

Shaking the Tree

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I. Introduction

How does one survive the winds of change when the tree to which they cling is shaking? In the 1960's, the RLDS leadership began a re-evaluation of its premises. This was deemed necessary as outreach began among peoples who had no background in Christianity. Some other basis for discussing the church's story and gospel needed to be found--one understood by the various non-Christian cultures. The leadership began a continuing dialogue with Christians through involvement in various ministerial alliances¹, attendance at various theological seminaries², and participation in a religious satellite TV network³.

Christian theologians and biblical scholars have for over a century critically analyzed the story of Christ found in the gospels. In removing the mythological statements, they salvaged a very human Jesus, who was--at best--a philosophical teacher, exemplifying the highest evolution of mankind. As the RLDS scholars employed these methods to examine the Book of Mormon and church history, reactions have occurred among the membership. From outright dissent to quiet leaving, those who saw the divine aspects of the church being tossed aside have objected to the steps of the leadership⁴. In trying to reach out to new cultures, the leaders had developed a language which was unintelligible to most of its current membership.

The leadership was seen as blowing with the winds of popular opinion, rather than calling the world to Christ. Zion and the kingdom of God were being downplayed. Expectations of a second coming were hidden behind the idea of self-

actualization. Calling people to repentance became offensive; the church was to be "inclusive." Edification of the body was played down in favor of each one defining their own version of theology.

Many members had been taught the theory that God brought the RLDS church into existence because none of the current organizations were doing God's work. These organizations, then, had no authority to act on God's behalf to offer salvation. If the RLDS church was just to be one of many Christian organizations, did it still have its authority? Was it giving up too much of what had been restored in the early 1800's? Where could one who held to these traditional ideas go?

This is the predicament facing many in the RLDS church today. How does one sort out the "truth" of the situation? The answer lies in "shaking one's own tree." Members must follow the lead of RLDS scholars, and begin a study of their history and the scriptures. With an open mind and prayer, one may discover a totally different answer than is currently advocated, and yet is based on careful study. Dialogue, unencumbered by the threat of censure, will also be needed as the church, under God's leadership, works out a consensus.

¹Joseph Smith III and William Blair attended the 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Illinois. Various ministers have joined local ministerial alliances, and presentations on the church's view on stewardship were given to a working group of the National Council of Churches. The church's application to join the Federal Council of Churches in 1908 was rejected, as was the attempt to join the International Council of Religious Education in 1948.

²St. Paul School of Theology, in Kansas City, Missouri, was a popular choice due to its proximity to headquarters in Independence. Other schools attended include the University of Chicago and Union Theological Seminary. The church now sponsors a Master of Arts in Religion degree through Park College. (The Community of Christ now sponsors a seminary through Graceland University.)

³The church joined 24 other denominations in the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network (VISN) in 1990. The name of the network was later changed to the Faith and Values Network.

(In 2001, it was renamed the Hallmark Channel and no longer has religious content, though some of its dramas involve religious people.)

⁴The largest exodus was the Independent Branch Movement, which began following the ordination of women in 1985. Similar movements arose from controversies over basic beliefs in 1970 and participation in Restoration Festivals in the early 1980's.

(Later controversies include changing the name to Community of Christ and adopting new bylaws, opening communion to all attendees, accepting adult baptisms of other organizations, and considering same-gender marriage and ordination of homosexuals.)

II. Models of God, the World, and People.

There are five predominant models of God: personal creator; highest ideal; first cause; process; tool. The biblically-based religions have gone through each of them in an effort to grow more universal in their outlook. Some have even been combined at various points¹. Each model has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Personal Creator

God is a being, distinct from the world, which he created. Yet, being personal, he is involved with the happenings of his creatures and interacts with them. People have claimed to be in his image. This idea has led to much anthropomorphism in trying to describe God's motives and apparent actions². These are only the attempts of those who've communed with the divine to work within the constraints of language. God is beyond any worldly comparisons.

Part of this involvement with his creatures is the act of God to enable a joint existence with them. This is usually seen as the creation of a new world at the end of history. That God exists in this new world is taken for granted. But, how can people transcend this world to enter the next? God provides for this by the action of a champion.

In the Jewish system of thought, this champion is the Messiah, created from the world's beginning to serve this purpose. Following the Babylonian captivity, there was a separation into two Messiahs. Ben Joseph was a suffering Messiah, who would be defeated in the battle against the evil of the world. Following him, Ben David would conquer and initiate the kingdom of God, only to fade from existence³.

Christianity viewed Jesus as a single Messiah, with two incarnations⁴. In the first, he died as a sacrifice to atone for humanity's sinful nature. The resurrection from the dead of all persons was enabled by his resurrection. The new world would come with his return at the end of history. Rather than fading from view, Jesus would rule in the ensuing kingdom as a co-equal with God. The exact relationship between Jesus and God was a subject of debate in the early Christian churches⁵. It continues to be a divisive issue, allowing various types of Christians to merge the basic models of God into various hybrid ones.

The transcendental nature of God raises three immediate questions. Is God completely separate from the world? Are people, his images in the world, completely contained in the world? Is it necessary for the Father and Son to be distinct individuals? The early responses to these questions would be: "Yes." People in ancient times didn't have the capability to express any interface between the spiritual and physical worlds. Modern developments in mathematics have given people new tools with which to model reality.

Early mathematics was devoted to solving practical problems in the sciences. In the 1800's, mathematics began becoming more abstract. Geometry expanded beyond the Euclidian space of three dimensions. Edwin A. Abbot wrote the mathematical novel Flatland: A Romance in Many Dimensions, in which a square learns of the possibility of three-dimensional space from a sphere. This is an illustration of the idea of projecting an object into a space of lower dimensions⁶.

There is the possibility that God could project himself into the natural world. In this case, Jesus' spiritual self would be the Father, and his worldly self would be the Son. As he disciplined himself to develop the interface between his spiritual and worldly selves, he became aware of who he was and what was required of him. People themselves may be spiritual beings who are projected into the world. In following the example of Jesus, they would also become more knowledgeable of their relationship with God and what he requires of them. They would be able to live within both levels of existence simultaneously as they developed their interface through spiritual discipline⁷. This idea becomes more plausible when one has some of the scriptural insights of Joseph Smith, Jr. These will be discussed in a later section on Restoration Models. Finally, this model fits into the Man/Son-of-Man myth that was being incorporated. The Son of Man was the earthly representation of the heavenly Man⁸.

Of what did God create the world? The early doctrine was *ex nihilo*, that God made the earth from nothing. When Genesis describes the earth as "without form and void", does this mean that the building blocks of the world were absent? Can it be that God made the earth out of himself?

This poses a contradiction, since God is supposed to be separate from the world he created. This restriction was made to avoid the possibility of idolatry. However, this is not a case of humans making graven images. Before passing judgment on the concept, one needs to look at some other analogies.

Consider dreams. People create a world in their mind to act out fantasies or to try and solve their everyday problems. They may, themselves, be active participants. Their fantasy world is created out of their thoughts and they are transcendent with respect to it.

A more modern analogy is the computer simulation. A team of programmers writes the code which creates a world within the memory of a computer. They can model various entities, including themselves. They can even arrange to "communicate" with the entities in the simulation.

Using these various analogies, it's feasible to have God constructing a world out of his own thoughts. (This could be the role of the Holy Spirit, since it is cited in scripture as being the source of both life and knowledge.) He is both separate from and the basis of his creation, free to interact with the entities which he has made. The objection to this theory is a response to confusion in identifying what is God. Nothing in the finite, natural world is God, though it is made of God. Nothing is worthy of being idolized as a deity, but everything is worthy of respect in its use. The identification of God as the building blocks of matter coincides with Einstein's Theory of Relativity (i.e., that matter and energy are related). It also explains the action of the Spirit in performing miracles of healing. There was simply the transformation of the Spirit from one form of matter to another.

Why do people exist? They exist to fulfill God's nature as a loving being. The God of the Bible needs to teach, to persuade other beings to be creative, loving beings. Having dominion over the world is a way of showing that love. For the world is needed by future generations. People must love these others, whom they will not know, enough to use the resources of the world wisely. When the human capacity to love has been realized, those persons are able to enjoy eternal life.

In an apparent contradiction, God doesn't force humanity to have joy or eternal life. This would seem to limit God's omnipotence. Yet, even in the old riddle about the "rock so heavy God couldn't lift it", there is a clue. God's limitations are self-imposed. There is nothing else so powerful that it can prevent God's actions. Why doesn't God force people's obedience? Voluntary cooperation is a necessary requirement for joy.

If people are allowed to choose, how can God be omniscient? Again, God need only know the possibilities and outcomes. One need not assume that there is a single set of outcomes for the fulfillment of history: only that God has provided for all contingencies.

Why do "good" people suffer while "bad" people prosper? First, the choice to be "good", or God-like, must be made for its own sake, not because of material rewards. The perfection required is to be consistent no matter what the circumstances. Second, those whose state of mind doesn't depend on circumstances defy this paradox. The evil person doesn't necessarily enjoy their prosperity, while the good person can find joy in any condition. Because they cannot know all things, people judge events as bad or good without knowing the goals of the future.

Highest Ideal

Plato assumed that the natural world is a shadowy reflection of a perfect world of ideals. God is the highest ideal, an indivisible unity. He makes existence possible; however, he doesn't make the natural world in this model. Being ejects "*Logos*" from itself; *Logos* emits the natural world. This concept eventually became a process of emanations causing the creation of a series of successively more imperfect worlds.

