

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

the people who betrayed them” [3]), Inouye grows up within a tight-knit Latter-day Saint community (converting to the religion at an early age) while raised by devout Buddhist grandparents and secular parents. Inouye’s stories reflect this blend, deftly weaving between Buddhist literature, the haiku of Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō (1644–94), Latter-day Saint doctrine, and academic rumination on the consequences of modernism. Inouye’s own prose reflects Bashō’s poems—a plain, lyrical style that juxtaposes the lofty and the vulgar to bring about new holistic ways of seeing the world that is at times profound and other times cheeky and irreverent.

Zion Earth Zen Sky is not the typical memoir, perhaps even less so as a Latter-day Saint one. There is no grand narrative leading up to some culmination or epiphany. The memoir itself is composed as a series of vignettes; snapshots of his life strung along in chronological order. One story does not necessarily lead into the next. Scattered between stories, haiku act as poetic punctuation marks. Inouye’s autobiography feels less like a traditional memoir and more like a Buddhist sutra—stories full of colorful characters, multiple near-death experiences, and even some supernatural visitations. These stories are stitched together (the word *sutra* means “thread” and is the root word for English words such as *suture*) that, when unfurled, reveal a larger cosmic pattern or theme.

And there are clear themes in Inouye’s stories. One theme is a familiar Latter-day Saint trope—a young boy, wracked with guilt for his sins and despairing at the atrocities of this world turns to God. Another theme is familiar to Asian Americans—yes, growing up in a racist society differentiated by the color of one’s skin, but also the alienation from one’s parents and grandparents as the child of immigrants and how we try to bridge that gap and find ways to express our love for each other anyway, sometimes understanding too late. And throughout it all, Inouye discovers early on a personal flaw that he struggles with all his life—the tendency to withdraw from the world that Jesus explicitly commanded his disciples to live and work and move and love within. It

is this third theme where the young Inouye does not find lasting relief in the justice of God. As Inouye later remarks, “Justice is like food. We can’t do without it. But too much kills us” (212). Inouye, hesitantly at first, opens himself up to the world and all that it has to offer, trying to embrace both its beauty and ugliness.

Inouye’s engagement in the world revolves around raking, referring to the rake one uses to make the paths within the gravel of a Zen rock garden. Raking is a metaphor for the work of maintaining faith and life, individuals and societies. Raking does not lead to some final goal but is the goal itself. Joy is found in the raking, whether it is home teaching or the mundane chores of family life. “If anything,” Inouye writes, “raking is a surer way to the kind of knowledge that matters most. The truth is something to practice, not something to think about” (165). Raking is how God created the world, and raking is how the world is maintained (29). Raking is not a task but an invitation to enlightenment: “My relationship with my Heavenly Father is much the same. I am not supposed to be raking *for* him. Rather, I am supposed to be raking *with* him” (175).

In this way, Inouye draws deeply from both the well of Buddhism and the waters of Mormonism. He is comfortable with this syncretic terrain, which could possibly be disorienting for some Latter-day Saints unfamiliar with the Buddhist faith tradition. Inouye’s world is a literary and theological space where bodhisattvas, *kami*, and Christ mingle easily with each other. For example, Inouye refers to God—that familiar Christian patriarchal deity—while also recognizing the gods, and at times these two terms seem almost interchangeable. Is he talking about the Buddhist pantheon of different buddhas and bodhisattvas, the animistic spirits of things and places of Japanese Shinto, or the council of gods within revealed scripture? In the Zen spirit of Inouye’s world, does it make a difference?

Make no mistake; Inouye is firmly rooted in his Latter-day Saint faith. But the Mormonism he unfolds—a faith tradition animated

through continual raking, a tradition that recognizes the gods in all things and people, a tradition that recognizes that “many of us, myself included, see ourselves as peacemakers even when the stability we seek is making life miserable for many” (215)—feels simultaneously foreign and familiar to me. I suspect this may be the case for many readers who have thought deeply on matters of justice and mercy. As a Korean American Mormon with my own personal syncretic connections to Buddhism and Confucianism, I yearn for the kind of theological practice Inouye slowly expounds through stories of raking, and I mourn for the fact that this is often not the case. One can feel Inouye’s own yearning and mourning as a tension throughout the pages, and it is a tension that is never fully resolved by the end. This may be unsatisfying for some, but perhaps he never meant to resolve it. Perhaps, like raking, that tension—between Zion and the world, between the lofty ideals of the heavens in the sky and the sometimes cruel but also beautiful realities of the earth below—is the entire point.

Inouye’s book arrives during a particularly turmoil-filled period as a global pandemic ravages the most downtrodden, crumbling empires lash out in fear and fury, misery festers in cages along the borders of nations, and Black and Asian bodies are gunned down in the streets by police and citizens alike with little accountability. The American Church, in turn, struggles with prejudice, racism, sexism, violence, and hatred within its own pews. A membership and church culture that once prided itself on its political neutrality seems paralyzed and neutered as it is caught in a torrent of injustices. Inouye’s own struggles with feeling overwhelmed with the horrors of this world and his subsequent turn back to the world he once tried to escape—to turn back to the burning house, a popular Buddhist metaphor Inouye deploys—may bring some measure of comfort to others struggling to keep their head above the floodwaters. This struggle in difficult times is not a unique moment but a deep and time-honored tradition of faith spanning centuries and cultures. Perhaps the greatest praise I can give for *Zion Earth*

Zen Sky is this: as soon as I finished, I put my tablet down, went for a walk outside to view the last of the remaining cherry blossoms, and then washed the dishes. I picked up my rake.

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Gendering Mormon Studies—At Last!

Amy Hoyt and Taylor G. Petrey, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Mormonism and Gender*. London: Routledge, 2020. 646 pp. Illustrations, index. Hardcover: \$250.00. ISBN 9780815395218.

Reviewed by Christine Talbot

Women's and gender studies emerged out of the women's and sexual liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, movements the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints vigorously opposed. The so-called New Mormon History flourished around the same time, opening the field to new approaches. While the New Mormon History resulted in a better understanding of women in Mormon history, the study of gender in Mormonism has largely remained captured by the kind of compensatory history that argues women were there, too, and they mattered. As Amy Hoyt and Taylor G. Petrey acknowledge, Mormon gender studies has remained relatively untouched by the methodological and paradigm shifts in the broader study of gender over the last few decades. Mormon studies has been late in applying to Mormonism