols.” By using terms possessing different levels of meaning, Isaiah implies that the people idolize certain “celebrities” or “bigwigs”; the people are “enchanted” and “captivated” by them, and exhibit “covetous desires,” “fawning adulation,” and “carnal lust” toward them (Isaiah 1:29-30).⁵⁸ The idols, on the other hand, exercise “immunity” from the law on account of wealth, power, or fame; they and their enterprises make up the very spark that sets off a fiery destruction of the Lord’s people (Isaiah 1:29-31).

The Hebrew prophets predict, as does John the Revelator, that the ultimate human idol will be the Antichrist of the last days.⁵⁹ Biblical types of this archtyrant abound: the king of Babylon, the king of Assyria, the king of Tyre,

the king of Greece.⁶⁰ To this list we may add later Antichrist types, from Nero to Hitler. As in Isaiah, the latter-day Antichrist forms a composite of all evil world-rulers who precede him. He, like them, commands the worship of men (Revelation 13:4, 8). Satan lends him his own power (Revelation 13:2). His heart, like theirs, is lifted up, and he thinks, "I am a God; I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas" (Ezekiel 28:2).

Like some figure out of *Star Wars*, the Antichrist rises in the heavens like the morning star to set his throne above the stars of God (Isaiah 14:13). He ascends above the altitude of the clouds and makes himself "like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). He sets his nest on high, in order to escape calamities on the earth (Habakkuk 2:9). He exalts himself above all gods, defying even the God of Gods (Daniel 11:36).

With divine irony, the Lord does not let the Antichrist arise until the world is full of false gods. Worshiping this human idol consists of but an extension of what is already transpiring. As God's instrument, the Antichrist nonetheless condemns the false gods of all peoples to the fire, including those of the Lord's people (Isaiah 10:11; 37:19). He regards no god other than himself, but "magnifies himself above all" (Daniel 11:37).

Under his tyrannous rule, all human idols now worshiped, exalted, extolled, glorified, revered, idolized, and adored will be things of the past. Rock stars, movie stars, sports stars, superstars, tycoons, barons, and bigwigs will be but "despised broken idols." Through the instrumentality of the Antichrist, the Lord will "make all glorying in excellence a profanity, and the world's celebrities an utter execration" (Isaiah 23:9). Until the Lord displaces the Antichrist as King of Kings and Lord of Lords when he comes in glory, the Antichrist's coercive worship will serve as punishment of our present voluntary worship of man.

6. Imaginations of the Heart

Virtually every instance of the expression “imagination of the heart” in the Bible equates such imaginations with idolatry and following other gods.⁶¹ At a covenant ceremony, Moses warns Israel, “Lest there should be among you a man, woman, family, or tribe whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood” (Deuteronomy 29:18). Moses goes on to cite a classic kind of self-deception, at the same time harking back to the curses he has just enumerated in connection with the covenant: “And it come to pass, when he hears the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace [salvation], though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst” (Deuteronomy 29:19).

Moses thereby gives us to understand that self-deception or “drunkenness” follows a personal lack of or “thirst” for the knowledge of God. Paul concurs with this when he says that imaginations, or reasonings, form a kind of conceit or pretense that exalts itself “against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Moses thus concludes his warning by showing how the Lord will not withhold his anger and jealousy from such but will bring “all the curses that are written in this book” upon them, separating them unto evil from his people, blotting out their name from under heaven (Deuteronomy 29:20-21).

Imaginations of the heart nonetheless constitute something each of us has to live with. They form an integral part of being mortal, expressing a person’s innate disposition to think or do evil. Unavoidably, “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). People possess a natural tendency to be proud, mischievous, and wicked (Proverbs 6:18; Luke 1:51).⁶² But when people let the imagination of their hearts rule them, when they do

not make captive every thought in obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), then they fall. Then, though “they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21).

When God’s prophet calls on the people to repent, they think, “There is no hope” – they continue following their own devices, relying for guidance on the imaginations of their heart (Jeremiah 18:12). Instead of hearkening to the Lord’s counsel, they hearken to those who say, “Ye shall have peace. . . . No evil shall come upon you” (Jeremiah 23:17). In the end, the Lord esteems such people as good for nothing and vents his wrath upon them (Jeremiah 13:10-14). Biblical types of falling prey to the imagination of the heart include the people before the Flood, the people at the Tower of Babel, and Israel and Judah before the Exile.⁶³

Nephi identifies the large and spacious building he and his father saw in vision as the “vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men” (1 Nephi 12:18). Nephi notes that a great and terrible gulf – the justice of the eternal God – divides those in the building from the godly (1 Nephi 12:18). Those who gather in the building consist not just of non-Israelites but also of the house of Israel, mocking, scorning, and fighting their humble brethren (1 Nephi 8:27, 33; 11:35). What distinguishes the multitude in the building is the exceeding fine manner in which they dress (1 Nephi 8:27). Their sophistication and pointing the finger reflect a preoccupation with unreality, as the building in the air, standing high above the earth, also signifies (1 Nephi 8:26). The building’s fall, as Nephi sees, is the destruction of all wicked nations, kindreds, tongues, and people (1 Nephi 11:36) – an event of the last days.⁶⁴

Without identifying everything today that would qualify as imaginations of the heart, it seems self-evident that what is worldly and subject to change – all things “new,” novel, fashionable, or in vogue; all trends, fads, crazes,

and gimmicks; in short, all that is not of God but concocted in the minds of people⁶⁵ – the Lord dooms to destruction along with those who love these things. They make up but a passing parade of phantoms intruding upon our senses, whose purpose is to confuse and to befuddle. Because imaginations of the heart vary constantly, those who follow them know no stability. Every wind of change, as it were, sweeps them away.

God, and what is of God, does not behave so. In God there exists no “shadow of changing” (Mormon 9:9). Unlike man, “God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said” (D&C 3:2). His thoughts do not reflect our thoughts, nor his ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8). As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). In summary, those of us who seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but walk every one in our own way, after the image of our own god – whose image is in the likeness of this world, whose substance is that of an idol – shall perish in Babylon, which shall fall (D&C 1:16).