This model reminds one of the paradox in which there is a picture of the picture of the picture of the picture of ..., etc. How many pictures of the Quaker are there in the label showing the Quaker holding a box of Quaker Oats? The real point is that one assumes the necessity of the infinite number of Quakers⁹. The starting point is the box of oatmeal that one's holding. Plato is starting with some point in the sequence, which one cannot prove exists¹⁰.

As it descends through the levels, Plato's order appears to become diverse. People perceive different principles governing various aspects of this imperfect world. This is, however, a pantheistic view. The whole of the universe can be taken as the supreme deity, with the diminishing entities becoming minor deities.

In this model, God is simply the essence of being¹¹. No reason is given for the creation of the natural world or for the presence of humankind. However, the assumption is that people are supposed to return to that state of unity. There is no reason for the end of history or the creation of a new world. The natural world's only fate is to be abandoned by a humanity which has returned to that perfect state of unity.

Through reason and discipline, people achieve mystical union with God. While allowing for divine intervention, a heavy reliance is placed on human capability to recover (or remember) principles lost at birth. People are seen as returning to the "real" world of ideals, or forms. Will human limitations permit attaining the necessary knowledge? Is human existence possible outside the natural world? How is it possible to know which the shadow is and which is reality?

Prime Mover

Aristotle proposed that God is the first cause of the world, which is a collection of currently imperfect entities which are moving to fulfill their purposes. The current state was called matter; the change to the potential state was called form. The goal of matter was to escape the material world to the distinct world of form.

Once again, there was no interaction between God and humanity. Whereas emanation made God one with the world, Aristotelian thought separated God from the material world by a discrete chain of matter and form. There was purpose in the world, but it wasn't really defined by God.

People learn through experience how to perfect themselves and escape the material world. Again, this presupposes that the suprasensual world can be comprehended by humanity's limited senses.

This is the stuff of which Deism was made. This product of the Renaissance was the theory that God put the universe into motion and left people to reason out how to fit into it. The "Watchmaker" was but a pseudonym for the Prime Mover. But, even the Deists began to discover that the "watch" needs correction. The universe doesn't run exactly according to the laws that scientists were discovering.

The theory of evolution and the philosophy of monism also have a start in this system. Originally, evolution was simply the idea that various species change in reaction to the environment. This became the idea that the change was always progressive, or that it represented an improvement. All of creation was then projected back to the simplest organisms. History, then, was the advance of these creatures into various and higher forms. The problem with this theory is that things tend to break down into simpler entities rather than become more complex.

Process

God is not a being, but simply the order of nature. Humanity's task is to discover the rules which define that order so that they can share in the optimum existence. There is no other world. People must learn to live in this one.

The origin of this order is not addressed. Neither is the origin of the world. Existence is taken for granted. Perhaps a more subtle assumption is that the world behaves according to laws that people can discover rather than an apparent randomness. The greatness of mathematics was that it was the language that described God's orderly design of the world. But, that idea fell apart in the 1800's as mathematicians discovered inconsistencies in the ways that mathematics would describe the world¹². Finally, Kurt Gödel showed that a mathematical theory sufficient to describe the world would be inconsistent.

This theory is involved with the idea of "Natural Law", that there was a common sense--instinctive to humans--which would guide them in making the best choices in living together. The religions of the world are merely attempts to develop the Natural Law within particular cultural contexts. Therefore, all religions are equally valid, or invalid. This is the basis of Liberal philosophy.

The problem with this is that human instinct is more that of survival and supremacy¹³. The common-sense of cooperation and the good of the community are

things which religion tries to teach as a replacement for this instinct. The fact that most of the world's religions involve humans receiving the necessary knowledge would argue against humanity's discovering the laws of nature on their own.

A variation of this model, called Process Philosophy, suggests that God and humanity react to each other. Alfred North Whitehead thought of the universe as a collection of entities acting out of the accumulation of past experiences with each other. Time consisted of discrete occasions, where an entity perceives other entities via its sense organs and incorporates its feelings about those perceptions. God was a special type of entity, which retained all of its perceptions, maintained its goals, and defined the next goals of all other entities. People were entities whose past perceptions became unconscious and who acted out of a synthesis of past occasions and the current goal assigned to them.

Whitehead's theory is actually more complex. Each entity has a physical and a mental pole. The physical pole is where the senses perceive things. The mental pole is where emotions or feelings are perceived, and where feelings are attached to physical sensations. God can be thought of as an entity which orders the universe or as the action of that entity to order the goals of the other entities. Because of this, Process Philosophy can be a bridge between the concepts of personal creator and natural order.

Tool

God is a linguistic device used to aid in decision-making. The question of a creator is left as undecidable, as is the nature of the world. A person's goal is to live the best life possible for himself. In the vein of the 12-Step Program, humanity is confronted with the hopelessness of their reality and the need for a power outside themselves to which they can be accountable for decisions. God is this higher power. Yet, in this model, there is the expectation that the person will become autonomous, outgrowing the need for a deity which determines right and wrong.

This model is probably the most applicable to the existential view of the world. God would be the essence of joyful existence: that is acting consistently according to one's notion of right. This would be called living authentically.

This model is also the most involved for its followers. In the other systems, some correct course of action is assumed. Here, the person is continually confronted with the decision of how to act. A parallel exists in the Personal-Creator model. The scriptures record that prayer to learn God's will and obedience in carrying it out were like bread and water to Jesus. His way of life was that of constant inquiry rather than the application of society's rules.

This model also has the most capacity for chaos. Since each person decides for himself what is "correct", the potential exists for conflicts. This would be the most difficult model in which to form a community. One need only form alliances as needed in particular situations. The implication that all should work together negates the basis of existentialism: that there is no "right" way, that one just makes the best of a rotten situation.

Restoration Models

The Restoration, as practiced in the Reorganization, has three scriptural resources to fall back on, as well as many traditional experiences. In Joseph Smith, Junior's "New Translation" of the Bible, one finds changes which dilute the determinism found in the King James Version. (For example, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" becomes "Pharaoh hardened his heart".) References to a plurality of gods are eliminated.

The usual creation story in Genesis depicts two versions. Joseph's "New Translation" changes the stories into a spiritual creation followed by a physical one. This dual notion ties nicely into the Talmudic idea of *Guf*--a place where human souls wait to be born. In D&C 28: 9, the concept that all things are spiritual is given. People's souls consist of both a body and spirit according to Section 85: 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Why did God create the world? Again, the answer is more complete with Restoration scripture. Moses is told that "... this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man." (D&C 22: 23) Lehi tells his son, Jacob, that "... men are, that they might have joy." (2 Nephi 1: 115) To accomplish these ends, God interacts with persons to offer guidance as to living. People are to learn through voluntary obedience to that guidance. (D&C 90: 3) This earth, then, is a place where people learn to live. (Alma 9: 40, 41)

In Sections 85 and 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the idea of a multitude of kingdoms is presented. Section 76 describes the inhabitants of the various kingdoms, or glories, of the coming world. These were only hinted at in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Section 85 speaks of all space being filled with kingdoms, each with its own governing principles that define it.

The Book of Mormon highlights the unity of the Father and Son in Jesus. Whereas, the Old World Christian community accepted the idea of the Trinity as distinct personages, the Book of Mormon portrays Father and Son as roles to be played by one being. This is also corroborated by the earliest version of Joseph Smith, Junior's vision, in which he saw only one personage¹⁴. The Book of Mormon also portrays Jesus as appearing in human form as a spirit. (Ether 1: 68-81)

There appears to be some ambiguity in the Doctrine and Covenants regarding the relationship between the Father and Son. Section 76 has the extreme view of separate entities, having Jesus at the right hand of God. Sections 34 and 50 echo the following from the New Testament: "... the Father and I are one; I am in the Father and the Father in me" Those who've studied mathematics would view this as equality. This is especially true in light of Jesus' statement--in John 14--that, in seeing him, the disciples had seen the Father. The other 19 sections that provide some self-identification in their content separate Jesus from the Father, but name him as God. It's interesting to note that only Joseph Smith, Jr., included such references within revelations. Subsequent Reorganization prophets write of being given insight by the Holy Spirit, making Joseph the Martyr Moses-like in the nature of his ministry¹⁵.

The concept of Trinity grew out of Old World Christianity's use of Greek philosophy. Qualities, such as love and wisdom, were personified. Whatever attributes were assigned to God became "persons" and part of the Godhead. The Trinity also fits with the Greek notion of *Logos*, the suprasensual creator of the natural world. The Father would be the High Ideal; *Logos* would be the Son, becoming incarnate as Jesus Christ; and Wisdom would be the Holy Spirit¹⁶.

The Book of Mormon proclaims a non-Trinitarian Christianity, and modern mathematics, as well as computers, have provided a feasible view of reality which supports it.

The story of Enoch and Zion shows a God promising to dwell in this world with people. God continually tries to teach humanity how to live in the world in joy and love. This is borne out by the testimonies of those who communicated with a personal God in the present day. Whether in inspired guidance or in a healing touch, God reaches into their lives. He doesn't isolate himself in another plane of existence. He shows his caring for each of them. He shows his desire to dwell with people on earth, teaching them to have joy.

Summary

Given the grounding of the Restoration movement in the revelation of God to Joseph Smith, Jr., non-personal models of God must be rejected when seeking for an authentic RLDS definition of God. This leaves the personal creator and Whitehead's process models in contention. A thorough study of process philosophy would show that the idea of an interactive God, who made humanity in his image, is permissible in the process scheme. There is certainly a basis for further discussion.

