DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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The Present, Past, and Future of LDS Financial Transparency

Samuel D. Brunson[1]

Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman.[2]

Every April in the Saturday afternoon session of its semi-annual General Conference, the managing director of the Auditing Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) reads his department's[3] report for the prior year. The annual report invariably concludes that "in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church . . . have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures."[4] Presenting the Church Auditing Department's reports at General Conference dates back at least to 1906. [5] And today, this annual report provides the sole window into the global finances of the LDS Church.[6]

The LDS Church has not always been so guarded about its finances. At times in the past, the Church's books were apparently "open for the inspection of the Saints."[7] And since its beginnings, the LDS Church has provided members with occasional public accountings of how it has spent its money. For the first eighty-five years of the Church's history, it made these public accountings irregularly.[8] In 1915, though, and continuing until 1959, the church made an annual public disclosure of its finances. As part of the annual April General Conference, somebody—often the president of the LDS Church or one of his counselors—would inform the assembled congregation of how much money the Church had spent in a variety of categories.

In 1959, in the wake of significant deficit spending by the Church and of massive investment losses, the Church ended its detailed public financial disclosure,[9] and instead limited its financial disclosure to the Auditing Department report. As a result of its silence about the details of its finances, members, critics, and the interested public have been left to guess at the Church's wealth and the scope of its charitable spending, among other things. The Church's lack of public financial disclosure bothers some—apologists and critics alike—who have requested, in various ways, that the Church return to its former practice of publicly disclosing detailed financial information.[10]

Those who advocate public financial disclosure tend to ground their arguments in both practical and theoretical bases. Practically, they believe that disclosure is necessary to prevent fraud and abuse; theoretically, they argue that the Church has a moral responsibility to its members to allow them to see how their donations are being used. Others support the Church's current limited financial disclosures, arguing that members do not need to see the internal financial workings of the Church and that no financial chicanery can occur with prophets leading the Church.

These two positions appear, in many ways, to be talking past each other; they also (in their purest forms, at least) misunderstand both what financial disclosure is and what it can do. Disclosure should be instrumental, not an end in itself. Furthermore, disclosure is not binary, to be turned on or off. Rather, it is the selective ordering and presentation of an organization's finances. That selective ordering can take many forms and, in fact, the Church has provided financial disclosure in several forms and continues to provide public financial disclosure.

As a result, the question to ask is not whether the Church should disclose its finances. It is, instead, what form that disclosure should take. To figure out what that form of disclosure should be, it is necessary to evaluate what we want the disclosure to achieve. Without an articulated aim, it is impossible to judge whether any disclosure the Church provides gives valuable information.

Although this article is about financial disclosure, my primary purpose is not to engage the arguments for or against expanded disclosure. Instead, I want to lay out a framework that can underlie those arguments. I will lay out that framework in three parts. First, I will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of financial disclosure, especially as they apply to charities and, more specifically, to churches. As part of that discussion, I will look at the law governing financial disclosure for churches and other tax-exempt organizations, the history of the law, and the theoretical reasons why a church might want to embrace financial transparency in spite of its not being legally mandated.[11]

Second, I will look at the LDS Church's forty-five-year flirtation with the kind of detailed annual financial disclosures that the disclosure advocates seem to prefer. I will look at the motivations for that historical practice, as well as stylistic and substantive evolution of these disclosures. I will explore the practical limits of what benefits these disclosures provided to members of the LDS Church, as well as what benefits they provided to the Church itself. Although this portion of the article will draw on historical numbers and statements, it is beyond the scope of this article to interrogate the motivations of those making or encouraging the disclosures, or to relate it deeply to the surrounding culture. Instead, I intend to illustrate the various ways that disclosure can occur (and, in fact, has occurred) to better understand where the Church stands today.

Third, I will discuss the current and future state of Mormon financial disclosure. In spite of its half-century experimentation with detailed financial disclosure, there is no indication that the Church will return to that practice. Rather, I suspect that, for the near future, LDS practice with regard to financial transparency will be static: without any change in law, the LDS Church is unlikely to face any internal impetus to return to its earlier experimentation with broad financial disclosure. That experiment originally rose from a desire to convince more members to pay tithing; today, the LDS Church appears to be content with the amount of revenue it can raise without being financially transparent.

At the same time, though, I will argue that the level of financial disclosure is far less important—from both a practical and theoretical perspective—than the trustworthiness of the person providing the disclosure. If the person doing the disclosing can be trusted, even the most general level of disclosure communicates valuable information. Conversely, if the person doing the disclosing cannot be trusted, the finest-grain disclosure provides virtually no usable information. In light of the limitations on the value of disclosure, and the unlikeliness that the Church will move toward detailed disclosure, I suggest that advocates of financial transparency look to a second-best solution. Rather than focusing on the type of disclosure the Church provides, then, a sensible and valuable intermediate step would be to focus on who provides the disclosure. Instead of using internal auditors, the Church should engage an external auditor and have that auditor present the state of Church finances.

I. U.S. Charities and Financial Disclosure

The LDS Church is not alone in its financial secrecy. It is true that most public charities in the United States provide public financial disclosure. They do so because the tax law requires them to. Though disclosure can serve a number of purposes,[12] for public charities, it serves essentially two. First, it allows potential donors to evaluate how an organization uses its assets. In that way, these donors can determine whether they approve of the way that the charitable organization will use their money. Second, mandatory disclosure can, theoretically, discourage fraud. If the managers of a charity know that their financial records will be presented to the public, they are less likely to engage in shady transactions.[13]

The tax law's disclosure requirement does not apply to churches, however, even though they automatically qualify as tax-exempt charities. In fact, churches and other charitable organizations have been exempt from federal income taxes since the inception of the modern income tax.[14] Initially, that exemption freed churches, along with other tax-exempt organizations, from virtually any interaction with the tax law. While the tax law required any person liable for tax to file a return, the law was silent with respect to those exempt from taxes.[15]

That changed in 1943. The Revenue Act of 1943 introduced a requirement that tax-exempt organizations file an annual return that laid out the organization's gross income, receipts, and disbursements.[16] The new filing requirement did not apply, however, to "religious organizations" that were otherwise exempt from tax.

The filing requirement does more than just provide financial information about tax-exempt organizations to the IRS and the government. Although the law generally protects the confidentiality of most tax returns,[17] exempt organizations' returns must be available for public inspection.[18] That is, tax-exempt organizations are required, by law, to publicly disclose their finances, and not only to stakeholders, but to anybody interested in looking at the finances. Churches, on the other hand, have no legal obligation to publicize their finances.

The reason Congress decided to require tax-exempt organizations to publicly disclose their finances has, perhaps, been lost to history: there is little legislative history surrounding the return requirement. The history of the public's right to inspect the returns of tax-exempt organizations is more easily discoverable: Congress expanded the availability of disclosure as a result of public concern over several high-profile scandals in which the executives of charities misused charitable funds.[19] Disclosure was meant to ensure public accountability and to assure donors that charities were not misusing their donations.

Because churches were not required to file an information return, they also did not have to make public disclosure. At the time, churches almost lost their return-filing exemption. Had that exemption gone away, churches in the United States would have had to provide public disclosure of their finances. By 1969, many members of Congress felt that the government needed more information about tax-exempt organizations, including religious institutions. As a result, the House version of the Tax Reform Act of 1969 completely eliminated the religious exception to the filing requirement.[20]

This galvanized churches to lobby the Senate for relief. In Senate testimony, a number of church organizations argued against imposing a filing requirement on churches. Ernest L. Wilkinson, president of Brigham Young University, testified regarding the deleterious effects various proposed changes to the tax law would have on universities and donors. Among other things, he opposed the broader return-filing provisions passed by the House, explaining that requiring universities and churches to file information returns would prove "extremely burdensome and costly to the universities and churches with no offsetting revenue to the government because colleges and churches are tax exempt."[21] Wilkinson went on to explain that maintaining the filing exemption for churches (and universities) would not abet tax evasion because donors themselves would still need to include their donations on their returns.[22]

The United States Catholic Conference (USCC) took a different tack in its opposition to the House measure. It explained that fiscal separation between religion and government was a central tenet of the separation of church and state. As such, it made two arguments against the government's requiring churches to file returns. The first was pragmatic: because churches don't make a general appeal to the public for funding, they do not need to provide general financial information to the public. Rather, since they appeal to their particular congregations, they should have the option of making voluntary financial disclosures to their congregations, but should not face a government-imposed obligation to make disclosures to the public at large.[23]

The USCC's first argument is implicitly premised on the idea that financial disclosure by tax-exempt organizations is meant to permit potential donors to make informed choices about where to put their money. If a church is not part of the donor marketplace—because donors feel a religious or spiritual obligation to donate—mandated disclosure may not serve a fundraising purpose. That is, according to the USCC's implicit argument, because churches raise funds from a narrowly-targeted group (their own congregants), providing financial information to the public at large does not serve any purpose for the public at large.[24] As for the congregants who do donate to the church, they may be indifferent to the church's finances (because, for example, they donate out of perceived spiritual obligation or as a requirement of membership). If, however, congregants want to understand how their church uses its money and they will not donate without that information, the church has the option to provide them with that information.

The USCC's second argument follows from, and builds on, its first. It argues that "requiring an information return strikes at the very freedom of churches and religious organizations from intimate, governmental, financial scrutiny."[25] Requiring churches to disclose their finances, according to the USCC, would be constitutionally suspect. Moreover, the USCC pointed out, exempting religious organizations from the filing requirement had a long and harmonious history. Congress had not pointed to any compelling reason to alter that historic relationship.[26] In the end, the USCC "view[ed] with deep concern the proposals that churches be required as a matter of law to file detailed financial information returns."[27]

Though neither Wilkinson nor the USCC addressed the place of disclosure in discouraging fraud, the Senate ultimately complied with churches' requests, though only partially: the filing exemption survived, but in a significantly narrowed form. The Senate's version of the bill, which ultimately became law, no longer exempted "religious organizations from filing information returns. Instead, it exempted "churches" and their "integrated auxiliaries" from the filing requirement.[28]

Notwithstanding the USCC's arguments, the exemption from disclosure that the Senate preserved for churches may have ultimately reduced their revenue. A 2006 study found that ten percent of church-going Christians claimed that they gave less to their churches than they otherwise would have because they were afraid their donations would be wasted or otherwise mishandled. Pastors, too, were concerned that financial scandals involving other religious leaders would tar them, as well, as a result of the lack of financial transparency.[29]

Still, it is unclear whether financial transparency prevents fraud or significantly aids donors in making better-informed decisions. The tax law still requires tax-exempt organizations to file information returns, still requires those returns to be made available to the public, and still exempts churches and their integrated auxiliaries from the filing requirement. Anecdotally, though, financial transparency has not been an obvious success at meeting its objectives.

In 2013, the *Tampa Bay Times* and the Center for Investigative Reporting ran a series of stories about what they dubbed the fifty worst charities in the United States. Topping its list was the Kids Wish Network. Over the previous ten years, the Kids Wish Network had raised $127.8 million from donors, putatively to help dying children and their families. It spent less than three percent of the money actually helping children; nearly $110 million went to for-profit fundraisers to raise more money and $4.8 million went to pay the founder and his consulting firms.[30]

And it was not just the Kids Wish Network; collectively, the fifty tax-exempt organizations flagged by the series paid out just four percent of their donations in direct cash aid. They paid a good portion of the remainder of the donations to for-profit fundraising companies to raise even more money.[31] *And none of this is secret*. The investigative journalists were able to follow the charities' money by reading through the same tax filings that are publicly available to donors.

