DIALOGUE
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Vardis Fisher's Mormon Scars: Mapping the Diaspora in the *Testament of Man*

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"Religion is like smallpox. If you get a good dose, you wear scars."
—*Vardis Fisher,* We Are Betrayed

In 1940, Vardis Fisher was one of a handful of writers in the United States rumored to be "important." He had achieved critical acclaim (and modest financial success) in three different areas: his early novels about the Snake River region of Idaho (*Toilers of the Hills*, *Dark Bridwell*) had been praised as examples of Western regional fiction and compared favorably to John Steinbeck in California and William Faulkner in the South;[1] the four autobiographical novels of his *Tetralogy* were originally grouped with the works of his friend, Thomas Wolfe, as premier examples of the confessional novel;[2] and his epic novel of the Mormon migration, *Children of God*, had just won one of the most important literary prizes in the country and had established Fisher as a major historical novelist.[3] In their 1979 book *The Mormon Experience*, Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton identified Fisher as "perhaps the most important writer of Mormon background."[4]

Among Mormon literary scholars, Fisher is categorized as one of the principal writers of the "Lost Generation"—a term first applied to Mormon literature by Edward Geary in his 1977 essay, "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s." Geary proposed the term to describe a group of writers from

Mormon backgrounds who rose to national prominence during the middle decades of the twentieth century. This group included Fisher, along with George Dixon Snell, Virginia Sorensen, Maurine Whipple, Richard Scowcroft, Juanita Brooks, Samuel Taylor, Blanche Cannon, Fawn Brodie, and Paul Bailey.[5] These writers all came from Mormon backgrounds and treated Mormon themes in their work, but none of them felt entirely comfortable with their religious identity, and many of them ended up leaving the institutional Church behind while often continuing to describe themselves as "Mormons" in public settings.

The term "Lost Generation" quickly worked its way into the vocabulary of Mormon literary studies and has become a standard way of referring to this group of writers. The term itself is unfortunate, though, as it frames their work from the very narrow perspective of Utah Mormon culture, which generally saw them as transgressive, disloyal, and hostile. But compared to the overwhelmingly hostile portrayals of Mormonism in American and British literature between 1843 and 1930, these writers were anything but anti-Mormon. Their nuanced, well-crafted narratives convinced millions of readers that Mormonism was more complex than *A Study in Scarlet* and *Riders of the Purple Sage* had led them to believe. And they wrote at precisely the time that the Church was emerging from its cocoon in the American West and renegotiating its relationship with the rest of the world. The writers of the midcentury Mormon diaspora were an important (if often unacknowledged) part of that renegotiation.

During his lifetime, Fisher was the most well-known writer of the midcentury Mormon diaspora, and his 1939 novel *Children of God* was arguably the most influential fictional treatment of Mormonism published during the first half of the twentieth century. A largely sympathetic portrayal of the Mormon migration, *Children of God* became a national bestseller, a Harper Prize winner, and the basis of the major 1940 motion picture *Brigham Young*. In a cover-story appraisal of the book for *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Bernard DeVoto, who a year earlier had proclaimed that there would never be a first-rate novel of the Mormon experience in America, declared himself a false prophet. "It will be read for a

long time," DeVoto exulted, "and Mr. Fisher has proved himself a mature novelist who belongs to the small company of our best."[6]

Though he was the most famous of the bunch, Vardis Fisher was also significantly more "lost"—to Mormonism at least—than most of the other writers in the midcentury diaspora. Born in rural Idaho in 1895, Fisher was raised by Mormon parents in almost complete isolation from other people, Mormon or otherwise. He would recall much later that his family had only one neighbor within ten miles in any direction.[7] Consequently, he attended no church and did not participate in any religious activities outside of his home. He was baptized into the Mormon Church at twenty years old, while attending school in Rigby, Idaho, but he left the Church after only a few months and never returned—though nearly all of his autobiographical early fiction deals with Mormonism as the context of his upbringing.

The question of whether Fisher can be called a "Mormon writer" in even a limited sense became the subject of intense dispute when early Mormon literary critics tried to claim him for their tribe. A few years before publishing *The Mormon Experience*, Arrington and his graduate student John Haupt presented a paper at the inaugural meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters entitled, "The Mormon Heritage of Vardis Fisher." This paper advanced the thesis that Vardis Fisher's rejection of Mormonism was less complete than critics had previously supposed. Against the common view of Fisher as an atheist who completely rejected Mormonism in his youth, the authors argue that he "was not an apostate," that he "never renounced his religion," and that "his outlook on life and history was religious, definitely Judeo-Christian and . . . definitely encompassing Latter-day Saint belief and practice." The paper was published in *BYU Studies* the next year, where it received modest exposure among scholars of Mormon and Western American literature.[8]

This article attracted the unfavorable attention of Fisher's widow, Opal Laurel Holmes. Convinced that Fisher would one day be remembered as a great American novelist, she felt a keen responsibility to make sure that nothing as nasty and disreputable as religion—especially Mormon religion—sullied his name. Holmes

republished his out-of-print works under her own imprint, and to several of these she appended the statement "Vardis Fisher Was Not a Mormon" and her letter to Spencer W. Kimball demanding that he suitably reprimand anybody who claimed otherwise. In her statement, Holmes declared that "VARDIS FISHER WAS NOT A MORMON; did not have a Mormon indoctrination during his formative years in the home of his father; that he had apostatized from the Mormon Church within a year after his baptism, without ever having followed through on anything that would have qualified him as a Mormon."[9] Vardis Fisher may have once written a book about the Mormon migration, she insisted, but he was a freethinker, a seeker of truth, and a genuine intellectual—and definitely not a Mormon.

But one need not go either to his widow or to Mormon historians to answer questions about Vardis Fisher's early life and perceptions. More than anything else, Fisher was a confessional writer who wrote five thinly veiled autobiographical novels and was always revising his confessions. His four-volume *Künstlerroman*, known collectively as the *Tetralogy*, paints as clear a picture as we might want of his early spiritual life through the experiences of his fictional alter ego, "Vridar Hunter."[10] Like Vardis, Vridar grows up in Idaho, reads the Bible and the Book of Mormon as a child, and dreams of becoming a prophet like Joseph Smith. Like Vardis, he is attracted to Mormonism the first time he experiences a Mormon community, but he is soon disillusioned with its anti-intellectualism and its dogmatic moralism. He leaves the Church and attends the University of Utah in order to become a writer.

Fisher's most significant statement of his adult connection to Mormonism, I believe, occurs in his novel *We Are Betrayed* (1935), the third volume of the *Tetralogy*. The statement occurs in a conversation between Vridar Hunter and his Jewish fraternity brother Dave Roth. A deeply cynical man, Roth does not seem like the sort of person to join a fraternity, so the equally cynical Vridar, who is considering quitting, asks him why he joined. "Being in a frat makes it easier for me to get along. I can go to some social flings," Roth responds. "Now and then a Christian smiles at me. And that . . . is quite a gift to a Jew." Vridar tries to protest that he

is not himself religious—that he is not a Christian or a Mormon. But Roth stops him cold: "Yes you are. Religion is like smallpox. If you get a good dose you wear scars. You had a good dose." Vridar does not dispute the conclusion.[11]

Like Vridar Hunter, Vardis Fisher got a good dose of Mormonism. And like Vridar, he wore scars. In this sense, and perhaps no other, we can legitimately consider Vardis Fisher a "Mormon writer." For all but a few months of his adult life, he did not believe in, or adhere to, the doctrines of the LDS Church. He renounced those doctrines and ridiculed religious belief throughout his life. But his people were Mormon, including the people he loved the most. And his only first-hand experiences with religious belief, moral guilt, desire for transcendence, and the possibility of revelation—which all became common themes in his writings—came in the context of his Mormon upbringing. Fisher himself was an atheist, or at least an agnostic, from his early adulthood until his death. He was a religious unbeliever; of this there can be little doubt. But Mormonism was the religion that he didn't believe in.

The Testament of Man

Despite his early success, Vardis Fisher did not want to be known primarily as a Western writer, or as an Idaho writer, or as an acolyte of Thomas Wolfe—and he certainly did not want to be known as a Mormon writer. He had bigger dreams to chase. In 1943, he published *Darkness and the Deep*, the first novel in the *Testament of Man*—a twelve-book epic cycle that would consume most of Vardis Fisher's time and considerable talent for the next twenty years. The project was the historical novel conceived on a grand scale. He set out to tell nothing less than the religious, psychological, social, and sexual history of the human race. It was a big job, and, though some of the initial novels sold well, the series itself did so poorly, and caused such controversy, that Fisher had great difficulty finding publishers for most of the later novels.[12] As Fisher's biographer Tim Woodward writes, *The Testament of Man* series "would cost him twenty of his most productive years,

a close friend and publisher, and any hope of maintaining the reputation he briefly enjoyed as one of the nation's up-and-coming novelists." However, as Woodward understands, "he wasn't writing the *Testament* for the best-seller lists. He was convinced he was writing it for the ages."[13]

Unfortunately, "the ages" have been no kinder to *The Testament of Man* than the bestseller lists were. All twelve books have been out of print for decades—and most of them are difficult to find even in libraries and used bookstores. Though the series did provide the subject matter for a few MA theses and PhD dissertations in the 1970s, there has been very little scholarly work on the *Testament* since then.[14] In one of the few recent treatments, written for a centennial celebration of Fisher's work, edited by Joseph Flora and published by the University of Idaho Press, anthropologist Marilyn Trent Grunkemeyer calls the series "a massive exposition of one of the greatest perduring male fantasies of all time," and refers to its capstone final volume as "spiritually exhausting and emotionally toxic."[15] The further we get from Fisher's source material and the time-bound anthropological assumptions that inform his work, the less likely it becomes that *The Testament of Man* will ever experience a massive resurgence in either popular or scholarly interest.

I would suggest, though, that there is much in the *Testament of Man* worth thinking well of. For one thing, most of the novels are pretty good. Fisher was a novelist of ideas, but, unlike most novelists of ideas, he also knew how to tell a compelling story. And in the second decade of the twenty-first century, *The Testament of Man* provides a fascinating glimpse into the state of anthropology and religious studies halfway through the twentieth. In preparing to write these novels, Fisher read thousands of works written from the 1890s through the 1960s, and what he incorporates in the novel represents a good sampling of the state of anthropological scholarship during his lifetime.[16] If it is a failure, it is a noble one—and therefore worth studying as one of the twentieth century's great cautionary tales: the one about the gifted writer whose reach exceeded his grasp.

Perhaps the most important key to reading the *Testament of Man* is to realize that it is ultimately another one of Fisher's autobiographical experiments. This becomes explicit in the twelfth and final book, *Orphans in Gethsemane,* which is a rewriting of the *Tetralogy.* Like the earlier four novels of the *Tetralogy*, *Orphans in Gethsemane* tells the story of Vridar Hunter, the thinly veiled self-portrait of the artist as a young (and very neurotic) man. But really, all twelve books in the *Testament* are autobiographical. Each of the first eleven novels has at least one character who is a recognizable type of Vridar Hunter, and, therefore, Vardis Fisher. Scholars have long recognized the typological nature of the series. "The research behind his books is tremendous," writes Fisher scholar Joseph M. Flora, but the primary strategy of the *Testament* is "to imagine what Vridar would have done in the times Fisher considers."[17] Tim Woodward explains the *Testament of Man* series as "an attempt to rewrite the Vridar story in a way that shed light not just on Vridar, but on all the Vridars—the confused, frightened neurotics whom he presently came to call orphans."[18]

The Vridar character in each novel is usually a brilliant social misfit with profound creative energy, equally profound neurosis, and deep doubts about the society that he lives in. In the early novels, which deal with pre-historic times and the earliest Mesopotamian societies, the main characters achieve great cultural power by exercising their intellect and creativity in essentially static societies. As the series progresses, however, the creative impulses of these Vridar/Vardis characters repeatedly clash with the forces of religious fundamentalism: the early Hebrew prophets in the court of Solomon, the ultra-nationalistic Jews during the Maccabean rebellion, the Christian zealots of the Inquisition, and, of course, Vridar's orthodox Mormon family members in *Orphans in Gethsemane*.

Nearly everything about the *Testament of Man* invites us to read it as a sustained meditation on religion. It takes its title from the two Testaments of the Bible, and it clearly mimics biblical structure, beginning with stories of Creation and Exodus and narrating the rise of both Judaism and Christianity. Nearly every book contains at least one character identified as either a priest

or a prophet—and the early books usually contain one of each. While Fisher processed religion intellectually through the thousands of books that he read while doing research for *Testament of Man*, he processed it emotionally through the only religious culture that he ever participated in. And just as the heroes of all twelve books are versions of Fisher himself, the religious forces that they struggle against are all, in some way, versions of the rigid, patriarchal, prophet-driven, sex-denying Mormon religion that he absorbed from his family while growing up in the isolated wilderness of rural Idaho.

We learn from his autobiographical writings that two of the most influential people in Fisher's life were strong Mormon women: his devout mother, with whom he remained close well into adulthood, and his first wife, Leona McMurtrey, whose suicide in 1924—a direct consequence of his own infidelity—haunted him for the rest of his life. Dealing with the Mormon perspectives of those closest to him is one of Vridar's most difficult challenges in *Orphans in Gethsemane*. And two of the other volumes of the *Testament* present fictional accounts of intellectual men interacting obsessively with religious cultures in order to better understand important women in their lives. In *The Island of the Innocent* (Book 7), an educated Greek doctor falls in love with a beautiful Jewish woman and joins the Maccabean rebellion on the side of the Jews. In *A Goat for Azazel* (Book 9), a young Roman intellectual travels throughout the empire trying to understand Christianity after seeing his Christian mother willingly accept martyrdom for her faith.

Both of these characters—like Vridar Hunter and Vardis Fisher—end up being strongly influenced by religious cultures whose religions they do not accept. They are powerful statements about simultaneously being part of and not being part of a religious community by one of the most important members of the mid-twentieth-century Mormon diaspora. Taken together, these two fictional accounts function as a catalog of ways to interact with a religious culture that one does not belong to and to make peace with religious ideas that one does not believe.

Island of the Innocent: Faith as an Intellectual Exercise

The seventh *Testament of Man* novel, *The Island of the Innocent*, takes place in Jerusalem before and during the Maccabean revolt, which began in 167 BCE and is treated in the deuterocanonical books of First and Second Maccabees. In his retrospective overview of the *Testament*, Fisher describes this as a pivotal moment for all of the major themes that he treats. "The extremely bitter struggle between Jews who wanted to Hellenize Israel and those who wanted to preserve it in racial and religious isolation—the struggle between beauty and righteousness—was of transcendent importance," he notes. "Allergic to women and to practically all pleasures, the lean, shaggy, angry prophets won a second time. The price the . . . Vridars paid for that victory no one, so far as I know, has ever tried to determine."[19]

The two worldviews that Fisher alludes to here—"beauty and righteousness," or, to use the especially apt Arnoldian terms, "Hellenism and Hebraism,"—conflict constantly throughout *The Testament of Man*.[20] The two novels preceding *The Island of the Innocent* represent the conflict allegorically, with paired characters who each represent one end of the dichotomy. In *The Divine Passion*, the priest named Rabi represents the Hellenistic impulse. He is creative, intellectually curious, socially liberal, and anxious to accommodate human nature. The opposite view, the Hebraic impulse, comes in the form of Yescha, the self-declared prophet who believes that women are the source of evil, that sex is inherently sinful, and that humanity can only be saved by rigid adherence to an uncompromising law. In *The Valley of Vision*, King Solomon represents the Hellenistic values of knowledge, experience, and creativity, while the prophet Ahiah represents the Hebraic values of obedience and self-denial.

In both of these earlier novels, the Vridar character is the Hellenist. Rabi and Solomon are simply Vardis Fisher-type characters set imaginatively in different historical periods. The same is true of the main character of *The Island of the Innocents*: a wealthy Greek physician named Philemon. In most ways, Phile-

mon epitomizes the Hellenistic worldview. He is well educated, skeptical, intellectually curious, well travelled, and a confirmed sensualist. However, when he is thrust into the middle of the pre-Maccabean conflict between the Hellenistic Jews and the *Hasidim*, or "pious Jews,"[21] Philemon chooses Hebraism—not out of any personal conviction or religious devotion, but because it is the only way he can get the girl.

The first sentence of *The Island of the Innocent* introduces readers to the obsessive love at the center of the novel: "He was Philemon, a Hellene, looking for a girl named Judith, a daughter of Israel, and he felt pretty absurd for having come down from Antioch because of an infatuation more than a year old."[22] Philemon had only seen Judith once, by chance in a crowd, when she was twelve years old. As the novel begins, he is returning to Jerusalem to find her—and, in the process, to reunite with his Jewish friend, Reuben, with whom he once studied in Antioch. As soon as he arrives, Philemon is thrust into the conflict engulfing Jerusalem. Reuben is a leader of the Hellenistic Jews and is actively working with Antiochus IV to eliminate Jewish ritual and worship for good. Two of Judith's siblings—her brother Paul and her sister Angela—are among Reuben's most loyal followers, while her oldest brother, Hosah, is a leader of the pious Jews. Judith, who is only thirteen years old when the novel begins, is solidly within Hosah's sphere of influence.

As Philemon searches for Judith, he learns more about her strange and violent religion. Somewhat implausibly, Philemon has read many of the Jewish scriptures in the libraries at Antioch, but he has had little personal experience with the Jewish people. At the end of the first chapter, he watches helplessly as a Jewish crowd stones to death a man who has trespassed on ground considered sacred. He gets a close view of the "religious fanaticism in the seed of Abraham,"[23] and he is repulsed by it—as are many of the city's educated and secular Jews. Nonetheless, because he loves Judith, he tries to remain neutral in the internecine conflict developing around him. Finally, Judith's sister, Angela (the Greek name that she uses in place of her given name, Hepzibeth) tells Philemon that his studied neutrality will

soon become impossible. "When the trouble comes," she warns, "when Jew kills Jew—when brother murders his brother, mother denies her daughter, and father slays his own son—when all that comes—and it's coming—whose side will you be on?"[24]

This question initially perplexes Philemon, but, in the end, he answers it by default. When he rescues Judith from the High Priest Menelaus—a Hellenist favorite who intends to rape her—Philemon is imprisoned, renounced by his Hellenist friends, and embraced by the pious Jews, who soften to the idea of his marrying Judith provided he undergo baptism and circumcision and become a Jew himself. By this time, Judith completely returns his affections. However, as Antiochus IV's persecutions become intolerable, and the Maccabean rebellion breaks out in the mountains, the happy (and the not-so-happy) festivities must be postponed. Through a combination of his passion for Judith and the whims of circumstance, Philemon finds himself a foot soldier in the revolutionary army of Judas the Maccabee. He has become a partisan in support of a religion that he does not accept. And he must fight to the death to support beliefs and practices that he finds reprehensible.

Most of us, of course, will never be in a situation quite like this. But if we take away the elements that make *The Island of the Innocent* a romantic adventure story, we are left with a conflict that many people in religious organizations today will find distressingly familiar. People today affiliate with religions for many reasons that do not include genuine conversion: family obligations, marital accommodation, social expectations, and so on. Many times these other motivations work in tandem with our belief structures. But sometimes—especially in the cultural regions that surround the intellectual diaspora—they do not. And this can produce a profound cognitive dissonance among those who, for reasons that they do not entirely control, find themselves unable to end their affiliation with a religious community whose core beliefs they reject or even despise. For the last third of the novel, Philemon struggles with precisely this kind of cognitive dissonance and works to create a philosophy to reconcile his behaviors and his beliefs.

To accomplish this reconciliation, Philemon reframes his affiliation with Judaism as an intellectual, rather than a religious connection, and he invokes three arguments to justify his participation. First, in an internal monologue, he separates the practical good that Judiasm does as a religious community from any evaluation of its truth claims. "There was treasure here," he told himself while observing a Sabbath meal. "Possibly mixed with it was much that was superstitious and evil; but there was good here and it was this good, this enrichment of hope, patience, and faith that Reuben and Angela would throw away, along with the tiresome nonsense in Leviticus."[25] Second, in a conversation with the Hellenizers, he argues that the unique doctrines of Judaism, while certainly not true, at least provide a better moral framework than other doctrines:

> To believe in something higher and nobler than self . . . is to organize some kind of harmony—into an orderly and self-regulating power. It makes no difference at all, as I see it, whether there is a god—and of course there is not—as long as the idea of god serves the interests of harmony and design. All people but Jews have many gods; and they also have confusion, lack of symmetry and design and purpose, which is always found when there is no core, no center of control. Jews, with what seems to be superlative, even if unconscious, wisdom have refused to accept that disorder.[26]

When the Hellenizers call him out for promoting a religion that he knows to be false, Philemon makes his third major argument: that nothing is actually more true than anything else, so it doesn't really matter what one believes, as long as it works for the person doing the believing. "Who . . . can say what is false and what is not? Can any man?" he asks his companions before launching into a suspiciously modern defense of moral relativism:

> If we wait to be sure that a thing is right before casting our lives with it we'll never risk our lives for anything. Much of what Hosah believes is ridiculous to me but it serves him. Now he lies a beast in a cave, starving, but willing to die rather

> than renounce what is truth for him. And I find that good. Or I'd put it this way. . . . There's no God—we all agree on that; but in every man there is a god. If the man wants to think that his god is a being or power somewhere out in space I can see no harm in it—or if he wants to think it is his own conscience or his own self-consciousness. As long as he has an idea that controls the caprices and tyrannies and impulses that would make him their slave.[27]

Philemon's moral reasoning here is hopelessly inappropriate for the time and the place of *The Island of the Innocent*. In the first place, the conflict between the Hellenists and the Hassidim is more political than religious. The pious Jews want the right to impose a harsh theocracy on everybody in the community—and the right to stone infidels to death in the public square. The Hellenizers, on the other hand, want to make circumcision a capital offense and place a statue of Zeus in the temple. Philemon's bland moral relativism—what we might today call "Benign Whateverism"—has very little to offer to either side. Philemon has been thrust in the middle of an epic cultural clash that cannot be resolved by simply letting everybody live by the truths that work for them.

But Philemon's program can work for those of us who, unlike Philemon and Judith, do live in pluralistic, secular societies. The basic steps that Fisher outlines through Philemon's intellectual journey—separating a religion's truth claims from its practical value, focusing on the positive social and familial aspects of a religious community, and rejecting the existence of any absolute truth upon which to ground religious belief—have actually made it possible for generations of non-believers to participate in religious communities. They are, I would argue, among the most important tools available for members of an intellectual diaspora (Mormon or otherwise) who want to maintain connections to their religion and its culture, whether through personal participation in activities and rituals, through ties to loved ones and family members, or through public confession in the form of art or literature.

A Goat for Azazel: **Religion as Research**

The ninth novel of the *Testament of Man* begins on the night of July 19th in the year 64 CE—the night that Rome burned. As the story begins, the protagonist, a fourteen-year-old Roman boy named Damon, has been invited to attend a banquet given by the Emperor Nero. As the banquet progresses, the guests begin to hear rumors of a fire, and Damon rushes out to find his mother, who had converted to Christianity, the strange new religion said to be responsible for setting the fire in order to hasten the return of the Lord. Damon finds his mother dancing ecstatically with other Christians as Rome burns. She is so consumed by spiritual ecstasy that she does not recognize her only son. A few days later, however, his mother is among the Christians arrested for arson and sentenced to burn, and Damon tries, naïvely, to save her life. "What happened then," Fisher tells us, "he was to spend a lifetime trying to understand":

> She was enveloped in flames! An incredible thing then happened and Damon was to ask himself many times if he saw it clearly. Though the flames had risen to her breast she seemed not to be suffering at all. She was smiling at him. . . . His mother's whole face seemed to Damon to be radiant, to be suffused with a light not of this world. . . . She made no effort at all to free herself; she kept her gaze fixed on the heavens, looking for her Savior and Lord. This life did not matter, she said. My son, be brave, she said to him. And there she died.[28]

Thus begins Damon's lifelong quest to understand the last moments of his mother's life. "What was it in this new faith that crowned a person with such nobility in her last moments of agony?"[29] This quest lasts from the first night of the great fire in the year 64 until his death almost fifty years later, when he is trampled to death by a mob while witnessing the death of another Christian martyr.[30] It takes him throughout the Roman world, to the pockets of Christians in Rome, Antioch, Corinth, Athens, and Alexandria. And it introduces him to many of the figures who shaped Christianity during its first and second generations,

including two of the authors of the New Testament: the formidable pedagogue Luke and the venerable apostle John. In each location, Damon encounters interlocutors who are able to discuss Christianity at great length and with perfect objectivity. From the literary perspective, this does not make for a great novel. *A Goat for Azazel* has less plot, and more philosophical discussion, than any other volume of *The Testament of Man*. What little story the novel has serves only as a scaffold for a 368-page history lesson—including more than fifty pages of notes at the end.

Read as a history lesson, however, *A Goat for Azazel* is not without interest. In his fifty years of traveling, Damon encounters two constant themes. First, every group of Christians has its own doctrines and its own distinct understanding of Jesus Christ. Some believe Christ to have been a mortal who became a god, others saw him as a god who became a mortal. Some insisted that he was crucified by the Jews or the Romans just a few years into his ministry, while others believed that he died in bed after living a long and happy life. There is no central authority, no consistent doctrine, no common vocabulary, and no consistent idea of what it means to be a Christian.

The second thing that Damon discovers is that practically nothing that any Christian believes is unique to Christianity. The idea of a Savior-God exists throughout the ancient world. Jesus is a reconfiguration of the Greek hero Jason. The Virgin Mary is based on the Egyptian goddess Isis. The figure of Satan comes from the Zoroastrian counter-deity Ahriman. Much of the proverbial wisdom that Matthew puts into the mouth of Jesus comes from Buddha, Lao Tzu, and the other great sages of the ancient Far East. And the most distinctive Christian doctrine of all—the belief that Christ died to atone for the sins of those who accept him—comes straight from the Hebrew ritual of the scapegoat. In this ritual, which gives the novel its title, the priest designates one goat for the Lord and one for the demon Azazel. The Lord's goat is sacrificed, while the goat for Azazel is loaded with the sins of the people and sent into the wilderness.[31] As Damon interviews Christian after Christian, he discovers that the only doctrine that

unifies them is that Jesus Christ somehow became the human equivalent of Azazel's goat.

At the end of the novel, Damon settles down to raise a family and write a book about Christianity. Years pass before he hears that Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch whom he had met years earlier, has been arrested and taken to Rome to be tried and (most likely) executed. He decides to follow the soon-to-be martyr to "see if his faith sustains him the way it sustained my mother."[32] Damon becomes part of the crowd that watches Ignatius travel from Antioch to Rome in the custody of Roman soldiers, addressing Christians at every stop. He watches as a patient Roman captain tells him that he can go free if only he will swear loyalty to Caesar. When he refuses, he is condemned to die by fire. As Damon watches him burn to death while frenzied spectators cheer, he experiences a sympathetic conversion to Christianity:

> Damon could look for only a moment at the horrible sight. The flames had completely enveloped him, There was fire in his hair and beard. He was there, he was not bound and he had not moved. Damon then forced himself to look once again at the faces that were not human and he hated them and he recognized in this moment that he was a Christian, as he would have been a Jew if he had been present when the holy city was sacked; as he would be in any situation of torture what was dearest on earth to the one tortured. Was that not what it all meant?[33]

Moments later, the crowd tramples Damon to death while he is pondering his connection to the dying Bishop of Antioch.

The final chapter of *A Goat for Azazel* consists almost entirely of passages from Damon's book about Christianity read by his son. In it, Damon shares the fruits of a lifetime of research. The book documents the rise of Christianity from a "mystery cult, offering salvation by supernatural means" to a "sacramental cult, which then took Greek ideas into its doctrines." It explains how the Christian cult almost immediately fragmented into mutually exclusive regional cults. And it painstakingly traces the pagan myths that became part of the Jesus story: "they have their Lord resurrected from a rock tomb, like Mithra; turn water into wine,

like Dionysus; walk on the waves, like Poseidon; lie in a manger, like Ion; come to birth in a stable, like Horus; and from a virgin mother, as with all the gods."[34]

We find nothing in Damon's book that confirms his end-of-life affirmation of Christianity—except for the fact that he wrote it, and that he spent most of his life trying to understand Christianity, which is itself an affirmation. And he never comes to a satisfactory answer. His book explains the history of Christianity and the development of its doctrine, but it captures nothing about the extraordinary faith of the Christian martyrs. But Damon is part of an intellectual diaspora precisely because he feels compelled to understand his mother's religion on its own terms—and to comprehend something remarkable about it that he has seen but that he cannot explain away.

And so it has always been with the writers of the Mormon diaspora—those who have rejected much of Mormon doctrine, practice, or culture, but who have been driven to study it and write about it for much of their lives. This includes figures such as Virginia Sorensen, who became an Anglican but wrote a half a dozen novels about both historical and contemporary Mormonism.[35] It includes Juanita Brooks and Maurine Whipple, who suffered the ostracism of their fellow Saints for their historical and fictional writings about controversial elements of Mormon history,[36] and Samuel Taylor, who wrote such classics as *Nightfall at Nauvoo*, *Family Kingdom*, and *The Kingdom or Nothing* largely to understand the Church that excommunicated his father.[37]

And it includes Vardis Fisher, who wrote the world's first serious treatment of the Mormon story in fiction—a book that, he would later say, he wrote because he "wanted to come to terms with Mormonism."[38] Until Fisher published *Children of God* in 1939, the Mormon image in American literature consisted of sensationalistic pulp novels and ribald satires.[39] And though Mormons condemned Fisher at the time for naturalizing Mormon origins and humanizing Mormon prophets, literary historians now realize that Fisher's novel broke new ground simply by taking Mormonism seriously—and making it possible for others to do the same. Within three years of *Children of God*'s extraordinary successful release,

mainstream presses had published no fewer than eight more works of serious, Mormon-themed fiction—including breakthrough first novels by Virginia Sorensen, Paul Bailey, and Maurine Whipple.[40]

Like so many of his creations, Vardis Fisher struggled to understand the religion and culture that produced him and sustained his loved ones. This impulse led to *The Tetralogy* and *Children of God* in fairly obvious ways. But it also led to the *Testament of Man* series that he considered his masterpiece—in which characters such as Philemon in *The Island of the Innocent* and Damon in *A Goat for Azazel* dramatize the central conflict of the Mormon diaspora in the middle of the twentieth century: how can one remain intellectually and creatively consumed by religious beliefs and practices that one has largely, or entirely, rejected? This was perhaps the central question for the Mormon writers of Fisher's generation. And it remains a crucial question for many people in the large and increasingly diverse world of Mormonism today.

Notes

1. See Tim Woodward's *Tiger on the Road: The Life of Vardis Fisher* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1989), 12–13 for a discussion of the early critical reception of Fisher's Antelope novels.

2. For a summary of the enthusiastic critical responses to Fisher's *Tetralogy*, see the unsigned pamphlet *Vardis Fisher: A Critical Summary*, published by the Caxton Printers in 1939, 8–11.

3. *Children of God* was Fisher's first bestselling novel and was awarded the 1939 Harper Prize, given biannually for excellence in fiction, which carried a monetary award of $7,500 (about $126,000 in 2013 dollars). In contrast, John Steinbeck, who won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction the same year for *The Grapes of Wrath*, received $1,000.