Not all of the concepts included under Highest Ideal, Prime Mover, and Linguistic Tool need to be discarded. The idea of the physical universe being composed of God, via the Holy Spirit, corresponds to the emanation of the Highest Ideal. That people are to grow from grace to grace is similar to the matter-form chain of the Aristotelian Prime Mover. Finally, the need to be in contact with and be accountable to a higher power is found in the Linguistic Tool¹⁷.

The following idea of Abraham J. Heschel is important to consider.

"Religious thinking, believing, feeling are among the most deceptive activities of the human spirit. We often assume it is God we believe in, but in reality it may be a symbol of personal interests that we dwell upon. We may assume that we feel drawn to God, but in reality it may be a power within the world that is the object of our adoration. We may assume that it is God we care for, but it may be our own ego we are concerned with. To examine our religious existence is, therefore, a task to be performed constantly." ¹⁸

¹For instance, consider the Aristotelian combination of emanation with the matter and form, which created a chain of form at one level and associated matter at the next lower one.

²Some examples would be God's voice in the Garden of Eden or at Mt. Sinai, his back being shown to Moses in the mount, and his anger. This last poses a particular problem. Does God get angry with people and hide himself from them or do they simply ignore him? Motives ascribed to God may be simply the explanation of some historian.

³In Jewish lore, the Messiah was a pre-existent being. He appears in each generation, but hasn't been revealed. Two reasons given for this failure are that all the souls in *Guf* must be born before the Messiah comes and that all sinners must repent.

⁴Jesus movements, such as the Q community, saw Jesus as a Cynic-style teacher, who gave them a way of coping with the social turmoil of their time. His lifestyle made their contentment contingent on inner change rather than the society around them. Jesus people had no need for a messianic figure.

⁵Was Jesus man ascending or God descending? Was God the union of three distinct entities or a single entity filling three roles? Much of the separation in the early church was due to the use of several languages.

⁶The sphere appeared as a circle in Flatland and as a line segment in Line-land. In both cases, he seemed to be speaking from outside those worlds. Of course, the sole occupant of Point-land refused to acknowledge the sphere's existence, since the point was his own universe.

⁷This is similar to concepts discussed in F. M. Smith's doctoral dissertation, The Higher Powers of Man.

⁸The Son-of-Man/Man myth seems to have its origin in the area of India and Iran. There is a man, who appears on earth, who is the image of a Man, who is in heaven. This was caught up in the kingship rituals of the Middle East. A periodic drama took place in which the king was abased and then transformed into the heavenly Man-king, who was to come and reign in an era of peace.

⁹ Let one consider Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise. Supposedly, Achilles can't pass the tortoise because he only closes half the distance with each stride. But, sooner or later, Achilles' stride is going to be longer than the distance between him and the tortoise. So, he will eventually pass it.

¹⁰ Many mathematical theorems are proved by assuming the existence of something which contradicts the theorem's denial. The Constructivist school of mathematics refuses to allow such proofs unless one can show how to find the assumed object.

¹¹ Greek philosophers personified qualities in their program of using myths as allegories to explain the world around them. Some people forgot that these qualities are persons only within the context of the myth. In reality, these qualities cannot create entities, only motivate entities to action.

¹² This began, in the modern age, with Bishop Berkeley's criticism of the calculus. This was followed by non-Euclidian geometries, new algebras, and the paradoxical attempt to provide a logical foundation for mathematics.

¹³ There's a sense of "inertia" in society. Change is opposed by those who want to protect what they have. There is no motivation to change the status quo until there's nothing left to lose or a lot to gain.

¹⁴ Howard, Richard P., "An Analysis of Six Contemporary Accounts Touching Joseph Smith's First Vision," in Restoration Studies I, p. 97.

¹⁵ Only Moses was to be dealt with face-to-face. Other prophets to Israel would receive messages in dreams and visions. (Numbers 12: 6-8)

¹⁶ The concept of Trinity was first written by Theophilus (ca. 190 C.E.). Some Jewish mystics, using the *Kabala*, derived a ten-part Godhead.

¹⁷ However, this might be just a consistent pattern of determining choices.

¹⁸ Heschel, Abraham J., God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism, p. 9.

III. Knowledge

Is knowledge really possible? If not, there's no reason to discuss theology. But, if the answer is "Yes," consider what people can know. Can they trust their own observations? Are they simply organizing their experiences in some pattern? How do people know how to organize their thoughts? Does anything exist in and of itself, or only in the mind of the observers?

This discussion will be limited to how people can get knowledge.

Revelation/Faith

Communication takes place with an outside entity. Revelation isn't deductive logic applied to existing ideas, though these could be a basis for inquiry. It isn't experimenting with hypotheses, though the proof of faith is in acting on the revelation. It isn't remembering some inbred knowledge or instinct.

The information is undecidable. One can't know the correctness of the message or its interpretation without experimenting on it. Action is taken based on expectation. If the results are as expected, information can be considered knowledge. Otherwise, some alternate interpretation could be applied. (Alma 16: 158-162; D&C 9: 3)

Individual experience is mandatory. Communication can be second-hand, as in listening to a prophecy or to another's testimony. But, the confirming experience must be personal. The experience of communicating with God cannot be put into words. Only the recollection can be written down. The "truth" of the recollection needs to be recovered in each person's life.

Reason

Knowledge is deduced from basic assumptions. Mathematics is one of the best examples of this type of knowledge. The most basic items in the theory are undefined terms, such as "point". These are used to develop definitions. The definitions are used to describe postulates, whose truth is assumed due to common sense. Finally,

theorems are deduced using the principles of logic. This provides that the theorems are true if the hypotheses and postulates are true.

However, the assumptions are undecidable, so certainty isn't established. Again, mathematics provides a fairly accurate way to predict how things in the world will work. But, the principles it describes are idealized to fit into the mathematical mold. The postulates have proven to be arbitrary, Euclid's parallel postulate being a good example. Finally, there is the dependence on the truth of the underlying principles. The undefined terms cannot even be fit into language, let alone proven. Therefore, there's always a risk that the knowledge obtained from reason is vacuously true.

Is mathematics remembered? Discovered? Is the world really organized according to mathematical laws or is that just how the human mind perceives it? Does mathematics already exist or do humans invent it? Since mathematics is the essence of human ability to "know" reality, the lack of certainty as to these questions indicates a limit on human ability.

Experience

Knowledge is generalized from experience. Modern science is the example of this form of knowledge. Guesses are made as to the causes of certain events, such as the outbreak of disease. Experiments are then conducted to test the hypothesis that something is the cause. If the proportion of successes exceeds a certain probability, the relationship is established by inductive logic.

But, human observations are limited by senses. The measurements involved in the experiments may have been insufficiently accurate or even wrong. Other possible causes may not have been checked even though they may be present in the current experiment or may be just as likely to be an independent cause. Finally, luck may have just allowed enough successes to make the conclusion appear likely when increasing the number of experiments would allow the conclusion to appear false.

Cause and effect may only be coincidence. Philosophers such as David Hume argued that the human mind links causes to effects because it has been conditioned to do so. The mind, then, doesn't look for alternative causes and so misses any others

that might be present. Other philosophers argued that nothing exists outside of the mind, so there's nothing about which to learn.

The inductive reasoning required by this method prevents certainty.

Intuition

Knowledge is based on instinctive information. What is the source? Is it only accumulated results of other methods? This is probably the most difficult method of learning to discuss. However, most cases of intuition have turned out to be an unconscious remembering of past experience accumulated in one's present existence. There's no evidence that the mind is imprinted with knowledge before birth.

Summary

It appears foolhardy to limit the attainment of knowledge to any one of these methods. The soundest model is that of the Native Americans. Knowledge is part of a never-ending circle of trusting faith, experimentation, reasoning, and revelation.

This is supported by at least three scriptures. Alma's "Seed of Faith" sermon invites listeners to assume the correctness of God's will and then experiment by acting according to it. God's spirit would signal them of the correctness of their ideas. (Alma 16: 158-162) This is also similar to the Buddhist concept of *dharma*. Oliver Cowdery was told that knowledge was found by one's studying out of an issue being confirmed by the Holy Spirit (D&C 9: 3). Finally, in both the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 12: 35-38) and in Matthew (13: 8-12) of the Holy Scriptures, one finds the injunction that God gives more to those who continue to receive his words and takes away all from those who stop receiving.

IV. Scripture

Scriptures are the written words considered holy by a group of people. For the purposes of this discussion, only the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants will be considered.

Word of God

Scriptures are the word-for-word ideas of God, free from human error. One who accepts this view will be disappointed when they study the Bible and find the contradictions, anachronisms, and denials of scientific fact ¹. If they study the book in its original languages, they will discover further where translation has changed the original meaning of the words ². When they study the past cultures involved, they will be dismayed to find that those in the past were working in the accepted rhetorical form of attributing the accumulated wisdom of a group to its founder ³. Beyond this, one need only recognize that the Bible contains both Words and Stories and that these don't require the same veracity.

The Book of Mormon is depicted as being a condensation of the religious history of two major groups who came to the New World. Unlike the Bible, there was no long period of oral transmission. The amount of material included may be comparable to the Bible. But, several times, the book records the claim that it is relating less than one percent of the people's dealings ⁴. There appears to be a single translation process, with the exception of a few records which were incorporated into the manuscript by the original authors ⁵.