7. Nature Cults

The prophet Isaiah, in several instances, refers to nature worship prevailing among the Lord’s people. Nature worship deviates from true worship in that it furnishes a ready substitute for paradise. To Isaiah, a preoccupation with parks or gardens (Hebrew *gan*; *gannah*) spells idolatry (Isaiah 1:29-30).⁶⁶ Nature lovers often frequent such places to escape responsibility toward God and humanity. The beauties of nature excite the romantic instinct in people, while nature’s seclusion paves the way for licentiousness and sexual abuse. Nature religionists can do pretty much as they please away from the common constraints of society. In addition, various cultic quirks characterize nature

enthusiasts. These include a preference for particular sorts of foods, a ritualistic way of preparing them, and their communal consumption in the appropriate surroundings. Naturalists shun and make fun of their puritanical brethren. On the other hand, they look up to and imitate favorite personalities.

Isaiah speaks of those who cherish and choose the nature experience in the act of forsaking the Lord their God (Isaiah 1:28-29). These provoke God to his face by "sacrificing in parks, making smoke upon bricks" (Isaiah 65:3). Their favorite resorts include canyons, ravines, and riverbeds (Isaiah 57:5-6). They frequently spend the night in hideaways, among green trees, and under crags of cliffs and rocks (Isaiah 57:5-6; 65:4). There, they burn with lust and commit fornication with one another (Isaiah 57:5; 66:17). They eat the flesh of animals the Mosaic code prohibits, among them pork, prawn, and rodents (Isaiah 65:4; 66:17). They pour drink libations as a toast to their cult; they consume polluted beverages (Isaiah 57:6; 65:4).

Those not of their life-style they bid keep their distance, considering themselves "holier than thou" (Isaiah 65:5). Often, they amuse themselves over the Lord's true worshipers, though they themselves are the slaves of sin (Isaiah 5:18; 57:4). Heedless and in abrogation of their own agency, they ape the behavior of those on whom they center their attention (Isaiah 66:17). Called the offspring of adulterer and harlot, they are born of sin (Isaiah 57:3-4), the product of an apostate people beset by satanic influences. The summital act of their wickedness consists of abusing and slaying children (Isaiah 57:5). In similar style, the Lord makes an end of them in the day of his burning wrath (Isaiah 66:17, 24).

The various kinds of nature worship that prevail in our culture repeat the ancient pattern. From overemphasizing perfection in home gardens and landscaping (while disregarding the needy who pass by in the street) to spending

an inordinate amount of time at the ritualistic gatherings and barbecues that many indulge in – the same self-gratifying imbalance marks the society of the Lord's people then and now. Isaiah could have had the latter-day camper culture in mind when he observed idolaters “hitched to transgression like a trailer” (Isaiah 5:18).

The nature lovers among us for whom nature has become a religion could hardly have been outdone by the primitive cult. The fervid weekenders and their sport, and even backyard enthusiasts, display a sophistication the ancients would not have guessed. Today's proliferation of campers, dirt bikes, dune buggies, four-wheelers, skis, snowmobiles, yachts, speedboats, gliders, and related accoutrements betoken a rampant and costly cult. When recreation becomes an end in itself, when promiscuity seeks out recreation as a means of self-expression, then there results a classic kind of idolatry.

8. Mammon

The scriptures in all ages warn that the “mammon of unrighteousness” (Luke 16:9) – the riches of this world – have been and will be the downfall of countless souls. The Lord himself has told us plainly that we cannot serve God *and* mammon. Each is a “master,” to be loved at the expense of hating the other.⁶⁷ So many are the scriptural counsels warning about the riches of this world that we must suppose they dulled the ears of those who perished with their riches. Or perhaps the rich did not think of themselves as rich, and so did not apply these warnings to themselves. The scriptures speak of self-deception as a trait frequently afflicting the rich.⁶⁸

From the way the scriptures emphasize equality among the Lord's people,⁶⁹ we see that the Lord's idea of the rich draws a contrast between the *haves* and *have-nots*. A rich man from another country we may not consider rich in our own, though he possess a surfeit of what others lack.

Being rich, in the scriptural sense, includes *having* when others do not, creating inequality.

To round out this definition, I will cite the dominant characteristics of the rich that the scriptures give. Those who “hasten to be rich have an evil eye” and are not innocent (Proverbs 28:20, 22). They soon fall into temptations and snares, into foolish and hurtful lusts, which “drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9). Trusting in “uncertain riches” (1 Timothy 6:17), people grow wise in their own conceit (Proverbs 28:11) and wax proud (Alma 4:6). They lift up their hearts because of their riches (Ezekiel 28:5), refusing to give heed to the word of God (Alma 45:24), becoming unfruitful (Matthew 13:22).

The rich pass over the deeds of the wicked and do not judge the needy’s cause (Jeremiah 5:28). They despise the poor and drag them before the judgment seats (James 2:6). They set their hearts on riches and the vain things of the world, scorning and persecuting those who do not believe according to their will and pleasure (Alma 4:8).⁷⁰ The rich defraud and condemn the just and suppose that they are better than they (Jacob 2:13; Mosiah 4:22). In brief, the love of money is the root of every kind of evil, causing men to “err from the faith” (1 Timothy 6:10).

When “their treasure is their god” (2 Nephi 9:30), the rich suffer evil consequences. The rich can hardly enter the kingdom of heaven because they already have their consolation (Matthew 19:23; Luke 6:24).⁷¹ Because they are puffed up, God despises them, thrusting them down to hell (2 Nephi 9:42; 28:15). They lay up treasure for themselves on the earth, only to lose their souls (Luke 12:16-21). They carry nothing of their glory or riches beyond the grave (Psalm 49:17). In the day of burning heat, the rich fade away like withering grass whose flower falls (James 1:11). The riches they have swallowed down, they must vomit up again (Job 20:15). Riches “profit not in the day of wrath” (Proverbs 11:4).

In such a day, the treasures of the rich become slippery, so that the rich cannot retain them (Helaman 13:31). The rich who do not give of their substance to the poor will lament in the day of judgment, crying, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved" (D&C 56:16).⁷² In the great day of the Lord, the rich hide themselves in dens, crying to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:15-17).

Yet there is something redeeming about riches. On those who are industrious, Providence often smiles most pleasantly (Jacob 2:13). If men do not learn how to administer the unrighteous mammon, how can the Lord commit to their trust the true riches? (Luke 16:11). As for the rich, they "do good" if they are ready to distribute their wealth to those in need and are willing to communicate with them (1 Timothy 6:18). The Lord has decreed a way to provide for his Saints, namely, "that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low" (D&C 104:16). The Lord justified the wealthy Zacchaeus, a hated publican who climbed a tree in order to greet him (Luke 19:2-9). Zacchaeus regularly gave "the half of my goods . . . to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore [unto] him fourfold" (Luke 19:8).