So why have donors given hundreds of millions of dollars to these disreputable charities? There are undoubtedly several reasons. For example, donors do not necessarily know that charities' financial information is publicly available, and charities (and particularly disreputable charities) may have little incentive to inform potential donors, when soliciting donations, that they could search through the charity's financial disclosures. Even if a potential donor knows that she can see the charity's financial statements, though, actually tracking down the disclosures and reading them requires affirmative effort by the potential donor. The internet has made the process less onerous—websites, including GuideStar's, provide copies of charities' Form 990s—but there is still effort involved.[32]

Even assuming that a potential donor knows that she can access the financial disclosures, knows where to find them, and undertakes the effort to find them, there is no guarantee that the disclosures will provide her with usable information. Most people have little exposure to the balance sheets of large entities, and do not have the background to understand and contextualize the information provided. And the disclosure itself does nothing to make a potential donor's research easier. Notwithstanding the fact that a tax-exempt organization's Form 990 must be publicly disclosed, its principal purpose is not to provide meaningful information to potential donors. On a Form 990, tax-exempt organizations provide financial and yes/no answers to a series of questions. Although this type of disclosure makes it possible to evaluate the financial performance of an organization, it provides essentially no information about whether the organization is achieving its programmatic and charitable goals.[33] At best, the disclosure provides tax compliance information to the IRS; for others, in large part Form 990 can be "impenetrable and . . . of little use."[34]

So the financial disclosure mandated by the tax law ultimately may do little to prevent fraud and mismanagement by charities. Similarly, voluntary tax disclosure may not prevent charities—including churches—from mismanaging their money. The Great Depression forced the LDS Church into deficit spending in 1937 and 1938. The Church lost $1 million on municipal bonds in 1956. It spent $8 million more than its income during 1959.[35] And all of this happened while the Church was voluntarily providing detailed disclosure of its finances (or, in 1959, while it may have reasonably expected to disclose its finances the following year). Even the fact of disclosure, then, did not prevent the Church from making costly financial decisions.

II. The LDS Church, Financial Disclosure, and Moral Imperative

Although preventing fraud and increasing donations are the principal considerations underlying mandatory financial disclosure by tax-exempt charities, churches may have an additional reason to disclose: they may face a moral, ethical, or scriptural mandate that does not apply to non-church charities. And, in fact, a number of churches have chosen to make audited financial disclosures available on the internet. For example, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) is an accrediting body for churches. Among other things, for a church to be accredited by the ECFA, it must prepare accurate financial statements reviewed by an independent certified public accountant and it must make those financial statements available upon written request.[36]

ECFA views the policy underlying compliance with its accreditation standards as a fulfillment of scriptural mandates.[37] It also provides for public disclosure for pragmatic purposes: its mission is to enhance trust in member churches[38] by providing "tangible assurance to your donors that their contributions are being handled in accordance with high standards of integrity. Having such assurance, donors will be able to give with confidence to your ministry programs."[39]

The LDS Church similarly has the option to make financial disclosure, whether or not the law demands it. Even without a secular obligation to disclose, the Church might view itself as subject to a divine disclosure mandate. But such a mandate does not explicitly exist in canonized Mormon scripture, and the evidence is strong that Church leaders have never believed they were under such a divine mandate, even at the beginning of the Church.

Early Church leaders—those most intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith and his revelations—apparently did not believe that God required the Church to disclose its finances. The Church did provide occasional financial disclosure during the 19th century, but such disclosures were sporadic. In 1832, Edward Partridge "gave a public accounting of Church finances to a Church conference."[40] According to D. Michael Quinn, the accountings were repeated annually until 1838, but stopped after the Mormons left Missouri. Brigham Young gave occasional financial reports and, after his death, John Taylor proposed to make those reports annual. Six years later, though, facing the federal anti-polygamy campaign, Taylor discontinued the financial reports.[41] Had there been some non-canonized divine imperative to make a financial disclosure, presumably early Church leaders would have felt an obligation to comply with it, and would not have been as inconsistent as they were.

That there was no divine but uncanonized mandate is further supported by the rhetoric that surrounded the re-introduction of financial disclosure. When the church started providing annual financial reports again in 1915, it did not frame its disclosure as an obligation; rather, in preface to his reading the disbursement of tithing dollars, Joseph F. Smith said that he was "taking a liberty that has not been indulged in very much: but there have been so many false charges made against me and against my brethren by ignorant and evilly disposed people, that I propose to make a true statement which will, I believe, at least have a tendency to convince you that we are trying to do our duty the best we know how."[42] Financial disclosure, in Smith's mind, was not the fulfillment of a divine command, but a pragmatic move designed to short-circuit criticism and reinforce the members' trust in Church leadership.

More than merely the practice of Church leaders, canonized scripture supports the idea that the Church is under no divine mandate to disclose its finances. Modern scripture does address financial matters. Doctrine and Covenants 104, for example, deals with the United Firm. In explaining how the Firm would distribute its assets, the scriptures required that "there shall not any part of [the United Firm's money] be used, or taken out of the treasury, only by the voice and common consent of the order" (D&C 104:71). Mormon scripture, then, has sometimes explicitly required specific financial practices—here, consent of the members of the Firm to take money out of its treasury. If the scriptures can articulate this financial requirement with respect to the United Firm, they are equally capable of articulating it with respect to the Church's finances at large. The fact of their silence about financial disclosure (in contrast to other explicit financial directives) can be plausibly interpreted as a signal that the Church is under no scriptural mandate to disclose anything.

Even if Church leaders felt they were under a moral obligation to disclose its finances, there is no reason that the disclosure would—or even should—look like the ECFA-approved disclosure. The ECFA's scriptural basis does not provide a framework for disclosure; rather, as an institution of accreditation, the ECFA had to make substantive judgments about form its members' disclosure would take.[43] It is insufficient, then, merely to say that the Church is morally, ethically, or scripturally obligated to disclose its finances; we must determine what level of disclosure would allow it to meet its obligation.

III. Forty-five Years of Disclosure Broadly

Even though the Church is under no legal or divine obligation to disclose its finances to the public, it chose to do so for just under half a century, providing a fascinating series of snapshots of the development of LDS Church finances during the first half of the twentieth century. But before making a fine-grain analysis of the specific disclosures and what they can tell us, it is worth making a handful of global observations.

First, the Church's financial disclosure practices did not spring, fully formed, from the head of the First Presidency. The corpus of financial statements shows an evolution not only in the Church's finances, but also in the manner in which the Church made its disclosures. I divide the disclosures into four periods, each with distinct information and styles:

1915–1922: Experimentation
1923–1943: Routinization
1944–1951: Magnification
1952–1959: Retreat

These divisions are at least partly arbitrary, of course, and are largely impressionistic. The men who presented the financial disclosures in General Conference certainly did not delineate specific stylistic or content breaks. The Church generally presented each year's statement atomistically, making no mention of previous years' finances.[44] Still, although the way I have divided up the Church's financial disclosure is not absolute and inevitable, looking at the disclosure in this way provides an interesting and valuable, analytical, framework.

Second, the disclosure for a particular year was given in April of the following year. In April, 1918, that is, the Church provided its financial disclosure for 1917. Thus, when I discuss the disclosure itself, I will refer to the year in which it was presented in General Conference. When I discuss the actual expenditures, though, I will refer to the year in which they occurred.

Third, both the informal, experimental manner in which the Church started its financial disclosures and the atomistic nature of such disclosures—especially at first—resulted in inconsistent categorization of expenses from year to year, and certainly from period to period. In the appendices to this article, I have taken the Church's annual financial disclosures and put them into a spreadsheet. But the spreadsheet suffers from some deficiencies. In creating the spreadsheets, I had to decide how to categorize certain expenses. As the Church itself was inconsistent about its categorizations, certain categories of expenses periodically appear and disappear. For example, for the first four years of financial disclosure, the Church listed expenditures on the building and maintenance of hospitals (though in 1917, the category morphed into "Expended for charitable purposes, including hospitals"). Over the next nineteen years, hospitals were only mentioned twice, then reappeared from 1937 to 1942, then entirely fell off the Church's financial disclosures. Presumably the Church continued to own and operate its hospitals, at least during the nineteen-year middle period, which means that the expenditures the Church incurred on hospitals were either folded into another category or excluded altogether from the financial disclosure. I attempted to bring some consistency to the categories but, because I do not have access to what underlies the disclosures, I cannot be sure that my categorizations are completely accurate.

Additionally, the Church went back and forth between separating general fund (tithing) expenditures and non-tithing expenditures. During the years in question, the Church provided welfare not only out of fast offering revenue and Relief Society monies, but also out of tithing funds. In some years, the Church separated the amounts of welfare paid from tithing from the amounts paid from non-tithing sources. In other years it did not explicitly mention non-tithing welfare spending (though it is not clear whether that means it folded such spending in with the tithing spending or just failed to mention that spending). Toward the end of its disclosure—especially in the Retreat period—it explicitly failed to separate the tithing from the non-tithing welfare expenditures.

In addition, for some years, especially during the Magnification period, the Church had a welfare section of its financial disclosure.

While that section would expressly lay out the amounts paid from fast offerings, certain of the expenditure categories looked as if they might also have been listed in the general fund section of the disclosure. In those cases, in listing the non-tithing welfare expenditures, I left out any numbers that might reflect tithing sources of welfare payments. As a result, the welfare column of the non-tithing spreadsheet may undercount the Church's expenditures.

With those caveats, though, the spreadsheets provide an interesting and valuable presentation of the Church's data, allowing us to see general trends in Church expenditures assembled in a single place. Figure 1 uses these data (imperfect though they may be) to graph the Church's expenditures from tithing between 1916 and 1953.[45] Though it does not tell us what it is, the graph illustrates that something significant happened in the mid-1940s.

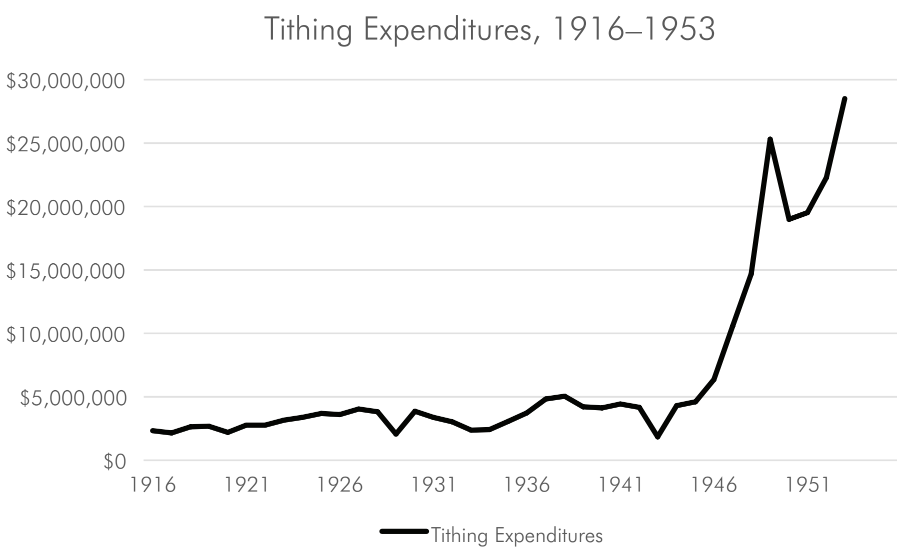

Figure 1

Figure 2 can help explain at least partially, what caused the explosion in expenditures. It shows spending on ward and stake expenses, on missions, on Church schools, and on temples. The data are incomplete—some years the Church failed to list expenditures in certain categories, leaving the lines broken—but they still point toward very specific culprits: wards and stakes. While all categories of expenses started rising in the mid-1940s, spending on wards and stakes exploded, sextupling between 1948 and 1953. And by 1953, stake and ward expenditures, which had been roughly in line with the other three categories, was two to three times as high as any of the other three categories of expenses.