There is a great deal of difficulty in attributing the events of the Book of Mormon to a particular locale or people in the New World. There is contradictory evidence on the development of New World languages, the use of steel, or the presence of the horse ⁶.

Finally, the Doctrine and Covenants would seem to be simply a matter of faith as to its veracity. However, Joseph Smith, Jr., felt it necessary to edit revelations,

which had been previously published. Committee reports and conference resolutions were also published in the book, to be later removed.

The most attractive feature of this position on scripture is its easiness. If the work of struggling with God has already been accomplished, it makes it so much "safer" for those who follow. They only need to memorize the words, the interpretations, and the logical arguments. This view is almost required of those who deal with reason as the source of knowledge.

Interpretation of Experience

Scriptures are the attempt to describe concepts communicated in revelation from God. In the human struggle to escape from the current situation to a better one, the problem of perspective cannot be ignored. The person is working out of the context of the very ideas they are trying to outgrow, while God is working from the vantage point of knowing how it ought to be. The person may not yet have the language to describe what God is sharing with them. So, they do the best they can.

Abraham Heschel writes the following thought.

"Our question then is: What did the prophet mean by the phrase, 'God spoke'? To understand the statements of the prophet about his experience we must keep in mind the following principles about the nature of these statements: (1) things and words have many meanings; (2) the prophet's statements are understatements; (3) the language of the prophet is the language of grandeur and mystery; (4) there is a distinction between descriptive and indicative words; (5) the statements of the prophet must be taken responsively." ⁷

It's incumbent on those who follow to recapture that experience. Those in the present have a larger language and experience to work from. A clearer version of the concept can be mined, or a newer one may supersede the old.

Something of this can be seen in the editing that Joseph Smith, Jr., did to both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. His spiritual and theological growth necessitated the changes.

Interpretation of Relationship

Scriptures are the attempt to describe the relationship of God with people. The actual revelation is the experience of God's presence; the scripture is the interpretation that the community makes in response. Revelation, then, consists of two acts: God's giving and the community's receiving.

The interpretation of the relationship is distinct from the interpretation of experience. The experience is in the past, while the relationship is in the present. The question is: What does God want of humanity now? This question is answered best in the use of scripture. It is seen in the rewording of accepted scripture for drama, readings, and such. This question is also answered in scholarly works about scripture.

Rabbinic Judaism has taken the view that the scriptures describe all of eternal Israel. That is, what happened to Abraham explains what is happening to those in the present and also what will happen to those of the future. This idea of *midrash* appears in Christianity, as well, both in the form of the New Testament "truth texts" linking Jesus to Judaism and in present-day doctrinal proofs. Indeed, such books as The Call at Evening and The Quiet Miracle contain RLDS *midrash* of this type.

While it appears less useful in explaining scripture than the interpretation of experience, the relationship is the reason for the experience.

Consensus

Scriptures are the records of how communities formed themselves. Since scriptures contain both Words and Stories, it's only natural that this is contained in scripture. Nor should the filtering process of history cause much surprise. One of the results of the critical analysis of scripture is identification of various works, which were edited together. From the Old Testament, one finds that the twelve tribes were not as closely connected as thought. Evidence suggests that there were at least two groups of tribes, with Dan possibly being a group of Sea People ⁸ who left Egypt at the same time as the *Bne Israel* ⁹. This northern group of tribes actually participated in the Exodus. Moses and Aaron may have been, in fact, Ephraimites ¹⁰. The southern group

of tribes, *Bne Jacob*, may have never sojourned in Egypt, but joined the covenant under Joshua at Shechem. The references to the temple, the Levitical priesthood, and sacrifices may have been an attempt to syncretize their religion with the Mosaic covenant. The blending of the various documents was an attempt to provide a common background for the tribes and justify the southern version of the religion.

This can be seen in several ways. First, the strains coming from the northern tribes and the prophets to them stress the journey in the wilderness, the Mosaic covenant, and distaste for sacrifice. The southern tribes were never reminded by their prophets of the desert wanderings. The experiences of the Patriarchs were emphasized to them. Second, the Levites were a professional group rather than a tribe. The **P** document, authored by them, is the source of the temple ordinances. The **P** tradition is also where Aaron is downplayed. While the Levites served as the priests of Judah, the northern priests were the "sons of Aaron". Third, some scriptures allude to only a portion of the tribes sojourning in Egypt ¹¹.

Likewise, the New Testament can be viewed as the weaving of various communities of Jesus' followers into a single group. There were at least four groups in the formative years of Christianity. The "Q" community was made up of Galileans, who saw Jesus as a social reformer in the style of the Greek Cynic philosophers. Those of the Jerusalem community, which included the apostles and Jesus' brothers, viewed Jesus as the heir of David. Another group followed Jesus because of his miracles. Finally, the Christ cult came out of the background of the mystery cults and Gnosticism ¹².

While the Levitical priests were the final editors of the Old Testament, it appears that the Christ cult, of which Paul can be called the founder, were the last writers of New Testament. Some strains of Jesus' original teachings can be identified, however, since they are at odds with the Pauline teachings. Jesus emphasized living with God in the present as the result of obeying his corrected (and more stringent) version of the Law. Paul renounced the Law and emphasized a proclamation of faith and the re-enactment of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Christianity wouldn't have survived unless it became a Gentile religion. The understanding of the Judaism of that time couldn't have accepted the form of Messiah which Jesus presented. There was also the persecution of Jews, which was occurring

at the time that the gospels were being written. In spite of this, however, there is something disturbing about the distortions which were incorporated into the story of Jesus. First, the writers invented Jewish opponents for Jesus and portrayed the original apostles as too dense to understand the true meaning of Jesus¹³. Second, they tried to justify as Jewish prophecy events in the birth and death of Jesus, which more closely resemble the legends of such mystery figures as Mithras and Attis¹⁴.

The writings of Paul could be thought of as merely trying to explain Christianity to the Gentiles in their own religious terms. The resulting ritualistic view of baptism and the Lord's Supper and the somewhat Gnostic knowledge that Jesus is the Lord might be thought of as the natural results of religious syncretism of the day. There is, however, evidence that Paul was not who he said he was¹⁵. Rather than being the Pharisee's Pharisee, he appears to have been an adult convert to Judaism, who failed in his studies and became a henchman for the High Priest. It is still possible that he could have had his experiences and been a valid witness for Christ. But, why create the deception in order to discredit Judaism? Why change the emphasis from Jesus' teachings to Jesus himself?

Because no community readily identifies itself as the survivors of the Book of Mormon story, it's difficult to discuss this scripture as a history of a community¹⁶. However, it can be seen as part of the justification for the Restoration movement. The early Restored church was a community called by God to live out the "full" gospel, which had been lost by the then current churches. The version of God's working with another group of covenant people was to be used to find the true principles of Jesus' teachings¹⁷.

Likewise, the Doctrine and Covenants is a source document for telling church's story. It reiterates, in the early sections, the call to lead out in living according to God's commandments. This is a reinstatement of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps, because it is in the present tense, it fails to offer much of an explanation as to the current state of affairs. The modern church writes its history apart from its scripture¹⁸.

Myth

Scriptures are the explanations of why things are the way they are. The stories used speak in symbols that seem to instinctively move people. Take for example, the story of the fall of Adam and Eve.

This story can be seen as an explanation of the loss of innocence. The Garden of Eden represents innocence; Adam and Eve represent the conflicting natures of preservation and creativity; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the totality of knowledge. Man is tempted to obtain total knowledge in an easy way, without learning how to handle it responsibly.

Satan can be seen as the tester. Would the person obey God and trust in him or would they try to run things himself? The attempt to become one's own god results in the loss of innocence, to which one cannot return. Acting on the knowledge, without the ability to use it wisely, causes reverberations throughout the world.

The problem with scriptures is that symbols become ineffective. Since the Enlightenment, the above interpretation would not be received well. Man was seen as the champion, who could learn all about the world and achieve heaven. The statement that he should trust in God was not wanted. Yet, such problems as the environment and nuclear arms serve as reminders that humanity's insatiable desire to discover and implement often outstrips its ability to use (or not use) wisely.

So, does one re-mythologize or does one take a hard look at how far pride has blinded them to their own limitations? It's certainly not a question to be answered in haste.

Summary

The presence of both Words and Stories in scripture demands at least of two of these models.

Words can be the literal word of God or the interpretation of experience. Since messages have been received as both concepts to be fleshed out or as dictated words, it makes no sense to confine God to one of these choices. The necessary caveat is that no revelation is the final revelation, giving God's total mind on a subject. Humanity is in

a growing relationship with God, with each generation needing its own meeting. This necessitates the availability of revelation to each generation.

The Stories contain both myth and consensus. While the Words give the commandments of God, the Stories offer explanations and histories. The question becomes: How does one use the scriptures?

Does one assume that everything in them is antiquated and useless? What criteria led to that conclusion? It is somewhat arrogant to assume that authors can only write in one form; that futures cannot be seen; that miracles cannot take place. What do the critics make of Edgar Allen Poe's writing both poetry and mystery/horror novels? Was Jules Verne really that far off in his predictions of inventions? Why is it that biblical writers have more restrictions than modern authors? ¹⁹

There is much about developing communities of joyful people in the scriptures. Why not concentrate on finding and teaching these ideals in modern terms? Clearly, the choice depends on one's view of God, knowledge, and scripture.

¹ For instance, David is made king of Israel though not enough generations had passed between him and his Moabite great-grandmother for him to be admitted into the congregation.