Jacob counseled the rich to think of their brethren like unto themselves, to be familiar with all and free with their substance—"that they may be rich like unto you" (Jacob 2:17). Before people seek for riches, he advised, they should seek for the kingdom of God, obtaining first a hope in Christ (Jacob 2:18-19). A hope in Christ means that as we devote our lives to God, we at some point receive a witness by the Holy Ghost that we have obtained a remission of our sins. We can justify pursuing riches, therefore, but only within a narrow compass: "for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry,

and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted” (Jacob 2:19). In the scriptures, that constitutes the sole justification of pursuing riches.

Since the selfish pursuit of riches is so widespread today, what do the ancient parallels portend for the future? The Lord warns us, the Latter-day Saints, not to become as the Nephites of old (D&C 38:39). Yet the Nephite prophets foresaw that we would indeed become like them.⁷³ In another type of the last days, the people of the Church at Laodicea had grown rich and increased in goods, lacking nothing (Revelation 3:17). Spiritually, however, they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17). Because they were neither hot nor cold but lukewarm toward the gospel, the Lord spewed them out of his mouth (Revelation 3:16).

Hosea describes Ephraim as saying, “I have become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me” (Hosea 12:8). But the Lord responds that he will yet make them dwell in tents (Hosea 12:9).⁷⁴ Likewise, before the Lord came to the Nephites a great inequality existed among them, so that the Church broke up (3 Nephi 6:14). This happened because of the immense wealth of some, while others suffered in the depths of humility (3 Nephi 6:10, 13). Finally, the scriptures warn us that first will come the day of the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble (D&C 58:10). After that will come the day of his power, when “the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord” (D&C 58:11).⁷⁵

9. Babylon

The name *Babylon* means many things to many people. The Hebrew word (*bābel*) goes back to a kingdom Nimrod founded, where the ancients built the tower of Babel, or Babylon (Genesis 10:9-10; 11:1-9). This kingdom evolved

into an idolatrous materialistic civilization that reached a zenith in the powerful neo-Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Daniel 2:37-38). The prophet Isaiah identifies Babylon typologically as both a people and a place: the sinners and the wicked; the earth and the world (Isaiah 13:1, 9, 11). He predicts latter-day Babylon will suffer the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, thus likening the world's desolation to a fiery cataclysm falling upon the wicked (Isaiah 13:4-19).

Jeremiah calls Babylon a "destroying mountain" (*har hammashit*), an expression that in Hebrew also means a "corrupting" or "decadent" kingdom (Jeremiah 51:25). Babylon's destiny is to become a burned mountain, desolate forever, because Babylon corrupts—and thus ultimately destroys—all the earth (Jeremiah 51:25-26). Babylon's fall in the last days forms a key event ushering in the Millennium.⁷⁶

Isaiah and Jeremiah single out something about Babylon that corrupts all, including the Lord's people. Those who engage in it become "Babylon" themselves and in the end perish with it. This involves the manufacturing, promoting, and selling of idols—the works of men's hands.

A story I heard in rabbinic school relates how Abraham's father, Terah, in the land of Ur of the Babylonians, at times put young Abraham in charge of his store. When Terah, who made and sold idols, went into the forest to fetch wood for their manufacture, Abraham was to sell the idols in his father's place. Typically Abraham would dissuade buyers, reproving the adults for esteeming statues as gods. One day, fed up with his duty, Abraham smashed all his father's wares except a large idol that stood on a top shelf. When Terah returned from the forest, he flew into a rage, demanding an explanation. Abraham responded, "The big one did it!" implying that these were no gods at all, or they could have saved themselves. After that, Abraham became unpopular in Ur and the people

sought his life. A sequel to this story appears in the book of Abraham, which commences with, "I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence" (Abraham 1:1).

As Hugh Nibley has often pointed out, the essence of this sort of idol worship is not that people really believed the idols to be gods, but that their manufacture, promotion, and sale provided them with a living. It formed a socio-economic system that afforded urban dwellers a means of sustenance. One problem with this system lay in its false economic base and the instability it bred—it fed on itself.

Economic factors determined social behavior—the law of supply. Manufacturing the works of men's hands yielded income but constituted idolatry, because what so many people worked at, oriented their lives around, was ultimately nonproductive. The work of idols did not sustain itself, but demanded to be sustained. It enslaved to a false idea not merely those directly involved with it, but also those who produced foodstuffs and raw materials. The latter labored additionally to provide for all the rest.

The reverse of this phenomenon also applied: false spiritual values influenced directions the economy would take—the law of demand. Because of their association with deity, idols represented something socially acceptable into which people might pour time and money. The prestige the idols furnished made people protective of the system. Those who prospered from it had found a niche. Their real source of subsistence—farmers and husbandmen—took second place in people's minds. Society measured wealth in terms of money and the idols it could buy, rather than by how much food could be produced.

We can thus liken Babylon's socioeconomic structure to an upside-down pyramid, which, as it grows, ever narrows at its base. In it, the many depend on the few for their support. Babylon's mass of people, engaged in producing and selling idols, remain out of touch with their

life source, rendering them vulnerable to catastrophe. The greatest height to which Babylon attains thus also forms her lowest point of stability. For when, through some unforeseen (divine) intervention, a single stone jars loose from the base, the entire structure collapses.

By way of contrast, Zion's economy is not so structured. As Israel's prophets outline, Zion possesses a broad rural base, in which every family works its inheritance of land.⁷⁷ This makes Zion a stable, self-sustaining structure. In it abide neither poor nor those who appropriate what belongs to others. Zion's people look to their Head, their cornerstone, to bless them with increase. Old Testament and Book of Mormon examples show that such a structure can weather most storms, endure most attacks, and quickly repair or rebuild itself. The direct means of sustenance—the capacity to produce foodstuffs and raw materials—is ready at hand. Even when a people must flee temporarily into the wilderness, this provides them with the greatest maneuverability.

In short, the works of men's hands on which people set their hearts, on which they spend natural and human resources are, by definition, "idols" (Isaiah 2:8; Jeremiah 10:1-5). As the prophets describe them, these are idols that people invent, design, sketch, carve, forge, molten, cast, weld, plate, fit, hammer, rivet, and mass produce.⁷⁸ Manufactured, promoted, and sold for gold and silver (Isaiah 44:9; 46:6), the idols form the fruits of a technology of well-nigh magical dimensions (Isaiah 47:10, 12). They follow trends and engage the whole of society (Isaiah 44:11; 47:13). Depending on the kind of idols, people both carry them about and set them in place in their homes (Isaiah 45:20; 46:7).

