

Article

A Latter-Day Saint Approach to Addiction: Aetiology, Consequences and Treatment in a Theological Context

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Abstract: This article explores the theological underpinning of the nature, aetiology and treatment of addictions within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The first section outlines the “plan of salvation” and how this provides the theological framework for the source and solution to addictions. The final section explores addiction against this background in terms of its aetiology, types, consequences and treatment in a Latter-day Saint context. In so doing it builds on the recognition by the Church in recent years that addiction is a problem in the lives of some of its members and that treatment programs coherent with its teachings and beliefs are necessary. The article concludes by suggesting that while addiction may be more openly discussed within a Latter-day Saint context there is a need to keep this dialogue moving forward. This article does not examine Latter-day Saint teaching within the wider context of psychotherapy and other definitions of addiction; rather it explores the place of addiction as understood within the theological and ecclesiological context of Mormonism.

Keywords: latter-day saint; Mormon; theology; addiction; aetiology of addiction; treatment; types of addiction

1. Purpose of Life

The central narrative of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints centres around what is termed the “plan of salvation” (Jarom 1:2, Alma 42:5 and Moses 6:62) [1]. Douglas Davies has suggested that the plan of salvation is deployed as a background to all Latter-day Saint discourse in a way that is “equivalent [to] mainstream Christianity’s notion of the Holy Trinity”. Further Davies suggests that the

plan of salvation frames the doctrines of Mormonism [2]. As such, it is important to begin any discussion of Mormon theology against the background of the plan of salvation. This plan is a grand narrative that explores the origin and destiny of humanity outlining four stages of existence. Firstly, existing without beginning all people were intelligences. God the Father then took of these intelligences and organized them into spirit bodies [3]. These spirit bodies were given mortal bodies as they came to earth (Abraham 3:22–25). Following death, in the judgement and the Resurrection, humanity progresses into immortal bodies, such as that possessed by God. Elements of this narrative will be explored in this article to develop the beginnings of a theology of the body which enables the importance of the body to be recognised within a discussion of addictions within Mormonism.

Integral to the plan of salvation is for humanity to experience mortality with its two associated purposes: the opportunity to receive a physical body and, to be able to exercise agency. While choice might be a more common rendering of the gift of agency, this term is important for Latter-day Saints: "...[A]gency is the ability and privilege God gives us to choose and 'to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon'. Agency is to act with accountability and responsibility for our actions. Our agency is essential to the plan of salvation" [4]. It is these two purposes of mortal life that link most closely when discussing addiction within Mormonism and will be explored in the next two sections of this article.

1.1. Theology of the Body

Mormonism has a theology that places high importance on the physical nature of the mortal experience. The physical body is not an encumbrance to progression rather is an important step in the fulfilment of the plan of salvation. This is a logical outworking of a belief in a God who has a physical body, a physical resurrection and a potential to become like God as the ultimate destiny of humanity. The first stage of the plan of salvation that was briefly touched upon earlier, explains that the spirits of humanity were created from an eternal pool of intelligences. Truman Madsen explained: "Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle...There is no creation about it" [5]. Latter-day Saints teach that God is infinite and eternal, but in actuality he is also a created being. If a Latter-day Saint were being exact, because of the pool of intelligences, which are eternal, then the Father, Son and all of humanity are infinite. This means that a part of them (intelligence) has always existed. In this way not only the Father and the Son, but also the Father and humanity, can be seen to be of the same species and co-eternal. "In the Mormon view...divinity and humanity are constituted of the same nature. God has the same ontological status as humans for both are, in their individual essences, uncreated and backwardly eternal. God is not different in kind from humans...it seems consistent to assert that divinity and humanity form a continuum rather than a dichotomy" ([6], pp. 472–73).

One of the things that separates human beings from God is the fact that the body that they now have is mortal, while the body that the Father has is immortal. The second barrier between humanity and God is sin, which will be explored below. The materiality of both the mortal and immortal body of humanity and the Father places the body as a central component in the individual's experience in the plan of salvation. Progression in this life and the next is impossible without a physical body. The body in this sense is not something to be overcome, rather it is central to human experience and, ultimately, to human exaltation. Even with the fallen nature of humanity, the body and the material nature of the world is to be celebrated. Stephen Webb has argued that, in terms of Mormon theology, "nothing in nature is

inherently ruined [by the Fall] because everything has the potential for intelligence and consciousness. Matter is wounded, but wounds are meant to be healed. Matter is motion, and becoming closer to the divine is its goal” [7]. The body is an essential part of the physical resurrection at the time of the last judgement. *The Book of Mormon* outlines what the resurrection will entail:

The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time...Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body (Alma 11:43–44).