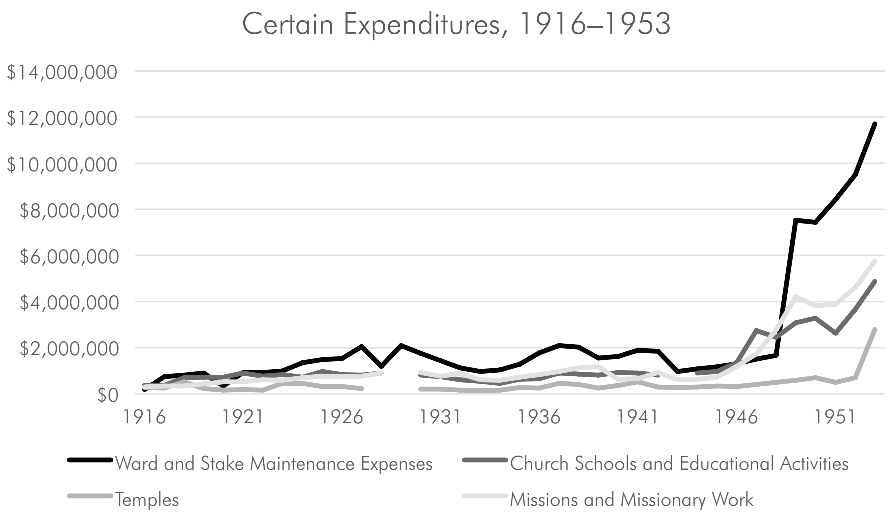

Figure 2

Third, the financial disclosures are virtually devoid of revenue reporting. That is, the Church never disclosed how much it received in tithing nor how much it earned on its various for-profit investments, the tuition it received from Church schools, nor the amounts earned from various Church-owned hospitals. The Church was not *entirely* silent about its revenue, though. It did disclose its fast offering receipts between 1942 and 1950. (Note that this additional disclosure lines up fairly closely with my Magnification period.)

As a result of the Church's virtual silence on revenue during the forty-five-year disclosure period, the Church's detailed financial disclosure did little to inform donors or to prevent fraud. That is, while we know that the Church spent about $6.3 million from tithing funds in 1946, then $10.6 million in 1947, the numbers leave out significant information that we need to evaluate the wisdom of such expenditures. We do not know how much revenue the Church had in 1946 and 1947, and the amount of revenue matters: if its revenue was only $5 million in each of those years, then the Church was engaged in deficit spending, and may not be the ideal recipient of donations. On the other hand, if it had revenue of $20 million each year, it failed to account for half of its revenue, leading to questions about what it did with the additional cash.

In either case, though, even knowing the annual revenue does not give us a perfect picture of whether the Church is financially sound or whether the Church acted fraudulently. The financial statements not only fail to disclose the Church's revenue, they largely do not disclose its assets (with the exception, in some years, of assets held for welfare purposes). Even if the Church spent more than its revenue for two or three years, it may have built up a surplus in prior years, with the intent to use that surplus to fund years with insufficient revenue. Likewise, the Church spending less than its revenue does not mean the Church was engaged in fraud; it may have been building a surplus for just such a rainy day. Disclosing expenditures alone, then, provides very little informational benefit. Expenditures make up only one facet of an organization's financial health. And essentially the disclosure that the Church made for so many years provided almost exclusively a snapshot of the Church's expenditures for a given year.

If the Church were to voluntarily return to providing detailed financial disclosure, there is no reason to think its disclosure would be significantly different from what it gave during the first half of the twentieth century. Those years represent the fullest financial disclosure the Church has ever provided, and, while those reports are tremendously interesting, as we will see, they have little benefit either for regulatory purposes or for donor purposes.

Theoretically, of course, voluntary disclosure is not the only model. Congress could do what the House of Representatives tried to do in 1969: eliminate the exemption for churches from filing information returns. Assuming it could get beyond the lobbying that would accompany such a change and get comfortable with the constitutionality of the change, Form 990 that other tax-exempt entities must file has considerably more information than the disclosure the Church made in the past. On Form 990, the Church would have to disclose its revenue and expenditures, and it would have to provide a balance sheet listing its assets.

Even this involuntary disclosure, though, may be less valuable to potential donors and watchdogs than they might prefer. In the first instance, as discussed above, Form 990 is meant to provide the IRS with the information it needs to ensure that a tax-exempt organization is meeting the qualification requirements for the exemption and is paying the taxes, if any, that it owes. It is not designed to give donors substantive information about how well the organization is meeting its charitable goals.

And Form 990 does not give a complete picture of an organization's financial health. For example, in Schedule D, a tax-exempt organization must list the interests it holds in non-publicly-traded companies. For the LDS Church, those investments would include Deseret Book, Bonneville International Corporation, and any other for-profit entities it owned. In addition to ownership, the Church would have to disclose the value of those entities. But it could choose between market value and cost. So if the Church initially acquired Deseret Book for $1 million, and today it was worth $100 million, the Church could choose either valuation to put on its disclosure (though it would have to say which valuation method it used).[46]

And because its for-profit subsidiaries are not part of the Church itself, their income and liabilities would not go on the financial disclosure. (They would file tax returns but, like most tax returns for non-exempt taxpayers, their returns would be private.[47]) In fact, the Church would almost undoubtedly—and understandably—compartmentalize even further.[48] Right now, for example, it is subject to financial disclosure in the United Kingdom, but the disclosure it makes is solely for its operations in the United Kingdom.[49] Moreover, its mandated UK disclosure in many ways provides less information than its voluntary twentieth-century disclosure did. While the UK disclosure includes revenue, it appears to only require the Church to break out separately its three largest expenditure categories. Again, it provides some valuable information, but that information has limited value in terms of fraud prevention and, given that outsiders are unlikely to donate in any event, even less value in terms of convincing potential donors that the Church will use their donations in the best possible manner.

The First Period: Experimentation (1915–1922)

Presumably, the Church's entrée into the world of financial disclosure came as a surprise to the members attending General Conference in April 1915. In fact, Joseph F. Smith appears to have anticipated the surprise. In introducing the Church finances, he admitted that such disclosure had "not been indulged in very much."[50] Why, then, indulge in it now? According to Smith, one reason, as discussed above, was to combat charges "made against me and my brethren."[51] Though he did not tell what charges were being made against him, in 1911 the House Ways and Means Committee had begun investigating whether the American Sugar Refining Company had violated anti-trust laws. As part of that investigation, it looked at the relationship between American Sugar and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, of which Joseph F. Smith was president.[52] The involvement by Church leaders, and the Church itself, in the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company led to accusations that Smith used Utah-Idaho Sugar to benefit the Mormon

Church, and that the Church used its political influence to enact tariffs that benefitted Utah-Idaho Sugar.[53] In fact, as the hearings approached, the *Salt Lake Tribune* "announced that it eagerly awaited the 'exceedingly embarrassing questions' that the sugar authorities would have to answer."[54] Smith's disclosure of Church finances, then, may have been intended partly to counteract this narrative that Church leaders were engaging in fraudulent and illegal transactions, at least with Church money.

But demonstrating the falsity of some people's accusations was only one reason for the disclosure. Smith provided the financials in the opening address of the opening session of General Conference in 1915; prior to reading the financials, he was discussing duty generally, and members' duty to care for the poor specifically. Combining the two strands, he said,

> The trouble with us at present is that there are so many men who are holding membership in the Church, who neglect their duty in so many ways, that we have not the means to provide as amply as we would like for the necessities of the poor. When you look upon a tithing record, a book of large dimensions, containing the names of members of the Church who do not pay their tithing, you do not need to wonder why the Church has not more means to provide for the poor.[55]

He then told the congregation that he was "going to read you just a few little things that we are doing with the means you consecrate to the Lord for the upbuilding of Zion."[56] Disclosing the Church's finances appears to have been motivated at least in part to encourage members to pay their tithing.

Thus, the Church ostensibly began disclosing detailed financial information for the very same reasons that tax law today requires most tax-exempt organizations to disclose their finances: to prevent fraud (or, in the case of the Church in 1915, to demonstrate that it was not engaging in any fraud), and to attract donors.

Smith read the expenditures of tithing funds in nine categories. Interestingly, one of the categories that was paid out of tithing funds—and that continued to be paid out of tithing funds at least until the Church ended its public disclosure—was payments "to the worthy poor." Fast offering and Relief Society monies augmented the Church's tithe-based charitable payments, but did not replace them.

The introduction of financial disclosure not only came as a surprise to members of the church, but it may also have been disquieting for them. Even Smith did not seem entirely comfortable with the new practice: after reading the financials, it occurred to him "that we are talking to you on the Sabbath day, and some people, perhaps, may feel that it is somewhat out of place for us to talk about money and temporalities, about tithing, or the expenditure of means and the uses made of it, on the Sabbath day." Ultimately, though, he felt this new experiment was right because "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."[57]

This spirit of experimentation—of trying to figure out how to do disclosure—continued for several years. In 1916, the second year that the Church publicly announced its finances, Smith did not lay out the finances from 1915. Instead, he aggregated the Church's financial expenditures between 1901 and 1915, the years of his presidency. He explained that he did not want to use this disclosure to put himself above prior Church presidents, "but I do think that we have a record that we need not be ashamed of for the last fourteen or fifteen years or more."[58]

The elision of fourteen years of financial history into a single report makes it impossible to compare this report with the prior year's. Still, it seems less like an attempt to suppress information than it does a valedictory celebration for Smith. He mentioned that in 1906, the Church paid off a $1 million debt. He discussed temples that had been and were being built. He mentioned historic sites the Church had purchased during that period. And, again, this was only the second year of disclosure; he was still experimenting, having not yet established a standard template.

Though the first two years differ in terms of categories and time periods, they both lay out expenditures as a table. In 1917, that changed: rather than a table with categories of expenditure followed by the amount expended, Smith provided amounts expended in narrative form.[59] In 1918 he returned to a tabular presentation.[60]

In June 1919, Heber J. Grant's first General Conference as president, he both followed Smith's lead and departed from Smith's format. Grant provided the financial disclosure in tabular form, but he waited until the second day of General Conference to present the information.[61] In 1920 and 1921, Grant returned financial disclosure to the opening address of the first day, but he presented it in narrative form.[62] In the last year of the Experimentation period, Grant presented expenditures in a combination of narrative and tabular formats, leading off with narrative educational expenses and then dropping the financial disclosures until three pages later, when he picked them up again, in what essentially amounts to a table.[63]

These first eight years are interesting, because they show a commitment to financial disclosure while, at the same time, they show the Church experimenting to figure out how to best present the information (and, to some extent, what information to present). Some things were identical from the beginning: during this period, it was always the president of the Church who presented the financial statements and, although the disclosed categories changed marginally from year to year, in general, Church expenditures were divided into a consistent group of categories.

Some things, on the other hand, were more difficult to nail down. The oral nature of the financial disclosure in particular seems to have presented problems. Church leaders settled quickly on two different presentation forms (narrative and tabular), but they switched between the two apparently at random (though, as we will see, they quickly decided that a tabular presentation was better).[64]

The immediate impetus for the Church's beginning to disclose its finances appears to have been to demonstrate the lack of fraud or mismanagement and to encourage increased donations to the Church, precisely what the theory behind disclosures suggests it should be used for. However, we cannot say from the financial disclosures whether the Church was successful, because, while it disclosed its expenditures, it never disclosed its revenues. Successful or not, disclosure instantly coalesced into a regular practice, albeit inconsistent in its details.

The Second Period: Routinization (1923–1943)

Irrespective of its original purposes, by 1923 disclosure appears to have moved from purpose-driven to inertia-driven. Introducing his financial disclosure in 1923 (just nine years after the beginning of consistent disclosure), Grant said, "It has become customary at the April Conference to give some statistics regarding the expenditure of the tithes of the people, our mission work, and other items."[65] In 1924 and 1925, he prefaced his reading of the financial disclosures with the same "customary" language.[66] In 1926, Grant changed his introduction slightly: now it was "generally expected that at the April conference of the Church something shall be given in the nature of statistics regarding the condition of the Church."[67] For the next two years, any such preface disappeared, only for "customary" to show up again in 1929,[68] 1931,[69] and 1932[70] (but not in 1930). After 1933, when Grant was no longer reading the financial disclosure, its presentation in conference came unprefaced by any substantive introduction.

In less than a decade, then, financial disclosure had transformed from a novel and slightly unnerving practice into a customary one. And in less than fifteen years, it had transformed further into an expectation. Although there were minor variations between 1923 and 1943, the financial disclosures during this period stayed remarkably consistent. During this period (and, in fact, for the rest of the Church's financial disclosure), expenses were presented essentially in tabular form. During some years (e.g., 1923–1925), the presentation of finances in the *Conference Report* was literally in a table. During others (e.g., 1926–1927), the written report does not put the description of the expenditure in a separate column from the amount.