The entire production of idols, however, is erroneous and vain (Jeremiah 51:18). It causes people to become like the idols themselves—sightless and mindless to things spiritual, unaware and insensible to impending disaster

(Isaiah 42:17-20; 44:9, 18; 45:16). It constitutes a “wine” that makes people drunk and mad – the wine of Babylon (Jeremiah 51:7).

A law unto herself, Babylon tyrannizes and enslaves; yet people do not discern her for what she is (Isaiah 44:20; 47:6-8, 10). In reality, Babylon suffers from gross defects, open wounds that no one can heal (Jeremiah 51:8-9). At her height, she mounts up to heaven, from whence the Lord suddenly and utterly casts her down (Jeremiah 51:8, 53). On her destruction, those intoxicated with her wine do not so much as wake up from their sleep (Jeremiah 51:39). Since their gods, the works of men’s hands, did not save them, they profited them nothing in the end (Isaiah 44:9; 46:7).

Although Jeremiah – at Judah’s exile – advised his people to serve the king of Babylon (Jeremiah 27:6-17; 40:9), Jeremiah did not mean, “When in Babylon, do as Babylon does!” Indeed, both Isaiah and Jeremiah looked forward to the time Israel would exit Babylon before the Lord destroyed her (Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 51:6). The time would come, as with Abraham, when it would no longer be advisable to remain in Babylon. The more she ripened in wickedness, the less possible it would be to live *in* Babylon but not be *of* Babylon.

Isaiah depicts the coming of the Lord’s people out of Babylon as a new exodus, patterned after the ancient exodus out of Egypt (Isaiah 48:20-21; 52:11-12). He likens the gathering of a repentant remnant of Israel from the ends of the earth to Abraham’s coming out of Babylonia into the wilderness (Isaiah 41:8-9; 51:1-3). The prophets, therefore, speak both of a literal, spontaneous exodus from Babylon on the eve of her destruction, and of a gradual, premeditated exit before that time.⁷⁹ As Lot’s wife illustrates, those ensconced in Babylon find it hard to leave at a moment’s notice.

Doing “the works of Abraham” – in order to merit an

exaltation that compares to his⁸⁰—thus includes leaving and forsaking Babylon as he did, becoming wholly pure of her abominable idols (cf. Isaiah 51:2; 52:11). Not unexpectedly, the limits of any alternative to Babylon are extremely narrow. In prophetic thought, what is not Zion is Babylon and what is not Babylon is Zion. In effect, only two choices remain for the Lord's people: either build up Zion or build up Babylon. This requires that we gain a clear idea about Zion and Babylon—how the prophets define them, what they stand for, and how to implement Zion.

Isaiah, for example, defines Zion as both a people and a place: those of the Lord's people who repent, and the place to which they gather—a safe place in the wilderness during the Lord's day of judgment.⁸¹ According to Isaiah, the Lord's people must urgently repent of Babylonian idolatry—worshiping the works of men's hands.⁸² Scriptural precedents prove the principle that those who leave Babylon under the Lord's direction inherit a promised land.⁸³ According to Jeremiah, a person leaves Babylon in order to go to Zion, throwing in one's lot with the Lord by an everlasting covenant (Jeremiah 50:1-5). To leave Babylon means to go out from among the wicked to establish Zion somewhere else (D&C 38:42; 133:4-9). All who remain in Babylon do so at the peril of their lives.⁸⁴

As for the works of men's hands in today's Babylon, we need say little more to recapture the ancient scene. Essentially the same materialistic economy that prevailed then prevails in our day. Like the ancient port city of Tyre, Babylon's mercantile arm,⁸⁵ latter-day Babylon encompasses every kind of trade and merchandise—whatever the souls of men lust after by way of material possessions (Revelation 18:1-24). The manufacture and promotion of contemporary works of men's hands form virtually an unlimited enterprise. Reduplicating the socioeconomic structure of ancient Babylon is the very stuff of modernization.

Technology of almost magical proportions consumes humanity to the point of enslaving us to it. By orienting our lives around their production, sale, and maintenance, we set material things above the glory of God. Taking care of the works of men's hands and servicing them are terms synonymous with loving and serving idols. And yet, as with her ancient counterpart, men do not discern modern Babylon for what she is. The wine with which all nations of the earth are drunk blinds men to life's divine charge and to Babylon's looming collapse (Revelation 17:2; 18:3). As with many other peoples who have grown up in captivity, we ourselves are not cognizant of, or else take for granted, the fact of our bondage.

The question remains, what will Abraham's children do? Will they continue to imbibe the wine of Babylon, or will they ask the way to Zion?

10. The Arm of Flesh

To Israel's prophets, Pharaoh king of Egypt epitomizes the arm of flesh on which the Lord's people lean in times of national crisis. Ancient Egypt – the type of a great latter-day superpower⁸⁶ – exemplifies human industry, wealth, and political stability (Ezekiel 31:2-9). At Israel's judgment, however, Pharaoh proves to be but a "splintered reed which enters and pierces the hand of any man who leans on it" (Isaiah 36:6; Ezekiel 29:6-7). When put to the test, Egypt's ample resources of chariots and horsemen prove no match for the ruthless world power the Lord raises up against his people.⁸⁷

By making treaties and alliances with foreign nations, Israel only adds sin to sin – she rejects the Lord's covenant and relies on the arm of flesh (Isaiah 30:1-2). The very act of the Lord's people turning to human strength for protection causes their hearts to turn away from their true source of strength (Jeremiah 17:5-8). In response to such conduct, the Lord denies his protection and shames his

people, causing them and their allies to fall before their enemies.⁸⁸ Though the Lord holds out a way of escape for the righteous of his people, by far the majority do not “see when good cometh” because they turn their eyes in the wrong direction (Jeremiah 17:6).