As a result of the positive view of physicality, Latter-day Saints have a theology of the body that reflects its eternal nature, indeed, Latter-day Saints are encouraged to be buried after death because of the physical resurrection.

This positive theology of the body is not to suggest, however, that the fallen nature of humanity does not have an impact both on the spirit and the body. There are scriptures that portray a negative perception of the body, such as the warning against putting “trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34); however, this should be taken to reflect the injunction to rely on God rather than the knowledge and strength of humanity. Other passages refer to the negative aspects of carnality: “which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil” (Mosiah 16:3). This suggests that succumbing to the “carnal” demands is responding to the devil. There is a definite responsibility within the mortal experience to care for the body and to meet its needs but also not to succumb to the excessive demands that its appetites can exhibit. The body as taught in 1 Corinthians is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). As such the care of the body is part of the responsibility of mortality. The *For the Strength of Youth* booklet published by the Church for young people to become familiar with a range of standards and teachings outlines that “Your body is sacred. Respect it and do not defile it in any way” [8]. The references within *For the Strength of Youth* highlight the care of the body to include dress, grooming, limitations on piercings and tattoos, as well as highlighting the health code of the Church known as the “Word of Wisdom”. Latter-day Saints believe that the Word of Wisdom was given by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1838, although initially adopted as “a principle with promise” and not as a “commandment or constraint” (D&C 89:2–3) it was later established as a commandment and forms part of the identity of a member of the Church in good standing. There are positive exhortations:

And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground (D&C 89:10–12,16).

As well as prohibitions:

That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good...And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies. And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill. And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly (D&C 89:5,7–9).

The interpretation of these prohibitions restrict Latter-day Saints from the consumption of alcohol, tea and coffee (hot drinks), and the use of tobacco. Implicit in the Word of Wisdom, though not mentioned, is the prohibition of the use of harmful drugs as outlined by a previous President of the Church, Gordon B. Hinckley:

Some have even used as an alibi the fact that drugs are not mentioned in the Word of Wisdom. What a miserable excuse...Can anyone doubt that the taking of these mind- and body-destroying drugs is an act of unholiness? Does anyone think that the Spirit of God can dwell in the temple of the body when that body is defiled by these destructive elements [9]?

Interestingly for the immediate context of this article, some of the most common addictions are proscribed in the Word of Wisdom and will be discussed in further detail below. The proper care of the body and the regulation of its appetites can be seen to be a part of the responsibility brought about by the Fall of humanity. Fallen humanity is often referred to within Mormonism as the “natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). This natural man is described as “A person who chooses to be influenced by the passions, desires, appetites, and senses of the flesh rather than by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Such a person can comprehend physical things but not spiritual things. All people are carnal, or mortal, because of the Fall of Adam and Eve” [10]. Thus, as well as seeing the physical nature of humanity as positivity and part of the plan of salvation, it is can also be seen to be something to be overcome as it reflects the desires of the flesh.

The view of the body in Latter-day Saint teaching is paradoxical. On the one hand physicality is necessary for exaltation and is to be celebrated while, on the other hand, being “fallen” means that its appetites and passions need to be controlled and regulated. As such the theology of the body, which reflects the first purpose of mortality (to receive a body) within Mormonism, is integrally linked to the second purpose of mortality in the plan of salvation: Agency.

1.2. Agency

Agency is central to the plan of salvation. In the pre-existence Latter-day Saints teach that the war in heaven when Satan rebelled centred around the issue of agency. Before the organization of the world, Latter-day Saints believe, there was a Council in Heaven in which God’s plan was put before all his children to enable their progression. This plan involved people being proved and tested, enabling humanity to return and live with God if they kept their second “estate” (Abraham 3:26), meaning their time of probation during mortality. Jesus Christ volunteered to be the Saviour, while Satan presented an alternative plan, which would force obedience, meaning that agency would not exist, and give him the glory.

And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came

before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honour... Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power (Moses 4:1,3).