But even during those years in the Routinization period that do not use a literal table, the financial disclosure was still essentially a tabular, not a narrative, presentation. In many years during the Experimentation period, numbers were incorporated into detailed discussions of what the Church was doing with the money, with expenditures interspersed within the paragraphs. During the Routinization period, description is limited to what the category of expenditure entails, and each such paragraph ends with a dollar amount.

During this period, Grant, as president of the Church, continued to present the financial disclosure until 1933, when David O. McKay, the second counselor in the First Presidency, took over "at the request of President Heber J. Grant."[71] Other than permanently dropping any introduction to the financial disclosures, McKay's taking over the role of reading them did not present any substantive change in format or content. And, with three exceptions, McKay continued to present the disclosure through the end of the Routinization period. In 1938,[72] 1940,[73] and 1943,[74] Joseph Anderson, Clerk of Conference and secretary to the First Presidency, read the financial reports. There was no substantive difference between the styles of the reports read by McKay and those read by Anderson, which suggests that, irrespective of the presenter, they were written by the same person or persons.

By the end—if not by the beginning!—of the Routinization period, the underlying goals of disclosure appear to have been forgotten. There is no discussion of increasing members' tithe-paying or of calumnious rumors about the mismanagement of funds. Instead, financial disclosure during this period has an inertial feel to it—it is being done, and done consistently, because that is what the Church does and because that is what members of the Church expect. The disclosure becomes less personal and the presenter becomes fungible—what the members hear is the same, whether delivered by the president of the Church, his counselor, or his secretary.

This lack of personality presents a significant advantage to listeners: as the disclosures become routine, and as they shed their idiosyncrasies, it becomes far easier to compare Church expenditures over time. This easy comparison from one year to the next does not provide all of the information a potential donor might want, lacking, as it does, any disclosure of Church revenues. Still, the Routinization period demonstrates that the Church had found what it considered best practices, and that it had professionalized its financial disclosure.

The Third Period: Magnification (1944–1951)

The year 1944 saw a significant stepping-up of the Church's financial disclosure. In April of the year before, J. Reuben Clark Jr., the first counselor in the First Presidency, delivered an address in which he encouraged members to "magnify your calling and live righteously." Members who magnified their callings would have "almost infinite power in [their] hands."[75] And Clark appears to have taken this injunction to magnify his duties seriously with regard to financial transparency.

Even in April 1943, when Anderson delivered the final financial disclosure of the Routinization period, Clark was thinking about Church finances. He explained to the congregation that 95.5 percent of tithe-payers in the Church paid less than $200, and their donations made up two-thirds of total tithing revenue. "Thus," Clark explained, "the tithing is paid by the moderately circumstanced and poor of the Church."[76] In October 1943, the last General Conference before Clark would begin delivering the financial disclosures, he told the assembled congregation that 1941 had represented the largest tithing in the history of the Church; then, in 1942, tithes had increased by more than fifty percent; in the first nine months of 1943, tithes had again increased by more than fifty percent.[77]

Of course, Clark's mentioning the increase in tithes did not provide any substantive information other than that donations were up. Although tithing receipts in 1943 were apparently two and a half times higher than the already-high receipts in 1941, Clark did not quantify the actual receipts. And he did not explain what, if anything, had changed to cause these increases. Nonetheless, he was open about the relative scope of Church revenue over the course of the prior couple years.

And then, in 1944, he began to deliver the financial disclosure for the Church. His method of financial disclosure represented a virtual sea of change in how the Mormon Church presented this information. Up until 1943, the Church had laid out its expenditures in generally stable categories. In 1944, Clark added layers of detail to this model. Rather than merely providing the expenditures, he listed the budget appropriations, the expenditures, and the amount by which expenditures differed from the amount appropriated.[78]

This model—appropriation, expenditure, and the difference between the two—continued throughout the Magnification period (which, it is worth noting, is coterminous with the time that Clark presented the financial disclosure in conference) with one small change: in 1948, Clark added a *fourth* column for supplementary appropriations.[79]

Why this detail? In addition to his dedication to magnifying his calling, Clark appears to have had a remarkable interest in the Church doing the right thing. He does not appear to have been an accounting wonk, delivering in-depth financial statements primarily out of interest in the numbers; delivering these tables orally must have been tedious both to him and to his listeners. In fact, he claimed to believe that "[f]igures are never very interesting"; they are, however, "more interesting when they indicate prosperity, the use of funds in a proper way, for proper purposes than they are at other times." Clark went on to explain that the Committee on Expenditures, made up of the First Presidency, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric, "pass on every cent that is covered by the budget," and that the accounts were audited. These procedures ensured that there was virtually no misappropriation of Church funds.[80]

Clark, in other words, saw this in-depth disclosure not only as his duty, but as having an instrumental purpose. Through broad transparency, he could assure Church members—including the poor, whose donations made up so much of the Church's revenue and who presumably sacrificed real consumption to pay their tithing—that the Church was using their donations responsibly. In his mind, the Church owed these tithe-payers an obligation to be careful with the money they donated. And care involved not only spending money on worthy things, but on actually planning how to spend the money and then living within those budgetary constraints.

Though the detailed budgetary disclosure is the principal feature distinguishing the Magnification period from other periods of disclosure, it is not the only distinguishing feature. Two other notable changes occurred roughly within this time period, both of which increased the Church's financial transparency. Beginning in 1944, the annual financial disclosure added the appropriations and expenditures for the Office of the Corporation of the President and the Office of the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop. Expenses in these two categories included, among other things, salaries, office and traveling expenses, and living allowances for General Authorities. Clark made clear that these expenditures came from non-tithing income, though he did not specify the source or amount of the non-tithing income from which these expenditures were made. Also, from 1944–1949, the financial disclosures included a detailed financial report laying out the net value of the assets owned by the Church that were associated with the welfare program.

As previously noted, the Magnification period corresponds with Clark's time presenting the Church's financial disclosure. I did not choose to designate the years between 1944 and 1951 as its own period solely because a single person delivered the disclosure; in 1944, the scope of disclosure changed radically, and it remained roughly constant for the eight years that Clark delivered it. Its constancy, the difference between disclosure between these eight years and the rest of the forty-five years, and Clark's expressed concern about donors feeling comfortable with how the Church used their donations, suggest that the Magnification period bears Clark's fingerprints in a substantive way.

And though one of Clark's underlying goals with this expanded disclosure was undoubtedly to assure tithe-payers that the Church was responsible with their money, this was probably not his only incentive. In 1948, Clark expressed concern about Church expenditures, which he felt were increasing at "a disquieting rate."[81] By laying out publicly the budget for each category of expenditure, and then whether the Church met that budget, he put pressure on those who spent Church money to stay within their budget. The style of disclosure during this period allowed the Church body to know if any department went over budget.

The Final Period: Retreat (1952–1959)

Clark continued as a member of the First Presidency until his death in 1961.[82] In April 1952, however, although attendees at the April General Conference heard Clark speak at the General Priesthood Meeting on the second day,[83] they did not hear him deliver the financial disclosure. Instead, the responsibility fell back to Anderson,[84] who continued to read the financial report until 1959, the last year the Church provided any kind of detailed financial transparency.

Immediately the disclosure began to revert to its pre-Magnification state. Rather than listing the amounts budgeted and the amounts spent, the disclosure returned to the tables of the Routinization period, laying out categories of expenditures and the amount spent. The reversion did not occur all at once, though: in 1952, the financial disclosure continued to include, as separate line items, the expenses related to the Office of the Corporation of the President and the Office of the Corporation of the Presiding Bishopric.[85] But the following year, the Church began to retreat in baby steps from this granular detail: in 1953, these expenses were collapsed into the "Administrative Expenses" category, which included, among other things, salaries of Church employees in the Offices of the Presidency and of the Presiding Bishopric, along with the Tabernacle Choir employees and living and travelling allowances for the General Authorities.[86]

In 1954 there was another significant, albeit quiet, shift in the substance of Church financial disclosure. From the Magnification period through 1953, the disclosure stated that expenses related to the Office of the First Presidency and the Office of the Presiding Bishopric were paid out of non-tithing income; in 1954, those expenses were suddenly in the category of expenditures "which originate directly and indirectly from the office of the Corporation of the President, which expenditures are funded in the main from the tithes of the Church."[87]

Although this final period of financial disclosure retreated from the level of detail provided during the Magnification period, it nonetheless provided some new information. For example, in

1955 and 1956, the Church's financial disclosure told how much of each category of spending came from Church general funds (i.e., tithing) and how much came from other contributions. For example, in 1954, the Church spent $2,808,448 of tithing funds and $265,582 from other contributions on building and equipping new temples.[88] This level of detail confirms that the 1954 shift from funding the Offices of the First Presidency and the Presiding Bishopric out of non-tithing revenue to funding them out of tithing revenue was not a fluke. In 1954 and 1955, the full amount of administrative expenses ($1,765,119 in 1954 and $1,620,198 in 1955) came out of general funds, while none of the payment of administrative expenses came out of other contributions.[89] In 1957, the Church dropped the separation in its disclosure and, for the final three years, simply stated that expenditures came "[f]rom Church general funds and from other contributions."[90]

This same separation between expenditures from the general fund and other contributions provides interesting detail about the Church's welfare expenditures out of tithing. Those expenditures do include directly assisting the needy, but they also include the "erection, purchase, remodeling and repair of bishops' storehouses and other general welfare properties, and for equipment."[91] It should come as no surprise, of course, that charitable funds went not only toward providing aid, but also toward creating and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to store and deliver aid; however, the detail does not show up even in the Magnification period. Even while the Church retreated from, and eventually ended, its financial transparency, it managed to provide new details about how it accounted for and spent the money it received from tithe-payers.

IV. Second-Best Financial Disclosure

The LDS Church's experiment with detailed financial disclosure provides an important lesson for those who argue for financial disclosure: disclosure, standing alone, is meaningless.

That must be an overstatement: how can financial disclosure, which provides the public with some level of information, be meaningless? Financial disclosure is, to a large extent, a process of categorization. Without categorization, disclosure would be a mere data dump, providing hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of line-item expenses. Analyzing and understanding that level of disclosure would take time and training that the vast majority of interested persons does not have.

To be valuable, then, the Church would need to categorize its expenses, which it did during the fifty years explored in this article. But those categories shifted over time, with some categories being absorbed into others, while other categories appeared out of nowhere. The ability to categorize provides the Church—or any other organization—with the ability to reveal or to obfuscate; in any event, financial disclosure provides (necessarily) a false sheen of objectivity.

In addition, the value of disclosure rests on trust. It is important to note that the Church does, in fact, provide annual financial disclosure to its members. Every year in General Conference, the Church Auditing Department reads a statement assuring members that its finances have been handled in accord with accepted accounting practices and Church budgets, policies and procedures.[92] Though this disclosure does not provide any specific details about Church finances, it does, nonetheless, provide financial information about the Church. And if the audit report is somehow untrustworthy, why would a more-expansive disclosure, prepared by the same people, be more trustworthy?

In fact, as long as disclosure is voluntary and the Church faces no consequences for false disclosure, there is no extrinsic reason to believe more-detailed disclosures over less-detailed ones. Moreover, as a practical matter, the Church appears unlikely to voluntarily provide detailed financial disclosure in the near future; it seems content with the amount of tithing it collects and is not facing any substantive rumors of fraud.

This creates a seemingly intractable problem: certain advocates want the Church to provide more disclosure, while the Church (apparently) does not. To the extent one party gets its desires, the other's desires are thwarted.

But there may be a second-best solution that accomplishes many of the Church's goals and of the disclosure advocates', even while it requires both sides to accept only partial satisfaction. That solution? Replace the Church Auditing Department report with a report read by an external auditor.

Presumably, in that case, the content of the report would be similar to what the Church currently presents. It would not provide details about how and where the Church spends money, detail which reformers would clearly prefer that the Church provide. At the same time, though, it could increase trust. While there is no reason to believe that the Church Auditing Department reports are inaccurate, the members of the Auditing Department are Church employees and, as such, face pressures (whether real or imagined) to view things in the manner most favorable to the Church. An external auditor would not face those same pressures, especially if the Church were only one of a number of clients.

