5 The Perfect Storm

Bruce H. Porter

There are many reasons an individual may decide to leave the religion and faith of their family. However, this discussion will focus on four key elements that have primed the youth and young adults to question their church and faith. Each of these elements are interconnected, although some play a larger part in one's inactivity and apostasy than do others. The four cultural elements that are discussed in this chapter will not address the specific questions and issues that are often used as the reasons for people leaving the church (those will come later). These four concepts are more connected to the social time period in which we live and the basic ideas that provoke the questions that lead to a separation from faith and family.

It should be noted that the spiritual trajectory of a younger generation has the power to influence the spiritual health of preceding generations (see 3 Ne. 1:29, 30). Also, the spirit of apostasy may quickly move throughout a family because of the influence of one member on another. For this reason, there are two types of falling away happening in the church. Influences from *outside* the church seem to affect the youth and young adults more, as the 'good soil' has not yet been prepared for the seed of the gospel to be planted. Influences from *inside* the church tend to affect the older generation. For them, the gospel has already taken root, **but**—feeling intellectually unfulfilled— they sometimes look for someone to blame for a lack of spiritual experiences or knowledge to justify their rejection and unbelief. Some parents might even seek to blame the church or priesthood leaders as they search for reasons why their children might be forsaking the faith.

This chapter's discussion will first address the issues that seem to be affecting the thought process of the Millennials – the generation born between 1980 and the year 2000. Because of their influence, these four issues have also made their way into their parent's generation.

The four *Millennial* mindsets or issues are listed in order of the discussion that follows rather than in order of the greatest causes in the falling away. Some of these influences may affect an individual more than another yet all are somewhat present even if in the sub-conscience mind.

- Education
- Linear View of Time
- Saeculum
- Internet

Education

For the last 30 years, public schools have been teaching students at every level of education to question the authority and antiquated morals of their parents and religious leaders. The education system has been a primary force in promoting humanistic and socialistic philosophies, turning once immoral acts and actions into civil privileges, using terms such as "rights" and "choices." Schools and teachers adopt rules and agendas that are anti-religious, sowing seeds of doubt that

overtly and covertly, consciously and subconsciously, cause students to question the morals and beliefs of their parents and religious leaders. Faith-based beliefs and family values based on spiritual laws and commandments are ridiculed and banned from discussion. Thus, as our culture seeks to do away with the concept of God and religious ideals, the Millennial minds have been taught to question the testimony and spiritual experiences of previous generations. Part and parcel of this phenomenon is the linear view of time.

A Linear View of Time

There are three mainstream views of the 'concept of time' that affect how individuals make decisions and form opinions. These are: the "chaotic" view of time, the "cyclical" view of time, and the "linear" view of time.

The ***chaotic*** view of time would suggest that the events of time are random and follow no pattern or reason. It's the view that one event in time follows another event without cause or effect. This view of time probably stems from ancient times when survival was a day-to-day experience. This view is compatible with the philosophy of life that repudiates the existence of a higher power to whom man must answer.

The ***cyclical*** view of time is based on patterns and cycles, creating a cause and effect: day/night, the phases of the moon, and seasons that repeat at specific times or intervals. The scriptures have a more cyclical outlook. This cyclical lifestyle was ordained by God to remind man of his relationship and dependence on God for his life and salvation. God even planned events around cyclical time. The Sabbath comes every seven days, marking weeks and months and years.

Smaller cycles may be used to determine larger or longer cycles that may be connected to a person's life. Because of cyclical time there are repeating anniversaries, birthdays, religious festivals and holy days that are renewed by cyclical repetition. These are often connected to some astral-cyclical event that might be sacred to a given culture. All give significance to the cyclical view of time.

Linear time is the view that everything progresses toward a positive perfection, like it does with technology. For example, from a technological linear time perspective, mankind has progressed from carving on stone to the reed and quill pen, and from there to the pencil and pen, then progressing to the typewriter and copy machine. Now, we just speak and the printed word arrives on the word processor ready for the laser printer. What took years of grueling labor copying texts in a monastery with a reed pen, now takes minutes with the copy machine and scanner.

This linear view of time is not limited to technology. Progressive and humanistic thought has applied this view to spiritual and moral issues. The practice of slavery was abolished as people fought for the equality of all men. In western culture, women have progressed from being treated as chattel to enjoying suffrage and equality in all areas. Our government now has laws protecting equal rights regardless of race, gender, color or creed. All of these things, it is argued, come from a linear view of time. However, this perspective is damaging to religious belief when morals and sacred practices of long standing are viewed as the moral relics of antiquity that are irrelevant to modern "enlightened" thinkers. In the linear time view, beliefs in the sacred are dismissed as the

"traditions of the fathers" while old immoralities are recast as civil rights. Society has moved from viewing immoral acts as wrong to a liberal linear lifestyle that is bereft of the rules of morality and standards of scripture, fostering the absence of guilt.

