

that local engagement in politics and engagement with those we see as being on “the other side” is the only way that change can be made. And this call to action is something I am still sitting with.

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Delightful Futuristic Mormon Morality Tale Offers Teaching Tool for Progressive Parents

Matt Page. *Future Day Saints: Welcome to New Zion*. Self-published, 2020. 58 pp. Hardcover: \$25.00. Color illustrations.

Reviewed by Christopher C. Smith

After his death and resurrection on Earth, Jesus Christ traveled to New Zion—a planet in the Kolob star system—and appeared to its six-eyed alien inhabitants, whom he named the Othersheep. He explained to the Othersheep that they had been created by Celestial Parents, and that on other worlds throughout the galaxy lived celestial siblings who would one day emigrate to New Zion. He commanded them to prepare the world for their siblings’ arrival (3). The first ship to arrive, in the year 2806, brought green-skinned creatures from the planet Siro. Nine more groups of alien emigrants followed, until the last arrived in 2841 bearing Earth’s humans (4–7).

Such is the premise of Matt Page's self-published graphic novel *Future Day Saints: Welcome to New Zion*. Less a novel than a collection of short stories set in the same universe, *Future Day Saints* includes maps, coloring pages, a line maze, and full-page teasers for a graphic novel series and toy line. It's unclear how seriously Page means for us to take the toy ads, since he also includes a full-page ad for a vinyl ska album by the band "Adam-Ondi-Skaman," with a release date of 12/2/2929.

The coloring pages imply a young target audience, and *Future Day Saints* is appropriate for children. Page's past work has exhibited a dark sense of humor, and his illustrations have sometimes included tiny penises. No penises appear in *Future Day Saints*, although the Satan character "Morning Star" bears an ambiguous nubbin in his groin area (16). The book contains no adult language and only bloodless violence. The heroes explicitly telegraph that they would never kill a spirit brother or sister, though they don't mind leaving a scar or two (39).

Though appropriate for children, *Future Day Saints* offers plenty to engage an adult Mormon reader. Clever Mormon inside jokes sprinkle its pages. The book's heroes include a being called "Triple Combination": a three-headed person in Native American garb who serves as New Zion's official record-keeper (13). Its villains include Mister Cain, who in keeping with Mormon folklore is tall, hairy, and Bigfoot-like (16). Another villain, Natural Man, is a "compulsive liar with no moral compass" and a suspiciously presidential yellow toupee. Kinderhook, a "sentient hole in the universe," is incapable of shaking your hand; but if you offer, he'll always try (17).

Future Day Saints's progressive Mormon ethos will be familiar to *Dialogue* readers. It celebrates the diversity of emigrants to New Zion, with each group of arrivals having its own distinctive body shape and variety of skin tones. The third group to arrive, the Starlings, are one-and-a-half feet tall. The fifth group, the MooNees, are all arms and mouth. "Their unusual appearance made the New Zionites reconsider the meaning of the ancient teachings that the Celestial Parents had created all beings in their image" (5). The seventh group, the Gazelem,

“don’t eat, drink, or communicate verbally” and lack “any distinct gender variations” (6). Most fun of all are the Selasi. Every Selasi individual has “a distinctly different appearance,” including a Liahona-shaped person, a beehive-shaped person, and a person in the shape of gold plates (7–8).

Page explicitly treats this variety as “beautiful and diverse” (8). One short comic portrays children of the various peoples attending school together, and another shows the family tree of a half-human, half-Othersheep person (8–9). The resurrected Christ, we learn, appeared to the people of each world in their own body shape, though in every shape his body bore the crucifixion’s wounds (3, 11). A full-page illustration shows a human man and his daughter at an art gallery, looking at paintings from each culture showing Christ in different body shapes. “But which one is right?” asks the daughter. “They all are,” her father replies (11).

One short comic offers a futuristic spin on the old folktale of the incognito Christ. A human man gives his last crust of bread to a hungry Starling. The Starling eats his fill and then gives back the remainder, which is somehow enough to sate the human’s hunger. Later the human meets the same Starling, who is dehydrated from thirst, and gives him water. The Starling offers the cup back, and it forever after slakes the human’s thirst. After a few more such encounters, the Starling eventually is unjustly imprisoned and asks the human if he would be willing to die in his place. The human says yes, and the Starling reveals himself as the resurrected Christ and praises the human for his charity to a stranger (43–49).

Another parable warns of the dangers of blind obedience to Church leaders. One of New Zion’s heroes is the Good Bishop, a “sincere and easygoing” religious leader who sincerely wants to help his parishioners. “You can trust him with your secrets and with your life.” Unfortunately, one of New Zion’s villains is the Bad Bishop—the Good Bishop’s perfect doppelgänger. The Bad Bishop cannot be trusted, and he poses as the Good Bishop to fool people and to lead them into dangerous situations. It’s critical, then, to avoid blind faith and to trust your feelings when dealing with leaders (15, 40).

Thus, in addition to being fun for both children and adults, *Future Day Saints* may also offer a powerful teaching tool for progressive Mormon parents. Its heartwarming morality tales offer a helpful balance to some of the one-sided tribal authoritarian ideas that children may encounter at church. In this way, the book far exceeded my expectations. Page's vision of a possible Mormon future is achingly beautiful, and not just because of his skillful art.

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Poetry as Ceremony

Tacey M. Atsitty. *Rain Scald: Poems*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018. 88 pp. Paperback: \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-8263-5867-7.

Reviewed by Michael P. Taylor

*O Holy People, show me how I am human,
how I am soon to sliver. Stay please, for woman
or man's sake. Succor me from a telestial state,
where I long to be self-luminous in a slate
of granite. How easily I fall to shards, a hand*

left to wane ungathered.

—Tacey M. Atsitty, “Evensong III”

In August 2018, I had the honor to sit down with Tacey M. Atsitty (Diné) and discuss her debut book of poems, *Rain Scald*. Among other things, we discussed her path to poetry, her poetic process, her imagined