But the arm of flesh assumes other forms besides relying on manpower and weaponry. All such forms constitute idolatry, because they put humanity before deity. They overlook God as the author and creator of all, as he who holds all things in being. God gives life and takes it away, often in ways that seem to men miraculous or untimely. God himself raises up adversaries, personal and national, and God disposes of them.⁸⁹

Even as the Lord promises his people a land of inheritance and an enduring posterity – as a covenant blessing, on condition that they live righteously – so he promises to protect them in the face of a mortal threat. The Hebrew prophets do not predict that the Lord will destroy the righteous in the day of judgment. On the contrary, the Lord grants salvation both temporal and spiritual to those who keep his commandments. In the theology of Israel’s prophets, temporal and spiritual salvation go hand in hand.⁹⁰ Perhaps some of the Lord’s people may get killed in order to fill up the measure of their sacrifice, and as a testimony against the wicked.⁹¹ Nevertheless, personal righteousness, in the last days as anciently, is the only criterion for being delivered from death.⁹²

Isaiah, therefore, reduces every kind of dependence on things human to a “covenant with Death” (Isaiah 28:15, 18). That includes looking back on past victories and glory (Isaiah 28:1, 4), believing human predictions of a bright future for humanity (Isaiah 30:10; 47:13), relying on the outward observance of worship (Isaiah 29:1, 13), being guided by anything less than direct, divine revelation (Isaiah 28:7-13), contriving secret schemes and contingency plans (Isaiah 28:15; 29:15; 30:16), plotting machinations and

intrigues (Isaiah 30:12; 47:12), and every other way of “taking refuge in deception and hiding behind falsehoods” (Isaiah 28:15).⁹³ In the Lord’s day of judgment, the people’s covenant with death proves void: a terrible scourge overruns those who trust in the arm of flesh (Isaiah 28:18).

All means of warding off woe by somehow indemnifying against it will then disastrously default (Isaiah 47:11-15). These will prove to be merely bonds that bind men down to destruction (Isaiah 28:22). At the last, human agreements and alliances will be held in contempt and come to nought (Isaiah 8:9-15; 33:7-8; 47:13-15). The compacts people make are deceitful – no brother can be trusted (Jeremiah 9:4-6). Even as they speak together in peaceable terms, people lie in wait to take advantage of one another (Jeremiah 9:8). In summary, all who trust in human counsel are under a curse and will be broken (2 Nephi 28:31; D&C 1:19).

It is no secret that human pacts pervade Western nations today. At the national level, leaders set up compacts such as UN, NATO, and SEATO, ostensibly for the welfare and protection of all. Leaders nonetheless consider simultaneous arms buildups essential for self-preservation. At the individual level, men set up various kinds of securities, indemnities, and insurance, ostensibly to benefit people and their dependents. By fortifying ourselves through these devices against possible future disasters, however, we in fact turn away from the direction whence good comes.

Such human helps betray a lack of trust in him who governs human affairs. These helps serve as a substitute for the welfare and protection that come from keeping one’s covenant with God. Relieving people of personal accountability before God, they seek to forestall his righteous decrees. Keeping a lesser law, people reap the fruits thereof. They reject the blessing of the Lord’s covenant of life for the curse of a covenant with death. Being concerned

primarily for their temporal well-being, people lose spirituality as a governing principle.

Another consequence of man's trusting in man is that, once made, human bonds can be undone often only with dishonor and loss of face. In the Lord's sight, we cannot simply walk away from our word (Ezekiel 17:15-21). Biblical examples, however, show the worst feature of human bonds to be the mind-set individual parties develop. The very disposition of those who rely on the arm of flesh holds them in its grip like a disease. Though they might acknowledge the Lord God, they cannot bring themselves to believe there exists any other way. Like all idolatry, relying on the arm of flesh blinds people to a divine purpose or providence—that God saves those who trust in him (Isaiah 42:17-21). Such an alternative forms an intangible that scares people to death (Isaiah 51:12-13). Even when the Lord brings upon people all manner of extremities, they remain insensible as to the cause (Isaiah 42:22-25). They cannot relate current woes to their own actions. Though they exercise good intentions after suffering the Lord's chastisements, they remain as prone as ever to trust in man before trusting in God (Jeremiah 42:1-44:30).

But when they exercise mighty faith in him who is the source of all good (Jeremiah 33:6-11), when they do not put the counsel of man before the counsel of God (Isaiah 29:15), when they cease to play God—killing those who should live, keeping alive those who should die (Ezekiel 13:19)—when they truly make the Lord their Judge, their Lawgiver, and their King (Isaiah 33:22), then the Lord extends his promise to them. In the destruction God has decreed upon us and our generation,⁹⁴ some he will endow with power from on high as a testimony against those who depend on human strength.⁹⁵ In that day, a remnant of Ephraim will find the Lord a sure source of strength to repulse the attack at the gates (Isaiah 28:5-6).

11. Elitism-Pharisaism

Parallels between the ancient types and their modern counterparts have till now seemed easily discernible. The two remaining parallels I leave for the reader to judge. Anciently, both conditions of idolatry immediately preceded the destruction of the Lord's people, the Lord delivering only a remnant. If the types hold true, therefore, the recurring of these forms of idolatry will signal the same result. Conversely, when the calamities of the last days appear at the door, it will be because these and other forms of apostasy have grown prevalent among us. For in the last days all types come together, whether for good, as in the restoration of keys and blessings of former dispensations, or for evil, as in the idolatry of Israel that precipitates the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

In setting out these biblical types, I may seem to assume the role of the devil's advocate. In fact, the types incriminate none but the offenders themselves, those who do not learn the lessons of history. We should remind ourselves, however, that such offenders cannot, nor ever will, constitute grounds for our growing disaffected with the Church. The great paradox, the test the Saints endure in our day, surely consists of remaining true, while all around people indulge in idolatry. Every parallel I mention possesses this as a moral.

Hugh Nibley serves as an inspiring example of such faithfulness to the Church. Although he recognizes the great good and the many evils in the Church, he stands aloof from all disaffection. He scrupulously maintains the fine line between discontent—often voiced openly to inspire us to higher things—and malcontent. Malcontent, the sure path to apostasy, receives not so much as a whisper from him.

On the other hand, should we take ourselves so seriously as to get up our ire or plunge into guilt feelings at

the whisper of anything critical? Should we not increase our capacity to see through the problems and even laugh at ourselves? The Jews, having endured a much longer history of spiritual heights and depths than ours, form perhaps the best example of a people exercising collective resilience and resourcefulness. Although the Jews take pains to preserve their religious integrity, they never view themselves so sullenly as to decline to discuss their faults and foibles past or present.

To omit the last two parallels would render this study incomplete and therefore defective. Were we to be selective about types or fail to see their total context, we might as well ignore them all. We then would not learn our lesson but would exemplify the folly of man that they teach. The total effect of the parallels surely does not cause us to point the finger at others. Rather, it helps us take the attitude, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" (cf. John 8:7). More than that, aberrations existing within a people's leadership, whether political or religious, tend to be symptomatic of the general condition—our leadership reflects what we ourselves are, both at our best and at our worst.