Beyond that, an outside auditor's opinion would provide more information to the average Church member than a financial table. Industry-specific auditors have contextual knowledge about their industries that laypeople do not;[93] while knowing how much the Church spends on real estate maintenance would be fascinating, most members have no way of knowing if that number is reasonable, if it is high, or if it is low. An auditor would, however, have that contextual knowledge.

An outside auditor could also provide value to the Church. Because of her contextual knowledge, she would know how the Church's finances were compared to a peer group of similar institutions. The Church could use that knowledge and information to improve its financial practices.

Conclusion

In the near term, the theoretical, political, and historical framework I have sketched here for the debate over whether the LDS Church should become more financially transparent is largely moot. The Church appears unlikely to return to the financial openness of the early-to mid-twentieth century.

On a theoretical level, a church's financial transparency does little to encourage donations by individuals other than its own members. Financial transparency by tax-exempt organizations serves principally to encourage donations by assuring donors that their money is being responsibly spent in ways the donor approves and by discouraging tax-exempt organizations from acting fraudulently. Because the LDS Church, like most churches, raises the majority of its donations from members, members would be the principal audience for such disclosure.

And, in fact, these theoretical considerations seem to have driven the Church's decision to make its finances public a century ago. The ability of voluntary financial transparency to prevent fraud and mismanagement appears limited, though: as demonstrated by the LDS Church's half-century experiment, a voluntary discloser can change the scope and detail of its disclosure, or even quit disclosing altogether. But even if it were required to disclose—as other tax-exempt organizations are—the ability of fraudulent charities to raise significant funds suggests that disclosure has, at best, a highly circumscribed capacity to police financial practices, even when such disclosure is required by law. Unless potential donors pay close attention to the financial disclosures and have the financial literacy to evaluate those disclosures, impact on the disclosing organization will be insignificant.

That the LDS Church does not disclose its finances suggests that it is satisfied with its revenues, and that it has no need to increase them.[94] It is possible, of course, that additional financial transparency might induce some recalcitrant members to pay more tithing, but it is also possible that some current tithe-payers would be dissatisfied with the way the LDS Church spends its money and would reduce their contributions.[95]

Why are members of the LDS Church willing to tithe without knowing how the Church spends its money? There are numerous of possibilities. The Church may have successfully inculcated in members a culture of tithe-paying. In members' minds, identity as a Mormon goes hand-in-hand with paying tithing, irrespective of how the Church uses that tithing. This kind of tithe-paying ethos could reduce the need for the Church to provide a detailed explanation of how it spends its money. Add to that culture an auditor assuring the body of potential donors that the Church is acting in a responsible financial manner, and the marginal value to members of additional disclosure could be vanishingly small.

In addition, paying tithing to the LDS Church is not an entirely altruistic endeavor. Members have been promised blessings—spiritual and, potentially, temporal—in exchange for paying tithing. They can see the tangible results, including meetinghouses and temples. And paying a full tithe has express spiritual and social benefits to members, too—tithe-paying is a prerequisite to attending the temple.[96]

D. Michael Quinn posits another reason that members of the LDS Church may be more willing to pay tithing without financial transparency than theory would lead us to expect. As a result of the Church's lay participation, and its cycling of members through positions that deal with Church finances, "literally millions of LDS men and women today have had experience as stewards over Church funds. These Mormons have personal knowledge of the careful accountability for these funds as overseen by superiors in the line of authority and by Church auditors."[97]

From an institutional and revenue perspective, then, the LDS Church appears to have little to gain by increasing its financial transparency. It can, though, provide valuable information to members and potential members without substantively increasing the amount of information it discloses by engaging an independent external auditor. While this does not perfectly meet the goals of advocates of disclosure, it does provide a second-best solution, one that provides real information to members with potential benefits to the Church as well. Perhaps by giving up the perfect for the good, advocates of financial transparency can, in fact, achieve a portion of their goals.

Appendix A: Expenditures from Church General Funds, 1914–1958

Year	Ward & Stake Maintenance Expenses	Church Schools & Educational Activities	Temples	Missions & Missionary Work	Church-owned Buildings	Church Welfare (tithing)	Hospitals (and certain other charitable expenditures)	Other
1914	$730,960.00	$330,984.00	$117,155.00	$227,900.00	$227,956.00	$116,238.00	$136,727.00	
1915	$5,003,856.00	$3,714,455.00	$1,169,499.00	$266,236.00	$1,716,000.00	$3,279,000.00	$600,000.00	
1916	$184,136.00	$365,832.00	$260,188.00	$297,745.00	$864,562.00	$308,951.00	$33,587.00	
1917	$751,978.00	$368,028.00	$237,781.00	$335,861.00	$154,878.00		$320,963.00	
1918	$814,769.67	$695,561.70	$510,036.17	$345,761.51		$279,244.30		
1919	$902,094.97	$722,353.83	$214,476.51	$420,359.88		$354,283.26	$70,121.00	
1920			$158,715.29	$511,709.97		$450,000.00		
1921	$925,270.00	$893,000.00	$170,000.00	$518,647.00		$266,649.00		
1922	$928,859.00	$771,490.00	$168,371.00	$615,461.00		$273,657.00		
1923	$993,000.00	$835,000.00	$449,000.00	$586,000.00		$171,000.00	$146,000.00	
1924	$1,352,663.43	$727,808.93	$442,018.46	$700,664.09		$175,520.77		
1925	$1,486,351.81	$958,440.67	$319,415.00	$769,926.79		$172,352.74		
1926	$1,530,243.64	$837,810.47	$322,500.36	$738,737.00		$187,570.43		
1927	$2,041,920.46	$805,117.84	$230,110.77	$767,647.80		$196,119.48		
1928	$1,200,000.00	$900,000.00		$900,000.00		$800,000.00		
1929	$2,080,000.00							
1930	$1,750,454.19	$811,622.19	$196,898.81	$916,543.59		$203,091.41		
1931	$1,446,850.46	$751,200.28	$201,833.50	$757,126.76		$224,556.38		
1932	$1,124,793.78	$609,467.95	$166,475.96	$871,908.21		$272,163.64		
1933	$959,162.96	$530,243.19	$136,457.70	$597,577.42		$157,208.88		
1934	$1,033,647.93	$459,580.65	$151,539.91	$593,459.62		$158,149.86		
1935	$1,287,938.43	$632,128.59	$268,857.59	$712,027.52		$183,809.71		
1936	$1,765,621.30	$657,455.23	$238,447.37	$827,132.03		$234,019.17		
1937	$2,088,592.35	$904,305.81	$451,043.33	$975,105.26		$298,807.55	$126,204.00	

(Continued on next page.)

1938	$2,016,300.04	$862,633.98	$404,582.26	$1,116,066.02		$572,898.61	$67,987.67	
1939	$1,544,357.99	$801,414.73	$239,457.65	$1,171,272.56		$429,982.89	$15,183.15	
1940	$1,627,921.15	$924,495.95	$352,423.60	$628,338.03		$594,917.00	$10,665.15	
1941	$1,892,335.54	$895,452.27	$515,269.82	$641,050.10		$462,822.02	$13,105.36	
1942	$1,841,671.00	$819,173.00	$292,774.00	$916,771.00		$307,483.00	$9,446.00	
1943	$965,424.00		$272,197.00	$598,299.00				
1944	$1,069,519.00	$903,941.00	$285,991.00	$624,176.00	$774,329.00	$285,949.00		$360,653.00
1945	$1,167,749.00	$969,846.00	$327,161.00	$721,106.00	$763,878.00	$291,696.00		$390,078.00
1946	$1,301,790.00	$1,343,931.00	$324,537.00	$1,201,476.00	$1,066,259.00	$665,687.00		$441,893.00
1947	$1,509,631.00	$2,745,099.00	$404,105.00	$1,729,542.00	$2,118,905.00	$1,242,123.00		$868,413.00
1948	$1,657,349.00	$2,444,518.00	$496,459.00	$2,762,668.00	$4,622,861.00	$1,547,123.00		$1,164,914.00
1949	$7,529,460.00	$3,086,136.00	$589,331.00	$4,212,138.00	$7,154,016.00	$1,714,280.00		$1,001,618.00
1950	$7,431,223.00	$3,272,403.00	$696,862.00	$3,822,189.00	$1,198,985.00	$1,608,454.00		$966,609.00
1951	$8,420,348.00	$2,627,430.00	$499,042.00	$3,894,826.00	$1,090,561.00	$1,947,653.00		$1,043,065.00
1952	$9,516,508.00	$3,674,086.00	$689,418.00	$4,601,828.00	$1,109,266.00	$1,573,803.00		$1,138,561.00
1953	$11,715,107.00	$4,879,227.00	$2,781,191.00	$5,755,081.00	$552,388.00	$1,514,873.00		$1,294,599.00
1954	$23,634,394.00	$5,608,131.00	$3,499,301.00	$7,120,399.00	$861,546.00	$4,645,684.00		$1,753,249.00
1955	$24,208,722.00	$7,694,274.00	$2,921,506.00	$8,849,697.00	$1,295,259.00	$6,059,361.00		$2,152,051.00
1956	$21,904,676.00	$10,201,140.00	$2,985,790.00	$10,482,511.00	$1,127,089.00	$4,863,513.00		$1,949,316.00
1957	$21,591,703.00	$10,351,171.00	$2,189,040.00	$12,137,175.00	$951,084.00	$6,242,500.00		$2,588,301.00
1958	$28,313,005.00	$15,508,502.00	$2,756,550.00	$13,034,893.00	$1,242,913.00	$6,881,667.00		$2,791,836.00

Appendix B: Non-Tithing Expenditures, 1914–1958

Year	Welfare (Fast Offerings and Relief Society)	Office of the Corporation of the President	Office of the Corporation of the Presiding Bishopric	Misc.
1914	$183,290.00			
1915	Not separated			
1916	Not separated			
1917	Not separated			
1918	N/A			
1919	Not separated			
1920	Not separated			
1921	$459,769.00			
1922	$323,638.00			
1923	$471,000.00			
1924	$489,406.61			
1925	$442,868.07			
1926	$436,055.44			
1927	$441,575.89			
1928	Not separated			
1929				
1930	$464,404.39			
1931	$455,423.46			
1932	$443,680.00			
1933	$355,566.71			
1934	$360,116.40			
1935	$402,938.94			

(Continued on next page.)

1936	$554,349.93			
1937	$388,619.67			
1938	$523,673.73			
1939	$589,102.58			
1940	$608,171.23			
1941	$779,256.80			
1942	$783,162.00			
1943		$272,783.00	$145,402.00	
1944	$872,776.00	$274,722.00	$164,998.00	
1945	$941,058.00	$293,602.00	$171,826.00	
1946	$1,209,359.00	$318,237.00	$227,185.00	
1947	$1,966,881.00	$356,898.00	$288,628.00	
1948	$2,052,828.00	$391,708.00	$379,480.00	
1949	$2,297,654.00	$380,935.00	$397,589.00	
1950	$2,399,390.00	$449,205.00	$458,364.00	$45,305.00
1951	$1,477,540.00	$454,106.00	$517,711.00	$85,080.00
1952	$1,714,202.00	$1,214,665.00[*]		
1953	$1,459,850.00	$1,407,913.00		
1954		$1,765,119.00[†]		
1955		$1,620,198.00		
1956		$1,740,836.00		
1957		$2,094,889.00		
1958		$2,264,940.00		

[*] In 1952, expenditures for the Office of the Corporation of the President and the Office of the Corporation of the Presiding Bishopric were combined into a single category, renamed ge*neral administrative expenses.*

[†] In 1954, these general administrative expenses shifted from being paid out of non-tithing revenue to being paid out of tithing revenue.

Notes

1. Thanks to Kevin Barney, Angela Clayton, and Spencer Weber Waller for their thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

2. Louis D. Brandeis, *Other People's Money: And How the Bankers Use It* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1914), 92.

3. The Church Auditing Department has existed since at least 1877, when John Taylor presented three names to the attendees at Conference as a committee to audit the Trustee-in-Trust. John Taylor, October 7, 1877, *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (Liverpool and London: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1878), 19:122.