4. *The Mormon Experience* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 330.

5. The term "Lost Generation" was borrowed from the term that Ernest Hemingway used to discuss the American expatriate writers in Paris during the 1920s. Geary's paper was first presented in the second annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters in 1977. "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s" was published in *BYU Studies* 18, no. 1 (1978):

89–98 and has since been reprinted several times and become a standard starting point for the construction of a Mormon literary canon.

6. Bernard DeVoto, "Millennial Millions" (*Saturday Review of Literature*, August 26, 1939), 14.

7. See John Milton's interview with Vardis Fisher in *Three West: Conversations with Vardis Fisher, Max Evans, and Michael Straight* (Vermillion, S.Dak.: Dakota Press, University of South Dakota, 1970), 1–45; see especially page 4.

8. Leonard J. and John Haupt Arrington, "The Mormon Heritage of Vardis Fisher," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 1 (1977): 28.

9. Opal Laurel Holmes, "Vardis Fisher Was Not a Mormon," press release, Vardis Fisher collection, Boise State University, n.d. (ca. 1979).

10. The four novels of the *Tetralogy* are *In Tragic Life* (1932), *Passions Spin the Plot* (1934), *We Are Betrayed* (1935), and *No Villain Need Be* (1936). All were published jointly by Caxton Printers of Caldwell, Idaho and Doubleday, Doran & Co. of New York, with Caxton serving as the first edition of record. In 1960, he published his fifth autobiography, *Orphans in Gethsemane* (Denver: Alan Swallow), which revises and extends the material in the earlier four. On the off chance that some readers did not find this sufficiently confusing, the paperback publisher of *Orphans in Gethsemane*, Pyramid Books, divided it into two parts: *For Passion, for Heaven* and *The Great Confession*, both published in 1962.

11. *We Are Betrayed* (New York: Pocket Books, 1953), 28.

12. The first five books of *The Testament of Man* were published by Vanguard Press in New York, which dropped the series in 1948 because of its consistently poor sales. The next two books were published by Abelard Press, also of New York, in 1951 and 1952. Though Abelard had originally agreed to publish the rest of the series, they refused to publish the seventh book, *Jesus Came Again*, in 1953, citing fears that a book that explicitly denied the divinity of Jesus Christ was too controversial for them to publish. Fisher approached his friend, Jim Gipson at Caxton Printers, who had published the *Tetralogy* novels when New York publishers had rejected them. But Caxton also refused to publish *Jesus Came Again*. The book languished without a publisher until 1956, when Denver publisher Alan Swallow agreed to publish it and the rest of the *Testament of Man* series. See Woodward, 180–88.

13. Woodward, 160.

14. The Revisionist Press of New York, an academic press that specialized in unrevised dissertations, published a series on Vardis Fisher in the 1970s. Among the titles it produced entirely or partially about *The Testament of Man* are Alfred

K. Thomas's *The Epic of Evolution, Its Etiology and Art: A Study of Vardis Fisher's Testament of Man* (1973); Doris C. Grover's *A Solitary Voice: Vardis Fisher* (1973); George F. Day's *The Uses of History in the Novels of Vardis Fisher* (1976); and *The Past in the Present: Two Essays on History and Myth in Vardis Fisher's* Testament of Man (1979). In addition to these titles, Joseph M. Flora's dissertation at the University of Michigan in 1962, "Vardis Fisher's Story of Vridar Hunter: A Study in Theory and Revision," deals at least partially with *The Testament*.

15. Marilyn Trent Grunkemeyer, "An Anthropological View of the *Testament of Man*," in Joseph M. Flora, ed., *Rediscovering Vardis Fisher* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 2000),165–66. The "perduring male fantasy" that Grunkemeyer refers to is "a fantasy that the past was a universal matriarchy that was overcome by universal patriarchy." This transition from matriarchy to patriarchy is indeed an important part of the series, and especially of its third, fourth, and fifth books. However, it is at least arguable that Fisher did not intend to portray either the matriarchy or the patriarchy as "universal"—but to represent, instead, the specific development of the group of people who ended up becoming the Hebrews.

16. Fisher explains his research for the *Testament* in some detail in the essay "Comments on His Testament of Man Series" in his book of occasional writings, *Thomas Wolfe as I Knew Him and Other Essays* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1963), 64–78.

17. Joseph M. Flora, *Vardis Fisher* (New York: Twayne, 1965), 75.

18. Woodward, 161.

19. Fisher, "Comments," 75.

20. In the fourth chapter of *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold describes "Hebraism and Hellenism" as two universal dispositions that reached a sort of perfection in the cultures for which they are named. "The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are; the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience." See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, edited by Jane Garnett (Oxford University Press, 2006), 97.

21. Fisher does not use the term *Hasidim* to describe the conservative Jews in *The Island of the Innocent*. The term, though, is often used in discussions of the period, including Alfred K. Thomas's 1973 study of *Testament of Man*.

22. Vardis Fisher, *Island of the Innocent* (New York: Abelard, 1952), 1.

23. Ibid., 13.

24. Ibid., 96.

25. Ibid., 238.

26. Ibid., 264.

27. Ibid., 266.

28. Vardis Fisher, *A Goat for Azazel* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1956), 22–23.

29. *Azazel*, 24.

30. The text dates Damon's death by placing it "in the Fifteenth Year of Trajan's reign," or approximately 113 CE (*Azazel*, 295).

31. See Leviticus 16:8–10.

32. *Azazel*, 294.

33. Ibid., 299.

34. Ibid., 303.

35. Virginia Sorensen's Mormon-themed books include the novels *A Little Lower than the Angels* (New York: Knopf, 1942), *On This Star* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946), *The Evening and the Morning* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt & Brace, 1949), *Many Heavens* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt & Brace, 1954), *Kingdom Come* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt & Brace, 1960). Mormonism also features prominently in her memoir, *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt & Brace, 1963).

36. Juanita Brooks's *Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950) was the first book-length study of one of the most controversial events in Mormon history; Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), which deals with polygamy, the colonization of Southern Utah, and (tangentially) the Mountain Meadows Massacre, remains one of the most important Mormon novels ever written.

37. Samuel Taylor (1907–1997) was the grandson of John Taylor, the third president of the LDS Church and the son of John W. Taylor, an apostle who was excommunicated in 1911 for continuing to practice polygamy after the Manifesto forbidding it. His historical works include *Nightfall at Nauvoo* (New York: MacMillan, 1971), a historical novel; *The Kingdom or Nothing* (New York: MacMillan1976), a biography of his grandfather; and *Family Kingdom* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), a biography of his father.

38. *Three West*, 11.

39. For an overview of the Mormon image in fiction before and after 1939, see my "'As Much as Any Novelist Could Ask': Mormons in American Popular Fiction" in *Mormons and Popular Culture*, Vol. 2, edited by Michael Hunter (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2013), 1–22.

40. Jean Woodman, *Glory Spent* (New York: Carrick & Evans, 1940); Paul Baily, *For This My Glory* (Los Angeles: Lyman House, 1940); Rhoda Nelson, *This Is Freedom* (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1940); Maurine Whipple, *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941); Lorene Pearson, *Harvest Waits* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1941); Hoffman Birney, *Ann Carmeny* (New York: Putnam, 1941); Elinor Pryor, *And Never Yield* (New York: Macmillan, 1942); and Virginia Sorensen, *A Little Lower than the Angels* (New York: Knopf, 1942).

Crossing the Planes: Gathering, Grafting, and Second Sight in the Hong Kong China International District

Stacilee Ford

Our strength lies in shifting perspectives, in our capacity to shift, in our "seeing through" the membrane of the past superimposed on the present, in looking at our shadows and dealing with them.[1]

Hong Kong, Dan Rather declared as he began his television coverage of the 1997 "handover" from British to Chinese sovereignty, "is Asia for beginners." That is what it was for me, although it has been my home now for more than twenty years. In all of that time and in all of my work on American culture in transnational contexts, considering how people are changed by their cross-cultural encounters, I have never written about Mormonism and its various crossings in Asia. Although I have no doubt that my beliefs infuse my professional work, as I thought about Asia in *my* Mormonism, trying to parse influences and see where the academic training and the Mormon upbringing inform one another became impossible. So I have given in to the blurring of boundaries and I embrace the amorphousness of what follows, but I warn the reader that it is a bit of pastiche: somewhere between an academic treatise, a class lecture, and a sacrament meeting talk. Fortunately, Hong Kong is and always has been, as historian Elizabeth Sinn notes, a "between place."[2] As a twenty-first century Latter-day Saint woman living in Asia, I am constantly reminded of the ways in which the crossings that take place today are in planes rather than across plains as they were in the nineteenth century.

My thoughts here are informed by my work in transnational American studies, which consider how "America" looks from the outside in, with a particular emphasis on the intersectionality of gender, national identity, and generation/history in Hong Kong as it is observed in women's narratives of their cross-cultural encounters. Although I am partial to a post-national/transnational view of the world (national identity is but one of many identifying threads in a particular individual or community in globality), clearly, notions of nationhood and national exceptionalism (particularly American and Chinese) still matter a great deal in Hong Kong and, I would argue, in much of Asia as well as elsewhere in the world.

Additionally, because national myths and values, particularly processes of Americanization, are, at times, still powerful influences shaping cross-cultural interactions in Hong Kong, within LDS congregations individual Church members often draw upon what they believe to be true about a particular nation or culture to affirm personal decisions or worldviews, including doctrinal opinions and/or spiritual core values. To use the nomenclature of gathering and grafting as it is deployed in the parable of the olive tree in the fifth chapter of Jacob in the Book of Mormon, each of us grafts our experiences onto our beliefs as we gather together in the larger communities in which we worship. Macro and micro histories are in constant tension and our pasts shape our present in profound but subtle ways. As borderlands studies scholar Gloria Anzaldua reminds us above, strength comes in "seeing through" the past, "looking at our shadows and dealing with them." Only when we understand what has been is it possible to truly shift our perspectives and change in ways that strengthen in the long term.

In Hong Kong, I have witnessed a number of Latter-day Saints in various stages of "seeing through" their pasts, grafting experiences onto belief (or vice versa) as they transit back and forth across the Pacific, gathering in various LDS congregations and imbibing elements of a host/national culture that often grafts onto a home/national culture. Their stories shed light on changes that have occurred over the past decades in both Hong Kong and

North America, particularly in terms of post-1965 immigration to the US and the "brain drain" from Hong Kong/greater China between the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in the PRC and the 1997 resumption of Chinese sovereignty marking the end of British colonialism in Hong Kong. Latter-day Saints in Hong Kong include members of the Asian diaspora who were born and raised in North America or in other western countries as well as children of the brain drain, which is now reversing as opportunities in Asia are on the rise.

The anecdotes and individual case studies discussed hereafter are suggestive of broad trends and demographic shifts in many parts of the world where Mormon congregations are becoming more diverse and increasingly dependent on diasporic souls as leaders as well as followers. They have been gathered via my own participant observation as a member of the LDS Church in Asia, email exchanges, and focused personal interviews conducted over the past two years. This exercise in narrative enquiry focuses on Latter-day Saints who are or were members of the Hong Kong China District (formerly known as the Hong Kong International District), the setting with which I am the most familiar and where I serve, currently, as a district Relief Society president. What follows is a glimpse of several individual "case studies" followed by a slightly more detailed discussion of one particular group of Church members in Hong Kong, domestic workers from the Philippine Islands.

The district is, to use Mary Louise Pratt's terminology, a contact zone, a place "where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[3] More specifically, Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, is both postcolonial and still beholden to a new hegemon in Beijing. It is also a site of American neocolonialism. Hong Kong is a unique backdrop for Latter-day Saint community formation. Mormonism, as an increasingly global religion, finds its way within the contact zone of Hong Kong in multiple ways.

I have argued elsewhere that there have been, historically, several types of "troubling" American women in the contact zone of Hong Kong. Sometimes troubling refers to ethnocentric, exceptionalist, or culturally insensitive behavior expressed by privileged American women (often, although not always, Caucasian) who express their views with particular confidence even though at times they may feel (or actually be) quite marginalized within Hong Kong society. The colonial mindsets that linger after the sunset of the British Empire in Asia often morph into expressions of American exceptionalism or neocolonialism in Hong Kong, which is still a very stratified society where "expatriate" and "local" populations often have frequent surface contact but little deep interaction.[4]

Although as Latter-day Saints we often think of ourselves as the literal or figurative descendants of poor and marginalized pioneer predecessors who crossed the desert plains in homespun simplicity, or we may feel the sting of persecution in our own lives as we defend particular principles or values, in postcolonial Hong Kong there are additional realities to consider. Most Americans who come to Asia to live and work are privileged rather than persecuted souls, crossing back and forth in jumbo jets rather than covered wagons. Many, if not most, have greater access to material wealth and opportunity than they would have had they stayed in the US. (Although there always have been and are, increasingly, affluent Chinese residents of Hong Kong—many of whom come from the Chinese mainland—as well as US citizens who are not particularly affluent, a majority of Americans who are most visible at church still earn high salaries and enjoy varied benefits such as club memberships, school subsidies, and opportunities for travel, although at reduced levels when compared to the pre-1997 era.)

As the memory recedes of both British colonialism in Hong Kong and Western imperialism in China, and there is talk of the "rise of China" in media coverage, there is a lingering awareness of—and aversion to—those who continue to exhibit colonial attitudes. For that reason, utterances that reflect Mormon and/ or American exceptionalism at Church (which are generally well-meaning albeit annoying to those who are recipients of what I call "the pedagogical impulse") can be somewhat alienating or

divisive even though interactions generally remain cordial. In fact, my book on the pedagogical impulse, and on the intersection of gender and American exceptionalism in Hong Kong, had its genesis in a moment when a Japanese sister at church asked me with genuine curiosity, "Why is it that American women are always trying to teach me something?" The divide in our Hong Kong LDS community is, unfortunately, widened by the fact that Cantonese-speaking and English-speaking congregations meet separately. The original purpose of forming a separate district in Hong Kong was to give all non-Cantonese speaking Latter-day Saints a place to worship and serve (there is a small Mandarin Chinese-speaking branch in addition to the English branches) but an unfortunate outcome of this partitioning is the limiting of interactions across linguistic (and often cultural) difference.

Although my published work to date has focused on women's narratives of cross-cultural encounter, it is not just American women who manifest strains of exceptionalism or take a teaching tone with others. American men can exhibit exceptionalist attitudes of various types as well. And for both women and men, the mode of exceptionalism can often boomerang back at the "folks back home" (in Western societies) who are seen to be less cosmopolitan in their views. One example of this boomerang exceptionalism within the LDS cohort in the greater China region is the "Mormon China hand" phenomenon that I have written about elsewhere. These individuals are men (and a few women) of various generations, ethnic identities, and cultural backgrounds who are deeply and personally invested in the people, cultures, and languages of Asia, particularly China.[5] While they are a highly diverse lot, they do share certain common traits: all served (or are related by birth or marriage to those who served) Chinese-speaking missions (most in Taiwan or Hong Kong although there are in the younger cohort those who have been sent to Mandarin- or Cantonese-speaking missions elsewhere); all enthusiastically embrace the effort to help "build the kingdom" in Asia, and many have returned to the greater China region to live, work, and teach. Those who have left Asia often maintain ties with China and Chinese culture in their professions and personal lives in the US and elsewhere.

Because many of these individuals are confident sharing their insider knowledge of a place and society they have come to know and appreciate, at times their rhetoric morphs with that of earlier generations of those who sought to "save China" in various ways. Such individuals are the latest in a long line of Americans who have grafted national onto religious identities in their experiences in the region. At work or at church they thrive on bridging cultural difference, seeking to fill gaps in others' knowledge. Predictably, they articulate a range of ideological and political perspectives as they bridge. Some sound to me like throwback Cold Warriors saddened by the "loss" of China to the Communists, while others are anxious to move American attitudes out of the past and into globality. All are keen to counter China bashing in the US.

Some "Mormon China hands" have attracted significant national and international attention in speaking about the Sino-US encounter in the contemporary moment. The most visible manifestation of the LDS-affiliated pedagogical impulse was on display in the 2012 Republican Primary debates when the two Mormon presidential candidates locked horns over the question of Sino-US relations. John Huntsman reprimanded Mitt Romney—in the Mandarin Chinese he learned on his LDS mission to Taiwan—for his naivety about life in the "New China." Branding Romney as naïve and out of touch with changes taking place in China—Romney had already branded Huntsman as a traitor to the Republican Party for accepting President Barack Obama's appointment as Ambassador to China—Huntsman subtly manifested the missionary exceptionalism that I hear articulated from time to time at church.

My emphasis here, however, is on another definition of troubling: troubling as unsettling or changing assumptions about what has been seen as the institutional or communal norm. One unanticipated outcome of my research on American and "Americanized" women in Hong Kong over the course of the past two decades has been a greater awareness of the ways in which people of Chinese descent, particularly younger Chinese women who spent time in the US and then returned to Hong Kong to live or work or study, were seen as troubling when they "acted too American"

in Hong Kong society. (Grace Kwok's work on LDS women in Cantonese-speaking congregations in Hong Kong confirms this assertion in rich detail.[6]) Hong Kong is an ideal place to observe transnational and transcultural lives and manifestations of various identities (national, gender, ethnic, religious) and their connections to past events. It is where "old" and "new" Asia meet and the children of diaspora trouble and unsettle—in quiet but significant ways—monolithic narratives about Mormon identity in the contemporary world.

In her article, "How Conference Comes to Hong Kong," Melissa Inouye, who belongs to a family familiar with transpacific crossings in planes as well as in mindsets, captures what so many of us who live and worship in Hong Kong feel when she writes:

> Hong Kong is famous for its diversity and discontinuities. Its tiny borders create a crowded space for the confluence of wealth, poverty, tradition, transience, centrality, marginality, urban, rural, East, West, and nearly everything else. In Hong Kong, Mormonism comes into focus as a dynamic global religion in which powerful forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity exert themselves side-by-side.[7]

Inouye has argued, "While the administrative center of the LDS Church is unquestionably Salt Lake City, Mormonism has other centers and other peripheries." I would add that Hong Kong is a center within the periphery and that the Hong Kong China District is on the periphery of the Church in Hong Kong. By that I mean that the majority of Latter-day Saints (like the approximately 95 percent of the general population) who live in Hong Kong are Cantonese speaking and ethnically Chinese. But the small cohort of individuals who are members of the Hong Kong China District are actually an important community to consider in the development of Mormonism in globality. Many within this population belong to the Asian diaspora that has, for generations, been moving between nations, congregations, and social contexts, negotiating between home and host cultures as well as Wasatch Front and more localized expressions of Mormonism. These individuals are gatherers and grafters and exemplars of

"shifting perspectives/seeing through" the membrane of the past who trouble (in positive ways, I think) stereotypical definitions of Mormonism, gender, and national identity in both LDS and their respective Asian cultures. Some have US passports but many do not. All have been shaped by a church culture that is infused by certain aspects of American culture and values.[8] A few of their stories are briefly considered here, and they suggest the challenges and opportunities facing the LDS Church as it transitions from a North American to a global entity.

Complex Legacies: The Americanization of Hong Kong Latter-day Saints

I begin with the story of a woman who is highly articulate about the identity work she has had to do grafting experiences onto belief over time. She prefers that her real name be withheld and I will refer to her as Sharon. Born in 1967, the year the Star Ferry riots marked a watershed in local Hong Kong Cantonese-speaking identity (forcing colonial government officials to respond to local concerns), Sharon converted to Mormonism as a teenager, attended BYU Hawai'i from 1986-1988, then served a mission in Hong Kong and returned to Hawai'i where she finished her education and married. Sharon's story is one of multiple crossings via marriage (she married a Caucasian man who was born and raised in the Western US), education, and worship. Sharon and her biracial/bicultural children move between local and expatriate branches in Hong Kong depending on the circumstance. Sharon's older children are enrolled in a Cantonese-speaking seminary class, but the family attends Sunday meetings in an English-speaking, highly Westernized congregation.

Raised mostly by her paternal grandmother (her father was "left behind" in China), Sharon attended an all-female secondary school in Hong Kong. She describes her childhood environment as "female-oriented" —including the "portrait of Queen Elizabeth [that] was prominently displayed in every government office and on our currency." Countering Western stereotypes of Chinese culture as patriarchal, Sharon declares, "My grand-

mother and mother never/rarely taught me to be a submissive wife or anything to do with my role as a woman, unlike what I was taught in the Mormon Church. Instead much emphasis was placed on getting educated so I would be able to make a good living. Perhaps it was because Grandma and Mom always had to fend for themselves."[9] Sharon's experience runs contrary to that of many LDS women I have known in Asia who joined the Church because they found it a more benign patriarchy than that which they knew in their childhoods.[10]

Sharon appreciates the direction that an immersion in the LDS community provided. "I always thought I should try to get good grades and everything would work out. I never thought about my future beyond that. It was the Mormon Church that helped me 'map out' my future, put it in more concrete terms when I became a member at 15." Sharon realized that she would have to make some adjustments to the more "male dominated world" of the Church, but the tradeoffs seemed worth it and she describes herself as "happy to go along" as "after joining the Church, I felt like Americans, especially American Mormons had it all figured out." After all, she recalls, "they (the missionaries) seemed so pure and kind, and most of all the white American males were the ones that ran the Church. And of course Jesus looked white and so did Joseph Smith. . . . I felt like they had come to rescue this confused and poor Chinese girl!"[11] The use of the term "rescue" in Sharon's narrative is significant as it links to a larger postcolonial critique of Westernization and colonialism as processes that create hierarchies in settings where local populations were seen to be lacking and in need of direction from a more "enlightened" and "whitened" West.[12] Sharon says she does not believe that LDS missionaries or leaders intended to make her feel inferior in any way, but imbibing a gospel message in the British colonial context of Hong Kong (where American neocolonialism was a growing presence) had unintended consequences for her identity formation. She writes:

> I think I subconsciously felt inferior and confused about my ethnicity for years. I didn't consider myself Mainland Chinese

because I was born in a British colony and Communist China was seriously looked down on by Hong Kongers. They were the unfortunately patriotic and impoverished hillbillies. Sadly I wasn't able to find a term to describe my ethnicity other than the unofficial term "Hong Konger" which was not accepted by everyone. . . . Thanks to the Church, I was able to attend BYU-Hawaii. I became somewhat "Americanized" there and I suppose I liked it. And I still am glad that I had that experience. After being away for almost ten years, I moved back with my white American husband and a half-white little daughter. . . . I still cringe when I try to look back at the first ten years that I was back. Now that I'm in my mid-forties, I feel more secure about being a Chinese woman. . . . for the first time in a long time I feel at peace with my identity as a Chinese person. My sense of security comes from being more mature and not trying so hard to be anybody other than myself. I have started to accept my weaknesses and realize that I have probably lived more than half of my life already. I need to stop trying to be someone I'm not and really feel good about being me. By me, I mean me, not just as a Chinese person, a woman or a Mormon. I have issues with all three of those identities.[13]

For me, Sharon's story is a cautionary tale about the ways in which messages about spiritual and personal success were inflected by American exceptionalism and white privilege during Hong Kong's late colonial era. Her story reminds me of a Caucasian colleague at the university where I teach, who left the LDS Church after completing his missionary service in Hong Kong. He was deeply frustrated by the white supremacist attitudes he observed among companions and some leaders. He is one of several ex-Latter-day Saints I have met in Asia, who have, thanks to the preparation their LDS missions gave them, found deeply rewarding work and relationships in Asia, but who were unwilling to stay in the Church, in large measure, because of what they saw as its promotion of American exceptionalist rhetoric and US corporate cultural mores.[14]

Sharon has been able to find a way to stay in the fold. She believes that attitudes have changed to a significant extent in

recent years both in Salt Lake City and in Hong Kong, and she has become more comfortable negotiating between her past and her present as well as feeling more authentically herself at church. She speaks and writes in good-natured fashion about learning to "un-clutter" her mind by removing the negative messages she received at church about Chinese culture, or the subtle manifestations of white privilege she observed both on her mission and in various LDS congregations on both sides of the Pacific. Still, reading her narrative one notices the multiple legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism (and sub-ethnic tensions within what has come to be known as Greater China) those of us who worship in Hong Kong have inherited. For now, Sharon's conscious determination to "stop trying to be someone I'm not" means that she has become more comfortable with the disparate strands of her identity. She continues the process of un-cluttering her mind by acknowledging where exceptionalist or ethnocentric rhetoric may still have a subtle but significant impact on herself and her family.

Identity Work and the Asian LDS Diaspora

As Sharon's story illustrates, there are lessons in transnational and diasporic lives for a church that is, despite hopeful signs of going global, still seen as very American in its approach at times and still very white and male in terms of its most visible leadership. There are, of course, comprehensive training initiatives that reach from Salt Lake City to the grass roots of the Church throughout the world, empowering local leaders to make decisions that best benefit their local congregations. One sees the fruits of that effort in Hong Kong in both "local" and "expatriate" units. Not only is the membership of the Church now several generations deep in the local Cantonese-speaking wards and stakes, but in the Hong Kong China District, the small but growing Mandarin Branch I mentioned earlier is a fascinating site of multiple generations of Chinese sub-ethnic negotiating and community building. Ethnically Taiwanese, Hong Kong Chinese, and Mainland Chinese Latter-day Saints serve with Chinese American and Caucasian

members who have served Mandarin-speaking missions. The "Mormon China hands" of an earlier era are still present in this unit and in the district leadership, but they are joined by a younger cohort less conditioned by Cold War values and American exceptionalism and more comfortable with a multipolar world where China is a major player. Many are in cross-cultural marriages or studying and working in institutional settings where crossings and negotiations are happening each day as well as on Sundays.

On the subject of the rise of China and the growth of the LDS Church among those with ties to the Chinese mainland, there is much to be said that is beyond the scope of this paper. (It is difficult to say a lot of it, as Church leaders and PRC government officials have, for different reasons, erected what one friend calls an "electric fence" around China. Church leaders are keen to be respectful of the Chinese government's strict limitations on organized religion.) There are, however, increasing numbers of PRC-born Latter-day Saints who are baptized outside of China and engage in processes of gathering and grafting as they transit between home and host cultures where they live, work, and attend school. Because Chinese nationals and foreigners are not allowed to worship together in LDS congregations in China, Hong Kong is an important crossroads of religious acculturation for many of these individuals. One woman who is currently a member of the Mandarin Branch was born in the PRC and has lived in both the US and Hong Kong. She speaks of how her identity as an LDS Chinese woman shifts depending on where she is attending church. She jokes about the similarities between institutional hierarchies in Beijing and Salt Lake, and she laments that many of the men she sees serving in positions of leadership in the Church seem to lose their "flavor" [distinct personality] over time. But she acknowledges that it is not easy to try and serve so many different individuals from varied cultural contexts in ways that honor individuality and nurture unity. This same woman has, on a number of occasions, mediated on behalf of Mainland Chinese sisters in her Hong Kong branch with priesthood leadership at various levels, relaying women's concerns about everything from priesthood leadership styles to food at branch activities.[15]

Because Latter-day Saints who belong to the Asian diaspora cross cultures and continents, they learn to negotiate between familial, governmental, and ecclesiastical worlds on both sides of the Pacific. They exemplify anthropologist Aihwa Ong's notion of "Flexible Citizenship." Although Ong wrote about Chinese flexible citizens who transited back and forth across the Pacific in the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries, establishing multiple "homes" and shoring up security in the face of political and economic turmoil, I see the term as appropriate for those in our district (and elsewhere in the LDS Church) who come to live and work in Hong Kong from all over Asia, as well as those of Asian descent who have lived in North America or other Western nations prior to relocating to Hong Kong. (I hope I am not guilty of reinforcing pernicious model minority stereotyping when I say that living in Hong Kong has alerted me to the burden of representation borne by these flexible citizens. They, as Jessie Embry asserted about Asian Americans years ago, are constantly functioning as cultural bridges.)[16]

Flexible citizenship has historical antecedents that we don't often acknowledge at church. Although I appreciate messages from the pulpit encouraging all of us to think more about what we have in common than what divides us, I worry at times that our well-intentioned desire to foster unity in our church community breeds a certain historical amnesia, which can dull our sensitivity to the reasons why we aren't as unified as we might be. We all bear the legacies of our predecessors when we arrive at our meetinghouses each week, and being thoughtful about those legacies as we worship can pave the way for treating each other with more care and respect. As a people, I don't think that we have begun to appreciate the balancing act that many Latter-day Saints of Asian descent (particularly those who came of age during and shortly after World War II) have performed and continue to perform as they bridge between cultures and countries.

I am cognizant that many of those within the LDS Asian diaspora may not view themselves as doing anything particularly extraordinary as they demonstrate their flexible citizenship. For example, Lily Lew, who has lived in Hong Kong since 1992, is an

American-born Chinese woman who grew up in Queens, New York, graduated from Brigham Young University, and is the mother of four children and an active Church member who has served in various leadership capacities. She does as much cultural bridging as anyone I know. Yet she does not consider her negotiations between disparate personalities at church (or in other settings) as a burden. She writes:

> So, who exactly am I? I'm actually an amalgamation of different bits of circumstances that have come to form and shape and refine the woman that I am. I am literally a "chop suey" (mixed scraps) of a person. I am American, I am Chinese. I'm a New Yorker living in Hong Kong and a summertime Utah girl. I am a Mormon and I am Confucian. I am a localized expatriate and a tai tai [Chinese term for an economically privileged married woman]. I am a tiger mom, a helicopter parent and a mom that is okay with "whatever." I have a mother who barely speaks English and children who barely speak Chinese. Some say I am a bridge and maybe I am. I truly feel I not only enjoy the best of both worlds (East and West) but I am comfortable and unapologetic in either world. (Although, some may say I don't truly belong in their world.) The snapshot of me changes over time depending on the circumstances but the essence of me is I am a woman who is hopefully using the scraps of my experiences to piece together a quilt called life.[17]

Lew, like many flexible LDS citizens I know, cheerfully exhibits a high degree of comfort moving between people, places, and expectations. I would assert, however, that the balancing act is one that requires a significant amount of effort to sustain.

Works in Asian-American and ethnic studies affirm that individuals like Lily and Sharon who engage in multiple crossings and perform as cultural bridges shatter bifurcated notions of race as it has been constructed in the US. When historian Gary Okihiro asks, "Is Yellow Black or White?" he reminds us that some Asian-Americans have been, at times, able to pass as honorary whites in US society (or have been seen—for better or for worse—as smarter or more hard working than any other ethnic

group).[18] Yet just as (or more) often they have been grouped in white minds with non-whites and subjected to harmful stereotyping, seen as exotic and inscrutable, as academic or economic threats, or assumed to be submissive and silent.