² De Barthe, Enid S., "Bonds of Tradition: Concepts of God and Gender Roles," in Restoration Studies V, p.81. In the Greek, Jesus' injunction to Peter refers to three types of sheep: young rams, the whole flock and young ewes.

Tyree, Alan S., "When Were Women First Ordained?" Saints Herald (Jan '87), pp. 5-6, 22. The words *presbuteros* and *presbutera* are translated as "elders" and "elder women" in I Timothy 5: 17. Both should either refer to an office or to one's age. Similarly, *diakonos* is used as a title for both men and women, avoiding the use of the female *diakona*.

"Preface", Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, 1985 edition, p. xx. "The as yet imperfect understanding of the language of the Bible, or what appears to be some disorder in the Hebrew text, makes sure translation of many passages impossible."

³ This point is discussed by Mack in The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins and by Funk and Hoover in The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus.

⁴ I Nephi 218-226; Jacob 1: 1-4; Jarom 1: 1-5; Omni 1: 26-33; Words of Mormon 1: 4-8, 13; III Nephi 3: 56-58; 3 Nephi 8: 14-19.

⁵ Mosiah I translated Jaredite records.

⁶ B. H. Roberts presented evidence on both sides of these issues in response to a non-member's inquiry.

⁷ Heschel, Abraham J., God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism, p. 178.

⁸ The *Dannuna* were a group of Sea People, who were allies of the Philistines, which lived in the area assigned to the tribe of Dan in the Bible. They are in turn linked to the *Dannuniyim*, who founded the city of *Karatepe* in southern Turkey (Cilicia). Their king claimed descent from *Mopsos*, a riddle-loving warrior, who cast the local goddess of Ashkelon into a pond. This is a close connection to the story of Samson, who also loved riddles and who tore down the gate of Gaza. That Dan's champion resembles a Greek hero rather than a Hebrew judge is further strengthened by resemblance of Samson and Delilah to the story of King Nisus, whose strength-giving lock of red hair was cut by his daughter when she betrayed him to King Minos of Crete.

⁹ *Bne Israel* consisted of the tribes of Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, though there is some evidence of a separate origin for Benjamin. *Bne Judah* consisted of the southern Isaac groups and the *Bne Keturah* — the twelve sons he had by his second wife, Keturah. In this sense, the Patriarchs are actually tribal groups, named after a founding leader.

¹⁰ Silver, Abba Hillel, Moses and the Original Torah, p. 16. See also Genesis 50: 29.

¹¹ Psalm 80 speaks only of Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin when talking about God bringing Israel out of Egypt.

¹² Clement of Alexandria uses a secret gospel, attributed to Mark, in which Jesus reveals the mystery of the kingdom of God to Lazarus.

¹³ The gospels were written during a time of persecution against the Jews, Jerusalem having just been destroyed following a revolt. This effectively eliminated the Jerusalem group's influence on the church's theology. The Christ Cult, led by Paul, was eliminating the ties to Judaism. To do this, it invented a normative Judaism, which it identified as the Pharisees, since they were the surviving group. In doing so, the gospel writers recast the political issue of messiahship into a religious one and attributed, to the Pharisees, attitudes and beliefs more characteristic of the Sadducees and the Essenes.

The most obvious change is the idea that Jewish Christians required circumcision of the Gentiles, when, in fact, only obedience to the Noahide laws was enjoined. The break between the Jerusalem group and the Gentiles occurred when the Gentiles couldn't be trusted to let the Jewish group to follow their practices.

Finally, there is the recasting of Jesus' brother Jude as Judas Iscariot, the betrayer required to retell Jesus' story as a redeemer myth.

¹⁴ Mithras was incarnated on December 25th to save mankind from Ahriman, who represented evil. His birth was witnessed by shepherds. He also held a last supper with his disciples prior to returning to heaven. Mithraism is now held to have originated in Paul's home town of Tarsus.

The re-enactment of Attis' death and resurrection began with the bringing of a pine tree into the city a week before the Spring Equinox. A week later, it was clothed in purple and placed in the temple of Cybele. There was one day of mourning, one day of whipping and castration, then, a celebration of Attis' resurrection. The relationship between Cybele and Attis reminds one of the Virgin Mary and Jesus.

¹⁵ Paul acted contrary to the other Pharisees, both in attacking the followers of Jesus and especially in working for the High Priest. The Sadducees (which included the High Priest) and the Pharisees were blood enemies. In his writings, even to the Jews, Paul uses Hellenistic rhetoric rather than Pharisaic rules of argument. His scriptural quotes are often incorrect or non-existent, and his conclusions differ from the generally accepted interpretations. His citations come from the Septuagint, never from the Targums or the Torah.

¹⁶ Most Native Americans have traditions of a prophet, who came on a ship from across the Pacific, and taught them peace. He travelled all through the Americas before sailing toward the Atlantic, promising to return.

The Book of Mormon story has Jesus descending from and ascending to heaven. His disciples are the ones who spread his teachings throughout the land. Jesus does state, however, that he's going to visit other groups.

Perhaps it is the assumption that the Book of Mormon reflects the history of the whole Pan-American land mass that leads to the contradiction.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 37: 15-28, Genesis 50: 30-31, and 2 Nephi 2: 17-23 speak of two scriptures being used to establish correct doctrine.

¹⁸ While the Doctrine and Covenants includes some administrative changes in its revelations, most history is recorded in separate works or in church publications.

¹⁹ One can see the differences in the revelations of Joseph Smith, Jr., during his tenure. There's also a discernible difference in the forms used by Mohammed in the Koran, which corresponds to the change in the roles he was playing.

V. Church

The Church began as separate movements, which formed a collegial relationship as a general outline of beliefs formed among some of them. Its government consisted of assemblies of bishops, who wielded less power than martyrs and prophets. When the church reached sufficient size, the differences in language and tradition began to pull it apart. Then, the emperor established Christianity as the state religion.

With the emperor pushing for the same uniformity in the church as in the government, the bishops began to seize power from the martyrs and charismatics and forge dogma and ritual. When the bishops failed to reach agreement, the emperor (yet to be baptized) intervened. But, when the empire split, so did the church.

The rise of Ecumenism in this century has encouraged the study of the Church. What is it? How does it compare to the collage of denominations? How do these groups fulfill the functions of worship, prophecy, redemption, and unity? Is cooperation sufficient or does one force the formation of a super-church? Is "reunion" possible when "union" wasn't a factual experience?

People vs. Supporting Organization

What is the church? The usual definitions would center on the building, the organization, and the dogma. But, Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants identifies the church as both those who change their lives to follow Christ and the supporting organization, which aids them in that journey. The most astounding thing is that the changed lives are more important than the structure. The organization, buildings, and dogmas are only there to assist in the process of spiritual growth.

Why was the Restoration organization brought into existence? According to church history and the Doctrine and Covenants, it was to offer a supporting organization to the "church". This was necessary because existing groups had altered Jesus' teachings. The message from Joseph Smith, Junior's experience--"They draw near to me with their mouths, but their hearts are far from me"--implies that institutional Christianity had become largely an intellectual exercise ¹.

What had changed? Revelation from God was denied in favor of scriptural deduction ². Sacraments had become rituals, bordering on the magical ³. The Kingdom of God had been removed from the earthly present to the heavenly future ⁴.

What was restored? The spiritual gifts, including revelation, were again used to bring insight to the community. Jesus' teaching of perfection through obedience to the commandments and the resulting presence of God in a community of such followers were reinstated as part of the teachings on Zion. The sacraments were re-emphasized as acts of covenanting, which began new lives leading to salvation. Offices of priesthood were established to provide ministry to those following Christ.

What happened to the Restored church? The emphasis appears to have shifted from the people to the organization. Rather than following Christ or building the kingdom, the church seems to be trying to maintain control of the people and gain acceptance from other churches ⁵.

There's always been a tension between the people and the leadership. The mass of people tend to achieve a certain level and then strive to maintain the status quo. The leaders are working to keep people moving in their journey to follow Christ. Ideally, the people respect the prophet as the one burdened with leadership and offer him their support. The prophet also respects the speed at which the people can move. When this balance isn't maintained, there is usually a period of sifting out until the equilibrium is regained.

Why is there such friction between the leadership and the masses? The simplest reason is a lack of communication. Since the time of F. M. Smith, there's been greater emphasis on education ⁶. This has resulted in many of those working full-time for the church attending seminaries of other denominations. In studying theology, they've learned to speak about their religious ideas in a different language than the main body of the RLDS church.

Another reason is the continuing aftereffects of the Supreme Directional Control controversy of 1925. Because of the autocratic style of F. M. Smith, many members became distrustful of the leadership and passed this attitude down to those who followed.

Finally, the apparent move to ecumenism is seen as a betrayal. The reaction of the church to its persecution has hidden the message of cooperation with churches who were trying to follow Christ⁷. This cooperation would naturally lead to dialogue. However, the distinctiveness of the covenants involved was to be preserved⁸.

Some of those leaders attending seminaries have accepted the idea of relativism, which is basic to the extreme form of ecumenism⁹. This is seen in the movements to open communion and acceptance of others on their previous baptisms. This has produced a polarity in the church. Does one continue with the traditional approach of God as the definer of the correct course or does one follow the existential concept of each person defining their own course? Can the church accept all other churches as viable, rejecting the reason given for its founding, and still justify itself as a necessary entity? Since these positions seem irreconcilable, who should leave?