What does the concept of linear time have to do with those who might be falling away from the Church today? This view is predicated on the belief that old ideas must give way to new more progressive beliefs. For example, it has been wrongly assumed that the priesthood was given to all worthy males in 1978 because of social pressure. Those holding to the ideas associated with linear time would believe that the Church bowed to the demands of political correctness, lifting all restrictions (In fact, the priesthood announcement came about because of prophecy and scripture, which will be explained in Part II). Since all worthy men now have the "right" to this priesthood, the linear view, being socially progressive, would demand that it's now time that women enjoy the same "right". This kind of thinking ignores the scriptural and doctrinal reasons the Melchizedek priesthood is limited to men in favor of pandering to modern sensibilities and emotions. In the same way, traditional marriage between a man and a woman has been deemed old fashioned. In other religious organizations, social pressure has resulted in the lifting of previously held taboos in the name of being "progressive". In the secular world, the common acceptance of same-sex relationships has been embraced to the point of becoming a cultural norm and civil right.

Members of the Church who hold to the linear view of time do not understand that God *cannot* change, and *does not* change to suit the politically-correct whims of the world. He doesn't live in linear time. There is no time where He lives. The plan of salvation is eternal and existed before the foundation of this world, having been prepared for this world and the next. The commandments are not restrictions but recipes for happiness, thus "*God is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (Mormon 9:9, Hebrews 13:8, D&C 20:12, 2 Nephi 27:23, 1 Nephi 10:18, D&C 35:1, 2 Nephi 2:4, 2 Nephi 29:9, Moroni 10:19).

A **religion** must be founded upon a *standard of rules* and doctrines that cannot change. That unchangeable *standard is found in the scriptures* and the doctrines contained in them. Where there is no standard upon which truth may be founded, there exists no foundation upon which to build. Anything and everything goes. Those who want the church to "catch up with the times" do not understand the concept of religion. To think one can change religious doctrine that is founded on unchangeable scripture is to believe one can change the mind of God. God cannot change for the better because he is already perfect, and he will not change the perfect to make things worse. God does not conform His will to ours, as He is more concerned about eternal happiness rather than the simple pleasures of mortality. Therefore, a church that will change its fundamental doctrines because of vote, petition, vigil or personal will is not a church or religion based on faith, but a ***club***.

Those who want an organization that can be "...tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men…" (Ephesians 4:14) should organize or belong to a club where the change of rules or doctrines might be accomplished by poll or vote. Everyone should know what is expected in action and belief before joining a religion. When one cannot, or does not want to adhere to the rules, doctrines, or beliefs of an organized religion, they often remain— kicking and screaming—in a futile effort to change the organization in which they have lost, or

never had, faith. Agency always prevails in an individual's belief, and moving on is always an option when disenfranchised.

In a church without a standard of truth, the linear Latter-day Saint mindset will be the only rule. Without a standard, the congregation could vote to make the overflow and cultural hall the smoking section for Sacrament Meeting. Or perhaps sign a petition making adultery or same sex relationships an accepted way of life for members and priesthood leaders in the church. If there exists no unchangeable standard, then wine tasting might, with a majority vote, be a part of homemaking meetings. As ridiculous as this sounds, it illustrates the point that religion must be founded on a standard of truth for salvation. One who desires to update moral thought and law demanding doctrinal changes for personal preference should join a club, not a religion.

The Bible implies that that there is a connection between *cyclical and linear* time, as it opens with: "In the beginning", which indicates that there *is a beginning* and therefore an end. "*In the end time*" is a phrase found in the scripture in opposition to the opening words of Genesis. This beginning and end are connected to the cycles of day and night, the stars, sun, and moon which are created for times and seasons, days and years. The 'holy days' of the Old Testament are based on a cyclical lifestyle of planting and harvest, spring and fall all connected to the phases of the moon. Yet at the same time, linear time is connected in the life and progress of the individual: from birth to death; milk to meat; movement from son to father; and from fallen man to salvation, each a progression, moving toward the better.

Constantinian Christianity grasped hold of the religiosity of this linear time concept that evolved out of the Judeo heritage. This view would argue: *things and people should continue to get better*. Linear time was wholly embraced by western culture. So much so that today, that culture seeks to completely abort the cyclical connection that creates a personal link to God and the sacred. This linear "progressive" view of cultural practices and beliefs will increasingly cause some immoral acts to become civil rights as people embrace the idea that casting off the shackles of old cultural mores is the more enlightened way. This linear view of time is taught in the schools from kindergarten through the graduate degrees of college. The youth today are primed to accept this view of time as the lens of their culture and a fundamental system for their beliefs.

