

contemporary queer / Mormon conversation, its ongoing power and intimacy. Perhaps this is because it pretty much refuses intimacy with contemporary Mormons (“the Mormons”; them/ us?). And in so doing it proves that narratives (even professedly anti-secularist ones) secularize to their own purposes when they use lives as a cautionary tale. They miss entirely how weird we are still. They still do not see the marvelous shame I wear—to this day, quietly, but proudly—whenever I walk into the world of my profession.

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Got Wheat?

Christopher James Blythe. *Terrible Revolution: Latter-day Saints and the American Apocalypse*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 348 pp. Illustrations, index. Hardcover: \$74.00. ISBN: 9780190080280.

Reviewed by Amy Hoyt

Growing up in the LDS faith, my parents always dutifully had large quantities of wheat, rice, beans, and all other manner of food stored—food we never ate in our daily lives. While they rarely discussed end-time catastrophe, I was aware that our food storage was a temporal preparation for a series of events that would be forthcoming, including plagues, famine and all the dramatic events detailed in scripture. I appreciated the idea but didn’t quite understand how we would actually survive on the food they had stored. I grew up, went to college

and graduate school, and eventually began teaching religious studies. When Christopher Blythe's *Terrible Revolution* landed on my radar to be reviewed for *Dialogue* I assigned myself to the review.

Blythe begins his text with a reminder to the reader that the beginnings of Mormonism are steeped in apocalyptic notions—after all, Moroni specifically instructed Joseph Smith Jr. to prepare for the return of Christ, an event many believe is the culmination of end-times calamities. Blythe chronicles the history of apocalyptic beliefs in the early LDS Church and carefully traces how those views have shifted over time. The first part of Blythe's text examines the methodological commitments of both historians of religion who employ “lived religion” and folklorists who work with “ordinary folk” to examine vernacular religion. At the end of the day, both methods prioritize the experiences of the non-elite. Lived religion examines the ways in which laity practice religious creeds and live their religion in their everyday life, folklorists are interested in the stories that are told by the people as stories can be interpreted as a mirror of a group's culture. Blythe ultimately relies on the method of folklorists, including both the official and unofficial narratives surrounding apocalypticism to describe a wider and layered understanding of it. This allows him to trace the shifts in official narratives and changing boundaries of what constitutes legitimate apocalyptic belief.

During the nineteenth century, lay LDS Church members enjoyed a more open and reciprocal relationship with the leadership when it came to end-time spiritual premonitions (and many other things). However, as the LDS Church began to seek accommodation with the wider American public, church leaders began to minimize the apocalyptic predictions and spiritual experiences of the laity and create firmer boundaries around official narratives. This transition coincided with a reshaping of apocalyptic narratives from events that were thought to be imminent and linked to the martyrdom of the early Saints to narratives that more closely align with American evangelical notions of end-times. This latter iteration posits a global apocalypse and places American democracy and religious freedom in jeopardy.

Blythe's text is a bit dense in places and sometimes feels sluggish in the beginning. Nevertheless, it is worth the read. Bythe connects early apocalyptic beliefs to the Saints notions of martyrdom, with revenge and retaliation figuring largely among early Saints. This was particularly true after Joseph Smith Jr. was killed and as they moved west. Next, Blythe examines the ways in which end-times were understood in early Utah after the trek west inadvertently left them within the newly defined boundaries of the United States. Finally, Blythe examines how apocalypticism was ultimately reimagined by LDS leaders as less of an American event and more of a global phenomenon based upon preparing the world for the Second Coming.

The highlight for me was the last part of the book, where Blythe examines the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and the stories that have come from unofficial channels, focusing on two types of groups that perpetuate them: Mormon fundamentalists and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The accounts range from terrifying to horrific and Blythe deftly observes that one of the byproducts of the minimization of official apocalyptic rhetoric since the nineteenth century by LDS Church leadership is that LDS Church members in the twentieth century began to feel increasing anxiety about end-times. This is not surprising since the basic arch of the unofficial contemporary apocalyptic experiences tend to include being shown future events that include war, American invasion, multiple plagues, famine, and unmitigated violence and depravity. The absence of official rhetoric in contemporary times has left a void which has been filled in by personal accounts, some of which are eerily similar. Blythe points out that some of the similarities between personal accounts such as the depiction of "tent cities" or "cities of light" where LDS Church members will be directed to gather together away from their homes in order to seek refuge during tumultuous times, as well as the destruction of both the East and West Coasts by some type of disaster and the subsequent "invasion" under the guise of aid by foreign soldiers. These

personal apocalyptic accounts are also different in that they embody different locals—one person’s experience focused mostly on events that are based in Utah while another person’s story focuses on events within American that will lead up to the Second Coming. There are enough similarities to give the reader pause; it certainly piqued my interest.

Blythe does a terrific job walking the reader through the shifts and nuances of the multiple apocalyptic themes that pepper the LDS imagination, both officially and unofficially. It is worth the investment. Perhaps I will also invest in a few extra cans of wheat as well.

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From the Garden of Eden to the Zen Rock Garden

Charles Shirō Inouye. *Zion Earth Zen Sky*. Provo: Brigham Young University Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2021. 271pp. Paper: \$19.95. ISBN: 9781950304110.

Reviewed by Ted Lee

The latest in the Living Faith series, Charles Inouye’s *Zion Earth Zen Sky* is an autobiographical memoir about growing up as a child to Japanese American immigrants who met in the internment camps during World War II. Born on a farm in rural southern Utah (“in order to be far from