The Restoration didn't occur so that other organizations could be condemned. It was brought into existence to be an exemplary group of people following Christ, claiming his promises to be with them in their present communities as they obey his commandments. It wasn't established to join with others in a search for the least objectionable, but to lead people to the fullness of God's promises.

Although the Reorganization has always sought to avoid the imposition of dogma, it needs to develop a consistent theology based on its own scriptures. The church--as well as all Christians--needs to acknowledge the wide variance within Christianity and the major differences between the Restoration and Christianity¹⁰. Finally, dialogue must replace fiat as the means of implementing change. Even within the legislative process of the World Conference, no one seems to gain much understanding of the other side's position on any given issue. Yet, this dialogue is needed with those outside the church also. The other denominations need to know what they're getting into if they join with the Reorganization in some fashion.

Ministry

Ministry can be thought of as any act of helping another. Usually, people apply the word to those who have been singled out to provide service to the community. This paper will discuss three issues related to these ministers.

Professional vs. Lay Ministers

When one considers the need to promote growth in the community's following after Christ, this is a very significant issue. The professional minister cannot afford to rattle the status quo too much or they'll be out of a job. The very fact that they're being paid is evidence that part of the community is avoiding their needed change by using the minister as a proxy. The lay minister can be freer to promote change, since they don't have to please anyone to preserve their income. There should be more evidence that all understand that they're called to serve.

Structure

The Restoration has always been proud of its containing all the officers possibly found in the New Testament church. What it has always overlooked is that there's no evidence that these all existed at any one time. Rather each version of the church seems to have developed a priesthood structure which met its needs. In the beginning, there was only the high priesthood. After Moses, there were the Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods. The New Testament church had apostles, prophets, elders, bishops, and deacons. The Book of Mormon church had priests, teachers, and elders. The importance is in the functioning of an office, not its existence.

Authority

Most every church grounds its authority in a founding experience when God authorizes its ministry. But, the following questions arise: How long does such authority last? Can there be more than one authorized church? Is this the only way to get authority?

The Book of Mormon has several examples of God's honoring man's initiative. Two of the first Nephi's brothers gave accepted ministry after Nephi ordained them as priests and teachers. Alma was accepted when he began baptizing in the waters of Mormon. The Nephi of Christ's time was also accepted in his baptizing and ordaining

after the disintegration of the church. But, when Christ appeared, this baptism and ordination became insufficient. Nephi was re-baptized and re-ordained.

This supersession of authority is corroborated by Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and Matthew 9: 18-23. Fuller knowledge requires growth into a new commitment. Any resident authority is lost when growth is refused.

One again turns to the Book of Mormon to find that God has dealt with all nations, giving them their own scriptures ¹¹. It is unreasonable, then, to assume that God would not provide the means for people to come to him at their own pace. The guiding principle should be that all organizations and scriptures are valuable and authoritative as they call humanity to the fullness of their relationship with God. The integrity of these various communities must be respected, however. Those from other groups do not have the authority to enforce their practices on communities to which they don't belong.

Sacraments, Worship and Abundant Living

For most Christians, worship is attending a weekly service to participate in a ritual and to hear a sermon. Some may also add a weekly prayer and testimony service.

Sacraments are defined as symbolic acts. They are performed by the appropriate ministers and they signify a covenant between the participants and God. The Christian community, however, has many different understandings as to the purpose, format and necessity of the various sacraments ¹².

There are many interpretations of the abundant life. Some Christians would explain it as the sanctification process by which "grace" transforms the followers of Jesus. Some would describe the abundant life as the response experienced as one chooses to be a positive force in the world around them. Others think of abundant life as a reward found in heaven. There are several views as to the roles of God and of individuals in obtaining and enjoying this existence.

How are worship, the sacraments, and the abundant life related? How have these concepts developed over the years?

The Holy Scriptures state that God established a covenant with humanity to live with them on earth if they followed his leadership. He gave people commandments to teach them of Jesus, who would come to redeem them. Baptism upon repentance was instituted as a rite of new birth, administered by a priesthood member. Blessings, given to sons and grandsons, tended to reinforce the covenants made between one's ancestors and God.

The original Torah, or "Teaching", of Moses was a tool to teach the people of Israel how to be obedient to God. The work of the prophets was to call the people back to the goal of being God's people, a people who practiced justice.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Judaism is its emphasis on study, prayer, and obedience to God's commandments. These actions can be seen as sacraments: administered by individuals, that remind them of their covenant to be God's people, working with him in the cause of peace ¹³.

Christ continued and built upon this tradition. He lived out a stricter version of the "Teaching" and instructed his followers to do likewise. Though his discussion was grounded in Pharisaic lore and methods, Jesus disagreed with the Pharisees on two points. He spoke to individuals rather than an eternal community of Israel and he spoke in his own name rather than one of an ancient teacher ¹⁴.

Jesus also connected sacraments to the kingdom. Baptism, based on repentance that was a reorientation of one's life, was necessary to enter God's kingdom. Knowing and following his teachings was the foundation of abundant life and peace. God would dwell with those who did so. The partaking of the bread and wine, a remaking of the Passover, became a memorial of Christ's life and a harbinger of meeting with him in the kingdom. Jesus also ordained ministers, blessed children, and administered to the sick.

The Book of Mormon follows an alternate development of Yahwehism. No authority is presented based on a long line of priesthood. God honors the initiative of Nephi in ordaining his brothers, Jacob and Joseph, as priests. God also honors Alma's establishment of a church.

Before Christ's appearance, the Nephite and Lamanite churches practiced ordination and baptism. The ministries of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands are not recorded ¹⁵. The sick were healed through prayer, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost followed from the water baptism ¹⁶. Fathers pronounced blessings on their children.

After Christ came and presented his new covenant, new baptisms and new ordinations were performed, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted. In plainer language, the partaking of the bread and wine were linked to observing Jesus' commandments and growing in the Spirit. The blessing of children was also introduced, and infant baptism was rejected.

While the Jews concentrated on life here on earth and God's earthly reign, the Gentiles longed to escape to heaven. The dominant religions were based on the Platonic concept of a perfect, ideal universe where the First Cause resided. The mystery cults provided rituals by which one found their way through the various levels of existence to that heaven. The most common ritual was the reenactment of a redeeming god's sacrifice. This was accomplished by the initiate's being showered by the blood of a bull, or ram, as it was slaughtered. This "baptism" was followed by the group's eating the flesh and blood of the animal in the "Lord's Supper". The communicant was assimilated with the deity through eating the body and drinking the blood.

Paul made use of this background in preaching to the Gentiles. The rebirth through animal sacrifice became the rebirth through baptism. One assimilated Christ into one's self by baptism and partaking of the Lord's Supper (later called the "Eucharist" to disassociate it from the mystery cult meal.) Paul's rejection of the commandments of the Torah (and by extension, those of Jesus) and his reliance on the knowledge of Jesus as the redeemer, betray a strong Gnostic influence, as well.

The Restoration is an attempt to merge the best of both of these heritages. From Judaism, comes the learning process of following the commandments and the concept of the earthly kingdom. The Gentile church contributes a personal relationship with God, who redeems all who come to him.

People's having the abundant life is God's goal. Worship--that is, keeping God's commandments--is the process by which people learn the abundant life. Activities such as prayer, study, and managing one's resources for God's purposes can be thought of as sacraments, which the individual members administer for themselves. The responsibility of teaching these disciplines belongs to the Aaronic priesthood, working in a small group setting ¹⁷.

What will be the purpose of the gatherings which have been observed as "worship"? They can be turned into times of sharing testimonies and celebrating God's blessings in people's lives. They can be times of intercession for those in need. As the people have been praying and studying and meditating over personal and group concerns, a foundation will exist for the ministry of the Melchisedic priesthood. The elders will lead the people in learning the mysteries of the kingdom as they begin to build consensus in addressing common issues.

Sacraments will become beginnings rather than closures, marking the participants' commitment to change, to a new relationship with God. The emphasis will be on the covenant to serve and nurture. It cannot be forgotten that the sacraments bind God, the participants, and the community together in a commitment to uphold each other.

What is nurture? How does it fit into the abundant life?

Nurture can be seen on three levels. The first is providing the necessities of life, which requires a commitment of resources. The next level is providing opportunities for development. This requires a commitment of time, as well as resources. Finally, to nurture is to keep alive, to cherish. To nurture at this level, requires one's self, as well. Each level of nurturing shifts the field of concern from one's self to others and reflects a growing trust in God.

How is this nurturing seen in the various sacraments?

In joining the church through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, new members make a commitment to engage in prayer, study and other spiritual disciplines in order to develop an ongoing relationship with God. They promise to serve others, both within and without the community. The congregation, meanwhile,

offers support through prayer, visiting, home ministry, and fellowship. It provides opportunities for involvement as the new members' gifts and talents are observed.

New ordinands pledge to ready themselves for ministry through spiritual discipline and study of fields appropriate to their calling. They promise to serve the community to the best of their ability. The congregation reciprocates by offering prayerful support.

When children are blessed, the parents are promising to raise them to be productive members of the community, well-versed in its teachings. The congregation nurtures both the parents and the children. Church members assist in the children's training and help provide the parents with time of their own. As always, prayerful support and fellowship are to be given.

The same trend of community support through prayer and fellowship can be easily seen in the case of marriage, as is the agreement of the couple to nurture each other. These are not as obvious in the sacraments of the evangelist's blessing or of administration for the sick.