4. See, e.g., *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, April 2, 2011 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semi-annual), 27 (hereafter cited as *Conference Report*). Archive.org hosts scans of *Conference Reports* dating back to October 1897 (plus a copy of the April 1880 Conference Report). These copies of the *Conference Reports* can be found at https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28collection%3Aconferencereport%20OR%20mediatype%3Aconferencereport%29%20AND%20-mediatype%3Acollection&sort=date (accessed March 23, 2015).

5. *Conference Report*, April 8, 1906, 91.

6. Some countries require churches to file annual financial reports. As a result, the LDS Church provides financial disclosure for its operations in those countries, but only in those countries.

7. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1905, 12.

8. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Finances from the 1830s to the 1990s," *Sunstone*, June 1996, 23.

9. Ibid., 25.

10. "The Church maintains that profits from business operations are used to support ecclesiastical efforts but this claim is unverifiable due to the private nature of Church finances. This policy of financial non-disclosure in and of itself raises tension with some societal segments." Seth Payne, "Ex-Mormon Narratives and Pastoral Apologetics," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 46 (Winter 2013), 93. While this article will focus on voluntary or legislatively-mandated financial transparency, there is a third potential approach. In a number of sexual abuse lawsuits that have been brought against the LDS Church, plaintiffs have demanded that the Church disclose its finances. This type of financial disclosure differs, though, in purpose and result from the type of financial disclosure that this article will evaluate. Associated Press, "Court

Says LDS Church Must Release Long-Veiled Financial Information," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 12, 2007, http://www.sltrib.com/ci_6357652 (accessed March 23, 2015). When plaintiffs demand financial disclosure, they have strategic reasons for doing so, including putting pressure on the defendant to settle and assuring the jury that the amount of the award they are pursuing is not comparatively outrageous.

11. I will limit the discussion of policies underlying mandatory financial disclosure to those that specifically apply to tax-exempt organizations. There are other reasons for disclosure, too—for example, publicly-traded corporations must disclose their finances in part so that potential and current investors can make informed choices, but, because churches do not have equity investors (and cannot if they wish to be exempt from taxation), these other policies are inapplicable to churches.

12. For example, the law often requires companies that are soliciting investors—or whose equity trades on public markets—to disclose risks they face, strategies they intend to employ, and certain financial information so that potential investors can make an informed decision about whether investing in the company matches their financial goals.

13. Or, at least, are less likely to engage in shady transactions that are easy to understand and follow.

14. Boris I. Bittker and George K. Rahdert, "The Exemption of Non-Profit Organizations from Federal Income Taxation," *Yale Law Journal* 85 (January 1976), 301.

15. Rev. Act of 1936, ch. 690, § 54(a), 49 Stat. 1671.

16. Rev. Act of 1943, ch. 63, § 117(a), 58 Stat. 36–37.

17. I.R.C. § 6103(a) (2012).

18. I.R.C. § 6104(a) (2012).

19. Karyn R. Vanderwarren, "Financial Accountability in Charitable Organizations: Mandating an Audit Committee Function," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 77 (2002), 969.

20. Charles M. Whelan, "'Church' in the Internal Revenue Code: The Definitional Problems," *Fordham Law Review* 45 (1977), 914.

21. Summary of Statement of Dr. Ernest L. Wilkinson, President, Brigham Young University, on Behalf of American Association of Independent College and University Presidents, Tax Reform Act of 1969, H.R. 13270, Testimony to Be Received Wednesday, September 17, 1969, Committee on Finance, United States Senate, 22 (hearafter cited as *Senate Hearings*).

22. Ibid. Of course, this line of argumentation ultimately proves both too little and too much. Only donors who itemize their deductions need to include their charitable donations on their returns, meaning that without disclosure by churches and universities, the IRS has an incomplete picture of how much money goes to those organizations. At the same time, if disclosure by donors is sufficient for the IRS's purposes, there would be no need for any tax-exempt organization to disclose its finances, because donors who itemize must disclose charitable contributions to any tax-exempt organization.

23. Summary of Statement by United States Catholic Conference, *Senate Hearings*, 93.

24. The obvious counterargument here is that a church's tax exemption represents a general subsidy from taxpayers to the church. As such, the public—which is subsidizing the church's operations—should have access to financial information about the church, both to monitor its actions and to ensure that it is using public monies responsibly.

25. Summary of Statement by United States Catholic Conference, *Senate Hearings*, 93.

26. Ibid., 110.

27. Ibid., 137.

28. An "integrated auxiliary" is a tax-exempt organization that is affiliated with a church, but does not offer goods and services to the general public. Treas. Reg. § 1.6033-2(h)(1) (as amended in 2011). So, for example, an entity that is controlled by a church and has, as its only activity, publishing and selling a newsletter solely to members of the church would qualify as an integrated auxiliary. A religiously-affiliated hospital that serves the general public, on the other hand, is not an integrated auxiliary. Interestingly, the exception for integrated auxiliaries has a significant Mormon antecedent: Senator Wallace F. Bennett of Utah was concerned that the auxiliaries of the Church (including Relief Society and the various Mutual Improvement Associations) would not be recognized as churches for purposes of the filing requirement. As a result, he added "auxiliaries"; ultimately, Congress decided on the phrase "integrated auxiliaries." Whelan, "'Church' in the Internal Revenue Code," 915.

29. John Montague, "The Law and Financial Transparency in Churches: Reconsidering the Form 990 Exemption," *Cardozo Law Review* 35 (October 2013), 246–247. The pastors' concerns ultimately seem strange; although the tax law does not *obligate* churches to disclose their finances, any church concerned about being lumped in with fraudulent behavior by other religious leaders has

the right to make financial disclosures. As the UCCC pointed out, the lack of mandated disclosure does not foreclose voluntary disclosure.

30. Kris Hundley and Kendall Taggart, "America's Worst Charities," *Tampa Bay Times*, June 9, 2013, A1, http://www.tampabay.com/topics/specials/worst-charities1.page (accessed October 13, 2013).

31. It is worth noting that all charities face administrative costs, including fund-raising costs. And there is no absolute bar at which fundraising costs, as a percentage of donations received, become morally repugnant. That said, a charity that spends only 4 percent of its revenues on its charitable purpose is clearly on the wrong side of the moral repugnancy line.

32. For example, GuideStar requires users to register—though the registration is free—before they can search for and read a charity's Form 990.

33. Peter Swords, "The Form 990 as an Accountability Tool for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits," *Tax Lawyer* 51 (Spring 1998), 574–75.

34. Ibid., 582.

35. Quinn, "LDS Church Finances," 25.

36. ECFA Standards 3 and 5, available at http://www.ecfa.org/Content/Standards (accessed March 23, 2015).

37. "ECFA's *Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship*™, drawn from Scripture, are fundamental to operating with integrity." http://www.ecfa.org/Content/Standards (accessed March 23, 2015). It is worth noting that the scriptures on which the ECFA bases its standards are not an explicit call to financial transparency; rather, they advocate doing right both in the eyes of God and of other people: 2 Cor. 8:21–22.

38. http://www.ecfa.org/Content/MissionStatement (accessed March 23, 2015).

39. http://www.ecfa.org/Content/Join (accessed March 23, 2015).

40. Quinn, "LDS Church Finances," 23.

41. Ibid.

42. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1915, 8.

43. Even the ECFA's scripturally-based standards are not carved in stone. They have changed, albeit infrequently, over time, presumably as the ECFA came to understand what would fulfill its scriptural mandate better. http://http://www.ecfa.org/Content/Standards (accessed March 25, 2015).

44. A significant exception to this context-free presentation was J. Reuben Clark. In 1948, he expressed his unease with the radical jump in Church expen-

ditures; from 1936–1945, he announced, the Church, on average, spent just under $5 million a year from its general funds. In 1946, it spent almost $6.9 million. In 1947, the expenditures from general Church funds had rocketed to $11.3 million. Though he was happy that the Church carried no debt, "in my own view, we must all watch more carefully our spending." *Conference Report*, April 6, 1948, 117.

45. Note that in 1916, rather than disclose the Church's finances from 1915, President Joseph F. Smith instead disclosed expenditures from 1901–1915. In 1954, the Church began to step back from separating general fund expenditures from non-tithing expenditures. As a result, it makes sense to leave out the first two years and the last five in designing the graph.

46. The choice makes sense; unlike publicly-traded corporations, closely-held companies may not have an easily-discernible market value. In that case, it may make more sense for an exempt organization to carry its investment on its books at cost.

47. I.R.C. 6103(a) (2012).

48. Cf. Nathan B. Oman, "International Legal Experience and the Mormon Theology of the State," *Iowa Law Review* 100 (2015), 727 ("As the Church expanded beyond the United States, it has had to fragment its legal personality in order to own property.").

49. The church's 2012 UK disclosure is available at http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=242451&SubsidiaryNumber=0 (accessed March 23, 2015).

50. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1915, 8.

51. Ibid.

52. Matthew C. Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar: The Mormon Church, the Federal Government, and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1907-1921* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press): 51-52.

53. Ibid., 86.

54. Ibid., 55–56.

55. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1915, 7.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 10.

58. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1916, 7.

59. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1917, 8-9.

60. *Conference Report*, April 5, 1918, 6.

61. *Conference Report*, June 2, 1919, 75.

62. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1920, 2-3; *Conference Report*, April 3, 1921, 4-5.

63. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1922, 10, 13.

64. The numbers presented during the *Experimentation* period fail to provide the full picture, though. Occasionally in this period, some offhand remark provided an additional picture of the LDS Church's financial practices, even when that remark was entirely unquantified. For example, in June 1919, Grant asserted that the bishops had handled tithing well. "Very little loss has been incurred," he continued, "except through the failure to find a market for the large potato crop of the year 1917" (*Conference Report*, June 2, 1919, 74). Though he did not provide any numbers, in this short sentence Grant acknowledged that there was *some* mishandling of tithing funds that incurred some amount of loss. We also learn that the Church raised potatoes, that 1917 was a good year for potatoes, but that, apparently, the market was flooded.

65. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1923, 3.

66. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1924, 3; *Conference Report*, April 4, 1925, 2.

67. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1926, 3.

68. *Conference Report*, April 5, 1929, 2.

69. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1931, 2.

70. *Conference Report*, April 8, 1932, 2.

71. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1933, 3.

72. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1938, 74.

73. *Conference Report*, April 5, 1940, 4.

74. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1943, 101.

75. Ibid., 100.

76. Ibid., 96.

77. *Conference Report*, October 3, 1943, 96.

78. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1944, 19.

79. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1948, 119.

80. *Conference Report*, April 5, 1946, 6-7.

81. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1948, 117.

82. David H. Yarn, Jr., "Biographical Sketch of J. Reuben Clark, Jr.," *BYU Studies* 13(3) (1973), 242.

83. *Conference Report*, April 5, 1952, 80-82.

84. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1952, 4.

85. Ibid., 7.

86. *Conference Report*, April 4, 1953, 9.

87. *Conference Report*, April 5, 1954, 65.

88. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1955, 88.

89. Ibid., 89; *Conference Report*, April 6, 1956, 25.

90. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1957, 40.

91. *Conference Report*, April 6, 1955, 88.

92. *See supra* nn 3–4.

93. Kin-Yew Low, "The Effects of Industry Specialization on Audit Risk Assessments and Audit-Planning Decisions," *The Accounting Review* (2004), 201–02.

94. It is also worth noting that on the metric people tend to use in judging charities—fund-raising or administrative costs as a percentage of expenses—the LDS Church does remarkably well. In its British financial disclosure, the Church reported no fund-raising costs on a revenue of £51,105,000, explaining that the Church "does not undertake fund-raising in the traditional sense. It relies on donations." http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/SIR/ENDS51%5C0000242451_SIR_20121231_E.PDF (accessed March 23, 2015). Though perhaps inartful in its use of the word "donations," its point is well-taken—because it does not fundraise in a traditional manner, its costs of raising revenue are negligible.