Yet despite (or perhaps because of) these difficulties, these flexible LDS citizens have strengthened our community in a host of ways by choosing to "see through" the past and exhibit what African-American philosopher and writer W. E. B. DuBois called the gift of "second sight." They "see" as ethnically other in an institutional culture that has been (and still is in important aspects) predominantly Caucasian and shaped by European American mores, yet they are also fluent in the language and behaviors of that highly Americanized institutional culture. These flexible citizens have a unique relationship to historical events such as nineteenth- and twentieth-century exclusion laws, internment camps during World War II, Cold War anxieties, fear of the "rise" of Japan in the 1980s, and current anxieties about the rise of the "New China." Even those who have no historical memory of such difficulties themselves are often the children of parents or grandparents who were shaped by them. Like people of African descent in the US, many of these Latter-day Saints live a certain type of "two-ness" in their abilities to see from the margins of a particular community as well as to understand what is happening at the center.[19]

My own introduction to the performance of diasporic second-sightedness and the impact of the Asian diaspora on the LDS Church was through the cultural production (books, speeches, articles) of the late and understudied Chieko Okazaki, an early globalizer and counselor in the General Relief Society Presidency in the 1990s. I didn't appreciate the importance of Okazaki's life and works until we moved to Hong Kong. As I began to see the ways in which well-meaning but exceptionalist rhetoric manifested itself in Sunday School and Relief Society lessons, or in leadership training meetings in my own congregation (and in my own worldview), I began to appreciate Okazaki's frank but gracious promptings to move beyond processes of Americanization in the LDS community within and beyond the Wasatch Front.

Her clear conceptualization of a gospel culture that superseded national cultures, and her charge (to women particularly) to draw "circles that include rather than exclude" became central to my own negotiations between my past growing up in Utah and my present life in Hong Kong.[20]

Okazaki assumed multiple burdens of representation, modeling how a woman of Japanese-American ancestry could repeatedly confront racism and sexism in the post-World War II US (including in the LDS Church) and shatter stereotypes of the inscrutable and demure Asian female.[21] She graciously but firmly rebuked the ignorance, anxiety, smugness, and shame surrounding sensitive topics ranging from depression and abuse to racism and gender inequality. (When I listen to friends at church comment on how much they appreciate the global vision and inclusive rhetoric of leaders such as Elder Dieter Uchtdorf today, I enthusiastically concur but I can't help but think that Sister Okazaki was saying the same thing decades ago.) Not only was Okazaki a globalizer as well as a gatherer and grafter, she also gracefully bore a particular burden of representation over several decades, often very publicly. Her steely refusal to ignore the past but rather cheerfully "see through" it and the shadows it cast offered and continues to offer a blueprint for decolonizing Latter-day Saint mindsets and thinking beyond borders of various types; psychological as well as topographical.

Nearly two decades removed from Okazaki's experiences, Mormon Millennials in Asia are the product of diasporic pasts and the rapid expansion of technology, particularly social media. One example of this cohort is Michaela Forte, an undergraduate majoring in comparative literature at the University of Hong Kong. Michaela (like many of her contemporaries who have grown up in the contact zones of rising Asia) is the second-sighted and bi-cultural product of a Hong Kong Chinese mother and a Caucasian American father. She is, for me, an example of the young LDS women that *New York Times* reporters Jodi Kantor and Laurie Goodstein wrote about in early 2014 when they took stock of the LDS Church's decision to lower the age of missionary service for women and men.[22] While Michaela is excited about

her recent mission call to Australia, when she returns from her mission she plans to finish school and pursue an academic career. She wants to balance having a family and a professional life but she has some anxiety about how that will be perceived by others at church. She is a devoted daughter, sibling, and visiting teacher, active in the Young Single Adults program, a branch chorister, and a constant presence at set-up and clean-up time whenever she attends a church event. In short, she is as devout in her actions as she is passionate about her spiritual and educational seeking. She looks for role models in various places, including the Bloggernacle, and she is wondering how she and other women who work so hard at balancing their lives will fare when it is time to marry.

When she finished reading Joanna Brooks's memoir, *The Book of Mormon Girl: A Memoir of an American Faith*, Michaela said she appreciated Brooks's broad-minded perspective but she was keen to find her own place in the conversation. She reflects:

> There is no handbook that tells me how to be a good Mormon. There will be no handbook that tells me what I should do and when I should do it. However, perhaps there will be a blog entry or a book of some sort that tells me that there is more than one way to think, that there is more than one way to live this religion. What I want to hear is that we can be worthy temple [recommend] holders without being the cookie cutter Molly Mormons. What I want to hear is that I can return with honor even though I didn't go to "The Lord's School" [BYU], even if I dream to pursue a career while raising a family, even if I put my education above all other things in life. Because at least I have given it my best shot.[23]

Michaela's determination to craft an identity as an LDS woman that allows her to cultivate her intellectual gifts and maintain certain traditions will be a twenty-first-century version of Sharon's late-twentieth-century journey to find greater self-acceptance within LDS society. The challenges today are different and Michaela is using a variety of tools (scriptures, literature, social media and her own agency) to seek inspiration and direction. She is adamant about wanting to use the privilege she has been given to make a

difference in others' lives but she eschews a sense of "chosen-ness," as that seems to be too closely linked with the lingering strains of American exceptionalism that she has observed, and chafed at, at church. She muses:

> Perhaps this difference will only be me becoming a better person; perhaps it is making someone happy or preparing someone for baptism. I do not know. But if I can make a difference (one of my lifelong goals), then I am content and satisfied. At the end of the day, I have come to understand that I cannot control how the Mormon culture has unconsciously influenced or shaped me, yet by recognizing and acknowledging it, I have been given a second chance to decide and choose again, with as much conscious agency as I have and with the gift of the Holy Ghost.[24]

Sister Societies: LDS Foreign Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

Often, when one thinks of the Asian diaspora in the LDS community, Mormons of Japanese or Chinese descent spring most readily to mind. However, the bulk of the Hong Kong China District is made up of women from the Philippine Islands. This fact makes our district, arguably, the most gender-imbalanced entity of its type in the Church. It is comprised of approximately 1,800 members. About 1,350 are women (including young women) and 1,000 of the women are employed as foreign domestic workers, often referred to as "helpers," who have "crossed in planes" from the Philippines with a few dozen sisters from Indonesia and a small cohort from Nepal. In the early 1990s, as the International District was created to serve all non-Cantonese-speaking Saints in Hong Kong, domestic workers (many of whom were already meeting in separate units in local stakes) were given the choice to attend "regular family branches" (traditionally expatriate units on both sides of Hong Kong Harbor or in Discovery Bay; the Discovery Bay branch is a fully integrated unit where "helpers" and "expats" worship together although some domestic workers still choose to attend sister units on Hong Kong Island) or

one of four "Sunday" units (Island I and II branches meet on Hong Kong Island, Peninsula II meets in Kowloon Tong, and Peninsula III meets in Kwai Fong in the New Territories). A fifth branch, Victoria II, is comprised of five "weekday families" (smaller groups who attend the "Sunday block" meetings Tuesday through Saturday depending on their designated day off). Several years after the organization of the district, domestic workers were strongly encouraged to attend the "helper branches/sister branches" (the terms are not official but have become familiar monikers) where their unique needs could be better met. However, those who choose to remain in regular family units are not, generally, given callings or assigned home and visiting teachers. (More about the strengths and criticisms of these units and the policies that govern them hereafter.)

These special units comprised mostly of women are structured so that the Sabbath is a lively and rewarding but lengthy day of worship and fellowship for Latter-day Saint domestic workers and those who serve them. Sundays include a regular three-hour block of meetings, home and visiting teaching, Relief Society activities, and Family Home Evening. There are several differences between these and other LDS congregations. In addition to the large numbers of females in attendance, there are structural issues to reckon with in order to keep things running smoothly and to provide sisters with opportunities to learn and grow spiritually. With the approval of the area presidency, branch and district leaders seek to uphold official guidelines while adapting to particular circumstances. Women are called and set apart as executive secretaries/administrative assistants (names are often blended and/or used interchangeably), branch mission coordinators (with responsibilities similar to those of branch mission leaders), Sunday school superintendents or coordinators (with assistants rather than counselors and responsibilities similar to those of a Sunday school president/presidency) and as assistant membership clerks. They attend branch council meetings and constitute the bulk of the branch council.

There are other differences including various manifestations of charisma and creativity that are rare or non-existent in the more

stereotypically "expatriate" branches. In the sister branches, one is immediately granted acceptance and welcomed to participate in any and all meetings and activities. Testimony meetings are one of many examples of Melissa Inouye's aforementioned notion of heterogeneity within homogeneity. Women sometimes sing part of their testimonies and share intimate stories of their challenges with homesickness, culture shock, difficult living conditions (many literally sleep in closets or bathrooms, or share beds/bedrooms with young children), long work hours, and heavy caretaking/cooking/cleaning loads overseen by moody, controlling, or verbally (and sometimes physically) abusive employers. Generally speaking, domestic workers in Hong Kong experience social marginalization (they are denied full civil rights under agreements between their home governments and the Hong Kong government), and the pain of going for months or years at a time without visits with spouses, children, or other kin except for regular Skype chats and phone calls.

Occasions for expressions of individual and communal creative energy and pathos in these congregations are valued opportunities for women to step outside of their weekday routines and elevate their sense of self-worth as they worship, steeling themselves for the week ahead. Choir numbers, skits, and dance performances weave gospel principles with joyful recreation in often surprising ways. Visiting teaching conventions and Relief Society anniversaries are serious productions that reflect thoughtful preparation and practice and stunning displays of beauty on a budget. (Decorations, costumes, mementos, and comfort food are important elements of these events.) On these occasions, re-enactments of the Mormon pioneer trek along the North American frontier (complete with actual-scale representations of handcarts, jagged cardboard rocks, and imitation snow squirting out of bubble guns) conclude with comparisons between nineteenth-century American and present-day Asian pioneers, all of whom sacrificed for family and faith.

The importance of these celebratory and inspirational events becomes more apparent when one thinks about the sacrifices the sisters make to prepare and attend them. They are care-

fully choreographed attempts to balance uplifting messages with Church-approved recreation, given that this is the only day off the sisters will have all week. Generally speaking, when boundaries blur, leaders are kind and good-natured participant observers. (One branch's recreation of a popular reality television show, "Relief Society Fashion Model," joyfully presented modest yet stylish clothing for audience approval. It opened with a tribute to past Relief Society presidents and a lively dance to a hip-hop beat.) As a district Relief Society president, my initial desire (and a few early attempts) to "liberate" my Relief Society sisters who are already overburdened with the work of care from doing more stereotypically female domestic work at church quickly morphed into a desire to support and respect the ways in which they used domesticity as a creative outlet and an expression of self-determination. I still struggle to know how to best add value in these settings. My academic training and deep immersion in LDS culture in North America provides me with a certain set of tools to teach, but it has also made me keenly aware of how my own past inserts itself in ways that may limit rather than lift.

What I have learned in my calling, and have appreciated about many of the brethren with whom I work as well as the sisters we serve, is that we are all engaged in learning how to honor individual agency and inspiration as we follow Church protocol. The exercise of agency is evident as sisters come to various conclusions about what business/shopping they do on the Sabbath, how they calculate tithing given the fact that paychecks are often committed to pay debts or support needy family members before being cashed, and how those with children of their own uphold traditional models of LDS motherhood when they are raising other people's children *and* trying to long-distance parent their own. Our sisters who are domestic workers are, generally speaking, frequently infantilized or seen as sexual objects in Hong Kong society. As Church leaders we worry about how we can ensure that they feel like they are true equals on the Sabbath when they are anything but during the week. LDS families who employ domestic workers try to level the social asymmetry but even at church it is not uncommon to

see expressions of deference in conversation or self-segregation in seating arrangements or in social settings.

And how does history and culture graft onto the patriarchal leadership structure of these special needs branches in Hong Kong, given that there are so few priesthood holders available to serve in these units? The answer is complicated. I have observed that while many of our sister units are, in some respects, an apparent example of Mormonism functioning as a matriarchy, in reality, the few men who are called as leaders in these branches are regarded not just with admiration, but often obsequiousness. Yet they don't generally take advantage of the esteem and they minister to a dizzying list of temporal and spiritual needs. I have, I confess, seen a few male leaders exert what I consider to be an inordinate amount of power over certain aspects of their members' lives. Yet more often, I have observed (and many branch presidents confirm) that men who are called to preside in these branches (and their wives who cheerfully serve with them and must struggle to find their place in these special units) have developed a greater ability to trust these women—both their wives and those from a culture different from their own—and they see them as having greater capacities than they had appreciated previously. There is, of course, an asymmetry to the structure that can exacerbate gender imbalance and perpetuate the sorts of colonial mindsets and power structures that still exist in the Philippines and Hong Kong as well as sexist behaviors that are still too common in LDS congregations everywhere. As an LDS feminist I see the work we have yet to do in order to take women seriously as partners in leadership positions given an all-male priesthood structure. Yet there are also unique opportunities for pioneering a model for global Latter-day Sainthood that takes account of the complexities of gender, national, cultural, economic, and political dynamics while forming and nurturing a gospel-centered community.

One helpful academic study that informs my thoughts about our district in Hong Kong is Rhacel Parreñas's research on children of global migration. Parreñas argues that the outmigration of Filipina mothers may challenge traditional gender norms in the short term but reinforces them over time.[25] I would argue that one

observes both resistance to and accommodation for traditional gender roles within the LDS foreign domestic worker community. These sisters are living on their own in somebody else's residence, working as breadwinners who send their salaries back to husbands and children, but they are, in general, quite conservative in their attitudes towards women's issues and gender inequality. (I have been cautioned by more than one of them not to be "too radical" in my views about gender roles within the Church.) Yet I do think their performance of flexible citizenship extends to more flexible notions of gender role expression. To that end, more research needs to be done about how LDS families in both the Philippines and Hong Kong are forming various identities as their lives are shaped simultaneously by their religious beliefs, cultural codes, and experiences of migration.

There has been, since the arrival of a critical mass of domestic workers in Hong Kong, an ongoing debate about how to best serve these sisters within the LDS community. Some Church members and leaders worry about a marginalizing effect on them as they are cordoned off in their own units. Beau Lefler, an attorney, university lecturer, and member of the Discovery Bay Branch, where domestic workers are integrated into the small congregation, is one of a small cadre of Latter-day Saints involved in helping to expand civil rights for domestic workers in Hong Kong. He writes:

> So why do we place the Domestic Helpers in branches all by themselves? My first impressions are not positive: 1) we don't really need them for our branches to function (from a pure governance role—not spiritually function, which I realize should be the same but doesn't have to be), and 2) if women aren't running families, we don't really know what to do with them other than to group them together and we put them in charge of each other. We have a whole bunch of Mormon women who are here alone, and we want to do something with them that is helpful. Maybe it's good to think about the difference between two goals: 1) we want to create a spiritual environment for these women to grow and to support each other, and 2) how are we integrating them into a

church based on families if we keep them separate from all the families, while many of them are without their own families?[26]

What is of particular interest to me in this dialogue is that our current district president, Benjamin Tai, who is a Hong Kong-born, Western-educated (and highly Americanized) ethnically Chinese man, moves between various groups in this debate—and many others—carefully soliciting diverse opinions, integrating various perspectives, coloring inside the lines of Church guidelines, and expressing confidence that all Church members have the best of intentions as they present their seemingly disparate views. He argues:

> In my view, the purpose of church boundaries is not to cause grief, heartache and headache for members or those in leadership callings. I am just very glad that anyone is willing to come and spend 3+ hours of his or her day off with us. My only desire is to make sure that for those that come, we are organized appropriately so that they can get the most out of their time and that spiritual growth is fostered and temporal assistance, where required, can be administered in the best possible way. . . . Your continued thoughts and suggestions are welcomed and requested.[27]

President Tai and other leaders who are "flexible citizens" in their own right, are able to concurrently understand a highly Americanized corporate leadership structure *and* the local needs of the Church in Hong Kong. Completely fluent in several cultures (Hong Kong, American, and Wasatch Front LDS), Tai demonstrates a high tolerance for individual difference, institutional resistance, and a willingness to ask unconventional questions that are, surprisingly at times, met with a positive response. One example of this ability to navigate in a "glocal" manner is the recent decision to open the Hong Kong Temple once a quarter on Sunday afternoon so that domestic workers who cannot attend during regular hours of operation will not be denied access. While there is an ongoing debate about the best way to draw branch boundaries, there is general agreement on the need to cultivate more culturally and socio-economically sensitive mindsets as the Church in Hong

Kong continues to grow, particularly among outmigrant populations from other Asian countries.

The transnational stories of sisters who leave their homes and families in the Philippines to work in Hong Kong are a vital archive that needs to be consulted when understanding the growth of the LDS Church in rising Asia. Likewise, their voices within the Asian diaspora provide evidence of the transition from an American to a global institutional culture. Church leaders struggle to know how to best counsel sisters who, in an institutional framework that favors traditional family norms, simply feel they have no choice but to leave their children in others' care in order to provide for them.[28] As Marissa Carino Estipona, an LDS domestic worker from the Philippines (a flexible citizen who has worked in Hong Kong, Beijing, and recently immigrated to Canada) writes:

> These are very sensitive/tender "things" when it comes to how or when is the best time to make comments/talks or even just a mere questions about all or even about each of them. Maybe because as much as we all wanted to be with our loved ones/families . . . we simply just couldn't afford it! Meaning . . . we couldn't bear to see our family go hungry, our children not to go to school etc.[29]

Like many of her compatriots, Marissa has known the sting of separation from her husband and son but she believes she made a difficult but necessary choice. She appreciates LDS friends, Church meetinghouses, and the temple for providing her places of refuge from her difficulties; however, she has been offended by Church members she felt didn't understand her decision to leave her family. She notes that she was "very lonely" when she worked in Beijing as she was "the only Filipino LDS there at that time." Without a community of supporting sisters like she had in Hong Kong she says it was inevitable that "most of the members were just in their usual hi's and hello's and the rest seemed like I didn't exist at all!" One sister, she recounted, "instead of saying How are you ? She asked me . . . Is it worth it? (She meant me working as a Domestic Helper and being away from family.) I responded . . . Everything is worth it for my family! That was her way of greet-

ing me?" Marissa's experience is one of many examples domestic helpers share of their views about well-meaning members who are seen as passing judgment rather than offering support. Marissa generously credited the woman as trying to be helpful but said she felt that perhaps this particular American sister simply hadn't known the sort of poverty she and most other domestic workers had known. Marissa and many others in similar situations have, for the most part, continued to take comfort in what sustains them at church. They don't generally expect more privileged members to relate to their situations but they are deeply appreciative of those who reach out to them in various ways. They are, nearly always, endlessly kind to all members they worship with each week, even those they feel are judgmental, and they are confident that the decisions they make are the ones the Lord wants them to make for themselves and their families. Their flexible citizenship in the "nation" of the LDS Church gives them a firm belief in personal revelation and as they exercise their agency, they selectively jettison messages that contradict what they believe to be inspiration.

Conclusion

The contemporary crossings in planes that bring Latter-day Saints to and from Hong Kong translate into varied narratives and personal "pioneer treks" grafting belief onto experience and negotiating between identities, desires, and expectations. The contact zone of the Hong Kong China District is a space between East and West, similar to the spaces that Laurie Maffly-Kipp has written about in her work on transpacific connections in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[30]

Then and now, the "brain drains" associated with migration and diaspora have been brain gains for the urban Church in many countries. Crossings were made for evangelism, education, or enterprise, and sometimes more than one at the same time. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century sojourns echoed their nineteenth-century

predecessors. Today, the work of "gathering and grafting" helps to "hasten the work" of globalism as well as salvation.

Notes

1. Gloria Anzaldua, ed., *Haciendo Caras: Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), preface.

2. See Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), introduction.

3. Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991), 33–40.

4. See Stacilee Ford, *Troubling American Women: Narratives of Gender and Nation in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

5. Stacilee Ford, "Brother Romney and Brother Huntsman: Mormon Manhood and the China Question" (paper presented to the American Studies Network, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, China, September 2012).

6. See Kwok Ka Yi, Grace, "Mormon Women's Identity: The Experiences of Chinese Mormon Women" (MA thesis, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong, 2012).

7. Melissa Inouye, "How Conference Comes to Hong Kong," http://www.patheos.com/blogs/peculiarpeople/2013/03/how-conference-comes-to-hong-kong/ (accessed March 4, 2013).

8. There is a growing body of scholarly writing on this subject. The following is a sampling of scholarship; each has helpful bibliographies for readers who wish to dig more deeply. In addition to the previously-cited work on Hong Kong by Melissa Inouye, see Inouye, "The Oak and the Banyan: The 'Glocalization' of Mormon Studies," in *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (2014): 70–79. See also Wilfried Decoo, "In Search of Mormon Identity: Mormon Culture, Gospel Culture, and an American Worldwide Church," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 6: 2–52; and Kristine Haglund, "We'll Find the Place: Situating Mormon Studies," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 6: 96–102.

9. "Sharon" (name changed), email to Staci Ford, February 2014, printout in my possession. She and I have also had several conversations over the past two years and the excerpts from her essay are similar to other thoughts she has expressed on those occasions.

10. For a more nuanced discussion of Asian and Asian-American LDS women's attitudes towards patriarchal relationships in familial, social, and religious contexts, see Melissa Inouye, "Culture and Agency in Asian Mormon Women's Experience in North America and the Rise of Global Mormonism," in Kate Holbrook and Matthew Bowman, eds., *Mormon Women in Historic and Contemporary Perspectives* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming). My limited contact with missionaries I speak with here suggests that in Hong Kong and in the region generally, they are operating under the assumption that Mormonism offers a traditional family structure (which is familiar and appealing in various Asian societies) without the extreme authoritarianism of certain cultural contexts. I would argue, however, that because of Hong Kong's unique position as a crossroads of culture, compounded by the gender role flattening of the Cultural Revolution in mid-to-late-twentieth-century China, attitudes towards "tradition" and gender and family are more complex and need to be parsed more carefully.

11. "Sharon," February 2014.

12. There are multiple studies in postcolonial, ethnic, and gender studies as well as cultural studies that discuss this issue. One that specifically addresses the Hong Kong context is Gina Marchetti's chapter, "White Knights in Hong Kong: Love is a Many-Splendoured Thing and The World of Suzie Wong," in *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 109–24.

13. "Sharon," February 2014.

14. During my time in Hong Kong I have become acquainted with a small group of "ex-LDS" returned missionaries who cultivated a deep love for Chinese languages and cultures while on their missions but felt like Church leaders—both local and in Salt Lake City—were reifying rather than confronting racism and promoting American exceptionalism. HC was a missionary serving in Hong Kong during the mid-1960s. He discussed his journey away from active membership noting that the process was one that happened over the course of several years. He often asked himself the question, "Do I remain a kind of liberalizing force within the institution, or do I go out totally alone to redesign who I am completely from scratch? . . . The mission helped me make that decision because there was so much racism. I was on the mission at least in part to try and get the testimony that wasn't there. I stopped wanting it. . . . My first companion in the taxi on the way home from the mission home verbally abused the taxi driver. . . . He was supposed to be a model of good language. With his fanaticism came this disgusting way of talking to Chinese people. . . . I don't know which I'm more embarrassed by, Mormonism or Americanism."

15. Interview with "Su-Mei" (name changed), Hong Kong, October 2013. Transcript in my possession.

16. Although the notion of cultural bridging is discussed frequently in Asian-American and diaspora studies, there has been little written about it specifically in the LDS context. Notable exceptions are the work of Melissa Inouye (cited previously) and Jessie L. Embry's *Asian American Mormons: Bridging Cultures* (Provo: Brigham Young University Charles Redd Center, 1999).

17. Lily Lew, email to Staci Ford, March 2014.

18. See Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

19. See W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co.;University Press, John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, Mass., 1903). DuBois writes, "One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

20. See Chieko N. Okazaki, *Lighten Up! Finding Real Joy in Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1993). Okazaki also discusses her views on race in multiple talks and articles in Church magazines. See also *Being Enough* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publications, 2002).

21. In my research and interviews concerning Sister Okazaki I heard several stories of the various ways in which she was often patronized or insulted by some of those individuals she worked with—men and women—in Church callings as well as in her professional life as an educator. Although her memoirs reference some of her challenges dealing with anti-Japanese sentiment both in Hawai'i and in Salt Lake City, once one scratches the surface of what she actually endured (via talking with some of those who knew her best) one gains an even greater appreciation of the restraint she exhibited in writing/speaking publicly of such matters. Thankfully, her papers and those of others who served in the Relief Society Presidency and General Board in the 1990s are being gathered and housed in the Aileen Clyde Collection at the University of Utah.

22. See Jodi Kantor and Laurie Goodstein, "Missions Signal a Growing Role for Mormon Women," *New York Times* (hereafter NYT), March 1, 2014; Kantor and Goodstein, "From Mormon Women: A Flood of Requests and Questions on Their Role in the Church," *NYT*, March 6, 2014. Although the discussion concerning the shifting expectations of LDS women has, to date, focused on North American experiences, and interest in LDS feminisms (including the debate about women and priesthood ordination) is marginal in Hong Kong, there are a number of young women in both the local congregations

and the Hong Kong China District who are increasingly interested in these issues. Like Michaela, they plan on balancing motherhood/active Church membership with professional aspirations, yet they often face criticisms from Church leaders and family members who worry that they will not find LDS spouses who support their aspirations.

23. Michaela Forte, email to Staci Ford, March 2014. Printout in my possession.

24. Ibid.

25. See Rhacel Parreñas, *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

26. Beau Lefler, emails to Staci Ford, February and March 2014. Printout in my possession.

27. Email correspondence between Ben Tai, Beau Lefler, and Staci Ford, February 2014. Printout in my possession.

28. This is an issue that merits a study of its own. Elder Dallin H. Oaks spent several years living in the Philippines; he and other Church leaders have, over the pulpit in Hong Kong, encouraged women not to place themselves in positions of "servitude." However, many sisters who hear such utterances feel that leaders do not understand the desperation they feel to provide for their families. I have observed that those who work with these sisters over an extended period of time come to soften their approach to the matter. They encourage sisters to seek their own inspiration and use their agency wisely but they do not advocate a "one size fits all" policy.

29. Marissa Carino, emails to Staci Ford, January and February 2014. Printout in my possession.

30. See Laurie Maffly-Kip and Reid L. Neilson, eds., *Proclamation to the People: Nineteenth Century Mormonism and the Pacific Basin Frontier* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2008).

Archaic Pronouns and Verbs in the Book of Mormon: What Inconsistent Usage Tells Us about Translation Theories

Roger Terry

This article is the second in a two-part series about LDS usage of archaic pronouns. The first article appeared in the previous issue and was titled "What Shall We Do with Thou*? Modern Mormonism's Unruly Usage of Archaic English Pronouns."*

Initially, I intended only one article on the usage of archaic pronouns and the implications of certain irregularities. But as I delved deeper into the implications, particularly what the erratic usage suggests about the translation of the Book of Mormon, it became obvious that this particular detour needed to stand alone as a companion piece to the main article. In that first article, among other matters, I explored briefly the inconsistent usage of second-person pronouns in the English translation of the Book of Mormon. In a nutshell, the text shifts back and forth randomly between the singular (*thou* and its variants) and the plural (*ye* and its siblings) in contexts where the singular form is required. What, we might then ask, can this information tell us about the process by which the Book of Mormon was translated? By itself, not much. But when considered in conjunction with other knowledge about the translation process, these pronoun usage patterns and other grammatical anomalies shed light on the larger question, and certain conclusions become more intriguing, perhaps even more obvious.

Some might ask why we should care how the Book of Mormon was translated, and for these individuals this may be a purely tangential concern. But if you recognize that imperfections and inconsistencies in the book—both grammatical and theological—are relevant to the larger question of exactly what the Book of Mormon is and just how divine it is, the translation question becomes important. The book itself, on both the title page and internally (Moroni 9:31), admits it is imperfect, but do the imperfections originate with the writers or with the translator—or perhaps even with the translation process itself? This possibility may shed significant light on the nature of revelation and of God's interactions with his children. So these are not just idle questions. The answers may tell us a good deal about God's methods of working with his children and his apparent reluctance to be either dictatorial (in the linguistic sense of the word) or even particular about specific details.

As I began a systematic editorial examination of the Book of Mormon, I initially assumed that the particular grammatical problem I was focusing on (pronoun usage) was a result of Joseph Smith's poor education and perhaps even sloppiness. But the accounts left by Joseph and those who were closely associated with him, particularly during the time he was translating and shortly thereafter,[1] don't leave any room for this possibility. Joseph was reportedly very careful, even to the point of correcting his scribes' spelling before being allowed by the "interpreters" to move on to the next textual segment. This process wouldn't permit a huge slip such as he would have to make in reading "thou canst" and yet dictating "ye can." So I began to entertain other possibilities. The conclusion I arrived at surprised me, as it may others, but even though it may appear naïve on the surface, it does account for several anomalies that other translation theories either circumvent or awkwardly dismiss. Because the English translation of the Book of Mormon is such a complex and in many ways inscrutable document, all translation theories are unsatisfactory in one way or another, this one included, but I feel this possibility needs to be published so that it can be included in the conversation and evaluated on its merits.

Based on clues in the text of the Book of Mormon itself and on the descriptive accounts left by Joseph and others, two general theories have arisen regarding this unusual translation process.[2] One theory, based on later recollections from those who observed Joseph translating, proposes that the young Prophet was actually seeing text spelled out before his eyes and was then dictating this text to the scribe. In essence, God (or the Holy Ghost, or the Urim and Thummim, or the seer stone) was revealing to Joseph the exact wording, and even the exact spelling of certain words and names. If these accounts are accurate, then John H. Gilbert, compositor of the 1830 Book of Mormon, makes a very astute observation: "The question might be asked here whether Jo or the spectacles [Urim and Thummim] was the translator."[3] In other words, if Joseph was just reading the English text to his scribe, who actually translated the Book of Mormon? The other theory asserts that the Lord was revealing ideas to Joseph, which the Prophet then had to frame to the best of his ability in his nineteenth-century approximation of King James English. Significantly, no one seriously entertains the possibility that Joseph was somehow tutored in "reformed Egyptian" and subsequently labored with the text itself, much as an ordinary translator would (except with a dose of divine enlightenment), thus wrestling it from its ancient source into an unremarkable replication of KJV syntax and vocabulary. For the moment, let us set this possibility aside, but I will return to it later. If we limit ourselves to the two general translation theories mentioned above, it is important to note that the first- and secondhand accounts of the process, as well as the text itself, provide compelling evidence for both theories.

The accounts of Joseph spelling out difficult-to-pronounce names, for instance, support the first theory. So do accounts of Joseph correcting the spelling of his scribes without even looking at their handwritten manuscript, although some of these accounts have been called into question.[4] Many other accounts, by both believers and skeptics, speak of Joseph either looking into the Urim and Thummim or peering into a hat that concealed a seer stone and reading the English text that appeared before his eyes. On the other hand, grammatical errors in the book, New Testament-influenced

language, the translator's apparent awareness of italicized words in the King James Version as he translated, nineteenth-century revival language, Protestant concepts and terminology, doctrinal development that follows the translation sequence rather than the narrative's chronology, and the fact that Joseph freely edited the text all support the second theory. B. H. Roberts also observed that "to assign responsibility for errors in language to a divine instrumentality, which amounts to assigning such error to God . . . is unthinkable, not to say blasphemous."[5] But "errors in language" are certainly present, and they do present us with both questions and clues about the translation process.

Errors in Pronoun Usage

As I began to explore usage of pronouns in the Book of Mormon, I realized I needed to conduct a thorough editorial examination of the book. For this project, I used the (at the time current) 1981 version of the Book of Mormon,[6] noting every grammatical inconsistency I could find. I then compared the resulting anomalies with Royal Skousen's *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*,[7] which follows the printer's manuscript and extant portions of the original manuscript meticulously, as well as incorporating a few changes to reflect what Skousen concluded was the intended text dictated by Joseph. A table summarizing the findings of this editorial study can be found at the end of this article.