Administration for the sick, or anointing with oil, is often accompanied or preceded by the prayers of others. More emphasis needs to be laid on the responsibility of the one receiving the blessing. A change in one's stewardship may be called for as harmful habits are dropped and healthy ones learned. A testimony of God's love can be offered, and other opportunities for ministry may present themselves. Since administration is a sacrament, some covenant is called for on the part of the recipient and the community.

The evangelist's blessing is a private sacrament. The community's nurturing is probably best done by the evangelist, who represents the church in the sacrament. The recipient is given some guidance as to the gifts they have to offer to the church. The evangelist, as well as others who are able to observe these gifts, can continue to offer encouragement ¹⁸.

Finally, the Lord's Supper becomes a celebration of the Spirit's working in people's lives as they grow through obeying God's commandments. Participation is a testimony to each other that God does provide the strength and means to follow his teachings. Further, the promise of greater communion is reinforced. The process is

dynamic. When the people receive God's words by living them out, he continues to help them grow by giving further guidance. The kingdom within each person is revealed and allowed to exist among the community.

What is the effect when those participating in a sacrament have different purposes and different understandings as to what they're doing? What covenant has occurred? If the sacrament is celebrated as a group of individual experiences, there is no growth into a community. Is there a growth toward God? If the person is being justified in their present state, it seems unlikely that they are being called to a closer relationship with God. Rather, they are being conditioned to stay the way they are. Is nurturing taking place? Perhaps as the lowest level, as one's need to participate is being met. But, no growth would appear to be occurring.

In a short-term view, it would seem that minimal good is being accomplished. But, the possibility exists that the continued involvement might lead to a deeper understanding and a desire for covenant with the community. The main reason for excluding anyone from the sacraments is the scriptural warning against serving the Lord's Supper to "unworthy" persons as it could lead to ill health, if not their damnation. (1 Corinthians 11: 23-30; 3 Nephi 8: 58-68) Though "unqualified" might have been a better choice than "unworthy", the emphasis seems to be on intent in participating. If one was not growing spiritually through obedience to Christ's commandments--remembering his life, they were making a false affirmation before God by partaking of the emblems. The procedure for beginning this repentance is baptism. What of one who was previously baptized? If it was not done with the expectation of enduring in a life of growth through obedience, can one now say that the first baptism establishes such a covenant? Psychologically, the new baptism marks a beginning in a new understanding of discipleship. Repeatedly in scripture, it is recognized that this act of commitment is necessary to break from the past and enter into the new relationship. Otherwise, one is in a psychological vacuum, belonging nowhere. Clearly, there is a need for dialogue about what each thinks occurs during the sacraments so that intelligent decisions can be made ¹⁹.

Summary

The primary definition of the church is people who have radically changed their lives to come unto Christ. That is, to become glorified by obeying his commandments. The secondary definition of the church is a community and its associated scriptures, organization, and sacraments.

The Restored church was established to provide a renewal of spiritual gifts, the concept of the kingdom of God, and dynamic sacraments. Its purpose is to lead other institutions in the full development of persons.

The separation into two churches discussed by Nephi needs to be seen as referring to organizations rather than people. Even this cannot be seen as the RLDS church versus all comers. For this organization has followed the same path as others before. In the words of Abraham Heschel:

"When faith is completely replaced by creed, worship by discipline, love by habit; when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past; when faith becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain; when religion speaks only in the name of authority rather than with the voice of compassion --its message becomes meaningless." ²⁰

The RLDS church has spent too much time trying to prove that they're different from Mormons and that they have the correct organization. They've forgotten that they were there to be images of God, living in community, showing people how God would have them be. That has nothing to do with debates or scriptural bibliographies. The idea is to show people, not convince them.

God provides for the different levels of knowledge and development among the world's peoples by acknowledging their efforts to come to him. Each organization is useful as long as it is enabling spiritual growth. However, when a person comes in contact with greater truth, and accepts it, they must join the newer community through a new covenant.

If different groups want to celebrate a growing involvement together, one option might be to develop new rituals to mark this closer fellowship.

¹ Creeds were originally developed as confessions of faith, but became baptismal interrogations. The belief in creeds is still a requirement for membership in many Protestant denominations.

² When Constantine made Christianity the state religion, he wanted the same unity of control which existed in civil government. This began a standardization of doctrine and scriptural canon. Revelation became a source of "error" and a challenge to authority. Therefore, it was eliminated.

³ Baptism and the Eucharist were celebrated largely to win God's favor. The commitment to live a life of communion with God and obedience to his commandments was minimal, if not absent. The person had been transformed by the sacramental act. If any learning was to take place, it would be according to the rules of the covenant community.

⁴ While various groups would gather to await the end of the world, there was certainly no understanding that one would cause such an event or that life with God could precede it. The kingdom of God, if it was still accepted as a viable concept, was something in the future, a motivation for good behavior.

⁵ It is unfair to assign sole blame for this problem on the leadership. Those who claim to hold to the traditional teachings on the restoration of authority and Zion have, in many cases, used these concepts like a Protestant creed. The intent to act on these beliefs doesn't exist anymore than in other denominations who've decided it wasn't practical to do so.

⁶ Joseph Smith, Jr., had established the School of the Prophets, as well as the University of Nauvoo. Graceland College was established during the tenure of Joseph Smith III. Having earned a doctorate in philosophy, F. M. Smith encouraged all priesthood members to improve themselves through education. The School of the Restoration offered various courses related to ministerial duties.

The Temple School succeeded the School of the Restoration in the 1970's. It became an integral part of pre-ordination training with the introduction of Guidelines for the Priesthood in 1985. Though the year of internship wasn't implemented, new ordinands are required to take three Temple School courses prior to ordination.

(Although the church established a Master of Arts degree in Religion at Park College, this has been transferred to a program through the Community of Christ Seminary, which is part of Graceland University.)

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 3: 13-17 speaks of establishing a church (organization) which would attract those of his church (people) by clarifying the true points of the gospel. Only those who have ignored God's commandments, and built up churches to themselves, should be disturbed by the restoration of the gospel and the priesthood. D&C 16: 4 clearly states one isn't to contend against any church but that of the devil.

One might say that the church is to be living out the gospel in the world, answering the questions of those who are drawn to join in the fellowship and speaking out against those who place an oppressive burden on others. The main thrust should be cooperation--as one is led by God--with others who are working good, letting one's actions do the persuading.

⁸ D&C 20 makes it clear that past sacraments, performed according to a different understanding of the gospel, have no effect in joining the new community. It is the present attitude of obedience, not the past act, which is of importance.

The conversion of one's covenant cannot be forced and must occur according to each individual's rate of growth. Cooperation in doing good works, however, needn't require any change in affiliation.

(Recent revelation has opened the door for the acceptance of "believer's baptism" performed by other institutions. This is inconsistent with the discussion above.)

⁹ Relativism is related to the concept of Natural Law: people are following an intuitive understanding of "good" living, with the different religions being cultural expressions of its implementation. Such a concept leads to acceptance of any other group's sacraments. The ecumenical goal is realized, not by any agreement on issues, but by ignoring the issues.

Experience with other denominations has shown that open communion has failed as a means of affecting any unity of belief or action. A more successful method has been intercommunion. Groups of denominations, usually with a common history, agree to the offering the Eucharist to each other's members. This has been the result of

discussions regarding their similarities and differences. Dialogue appears to be an essential precursor to effective unions.

(Since this paper was written, open communion has become the normative practice of the Community of Christ.)

¹⁰ Within Christianity, there are wide differences on such issues as the number and nature of the sacraments, the roles and titles of ministers, the source of truth, and the nature of God. The RLDS church has other issues such as continuing revelation and an open canon, calling of ministers through revelation, and the call to establish God's kingdom on earth through right living.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that the concept of humankind being in God's image is found in both Chinese and Indian religion. The Chinese taught that each person had a *Te*, or image of God, within them that was to be exposed by following the Way of Heaven. There is evidence that their very language is based on the concepts of Genesis. Similarly, the Hindus felt that each one was to find the *Brahmin* within them.

¹² Most Protestant churches observe two sacraments, some churches admit none, and some have seven--though the list isn't identical. Of those practicing baptism, some believe it is necessary for salvation, while others believe it's only an act of obedience. Confirmation by the laying on of hands is variously interpreted as a renewal of baptismal vows or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some churches believe that that baptism of the Holy Spirit follows immediately after the water baptism--or acceptance of Jesus as Savior--and must be evidenced by the speaking in tongues.

The Eucharist is variously interpreted as a strict memorial, a renewal of commitment, or the actual reenactment of Christ's crucifixion. The bread and wine are simply symbols of Christ, tokens which unite the believer with Christ, or the actual body and blood.

¹³ Silver, Abba Hillel, Moses and the Original Torah, p. 12, 22, 32. Heschel, Abraham J., God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism, p. 290. Micah 6: 8.

¹⁴ Neusner, Jacob, A Rabbi Talks With Jesus: An Intermillennial, Interfaith Exchange, p. 22, 29.

¹⁵ Ordinations are mentioned. The only other instance occurs in Alma 16: 102-117, where Alma II offered a prayer and "clapped his hands" on his companions in a mission to the Zoramites, whereupon the companions were filled with the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ An exception to this is the group of 300 Lamanites who were guarding Helaman II's sons in prison. (Helaman 2: 82-114) There is no record of their water baptism; yet, Jesus states that they had been baptized by fire and the Holy Ghost. (III Nephi 4: 50)

¹⁷ It is a well-established principle that people learn by doing. The sermon is a less effective method, required by large groups. The small group, such as the family setting, would allow for the incorporation of activities.