The Father's plan was accepted with Christ chosen to fill this role of Saviour (Abraham 3:27) for fallen humanity: "the blood of thy Son which was shed" to "spare these my brethren that believe on my name" (D&C 45:4–5). The second purpose of life for humanity is outlined in the *Pearl of Great Price* as the creation of the world is described:

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And *we will prove them herewith*, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them... (Abraham 3:24–26 emphasis added).

The purpose of this life is for humanity to be proved, or tested. The agency that is given to humanity is to enable them to freely choose to follow the Saviour, or to reject his teachings as taught in the *Book of Mormon*:

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself (2 Nephi 2:27).

There is no compulsion; God wants people to freely follow him, as they were free to follow him or Satan in the pre-mortal existence. As the third who followed Satan were cast out of God's presence in the pre-existence, Latter-day Saint soteriology explains that those who reject God in this life will be found outside of his presence following Judgement Day. There will however, be a level of salvation granted to all who live in mortality because they kept their first estate; meaning that they chose to follow the Saviour, rather than Satan, in the pre-mortal existence [11].

This discussion of agency is intrinsically linked with the nature and source of addiction. This is a result of Latter-day Saint teaching that choice is the determining factor in the addictions people develop. Furthermore, the expression in 2 Nephi above that explores the choices to be made by humanity are particularly pertinent when it comes to addiction. The captivity and subjection outlined may well help Latter-day Saints understand aspects of the aetiology of addiction as some of this imagery is used to discuss the shackles which burden a person suffering from addiction.

2. Addiction

2.1. Types of Addiction

The Addiction Recovery Program of the Church outlines that:

Addictions can include the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol, coffee, tea, and drugs (both prescription and illegal), and behaviours such as gambling, co-dependency, viewing

pornography, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and disorders associated with eating. These substances and behaviours diminish a person's ability to feel the Spirit. They harm physical and mental health and social, emotional, and spiritual well-being ([12], p. 5).

This is, however, not an exhaustive list. Other leaders have included addictions to video games, online computer use, and other behaviours that are not necessarily prohibited within wider Mormon experience. Linked with the concept of agency, it is possible to suggest that for Latter-day Saints an addiction is any action that takes away a person's capacity to choose and/or the person becomes reliant on such a substance or action. This may be linked with the teaching of Latter-day Saints that anything that draws a person away from God, and at the same time towards Satan and his desire for reduced agency is wrong and is placing barriers in a person's relationship with God. The Doctrine and Covenants suggests that people "walketh in [their] own way, and after the image of [their] own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance of that of an idol..." (D&C 1:16). In common with many other religious traditions, Latter-day Saints understand the phenomenon of addiction according to the tenets of their theology, which offers an understanding and typology that differs significantly from most psychotherapeutic models. Addiction is a much broader theological term within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Indeed, the Addiction Recovery Program of the Church (see below) is designed to meet the needs of all types of addicts. In the same Addiction Recovery support group there can be people with vastly different addictions, but the source and the solution to all are interrelated.

2.2. *Aetiology of Addiction*

It would seem a logical outworking of the central concept of agency that the aetiology of addiction is a person's own wrong choices. Indeed, in the Addiction Recovery Program guide the introduction outlines the thoughts of addicts in recovery that "We have paid an awful price in self-inflicted pain and suffering because of our addictions" ([12], p. v). Further, these addictions are caused by ignoring God's will and succumbing to the temptations of Satan. One Latter-day Saint Church leader, Dallin H. Oaks, strengthened this suggestion when he taught:

We should avoid any behaviour that is addictive. Whatever is addictive compromises our will. Subjecting our will to the overbearing impulses imposed by any form of addiction serves Satan's purposes and subverts our Heavenly Father's...We can avoid addictions by keeping the commandments of God [13].

That these addictions are the result of Satan trying to take away humanity's agency so that they lose their ability to choose and are shackled with dependency is taught consistently in Latter-day Saint thought. M. Russell Ballard, a Latter-day Saint leader, gave an extended description of how this is so:

Satan and his minions have their lures all around us, hoping that we will falter and take his flies so he can reel us in with counterfeit means. He uses addiction to steal away agency. According to the dictionary, addiction of any kind means to surrender to something, thus relinquishing agency and becoming dependent on some life-destroying substance or behaviour. Researchers tell us there is a mechanism in our brain called the pleasure centre. When activated by certain drugs or behaviours, it overpowers the part of our brain that governs our

willpower, judgment, logic, and morality. This leads the addict to abandon what he or she knows is right. And when that happens, the hook is set and Lucifer takes control [14].