95. If nothing else, members would see large numbers with little way to process them. Although we do not know what the LDS Church's budget currently is, in 1958 its tithing expenditures of $70.5 million were the equivalent of nearly $569 million in 2013 dollars. (To calculate the inflation-adjusted amount, I used the data at http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/spp/polisci/research/inflation-conversion-factors-convert-dollars-1774-estimated-2024-dollars-recent-year [accessed March 23, 2015].) In 1958, though, the Church had only 1.6 million members in 273 stakes and 2,513 wards and branches (*Conference Report*, April 6, 1959, 91). By 2013, membership had increased to over 15 million members in 3,050 stakes and 29,253 wards and branches (Brook P. Hales, "Statistical Report, 2013," https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/statistical-report-2013?lang=eng [accessed March 23, 2015]). With membership and congregations having increased by more than an order of magnitude and its spending per unit—or per member—staying constant, we could expect a $5

billion annual budget. (There is no reason, though, to assume that spending per member or per unit has not risen or dropped since 1958.)

96. Tithe-paying has been a component of worthiness to go to the temple since the Nauvoo period. Edward L. Kimball, "The History of LDS Temple Admission Standards," *Journal of Mormon History* 24 (Spring 1998), 162.

97. Quinn, "LDS Church Finances," 26.

On the Existential Impossibility of a Religious Identity: *I'm a Mormon*

David Mason

Psychologist William James referred to personal identity as psychology's "most puzzling puzzle."[1] The oracle of Delphi's most famous charge—Know Yourself—affirms that human puzzlement over the nature of identity goes back to the early days of civilization, since the oracle would hardly find this counsel significant enough to utter if everyone already knew themselves as a matter of course. Descartes thought he had solved the problem by locating identity itself in the irreducible fact of consciousness, or the *cogito* of *I think, therefore I am*, but in our own day, philosopher-theologian Paul Ricoeur points out that the *I* implicit in Descartes's first-person verb presumes itself, rather than proves itself, so that Descartes's assurance only demands that we ask, ". . . what is this 'I'"?[2] A person's very first step toward a definitive declaration of identity—in terms such as *I am* . . .—has no ground on which to land. Insofar as what constitutes *any* identity, or human identity, *per se*, still baffles us, we find ourselves unmoored even before we consider a question such as what constitutes a specific *kind* of identity.

So, the declaration *I'm a Mormon* is problematic. If we can't find a self, we can hardly find a *Mormon* self. But this philosophical uncertainty has not stood in the way of the LDS Church's most recent media assault on the United States. Four years after it first colonized billboards and the rooftops of taxi cabs in New York City, the marketing campaign still asserts itself with a mad audacity. Smiling, non-threatening faces appear on no less than three successive pages of the Marquee program distributed to audiences attending current touring productions of Matt Stone's and Trey Parker's satirical musical *The Book of Mormon*. The faces assert their Mormon identities, even in hostile territory, as perfectly reasonable, natural, ordinary, and amenably heedless of the content of the play their faces inadvertently advertise. The all-American strategy seems to serve its purpose even in the United Kingdom, where visitors to mormon.org.uk as well as requests for contact with the LDS Church jumped two hundred and fifty percent within the first couple of months during which the young and hip proclaimed their Mormon identity from the walls of the underground passageways of the Tube.[3]

But the campaign's blissful ignorance of the problem of identity, and of a particularly Mormon identity, does not dismiss the problem. Other faces—similarly happy, similarly smiling—appear on various institution-defying channels of the internet to affirm *I'm a Mormon* with equal conviction, though without the sanction, approval, or even the affirmation of the LDS Church. The ongoing battle over who can speak this most recent of the LDS Church's marketing tag lines brings into relief the existential problem that is inherent in such an affirmation of identity.[4]

At the parochial level, *I'm a Mormon* challenges us to consider what constitutes a personal identity as "Mormon." At the ecumenical level, the existential comprehensiveness implied by *I'm a Mormon* demands an interrogation of the extent to which identity consists only and exclusively of an ideology, or of an exclusive ideology. That is, *I'm a Mormon* raises some questions: (1) How does a person know if he or she is a Mormon? (2) What is the quality of existence that is uniquely Mormon? (3) Is a Mormon *always* a Mormon, at every moment? (4) Must a Mormon be *only* a Mormon, or can a person be a Mormon and also be something else—also, for instance, a Hindu, or an atheist? Insofar as these questions are, indeed, legitimate questions, the parochial and ecumenical versions of the Mormon identity problem both speak back to the presumption that some institution—the LDS Church, for example—is the final arbiter of Mormon identity. Who can declare *I'm a Mormon* and what that declaration must affirm and deny elude institutional prescription as surely as declaring *I'm an American* or *I'm a Pepper*.[5]

The interrogation of the marketing slogan will grow more abstruse later in this discussion. But first, the most straightforward complication in circumscribing what the word *Mormon* can mean. Mormonism has always had Christian content. The central event of the Book of Mormon narrative finds the resurrected Jesus visiting followers in the Americas. Joseph Smith reported visions of the divine Jesus. The language of Mormon ordinances has consistently included deference to Jesus, alongside the Father and the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, Mormonism's claim to Christianity has always been in question, and since at least the 1950s, the beginning of the great LDS expansion, the LDS Church has exerted an effort to claim Christian legitimacy for itself in a national and international field. Jan Shipps has summarized some of the deliberate strategies that the LDS Church has employed in the past few decades to bring its Christian elements into greater relief against the background of Mormon elements that distinguish Mormonism from historical Christianity.[6] From curricular modifications that emphasize the apostolic heritage that the LDS Church claims to the orientation of publicly proclaimed doctrine toward "Atonement discourse" to adding an assertive subtitle to its central scripture to redesigning the church's logo, the LDS Church has tried to claim an identity as a Christian church rather than as a Mormon church. LDS members consistently express incredulity at the charge that Mormonism is not Christian and cite the name of the Church, the Church's official recognition of Jesus' divine sonship, the Church's acceptance of the New Testament as holy writ, and other things, as signs of Mormonism's Christian bona fides. Since it bows to Jesus Christ, goes the argument, the Mormon identity must be Christian.

At the same time, and with considerable irony, LDS Church members routinely deny the Mormon bona fides of members of the Community of Christ, the FLDS church, the Hedrickites, etc.[7] However, by the same logic that Mormonism must be Christian because of Mormonism's confession of Jesus' divinity, it seems that Mormon reorganizations, reformations, fundamentalisms, and other movements have a legitimate right to call themselves Mormon on account of their confession of Joseph Smith's prophethood and their adoption of the Book of Mormon as scripture.[8] The LDS rejoinder that these various religions do not properly understand Smith's prophetic role nor do they properly interpret the Book of Mormon sound suspiciously like the traditional Christian's assertion that Mormons do not understand Jesus nor interpret the Bible properly.[9]

Before looking at the problem of personal Mormon identity, we should first acknowledge that "Mormon," as a socio-cultural category, must include any communities that harbor peculiarly Mormon elements of doctrine or practice which make them distinct from other new religious movements. As opposed to a conviction of Jesus' godhood, of the Bible as the divine word, of the family of faith to be found in Christianity, which were articles of faith that were common to religious movements, well-established and otherwise, in Jacksonian New England, the confession of Joseph Smith's divine commission, or prophethood, and an acknowledgement of the scriptural status of the Book of Mormon were unique to the people whom outsiders would call Mormons almost from the moment of Smith's publication of the Book of Mormon. Those communities that make these unique claims must be, historically, Mormon.

Given this thesis, there are, clearly, many Mormon churches of which the LDS Church is only one (albeit the largest by a significant margin). It follows, then, that any affiliate of any of these many churches—from Stephen M. Veazey to Warren Jeffs—can aver without equivocation *I'm a Mormon*. It also follows that the unaffiliated might legitimately claim Mormonism as their own. Insofar as an individual confesses Joseph Smith's prophetic role and the scriptural character of the Book of Mormon, he or she axiomatically identifies himself or herself as a Mormon.[10] The first hurdle in sussing out the content of *I'm a Mormon* is determining how the declaration accounts for many Mormonisms—the variety of traditions that descends from the publication of the Book of Mormon and the founding of the Church of Christ, which was Smith's first Mormon institution. This is to say: one significant problem with declaring *I'm a Mormon* is that the statement does not specify what kind of Mormon one is. Indeed, given how many

Mormonisms there are, the assertion *I'm a Mormon* does more to obscure than clarify an individual's religious identity.[11]

The diverse institutional geography of Mormonism may be the most obvious obstacle to a definitive understanding of Mormon identity, but probably the least interesting, since it is, ultimately, a political matter that could be more or less resolved by referendum.[12] More intriguing, if more unforgivably recondite, are the existential conundrums that any presumption of Mormon identity inevitably butts up against.

Three centuries ago, John Locke puzzled over personal identity in a way subsequent arguments have had to address. Among the philosopher's classic questions about identity are the following:

> What makes a forty-five-year-old numerically identical with an eight-year-old from thirty-seven years prior, with whom the forty-five-year-old shares a name and a certain, apparent physical continuity?
>
> Is the "sameness" of a forty-five-year-old and an eight-year-old quantitative or qualitative?
>
> Is it possible that a forty-five-year-old is *not* the same person as an eight-year-old with whom the forty-five-year-old shares a name and a certain physical continuity?

One classic, Christian solution to all such questions resides in the concept of an eternal soul that is independent of the physical body. According to this religious idea, a person's identity resides in his or her soul, which lives apart from the body and after the body's dissolution, so that identity is transcendent and immaterial and not subject to the contingencies that inspire Locke's classic questions about personal identity.

However, the "eternal soul solution" did not satisfy Locke, and it certainly does not address the matter of Mormon identity, at least insofar as one applies the tripartite Mormon concept of being, which makes the soul neither immaterial nor independent of the body. Proposing a hypothetical example, *Freaky Friday* model in which God swaps the souls of a prince and a cobbler, Locke concluded that the Christian soul, eternal and physically transcendent, cannot account for identity, since physical circumstances very much shape identity. Splitting the conceptual hairs demanded by such Mormon aphorisms as "the spirit and the body are the soul of man," we would have to concede that the term *spirit* in the Mormon lexicon is closer to the term *soul* as understood by traditional, bipartite Christendom, at least to the extent that Mormons would acknowledge that the spirit can exist apart from the body, but the soul cannot.[13] This bit of parsing might help us edge toward solving the identity puzzle by way of a metaphysical entity after all.[14] We might say that a Mormon identity is essentially embedded in a person's spirit. But we would then have to wrestle with Joseph Smith's dictum that the spirit is fundamentally deficient and must be embodied to be whole.[15] Considering this Mormon conception, a spirit might be "Mormon" in some way, but the complete soul—of which spirit is only a constituent part—might not be.

Rather than solving questions of Mormon identity, a theory that embeds identity in spirit only creates new questions for the interrogation of Mormon identity:

> If God switched my Mormon spirit with the non-Mormon spirit of Kim Jong-un, so that when my duly baptized and endowed body awoke in the morning to threaten the suburban neighbors with nuclear tests, and the unbaptized, unendowed body in Pyongyang awoke with a hankering for pancakes and peanut butter, whose temple work would need to be done after our deaths?

I will suggest here that the argument has not run off the rails, its citation of the very un-railed Democratic People's Republic of Korea notwithstanding. If Mormonism will assert that an individual identity can *be* Mormon, as opposed to something else, and if Mormonism will follow the classic Christian address of the identity problem by accepting the proposition that each individual is possessed of a unique, bodiless spirit, then Mormonism is necessarily positing that an individual spirit could itself be possessed of a uniquely Mormon quality or character, which would, presumably, accompany the Mormon spirit to another physical body were God to oblige the experiment.[16] If temple work must be done for Kim

Jong-un's body after my Mormon spirit has occupied it and after also my Mormon spirit has left it (to death), we have found the Mormon doctrine of the deficiency of the spirit, which concedes that (Mormon) identity does not reside in a non-physical (not, necessarily, immaterial) spirit. If temple work need not be done for Kim Jong-un's body because my Mormon spirit has occupied it, we have uncovered a serious problem with Mormon temple work, which will be examined in greater detail below. In either case, we find that the Mormon approach to identity—at least inasmuch as we accept that that identity can *be* of a particular sort—departs from a traditional, bipartite, Christian concept of being. We also discover that Mormonism does not locate Mormon-ness in either the body or the spirit.