I call this form of idolatry elitism-Pharisaism, because it simultaneously partakes of social pride and hypocrisy. It constitutes idolatry because it puts the institution or peer group before the individual: a person serves the corporate entity, not vice versa. It involves worship, in effect, of the system or organization to which people belong and thus is a kind of self-worship. Typifying this sort of idolatry are the Pharisees of the New Testament period, a group whose elitist tendencies we know well from Jesus' discourses with them. Book of Mormon examples of the same sort of idolatry (not cited here) include the priests of King Noah and the Zoramites (Mosiah 11:1-12:37; Alma 31:1-32:5).

These persons display a form of godliness lacking the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). They harbor a naive presumptuousness about being a chosen and elect people

(Luke 3:8). They consider others—their righteous brethren—a lost and fallen people, worthy to be despised as lesser mortals (John 7:47-52).

A paradoxical aspect of the elitist-Pharisaic phenomenon is that its pastors and teachers do in fact possess authority to teach and instruct. The Lord requires, therefore, that his people obey them (Matthew 23:1-3). In reality, however, they have taken away the key of knowledge and shut up the kingdom, neither entering it themselves nor letting others enter (Matthew 23:13; Luke 11:52). As a result, they cannot answer difficult religious questions nor recognize the signs of the times (Matthew 16:2-3; 22:46). They are blind leaders of the blind, yet they assume they see things aright (Matthew 15:14; John 9:41). They confuse their priorities and what is real (Matthew 23:16-24; Luke 11:42). They cancel the good effect the word of God has in people's lives, overruling intuitive devotion with conventions (Matthew 15:3; Mark 7:13).

Yet, observant in their religion and esteemed by men, they consider themselves righteous by their own standards (Luke 16:15; 18:11-12). But their religion consists of what appears in public (Matthew 23:5). Their thoughts tell another story (Luke 12:1-3). On the outside they appear righteous, but inwardly they raven like wolves; they yield to wickedness, oppression, excesses (Matthew 23:25-28; Luke 11:39). Though they believe in Christ, they care more for men's praise than God's (John 5:44; 12:42-43). Like leaven in bread, hypocrisy permeates their establishment (Luke 12:1). Their hypocrisy, likewise, inspires their communal prayers (Matthew 23:14). They love for men to call them by ecclesiastical titles, to greet them publicly and hold them in admiration (Matthew 23:7; Luke 11:43). In token of reserved seats in the kingdom of heaven, they take the foremost places at meetinghouses and banquets (Matthew 23:6; Luke 14:7-8). Yet quickly they find fault with those not

conforming to their exterior of worship (Mark 2:18, 24; 7:2, 5; Luke 6:7).

While they themselves covet the things of the world, they hate those mingling with sinners in attempts to rescue them (Matthew 9:11; Luke 7:33-34; 16:14). Their fear of political repercussions outweighs their love of spiritual obligation (John 11:47-48). In the end, they disfellowship those who love and confess Christ (John 12:42). The converts to their form of religion, whom they go to great lengths to gain, they make twofold more children of hell than themselves (Matthew 23:15). Hypocrisy fills their lives so much that it appears incurable (Matthew 23:31-33).

To assure themselves that their religion is well founded, the elitist-Pharisaic faction makes frequent mention of a key prophet or forebear on whom they base their authority.⁹⁶ So far have they departed from the prophet's message, however, that if some came among them who taught as he did, they would seek to kill them as did their forefathers (Matthew 23:30-34; Luke 11:47-49). Were their acclaimed prophet to confront them, he would be the first to assert that neither God's love nor word abides in them (John 5:38, 42, 45). Thus, the most righteous among them — one like their acclaimed prophet — they call a deceiver and make a scapegoat (Matthew 27:63; John 11:50). At that point, the Lord removes the kingdom from them, giving it to a people who will bring forth its fruit (Matthew 21:43).

In summing up this somber biblical type, we see among the ancient elitist Pharisees many forms of priestcraft that Jesus and his apostles predicted would corrupt the church of the last days. Indeed, the things they prophesied that would befall us repeat the Pharisaic phenomenon as nearly as any type. Just as their love had waxed cold because of iniquity among them, so will the love of many in the church of the last days wax cold because of iniquity (Matthew 24:12). As they loved themselves and were covetous and treacherous, so also will many in the church in the last

days (2 Timothy 3:1-4). As they were ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth, so will many in the church of the last days (2 Timothy 3:5). As they admired men for personal advantage, so will many in the church of the last days (Jude 1:16). As they failed to believe that enemies would invade and destroy their land because of their iniquity, so will many of the church in the last days be willingly ignorant of their role in precipitating a fiery destruction of the wicked (2 Peter 3:3-10). By their idolatry and hypocrisy, they will pollute the church of God, bringing upon themselves God's judgment (Mormon 8:38).

As a consequence, just as messianic impostors from among the Jews preceded Jesus' first coming (Acts 5:36-37)⁹⁷—with the notable exception of John the Baptist—so false Christs and prophets will precede his second coming (Matthew 24:5, 11, 23-24; Mark 13:6, 21-22). The true prophets they will nonetheless withstand, as the false prophets withstood Moses (2 Timothy 3:8-9) and as the Pharisees withstood Jesus.⁹⁸

The righteous among them they will hate, mock, and betray (Matthew 24:10; Mark 13:12-13; Jude 1:18), just as the Jews hated, mocked, and then betrayed Jesus and his disciples to ecclesiastical and political authorities.⁹⁹ They will deliver many to councils to be judged and punished for their testimonies, smiting some and killing them unlawfully (Matthew 24:9, 49; Mark 13:9)—even as they delivered Jesus and his disciples to be persecuted and killed by ecclesiastical and political authorities.¹⁰⁰ In the day of judgment that will then be upon them, they will suffer the fate of all hypocrites. Cutting them off from his people, the Lord will cast them into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.¹⁰¹

12. Pollution of the Temple

A final kind of idolatry, one that caused the Lord's presence to depart from his people as invading armies

advanced on them (Ezekiel 8:6; 9:1-11), concerns the pollution of the temple by idols. Several kinds of idolatry polluted the house of God anciently, including the symbol of envy,¹⁰² a man-made idol situated at the inner entrance and exit (Ezekiel 8:3, 5). Men also viewed all manner of images portrayed against a wall (Ezekiel 8:10-12); elders of Israel made clouds of perfume or sweet odors (Ezekiel 8:11);¹⁰³ women at the temple bewailed the death of a popular cult figure (Ezekiel 8:14); and men worshiped the great luminary in the temple's precincts (Ezekiel 8:16).