Among other things, I discovered that second-person pronoun usage was inconsistent, but not uniformly so throughout the Book of Mormon. In particular, usage in the portion of the book that came from the small plates of Nephi is more consistent than usage in the portion that came from Nephi's large plates. I will make an observation about this discrepancy later. At any rate, second-person pronouns do not appear regularly in the book because it is a history and is therefore written largely in the third person. Some second-person discourse in the book is also in the form of speeches, which use primarily the plural form, and most of the errors involve the use of the plural where context requires the singular. Consequently, the seven chapters in Alma (36–42) that report Alma$_2$'s instructions to

his individual sons (all in second person) contain a large percentage of the pronoun usage errors. Outside of these chapters, Alma 30 (conversations with Korihor), Alma 54 (Moroni$_1$ and Ammoron exchanging letters), Helaman 10 (the Lord's instructions to Nephi$_2$), and Ether 3 (the Lord's conversation with the Brother of Jared) contain heavy concentrations of errors. This is understandable, since these chapters feature significant second-person-singular discourse. Indeed, Alma 30 contains more pronoun errors than any other single chapter in the Book of Mormon.

While it is possible that erratic usage of singular and plural pronouns of address in the English translation could be due to a similar randomness in the source language, this is quite unlikely. If the Nephite language was in a state of flux regarding second-person pronouns, the confusion we see in the English translation might be merely an accurate reflection of similar confusion in the source language. But how likely is it that such a pronoun shift would have endured for a thousand years? Perhaps we can put this question to rest by looking at another uneven feature of the English Book of Mormon.

A Second Inconsistent Usage

A second fundamental morphological difference between King James English and modern English—besides the archaic second-person pronouns—is the third-person-singular verb conjugation (*hath* or *knoweth* instead of the modern *has* or *knows*). The King James Version is almost flawless in its usage of the archaic -th form. In fact, the only -s ending I am aware of in the KJV is the idiomatic expression "must needs" (as in "it must needs be"), which occurs twelve times in the KJV and forty times in the Book of Mormon.[8] A computer search of the Bible, for example, reveals exactly zero instances of the word *has* in the KJV. A similar search for *has* in the Book of Mormon (current 2013 edition on lds.org) shows that this word appears 271 times. Admittedly, many of these non–King James conjugations were introduced later, in the various printed versions of the book, as indicated by a comparison between the 1981 printed edition and Royal Skousen's *Earliest Text*. This

comparison showed fifty-seven instances of *has* in the *Earliest Text,* meaning that 214 times *hath* was changed to *has* sometime between the handwritten manuscript and the 2013 edition. In my editorial examination of the 1981 printed edition of the book, which I then compared with the *Earliest Text,* including all instances of *has* and *must needs,* I identified 345 -s verb endings in the 1981 edition and 129 in the *Earliest Text.* This means that the handwritten manuscripts (the printer's manuscript and the portions of the original manuscript that still exist) contain at least thirty-two modern verb conjugations such as *prospers, gains, prophesies,* and *comes.*[9] Regardless of the actual numbers, though, the modern English -s ending appears frequently enough to indicate inconsistency that does not occur in the KJV.[10] Significantly, this shift in third-person singular verb endings from -th to -s is unique to English and would have been extremely unlikely to have any corresponding morphological shift in the ancient Nephite language, especially over a period of a thousand years. The only possible conclusion regarding the presence of -s endings in the English Book of Mormon, therefore, is that these were introduced by someone whose consistency was incomplete in applying King James forms to the Book of Mormon's English translation.[11]

While I certainly missed some of the grammatical inconsistencies in my examination of the book, I did identify 345 instances of -s endings, compared with 1,708 instances of -th endings in the 1981 edition, while only 129 instances of -s endings appear in the Skousen volume. And the usage of these forms is just as uneven as the usage of second-person pronouns (although the second-person pronoun usage is more consistent between the 1981 edition and the *Earliest Text,* apparently because fewer of these pronoun errors were corrected in later printed editions). In 1 Nephi 19:12, for example, we read, "And all these things must surely come, <u>saith</u> the prophet Zenos. . . . The God of nature <u>suffers.</u>" While at least 199 instances of *has* are later alterations that did not appear in the manuscripts,[12] most of the instances of other verbs using modern -s endings appear both in the manuscripts and in the 1981 edition. Spot checks of -s endings in a facsimile copy of the 1830 edition indicate that the 1830 edition is consistent with Skousen's *Earliest*

Text, which means that most of these changes occurred in later editions of the book.

The presence of so many -s endings in the Book of Mormon suggests that these were almost certainly introduced by the translator, and it is tempting to assume that it was Joseph Smith who introduced these inconsistencies during the translation process. But that assumption supposes that Joseph was the translator.

A New Translation Theory

Let's not get ahead of ourselves here. I would like to take a step back and look at Book of Mormon translation possibilities from a different angle. John Gilbert's question of whether the book was translated by Joseph Smith or by the "spectacles" is not just a flippant dismissal by an early skeptic. Gilbert was intimately acquainted with the text, since it was he who provided the initial punctuation for the Book of Mormon, and his question brings up an important point. There are three possible origins for the translation of the Book of Mormon. It was either a divine translation, a human translation, or a machine translation. What I mean by "machine" translation is some sort of preprogrammed mechanical process. Either the Urim and Thummim (or seer stone) was a device of some sort that could mechanically (automatically) translate language (similar to our modern though still crude computer translation programs) or it was a tool through which language (or thoughts) were communicated. If the accounts are true of Joseph looking into his hat and reading word-for-word English text to the scribe without referring at all to the plates, then we must assume that Joseph was not the *translator* of the Book of Mormon.

I have a little experience with translation and am also acquainted with translation theory. Years ago, for instance, when I was more fluent in German than I am now, I translated Theodor Storm's novella *Immensee* into English. This was an intense labor that required a sound understanding of nineteenth-century German and the ability to recraft those German thoughts and sentences into an English equivalent that preserved not only the meaning and literary feel of the source text but also, with as much precision

as possible, the sentence structure. Because English is a Germanic language, this was quite feasible though challenging. But what Joseph did in producing the Book of Mormon is not at all similar to this process. As David Mason put it, somewhat tongue in cheek, "Joseph Smith had a lot of experience translating documents that he couldn't read."[13] In other words, what Joseph did was not what we would normally call translation. Translation requires ample understanding not just of the source language but also of the source culture—an understanding, I might add, that is evident in the Book of Mormon translation.

If Joseph was merely reading English text that was revealed to him through divine instrumentality, then, we must ask, who did translate the text? Did the spectacles? Were the Urim and Thummim some sort of celestial equivalent to *Star Trek*'s universal translator? Unlikely. Certainly the Book of Mormon is not a machine translation. Any mechanical process, particularly one using a heavenly instrument, would not have produced the inconsistencies I have identified above. A machine translation would likely be awkward to read, as much of the English Book of Mormon text is, but it would at least be morphologically consistent. By the same token, I think we can rule out a divine translation—in other words, a translation by God or by the Holy Ghost—unless we wish to attribute such overt grammatical errors to Deity, which B. H. Roberts suggests would amount to blasphemy. Joseph's willingness to edit the text also suggests he did not regard the exact wording as being of divine origin.

So, if the English text of the Book of Mormon is not a machine translation or a divine translation, this leaves us with only one other possibility: it is a human translation. And it shows all the signs of being just that. Someone wrestled with the words and phrases and did so very imperfectly. But who was the human translator? Joseph? I doubt this. Brant Gardner has proposed the theory that Joseph was receiving by the power of God various pieces of prelanguage concepts, which Steven Pinker calls *mentalese*. He then had to express these ideas that originated in a different, indeed an unknown, language, not only in English but in the religious

idiom of his day—King James English. His mind somehow then produced the words he "saw" in his hat.[14]

I find this theory unconvincing, for several reasons. First, Joseph's ability to craft (or dictate) an extensive and intricate English document was rather limited. The vocabulary of the Book of Mormon itself was likely far beyond his abilities in 1829. According to his wife, Emma, he could not even pronounce names like Sarah and had to spell them out.[15] Second, the sentence structure of the book is very complex, with long, convoluted sentences sometimes employing multiple layers of parenthetical statements and relative clauses (see, for instance, 3 Nephi 5:14), which would have been far beyond the language capabilities of a young man whose wife claimed that he "could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon."[16] Add to this fact the reality that Joseph dictated an unpunctuated text, and this task stretches far beyond Joseph's ability to formulate prelanguage concepts into the complex sentence structure of the Book of Mormon. Without the help of punctuation to separate embedded clauses, this feat would have been mind-boggling. Third, Joseph would have been incapable of reconstructing long chapters from the King James Version from memory, even if prompted by some form of "mentalese." Joseph was so famously unacquainted with the Bible that he was unaware Jerusalem had walls;[17] it is therefore untenable that he could have reproduced whole chapters of Isaiah from memory. It is obvious that the translator, whoever it was, had direct access to the *printed* Bible text, including italicized words that were often changed or omitted in the Book of Mormon, sometimes causing nonsensical or ungrammatical sentences. These are a few of the problems I find with Gardner's theory.

But if Joseph did not "translate" the book, who did? I once saw a comment following a blog post about the Book of Mormon translation suggesting that perhaps the King James translators performed the translation in the spirit world. While an enticing notion, this proposition is improbable. Neither they nor William

Tyndale, another likely postmortal candidate, would have made the mistakes with pronoun usage and third-person verb conjugations that we find in the Book of Mormon. The final result would also have been far more elegant. But perhaps this suggestion is on the right track. Perhaps the book was indeed translated by a postmortal (but not yet divine) being. Do we know of anyone who was proficient in reading and writing the reformed Egyptian characters recorded on the plates, who also spoke English, and who tended to quote passages from the Bible with deviations from the King James text? Yes, we do: Moroni.[18]

Interestingly, the Book of Mormon often reads not like a text converted from a foreign language into the translator's native tongue, but more like a text converted by the translator from his native tongue into a language he is not completely comfortable with. The phrasing is often awkward in English. My friend Avraham Gileadi, who helped retranslate the Book of Mormon into Hebrew, claims that it went "back" into Hebrew very smoothly. Indeed, he assured me that some of the awkward phrasing I specifically asked him about is perfectly idiomatic Hebrew. Of course, how closely the reformed Egyptian characters correspond to modern Hebrew is an unanswerable question, but the fact that the text often seemed more natural in Hebrew than in English supports the idea that the translation may have moved from a language native to the translator to a tongue foreign to him instead of in the usual direction.

The possibility that the translation was performed by a resurrected but not yet divine being and then communicated by miraculous means to a mortal intermediary raises interesting questions and offers fascinating insights into both the postmortal existence and the restrained manner in which God interacts with his children on earth. For instance, we might ask how Moroni learned English. If this theory is accurate, then it is obvious that Moroni was not somehow miraculously endowed with a perfect command of what would have been to him a foreign language. Did he have to labor over this language acquisition much as we do, even when we are assisted by the Spirit? Did he have to practice

conversing in English? With whom? In the spirit world or here on earth among mortals? (If the latter, fascinating possibilities come to mind.) Assuming he had to study not just nineteenth-century English but also the already archaic religious idiom of the day and become versed in expressions of religious ideas and doctrines, this may explain the presence of common Protestant doctrines and even specific religious terminology in the Book of Mormon. It certainly explains the presence of lengthy but slightly altered King James quotations.

And what about God's involvement in this endeavor? What can we learn from the idea that God didn't prepare a perfect translation himself and miraculously present it to Joseph? This fact seems to support the homely metaphor a friend of mine once coined: "God doesn't send cookies baked in heaven." Unless we imagine to ourselves a God whose grasp of King James English was inferior to that of the King James translators, we must assume that he left the translation largely in the hands of his still imperfect children, mortal or immortal. For a volume as important as the Book of Mormon to come forth with such labor pains and such imperfections suggests perhaps a more hands-off God than some of us prefer to imagine. Subtlety and restraint appear to be two of his most prized attributes.

Some Concluding Thoughts

As mentioned earlier, my editorial pass through the book uncovered another interesting fact: second-person pronoun usage is far more consistent and correct on the portion translated from the small plates than in Mormon's or Moroni's abridgments. The usage of "must needs" is also much more frequent in the text from the small plates. This makes me wonder if the English translation was performed by at least two translators—one who understood the more ancient writing on the small plates and one who was more conversant with the later text composed primarily by Mormon. Whether or not this is accurate, one thing is certain: Joseph Smith did not "translate" the Book of Mormon, not if we mean that translating involves having a sound understanding of the source

language and culture and then converting a document from that language into the target language.

After a quarter century studying the manuscripts and various editions of the Book of Mormon, linguist Royal Skousen insists that the translation was given to Joseph word for word—a very closely controlled translation. I tend to believe him, which means Joseph himself wasn't translating but was receiving text translated by someone else, delivered to him "by the gift and power of God" (Book of Mormon title page). If Joseph knew the English text was a human translation and was flawed in certain respects, this may explain his eagerness to make corrections and changes that he probably wouldn't have made if he had viewed the text as divine and therefore perfect. Of course, the fact that it was unpunctuated was a clear indication that the text as dictated by Joseph and written down by his scribes was neither perfect nor ready for publication.

The fact that the dictated English text was unpunctuated brings up other questions and difficulties with the theory presented here. Assuming Moroni or some other postmortal Nephite who was conversant in King James English performed the translation, one must ask why the text was unpunctuated, even those sections adapted from the King James Version. The unpunctuated nature of the dictation lends support to Brant Gardner's "mentalese" theory. But it certainly leaves many other questions unanswered. Of course, it is also possible that the text Joseph was reading was indeed punctuated but that he dictated it without speaking out the punctuation marks, just as we usually read punctuated text aloud. Unfortunately, Joseph left no record of such translation details. In the end, I suppose, we must still admit that the Book of Mormon translation methodology is largely a mystery, and it will remain so unless God chooses to reveal more on this topic.

Notes

1. See John W. Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 77–213.

2. See Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), and Don Bradley, "Written by the Finger of God? Claims and Controversies of Book of Mormon Translation," *Sunstone* 161 (December 2010): 20–29, for a more complete description of these two theories. Gardner actually describes three theories that originated with Royal Skousen—loose control, tight control, and iron-clad control—but the latter two can be lumped together for our purposes here.

3. "John Gilbert's 1892 Account of the 1830 Printing of the Book of Mormon," quoted in Gardner, *The Gift and Power,* 251.

4. For instance, Brant Gardner points out that this "inerrant" translation theory "presupposes the absence of error and [Royal] Skousen's work makes it clear that errors occurred," which means that "an inerrant translation is simply not a supportable option to explain the translation of the Book of Mormon." Gardner, *The Gift and Power*, 148.

5. B. H. Roberts, "Book of Mormon Translation: Interesting Correspondence on the Subject of the Manual Theory," *Improvement Era* 9 (July 1906): 706–13.

6. According to the Church's statement on the 2013 version, "Changes to the scriptural text include spelling, minor typographical, and punctuation corrections." I am assuming that any changes to pronouns or verb endings would have been minimal or nonexistent. "Church Releases New Edition of English Scriptures in Digital Formats," https://www.lds.org/scriptures/press?lang=eng (accessed July 15, 2014).

7. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009).

8. I should mention that the search engine at lds.org is not completely accurate. For instance, it did not identify all the instances of "must needs" that I found in my editorial read-through of the Book of Mormon. By the same token, I did not find all the instances that it did, so this number (forty) is actually a combination of my finds and the search engine's results. There may actually be more than forty. It is possible that both I and the search engine missed a few. This cautionary note applies to all other numbers listed in this article that are derived from either my examination of the book or the lds.org search function. They must be seen as close approximations, nothing more. But they are close enough to make the point this article is concerned with.

9. This is derived from 129 (-s endings) – 57 (instances of *has*) – 40 (instances of *must needs*) = 32.

10. The incidence of second-person pronouns and third-person present-tense verb conjugations is, of course, sporadic throughout the book, since it is written mostly in third-person past tense. Second-person pronouns occur primarily where conversations or divine discourse are being reported. Third-person present-tense verbs occur primarily in conversations, editorial commentaries, and reports of things God "hath done" or "hath said."

11. It is also relevant to note that the manuscripts written mostly by Oliver Cowdery contain grammatical oddities such as "I hath" and "thou can" (see Ether 3:4–15, in Skousen, *The Earliest Text*, 679, 681). It should be noted that Joseph Smith was certainly not alone in his inconsistent usage of -th and -s endings. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," for instance, contains the phrase "He <u>hath</u> loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword" as well as "He <u>has</u> sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat." Julia Ward Howe composed these lyrics in 1861.

12. This is derived from 256 (instances of *has* in my examination) – 57 (instances in Skousen's *Earliest Text*) = 199.

13. David V. Mason, *My Mormonism: A Primer for Non-Mormons and Mormons, Alike* (Memphis, Tenn.: Homemade Books, 2011), 99.

14. Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 90, quoted in Gardner, *The Gift and Power*, 274.

15. "Emma Smith Bidamon, interviewed by Edmund C. Briggs (1856)," in *Opening the Heavens*, 129.

16. "Emma Smith Bidamon, interviewed by Joseph Smith III (1879)," in *Opening the Heavens*, 131.

17. "Emma Smith Bidamon, interviewed by Edmund C. Briggs (1856)," and "Emma Smith Bidamon, interviewed by Nels Madsen and Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1877)," in *Opening the Heavens*, 129–30.

18. After Joseph Spencer (with my permission) gave a preview of my Moroni-as-translator theory in a blog post on Patheos (see "On Translation Theories and the Interpretation of the Book of Mormon," http://www.patheos.com/blogs/peculiarpeople/2014/05/on-translation-theories-and-the-interpretation-of-the-book-of-mormon/), I received an email from Stanton Curry, sharing with me a short essay he had written a couple of years previously, in which he also proposes Moroni as the translator. I find it significant that he arrived at this conclusion independently and from a different angle—certain information found on the book's title page and an attempt to explain the King James quotations in the text. J. Stanton Curry, "A Possible Explanation for King James Bible Passages in the Book of Mormon" (unpublished paper, copy in

my possession). Brant Gardner mentions another LDS writer who proposed Moroni as translator. Carl T. Cox included this theory in "The Mission of Moroni," published in three parts on his website. The relevant text is available at http://www.oscox.org/stuff/bom3.html. This reference somehow slipped by me, and I did not remember it when I had completed my editorial examination of the Book of Mormon and started considering translation theories. It is very possible that this idea was lurking in my subconscious and surfaced in what I thought was an original insight. If so, I am glad to give Carl T. Cox the credit for this idea. See Gardner, *The Gift and Power*, 254.

Appendix

The following pages contain a table charting data regarding the usage of sixteen different substitutions, endings, etc. In column listing chapter numbers, the letter "H" is used to denote a heading.

		ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
1 Nephi	H									
	1									
	2									
	3									
	4									
	5									
	6									
	7									
	8									
	9									
	10	3			1					
	11	4								
	12									
	13									
	14									
	15									
	16									
	17	1								
	18									
	19									
Is. 48	20									
Is. 49	21									
	22	1								
2 Nephi	H									
	1									
	2									
	3									
	4							1		1
	5									
	6									
Is. 50	7								1	
Is. 51	8									
	9									
	10									
	11									
Is. 2	12	1								
Is. 3	13									
Is. 4	14									
Is. 5	15									

		th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
1 Nephi	H	6						
	1	2						
	2							
	3	7	1		1	1		
	4	4						
	5	3						
	6		1	1		1	1	
	7	3						
	8							
	9	4						
	10	2	1		1	1		
	11	6						
	12	5						1
	13	19	1	1		0	0	1
	14	14						2
	15	16	2		2	2		
	16	3	5	3		0	0	1
	17	16	5	5	1	1	0	2
	18							2
	19	11	2		1	2		4
Is. 48	20	14						
Is. 49	21	19						1
	22	17	3	1	1	2	0	2
2 Nephi	H		1			1		
	1	16						
	2	12	6		6	6		
	3	5						
	4	19						
	5	2	2			0		1
	6	4	7	7		1	1	
Is. 50	7	10						
Is. 51	8	10						
	9	11	13	7	5	5	0	1
	10	15	7	4	3	3	0	
	11	12	1	1		0	0	1
Is. 2	12	6						
Is. 3	13	7						
Is. 4	14							
Is. 5	15	7						

Book	#	ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
Is. 6	16									
Is. 7	17									
Is. 8	18									
Is. 9	19									
Is. 10	20									
Is. 11	21									
Is. 12	22									
Is. 13	23									
Is. 14	24									
	25									
	26									
	27									
	28									
	29									
	30									
	31									
	32									
	33			1						
Jacob	H									
	1									
	2									
	3									
	4									
	5							2		
	6									
	7	4	3							
Enos	1	1	1							
Jarom	1									
Omni	1									
W of M	1									
Mosiah	1	1		2						
	2			2						
	3		2							
	4			1				3		1
	5			1						
	6									
	7									
	8									
	9									

Book	#	th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
Is. 6	16		1	1		0	0	
Is. 7	17	1						
Is. 8	18	4						
Is. 9	19	7						
Is. 10	20	12						
Is. 11	21							
Is. 12	22	1						
Is. 13	23	3						
Is. 14	24	11						
	25	20	1		1	1		3
	26	38	1		1	1		
	27	22						1
	28	27	2		1	2		1
	29	1						1
	30	1						
	31	14						1
	32	5						
	33	11	1			1		1
Jacob	H	2						
	1							1
	2	21						
	3	2						
	4	10	1		1	1		1
	5	37	1	1		0	0	1
	6	5	1					
	7	1						
Enos	1	1						
Jarom	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	
Omni	1	3	2	1		2	1	2
W of M	1	4						
Mosiah	1	1						
	2	35	13	12		2	1	
	3	30	1	1		1	1	
	4	17	9	9		0	0	
	5	7	5	5		1	1	
	6							
	7	7	4	4		1	1	
	8	4	2	2		0	0	
	9							

		ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
	10									
	11									
	12			2						
	13			1						
Is. 53	14									
	15									
	16									
	17	2	4			1				
	18	1	2	1						
	19									
	20	1								
	21									
	22									
	23									
	24			2						
	25									
	26		3							
	27	2	1							
	28									
	29			2						
Alma	H									
	1									
	2									
	3									
	4									
	5			7	1					
	6									
	7			2						
	8	1				1				
	9									
	10									
	11	2	4							
	12									
	13									
	14									
	15									
	16								1	1
	17								1	
	18	1	1							
	19	1								

		th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
	10		1	1		0	0	
	11	5	1	1		0	0	
	12	22	4	4		1	1	
	13	3	3	1		2	0	
Is. 53	14	6	1	1		0	0	
	15	19	11	11		3	3	
	16	6	1			1		1
	17	1	1	1		0	0	
	18		1	1		0	0	
	19							
	20	1	2	2		0	0	
	21							
	22							
	23	4	1	1		0	0	
	24							
	25							
	26	7	2	1		0	0	4
	27	6	3	3		0	0	
	28		1	1		1	1	
	29	17	9	6		2	1	
Alma	H							
	1		4	4		3	3	
	2							
	3	7						1
	4							
	5	42	3	3		1	1	
	6							
	7	27	1	1		0	0	
	8	2	1	1		0	0	
	9	3	5	5		1	1	
	10	14	7	6		0	0	
	11	6						
	12	14	11	7		6	3	1
	13	5						
	14	3	1	1		0	0	
	15							
	16							
	17							1
	18	8	7	4		5	2	
	19	4						

	ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
20	1	1							
21									
22	2								
23									
24									
25									
26									2
27									
28									
29									
30	31	5			5				
31									
32			2						1
33									
34			1						
35									
36	10	4							
37	18	15			1				
38	20	4	2		12				
39	16	10	2		14	3			
40	1	3							
41	9	5	1		3				
42	7	5	1		2	1			
43									
44									
45	2	2							
46									
47									
48									
49									
50									
51									
52									
53									
54	15	19	3						
55			1		13				
56	2		1						
57									
58	1	1							

	th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
20	2						
21							
22	3	2	2		0	0	
23	2						
24	7	7	7		6	6	
25							
26	15	11	11		4	4	1
27	2	1	1		1	1	
28	2	3	2		3	2	
29	15	1	1		1	1	
30	7	6	4		1	0	
31	2						1
32	45	3		3	3		
33	1	1	1		0	0	
34	21	7	5		0	0	
35							
36	1	8	8		0	0	1
37	10	7	7		0	0	
38	2						
39	3	2	2		1	1	
40	20	8	4	1	5	1	
41	4	4	4		2	2	
42	14	2	2		0	0	
43		1	1		0	0	
44	1	5	4		1	0	
45	4	1	1		0	0	1
46	4	1		1	1		1
47		1			1		
48							
49							
50		1	1		1	1	
51	2						2
52							
53							1
54	8						
55	2						1
56	1						2
57		2	2		0	0	
58	1	4	4		0	0	

	ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
59									
60			2						
61	5	2	1	3					
62									
63									
Helaman H									
1									
2									
3									
4									
5			2						
6									
H									
7			2			2			
8			2			1			
9	2			4					
10	8	2							
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
3 Nephi H									
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
Matt. 5 11									
Matt. 6 12	3	2							
Matt. 7 13	1	1		1					
14									
15									
16	1	2							
17									

	th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
59							
60	3	8	8		2	2	
61	10	1			1		
62							
63							1
Helaman H							
1							
2							
3	1						
4	1						
5	6	1	1		0	0	
6	2	1	1		0	0	
H	1	2			2		
7	1	7	7		0	0	
8	11	3	3		0	0	
9	6	9	9		0	0	1
10	1						
11	1	1	1		1	1	
12	13						
13	38	1	1		1	1	1
14	27						2
15	16						2
16	1	3	3		1	1	
3 Nephi H							
1	2						
2							
3	4						2
4	1						
5	11	2		2	2		
6							1
7							
8	1						
9	6						1
10	5						1
Matt. 5 11	17						
Matt. 6 12	12						2
Matt. 7 13	8						1
14	15						
15	13						
16	12						
17	4						

Section	#	ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
	18									
	19									
	20									
	21									
Is. 54	22									
	23									
Mal. 3	24									
Mal. 4	25									
	26									
	27									
	28									
	29									
	30									
4 Nephi	H									
	1									
Mormon	1	8					1			
	2									
	3									
	4									
	5									
	6									
	7									
	8									
	9									
Ether	H									
	1	1								
	2									
	3	12	1							
	4									
	5									
	6									
	7									
	8	4	1							
	9									
	10									
	11									
	12									
	13									
	14									
	15									
Moroni	1									

Section	#	th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
	18	12	1			1		
	19							1
	20	32						
	21	9						1
Is. 54	22	9						
	23	1	1		1	1		
Mal. 3	24	11						
Mal. 4	25	4						
	26	3						1
	27	21	1			1		
	28	12	1		1	1		
	29	6	1			1		1
	30	2						
4 Nephi	H							
	1							
Mormon	1							
	2		2	2		2	2	
	3	2	1			0		
	4							
	5	7						
	6	2						
	7	7						
	8	31	2			1		
	9	21	5	4		3	3	
Ether	H							
	1	2	1			0		
	2	4						
	3	3	2	2		1	1	
	4	21	1	1		1	1	1
	5							
	6	1						
	7							1
	8	11						
	9	1						
	10							
	11							
	12	12	2	1	1	2	1	1
	13	5						
	14	1						
	15	1						
Moroni	1							

	ye for thou	you for thee	you subject	ye for you	your for thy	yourself	thou for ye	thee for you	thy for your
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8		1							
9	1	1							
10									
TOTAL	207	110	45	1	61	5	9	3	6

	th ending	s ending	has	must needs	Skousen -s	Skousen has	other error
2							
3							
4	1						
5							
6							
7	51	7	3	3	5	1	2
8	25						
9	7	1	1		1	1	
10	13	1		1	1		
TOTAL	1708	345	256	40	129	57	75
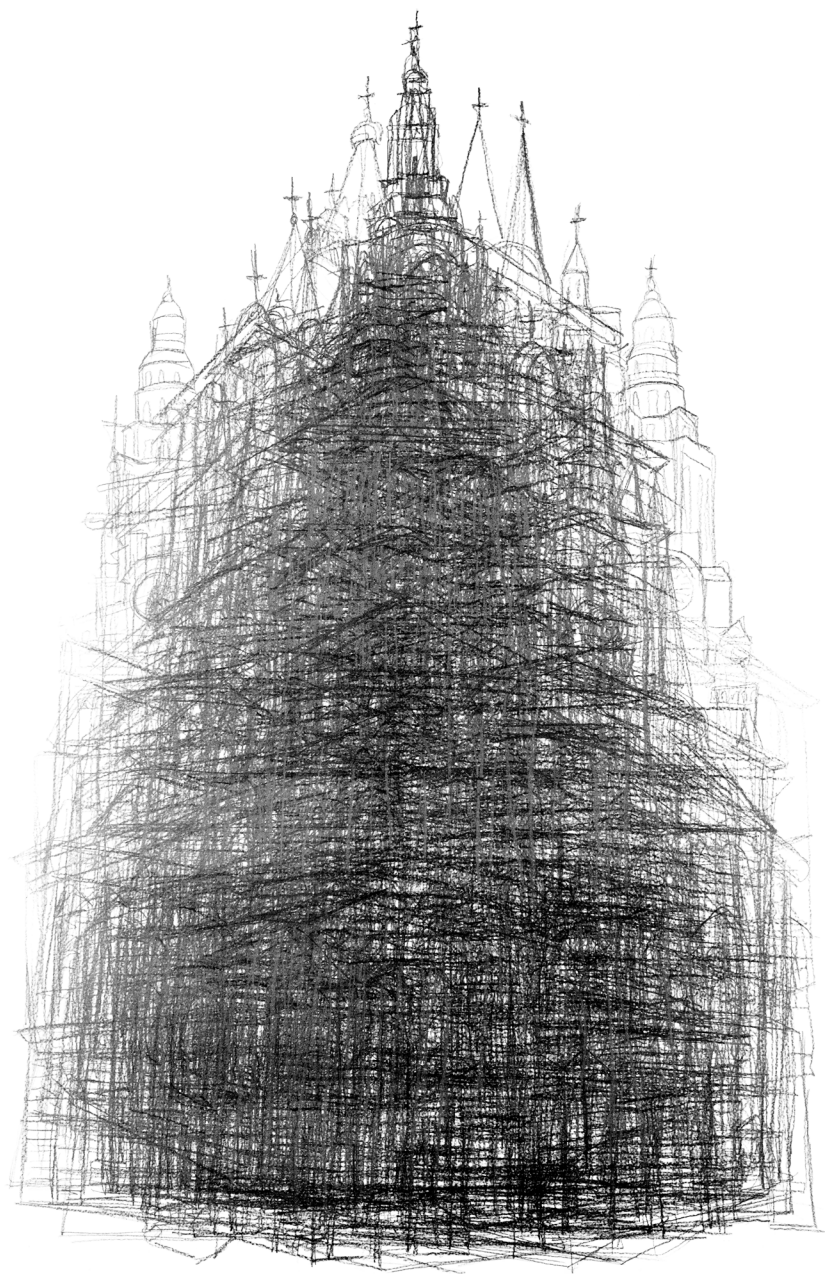
Maddison Colvin
Template (London)
Graphite

Maddison Colvin
Church Studies (London)
Ink on vellum

Maddison Colvin
Template (Utah)
Graphite

Maddison Colvin
Temple Studies (Utah)
Ink on vellum

Denying

Mark D. Bennion

In his body's haze and swelter,
In the furrow of appetite,
The Son of Man holds out his hand
To stem the stream of lush requests,

Inimical ramblings, templed
Invitations. He pushes back
Subtlety and evanescence,
Strains of his own sweat amid talk

Waxing of angels in their charge
Who wait for the chance to bear up.
Ripening for his ministry,
Refulgent on the mountaintop,
In hunger and need, he rejects
Illusion and its offering,
Temerity and its mayhem
Touchstones showing silver and gold
Even when they seem genuine,
Even when the road before him
Needles toward crushed olives and cross
Nests with those who will betray him.

