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— Robert A. Rees, co-founder and vice-president of the Bountiful Children's Foundation



## And There Was No Poor Among Them

Liberation, Salvation, and the Meaning of the Restoration

By Ryan D. Ward

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### Description:

While The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has expanded many fundamental Christian doctrines, salvation is still understood as pertaining exclusively to the next life. How should we understand salvation and what does the timing of the Restoration reveal about God's vision of salvation for a suffering world?

To answer these questions, author Ryan Ward traces the theological evolution of salvation from the liberation of Israel from oppression to the Western Christian development of salvation as an individualistic, transactional atonement. This evolution corresponded with the shift of Christianity from a covenant community to an official state religion aligned with imperial power structures. Ward also explores the economic and social movements in the centuries leading up to the Industrial Revolution, which solidified the power of propertied elites at the expense of the poor, plundered entire continents, and killed millions.

Synthesizing these theological and historical threads, *And There Was No Poor Among Them: Liberation, Salvation, and the Meaning of the Restoration* asserts that the Restoration is God's explicit rejection of social and economic systems and ideologies that have led to the globalization of misery. Instead, Ward shows how the Restoration and the gospel of Christ is an invitation to a participatory salvation realized in Zion communities where “there are no poor among us.”

**Subjects:** Atonement, salvation, Book of Mormon, Restoration

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# And There Was No Poor Among Them

*And There Was No Poor Among Them* demonstrates how the Latter-day Restoration calls Saints to join with God in lifting the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.

## Background:

Between the periods that Latter-day Saints generally refer to as the Great Apostasy and Restoration, mainstream Christian theology gradually shifted away from a focus on communal and temporal salvation emphasized in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, and instead began to understand salvation as primarily an individual effort for purity in the afterlife. In *And There Was No Poor Among Them*, Ryan Ward highlights how the Restoration arrived just as the Industrial Revolution began accelerating enslavement, colonialism, genocide, oppression, and wealth disparity across the globe, and how the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith's revelations, and the Latter-day mandate to establish Zion directly calls God's people to restore that communal and temporal salvation that embodied the Biblical past. In doing so, Ward connects that mandate to the liberation theology movement that began in the mid-twentieth century, as Catholic priests and theologians in Latin America began to look deeper into the Bible to provide a new paradigm of what Christianity had to offer the poor and oppressed around them.

## Key topics:

1. Salvation and the Atonement
2. Capitalism and wealth disparity
3. Book of Mormon and the Restoration Scripture
4. Zion

## Praise from early reviewers

- “This a profound and profoundly important book, one of the most compelling in the history of modern Mormonism. . . . If I had the power, I would make *And There Was No Poor Among Them* required reading of every local, regional, and general leader of the Church.” — Robert A. Rees, co-founder and vice-president of the Bountiful Children's Foundation
- “Innovative, forceful, and thoughtful. . . . This book reveals that the richness of the gospel lies not merely in piling up treasures in heaven, but in working with God to liberate the world.” — Margaret Olsen Hemming, co-author of *The Book of Mormon For the Least of These*
- “Persuasively argues that the Latter-day Restoration is also a call to return us to the societal salvation exemplified in the Hebrew Bible and Christ's ministry. . . . This is an invaluable resource for improving and directing our Christian ministry in the world today.” — David B. Ostler, author of *Bridges: Ministering to Those Who Question*
- “A prophetic reframing of salvation, atonement, and apostasy, making the teachings of Joseph Smith's Restoration ring with power and relevance amid the calamities of our current age.” — Melissa Inouye, author of *Crossings: a bald American Latter-day Saint woman scholar's ventures through life, death, cancer, and motherhood (not necessarily in that order)*
- “In *And There Was No Poor Among Them*, prophetic imagination is integrated and redefined with insights that explicate the meaning of building the kingdom of God on earth, here and now. . . . This is a great book.” — Warner Woodworth, author of *Radiant Mormonism: Using Our Faith in Christ to Power World-changing Service*

## Recommended Chapters

Introduction: Two Salvations – Introduces the differing understandings of salvation that are discussed in the volume.

Chapter 2: Jesus and the Reign of God: Salvation as Covenant Community – Examines the Gospels to show how Jesus himself was engaged in a restoration of the Hebrew Bible’s mandate for temporal salvation and building the Kingdom of God

Chapter 5: The Book of Mormon: Liberation and Salvation Retold – Highlights how one of the central themes of the Book of Mormon—and thus the Restoration—is one of temporal salvation, beginning with Lehi’s family’s salvation from the destruction of Jerusalem through the people’s formation of “a church of Christ” where “they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.”

## About the Author

**Ryan D. Ward** received his PhD from Utah State University specializing in experimental psychology. Following postdoctoral work in the Departments of Psychiatry and Neuroscience at Columbia University in New York City, he accepted a position at the University of Otago, where he is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology. His research focuses on the neural basis of learning, animal models of psychiatric disease, and motivations for drug use. He teaches courses on drugs, behavior, addiction, and policy, and research methods. He lives with his wife and five children in New Zealand.

Ryan is available for interviews. He can be reached directly at [rwardphd@gmail.com](mailto:rwardphd@gmail.com) or through Greg Kofford Books.