The Saeculum

A *Saeculum* is a length of time that generally equals the lifespan of a person. This *life's-time* has been defined as about 100 years. This span is basically divided into four equal parts or "ages" of about 22-25 years each. First used by the Etruscans, who were the cultural predecessors of the early Romans, it was believed that because of the four "ages" of man, there were different aspects in the Saeculum (or century) of contiguous generations that would cause similar events to happen at regular intervals. The Romans believed that there existed a specific number of Saeculum for the empire and that both external and internal conflicts and wars, as well as economic prosperity, were based on the Saeculum of contiguous generations.

What does the current falling away and the Saeculum have in common? One of the patterns found in the study of the Saeculum has to do with the pattern of *spiritual or moral revivals* (good and/or

bad). This pattern is most apparent in the 40-55 year intervals, or half Saeculum. Here is a brief look at U.S. history in the 40-55 year increments of congruent Saeculum:

1770-1780

A spiritual and *national revival* that established a new country and nation set free from the national and state religions of Europe, with a Constitution based on religious freedom and the equality of mankind.

1825-1835

A great spiritual and religious revival enveloped the United States known as the "Great Revival" and described by Joseph Smith as "an unusual excitement on the subject of religion." The light from the heavens began to shine through the windows of *The Restoration* in the beginning years of this great revival age.

1870-1880

The *Industrial Revolution* forced open the doors of spiritual Babylon even wider as men, rather than nations, became rich at the expense of others. This was a time when morals and ethics were traded for money, which could only lead to spiritual corruption.

1920-1930

Commonly referred to as the "*Roaring Twenties*" the prosperity of the Industrial Revolution and the previous generation erupted into a time of vice and corruption and witnessed the rise of organized crime as Babylon (spiritual wickedness) took control of the hearts of men. Over the next decade, the Great Depression brought this corruption to a screeching halt, leaving the United States on the doorstep of a World War, a cycle outlined several times in the book of Mormon.

1960-1970

"*Free Love*" was the call of the day as the 'hippie' movement came into full swing, with youth rebelling against the organized "establishment" of government, religion and antiquated morals. On the beaches of Southern California, the **Jesus Movement** heralds a spiritual revival that establishes new 'Born Again' churches as a viable choice of faith.

2010-2020

The *Humanistic Revival, an amoral Saeculum born* of a liberal education and linear view of time, and well-oiled by the creation of the internet, creates *the perfect storm* for the falling away that's taking place in most Christian faiths today. (Humanism is a system of values and beliefs that are based on the idea that people are basically good and that problems can be solved using reason instead of religion, effectively doing away with the need for God.)

History does and will repeat itself without question. All scripture as well as world history reveals that when the evil past is ignored, or forgotten, and even purged by political correctness, secularism, and the linear view of time, the repetition of evil and destruction will be made sure.

These time patterns are also seen in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. For example, the length of time between King Benjamin and the wicked work of Alma the younger (Mosiah

26:1), as well as the amount of time after the visit of Christ and the falling away in 4 Nephi. The next big spiritual revolution: +/- 2065?

The Internet

At the time of this writing, the Internet has been around over two decades. Considering that the ages of those who are leaving the church at present and in the greatest numbers are between 18-31, might fuel the supposition there is a definite connection between the two? Where do the youth of today go to find their answers to their questions? They "Google it." When looking for the voice of authority, many reach for the Internet. Answers to almost every question is at our fingertips. While there are some great things contained on the Internet that are beneficial to the spirit and mind, the user must never fall into a false sense of security and trust. As with everything, it can be used for good and evil. In jest it is stated: "If it's on the Internet it must be true!" This is a comic reminder *to be mindful* of who or what becomes one's authoritative voice. In a day when **everyone** has a voice (thanks in large part to the Internet and social media), all must be wary of the calculated manipulation and impurity of others.

Many have begun to search for answers to difficult gospel questions by going to Internet sources. If one cannot (or is afraid to) find the answers from an easy, reliable and convenient human source, the Internet becomes the trusted 'private' source for answers. To assist us in seeking light and truth, God created the human mind to look for satisfying answers to the questions that are deemed important. It doesn't always matter to the organic computer of the mind if the acceptable answer is true or false, it just needs *an* answer that will satisfy the inherent desire to learn the truth. The answer will always be framed within the experience and learning of the individual to be accepted as valid. For this reason, many will accept as truth answers to some questions from sources that have as their objective a desire to distort truth and/or provide false or misleading information.