Leap

Mark D. Bennion

[W]hen Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the
babe leaped in her womb.
—Luke 1:41

In the timbers of a hill country voice,
I hail you across the wreath of limestone
and yard, you—God's authentic, sparrow choice—
mettle in the tendons, pluck through the bones.
We catch the thick upwelling, blood ready
to spurt through our skin, like pinion falling
or prophecy rising, a strong eddy
in this water of custom. Such prizing
of youth and age engulfs our pregnant sphere.
No worry over haggling lunatics,
uprisings, whether we'll go or stay here.
Softly, they'll come, both prayers and walking sticks,
for the sacrifice of want and regret.
These arms wide open now, like fishing net.

Seeing Someone I Used to Know

Mark D. Bennion

She walks with others
across the chapel, her voice
trailing through the pews,
hovering like a wisp of candle light.
I take my place among the heart's altar,
wonder about the years unfurled
between us, the grass clippings,
the hailstones, lights reaffirming
near the windows. Like the janitor,
I remain unnoticed,
debate whether to interrupt
the jostling of goodwill
or the smile connected
to an index finger. She continues
her reverie, her whisperings,
prayers lifted with the rise
of shoulders and songs. The past
caroms me to the pulpit, the sacrament
table, the bishop's gray jacket,
leads me to nod toward others
I've just barely met.
And it's not because of shame
or fear or even the desire
to stay unseen that prevents me
from seeing how her life
has come to pass. And it's not
because I'm unfeeling or disinterested
in my friend's good keeping.
It's a matter of control
and letting go,

letting the past surprise me
without commentary and justification
as I take and eat the bread,
knowing, regardless of the hour
or season of worship,
the past will arrive quietly
in an unchosen hour
warming, perhaps bowing,
like a candle flickering
at what once was
and who we used to be.

Celestial Terms

Sarah Dunster

You love me in algebra—
$D + d = L$ to the Nth degree,
and I love you in quarter notes—
a fierce appoggiatura and a soft, high C.
We loved each other then in
a jumble of chords using mostly black keys,
in square roots, and Pi with ice
cream, and the straining of infinity.
We passed my childhood in a
barrage of love-fear-grief-love—our Symphony.
When firmaments fell, you were
quiet. You held your anger safe from me.
At my wedding dance (neither
of us dances) we circled awkwardly,
and when I left the house for good
I looked up the long, steep length of driveway
and choked on my new freedom.
I couldn't picture what my life would be.
And now, we tiptoe on the phone
(not our favorite). But then, last Christmas Eve
we debated math, Ron Paul,
and the theory of relativity,
and my poor husband went to bed
with a titan headache, like Sicily
invaded by the Romans.
But it is the inevitability
of you and me, the red-haired
inventor and blond pigtailed girl, hungering
for the best of what you could
(D+d) and could not quite give to me:

Someday we will share feelings.
In celestial terms they'll zip, from heart to
heart, like electricity
elegant with algorithms, channeled in
raw-sung soliloquies.

In the Night

Sarah Dunster

We slumber heavy in the night
so long as hills are bare and white
and what is real, is pressing. What
can you do but answer. What can
you do but take my jaw in hand
and answer. And what can I, but

know you while night visions press us, hot
in our down blanket. What cannot
be spoken, we will speak with night
still resting on us—your air
on me, and my warm shoulder bare
to you—real, real as day is light

until we wake in morning's cold,
when mountains, rimming in the gold
of cresting sun, can no more be
deferred. What can we do but rise . . .
that I could stop you with my gaze
as you work your task of leaving me.

Tangled Women

Sarah Dunster

Mother always dreamed of our perfection;
daughters who escaped her careless jumble
with cool minds and clear heads. A strong woman

was (she first thought) like lines of a chi garden
with stones laid straight, and raking gravel—
tines in furrows, dug for our perfection.

Then, battling with star thistles and watermelons
sprung up from seeds of wars in a tough tumble
of coiling vine, she became the sort of woman

who taught her daughters the raw mysticism
of broken earth, while the sting of new soil
stirred us. She demonstrated the perfection

of bulbs thrown, of planting in the pattern
of scatter. With closed eyes, she tossed her handful
in hope that we would all grow to be women

of choice. What renaissance—the perfection
of rebellion in us, tangled women.

A company man on his day off

Ronald Wilcox

thinks of:

blue sky
not the oppressive space of huge warehouses
chopped by endless categories of air
not lines, struts, vast pitiless squares
and vicious skylights inexorably gray

white clouds
not hangers of outmoded airfields deserted
where invisible zeppelins of greed play &
balloon proportionless as from spent minds
with rows of stuff massed against the spirit

mountain stillness
not the silences of men marching indifferent
to drummers long since dead of old desire
public men incorporating their greatnesses
indisputable, indisputed, without mistake

grassy slopes
not the soft demolition of daily statistics
not the rapine[1] of gadgets working their ways
not fluorescent promises winking in steel whispers
amidst assembled measured boxes of production
    but

morning
standing waist deep in the simple light flowing
in mountain streams when the selling of the thing

occupied the boy never at all fly-fishing for ideals
even as the fleeting trout rose at the rainbows.

Note

1. Rapine, "the violent seizure of someone's property," pronounced rapǝn, or rappin'.

The Postum Table

David G. Pace

Excerpt from the novel Dream House on Golan Heights, *forthcoming from Signature Books.*

The family had been in the dream house about three months. It was October, and they were gathered for Family Night. A box of See's chocolates, wrapped in glossy white paper, sat like the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil on what everyone else in America called the coffee table, but they called the Postum table, because of the injunction against coffee, among other things.

The chocolates, several boxes of which were shipped to them periodically from California by one of Gush's fans, were saved for Family Night refreshments. These morsels, individually fitted into dark brown accordion papers, were distributed at the end of Family Night by reverse seniority, starting with Jessica, the penultimate child at the time who was nearly three, and ending with Gush, who complained every week that someone had eaten the dark square one with caramel, but no one seemed to care. So much for being the family patriarch.

Riley looked across the living room at his sister Muriel, the oldest. Even with the chocolates planted in front of them, she did not want to be at Family Night, and she was making sure the rest of them knew it. Muriel was a junior in high school, Riley's model for Snob Hill living—by default. She sat back in the corner of the flowered couch with the pink cushions, her arms crossed on her chest, her pallid eyelids closed. They were all waiting for JoDee, number two, who was still moping somewhere downstairs. Joan sat looking at her husband. Gush sat looking at his wife. Finally, she sighed. Gush stood, then walked over to

the black, wrought-iron railing that guarded the stairwell and leaned over it so far that the arch of his left foot lifted out of his house flip flops, exposing the pink underside.

"JoDee!" he hollered down the stairs. It was one of his angry, staccato hollers that guaranteed no more moping in the kids. At the sound of Gush, Muriel started, her eyes flashing in annoyance. Instantly, Mom told Jessica to stop coloring in her book. Mom was annoyed too. The kids took their cues from her. When JoDee entered the living room, she muttered something about being on the phone. The rest of the kids looked at her like she was delaying the second coming of Christ, which in a sense, she was.

"Honey," said Gush, "your friend Debbie knows that it's Monday night."

"Not everyone has Family Night," said JoDee. She pushed her new octagonal wire-rims, which Muriel referred to as JoDee's honeycombs, up the bridge of her nose. Family Night had always been forced affairs for them, like family vacations, a time when the kids could channel contempt toward each other. For Gush and Joan it seemed to be an endurance test.

"Now listen, kids," Gush said. Muriel opened her eyes. "I don't want you planning anything on Monday night, understand?" He looked about the living room at the "older set," the four of them on the top end of a porous line that would shift down from time to time as they all grew up and moved on. In 1972 the line was somewhere between Riley and his only brother Cade, number five, who was two years younger. Riley was eleven. Number four. Cade was sitting on the couch next to Muriel and chewing his lower lip. Next to him sat Winnie and Chums, numbers six and seven. The four of them sitting there looked like they were waiting to see a doctor.

Candace, number three and two years Riley's senior, was sitting on the floor next to him. She was casually flipping through her health text which had the most explicit description of the sex act Riley had ever read, a delicious candy unto itself because Mom and Gush were not privy to it. Perched next to Candace, on a bar stool, was late arrival JoDee who was named after the children's Uncle Dee and a cousin who their mother explained had

died at age four choking on a wad of gum the size of a walnut. That was the reason why chewing gum was never allowed in the house even though Candace had a stash of Juicy Fruit hidden in a shoe box in her closet.

Joan was seated in the rocking chair. The baby, her dark hair matted against a sweaty head, was sleeping in her moist arms. Gush shook his head with disgust at the effort he was having to put out.

"Jeepers," he said to her with an embarrassed half-smile. Joan smiled back, batting her eyes like she always did when she was humoring him.

"Let's get started, I need to put you-know-who to bed," she said. You-Know-Who, also known as Jessica, looked up from her crayons and said threateningly, "No bed!"

They were a family totaling eleven. Two parents, nine kids. When you said all of the kids' names together, in order, really fast, with the right stresses like JoDee liked to do—"MurIELJo DeeCandaceRileyCADEWinnieCHUMSJessieBabyAgnesHone yToo"—it sounded almost musical, like that hamburger ad they would all be singing a few years later, "TwoALLbeefpattiesspe-cialSAUCElettuce CHEESEpicklesonionsonasesameseedBUN." There were enough of them to start a country, it seemed. In a way, they were their own country.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

With JoDee there, Family Night could finally start. The chocolates seemed a millennium away from being devoured. The chalk board already had stick figures representing Adam and Eve drawn on it, but Riley could sense Gush's irritation at the possibility he was not being taken seriously. They sang one verse of *O How Lovely Was the Morning*, and Cade started snickering when they got to the part that goes, "Oh what rapture filled his bosom." Riley snickered too, but not so much that Gush would notice. He shot Cade a reproving look during the closing phrases of the hymn and then made him say the opening prayer afterwards to sober him up.

Cade stood. Funny, since it wasn't like he was giving the invo-cation in church or anything. He folded his arms and bowed his head. He didn't look anything like Gush or his older brother.

Cade was very fair, like Muriel, and had a galaxy of freckles on his head and neck.

"Dear Heavenly Father," he mumbled into his chest. "We thank you for our many blessings . . ."

". . . We thank *Thee*," corrected Gush. Cade, his arms wrapped tightly around himself and squinting hard, continued.

"We thank Thee for our many blessings, for our family. We pray for the prophet and for our family. We ask You . . . Thee . . . ." Cade open one eye and looked at Gush. ". . . To help us to get our year's supply of food, and we ask Thee for . . . that we can get out of debt. InthenameofJesusChrist,Amen." Simultaneously with the rushed and coded ending, Cade sat back down on the couch with a bounce. Everyone else said "amen," too. Gush said it loudest.

Family business was always first on the agenda every week, and Gush, as if he were the bishop conducting sacrament meeting, would turn the time over to Mom, who would talk about family problems.

"I don't know what happened Saturday," their mother said to them. She still had that precision in her diction that she'd practiced as Miss Utah for her poise interviews at the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City. "When my visiting teachers came by, not a single thing had been done in the kitchen or living room. And it was three o'clock!"

"I couldn't vacuum in here until Candace dusted," complained JoDee, her white toes curled around the cross bar of the stool she sat on. Candace smacked her sister's leg.

"I did dust, you stupid idiot."

"Girls!" thundered Gush.

"Well, I did, Dad!" cried Candace.

JoDee started back in. "Muriel says that you dust like you're a cheerleader with pompons."

"JoDee," said Muriel with a guilty smile, "I did *not* say that!"

"All right, all right," said Mom. "I don't know what the problem was in here—or in the kitchen, either. But when Sister Walker and Sister Slaughter walked in here and saw . . . there were two bowls of cereal still in here from breakfast! . . . when they saw that and Riley's dirty socks under the piano bench"—she looked at him when she said that—"I was embarrassed. I was embarrassed to tears."

Riley always knew when his mom was angry or at the end of her tether because she used the phrase "embarrassed to tears." The first time he remembered her saying it was when he was eight, and they all still lived in the river bottoms. She was talking on the phone to someone about his father's family, and Riley was finishing her sentences for her while he jumped up and down on the couch. She was talking about someone's first daughter, "a lovely girl who lives in Ogden and has six children. And then they had a second daughter . . ."

". . . who was the ugly sister," Riley said, laughing gaily as he continued jumping. She glared at him over the receiver, her lips tightening to a white line. He knew he was in trouble. When she got off the phone she informed him that she'd been talking to the bishop's wife and that the woman Riley had referred to as "the ugly sister" was his cousin Sally who had been confined to a wheelchair with a muscle disease ever since she was six. "I was embarrassed to tears," she said through her taut face. And then she left the room, went to the bathroom, shut the door and didn't come out for a long time. Riley never knew if his mother actually shed tears from embarrassment, but he always admired the inventiveness of the phrase.

Riley only saw his cousin Sally, who was easily twenty years older than he, when they went to family reunions in Arizona, and she was the most curious thing he'd ever seen, a lump of white flesh behind a house dress with a sagging, elasticized collar and terry cloth socks on her tiny, deformed feet. Nevertheless, he felt so guilty about ridiculing a cripple that he went to his room and lay on the bed, trying to feel emotion he imagined appropriate to the occasion. Eventually he gave up and went looking for bra ads in the Sears catalogue.

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During this Family Night the vacuum-dusting controversy between JoDee and Candace only got partially settled. Mom detailed, as she did every week, what the Saturday chores were, and she went on and on telling them how to wash the windows so that they wouldn't streak and that if she ever, ever found out

who was just dumping the utensil strainer into the utensil drawer without sorting them in their plastic-molded compartments that she was going to wring his neck. She could just as easily have said "*her* neck," considering the gender distribution of all of them—seven girls and two boys.

"You heard your mother," said Gush with finality. "Now let's do it! And I have something to add as well." It seemed to Riley that Gush had a spring in his jaw that he could wind up by just lifting one of his eyebrows, because whenever he wanted to be stern he'd get a tightly wound jaw that looked like Colonel Klink's on *Hogan's Heroes*. "When I came home from work today *every single light* was on downstairs. And so was the curling iron!" Everyone looked at Muriel, who not only used the curling iron but had a relationship with it.

Muriel shrugged and sighed, "Okay, okay. I know."

They'd been at Family Night for forty minutes, and they hadn't gotten to the lesson yet. Family Nights in most families often amounted to playing a board game and eating refreshments. Sometimes, these families would all just go bowling, or watch re-runs of *Flipper* and count that. But Gush was different.

By the time Gush had pulled the chalkboard out front and center, Winnie and Chums were at each others' throats.

"Stop touching me!" screamed Winnie, the older one.

"Chums, keep your hands to yourself," said Mom to the younger, a mere wisp of a child whose real name was Chelsea and whose feet barely hung over the edge of the couch. "There's plenty of room there for both of you." Stone-still, Chums looked at Riley, her wounded eyes shading into defiance. Once Gush started talking again, she placed the pinkie of her right hand ever-so-lightly against Winnie's pant leg.

"Stop *touching* me!" Winnie screamed again, louder and pushing the hand away.

"She's taking all the room!" said Chums, a defensive sob rising in her five-year-old throat. Her sister slugged her. Suddenly Chums grabbed Winnie's hair in her fists, no larger than apricots, but with a power surge rivaling that of a vacuum cleaner. With one

sweep of Gush's powerful arm, the hair-puller was transported screaming to her room.

"I can't believe this," Muriel said with disgust. "I've got so much homework tonight."

"Which boyfriend are you studying tonight, Muriel?" said JoDee with a smirk. She was taking advantage of the fact that Gush was out of earshot.

"Shut up, JoDee." Muriel glanced at her mother.

"Mommy, Muriel said a bathroom word," reported a scandalized Winnie, still rubbing her scalp.

"Muriel," said Mom, "I don't care what kind of language they use at that Provo High, but at home you have little brothers and sisters who are watching everything you say." Riley thought what a strange expression that was, "watch what you say," as if the words became incarnate as they hit the air like blue blood turns to red the moment it hits oxygen. Suddenly Gush was back, his brow furrowed, his chest heaving. In the other room they could hear Chums screaming through the nursery door, which she was periodically kicking with mighty thuds. One had to hand it to her, she fought like Samson.

"This has been a real disappointment," Gush said, referring to the family powwow. He seemed to be trying hard to form an appropriate expression of gravity in his flushed face. "This is like a circus around here. Now, kids, sit up . . ." (They did.) ". . . and let's study the Gospel."

The Gospel was the saving knowledge revealed in this, the last dispensation of the fullness of times by the first latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith, and others. And it was linked indelibly to the true Church of Jesus Christ which had been restored to the earth in 1830 and was headed by the current prophet—a short octogenarian with a funny voice named Spencer Kimball—and his twelve apostles, all of whom wore suits like Gush and lived fifty miles north of them in Salt Lake City. Gush had a reputation in the ward for teaching the Gospel with an electrifying, at times crushing, fervor, and as his children they were not spared. On this particular Monday evening, even Muriel seemed to have

finally realized that when it came to Family Night, the only way out of it was through it.

Gush held the chalkboard in one meaty hand, and in the other sketched with surprising dexterity the entire Plan of Salvation. The Plan started with the creation of the world, moved to the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve fell from grace. At this point Gush re-drew upside down the stick figures of our first parents to show how they were falling to the lone and dreary world. Even the younger girls laughed at that, which was okay with Gush since he was going for a little levity.

Chums was suddenly back. Drawn by laughter at Eve's stick hair flapping in the wind, she had sneaked down the hall and was standing shyly in the doorway of the living room, a finger in her mouth, her eyes red with tears. She had a bad case of the post-cry hiccups.

"Are you ready to come back in, Chums?" Gush asked with a reproving look. She nodded soggily, and returned to her rightful place in the family order, this time next to where Gush was kneeling on one knee, her small, dimpled hand on the back of his calf. He briefly rubbed her back. She hiccupped.

From the fall of Adam and Eve, Gush took them through Noah and the flood, the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues, and into the time of Abraham.

"Now, brothers and sisters," began Gush, then stopped abruptly and smiled. He looked at Joan who, still pinned by the baby to the chair, smiled back wearily. Gush was always forgetting who his family was when he got wound up with the Spirit. "Sorry, kids," he blushed, and the kids moaned with an irritation that was only mild considering their new absorption in the illustrated Plan of Salvation. He continued. "The story of Abraham and Isaac is a type and shadow of the sacrifice that Heavenly Father would make later of his own son, the Christ." Gush always talked about Jesus as "the Christ." Maybe he did it to invoke awe. Gush looked at Riley with a fresh idea in his face. "Let's say that I'm Abraham, and Riley here is Isaac, my ONLY SON. Riley, stand up here for a minute."

"What?" Riley asked.

"Just stand up here for a minute will you?" said Gush, moving the box of chocolates off the Postum table and handing it to Cade who, holding the glistening package in flat hands, seemed galvanized into one of the magi, bearing frankincense in the annual Christmas pageant. "I need your help."

Being one of only two boys in a family of what was then nine kids certainly had its advantages—not as many hand-me-downs to wear—but being singled out by his father as an object lesson in Family Night was certainly not one of them. It meant, of course, that Riley couldn't just sit on the sidelines and comment, *sotto voce*, about all the ridiculous things his sisters and brother did, and he knew that if he didn't cooperate, Gush would be "disappointed" yet again.

Riley stood up, and Gush helped lay him down on his back on the Postum table. Winnie and Chums giggled. Gush cleared his throat like he did when he lectured. "Just for illustrative purposes," he said, "let's say that I've taken Riley into the mountains."

"Like 'Y' mountain?" said Chums, her eyes now wide with interest. She was referring to the mountain directly across the street, a pile of flinty rock topped with pine and sporting a huge blocked and whitewashed letter "Y" which could be seen for miles and tagged the nearby presence of Brigham Young University, a.k.a. the Lord's University.

"Yes. Let's say 'Y' mountain. And I've taken him up there because the Lord has told me that it's necessary to sacrifice Riley to show my obedience." From where he lay, legs and feet cantilevered off the end of the table, Riley could see his father's torso and head above, intent eyes behind black-rimmed glasses. He could feel the heat from off Gush's body and smell the warm, beach-like odor of his skin. Gush cleared his throat again, and Riley saw that Gush was wearing his Moses face—a face flushed with righteous indignation—that from this angle frightened him. When Gush gave talks in church or as a guest speaker at firesides he would gush, emphatic with a Gospel principle. He'd spread his stocky legs apart, thoughtfully and ever-so-slightly caress his chest with the fingers of one hand, gaze intently into space and lift one eyebrow as if he were in pain. Then he'd talk through his

teeth with such a high-pitched voice the blood would drain out of your face just from watching. This sort of thing made Riley uncomfortable. Wouldn't people think his dad was angry about something? Or strange? But the effect on everyone in the audience was always a certain kind of teary-eyed awe.

Gush had Joan's hairbrush in his hand, the bristles pointed at Riley's heart. His other hand was pressed securely on his son's chest while he continued to tell the story. "Now, children, try to visualize Abraham explaining to his ONLY SON that the offering of the day was not going to be a ram or a sheep," he paused here for purposes of the drama, ". . . but that it was going to be his ONLY SON Isaac." The baby started to fuss and the rocking chair creaked as Joan shifted in it. In the ceiling Riley saw for the first time a thin crack in the plaster that ran to the wall behind the couch like a river on a map.

"I like to think," continued Gush, "that Isaac was a young man, older than Riley here, maybe eighteen or so, and that he had as much faith as Abraham." Riley thought about what it would be like to be eighteen. That if he wasn't so afraid to play team sports, he would choose number eighteen for his jersey. "And that when Isaac learned what the Lord had asked of his father he had so much faith he freely laid down on the stone altar without his father having to bind his hands." Cade, holding the chocolates, asked what "bind his hands" meant, and while Gush explained it, Riley's back started to throb. He tried to shift his weight a little but Gush, lost in his narrative, was pressing down on him so that he couldn't move. Riley could see Gush rolling the handle of the brush through his fingers while he talked about the Lord's commandments, explaining how, sometimes, though the commandments might seem questionable, that the faithful must obey.

"Can you imagine the anguish of Abraham," said Gush, "as he looked into the heavens to offer the sacrificial prayer, and raising the knife above his ONLY SON . . ." Gush raised the hairbrush above his head with a dramatic jerk. Three of his mother's hairs floated blurrily above Riley. ". . . was determined to keep the Lord's commandment?" There was a long pause in

his father's voice. Everyone was quiet, and Riley wondered how much longer he was going to have to lie there. He thought briefly about a homework assignment that was due the following day. Finally, he looked up at Gush, the brush still raised above his head, his face turned upward. Tears were streaming down his face. No one said anything.

"Dad?" Riley finally said. "Can I get up now? This is hurting my back. Dad?"

As he sat up, and straightened his T-shirt, Joan handed Gush a tissue with which he wiped his eyes. Riley looked at Muriel and then at his brother, the box of chocolates finally forgotten in his lap, his own eyes wide with some kind of new appreciation for something. Even though Cade had narked on Riley the week before when he ate half the bag of chocolate chips that Mom was saving for cookies, Riley suddenly felt sorry for his brother. That he hadn't been the one sacrificed. That he hadn't been chosen as he, Riley, had.

After Gush blew his nose, he mentioned how God had stopped Abraham from killing his son and that he provided a ram, trapped in nearby bushes, for them to sacrifice instead. Then Gush bore his testimony about how the Christ died for their sins, that God the Father actually did sacrifice his Son, and that he did so because he loved them, and that all of the faithful were likely to have a test like Abraham's at some point in their lives. They probably wouldn't be asked to sacrifice a child, but it would be very serious and trying, and that was God's plan for his children's purification and perfection.

<center>***</center>

They knelt in family prayer. Afterwards, JoDee opened the box of See's candies, carefully removing the quilted paper that covered the eats inside. She placed the box into the upside down cover, like they did every week at the end of Family Night, and then held the box carefully in front of Jessica who, as always, seemed arrested by all the choices and took forever to decide, attempting to touch each one with a sticky finger while everyone agonized for their turn.

The box was passed from Jessica, who ended up with a candy wrapped in gold foil, on up the line, like the sacrament of bread and water passed at church on silver trays. They were all silent, savoring the creams, the liquid cherries and the nuts, nibbling at the corners of their angular confections to make the reward last, eating half and then, finally, breaking the spell of their pleasure by bargaining for the better half of another sweet, held aloft by a munching sibling.

On the Postum table, forgotten, lay Joan's hairbrush—the weapon—still smoking.

Moving On

Michael Andrew Ellis

So I'm down in Payson helping my father, Wymond, move his new wife's things into storage. The landowner Peg has been renting from is selling out to developers who want the farmland. It's early on a fall Saturday, and Peg, her neighbor Midge, and I are in the kitchen boxing things up. The guys Wymond recruited to lift the heavy stuff haven't shown. Neither have my married, older siblings. But I expected that. They're boycotting this move—and just about anything Wymond does nowadays—to show Mom their unqualified support. Even though I'm here against their wishes and hers, I'm on Mom's side, too.

We are all adults.

Wymond blows into the kitchen just as Midge is stretching a length of tape across the top of a box of wine glasses. She's straddling the box and pressing the sides in so the flaps are flush. Wymond waves his hands wildly.

"No, no, just interlock the flaps. Don't you think so, Peg, dear?"

"She mentioned it," says Midge, "but it's glass. So tighter's better."

Midge appears to be in her late forties. I know she's Mormon, too, because her garments show when she bends over. She has auburn hair with pink highlights, and she's wearing two studs in one ear and a dangling peace sign in the other. Her earthy T-shirt proclaims in fat lime letters, "Every girl loves a dirty cowboy." No wedding ring that I can see.

Of the three of us children, I guess I should be the most upset. For one thing, I learned about everything in Wymond's letter that arrived a week before I was to come home from my mission in the Ukraine. He explained that he'd lost his testimony for the various reasons he listed and that he was tired of "living a lie" being an active member of the Church. He said he hadn't

wanted a divorce, but that Mom had rejected *him*, because he couldn't be the man she'd married anymore.

Mom's email soon followed, once she knew herself, I guess. In a departure from her usually uplifting and encouraging emails, she spoke of her resignation and her ensuing depression, and how she couldn't help but feel an unbearable sense of failure. She'd tried hard to hold things together over the years. All of us children knew that.

By the time I'd come home, it wasn't home anymore. The house I'd grown up in had been sold. Wymond had taken his share of the sizable amount of equity and disappeared. Mom had moved into a smaller place.

"A little tape won't hurt, Wym," says Peg. "'Specially on them boxes with the fragiles." "Wym" is Peg's pet name for Wymond. It fits.

"Take no chances with glass, 'Wym,'" I say, agreeing.

"I just think that interlocking the flaps is more practical," says Wymond, adjusting his glasses. The big transitional lenses are dark from his having just come inside. "It's a temporary move. No sense in dealing with all that tape, Peg."

Peg starts to say something, but then just shrugs. Midge, undeterred, moves her hand back and forth over the tape to smooth out any bubbles. She seems to enjoy flouting Wymond.

Two years younger than Wymond's fifty-two, Peg looks even younger. Maybe late thirties, early forties. Being part Japanese has helped. She has round brown eyes and small pink lips, and the orange hair that comes from bleaching brown hair blond. Long and straight, it's wound up and pinned with a pencil. Except for the youthful look, I don't see what has attracted Wymond to Peg over Mom. And even on that point, my old seminary teacher, Brother Wright, used to say that forever love is forever *young* love, meaning each spouse sees the other as on the day they first fell for each other. That's the way it's supposed to be.

I first learned about Peg when I finally met Wymond for lunch at some sub joint a full month after I'd been home. (I said he'd disappeared. He hadn't met me at the airport, nor had he come to my homecoming sacrament meeting, and I could never seem to

reach him by phone either, until he called me about doing lunch.) I was raring to dump on him, but before I could get a word in, he announced his engagement to Peg. Said he'd found her in the library at the U researching Wild West women, and that she's the one for him. Said they'd been vacationing in Hawaii for the past few weeks, that he'd meant to call, but hadn't known quite what to say at the time, and thought it would be better in person. To show him how much I thought of him moving on with his life so fast, I left without finishing my sandwich. I didn't attend the wedding up at Sundance either. Later, when I finally answered his phone calls, he asked me to help him move Peg's stuff. Said we could talk. I wanted to. I wanted to blow up at him. I wanted to make him feel bad. That's what got me here, mainly, but more than all that was my mission president's instruction to me before I came home that I was to love my father, no matter what.

My cell phone buzzes. It's Ash. She texts, *how's it going?* I text back that we've just been boxing stuff, haven't talked yet. She encourages patience. I punch in an eye-rolling smiley.

Ash and I are practically engaged. My high school sweet heart; she waited for me. I haven't proposed yet, but we're talking marriage. I never realized how many ads for rings there are around here until I thought about buying one.

Wymond's saying we ought to get the piano on the pickup first, and then pack smaller boxes around it. His whiny voice is coming from the front room. I walk over and find the front door open. A Home Depot pickup is backed up to the stairs, its tailgate down, just about level with the porch. Wymond has never owned a truck, and he especially hates the souped-up monster ones, as common as chapels around here.

"By ourselves?" I ask. "How many pianos have you moved before?"

"What else are we gonna do? My guys are no shows, and no priesthood peter goody-goody is gonna help an apostate without wanting something in return," says Wymond, except he qualifies "apostate" with the implication that God has damned him somehow.

Just to get through the day, I'm trying to shrug off his swearing and his barbs toward the Church. Brother Wright used to say that

people like Wymond get bitter. They leave the Church, but can't seem to leave it alone. Maybe it's from some sort of subconscious self-loathing. I don't know for sure. But I do know that Wymond seems so small now compared to the man and a half he once was in my eyes. I remember him leading our family in regular scripture study and prayer. I remember the fun family night activities he used to come up with. I remember the priesthood blessings he gave me when I was sick or worried about something. He even ordained me an elder and participated in setting me apart as a missionary. But now, he's just like any other man of the world.

"Who'd you call?" I ask.

"No one you know. Now, don't just stand there like a jackass. Grab hold."

At one end of the piano, Wymond's looking from one side to the other, feeling for a handhold. I come stand at the other end with my hands in my pockets.

"We need help," I say. "And will you please stop swearing so much around me?"

"What the, that's not even a swear. It's a *bona fide* animal that stands around looking stubborn stupid. Come on, we'll just take baby steps."

