

study of his life. Yet, the chronological organization works quite nicely. Taysom leads us through the ups and downs of a life while helping us better understand major moments in LDS history. I would place *Like a Fiery Meteor* alongside the best LDS biographies. It deserves the same recognition in LDS historiography as such pathbreaking works as Val Avery's *From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet* (Illinois, 1998), John Turner's *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Harvard, 2012), and Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow's *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (Oxford, 2011). I suspect that I will return to this book many times in the years ahead.

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Peacebuilding through Latter-day Nonviolence

Patrick Mason and J. David Pulsipher. *Proclaim Peace: The Restoration's Answer to an Age of Conflict*. Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship and Deseret Book Company, 2021. 290 pp. Paperback. \$19.99. ISBN: 9781950304165.

Reviewed by Shiloh Logan

If the strength of a religious community is determined by how vigorously its leaders, scholars, and members can renegotiate the historical and common interpretations of its sacred texts while maintaining community cohesion, then the (re)scripturalization of Restoration scripture

within *Proclaim Peace: The Restoration's Answer to an Age of Conflict* by Patrick Q. Mason and J. David Pulsipher offers significant evidence of the cohesive vigor of the Latter-day Saint community. The book makes many constructive claims, but its provocative thesis is that Restoration theology not only has a place in the millennia-old nonviolence discourse (which it has not previously been a part of) but that the obscure message of nonviolent peacebuilding “is at the heart of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” (xvi). For these authors, “Restoration scripture offers a prophetic critique of all three forms of violence—direct, structural, and cultural” (xxiii), and “to ‘proclaim peace’ is to renounce all forms of violence” (xxiv). While the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a peace church that institutionally advances nonviolence, *Proclaim Peace* explicitly states that it is time for Latter-day Saints “to claim a seat at the peacebuilding table” (xxv).

Proclaim Peace offers scholars within a strong hierarchical religious community ample evidence of how to (re)negotiate old and new interpretations of scripture and (re)consider old and new concepts about God’s nature. A Latter-day Saint nonviolent hermeneutic requires deeper consideration than grappling with the Bible alone. Scholars working in Latter-day Saint spaces must also consider the authoritative words of Church leaders who preside over the community. The often shaky and sometimes contentious relationship between Latter-day Saint scholars and Church leaders is well documented, but *Proclaim Peace* mitigates potential conflict by differentiating between *doctrine* and *theology*. Whereas “only those called as prophets, seers, and revelators have the authority” to set and define “doctrine,” the authors argue, “all Church members can participate in the work of theology, by which we mean reasoned reflection on the doctrine received by the body of the Church” (xx). The authors contend their book does not assert any new doctrine but “is at its heart a work of scriptural theology” (xx). Restoration scripture is the book’s primary source material to apply and promote a nonviolent hermeneutic. Quotes from Church

leaders functionally reify possible bridges between the authors' new hermeneutic and commonly accepted understandings of God's nature and violence within the Latter-day Saint community. In this manner, *Proclaim Peace* can successfully renegotiate the community's understanding of scripture without immediate conflict with Church leaders who have never taught or promoted an unequivocal nonviolent reading.

The book's ten chapters address common themes in the Christian nonviolence discourse, including Christ's atonement, the definition and essence of love and peace, the relationship between justice and mercy, the qualifications of justified violence, modern concepts of power, and divine violence. *Proclaim Peace* uses many unique stories and theological nuances within Restoration scripture to apply nonviolent interpretive methodologies. One of the book's many strengths contrasts how creative nonviolent responses to commonly violent "cycles of conflict" in the Book of Mormon produce deeper and more effective peaceful outcomes (74–93). Close attention is given to distinguishing between *justified* violence and *righteous* nonviolence as set forward in the often-ignored standard of section 98 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Violent self-defense is only justified after an assailant attacks three times but is counted as righteousness to the victim when the victim spares the assailant from violent recourse a fourth time (128–147). The final chapter, "Just Ward Theory," is a practical call to action that synthesizes the book's nonviolent peacebuilding theology and encourages members of the global Church to reject worldly reactionary violence and apply these suggested principles locally in a renewed effort to build Zion.

The most difficult theme in Christian nonviolence discourse is resolving the many scriptural examples of divinely mandated or divinely enacted violence. A common Christian nonviolent reconciliation is that God's violence is not incongruent with requiring his children to be assertively and nonviolently peaceful. This argument is more difficult within a Latter-day Saint discourse, which has, at some point, asserted that humans are "gods in embryo" and that mortal life is a learning and testing period to "become gods" themselves. *Proclaim*

Peace borrows from the common Christian narrative in resolving the Latter-day Saint conundrum by arguing that “the moral calculus by which God decides to strike one person or society and not another remains hidden to us” (157). While the authors offer examples of God working within the nonviolent paradigm, more work is still required to convincingly reconcile a Latter-day Saint nonviolent understanding of a Jesus that commands “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27) and who also admits, only a few pages earlier, to gruesomely destroying at least sixteen cities full of men, women, and children “because of their wickedness and their abominations” (3 Nephi 9:12).

Originally writing for an academic audience, the authors pivoted toward a Latter-day Saint audience at the behest of preliminary readers (xi). It is arguable whether *Proclaim Peace* firmly made the transition from arguing to the broader academic community that Restoration theology has a reasonable place in nonviolence discourse to convincing the Latter-day Saint community of a central nonviolent understanding of their sacred texts. That *Proclaim Peace* was copublished by the BYU Maxwell Institute and Deseret Book makes sense to maximize distribution but also magnifies the ambiguity of its seemingly dual-facing audiences.

These mild critiques aside, there is never a better time than the present to reimagine peace within our communities. Mason and Pulsipher have accomplished the difficult task of offering the Latter-day Saint community a rare understanding of peacebuilding and nonviolence within their faith tradition. *Proclaim Peace* lays sufficient groundwork for Latter-day Saints to reimagine and build a more peace-centered religious community. Further, the authors succeed in effectively arguing that Restoration theology has a legitimate seat at the peacebuilding table if it desires.

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