Because the Lord's people polluted the house of God by setting up *their* abominations in it (Jeremiah 7:30; 23:11), the temple proved no place of protection for them in the time of judgment (Jeremiah 7:4-10). When Israel's enemies entered the land, they went in and destroyed the temple (Jeremiah 52:13), or polluted it yet further by setting up their abominations in it (1 Maccabees 1:54). Beginning at the temple, they slew all except a certain few whom the Lord protected (Ezekiel 9:6-7). The latter sighed and cried continually because of the abominations in their midst (Ezekiel 9:4).

Conclusion

Lest we assume that I have overstated the case of idolatrous types, or that somehow we are better than or different from former generations of the Lord's people, I have drawn ten points from President Spencer W. Kimball's bicentennial address to the Saints, entitled "The False Gods We Worship":¹⁰⁴ (1) an idolater is one who sets his or her heart or trust in something other than the God of Israel; (2) an idolater cannot be saved in the kingdom of heaven; (3) telling parallels exist between ancient forms of idolatry and the behavioral patterns of the Latter-day Saints; (4) we live today in conditions resembling the days of Noah before the Flood; (5) "we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people"; (6) idolatry forms a grave and singular contra-

diction in the lives of the Saints; (7) we must forthwith leave off our idolatry, or be damned; (8) we must serve the Lord at all costs and prepare for what is to come; (9) our modern life-style, tainted by idols, contrasts the rural ideal of a generation ago; (10) if we live righteously, the Lord will protect us from all our enemies.¹⁰⁵

I trust that what I have attempted by way of saluting our beloved mentor, Hugh Nibley, will have only a positive effect in the lives of the Saints, will help us eliminate the imbalance that is idolatry and move us to center our souls in God. As it has been Brother Nibley's manner to state his case and disappear in the crowd, so I write these words in the same spirit. The imperative to purify our lives seems self-evident. Whether we can do so in time, not whether we must, is the question that hangs over us all. Although we live in a world that combines the evils of the past, the principle that the Lord gives no commandment unless he prepares a way to keep it (1 Nephi 3:7) surely is true of the first commandment – to love the Lord with our whole heart and soul, and with all our might.

Notes

1. We who are familiar with the Book of Mormon, for example, observe how biblical types repeat themselves consistently among that branch of the Lord's people.
2. See Judges 10:13-14; Isaiah 37:18-20; Jeremiah 11:10-15.
3. See Isaiah 44:9-20; 46:1-7; Jeremiah 2:28.
4. See Deuteronomy 7:1-11; Isaiah 50:1; Hosea 1:2-9.
5. See Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Isaiah 65:1-7, 11-15; Jeremiah 44:2-14.
6. See Deuteronomy 10:12-13; D&C 20:19; 42:29.
7. See Deuteronomy 4:1-9; Matthew 15:7-14; D&C 45:28-32.
8. See Deuteronomy 12:28-30; Jeremiah 10:1-16; Revelation 18:2-3.
9. See Deuteronomy 4:23-28; Isaiah 45:20; D&C 1:16.
10. See 2 Nephi 25:8; 3 Nephi 20:11-13; 23:1-3.
11. See Isaiah 1:11-14; cf. Jeremiah 7:1-15; Amos 8:3.
12. I give an overview of biblical types in Avraham Gileadi, *The*

Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 66-76.

13. This occurred in two instances of biblical history: first, when the northern tribes of Israel apostatized, leading to Assyria's conquering and desolating of the ancient world; second, when Judah apostatized and Babylon repeated the scenario. The prophets link both events to Israel's idolatry (cf. Hosea 11:1-7; Isaiah 10:3-11; Jeremiah 25:3-11). By likening wicked Israel to Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Isaiah 1:10; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49), the prophets allude both to Israel's fate and to a deficit of righteous people (cf. Genesis 18:23-32; 19:24-29).

14. See Exodus 20:5; 23:24.

15. In the biblical narrative one of the Lord's titles is "Bull" of Jacob (Heb. *'abir ya'âqôb*, Genesis 49:24).

16. See Exodus 32:6, 25; Leviticus 18:3-19:4; Numbers 25:1, 8; 1 Kings 14:23-24; 2 Kings 23:4-7; 1 Peter 4:3; 1 Nephi 13:8.

17. Cf. Deuteronomy 30:17; Isaiah 44:19; Ezekiel 20:7-8.

18. Cf. Deuteronomy 30:18; Ether 2:8-10; Moroni 8:29.

19. See Judges 8:27; 17-18; 1 Kings 11:4; 12:28.

20. See 1 Samuel 4-7; Jeremiah 10; Ezekiel 6-7.

21. Translations of Isaiah are taken from Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah*.

22. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Quill, 1978), 200-15, 240-60, 299-322.

23. Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug* (New York: Viking, 1980), 10, 12-29, 69-70, 96-102; Mander, *Four Arguments*, 195-200.

24. Mander, *Four Arguments*, 126-32.

25. Rose K. Goldsen, *The Show and Tell Machine* (New York: Dial, 1977), 28-47, 248; Gregg A. Lewis, *Telegarbage* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1977), 104-8; Mander, *Four Arguments*, 267-74.

26. Goldsen, *Show and Tell Machine*, 250-52; Winn, *Plug-in Drug*, 42-47.

27. See types of the latter-day Antichrist in Isaiah 14:4-20; Ezekiel 28:1-9; Daniel 11:36.

28. See Deuteronomy 4:1-4; Judges 2:11-13; 8:33.

29. See "Poems about Baal and Anath," tr. H. L. Ginsberg, in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 129-42.

30. Baal means "lord."

31. Lewis, *Telegarbage*, 43-69, 86-94.

32. Cf. James 1:27; Alma 13:12; D&C 59:9.

33. The "Books of Adam and Eve," in *The Lost Books of the Bible and the Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: New American Library, 1974).

34. See the New Flood imagery Isaiah uses to depict a great latter-day cataclysm, Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah*, 23-24, 69-70, 77, 86-87.

35. Ancient versions of the books of *Adam and Eve* exist in Arabic, Ethiopic, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, showing its wide dissemination in early literatures.

36. See Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; 2 Peter 3:3-14.

37. See Moses 8:20-24; 2 Peter 2:5; *Jasher* 5:22-24.

38. See Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2; 4:1; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12-13.

39. See Genesis 6:11-13; Moses 5:51; 7:33; 8:15, 22.

40. See 2 Timothy 3:1-6; 3 Nephi 16:10; Ether 8:23-25.

41. See also Moses 7:37; 8:13.

42. See Jacob Aranza, *Backward Masking Unmasked* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1983); Dick Donovan, "Rock Music Praises Satan," *Weekly World News*, 2 February 1982, 15; "New Lyrics for the Devil's Music," *Time*, 11 March 1985, 60; Lex de Azevedo, "A Closer Look at Popular Music," *Ensign* 15 (March 1985): 39.