"Hold your horses, Wym," says Peg, entering the room with Midge. "Don't go breaking your back on my account. Midge here just called her husband."

"We don't need church help."

"Help is help, Wym," says Peg. "We'll take it."

"Yeah," I say, "who said anything about church? Her husband's coming."

"They *always* want something in return," says Wymond.

"Well then," says Peg, in all innocence apparently, "I don't mind whipping up a green jello salad for them."

"It's not like we want your soul or anything," says Midge, grinning.

Wymond smirks. Then we all turn as some hulk fills the doorway. He's wearing a tight, earthy T-shirt too, except its fat lime letters read, "I'm the dirty cowboy." His muscles are toned and

distinct, and he looks like he just stepped out of an Arnold Friberg painting. A skinny young man stands behind him.

Midge introduces Jack and their son, Billy.

"Let's wrestle this piano then," says Jack. "I eat pianos for breakfast. Places, men."

"Careful with them legs, boys," says Peg. "That was my grandma's piano."

Shuffling, we roll the piano toward the door and then, heaving, just about make it through when Wymond cries out for a rest and drops his corner. Bent over and breathing heavily, he blows a lock of his long, gray, positively juvenile hair from his eyes and rubs his wrists. We ask whether he's all right. He nods and coughs. Peg brings him a cup of water. He gulps it down and hands the cup back.

"I'm ready," he says, hoarsely.

"Good on ya," says Jack. "On three then, One—"

"Don't count, just lift," says Wymond.

We get the piano onto the truck. Wymond's gray mop is matted down on his forehead. He removes his glasses and cleans the lenses with his shirt. I glimpse the expanse of pale, hairy flesh where I used to see cotton mesh. He murmurs a thank you all around.

"Where you moving to?" asks Jack.

Breathing out audibly, Wymond steps back onto the porch and hitches his cargo pants up from their default slack position below his protuberant belly.

"My place is small," he says, "so we're moving Peg's stuff into storage till our ranch house is built."

"Sounds great," says Jack. "If you need help on the next move, just holler."

"We'll be sure to do that."

Yeah right, I think.

"So, what's next?" asks Billy.

"A dresser. Lots of boxes," says Wymond. "Just fit them in around the piano. We can get the other furniture on the next run."

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In the master bedroom, I find Peg's dresser. Its five drawers have already been stacked up on the floor. I pick up two. The top one

has panties of various pastels, some feminine hygiene products, cheap jewelry, and other personal items, including a framed photo of Peg and a man in a ten-gallon hat embracing each other in a Western setting. As I pass Peg in the hallway, she winces and draws a pair of undies over the picture.

"The ex," she explains. "Been meaning to get rid of that."

Mom told me that Peg was married before. Although I don't know much about Peg, my first thought at the time was that the whole situation was made more complicated, what with Wymond and her coming together, respectively, from broken marriages. Brother Wright told me once that most marriages fail because of selfishness. I know that's true for Wymond. I remember him fighting with Mom about money, household chores, and his spending too much time doing stuff without her.

Then I notice that Peg's holding a porcelain wedding cake topper—a cowboy groom and his bride in dated formal wear, dancing—and I ask her about it.

"Yeah, it's your dad's and mine, from our wedding. It's real special, because my grandma and my mama used it, and I've used it twice now."

Funny thing, the Wymond I knew before my mission despised cowboy culture: the swaggering presence, the pickup trucks, the hyper-patriotism, and the country music that extols it all.

"Wymond's not the cowboy type," I say.

"You'd be surprised," says Peg. "He ain't dressing the part yet, but he's a cowboy."

When I reach the front door, Jack is waving in another pickup. It's backed up toward the house at an angle to the rental. Wymond comes out laden with a couple boxes, and then Jack introduces us to the reinforcements, the Knox brothers, who live nearby.

"Great," says Wymond. "Grab just about anything. Lady's got lots of stuff."

They go inside, and he deposits his load. I set my two drawers on the tailgate of the empty truck, off to the side, so they're not in the way when the dresser comes.

"Why don't you cover that piano, Wym?" says Peg. "They're calling for rain, you know."

She's holding a taped-up box labeled "China."

"It's kind of tough to do that now, dear, with all these boxes in the way," says Wymond.

"You gonna tie it down, then?"

"It's not going anywhere. Look." He steps off and lifts the tailgate. "See? This'll be up."

"Well, can't someone ride in back to keep an eye on it? It was grandma's, you know."

"Sure, I guess," says Wymond, "if it'll make you feel better."

"What about this china, Wym? Set this up there and it's right near tipping over the side."

"Put it on the other truck."

"Can't you just tuck a tarp in around that piano, Wym?" says Peg, squinting at the sky.

"I just don't think we need to, hon," says Wymond. "We're only going down the hill."

"I'll cover everything, Peg, and tie it down," I say, as I take the box of china from her. It's evident that Wymond's reluctance to be guided by a woman hasn't changed.

"Do what you need to, then," says Wymond. He turns to go inside right when the Knox brothers are coming out with the dresser. He sidesteps just in time to avoid smashing his face against Howie's back. When they've passed, he tries again, but this time he meets Jack's hairy arms carrying out the dresser's remaining three drawers. Finding all this amusing, Peg and I smile at each other, and maybe, we're laughing inside, too.

When he's finally gone in, I say to Peg, "You got some rope, and a tarp maybe?"

Nodding, she stares ahead absently, then says, "Wym's a good man."

Not quite a question.

"He can be," I say.

"I expect we're all a mix."

"Yeah, a little lower than the angels and all that."

"If you believe in angels."

"Either way, we fall short of our potential more than not."

"Ain't that the truth."

Peg interlocks her fingers and stretches, cracking her knuckles. She walks to the swing at the end of the porch and sits down. Then, just as I'm about to go hunt up some rope and a tarp, thinking she forgot, she waves me over, saying, "Wait, let's take a breather."

She smoothes a loose strand of her orange hair back in place and pats the seat beside her. I tell her I'll stand, and I lean back against the rail. She licks her lips.

"What's your mama like, Chase?"

She wants to know how she measures up. I push off the rail, turn around, and grip it. The empty truck is filling up with furniture and boxes. "Peg, listen," I say, "I'm just here to help out, that's all."

"It's a simple question."

"You'll have to ask Wymond, then."

"I expect she's a better woman than he lets on."

It figures. I want to tell her she expects right, that Mom is *the* better woman. But it doesn't seem right to spite her. I turn to face her.

"I'm sorry," I say, "I just think it's better I don't say anything one way or the other."

"I ain't trying to make you take sides," she says. "I know whose side you're on. Just curious, that's all. You're twenty-one, right?"

"Yeah."

"You got a girlfriend?"

"Yeah."

"Thinking marriage?"

"Possibly."

"Ain't you return missionaries supposed to decompress some before you up and get hitched?"

Amused by this, I say, "Usually, it's a good idea, but Ash and I have known each other a long time."

"'Ash,' that's a pretty name," she says. Then, leaning forward, she plants both boots together, rests her elbows on her knees, and clasps her hands. Her expression is no-nonsense. "Listen, you don't have to tell me about your mama. Maybe it's no fair question. Maybe I'll meet her sometime. But there's something you gotta understand, to smooth things over with your daddy, cause he still wants a relationship with you."

"What's that?"

"Let me ask you a couple questions. Do you know, today, about every trial, frustration, disappointment, failure, success, and so on, you and Ash will meet or have together?"

"No, course not."

"OK, then, do you know, today, how you and Ash will feel about each other ten, twenty, thirty years from now, when all that time is filled up with the experience of life?"

"I hope it'll be the same, but deeper."

"That's a good hope, for sure. My point is people change, Chase. They can become a completely different person from the one you married, from the one you've known since childhood, even. And I'm just talking about in a lifetime. Your daddy says you Mormons commit yourselves to an eternity with one partner, mostly. Such highfalutin expectations! What I'm saying is you shouldn't hold what happened against your daddy, son. That's life. He's still family."

"Let's not go there. It's not you I'm upset at. Anyway, I can and I will hold it against him." I start to walk toward the door, then turn back and say, "But you know, I will tell you something about my mom. She didn't put up with Wymond's crap. She put him in his place, as her equal. And he seemed to get along fine, as long as he treated her as such. Now, he's getting older, and you've married all the old-age problems and dispositions my mom had steeled herself to endure from the get-go, and through eternity, even. At least she has memories of a kinder Wymond Helm that would've got her through."

Peg pushes off. The swing creaks, complains.

"Well, different women, different touch brings out the man you want," she says.

I step closer. "You don't know Wymond then."

"You two just gonna sit on your asses and jaw all day while the rest of us load the trucks?" says Wymond from the doorway. He's red-faced and straining to carry a heavy box, but he's let a smile twist his habitual scowl, which softens the severity of this tongue-lashing. Just a little.

Peg digs her heels in to stop the swing. It rocks violently.

"Let me get that stuff for you," she says to me. "And you just might want to think about how much your girlfriend may have changed already in the two years you been gone."

***

Wymond has let me drive. He sits on the opposite side of the bench near the open window and neglects his seatbelt. Billy's in back, keeping an eye on the load. Jack and the Knox brothers follow us in the other truck. Our two trucks pace down the hill. On the other side of the valley, the underbellies of clouds hang in tatters, a sign of rain bearing down on us. Wymond and I haven't spoken since we left the house. I don't know why I haven't torn into him yet, or what I'm waiting for. Exercising restraint, I guess.

"I suppose by now you want some kind of comp inventory with your old man," says Wymond.

"Yes," I say, cautiously, "we haven't talked about the elephant in the room. You've made yourself scarce."

"You wanna go first, then?"

"Sure, I—"

"Wait," he cuts in. "Let me. I know Ash waited for you. You thinking of getting married right off your mission?"

"Don't make this about me," I say. "This, this here, I want to talk about what you've done."

"You'll be making the same mistake I did, Chase. What is it, you want the sex? You two can't keep your hands off each other?"

"Oh yeah, right, that means a lot coming from the general authority on shotgun weddings."

Wymond smoothes his hair back with both hands, looks out the window, then back at me.

"Chase, son, what are you and Ash going to live on?"

"She's got a part-time job and just a year of school left."

"A part-time job," he says with a smirk. "What's going to happen when she has to quit because a kid comes along? Are you going to give up your education? Rent, utilities, groceries, insurance, a car and gas, a dozen other expenses. The burden is on you in Mormon culture. Young love is all fairytale and fantasy till you throw real life into the mix, believe me."

"I have a hard time taking advice from the likes of you, *Father*," I say, trying to switch the focus away from me.

My cell phone buzzes again. I know it's Ash, but I don't look at it.

"Yeah, well, it's in the application that things get screwed up. You'll see," he says. "You gonna answer that?"

His face is flushed and his hand grips the door handle.

"Just because *you* screwed up doesn't mean the principles aren't sound," I say, preachy-like. "I may not be married yet, and maybe some of my ideas are just ideals, but I've seen good marriages. I've seen old couples who talk of the thrill of holding hands across the kitchen table, after all their years together. That's enduring love. I want that. And I wanted it for you and Mom."

We turn onto the street where the storage shed is located.

"You can't judge a couple by their Facebook page, son. Anyway, your mom and I never had that depth. After a while, our marriage was practical, mundane, planned out—no spontaneity. The daily routine sucked the marrow out of it, left a dry bone. I stuck with it for the sake of you kids, and because I couldn't face that I wasn't happy." Here he pauses to compose himself, then continues, "Someone once said that you want to marry someone who, when you're both empty nesters and out on the porch together, you can still have a stimulating conversation with. I think your mom and I would have fought all the time, or longed for release in respective silence. But enough of this, we're here."

I key in the code Wymond tells me and we pass into the maze of pathways and metal boxes when the rain hits.

"Thank you for covering the load," says Wymond. "Save me a lot of trouble with Peg."

A little surprised, I nod. Then, considering what he's said, I realize he's right about one thing. Looking back, my parents didn't seem to enjoy being alone together. Their conversation was mostly about day-to-day things: who's taking the kids where, what happened at work, whose turn it was to do such-and-such chore, and so on. There was no forget-the-world passion between them, for the cares of the world were always at the forefront of Mom's mind. She's the biblical Martha, if there ever was one.

I think of Ash's text waiting for me, her sometimes hyperactive concern for me, and wonder if I'm not in some way considering marrying someone like my mother.

We sit in the trucks and wait for the rain to quit before we start unloading. The air between us heavy, Wymond and I hardly speak. Ash buzzes me several times, but I don't answer. Wymond hears it and just smirks. Then, after we've unloaded the trucks and locked up the storage box, he and I begin the drive back to Peg's. The others don't come back with us. We get another shower. The windshield fills with raindrops; the wipers sweep it clear. I ask the question that has been gnawing me the last hour or so.

"Did you think that because we kids are grown up, the divorce wouldn't affect us?"

"No, but I did expect you to be adults about it."

"It's kind of funny how 'being an adult' about things seems to mean you tolerate all sorts of bad behavior."

"No, it means you understand that different people live different lives, for better or worse, and you have to respect that. Not everyone's Mormon, son."

"But you're not supposed to be one of *them*. You're supposed to be one of *us*. Why did you have to leave everything?"

"I told you why in the letter. Enough said."

"No, it's not. You could've had faith."

"Could've, would've, should've. I don't have much more to say about it. What's done is done. I did love your mother, and I do care about her and you kids. I'm not heartless. She got half my 401k, which wasn't chump change, half the money from the sale of the house, and I'm paying her alimony, long enough for her to get trained and find a job."

"Money covers a lot of sins, doesn't it?" I say, disgusted he thinks his magnanimity makes everything all right.

"Who knew an RM could be such a smart-ass?" he says, grinning. "How is she doing?"

"You wanna know because you think you're obligated somehow?"

"I do have some obligation—"

"But not to care."

"I would like to know, really."

"Fine. She's moving on, too."

"Come on. You're not being sincere."

I grip the steering wheel at ten and two, my wrists arched, my knuckles white hot.

"You don't have to care anymore. What is it you've just got to know?"

"That she's finding a way to be happy again."

"She's not. She blames herself. She cries every day. You left a huge hole, and there's nothing you can do about it now, so just drop it."

"It's not her fault, son. Tell her that. It's not anyone's fault. It's just life."

"No, Father," I spit out, my voice quivering. "It *is* your fault. It's all your fault. Your loss of faith in the Church destroyed everything."

He stares straight ahead, solemn.

"Fair enough," he says at last. "I'll take it. I am sorry. I am. But after being one woman's project for more than twenty years, you want to free her from her need to 'fix' you and free yourself from the idea that you need to be 'fixed' to be accepted. Sometimes, you show more love and respect for each other by separating than you do by desperately holding it together."

I relax my grip on the wheel. Out my window, the valley is a crisp fall green, the air clear of the afternoon haze, and the western range dark and hard beneath the setting sun. I wonder why he thinks Peg will be any different, but don't say anything.

"Look," he says, when the silence has become unbearable, "if you do end up marrying Ash sooner than later, against all my advice, I'm here to tell you that no mere mission companionship prepares you for what she wants. You'll see. How often did she buzz you since you got here? It's already started. She'll want you to meet the image of a man she has in mind, and if for any reason you're not that man, she'll want you to *change*."

"Isn't that the point?" I ask. "To lose yourself, to find yourself? What if the person you *really* are is on the other side of that sacrifice?"

"No, the point is to know yourself, first."

I pull up to the house and turn off the engine. I feel sad that so much in my life I was so sure about has changed, and there wasn't anything I could do to stop it. I jangle the keys.

"Listen, son," he says, "two lives collide like atoms, and it's beautiful or destructive, or both. Just don't treat marriage like it's something to check off your TO-DO list, all right?"

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

We find Peg on her hands and knees scrubbing the kitchen tile with a thick sponge. Midge is gone. The house is empty. A shell.

"I've got you all boxed away," Wymond announces cheerfully.

"Don't you keep a lid on me too long now."

Standing over her and reaching down, like he used to do with Mom, Wymond pulls Peg up from the floor. They forget I'm here, or else Wymond is telling me "in your face" when they kiss. It's no peck on the lips. I lean against the kitchen doorway, watching them, and I wonder how it is that they seem to have a good marriage, even without the gospel in their lives. It doesn't seem possible, or fair, but they do, somehow.

And I will have to learn to swallow it.

Now my dad is leading his wife in a kind of waltz around the kitchen, increasing speed as they whirl. They spin and spin, and then their clasped hands swing around and knock a small, taped-up box off the counter. It flies into the wall and then drops on the tile with a thud. Peg falls to her knees.

"Oh God, Wym," she cries.

"What? What is it?" he asks.

She shakes the box gently, and we all hear the muffled sound of one piece of solid something.

"It's our cake topper," she says, relieved. "You had me worried, Wym. It's such a fragile little thing."

Later, sitting alone in my car in the driveway, I text Ash and tell her we need to talk.

Pre-Mortal Existence and the Problem of Suffering: Terryl Givens and the Heterodox Traditions

Terryl L. Givens. *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 400 pp. Hardback: $99; also available in paperback: $24.95. ISBN: 978-0195313901.

Reviewed by James McLachlan

Terryl Givens's work has, with good reason, become quite popular in Mormon circles over the past few years. Since *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (1997), he has become the most prolific and perhaps most important scholar writing about Mormon culture and theology today. He is difficult to categorize. He doesn't quite fit the traditional roles of historian, literary critic, or theologian. He was trained in English literature at the University of North Carolina and teaches it at the University of Richmond, where he is Bostwick Professor of English; his early work was on the theory of mimesis. But the key to understanding his approach is his early graduate studies at Cornell where he studied Western Intellectual History. He is less a theologian or historian than an historian of ideas in the tradition of Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873–1962) and his classic text *The Great Chain of Being* (1936). *When Souls Had Wings* is perhaps the crowning example of this way of thinking. In this book, Givens places the Mormon belief in the preexistence of the soul within a Western context, leaning heavily on the Platonic tradition in which the preexisting human soul falls into time from timeless eternity, and where God, in His perfection, is exempt from the trials of change and evolution. This paper is not a critique of what Givens has accomplished; rather, it is an exploration of other avenues of thought that add to our understanding of non-orthodox Christian conceptions of the preexistence. Heterodox thinkers such as Jacob Boehme, F. W. J. Schelling, and Nicolas Berdyaev offered alternative, non-Platonic versions of pre-mortal existence that have important implications

for thinking about the problem of suffering and perhaps thinking about LDS doctrine. It is here where my disagreements with Givens's account emerge. I think this heterodox tradition offers important alternate resources for Mormon theology, while Givens folds them into the Platonic mainstream.

When Souls Had Wings

When Souls Had Wings traces the idea of pre-existence from ancient Mesopotamia to the present. It suffers from the flattening of context and hasty journey through the past that all "history of ideas" books do. Indeed, Mormons who purchase it may be disappointed when they turn to the explicit discussion of Joseph Smith's and the Latter-day Saints' contributions to the idea of pre-mortal existence and discover it covers a scant six pages (212–18) in a book of over 300 pages—but they shouldn't be. Rather, the book reveals that their heterodox doctrine of pre-mortal existence has a long history.

The first chapter begins with a discussion of Ancient Near Eastern traditions: the ancient Mesopotamian story of the gods' creation of a race of clay slaves who, when imbued with divine element (taken from the slain god We), become humans. The final chapter concludes with a consideration of neo-Darwinism as a materialist incarnation of the ideas of pre-mortal existence (306–17). This story ties the first (pre-Platonist) chapter and the initial discussion of ideas about the pre-mortal existence of humans to the materialist, post-Platonist, neo-Darwinian forms, neatly bookending the discussion. This structure also privileges the inherently Platonic nature underlying the multiple versions of pre-mortal existence that Givens discusses. The Platonic foundation spread via Middle Eastern conceptions of pre-mortal existence until it gradually diminished in the twentieth century. It also is tied to the idea there is some portion of the eternal divine in humans—a theme that runs throughout the history of the concept of pre-mortal existence. Givens's central point is that belief in pre-mortal existence repeatedly resurfaces throughout the Western traditions (be they secular, pagan, Jewish, or Christian) despite the adamant opposition of Christian orthodoxy.

Chapter 2, "Classical Varieties," deals with Plato's theory of forms and creation *ex materia*, in which a demiurge or demigod assembled the preexisting material chaos of the receptacle by molding it to take on the order of eternal ideals.[1] This Platonic version of pre-mortal existence returns again and again in history: in Christianity with Origen, in the Cambridge Platonists, and in several of the Romantics.

For Givens, the Middle Eastern and Greek traditions run parallel to each other: in the first few chapters of the book, they often interact, but are still somewhat distinct. Chapters 3–5 discuss this complex relationship. In chapter 3, for example, the Middle Eastern and classical Greek traditions converge in the work of the Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE–50 CE), who claimed that Moses had conceived of preexisting matter before Plato and used Genesis 1 to prove his point (41). Givens also cites Philo's un-Platonic positive fall into the body. Philo claimed that the unembodied soul was incomplete if bereft of physical form, yet true to the Platonic vision the completion of the soul's journey was ultimately found in the return to the non-physical (42–47).

The Jewish traditions that culminate in the Pseudepigrapha and New Testament, however, are less Platonic. In John 9, another of the recurring themes in the history of the idea of pre-mortal existence emerges: that pre-mortal existence may be used as an answer for the problem of suffering. The tension between Middle Eastern and Greek traditions develops in chapter 4, entitled "Neo-Platonism and the Church Fathers." Neoplatonism offered a temptingly pantheistic view in which all souls are divine and thus grounded in the One. Its founder, Plotinus (205–270 CE), was a powerful philosophical influence on a whole set of Christian thinkers ranging from Origen, who championed pre-mortal existence, to Augustine, who championed its expulsion from the doctrine of the Western Church. Givens reveals the complexity of early Christian arguments on pre-existence by showing how they were intertwined with Platonism as well as with Middle Eastern sources. Several evangelical thinkers in *The New Mormon Challenge* and elsewhere refer to the pre-existence, the eternity of element, and creation *ex materia* as proof that Mormons are more Greek

than Judeo-Christian.[2] And indeed, Givens shows how intermeshed the Greek and Middle Eastern traditions become in the history of early Christianity. Origen, a champion of the various Christian versions of the pre-existence, is plainly a Platonist—but then so is Augustine, the subject of chapter 5, "Augustine and the Formation of Orthodoxy," who banished the notion of pre-existence from traditional Christianity by using Platonic notions of divine perfection to emphasize God's self-sufficiency. The emergence of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* assured God's ontological separation from creation and demands a beginning of time and space (322), something we will consider more fully a bit later.

The final seven chapters of the book demonstrate that the power of the doctrine of pre-mortal existence lies in its capacity to answer questions of suffering and justice. The champions of preexistence that emerge in these chapters include the Cambridge Platonists, Henry Moore and Anne Conway, the German Romantic theologians F. W. J. Schelling and Julius Müller, American Romantic Edward Beecher, and Russian religious existentialist Nicholas Berdyaev. It is an impressive assemblage that hopefully will encourage LDS scholars to continue work to elucidate a rich and often unexamined tradition.

The few pages that Givens devotes to Mormonism are brief but quite good. He notes that the traditional objection to the Platonic version of pre-existence—or to any other idea that might posit the actual independent existence of the pre-mortal entities—is that offered by the liberal Protestant church historian and theologian Adolf Von Harnack. Such ideas pose a threat to God's sovereignty; "The primary idea is not to ennoble the creature, but to bring to light the wisdom and power of God" (213). But as Givens notes, Joseph Smith "made a career of promulgating ideas that were outrageous affronts to Christian orthodoxies—and his radical critique of conventional notions of God's sovereignty like the one defended by Harnack was no exception" (213). Givens then quotes Doctrine and Covenants 93:29–30 and comments on its "cryptic philosophical brevity and hermetic undertones" (213); he also points out Smith's understanding that "Personal Beings alone have the source of their existence in free self-determination" (215).

Givens argues that Smith is one of the few Christian thinkers who did not derive his idea of pre-existence from Plato. There have been previous efforts to show Smith's relation to non-Platonic versions of pre-existence: John L. Brooke attempted to link him to Hermeticism and alchemy, Harold Bloom to Jewish theurgy (216). Givens notes that for Plato, the fall is a fall into physicality; for Smith the reverse is true: only the absolutely evil are pure spirit and have no body.

Givens's most interesting comments concern the King Follett Discourse and the ambiguity in the text that has caused perennial arguments about whether human beings are eternal individuals in relation to God or were "born" through God's organization of a spiritual "substance":

> On that occasion he remarked that he desired "to reason more on the spirit of man" and asserted that "intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it." That little indefinite article "a" before spirit is a crucial and contested item, for the question not clearly resolved in Smith's spiritual anthropology has to do with the relationship between the terms intelligence and spirit. (217)

Givens notes that "from the Middle Ages through Shakespeare and Milton and into the nineteenth century, 'intelligence' had the meaning of an incorporeal or spirit being" (217), and that B. H. Roberts was persuaded that "the two terms were synonymous. God did not fashion or beget "intelligence" into individual spirits" (217). But, he writes, this view has not been persuasive to Mormon leaders who have often maintained that God fashioned "intelligences" out of an eternal substance, "intelligence." For example, James Talmage called a spirit "an organized intelligence," Orson Whitney called God "the Begetter of [the human] spirit in the eternal worlds," and Bruce R. McConkie claimed, "We were born as the spirit children of God the Father. Through that birth process spirit element was organized into intelligent entities."[3]

While Givens highlights just how radically heterodox Mormon traditions of pre-mortal existence are in comparison to the mainstream of Christian Platonism, he underestimates the divergence

from that tradition that began with Jacob Boehme. Boehme abandoned traditional notions of perfection. Where Plato saw the world as the dim material reflection of timeless perfect eternity, Boehme, Schelling, and Berdyaev saw a God creating Him/Herself in relation to the world. While the Platonic thinkers Philo, Thomas Traherne, Henry Moore, and Anne Conway told a positive story of the fall and saw the perfection of humanity through its pilgrimage in the world, Boehme, Schelling, and Berdyaev made the radical move of including God as a participant in this pilgrimage. Their distinction between a notion of eternal, changeless divine and an evolutionary idea of divine perfection can be focused in the question "Is God/The Divine with the world greater than God/the Divine alone?" The way we think about this question is consequential in many aspects of religious thought, and particularly in regard to questions about evil and suffering.

The Problem of Evil

Strange! that you should not have suspected years ago—centuries, ages, eons, ago!—for you have existed, companionless, through all the eternities. Strange, indeed, that you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction! Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane—like all dreams: a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell—mouths mercy and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man,

instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him![4]

The quotation above, taken from the closing lines of *The Mysterious Stranger*, indicates the depth of Mark Twain's rebellion against his Calvinist upbringing and its God, an omnipotent creator of heaven and earth "who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones." Twain's sentiment is not uncommon in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. Two common examples used in introductory discussions of the problem of evil are Ivan's decision to return his admission ticket to God in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Rieux's objections to Paneloux's sermon on suffering in Albert Camus's *The Plague*. (One mistake often made in introductory philosophy of religion courses is to cite these literary examples and then move to particular explications of the logical problem of evil, such as J. L. Mackie's or H. J. McClosky's, and then move onto Alvin Plantinga, William Hasker, and Peter Van Ingen's defenses of traditional theism while overlooking the fact that Ivan and Rieux are not concerned with the logical problem of evil.) Ivan Karamazov says he accepts the existence of God, even accepts the logical proof of his goodness, but still wishes to return his ticket to existence.[5] Rieux contends that in practice, no one can believe in an omnipotent God, and that if he believed in such a God "he would cease curing the sick and leave that to Him."[6]

The point Dostoevsky and Camus make through Ivan and Rieux is that God needs to be involved in "the same humiliating adventure as mankind's, its ineffectual power being the equivalent of our ineffectual condition."[7] Camus's description of the rebel's desired relationship with God echoes William James's insistence that God "be no gentleman. . . . His menial services are needed in the dust of our human trials, even more than his dignity is needed in the empyrean."[8] While Augustine held that creaturely suffering is but the dark speck in a landscape—the contrast that forms the greater beauty of the whole work of art that is God's creation—Dostoevsky, Camus, and James suggested that to forsake

the suffering individuals for the beauty of the whole is a betrayal of those who must sit in that dark part of the picture.

The idea that creation is a masterwork painted by the great artist God has deep roots in Western religious traditions. The origins of the idea that evil can be explained in terms of an aesthetic contrast lie in Platonic thought, which envisions a divine perfection beyond the suffering and changeable nature of this world in an eternity where "moth doth not corrupt." The underlying aesthetic ideal of Platonic perfection is present every time someone utters, "it's all part of God's plan," when faced with tragedy—this response reflects an implicitly held belief in an unseen yet wholly complete picture or map in which the disturbingly illogical events cohere in order to create meaning. Even thinkers as divergent as Origen and Augustine conceived of such a divine perfection devoid of change or relation. This horizon of Platonic perfection oriented Origen's ideas of the pre-existence of souls and universal salvation in God. It is also present in Augustine's denial of both of these ideas, appearing instead in his affirmation of predestination and original sin.

Platonism, Pre-existence, and the Problem of Theodicy

Pre-existence has often been used as an explanation for the problem of evil and suffering. For example, the Hindu theories of karma explain why some of our brothers and sisters sit in the dark part of the picture. The concept of reincarnation is used in *The Laws of Manu* to instruct us that if a person of the highest caste, a Brahman, were to fall "from his duty" he would suffer through a shameful and degrading reincarnation.[9] Early Christians also used pre-existence to justify gross inequality in the distribution of joy and pain in the world since the Fall. Within Mormonism, B. H. Roberts proposed the unofficial but unfortunately tenacious notion that the inequality we find in this mortal existence is a result of personal valiance, or the lack of it, in the pre-existence.[10] Mormons have used this unofficial explanation of the problem of evil to justify the denial of priesthood to Blacks as well as other kinds of racial and social inequality.[11] In the third century, Origen provided the clearest Christian doctrine of pre-mortal existence. Origen took

the Platonic philosophical traditions already Christianized during the previous two centuries and elucidated a Christian Neoplatonic vision of God's creation that included the eternity of souls in God, the *ex nihilo* creation of the world, the fall from perfect unity, and the eventual return to harmony with the One God.

Neoplatonism continued to develop throughout the history of early Christianity, and as it did so it often utilized the logic of the pre-existence of souls to explain injustices. Consider this quotation from Aeneas of Gaza (d. 518 CE) that Givens provides:

> If we deny the preexistence of souls, how is it possible for the wicked to prosper and for the righteous ones to live in idle circumstances? How can one accept the fact that people are born blind or that some die immediately after they are born, while others reach a very old age.[12]

In Aeneas's day, however, the doctrine of pre-existence was in retreat. After many years of considering the problem of suffering, Augustine came to an aesthetic solution by asserting that after a long struggle the faithful will receive a vision of the beauty of the whole of creation that will answer all questions about the seeming injustices of this world:

> To us is promised a vision of beauty—the beauty of whose imitation all other things are beautiful, and by comparison which all other things are unsightly" whosoever will have glimpsed this beauty—and he will see it, who lives well, prays well, studies well—how will it ever trouble him why one man, desiring to have children, has them not, while another man casts out his own offspring as being unduly numerous; why one man hates children before they are born, and another man loves them after birth, or how it is not absurd that nothing will come to pass which is not with God—and therefore it is inevitable that all things come into being in accordance with order—and nevertheless God is not petitioned in vain?[13]

According to Augustine, if we study and pray well, we will have a vision of beauty that will answer the problem of theodicy. In short, not only our concerns about the horrible suffering of creatures

but also those about the terrible and unjust distribution of such suffering will vanish, swallowed up in the vision of God.