The majority of addictions are seen by Latter-day Saints to involve substances and activities that are contrary to God's commandments. It also seems that for Latter-day Saints even seemingly innocuous activities that do no harm to a large number of people can be utilised by Satan to ensnare people in addiction. As such the nature of addiction is far broader, and perhaps less concrete than in accepted definitions of addiction within accepted psychotherapy. In Latter-day Saint belief it is the abandonment or loss of choice that is most damaging to a person's life: "Addiction surrenders later [after a period of use] freedom to choose...[O]ne can literally become disconnected from his or her own will" [15]. The aetiology of addictions seems, in Latter-day Saint thought, to come from an individual's conscious decision to succumb to the temptations of Satan in the first instance, but through neurological or chemical (in certain cases) means the person becomes dependent and loses the ability to "choose" because of their addiction. This is crucial for Latter-day Saints to recognise, that rather than being an on-going choice of the individual to continue in the addictive behaviour, that the behaviours become so ingrained and part of a person that they lose the ability to choose. As such any treatment of addiction must go beyond the advice to just stop, a point recognised by the Addiction Recovery Program:

Some people consider addictions to be simply bad habits that can be conquered by willpower alone, but many people become so dependent on a behaviour or a substance that they no longer see how to abstain from it. They lose perspective and a sense of other priorities in their lives. Nothing matters more than satisfying their desperate need. When they try to abstain, they experience powerful physical, psychological, and emotional cravings. As they habitually make wrong choices, they find their ability to choose the right diminished or restricted ([12], p. v).

To recognise the aetiology of addiction to be solely based on choice (inspired by Satan) is to fail to recognise the complexity of human physiology. It is accepted within Latter-day Saint teaching that the continued reliance on addictive substances and behaviours can be as a result of changes to the brains of addicts, one Church leader has suggested that: "There are many kinds of addictions, and it is difficult for someone who has one of these serious addictions to change because some of them are mind-altering, A recent article on addiction said, 'In the brains of addicts, there is reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex, where rational thought can override impulse behaviour'" [16]. As such treatment of some addictions can focus on the addict as suffering from a disease. Merlin O. Baker suggests from a Latter-day Saint perspective that there could also be a physiological or genetic cause of addiction: "There is strong evidence that much vulnerability to alcohol is inherited. Alcoholics frequently have alcoholic fathers, mothers, grandparents, siblings, and children" [17]. While recognising potential socio-economic causes of alcoholism Baker recognises that there might be a vulnerability in the genes of alcoholics. If this is so, how is this genetic disposition to addictive substances or behaviours to be reconciled with the Latter-day Saint view of life as a test? Are some therefore disadvantaged from birth because of inbuilt predispositions?

Even after this discussion of the sources of addiction, an interesting discussion from Mark Koltko suggests that there are elements of Mormon culture that make addiction a greater danger than in the wider world. This may be a result of having a larger number of activities that are suggested as being addictions in Latter-day Saint culture. Some of these addictions would not be recognized outside of the

immediate religious context found within the Church. Koltko suggests many reasons for the dangers of Mormon culture which lead to addiction; one such is the demand of individual Latter-day Saints to be “flawless”. This is reflected in all areas of addiction for Latter-days Saints, though Koltko only outlines addiction of a sexual nature and substance addictions. It may also lead to an unwillingness among individuals to discuss any issues that might be perceived as contrary to the commandments. He extends this to areas that might be considered unMormonlike characteristics such as such as depression and anger. In a similar way to addiction in any area of flaws in a person’s life there is a reticence to ask for help or even recognise that help can be asked for [18]. This has begun to be countered through the Addiction Recovery Program that will be explored below, but within the context of their beliefs it would seem that there might a need for Latter-day Saints to be more open to receiving help with their flaws from people outside of the individual themselves.

2.3. Consequences of Addiction

According to Latter-day Saint thought there are many consequences of addiction for the addict and also their friends and family. As outlined earlier one of the major consequences of addiction is the loss of agency or choice, which is also linked to the disintegration of relationships with those people around the addict. Donald Hilton, in exploring addiction to pornography within a Latter-day Saint context, highlights the impact on those who surround the addict:

[Addiction] allows the person to entertain desires that selfishly disregard the consequences visited upon not only the addicted one, but also upon his loved ones. Satisfaction of the addiction becomes the ultimate priority, yet surely a greater oxymoron does not exist. There is never final satisfaction in addiction of any kind, only temporary satiation...Relationships are devalued in the addicted person’s warped new world and become obstructional to acting out. Values change to accommodate the need to sate voracious desire, and spirituality is one of the first casualties. Honesty is disregarded; lies are rationalised as necessary to protect the innocent [19].