43. Goldsen, *Show and Tell Machine*, 80-93.

44. See Isaiah 43:2; Malachi 4:1-3; 1 Nephi 22:17.

45. See Abram Leon Sachar, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 1973), 100; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1972), 55, 217-19.

46. Hugh Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 20-21.

47. William F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 348-57; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1975), 34, 62-64.

48. Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out*, 1-32.

49. Hugh Nibley, "The Roman Games as a Survival of an Archaic Year-Cult," Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1957.

50. Joseph Vogt, *The Decline of Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 20; T. G. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 280; Stewart Perowne, *The End of the Roman World* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), 12.

51. Vogt, *Decline of Rome*, 20; Tucker, *Life in the Roman World*, 263, 273.

52. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World*, 223, 263-64, 273-74, 285; Vogt, *Decline of Rome*, 19-20.

53. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World*, 274-77, 286; Vogt, *Decline of Rome*, 19-20.

54. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World*, 274, 277-79, 284-85, 287; Vogt, *Decline of Rome*, 20; Perowne, *End of the Roman World*, plate 8.

55. Perowne, *End of the Roman World*, 12; Vogt, *Decline of Rome*, 20; Tucker, *Life in the Roman World*, 263.

56. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World*, 280; Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), 1:30; 4:32.

57. See Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (New York: New American Library, 1969); Samuel N. Kramer, ed., *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

58. See the multiple meanings of the Hebrew nouns 'el, 'elah, and *hason*, and Isaiah's use of the Hebrew verbs *bāhar* and *hāmad* (Isaiah 1:29-31).

59. See Daniel 7:19-25; 11:36; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 13:1-8.

60. See Isaiah 10:5-15; 14:4-20; 37:21-29; Ezekiel 28:2-19; Habakkuk 2:2-10; Daniel 8:19-25.

61. Hebrew *yēser/šērūt lēb* also means "inventions/concoctions of the mind" and "stubbornness of the heart."

62. See also Mosiah 3:19: "The natural man is an enemy to God."

63. See Genesis 6:5; 11:6; Jeremiah 11:7-10.

64. See Isaiah 34:2; Zechariah 12:9; 1 Nephi 22:16-19; 3 Nephi 20:20.

65. See n. 61.

66. The same terminology in Hebrew defines "parks," "gardens," and "paradise."

67. See Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; 3 Nephi 13:24.

68. See Proverbs 18:11; Jeremiah 5:28; Alma 4:6, 8.

69. See 2 Corinthians 8:12-15; Alma 1:26-27; D&C 70:14; 78:6.

70. See also Micah 6:12; 2 Nephi 9:30; Jacob 2:13.

71. This also forms the moral of the story of Lazarus and the rich man (cf. Luke 16:19-25).

72. See also Revelation 18:1-19; Alma 5:53-56; Helaman 13:38.

73. See 2 Nephi 27:1-2; 30:1-2; 3 Nephi 16:10; 20:15-16.

74. See also the church in the wilderness (Isaiah 48:21; Ezekiel 20:35-38; Hosea 2:14).

75. See also Isaiah 25:6; Luke 14:16-24; Revelation 19:9, 17-18.

76. See Revelation 17:1-19:8; D&C 1:1-16.

77. See also the Prophet Joseph Smith's plot for cities of Zion based on a rural economy, *History of the Church*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 1:357-59.

78. See Isaiah 40:19-20; 41:7; 44:10, 12-13; 45:16; Jeremiah 51:17.
79. See D&C 133:1-15. Cf. Isaiah 57:1: "The righteous disappear and no man gives it a thought; the godly are gathered out, but no one perceives that from impending calamity the righteous are withdrawn."
80. See John 8:39; D&C 132:32.
81. See Isaiah 1:27; 4:5-6; 35:10; 59:20.
82. See Isaiah 2:5-8; 17:7-8; 46:3-8.
83. See Jared and his company (Ether 1:40-43), Abraham and his company (Genesis 12:1-7), and Lehi and his company (1 Nephi 2:1-4, 20).
84. See Isaiah 48:17-19; Jeremiah 51:6; D&C 64:24.
85. See Isaiah 23; Ezekiel 26-28.
86. Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah*, 72-74.
87. See Isaiah 19:4; Jeremiah 43:10-12; 46:1-26; Ezekiel 29:19-32:32.
88. See Isaiah 30:3-5; 31:2-3; Ezekiel 17:16-21; 30:1-8.
89. See Exodus 22:23-24; 1 Kings 11:14, 23; Isaiah 10:5-17; 54:16-17.
90. See Isaiah 8:9-15; 55:3; Jeremiah 21:8-9; 27:12-17; Ezekiel 18:1-32; 33:1-20; Amos 5:1-15.
91. See Isaiah 51:17-23; Jeremiah 51:49; Ezekiel 9:5-7; 37:1-14; Daniel 11:33-35; Revelation 6:9; 13:7-10.
92. See Isaiah 33:14-16; 65:8-16; Jeremiah 51:45; Ezekiel 9:4, 6; Daniel 7:26-27; Revelation 9:4; 12:1-16.
93. Isaiah 28-31 forms a structural unit in which Isaiah typifies human counsel and schemes as a covenant with death.
94. See Daniel 8:24; 12:7; 2 Nephi 30:1; D&C 38:13.
95. See Daniel 7:27; 1 Nephi 14:14; D&C 1:36.
96. See Matthew 3:9; 19:7; Luke 20:28; John 9:28-29.
97. See also Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Messianic Movements," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols. (Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 11:1420.
98. See Matthew 26:67-68; Luke 20:1-2.
99. See Matthew 26:47-27:31; Acts 6:11-15; 18:12-17.
100. See Luke 22:47-23:24; Acts 7:57-59; 12:1-2.
101. See Matthew 8:12; 13:41-42; 24:51; 25:30.
102. Hebrew *sêmel haqqin'âh hammaqneh*; also "object of envy [which incites envy]."
103. Hebrew *'atar 'ānan haqqstōret*; literally, "an odorous cloud of perfume/incense."

104. Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 3-6.

105. See, respectively, 4 (par. 7); 5 (par. 12); 4 (par. 8); 4 (par. 1); 6 (par. 2); 4-5 (pars. 9, 12); 6 (pars. 8-9); 6 (pars. 13-15); 3 (pars. 2-3); 6 (par. 6).