Augustine's aesthetic solution to the problem of suffering is based on a Christian Platonist view of being and its ultimate perfection. Plato's notion of perfection is presented in his discourse on love and beauty in *The Symposium*:

> But what if a man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colors and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities for he has hold not of an image but of a reality, and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may.[14]

Here is eternity with no risk and no attachment to a particular, finite person. Plato's desire is for the eternal absolute purity beyond individuals, not "clogged with the pollutions of mortality." One loves nothing but the ideal untouched by the world and the world is only real in so far as it participates in the ideal. Here people do not love another as individuals, but for the eternal that is within them. We escape the pollutions of mortality and of change in the immaculate beauty of changeless eternity.

This Platonic conception of the ideal as the real is at the heart of Augustine's aesthetic solution to the problem of evil. God, from eternity, sees the entire temporal spatial unity: the light and the darkness together complete the beauty of the composition. As Plotinus wrote, "We are like people ignorant of painting who complain that the colours are not beautiful everywhere in the picture: but the Artist has laid on the appropriate tint to every spot."[15] Like Plato and Plotinus, for Augustine the existence darkness in the picture only enhances the perfection of the whole. Suffering is an illusion in this world of shadows. He writes that this contrast, brought about in part by the disparate wills of creatures, enhances the beauty of the whole: "I no longer desired a better world, because my thoughts

ranged over all, and with sounder judgment I reflected that the things above were better than those below, yet that all creation together was better than the higher things alone."[16] This is the Christian version of the famous Great Chain of Being, in which the whole harmonizes all its parts.

This vision of beauty—which includes the suffering of billions of creatures of all sorts—is the kind of solution to the problem of evil that Mark Twain finds insane in *The Mysterious Stranger*, that causes Ivan Karamazov to desire to turn in his admission ticket to the play of life, and against which Doctor Rieux rebels. It is intimately related to Augustine's championing of predestination, for the omnipotent and omniscient God who creates all things *ex nihilo* also sees, from eternity, the whole as one great masterwork.[17]

Heterodox Personalism: Boehme, Schelling, Berdyaev, and Non-Platonist Pre-Existence

Mormons have a soft spot for Plato's *Timaeus*. Givens quotes from it: "He who framed this whole universe . . . was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything. And so, being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as was possible."[18] In the King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith also asserted that God organized the universe because he wanted others to be able to "advance like Himself." A closer look at the quotation from Plato helps us not only to understand its resonances with the King Follett Discourse but also to see how Plato's and Smith's ideas are ultimately distinct.

Though Augustine's theisms reflect Plato, the reverse is not true. In Plato, we have a creation from chaos rather than creation *ex nihilo*. A demiurge—distinct from an omnipotent deity—creates the world by getting the receptacle of chaos to accept ideal forms. However, this creation is still, at root, a fall. The plurality of beings lacks the perfection of the blissful forms: beings accept form and are not the eternal forms themselves. They are born, mature, die, and decay; God/the Divine is no greater with the world than God alone. Even when the creature is improved by

the journey s/he returns to the state of perfection in God, and God's perfection is not altered.

I think Givens misses an opportunity here. He sees the most important influence on Boehme as Neoplatonism.[19] But Boehme cannot be melted neatly into the Platonic fold on questions of pre-existence, and to try to do so is to miss an important development in the history of philosophy that did not come into full fruition until Schelling, and whose implications are still being worked out in contemporary philosophy. This is not to say that Givens completely misunderstands Boehme, but rather that he underestimates the significance of Boehme's radical departure from the Neoplatonic tradition.

Givens quotes Berdyaev's studies on Boehme, which appeared as the introduction to the 1930s French edition of Boehme's monumental commentary on the Book of Genesis, *Mysterium Magnum*. In this introduction, Berdyaev interprets Boehme's seminal doctrine of the *Ungrund* as the pre-ontological abyss: it is prior being, yes, but it is not some sort of perfection at the base of the universe. Rather, *Ungrund* is a chaos and, as primordial freedom, the source of the possibility of both good and evil.[20]

Boehme understands the primordial abyss to include the source of being through primordial freedom. What Givens seems to misunderstand or underestimate is how this concept breaks with Neoplatonism, which sees the original unity as Being itself, absolute and perfect. For Boehme, the abyss is the absolute (the One), but the chaos of freedom is not yet being. Both Platonism and Neoplatonism in all their forms (including Christianity) seek to return to the perfection of pre-existing Being. For Boehme, on the other hand, the abyss is only the chaotic freedom that is prior to creation: the desire for creation, the desire of no-thing to become something. This understanding is already radically distinct from Christian Neoplatonism, but Boehme adds to this a second and even more radical element: this kind of chaos, this non-rational given, is also in God. Thus God, too, must develop and evolve.

For Boehme, the absolute God of Christian Neoplatonism is nothing. Without creation, there is no social determination of God—there is nothing to say about him, and no one to say it.

Such perfection is the perfection of complete vagueness: perfectly boring, perfectly empty. This boring *Ungrund* is, of course, also bliss. "God, in Himself is neither being nor becoming, He is absolutely nothing, He is not even kind or cruel, not good or evil."[21] As such, the abyss lacks foundation; it is fundamentally unreasonable.[22] Situating the beginning in pure undetermined will gives Boehme's thinking a voluntaristic character that was new in Western thought. This novelty was taken up at the beginning of the nineteenth century by German Romantics and idealists, in particular F. W. J. Schelling.

This idea of a pre-rational chaos at the base of everything, even God, is also critical to the Mormon understanding of freedom. For example, the discussion of the source of suffering and joy in the opposition of all things from 2 Nephi 2 can be read as reflecting a movement from the unity of the primal chaos before God's creative acts through the alienated, conflict-oriented multiplicity of this world, and finally on to a freely-chosen conscious unity in multiplicity (a sociality of love) in both this world and the world to come.[23] The problem with the eternal bliss of the Platonic One is that though it may be unified, it is dead. For Mormons, as for Boehme, joy is found in the relation with others, a sociality that only arrives after the fall (2 Nephi 2:25, Doctrine and Covenants 130:1–2).[24]

Givens misses this connection between Boehme and Schelling. That other great historian of ideas, Arthur O. Lovejoy, does not. In his conclusion to *The Great Chain of Being*, Lovejoy claims that Schelling presented an evolutionary theology that finally turned the Platonic scheme of the universe upside down.[25] In this view, even God is affected by time and relation. This notion militates against the "devolutionist" metaphysics of Plato and Plotinus that was Christianized by Origen and Augustine.[26]

Lovejoy places this difference in the pantheism controversy fought out by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Schelling in 1812 when Jacobi, Schelling's one-time inspiration, became his sharp adversary. Jacobi reacted against Schelling's evolutionary ideal, arguing that the creator was perfect and could not evolve.[27] This move produced an impassioned and angry response from

Schelling, who questioned why, if the more perfected being pre-existed eternally as pure act and not as potential, it would have created a world with suffering in the first place.[28] Schelling then argued that God is not now what God was at the beginning: God as the Omega is more than God as Alpha, or God plus the world is greater than God alone.[29]

Schelling's thought followed that of Boehme with regards to God's personhood. He goes so far as to say that we must think of God in anthropomorphic terms. This divine anthropomorphism is a crucial difference between Boehme and Schelling on the one hand and the Platonists like Origen on the other. Boehme and Schelling see an evolution in God and, even more radically, see this evolution as an advance away from the primal One, the absolute unity. The key here, again, is the concept of God as a person.[30] To be a person is to be in some sense finite, to be limited by and related to another. Thus God must be related other beings like Him/Her. Schelling saw this relational finitude as an improvement over the Platonic unity of oneness, and made this movement from the egoistic bliss of the vague to plurality and love into a general metaphysical principle. "But the groundless divides itself into the two equally eternal beginnings only in order that the two which could not be in it as groundless at the same time or there be one, should become one through love; that is, it divides itself only that there may be life and love and personal existence."[31] God can only reveal Her/Himself in creatures who resemble Her/Him: free, self-activating beings for whose existence there is no reason save God, but who are as God is.[32] Thus things once created are alive in themselves; Schelling claims they have the divinity in them. Beyond that, Schelling's claims here re-categorize God's self revelation in terms of a socially-grounded communication. "He speaks, and they are there" demonstrates the idea that to speak is to speak to another. God, thus, requires humanity.[33]

Schelling's divine anthropomorphism extends the pre-existential potentiality and chaos to God as a person. There is real indeterminacy and particularity to God. Decision only manifests itself in historically embedded actions. Acts can only

be concretely experienced and cannot be reduced to philosophical concepts. Schelling called this element of capriciousness at the base of things "the irreducible remainder," which grounds rationality and creativity but cannot itself be rationalized.[34] For Schelling, then, pre-existence is foundational to our very being. It cannot be explained conceptually; it is our ability to choose and it can never be completely eliminated without eliminating all life, striving, and joy.

While there are areas left unexplored in Givens's treatment of Schelling, he does give ample room to the twentieth-century Russian theologian and philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev, whom he describes as "the man leading the charge to rehabilitate Origen in the twentieth-century setting" (278). Givens ties Berdyaev to the Platonic tradition of pre-existence as elucidated by Origen because Berdyaev interprets freedom as prior to time. Berdyaev calls this structure "existential time." "Existential time" is still time. It is the time of decision, the tempest at the soul of being that we find in the concept of decision held by both Immanuel Kant and Schelling. Givens quotes Berdyaev to this effect, noting that existential time "depends upon intensity of experience, upon suffering and joy. . . . [It] is evidence of the fact that time is in man and not man in time, and that time depends on changes in man. . . . In existential time, which is akin to eternity, there is no distinction between the future and the past."[35] This language is difficult, but it is important to note that there are differences between Berdyaev's formulation and Platonic eternity. The contradictions of freedom are present in existential time in the *Ungrund* as the unruly "irreducible remainder" of freedom that cannot be eliminated from being. This non-rational given is eternal.

Givens notes that Berdyaev plays out the implications for pre-existence in a way that few theistic thinkers would want to follow.[36] For Berdyaev there is no ontological difference between human beings and God as there are in traditional Christian theology; all of reality is contained in the primal unity of the *Ungrund*. Berdyaev, like others in this tradition, involves God in the difficulties and struggles of the world itself. Freedom (or choice) grounds being, rather than the reverse. Conceptually, we can see the totality of

life with all of its choices as subsumed in one great choice, which is itself the meaning of the whole.

Pre-existence as Choice

What kind of picture of God do these options give us? If God is involved in moral struggle, should we necessarily be suspicious, afraid that he may "break bad" at some future point à la Walter White, shifting from mild chemistry teacher to evil meth dealer? Strangely enough, it is Schelling's and Berdyaev's responses to this question that provide a potential response to the old argument among Mormons concerning whether or not "intelligence" signifies eternal individuals or a primal substance that God organizes into His/Her children.

Givens points out that one of the odd aspects of Kant's theory of our disposition for good or evil is that "it has not been acquired in time. . . . Yet this disposition itself must have been adopted by free choice, for otherwise it could not be imputed."[37] How could a free choice made outside time sum up the meaning of one's life? Schelling and Berdyaev make similar statements: the meaning of our existence is a choice taken outside history in what Berdyaev calls "existential" as opposed to "historical" time. It is important to note that all of these thinkers oppose the Augustinian doctrine of pre-destination. In some ways, this all sounds similar to B. H. Roberts's assertion that pre-existence explains the problem of evil here as a consequence of actions and choices made prior to our arrival in this world, but this also would be a misunderstanding. The American personalist philosopher and committed Kantian, George Holmes Howison, spoke about the doctrine of pre-existence explicitly. Howison taught philosophy at the University of California at the turn of the twentieth century. He claimed that his 1901 magnum opus, *The Limits of Evolution*, was misunderstood by a reviewer for the *New York Times*. In an appendix entitled "The System Not the Theory of Preexistence," Howison attempted to dodge the charge that his description of reality as a sort of divine democracy between eternal persons (us) and the ideal eternal person (God) did not presuppose pre-existence. The *Times*

reviewer's "mistake" is quite understandable given statements such as the following, which describes Howison's idea of God as a social multiplicity: "These many minds form the eternal 'unconditionally real' world. They constitute the 'City of God.'"[38] Howison claimed that such eternal persons signify the logical priority of choice (or freedom) in the atemporal creation of the self.[39] But what does he mean by this? One way to think about it is as a prioritization of freedom that places choice outside the causal stream of historical time. In this model, our life and all our choices come down to one great choice between relating to the other (existence) and opposing the other through narcissism (solitude). In the terminology of Mormon doctrine, the first was Christ's choice and second was Lucifer's. Thus the pre-mortal existence under this idea is a primal indifference: we need to actively choose in order to be. This notion of a determining, atemporal choice emerges repeatedly in Kant's idea of chosen predisposition, in Schelling's choice for good and evil, in Kierkegaard's "existential choice," Berdyaev's "existential time," and in Martin Buber's nicely phrased "choice at the point of our being."[40]

In his study of Schelling, Slavoj Žižek explains this choice is for human persons, as well as God, to disengage themselves from primal indifference.

> Man's act of decision, his step from the pure potentiality essentiality of a will which wants nothing to an actual will, is therefore a *repetition* of God's act: in a primordial act, God Himself had to "choose Himself." His eternal character—to contract existence, to reveal Himself. In the same sense in which history is man's ordeal—the terrain in which humanity has to probe its creativity, to actualize its potential—nature itself is God's ordeal, the terrain in which *He* has to disclose Himself, to put His creativity to the test.[41]

The innocence of the pre-existent state is also a moment of complete boredom: it is the meaningless changelessness of an eternity without a decision.[42] Thus we have a possible reading of Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21, which says that blessings are dependent on that law in which the blessing is predicated. At its

root, the fundamental law of Christianity is that we should love the other. All choices are part of this choice, which was made at the atemporal point of our being that determines the meaning of our lives. Such a reading makes sense for a section that begins by talking about sociality as the highest human activity.

Here, then, is a possible synthesis of the two LDS understandings of preexistence. Everything that "is," that preexists, has its foundation in freedom or creativity. God calls us to higher degrees of perfection, eventually to personhood, and finally to Godhood. We are not persons from eternity but become such in relation to our responsiveness to God's call, just as God becomes personal in relation to us.

If Charles Harrell is correct in his claim that Joseph Smith only used the term "organization of intelligences" to indicate social organization and not an organization of intelligence into intelligences, we could understand that we only become organized into intelligences though the social relation—through sociality with the Other.[43] We answer the Other's call. This fundamental social relation would make some sense of both Brigham Young's and John A. Widtsoe's claims that it is the isolation of the sons of perdition that leads to dissolution:

> They will be decomposed, both soul and body, and return to their native element. I do not say that they will be annihilated; but they will be disorganized, and will be as it they had never been; while we live and retain our identity and contend against those principles which tend to death or dissolution.[44]

The concept of pre-existence may provide a response for the problems of evil and suffering, but it ultimately fails to solve the Platonic fall from the unity of perfect harmony and to which we wish to return in part due to the static nature of such totalizing unity. We live in a universe that is open, chaotic, and free. Such freedom is intrinsically linked to tragedy—both human choice and the chaotic nature of reality produce the ongoing potential for suffering and evil. But the eschatological possibility of overcoming the chaos is real. Through real relation, sociality, and

love, Zion may come to be. The Kingdom of God is ultimately something *we* build.

Notes

1. For example, the idea of there being something of the pre-mortal existence in the form of divine councils which appears in the Hebrew Bible resurfaces in Jewish midrash in the middle ages and the Renaissance (139, 216). The notion of the divine in the human celebrates human potential, human freedom, and human responsibility. But the idea is not without negative themes, including both the tendency in Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas of pre-existence toward pantheism and the consequent orthodox reaction against pre-mortal existence that seeks to protect absolute power of God.

2. See Paul Copen and William Lane Craig, "Craftsman or Creator? An Examination of Mormon Doctrine of Creation and a Defense of *Creatio ex nihilo*" and Jim W. Adams, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph Smith? God, Creation, and Humanity in the Old Testament" in Francis Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Zondervan, 2002), 95–152 and 152–92.

3. James E. Talmage, *Vitality of Mormonism* (Boston: Gorham, 1919), 241; Orson F. Whitney, "Man's Origin and Destiny," *Contributor* 3, no. 9 (June 1882); Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 386–87. Givens also quotes Charles Harrell's study of the development of the doctrine of preexistence in early Mormonism. Harrell shows that Smith used the term organization only in terms of social organization and not an organization of intelligence into intelligences. Charles Harrell, "Development of the Doctrine of the Preexistence 1830–1844," *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 75–96.

4. Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger* in *The Portable Mark Twain* (New York: Random House, 1974), 743–44.

5. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazon*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkhonsky (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1990), 245.

6. Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 116–18.

7. Albert Camus *The Rebel* (New York: Vintage, 1984), 100–3.

8. William James, *Pragmatism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 35.

9. For example, he could become "an Ulkamukha Preta (comet mouth ghost), who "feeds on what has been vomited." A Kshatriya would become a "Kataputana (false stinking ghost), who eats impure substances and corpses." A Vaisya would become "Maitrakshagyotika Preta (sees by an eye in its anus),

who feeds on pus," and a fallen Sudra would in the next life be transformed into "Kailasaka (Preta who feeds on moths)." (Laws of Manu 12:71–72). Therefore, if you were ever to meet a pus-eating ghost that sees out its anus, you would know that he was responsible for his plight because of his actions in a previous life.

10. Roberts believed that this explanation would solve the problem "that has perplexed many noble minds in their effort to reconcile the varied circumstances under which men have lived with the justice and mercy of god." B. H. Roberts, "Religious Faiths," *Improvement Era* 1, no. 11 (Sept. 1898): 827–28, cited in Givens, 213.

11. Mark E. Peterson, "Race Problems—As They Affect the Church" (address delivered at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, August 27, 1954), http://www.mormondocs.org/2012/05/race-problems-as-they-affect-church. html (accessed August 7, 2014). Roberts himself used this concept to justify priesthood denial to Blacks: "Through their indifference or lack of integrity to righteousness, [blacks] rendered themselves unworthy of the Priesthood and its powers. " B. H. Roberts, *Contributor* 6, 296–97.

12. Givens tell us that Aneas was himself an opponent of the view

13. Augustine, *De Ordine,* 51.

14. Plato, *The Symposium* in *The Works of Plato*. Benjamin Jowett, translator (New York: The Dial Press, 1936) , 342–343.

15. Plotinus, *The Enneads: Third Ennead: Second Tractate: Section 11*, http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/enn197.htm (accessed August 7, 2014).

16. Augustine sees this as a great harmony that brings together light, dark, high and low elements.

> To thee there is no such thing as evil, and even in thy whole creation taken as a whole, there is not; because there is nothing from beyond it that can burst in and destroy the order which thou hast appointed for it. But in the parts of creation, some things, because they do not harmonize with others, are considered evil. Yet, those same things harmonize with others and are good, and in themselves are good. . . . I no longer desired a better world, because my thoughts ranged over all , and with sounder judgment I reflected that the things above were better than those below, yet that all creation together was better than the higher things alone

Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions,* translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7:13.

17. Givens cites Phillip Schaff, who argues that the concept of original sin is no true alternative to preexistence but only disguises it as "a generic pre-existence and apostasy of all men in Adam" occurring as "a transcendental act of freedom lying beyond our temporal consciousness." Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1910), 3:831. Cited in Givens, 122.

18. Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e, quoted in Givens, 322. Here is the full passage from the King Follett Discourse: "The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits of glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself." Joseph Fielding Smith, editor *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1938), 311.

19. Givens, 145.

20. "The mysterious teaching of Boehme about the *Ungrund*, about the abyss, without foundation, dark and irrational, prior to being, is an attempt to provide and answer to the basic question of all questions, the question concerning the origin of the world and the arising of evil. The whole teaching of Boehme about the *Ungrund* is so interwoven with the teaching concerning freedom that it is impossible to separate them, for this is all part and parcel of the same teaching. And I am inclined to interpret the *Ungrund* as a primordial freedom . . . indeterminate even by God." Nicholas Berdyaev, "Deux études sur Jacob Boehme" in Jacob Boehme, *Mystérium Magnum*, Tome I (Paris: Aubier, 1945), 39. Cited in Givens, p. 146

21. Alexandre Koyre, *Le Philosophie de Jacob Böhme* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 320.

22. Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum: Part II or An Exposition of the First Book of Moses Called Genesis,* translated by John Sparrow (1623); facsimile edition (Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2002) 60: 38, 664.

23. But it is clearly the case that the plurality of the world, with all its conflict, is superior to the serenity of the One.

> For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the

end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God. . . . And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth. . . . And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. . . . Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:11:25)

24. As Mark Twain wrote in his *Diaries of Adam and Eve,* the primal couple lost Eden in the fall but found each other, and where the beloved is "there was Eden." Mark Twain, *The Diaries of Adam and Eve* (New York: Dover Books), 28.

25. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 325.

26. Ibid., 32.

27. Ibid., 321.

28. Ibid., 322. ". . . is difficult for many reasons, but first of all for the very simple one that, if it were in actual possession of the highest perfection [or completeness], it would have had no reason (*Grund*) for the creation and production of so many other things, through which it—being incapable of attaining a higher degree of perfection—could only fall to a lower one."

29. Ibid., 323. "I posit God as the first and the last, as the Alpha and the Omega; but as Alpha he is not what he is as Omega, and in so far as he is only the one—God 'in an eminent sense'—he can not be the other God, in the same sense, or, in strictness, be called God. For in that case, let it be expressly said, the unevolved (*unentfaltete*) God, *Deus implicitus,* would already be what as Omega, the *Deus explcitus* is."

30. Schelling recognized this difference when he set Boehme off from the rest of the Western esoteric tradition:

> One must, of course, distinguish Jacob Boehme, in whom everything is still pure and original, from another class of mystics, in whom everything is already corrupt; the well known Saint Martin particularly belongs in this class: one no longer hears in him, as one could in J. Boehme,

the person who has been originally stirred but only the mouthpiece or secretary of alien ideas, which have, moreover, been prepared for purposes of a different kind; what in Jacob Boehme is still living, is dead in him, only, so to speak, the cadaver, the embalmed corpse, the mummy, of something originally living, of the kind that is displayed in secret societies which simultaneously pursue alchemical, magical, theurgic purposes.

F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy,* translated by Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 183.

31. F. W. J. Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, translated by James Gutmann (Chicago: Open Court, 1936) 88–89; F. W. J. Schelling, *Shellings Werke*, edited by Manfred Schroter (Munich: Beck, 1927), 7:408.

32. Schelling, *Of Human Freedom* 18–19; Schelling, *Shellings Werke* 7:346.

33. Schelling already approached this position in his early work. For example, as Pirandello does in *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* he likens God to a playwright who is not just outside his work but in it:

> But now if the playwright *were to exist* independently of his drama, we should be merely the actors who speak the lines he has written, If he *does* not exist independently of us, but reveals and discloses himself successively only, through the very play of our own freedom, so that without this freedom even he *would not be*, the we are collaborators of the whole and have ourselves invented the particular roles we play.

F. W. J. Schelling, *The System of Transcendental Idealism (1800),* translated by Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 210, *Werke* 3:602.

34. Schelling writes of the irreducible remainder:

> The world as we now behold it, is all rule, order and form but the unruly lies ever in the depth as though it might again break through, and order and form nowhere appear to have been original, but it seems as though what had initially be unruly had been brought to order. This is the incomprehensible basis of the reality of things, the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason by the greatest exertion but always remains in the depths. Out of this which is unreasonable, reason in the true sense is born.

Schelling, *Of Human Freedom* 34; Schelling, *Shellings Werke* 7:359–60.

35. Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End: An Essay in Eschatological Metaphysics.* (London: Geofrey Bles, 1938), 206–7. Cited in Givens, 280.

36. One of the ironies of Berdyaev's biography was that after he escaped the Soviet Union and came to Paris in the 1920s he was considered a spokesman of orthodoxy by some important French Catholics such as Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier, who were founders of French Catholic Personalism. The problem with this was that Berdyaev was a heretic. The Russian émigré community in Paris saw him as such; in fact he was almost excommunicated in Russia before the events of the 1917 revolution intervened. See Donald Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicolas Berdyaev* (San Francisco: Harper and Brothers, 1960).

37. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason*, translated by T. M. Greene (Chicago: Open Court, 1934), 20; quoted in Givens, 202.

38. George Holmes Howison, *The Limits of Evolution and Other Essays Illustrating the Metaphysical Theory of Personal Idealism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1904), xi-xii.

39. Ibid., 412–13.

40. Marin Buber, *Good and Evil* (New York: Pearson, 1980), 112.

41. Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 1996), 21.

42. Žižek illustrates this idea in Schelling with an example from pop culture, Harold Ramis's film *Groundhog Day.* In the film, weatherman Phil Connors (played by Bill Murray) finds himself thrown into eternity: he wakes up day after day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and it's always February 2nd, Groundhog Day. After thinking that he might be a god and in a heaven where his is unrelated to everyone else, because they are only in time and their lives are meaningless from the point of view of eternity, Phil eventually grows bored: he realizes that he is actually in a hell in which nothing matters. He only escapes this hell and restarts time again when he commits to the people around him, particularly—this is Hollywood, after all—to his producer Rita (played by Andie McDowell). In real relationships, both beings in the relationship are affected by the other. Žižek writes, "The 'Schellingian' dimension of the film resides in its anti-Platonic depreciation of eternity and immortality: as long as the hero knows that he is immortal, caught in the 'eternal return of the same'—that the same day will dawn again and again—his life bears the mark of the 'unbearable lightness of being', of an insipid and shallow game in which events have a kind of ethereal pseudo-existence; he falls back into temporal reality only and precisely when his attachment to the girl grows into

true love. Eternity is a false, insipid game: an authentic encounter with the Other in which 'things are for real' necessarily entails a return to temporal reality." Ibid., 53.

43. Charles Harrell, "Development of the Doctrine of the Preexistence 1830–1844, *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 85–86.

44. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1860), 7:57. John A. Widtsoe, "Who Are the Sons of Perdition?" in *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 212–14; John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 79.

Shifting Attitudes: Nauvoo Polygamy

Merina Smith. *Revelation, Resistance and Mormon Polygamy: The Introduction and Implementation of the Principle, 1830-1853*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2013. 280 pp. Hardcover: $29.95. ISBN: 978-0874219173.

Reviewed by Kathryn M. Daynes

Merina Smith's book continues the fascination with Nauvoo polygamy. Other authors have considered such topics as Joseph Smith and his wives, the experience of those entering polygamy in Nauvoo (as well as the numbers and names of those who did so), the theology underpinning plural marriage, and much more. The major question Smith deals with is how Latter-day Saints "were persuaded to shift their understanding of marriage not only to accommodate polygamy, but to regard it, at least officially, as the ideal form of marriage" (2). Larry Foster has dealt with this question[1], though Smith explores it in more depth and frames her answer with theology rather than theory.

Smith's is a chronological approach. She divides nineteenth-century polygamy into five phases: 1) development, 1830–1841; 2) introduction, 1841–1844; 3) aftermath of Joseph Smith's death, 1844–1852; 4) the Utah period, 1852–1890, and 5) after the 1890 Manifesto. With more than half of the chapters focusing on the

1841–1844 period, she concentrates on the introduction of plural marriage in Nauvoo during Joseph Smith's lifetime.

Problematic sources from the Nauvoo period about polygamy guarantee that the topic will continue to be explored and reinterpreted. Beyond Doctrine and Covenants 132, Joseph Smith wrote nothing directly about plural marriage. Documents from others were often written years after the events, by those hostile to polygamy, or by people whose involvement in the events they recount was not firsthand. Ambiguous and conflicting selections from the documents support a variety of interpretations. Smith draws on published and familiar manuscript sources, and she takes seriously the claims of participants that they were motivated by religious considerations. She argues that "Mormons' willingness to accept polygamy hinged on the development of . . . a moral order, or story [an 'internally coherent system' in Christian Smith's words], but that the story, which was connected to nothing less than salvation and exaltation in the next life, developed symbiotically with polygamy" (13). It is never clear whether this "story" is the one known by Joseph Smith or the one eked out in various stages to some followers, though the two are surely distinct.

She supports her argument that the theological narrative developed in relation to the introduction of polygamy by contrasting the reasons for entering into plural marriage Joseph Smith gave to Mary Rollins Lightner and Zina Huntington with those he gave later to Sarah Kimball (85), indicating that the later proposal evinced development of the theological narrative in the interim. Perhaps. But in contrast, she states that Joseph Smith's approach to a man was shaped by the inducement most likely to convince him (145). Given Joseph Smith's sensitivity to individuals, his approach to a woman was at least as likely to be informed by incentives he believed would have greatest appeal to her.

Smith arrives at her conclusions about the development of the theological narrative in the women's accounts by her method of reading between the lines and analyzing the timing of events, a method fraught with problems because of the incompleteness and ambiguity of the sources. Nevertheless, this method works well for her beautifully done case studies. The stories she tells of various

Latter-day Saints' acceptance of plural marriage compellingly capture the essence of what they experienced in accepting and attempting to live the new—or restored—marital practice. Her goal is fundamentally to understand, rather than to stand in judgment based on today's culture, and she conveys that understanding through intriguing stories of several individuals' experiences.

For the record, the figures on page 240 for the percentage of divorces for first and subsequent wives—sixteen and eighteen percent respectively—are incorrect. According to my research for *More Wives than One*, the figures are eight and twenty-five percent.[2] On the other hand, Smith correctly attributes a quotation regarding being able to speak freely about polygamy in Winter Quarters to Lorenzo Snow (210), despite her first coming across the statement in Richard Van Wagoner's *Mormon Polygamy*, which gives the source as Eliza R. Snow.[3]

Revelation, Resistance and Mormon Polygamy is a clearly-written and highly readable account that provides an excellent introduction for readers only vaguely familiar with Nauvoo polygamy. For scholars, it is an important contribution to our understanding of how a monogamous people could embrace plural marriage.

