In the information age, growing awareness of Joseph Smith’s first vision accounts and the findings of the New Mormon History disrupted the collective Mormon memory of Smith’s vision. Of the saints who learned of the newly selected and related knowledge, many dismissed or disregarded it. But many experienced dissonance that led to deeper investigation. Some successfully incorporated new knowledge and consolidated a more complex but still orthodox memory. For others, however, a high degree of unresolved dissonance eroded their faith. They could no longer believe that Joseph Smith experienced a vision, but because it had become the seminal event underpinning their faith, they could agree with Gordon B. Hinckley that it either occurred or it did not, and if it did not, the faith was a fraud.

At the turn of the twenty-first century church leaders and educators took for granted that Latter-day Saints shared the memory of Smith’s vision as their origin story and that it would automatically be transmitted to the next generation. Internet-empowered selectors and relaters disrupted that memory, however, leading many to question both the vision and whether they could trust the church regarding it and other points of history. Though slow to respond to the information age, The Church of...
Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints remained the most powerful selector and relater of memory elements, and began introducing diverse and effective means of complexifying and solidifying a shared memory of Smith’s first vision.