¹⁸ The evangelist's blessing has evolved over the last several years beyond something given to individuals. It can now be given to families and congregations, too.

¹⁹ It should be noted that only communion, ordination and the evangelist's blessing currently require membership. (Confirmation only requires baptism by RLDS ministers.) Why are blessing of children, administration for the sick, and marriage allowed for non-members? What makes these sacraments different from the others?

(Since this paper was originally written, only ordination still requires membership in the Community of Christ. The church leadership now accepts "believer's baptism" by other institutions. Open communion is practiced, and non-member friends can receive an evangelist's blessing.)

²⁰ Heschel, Abraham J., God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism, p. 3.

VI. History

There are at least two views of religious history. One is that, reacting to a basic inner sense, humankind began to form societies. As part of their community-building, they developed religions both to explain and to justify how their groups worked within the world around them. Judaism drew from the mythologies of the national groups around it, adding a belief in a monotheistic God who sought a just, peaceful world. Jesus was a teacher who arose out of this tradition and became the best example of fulfilling this goal. Modern Christianity grew out of the various groups who applied Jesus' examples to their own backgrounds. The ultimate goal of this development is an inclusive umbrella organization, which acknowledges each individual's effort to define an authentic existence.

Another model of history is based on the continuous action of God to teach humankind full, joyful living. The various strains of religion are results of God's present involvement with the various cultures and their remembrance of a common past involvement. The different cultures had similar stories because of a common beginning rather than intercommunication. The beginning of Judaism was the attempt to have a nation, living as an example of a just, joyful community.

The purpose of the law in Judaism was to teach the people to be obedient to God. (Deuteronomy 6: 1-3) It would be fulfilled when the community learned to live in communication with God, obedient to his commandments. (Jeremiah 31: 31-34) Inherent in this promise was that God would live with them. Jesus is said to have lived such a life, so he fulfilled the law. Did he do away with the law? Since his recorded teachings make the law stricter, it is hard to imagine anyone thinking so. But, the emphasis is not on obeying certain rules, but on knowing God's will and carrying it out. Showing how to be living in the kingdom was more important than serving as a sacrifice.

For various reasons, the Christian churches took the same steps as their Jewish antecedents. They eliminated the instructive leadership of God and made religion the performance of various rituals and the acceptance of certain creeds. When the Enlightenment came, the superstitious underpinning of the religion was removed, leaving no cause for involvement. However, there was a great deal of encouragement

to attack the perceived bases for Christianity. Humankind became supremely confident in its own ability.

The Restoration movement was a reinstatement of God into the life of the church, along with the promise of the kingdom. In this, there was a calling to be the present-day Israel. (D&C 100: 3) This was not to be a replacement, as was taught in Christianity, but a merger with a people for whom God was still fulfilling covenants. (3 Nephi 14) In fact, the Restoration was not a community waiting for the coming of the kingdom, but a people with a vital part to play in causing the kingdom to come by meeting the conditions of Enoch's covenant. (Genesis 9: 21-23)

These two views of history are antithetical. The first is that of a never-ending evolution of humanity. The only role which God played was to be a tool used by mankind in that development. The second view affirms the continuous involvement of God in teaching all nations to follow him to a transformation of the world.

What is that transformation? Is it the scorching of the world and the evil people while the righteous are floating above them in the sky? Is it the disruptive chaos as communities of people adopt alternative lifestyles and cause the economies around them to crumble? Fundamental changes will cause some violent reactions. Is God the author of them, or does he just allow the consequences of people's choices to occur? There is a tendency for people to attribute too much to God and to avoid too much responsibility.

Abraham didn't need to know what would happen before he obeyed the commandment to offer up Isaac. He acted and God provided a less bloody solution. Perhaps the church also needs to move out in faith and trust that the results will be beneficial for all.

VII. Conclusions

The symbol of the tree comes from two sources. In the eleventh chapter of Romans, Paul compares Israel to an olive tree, whose natural branches have been replaced by the wild branches of the Gentiles. Nephi's brother, Jacob, quotes a similar parable of Zenos. (Jacob 3: 30- 4: 18) In each case, the intent is to restore the original branches. In each case, the branches which bear bitter fruit will be removed. One needs to examine one's ideas to determine which need to be pruned.

One never knows what will fall out of the tree when it is shaken. If the various issues are examined in language the people can understand, they will be surprised by what they might have in common with their "opponents". But, there are still differences.

Who determines how things should be? There will still be those who will surrender control to the individual because they don't want to offend. There will still be those willing to offend the individual in order to call them closer to God. There will still be those who want to act according to the ideas contained in scripture. There will still be those who want to ignore scripture as outdated. What is needed is communication.

M. Scott Peck has outlined a process for building communities. The four steps are pseudo-community, chaos, emptying, and consensus. Although the process has somewhat improved at World Conferences, the democratic tradition dictates that the usual course is pseudo-community, chaos, vote, and split. Perhaps the new bottom-up discussions advocated at the last Conference [2010] will facilitate the emptying and consensus.

In dealing with other churches, this same process needs to occur. To simply pretend that the differences on various issues don't exist, doesn't affect any real fellowship. Only as a joint effort is made to go back to the source, can any progress be made.

Two of the most exciting events of modern Christian literature have been the publications of Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* and the series of Joshua stories by Fr. Joseph Girzone. Sheldon presents a vision of communities acting in an imitation of Jesus. Girzone tells of Jesus' return to reinstate his original teachings.

In seeking to invoke the spirit of this return, the church needs to consider its relationships with Christianity, Judaism, and all the other religions of the world. The current view of Judaism, particularly, is colored by the invention of the New Testament writers and the years of anti-Semitism caused by their distortion. The church needs to obtain an accurate understanding of the faith observed by these people, for it seems to be more closely related to the message of Restoration scripture than many Christian denominations. Other religions also retain an understanding of God's intent for mankind. There is a role for the church in helping others to assemble all the pieces of the puzzle that shows God's hope for his children, which may be lost if the church subordinates itself to modern Protestantism.

What is still left on the tree?

God is a personal force that interacts with his creation today. He is responsible for originating and maintaining the world of mankind's existence. To those who draw near to him, he shares an active, present communion.

There is a consistent model for interpreting the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as a monotheistic unity. This model also explains the dual nature of humanity and a view of abundant living.

God's plan for spiritual development is based on the experience of doing the abundant life, through obeying his commandments. These may include ones given in the past, but are often individual and are obtained through a discipline of communion with God. Since language is insufficient to record all of God's intent and human reason is unable to deduce it, each person must seek their own experience of God's will in their life.

Jesus' central message was a call to change one's life to participate in the kingdom of God in the present. One needed to completely surrender their past life to enter, because their living would now be determined by the commandments which God would give them. This is a continuation of God's promise to Enoch and to Noah that Zion would be restored, and it is the basis of the RLDS church's call in the modern age.

God reaches out to all peoples to bring them to him. He responds to their initiative, enlarging their understanding to meet his purposes. Such organizations as

develop are honored as long as they assist in the process of spiritual growth. When their goals diverge from the establishment of God's kingdom, they cease to be useful, but are counterproductive.

Since people develop at different rates, they will, perhaps, be involved in different groups. As they respond to new understandings, their covenants will change and require new expression in sacraments.

The RLDS "church" was organized to facilitate the development of the extant church--that is the people who were trying to come to Christ. Its role is to lead others toward a life with God, expressed in Zionic communities, by being an example. History has shown that arguing scriptural proofs or protesting the church's distinctiveness has been a poor substitute for Jesus' method--just living it out. Simply believing in past events and in the origin of texts is useless, as is the arbitrary doing of good works. The church must demonstrate its living communion with God.

The church is called to be the leaven in the loaf of the world. Some tend to ignore the fact that the leaven is an agent that brings the milk, eggs, flour, and honey into a nutritional whole. The yeast doesn't become any of the other ingredients, nor does it force them to become yeast. It simply helps the baker to bring out the best contribution of each. In a similar manner, the RLDS church's job isn't to make everyone into Latter-Day Saints, but to be a community of people so afire with the love of doing God's will, that others will come to learn of them. If one doesn't put into practice the ideas in which they claim belief, what good is that belief?

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Shaking the Tree: Sixteen Golden Greats is a compilation album by the English rock musician Peter Gabriel. It was released in 1990 as Gabriel's first career retrospective, including songs from his first solo album *Peter Gabriel (I or Car)* (1977), through *Passion: Music for The Last Temptation of Christ* (1989). It was remastered with most of Gabriel's catalogue in 2002.

Tree shaking is a term commonly used in the JavaScript context for dead-code elimination. It relies on the static structure of ES2015 module syntax, i.e. import and export. The name and concept have been popularized by the ES2015 module bundler rollup. Note that any imported file is subject to tree shaking. This means if you use something like css-loader in your project and import a CSS file, it needs to be added to the side effect list so it will not be unintentionally dropped in production mode Shaking the tree. 1K likes. Tribute to Peter gabriel. Contact Shaking the tree on Messenger. Musician/Band. Page TransparencySee More. Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content. Page created - February 17, 2014. People. "Shaking the Tree: Sixteen Golden Greats" was released in 1990 as Peter Gabriel's first "greatest hits" album, including songs from his first solo album "Peter Gabriel" (1 or "Car") (1977), through "" (1989). It was remastered with most of Gabriel's catalog in 2002. The tracks are creatively re-ordered, ignoring chronology. Some of the tracks were different from the album versions. Most songs are edited for time, either as radio, single or video edit versions.