What once took hours of researching, pouring over encyclopedias and books to find answers to questions, may now be accomplished in an instant with a brief Internet search, bringing up thousands of possible responses that offer many answers and differing viewpoints. Some sites may have the right answers, while others will direct the user to sites that may provide false and incomplete information. Some sites will provide answers that are mostly true, but present them in a way that subtly provokes more questions, sowing seeds of doubt in the mind of the searcher, having the underlying objective of destroying one's faith. With answers so freely available, leaders, teachers, and parents should never respond to difficult questions asked by our youth by saying: "That is not pertinent to your salvation" or "You don't need to know that right now." Doing so will without doubt encourage the youth to go to the Internet.

Statistics show that the age groups with the highest Internet usage are (93%) the 18-30 years olds. That is not surprising since they are the first generation to grow up with the Internet. Today's school age students are taught to use the Internet to find answers to their questions, do research and complete homework assignments from the Internet. Anyone from that age group who has graduated from high school has already been taught to use Google to discover answers to difficult questions. The most difficult thing to remember when using the Internet for information is: *just because it is on the Internet does not mean it is true*. Most Internet sites are created with the objective to persuade, market, or manipulate the mind of the reader. That means the information

found may or may not be true. Every individual should be taught that when going to the Internet to find answers to their questions, they should first question the sources, the context, and especially the objective of the site itself. A person will never be any smarter than the person (or website) they choose to believe. It behooves all to pay attention to the point of view and objective of the websites visited. Would one feel physically safe locked in a cage with a hungry tiger? *Of course not*. Then why would one feel spiritually safe believing the content found on websites that are calculated to devour and destroy one's faith and beliefs? Should the Latter-day Saint believe the explanations and statements of an organization or website that has as its objective the destruction of Mormonism? *Of course not*!

As a simple experiment, the words "Mormon Questions" were typed into a Google search, and within 0.2000 seconds, over 8,500,000— that's over eight and half million—different results appeared. How many of those do you think presented a pro-LDS view compared to those that were slanted against the church?

Since every website has an objective, purpose, goal, or opinion to offer the visitor, the user needs to be aware of those designs and purposes. All parents should teach their children to do the same. The Internet is the largest marketing tool that exists, and each website is designed to attract and persuade people that its products or ideas are *true and better than the rest*. These sites often present small truths to entice the visitor, explaining that the information presented is good and desirable and will make one wise, and then suggest that the reader should then go and get others to partake by pushing social media buttons that inform their friends what they believe and accept, inviting them to believe and partake also.

Satan's work is to *stop and destroy* the work of the Lord. However, he can only work through the words, works and marketing of others. There are people, organizations and websites that would do and say anything to destroy one's faith in Mormonism.

- Why would you want to trust a website whose very objective is to destroy the beliefs, teachings, and doctrines of a religion that would teach its members to become better fathers and mothers and more productive citizens?
- Why would you put trust in a website that seeks to destroy a religion that teaches that charity is the pure love of Christ, and that one demonstrates faith in Christ by serving and caring for their fellowmen?
- Why would one accept a website designed to destroy a faith and religion that seeks to help keep its members healthy physically, mentally and spiritually?

Nothing good may come from those who seek to destroy. Those who seek to destroy the Church from the inside or the outside should keep the following verses of scripture in mind. At a time when nonbelievers were seeking to destroy the first Church of Jesus Christ, Luke wrote:

> 35 ...Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.
> 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught.
> 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for ***if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught:***
39 But ***if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it***; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. (Acts 5:35-39)

Luke explains: 'It's a waste of time to try to destroy that which is of God, for if the work is of God it cannot be destroyed, and if not of God it will come to naught on its own, without any help from man.'

The liberal education being offered by the public schools and the linear view of time, coupled with the generational Saeculum and the profusion of questionable information on the Internet, all play a part in Satan's objective of destroying faith in God. The *perfect storm* of apostasy has arrived. Unaware, many who are falling away believe that the supposed true answers they have found to difficult questions in their electronic searches is what enlightens them to separate themselves from the faith of their fathers. The right and true answers to these questions do exist. There are answers that will strengthen their faith. The problem: many know not where to find the answers. This storm of faith affects almost every family in the church as the youth, young families, and even many older adults are choosing a different path of faith. The Book of Mormon teaches about the doctrine of agency and states multiple times that 'there was no law against a man's beliefs, only his crimes.' Religious freedom is based on the doctrine of equality and choice. Agency for the individual is the greatest gift God has promised and provided to man. That same individual agency often causes the greatest pain that a loving parent can endure.