Notes

1. See Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

2. See Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 163.

3. Richard Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 82.
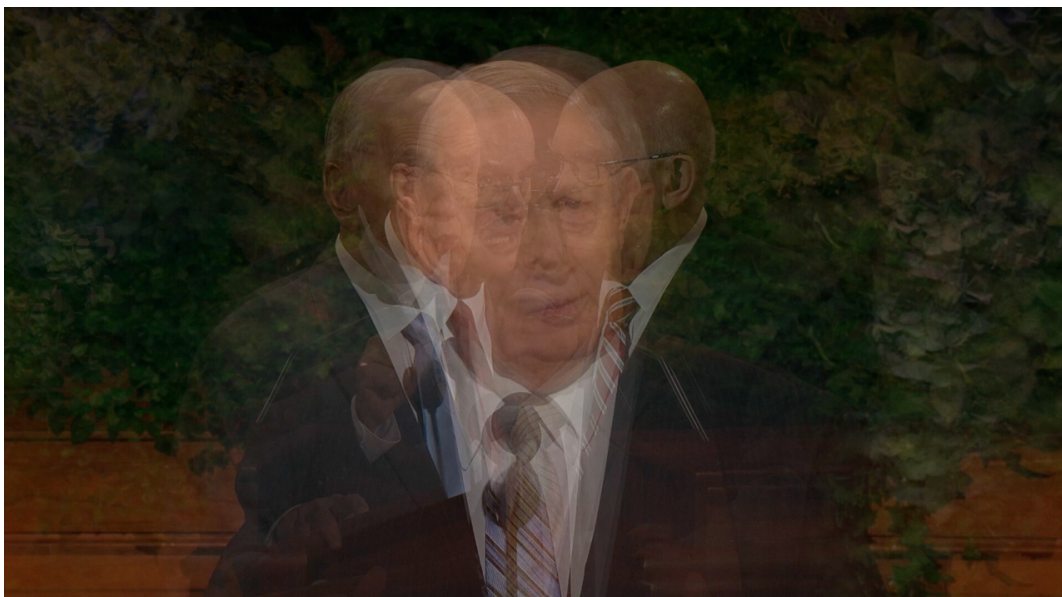
Maddison Colvin
183rd Semiannual General Conference - (Apostles, Prophets)
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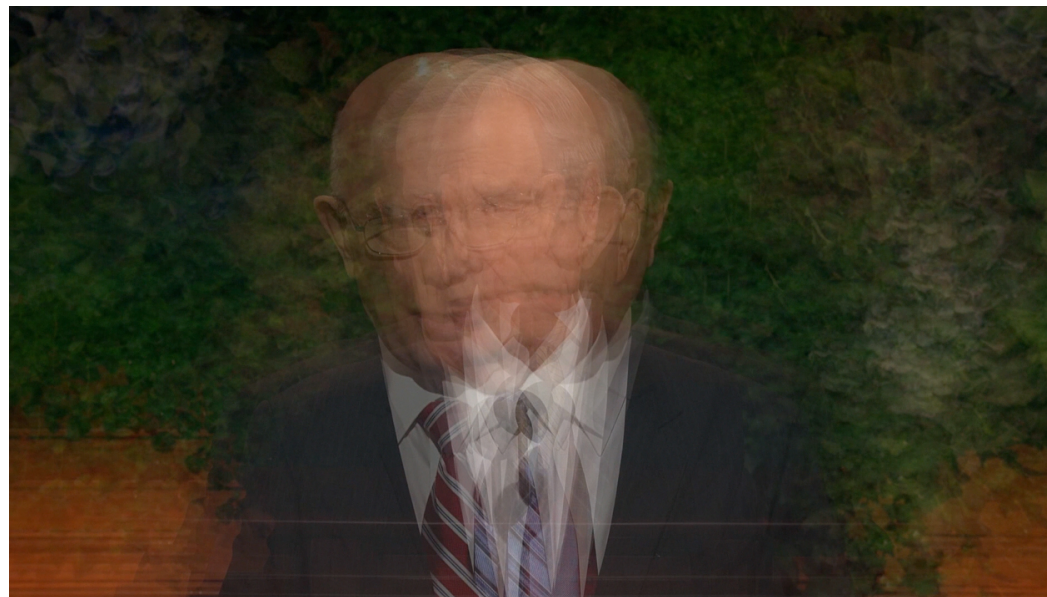
Maddison Colvin
183rd Semiannual General Conference - (Apostles, Prophets)
Still from video

Maddison Colvin
183rd Semiannual General Conference - (Female Speakers)
Still from video

For All His Creations of Which I'm a Part: Buddha Nature, Neo-Animism, and Postmodern Mormonism

Charles Shirō Inouye

When my parents died, I inherited our family's Buddhist altar, or *butsudan*. It now sits in my living room in Lexington, Massachusetts. I pray before it about twice a month. I burn a stick of incense and ring a small brass bell. I close my eyes, and thank my ancestors for what they have given me. Usually, I do this with my youngest son, Kan, who is now three years old.

The brass vessels, the picture of Amida with rays of light emanating from his body in every direction—these are very familiar to me. So is the image of Jesus that I have put on top of the *butsudan*. These two images—Jesus and Amida—mark the two major poles of my early religious education. When I was a young boy, my parents, who were not members of the church, would take us to the Mormon chapel in Sigurd, Utah, where I attended meetings with my sister and brothers. Less often, my grandfather Sashichi Inouye would pull a chair in front of his dresser, stand me on it, put a rosary on my hands, light incense, and have me pray to the small, black-and-white photograph inside the altar.

My grandfather did not speak English.[1] I did not speak Japanese. Only much later did I learn that the woman in the picture was my grandmother Mikano Inouye. I feel close to her and to my other ancestors when I light incense at home, or visit the

Boston Temple, just five minutes away. Both actions are responses to what we Mormons call "the spirit of Elijah." Because of my Buddhist training, I am very much at home when it comes to doing work for the dead.

The spirit of Elijah prompted my wife Rei and I to organize a family reunion. The part of my family that lives in t`he United States traveled to Japan to meet the part that lives there. We met at our ancestral home in Amagi, Fukuoka Prefecture, where there stands a similar, though much larger *butsudan*. At a nearby temple, we all examined the remains of my ancestors, many generations of hard-baked clay balls, stored in an urn and kept in a wooden locker.

Another part of this week-long family reunion was taking my Aunt Ruth to the Nishi Honganji in Kyoto, the physical center of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Sitting on the tatami floor next to my aunt and my cousin Jeanette Misaka, I listened and watched a Buddhist service. Tears welled up in my eyes because I could feel the devotion of the people around me.

My long involvement with Pure Land Buddhism raises an interesting question. Is the spirit I feel when I honor my ancestors in this Buddhist fashion the same spirit that I feel when doing ordinances as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? I talk about "the spirit," but what exactly is it? Jesus taught that it is something we can misunderstand. Consider the example of the Sons of Zebedee, who were offended by the rude treatment they received at a certain village. Angered, they responded by wanting to call fire down from heaven and to destroy the people who had offended them. Seeing this, Jesus chastened them, saying, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." In the end, they went to another village (Luke 9:51–56).

In the Japanese case, spirituality is often broad and generous. The Japanese have been notably syncretic when it comes to appreciating various forms of religious inspiration. It is not unusual to be both Buddhist and animist at the same time. One might argue that this sort of openness suggests a lack rather than an abundance of religious devotion, that it ignores what distinguishes one religion from another. If taken too far, does not tolerance become confusion

and indifference? Does not a shallow acceptance of everything become simply convenience? To rephrase the question slightly, at what point does, or should, believing in one thing prevent us from believing in something else?

The explanation for Japanese openness can be explained in this way. At the foundation of Japanese culture is the acceptance of *hakanasa*, the idea that everything is always changing, that everything is contingent, and that life is brief, fragile, and quickly passing. This acceptance of radical change has obvious philosophical ramifications. If everything is changing and contingent, then, logically speaking, it becomes impossible to establishing meaning. Without positing that some things are at least semi-permanent, we cannot measure anything, or show development, or even identity. Would you still be you, if you changed your name every day?

In the attempt to make life meaningful, the Japanese assert form—*kata*, *katachi*, *kejime*—and they do so in a way that does not reference metaphysical ideals or ideological systems. In other words, by way of various customs and cultural practices—such as bowing, taking one's shoes off before entering a home, and so on—meaning is established within the realm of *hakanasa*, or radical change. In this world, significance is not necessarily symbolic, as the example of the *shimenawa* shows.

The *shimenawa* (七五三縄) is a rope that marks something sacred, but it is not a symbol like a cross or a swastika or a word. A symbol is a special type of sign. A portrait of Jesus, for example, is a symbol if it is meant to point to someone who is not immediately present. In contrast, the *shimenawa* is not a symbol because it points to the tree around which it is tied; and the tree is always present. In other words, the rope expresses the tree's sacred nature by drawing our attention directly to it. We can see it. We can approach it. We can touch it.

Such non-symbolic signs are important to Japan's animistic tradition. By contrast, Buddhism is a symbolic system of meaning, and tends to be highly metaphysical. Originating in India, the Mahayana branch of Buddhism that entered Japan came by way of China and Korea in the sixth century. It presented the Japanese with a new way of establishing meaning that was able to exist side-by-side

with animistic practice precisely because the emphasis of each was different—the one being metaphysical and the other being physical—and also because the visual splendors of Buddhism were also understood in already well-established animistic, directly physical, visual ways. Even today, it is not unusual to find a Shinto shrine located within the grounds of a Buddhist temple.[2]

Animistic practice existed in many places other than Japan; but in those locations where the great monotheistic traditions developed, the worship of many gods was largely supplanted. As the Old Testament shows, the struggle between one god and many gods was protracted. It was also fraught with difficulty and even at times violent. "Then the children of Israel put away Baalim and Ashteroth, and served the lord only" (1 Samuel 7:4).

Being focused on the one and only god, monotheisms tend to be exclusive and chauvinistic. In structure they are hierarchical and authoritarian. Consequently, their spread to Europe and beyond led to religious conflict and sectarianism on a large scale, as in, for example, the Thirty-Year War. Who can fathom the suffering that sectarianism and religious persecution have brought over the millennia? How many deaths have the differences between Christians and Jews, Protestants and Catholics, Sunni and Shiites caused? Mormons, of all people, should be aware of the troubles that follow when differing conceptions of God (and the culture of the godly) provoke hatred and persecution.

Modern secularism attempted to address the violence of religious chauvinism. The Enlightenment in Europe was meant to get us past the problems that religion caused. Yet even the modern impulse that led to the creation of various non-religious systems of meaning—positivism, nationalism, capitalism, and so on—have not done away with authority, prejudice, exclusion, persecution, and war. To say the obvious, modernity did not solve the problem of hating those who are different because it largely inherited the hierarchical structure of monotheism. This borrowing is reflected in, for instance, the dominance of realism throughout the modern era. Being perspectival, realism is an inclusive, even universal system of vision that translates reality into detailed constituents of a much larger picture. By asserting a single, unmovable point

of view, this modern type of expression established a knowable, measurable, reproducible relationship between these details, thus rendering them stylistically homogenous.[3]

My larger argument here is that Mormonism is not monotheistic and, therefore, shares something with the openness of Japanese spiritual practices. It allows for both the *butsudan* in my living room and the small wooden triptych of Jesus and Mary that sits on top of it.

My openness to this openness was imparted to me by my grandmother Kume Murakami. She compared religious striving to the climbing of a mountain. The destination is the same for all of us, but the paths that get us there can be very different. Each person has to find his or her path to the top. Yet each of these individual paths is, in essence, similar in that they lead to a certain high point that is obvious to all climbers who eventually get there.

This is a version of what we Mormons call "Man's search for happiness." And it is one that harmonizes with what I notice about the lives of spiritually accomplished people, whether Latter-day Saints or Baptists or followers of Confucius. As Karen Armstrong and others point out, as climbers of the mountain, we are surprisingly alike in our differences. We know we are getting close when we develop compassion, which is what the world's various traditions commonly seek.[4]

More specifically, one important way that Mormons and Buddhists and animists are distinctively alike is that they share an understanding of divine nature. According to the Mahayana tradition, salvation is possible because everyone has what is called "Buddha nature." That is, human beings not only have the instinct that has us climbing the mountain, but we also have the legs to get us there, and the ability to appreciate the view from the top.

Perhaps this teaching explains why my parents were comfortable with Mormonism—why they took us to the church in Sigurd, and why they eventually were baptized as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For one thing, Mormons teach the same principles of human potential that Pure Land Buddhists do, although the terms differ slightly. We talk about "eternal progression"—about the innate divinity of God's many sons and

daughters.[5] We believe in the spiritual purification that overcomes the "natural man" in us, and allows us to realize our own divine nature.[6] By comparison, Buddhists talk about a path to enlightenment, and the ability to become Boddhisatvas—compassionate, godly men and women who return to suffering, to the burning house, to help those who still linger in delusion.

We are the same yet different. One perhaps overly simple way to explain why many Christians do not consider Mormons to be Christians is to say that our version of Christianity is a bit Buddhist. While the claim to be gods-in-training is not surprising to members of the Pure Land tradition, in the eyes of some of our Christian brothers and sisters, this notion seems arrogant and even blasphemous.[7] Surely, the need to be temperate and humble also exists in our teachings. "Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend" (Mosiah 4:9). These differences notwithstanding, we still believe that we are as God once was, and that the purpose of this life is to become godly.

To be sure, the real arrogance of our reality here on earth lies not in this assertion of divine potential, but in the chauvinism that follows from the hierarchical structure of traditional Christianity and its amplification by various modern ideological systems that place justice before compassion. The pride that had Jesus' disciples arguing about which of them was greatest has been amplified by the modernization of Catholicism, which led to the many protests of Protestantism, on the one hand, and the rejection of religious sentiment by secularists, on the other. Unavoidably, much of modern, secular thought has colored our understanding of the mountain and of the possibility of many paths.

Personally speaking, of the things that I have made me uncomfortable about my membership in the church over the years, practically all of them have actually been reactions to the modern context of our faith. We live in a world of racism, chauvinism, and materialism, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has taken shape within this modern, secular world,

reflects these values even though it was never meant to be a modern institution. To be sure, when Joseph Smith went into the grove to pray, he asked a most modern question: which church is true? The answer he received, however, was a surprising, postmodern response: the visit of personages who were plural, visible, approachable, and loving. As we know, Joseph Smith went on to establish an organization that was not a derivation of existing forms of Christianity, but a restoration of ancient practices. My question is this: How ancient is Mormonism? Could it be even more ancient than monotheism?

Again, Joseph Smith lived in a modern age, and so even the restored church naturally reflects modern values. For example, the emphasis placed on The Book of Mormon as a cornerstone of our faith echoes the Protestant assertion that the Bible is the only word of God. For this reason, our emphasis on scripture study would seem to be clearly antithetical to the lack of a scriptural tradition in Japan.

In Japan there is no regular practice of referring frequently to an authoritative text that gives clear answers to the big questions. Who are we? Why are we here? And where are we going? For the Japanese, there is no single, authoritative text. This is true today; and it has been the case in the past despite the popularity of certain texts at certain times: the *Tales of Ise, Heart Sutra* (*Hannya shingyo*), and such. This lack of an emphasis on scriptural study holds for both animists and Buddhists.

I once asked a group of would-be Buddhist clerics about their thoughts on this matter. My wife and I played volleyball with them on Wednesday nights during the year we were living in Kyoto doing research. One evening as I was making my way home from work, I saw them in a small neighborhood restaurant. I stopped in to say hello. One thing led to the next, and I was able to pose the question that I had wanted to ask for some time.

"Is it true that you don't teach your people to study the sacred texts?"

"Yes. That's true."

"Why not?"

"It would confuse them."

At first, I did not know how to process this answer. But now that I have had time to give it some thought, I think that there is simply no better answer than the one they gave. We can, and regularly do, confuse ourselves by studying the sacred texts. Moreover, we Mormons are actually close to Mahayana Buddhists in this felt need to avoid doctrinal complications.

While we believe that intelligence will rise with us in the next world, (D&C 130:8), what we call intelligence is not actually intellectual accomplishment per se. Some of us, myself included, dare to identify ourselves as Mormon intellectuals. But the truth is that the climb up the mountain is a matter of spiritual, not scholastic, accomplishment. Our model of education is such that progress comes through experiencing the same simple precepts over and over.

This is similar to Confucian practice, which also contributed much to Japanese culture.[8] In the *Analects* we read, "Is it not joy when an old friend visits from afar?"[9] One interpretation of this passage is that the old friends mentioned here are the teachings we learn in our youth. They are a joy to us because every time we encounter them over the course of a lifetime, they allow us to measure the change in us precisely because the teachings have remained the same. When we live those teachings, they are powerful and transformative. When we do not, they become platitudes. We Mormons believe in learning; but just as it is possible to criticize the Japanese for a lack of philosophical sophistication, so is it possible to dismiss Mormon thought as less than robust. Children write memoirs of their loving parents more often than they write studies of them. We, therefore, are not distinguished theologically. Our rhetorical tradition requires us to have experienced what we claim to know, what we write, what we encourage others to do. So, like the Japanese, we do not spend a lot of time speculating about God's nature. "If God is perfect, does he ever get a haircut?" More than eloquence or conceptual vigor, we value day-to-day acts of kindness, and through these we come to know our Father in Heaven in an intimate, familiar way.

We are told there are different ways of learning. "And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of

wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 109:7). Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that study is irrelevant to living a good life. What I am saying is that what we are trying to learn is, above all else, compassion and understanding, virtues that do not exist apart from our lived relationship with God, which includes our lived relationship with everything and everyone.

<div align="center">***</div>

If you ever go to Kyoto, visit the Ginkakuji, or the Silver Pavilion. There you will find a garden of remarkable beauty. It is an affirmation of *hakanasa*, constant change. Every time the wind blows, every time the rain pours, every time a leaf falls, someone has to get out there with a rake or trowel and fix the sand. Why would anyone in his right mind make such a garden? In America, we would probably try to make such a space out of stainless steel, so we would not have to worry about the upkeep. But in Japan, with its affirmation of constant change, such a departure from the nature of sand would be out of the question.

Of course, the point of the Ginkakuji garden is its high maintenance. Like this plot of sand, our lives require constant attention and effort. This is, of course, also the point of such practices as Family Home Evening, Home and Visiting Teaching, Sunday meetings, regular temple attendance, and so on.

Both Mormonism and Zen emphasize practice because this is how the symbolic order and the non-symbolic order are reconciled. That is, both traditions try to learn about less visible things by way of more visible things. To put it simply, Zen is the most Japanese form of Mahayana Buddhism because it tries to make the abstract teachings of Buddhism as concretely animistic as possible. One's spiritual progress comes by practicing a certain way, or *dō*, as in *kendō* (the way of the sword), or *sadō* (the way of tea), or *kadō* (the way of flower arrangement). By doing something hands-on, we grow spiritually. Raking gravel is spiritual. Doing the dishes is spiritual. Everything becomes a matter of spiritual practice.

Now, you might ask, "If this is so, if everything is a matter of practice, then is there any room for God in such a picture? Is my

mastery of a jūdō *kata* really a way to worship God? Is the arranging of flowers a way to the top of the mountain?

The short answer to this is "Yes, they are." God certainly is a part of this type of everyday practice because everything is godly. Even the ink that flows from the calligrapher's brush, or the branches of a cherry tree that become a part of an arrangement—they, too, have a spiritual aspect, as informed by Japan's ancient animistic sensibilities.

This is also a Mormon sensibility. As Joseph Smith taught, everything has a spiritual nature. There is no matter that is not also spiritual. This includes, of course, you and me. "All forms of living things—man, beast, and vegetation—existed as individual spirits, before any form of life existed on the earth."[10] We have a divine nature and view as unavoidable the out-of-the-garden process of becoming as the gods, knowing good from evil.

What is the cultural context of this understanding of many potential gods, especially for us today? As I said, animism was once pervasive. It is also true that it is still very much alive today. By calling our times the era of the "post-human,"[11] the so-called postmodern critique of modernity suggests just how normal this ancient response to the divine has recently become.[12] For us, the idea that the end of human dominance is now upon us should be neither alarming nor hard to grasp. It is not difficult to see how lasting "pagan" practices have been, despite the rise of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and despite the age of science that followed. Consider how we place stuffed animals near our babies, or bring trees into our homes during the Christmas season, or color, hide, and find eggs on Easter, or dance around trees in springtime. These lasting practices are vestiges of a very deeply rooted animistic sensibility. They express a lyrical reflex that responds to the spiritual nature of the world in which we live, one that is not easily tied to any symbolic order, which is only to say that even a Christmas tree is not necessarily tied to Christ.

In Japan, the presence of the *shimenawa* reminds us that animism managed to survive the modern period in Japan. This occurred despite the attempt to create the institutional juggernaut of State Shintō, where local practices were brought into a national

structure, and the emperor was made the symbolic father of all Japanese—the head signifier of all realistic Japanese details. With defeat in war, the hegemonic structures of militarism and imperialism collapsed, ushering in a postmodern world in which the usual authorities are the enemy and monsters (*bakemono*) are the only ones who speak the truth.[13] The highly imaginative and globally popular works of an animator such as Miyazaki Hayao similarly mark a post-War resurgence of interest in animism. So do *yokozuna*, masters of sumo wrestling. Encircled by a similar rope, they too are *kami*, or god.

Once again, the *shimenawa* is a marker of the sacred that does not symbolically turn our attention to something not present. Rather, it draws us to something that is present. Whether tree or rock or sumo wrestler, the sacred is close to us, visible rather than invisible.

This immediacy and concreteness is Japanese, but I would also add that this appreciation of the here-and-now is a Mormon impulse as well. Most of my high school friends in Gunnison, Utah did not become long-haired, bell-bottomed "flower children" back in the 1960s. But we did grow up singing "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," which turned us into flower children of a different sort.

This song was my favorite. My wife Rei, who grew up in Japan and converted to Mormonism in her forties, quickly came to revere this Primary song for the way it expresses a very lyrical, very Japanese regard for the senses and for the world that our senses bring to our awareness.

> Whenever I hear the song of a bird
> Or look at the blue, blue sky,
> Whenever I feel the rain on my face
> Or the wind as it rushes by,
> Whenever I touch a velvet rose
> Or walk by our lilac tree,
> I'm glad that I live in this beautiful world
> Heav'nly Father created for me.
>
> He gave me my eyes that I might see
> The color of butterfly wings.

He gave me my ears that I might hear
The magical sound of things.
He gave me my life, my mind, my heart:
I thank him rev'rently
For all his creations, of which I'm a part.
Yes, I know Heav'nly Father loves me.

The sentiment expressed here by Clara Watkins McMaster (1904–1997) is wonderfully Japanese *and* wonderfully Mormon. No doubt a Japanese composer would have referenced cherry blossoms and irises rather than roses and lilacs. But the idea of being "a part" of "this beautiful world" and grateful for having been given senses that apprehend and appreciate God's creativity are familiar to Japanese poetics, at least as they were anciently expressed.

A lilac tree has a spirit that resonates with mine. The same can be said for butterfly wings. As God's creations, are they to be appreciated as symbols that point to Him, the God of All? Or are they to be understood as beautiful things in their own right? To put the question in slightly more dramatic fashion, when our Heavenly Father and Mother created you and me in their own image, was their intention to make us symbols of them? When I take upon me the name of Jesus, so that I might have the companionship of the Spirit, am I trying to become a symbol of Heavenly Father? Or am I trying to become godly in the same way that Jesus and the Father are similarly divine? What Mormons, Mahayana Buddhists, and neo-animists share is a belief that parents and children are alike.

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Last spring, I organized an event at Tufts, where we put a *shimenawa* around a large beech tree on campus. I did this in order to seek an answer to the pressing question of how community is to form in a postmodern environment. Put simply, postmodernism is a critique of modern hegemony with its emphasis on uniformity and on making everything seamlessly fit. Back in the 1960s, "Love it or Leave it" was countered by "Change it or Lose it," thus beginning a counter-cultural critique of "the system" that postmodernists came to term "the symbolic order." The way to fight the system

was to embrace diversity and to admit that what we see depends on the perspective from which we are seeing things.

If there has been a perceived problem with postmodernity, it is the lack of an obvious point of commonality that unites us. If diversity rules—if there are many truths, rather than one—then what is the glue that holds us together and allows us to work together as a community?

The answer to this conundrum is also an answer to the question of why so many of my students reject religion, even when they recognize the importance of spiritual matters. One way to propose a new answer to this decades-old question was to introduce my students to the *shimenawa*, a non-symbolic symbol, a direct expression of divine love. By providing an unmediated, non-symbolic access to the sacred, the problem of connection might be solved.

The *shimenawa* insists that the world itself is sacred. It connects us with the divine, which is less mediated and less represented than either monotheism or modernity makes possible. In other words, it brings into being a world that is meaningful without being symbolic. At Tufts, our animistic celebration of the tree was a moment of rejoicing. My students loved direct access to the spiritual. On the other hand, because our non-symbol was still interpreted by some to be a symbol, three students cut it down on the night of commencement. We repaired it, and put it back up. By the end of the summer, the rope vanished again.

In another month, we will put up another rope. This time, it will be accompanied by a sign that explains that the *shimenawa* is not a symbol, that it does not stand for anything, that it simply marks the tree as something to respect and to love. Perhaps this will prevent further attacks. The assumption here is that this sort of aggressiveness flows from a residual, subliminal anger towards the symbolic order, and that by replacing symbols with non-symbols this antagonism might be ameliorated.

This is why I wished to deploy the *shimenawa* in places that are not Japan. The finer point here, of course, is that this expression of Japanese culture is also an expression of Mormon values. Both are similarly of the moment because both emphasize the non-symbolic nature of the divine. This common quality also suggests

why the postmodern present is a good time for both Japanese culture and for Mormonism.

Largely because of the cultural circumstances in which the church has developed to this point, many Mormons consider themselves modern. Many consider the church to be a conservative, last-bastion of certain values that are being eroded by the decadence of our times. I see this sort of nostalgia as problematic for two reasons. First, it marks a yearning for something that was bad for Mormonism in the first place. Let us remember that modernity is secular and anti-religious by nature. Second, the timing of things is off. If the "latter-days" are the modern days, and if modernity has come and gone (as is arguably the case in places like the United States and Japan), then this can only mean that we have missed the boat. Our moment has come and gone. And the future we envision is not really a future.

This alarming wake-up call comes to us just as the so-called culture wars that were fought within the academy during the 1960s to 1980s have spread to the general population at large. The contested nature of modernity—is it really over or still going strong?—brings us to a state of political gridlock that will, unless someone pulls the plug, gradually resolve itself for reasons that deserve more attention than can be given here. Suffice it to say that the end of modernity should be good news for Mormons. If we are true to practice, if, Zen-like, we keep trying to reconcile the symbolic and the non-symbolic, then the golden age of Mormonism is not behind us, but lies ahead.

In sum, I have made the point that, precisely because of the way Mormonism resonates with Japanese culture, both are presently flourishing and should continue to do so for into the foreseeable future. We have considered a few similarities: the closeness of the living and the dead, human godliness, the spiritual nature of all things, an emphasis on constant practice/service, a lack of theology, etc. A secondary point is that all these features make both Japanese culture and Mormonism of the moment, well suited to the present postmodern, post-human times that are upon us.

When we take a look around from this vantage point, we see that diversity is not someone's political agenda. Neither is it an

institutional program, nor a code word for progressivism. Diversity is reality. Truly, the world is diverse by nature; but this is not to say that it is easily understood as such. There are modern-minded Mormons and those who are not; and so our paths up the mountain will have to be different and various. Having said that, I would also like to say that we share important similarities. For many of us, the mountain itself still entices us to climb it, and the spirit teaches us when and where to turn and when and where to go straight. Slowly ascending—and sometimes descending—we learn what we can, when we can. We move forward from the place we are now.

Our circumstances are different. From my ancestors, I learned about my animistic nature and about my Buddha nature. From Sister Miriam Dastrup, who taught me the Primary lessons and songs that have become old friends, I have learned my divine place in this godly world, "of which I'm a part." Both the *butsudan* and the sacrament tray teach me to practice certain simple fundamentals, and to appreciate "the color of butterfly wings," and the "magical sound of things." They are symbolic elements that are useful to my non-symbolic practice. Both make me glad that I live in this beautiful world that Heavenly Father created for me.

Notes

1. My paternal grandfather, Sashichi Inouye, actually did know English quite well. But when his family was put into a concentration camp during World War II, he decided to stop speaking English. This was something I learned only after I had studied Japanese and tried to have a conversation with him in his language. Apparently, he preferred to keep our essentially wordless relationship the way it was.

2. There have been two notable periods of exception to this compatibility: when Buddhism was first introduced in the sixth century, and then around the turn of the twentieth century when animism took the modern form of State Shinto, a hegemonic system that provided ideological support for an unfortunate period of nation and empire building.

3. A detailed analysis of modernity and the importance of realism to its development is contained in my recently completed manuscript, *Archipelago: Figurality and the Development of Modern Consciousness*.

4. Karen Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010). For a video summary of her thoughts on compassion, see her TED talk at http://www.ted.com/talks/karen_armstrong_makes_her_ted_prize_wish_the_charter_for_compassion.

5. For Gordon B. Hinckley's thoughts on eternal progression, see "Rise to the Stature of the Divine within You," https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1989/10/rise-to-the-stature-of-the-divine-within-you?lang=eng (accessed March 15, 2014). For the provenance of Lorenzo Snow's well-known couplet, "As man is now, God once was. As God is now, man may be," see Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 9–10. Joseph Smith elaborated upon Lorenzo Snow's revelation in the King Follet Discourse. "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself." *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 345–46.

6. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:14). "For the natural man is an enemy to God . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit . . . and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ" (Mosiah 3:19).

7. At the Global Crossroads Conference, held in Berkeley, California on March 22, Reverend Jerry Hirano, who grew up in Utah and now is the head priest at the Buddhist temple there, made the point that many Buddhists think that they do not share this point of Buddha nature with Christians. As he pointed out to his fellow Buddhist clerics, Mormons are exceptional in that they share a similar conception of human divinity. For more on Reverend Hirano's understanding of Buddhism, see J. K. Hirano, *Teriyaki Priest: Tales from the Realm of Gratitude* (Anaheim, Calif.: Buddhist Education Center, 2013).

8. The influence of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism (which was a later theorization of Confucian thought and sensibility) has waxed and waned over the centuries, from ancient times to the present. Although this influence has been complicated, it is probably safe to say that it has had turned the Japanese mind toward social harmony, the value of education, and respect for parents, ancestors, teachers, and other figures of authority.

9. This is the opening line of the *Analects*.

10. "Spirit" as defined in the Bible Dictionary, https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/spirit.p1?lang=eng&letter=s (accessed March 15, 2014).

11. Simply put, as articulated by Japanese artists such as Oshii Mamoru and Murakami Takashi, the post-human situation is marked by the way that people, plants, animals, and even robots exist on the same level. As a denial of human superiority, the "superflat" post-human movement comes as an adjustment to ever more sophisticated technological developments that it is actually dependent upon. More straight forwardly, it is also a critique of the modern arrogance that brought us World War II and, now, environmental problems such as global warming.

12. "Postmodern" is a broader term than "posthuman." It is a vague, and perhaps temporary, marker of a time—our present time—that comes after modernity's demise. There are many definitions of modernity in circulation, one of which—"better than what you had before"—does a good job of ensuring the relevance of modernity forever. Who wouldn't want something better? One point of the postmodern, of course, is that this claim of constant improvement has been shown to be false: newer is not always better; progress often comes at an exorbitant price; and what counts as improved depends on one's relative position to it. As an attack on modern hegemony—that is, a perfected and coercive system that skillfully conceals its manipulation even to the point that we are unaware of it—postmodern critics argue that there is no single unimpeachable, authoritative position that deserves our unquestioning subservience. While many view the collapse of modern structure as a time of mourning, I view the growth of new plants that are coming up through the rubble as a sign of a possibly better, more compassionate future.

13. For an English translation of Mizuki Shigeru's War and Japan see Matthew Penny, "War and Japan: The Non-Fiction Manga of Mizuki Shigeru," in *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, http://japanfocus.org/-Matthew-Penney/2905 (accessed March 15, 2014).

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