Although painting a picture of no hope, to some extent this image reflects the Latter-day Saint view of the darkness of the addiction. Koltko comments above suggest that this may be exacerbated within Mormon culture because of the great measures of guilt and shame that might accompany even small infractions. A person’s sense of self-worth will dissipate as they recognise the cycle in which they find themselves of performing actions that are contrary to the will of God, and therefore they being too ashamed to ask for help. Leading to there seeming to be no way out of these behaviours.

This lack of self-worth and the associated feelings are coupled with the very real emotional, social and relational consequences that accompany addicts of any kind. While addictions may be hidden, in Latter-day Saint culture addictions also afflict the spirit. In turn as a person exhibits more addictive behaviours a person’s relationship with God and those around them are diminished and damaged. If left unchecked the addiction can have “the effect of damaging heart and souls to their very depths, strangling life out of relationships that should be most sacred, hurting to the very core those you should love the most” [20]. This diminishing of relationships is central to the harm that addictions can bring to a person’s progress within the plan of salvation. Latter-day Saint soteriology is all about relationships; those

relationships formed during mortality are part of eternal relationships as families are forever, but also serve as preludes to the unifying relationships with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost that are a part of exaltation. As such if the relationships of mortality are damaged, then the potential for the eternal relationships with loved ones and the Godhead are negated through continued addiction. This is of great significance within a theology of addiction. It would seem that in Latter-day Saint teaching a person who suffers from addiction is effectively exchanging eternal relationships (with family and with the Godhead) for ultimately fruitless and temporary relationships with addictive practices and substances. Although, the potential of these eternal relationships to draw people out of the cycle of addiction will be discussed below, it is also possible to suggest that a person who suffers from addiction might feel hopeless as they may think they have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage (see Genesis 25:34).

2.4. Overcoming Addiction

Although Koltko paints a picture that might suggest a culture of Mormonism that is filled with grief and shame, this stands in opposition to the Gospel of hope and the plan of happiness that is preached by Latter-day Saints. Latter-day Saints teach that there is an ultimate panacea to all of the ills of the world, including addiction. The solution for addiction and the suffering caused by addiction in Latter-day Saint teaching and experience is the atonement of the Saviour Jesus Christ. Although the overwhelming focus in Latter-day Saint theology is on the atonement's purpose being evident in the penal substitution model, there is a great capacity and focus on the moral compassion approach [11]. In the moral influence view of the atonement, "the atoning work of Christ is designed first and foremost to effect a change in human beings...The work of Christ chiefly consists of demonstrating to the world the amazing depth of God's love for sinful humanity. The atonement was directed primarily at humanity, not God" [21]. Through the fallen nature of humanity people refuse "to turn to God and be reconciled. Through the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, the love of God shines like a beacon, beckoning humanity to come and fellowship" [21]. For Latter-day Saints this is perfectly exemplified in the experience of an addict; their reliance on the subject of their addiction is a person refusing/being unable to turn to God and find reconciliation. Ostler argues, in a Latter-day Saint context, that the "purpose of the atonement in LDS scripture is to 'bring about the bowels of mercy' so that God is moved with compassion for us and we are moved with gratitude to trust him by opening our hearts to him...The suffering that Christ experienced not only moves us with compassion for him, but it also moves him with compassion for us" ([6], pp. 235, 238).

Central to the atonement in Latter-day Saint teaching is the necessity that God the Son became flesh so that he could "succour them in their infirmities" (Alma 7:11–12). It was necessary for Christ to experience all of the trials of humanity to be a perfect example, but also to be able to bear the burdens of humanity. The atonement is for more than sin as it draws humanity into a relationship with Christ when a person realises the impact of sin. The atonement also draws humanity into this relationship in every area of human life. Latter-day Saints feel that:

When we let go of our past and release the painful energy of alienation [and suffering], Christ experiences and receives into himself the pain that we have experienced to be transformed by the light of his love. If we refuse to let go of our past histories and the pain that arises from our sins, [sicknesses and infirmities] we will continue to experience that pain. If we let

go of that pain, however, then Christ experiences the very pain we release, but we no longer have to. In his Passion we find compassion ([6], p. 236).

In this understanding of the atonement, the focus shifts from the eschatological and soteriological to the importance of an on-going presence of Christ's work in a person's mortal life. Christ's atonement experienced in his humanity builds a relationship with God that overcomes the effect of the Fall of Adam both in this life (addiction, sickness, infirmities, guilt for sin) and the next (sin and death) as the relationship with God is repaired. Had Christ's sacrifice been only the sacrifice of a God then it may not have the same effect either on him (being able to suffer) or on humanity (drawing people to him through his suffering).

As a symptom of the "natural man" addiction is seen to be overcome through the atonement of Christ. However, this is not to suggest that a person struggling with addiction should only be advised to "draw closer to the Saviour" through the usual spiritual activities of praying, studying scriptures and participating in the ordinances and covenants of salvation. Rather, recognising that a person who is suffering from addiction has been robbed "of the power to decide" [22] and there needs to be a more robust structure in place to help a person on the road to recovery. As such the Church "has adapted the original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous...into a framework of the doctrines, principles, and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" ([12], p. 2). These Twelve Steps are:

Step 1

Admit that you, of yourself, are powerless to overcome your addictions and that your life has become unmanageable.

Step 2

Come to believe that the power of God can restore you to complete spiritual health.

Step 3

Decide to turn your will and your life over to the care of God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Step 4

Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of yourself.

Step 5

Admit to yourself, to your Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, to proper priesthood authority, and to another person the exact nature of your wrongs.

Step 6

Become entirely ready to have God remove all your character weaknesses.

Step 7

Humbly ask Heavenly Father to remove your shortcomings.

Step 8

Make a written list of all persons you have harmed and become willing to make restitution to them.

Step 9

Wherever possible, make direct restitution to all persons you have harmed.

Step 10

Continue to take personal inventory, and when you are wrong promptly admit it.

Step 11

Seek through prayer and meditation to know the Lord's will and to have the power to carry it out.

Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, share this message with others and practice these principles in all you do ([12], p. iv. This Twelve Step Programme builds substantially on the work of Bill Wilson, Bob Smith, and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous [23]).

All of these reflect the Latter-day Saint belief that the Saviour, through his atonement, knows “according to the flesh how to succour his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:13). He provides respite to the addict and is able to take upon himself the burden that the person carries. Perhaps this is most obviously taught for Latter-day Saints in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here the lost son recognises that through his riotous living he has damaged all of the relationships that are of importance: “And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). This was highlighted earlier as a major consequence of sin, as such through returning home the lost son, the addict, can find rest and is a cause for rejoicing: “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:32). This is only possible in Latter-day Saint teaching through the conscious choice of the individual to accept the Saviour into their lives. In so doing laying their sins and addictions at the Saviour's feet he will fulfil his promise to “encircle thee in the arms of my love” (D&C 6:20). Latter-day Saints view the Addiction Recovery Program as merely a tool to help that process develop and come to fruition.

3. Conclusions

Addiction in Mormonism has not really been explored in great detail within Latter-day Saint theology. There have been great efforts made in recent years through the Addiction Recovery Program and its associated web pages to help those suffering with addiction, and their families, to find hope, help and support that enables Gospel principles to be at the centre of an addict's recovery. This has begun to destigmatise addiction in the eyes of Church leaders and perhaps in the eyes of the families of addicts. Koltko wrote describing the situation within the Church culture as he saw it; since then structures have been put in place; but it will be important moving forward to ensure that Latter-day Saint leaders and members are in a position to help addicts progress without the associated uninformed comments or unnecessary hiding of addictions. To begin the discussion about addiction and addictive behaviour it is important to move beyond “just say no,” to approaches such as the Addiction Recovery Program, which is based in a theology of hope and help. Latter-day Saints view the Gospel they teach as one of joy and happiness; a focus on the hope and rest that a person can find through the atonement of Christ is central

to the rescue of addicts and recovery from addiction. The hope in Latter-day Saint circles is that attitudes such as those expressed in the formal teachings and programs of the Church can enable many more people who were lost in the fog and chains of addiction to be found and reclaim their lost relationships. This can be achieved through a proper understanding of addictions and their solutions within the plan of salvation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References and Notes

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