Locke was similarly dissatisfied by the "soul" solution. To replace the soul as the seat of identity, Locke proposed "consciousness" as an element that is not the same as the Christian soul, and that can be regarded as one and unified over time, irrespective of the radical changes through which a single human body passes. Locke saw consciousness as especially evident in the phenomenon of human memory. Hence, what justifies regarding an eight-year-old and a forty-five-year-old as the same person is the individual, unified, continuous consciousness that both possess, in which lies the singular historical narrative of memory that both share. Locke's location of the self in a continuous consciousness sets aside both the body and the spirit as the sites of identity, which had the advantages of accounting for the persistence of identity independently of the significant difference between an eight-year-old body and a forty-five-year-old body, and of setting aside the problems inherent in locating identity exclusively in the (Christian) soul.

One of these problems might be the unfalsifiability of anything that is immaterial. Locke himself was not so concerned with proof (or not) of spirit. He accepted certain Christian concepts of life after death, which required a belief in an immortal spirit, and part of what drove his reconceptualization of identity was an anticipation of the Christian resurrection, in which spirit and body would reunite. Locke was, rather, concerned that the Christian spirit was no more useful as a location of identity than the physical body. A not-conscious person, for instance—a person, say, in a coma—might have both body and spirit, but not much in the way of individual identity. Worse, upon waking from the coma without memory of anything preceding the coma, such a person would *not* be the same person as before going into the coma, though, presumably, would still be composed of the same body and spirit. Identity, for Locke, thus became less something defined by a distinct entity (such as a body or a spirit) and more itself a definition. Rather than deriving its essential nature from a soul and its God-given characteristics, a person's consciousness determines the nature of the body and spirit which it accompanies.

Lockean identity, then, is not a feature of an individual, but an agency, and in some important ways, Western culture has followed along. Among other things that Locke's concept drives is Western jurisprudence, which, by allowing such things as insanity pleas, recognizes identity as a function of agency (or vice-versa). That the law might not reasonably punish an individual who was not conscious of his or her actions in the moment of committing them acknowledges the Lockean doctrine that the individual who commits a crime and the individual who stands accused in the box may not be the same individual, even if the two are composed of the same body/spirit. Moreover, as Patrick Stokes has articulated, the identity that Locke imagines establishes and secures its existence by being the agency of its activity. Rather than a transcendent entity showing us what (or who) is responsible for an act, responsibility for an action, which only arises from a conscious, free act, shows where and what identity is.[17] The Lockean implications of *I'm a Mormon* are profound. For one thing, Mormonism's deep investment in the sanctity of agency makes the religion appear as a hyper-Lockean worldview. Certain restoration scripture makes agency more important than obedience.[18] Indeed, at least one of Joseph Smith's revelations asserts the very Lockean claim that existence itself depends on agency.[19] Saying *I'm a Mormon* seems to be as much as to say, "Choosing to do the Mormon things I do establishes and determines my Mormon-ness."

But Locke was not without his critics, even in his own day, and he does not provide a theory of identity that incontestably determines what constitutes a Mormon identity. The classic questions about personal identity ring with a new and portentous tone when tuned with the language of Mormon selfhood:

> If *I'm a Mormon* when I am eight years old, am I necessarily a Mormon when I am forty-five years old?
>
> If *I'm a Mormon* at eight years old and at forty-five years old, is the Mormon characteristic over this span of time quantitative or qualitative?
>
> If *I'm a Mormon* at eight years old but not at forty-five years old, is the difference physical, psychological, spiritual, or institutional?
>
> If *I'm a Mormon* at eight and at forty-five, am I the *same* Mormon, and, if not, is it because the forty-five-year-old's *I'm* is not the same *I'm* as the eight-year-old's? Or, is it possible that Mormon-ness when I was eight years old is not the same Mormon-ness now that I am forty-five?

In the search for the constitution of a Mormon self, these questions—and many more that we might ask—are not incidental. The answers that are forthcoming reveal how we think of Mormonism as a phenomenon. The answers that are not forthcoming, similarly, reveal just how problematic the declaration *I'm a Mormon* can be.

Locke's critics have pointed out that people often *do not* feel a continuity between their eight-year-old selves and their forty-five-year-old selves. A forty-five-year-old may not feel a responsibility for his actions as an eight-year-old (or, perhaps more illustratively, as an eighteen-year-old). As Locke's near-contemporary Thomas Reid pointed out, the forty-five-year-old might not remember what the eight-year-old did, even without the catastrophic event of comatose amnesia. If we accept Locke without qualification, we would have to regard such forgetful forty-five-year-old people as distinct individuals from the eight-year-old people of their lost pasts. Where Mormonism is concerned, if my eight-year-old self was baptized, but my forty-five-year-old self does not recall the event (which, in this case, is mostly true), the forty-five-year-old Mormon self is not the same thing as the eight-year-old Mormon self. Under Locke, if my eight-year-old self could genuinely declare *I'm a Mormon* on account of remembering his baptism, my forty-five-year-old self, which does not recall the event, might not, genuinely, be able to make the same affirmation.

In an un-Lockean way, Mormonism could dismiss this conundrum as mere nit-pickery that need not concern people who inhabit the real world forsaken so readily by the pointless flights of philosophical imagination. The eight-year-old body was baptized, therefore the forty-five-year-old body is Mormon. But this Mormonism has merely retreated to the theory that the body that can be submersed holds an individual's personal Mormon identity—a formula of personal identity that did not satisfy Locke, in the first place. Even so, this very retreat necessarily reasserts a Lockean concept of personal identity in spite of itself. The individual who does not remember his or her Mormon baptism might be able—might, even, be *required*—to declare *I'm a Mormon*, anyway, to the extent that his or her body can be remembered by *someone* to have been baptized in the past. Here, we see Mormon materialism manifest, the kind of materialism that regards even the physical body as eternal, and, therefore, necessarily constitutive of personal identity. Indeed, we see here something we might call "obligatory materialism," inasmuch as the body provides for personal Mormon identity where neither spirit nor consciousness can.

Consider that in LDS Mormonism—one Mormonism that still practices baptism for the dead—the theology of proxy baptism includes the anecdotal but frequently affirmed doctrine that in the event that proxy baptisms are performed for them, the spirits of the departed have been taught LDS Mormonism and choose, even as spirits, whether or not to be Mormon. LDS Mormons are careful to stipulate that the proxy baptism itself is of no consequence without the conscious understanding and consent of the dead. This valorization of agency seems very Lockean and may imply that LDS Mormons find identity in consciousness rather than the body after all. But in the Lockean scheme, the person who emerges from a coma with no recollection of his or her Mormon-ness cannot be said at that moment to understand nor to have consented to his or her baptism, and, therefore, ought to be baptized again (following, of course, adequate instruction and his or her conscious consent). LDS Mormonism, however, would *not* rebaptize the person awaking from a coma with no recollection whatsoever of his or her pre-coma Mormon-ness, which shows that consciousness and its concomitant agency are, actually, not so very important and that Mormonism does, indeed, locate Mormon-ness in the physical body and not in spirit or consciousness or consent. If the pre-coma baptism is left as perfectly efficacious regardless of the coma and the ignorance of Mormon identity the coma brings about—that is, ignorance of the Mormon activity in which some consciousness chose to engage in the past and for which that consciousness feels a responsibility—we might just as well conclude that proxy baptism does *not* require the conscious acquiescence of the dead, since the superfluity of post-amnesia rebaptism demonstrates that consciousness and deliberate action on the part of the baptized are unnecessary. We should also conclude from the superfluity of post-amnesia rebaptism that LDS doctrine and practice do, in fact, locate Mormon-ness in the body, quite irrespective of any consciousness. Not rebaptizing the person whose coma has erased his or her Mormon consciousness signifies that contemporary LDS Mormonism regards the body as the seat of identity, as numerically and qualitatively continuous over time, even in spite of discontinuity of consciousness.[20]

But this obligatory materialism, it turns out, is not located, in popular LDS Mormonism, in a person's own body, after all. The assurance of a body's physical baptism and, thus, of a person's Mormon-ness does, indeed, in a Lockean way, reside in the continuity of a certain memory over time. LDS baptism must persist in *someone's* memory, if not in the memory of the baptized individual. The contemporary LDS Church, at least, in the absence of *any* memory of the amnesiac's baptism, will, as a matter of fact, rebaptize the amnesiac. Even in the event that someone *does* remember the baptism—say, the amnesiac's non-Mormon cousin—the LDS Church will regard the amnesiac as *not* a Mormon and will require the amnesiac's rebaptism, nevertheless, as long as the memory of the event that persists over time is not constituted by a verifiable Church record or by the memory of two people who are themselves duly recorded members and who can attest in writing to the year in which the ordinance-event occurred and can identify the person who performed the ordinance.[21] For the LDS Church, even the coma victim who emerges from his or her long sleep with a bright and clear personal recollection of his or her baptism would have to be rebaptized if no Church record or witnesses of a very specific sort were forthcoming.[22] Until and unless that rebaptism is duly recorded, the LDS Church, at least, will not concede this individual's *I'm a Mormon* claim as a genuine expression of personal Mormon identity and will affirm that expression of identity only as long as the record of the rebaptism persists.

The preceding analysis brings us to conclude that the LDS conception of Mormon identity *does* follow Locke's insistence that a continuous consciousness revealed by memory constitutes identity, but that it is a *corporate* or *institutional* identity rather than a personal identity. For that matter, the memory that constitutes this corporate identity, the memory that supersedes all others, is, similarly, a *corporate* memory. In the way that a Lockean personal identity depends on particular memories, the LDS Church's corporate identity depends on particular memories, duly recorded as distinct LDS membership records. But the recording of membership statuses recursively determines (or validates) these instances of corporate memory—the identities of these *members*—in the way that Lockean conscious memory composes an individual's personal identity, and *only* an individual's conscious memory composes that individual's personal identity.

The primacy of LDS records anticipates the exclusionary problem pursued below. In the same way that the Lockean eight-year-old person has no personal identity of its own as long as the forty-five-year-old person claims the eight-year-old's activity for itself by way of memory, and, in fact, in the same way that the eight-year-old largely ceases to exist at all should the forty-five-year-old not claim its activity by way of memory, so does the institutional LDS memory recursively affirm or deny an individual's personal LDS Mormon identity, but only to the extent that that personal LDS Mormon identity contributes to constituting the institutional LDS Mormon identity. As the eight-year-old's personal identity "belongs to," and is determined by, the remembering of the forty-five-year-old's personal identity, so a personal LDS Mormon identity belongs to, and is determined by, the institutional LDS Mormon identity that claims it, with the consequence that the personal LDS Mormon identity has no more of its own substance or individual quality than an eight-year-old has of itself forty-five years later.

Following Locke a little further, the institution's membership record contributes little or nothing to the personal Mormon identity of an individual, since the record and the making of it are corporate acts and very seldom an individual's own conscious action. Thus, the membership record is almost never a conscious memory by which an individual can know itself. Insofar as a personal identity consists of conscious memory of actions and events, and, so, a personal Mormon identity consists of conscious memory of Mormon actions and events, a Church membership record—even while asserting the right to determine an individual's Mormon identity—is not constitutive of a personal Mormon identity, since the personal Mormon never composes his or her own membership record and, thus, does not hold the act of composing it in his or her memory.

According to Locke's theory of identity, then, what constitutes a Mormon institution's corporate identity is a corporate consciousness-memory that is continuous over time, not contingent on changes to the corporate body, and independent of the corporate spirit (or soul). While this understanding of identity raises very interesting questions about an institution's character—questions that would be the topic of another inquiry—it does not explain what the Mormon in *I'm a Mormon* might be. In Locke's scheme, the peculiar Mormon quality of the institution's identity seems to emerge not from the Mormon-ness of individual members but from the authorized (recollected) record of the incorporation of its members. *I'm a Mormon* is, here, a marketing slogan, indeed, expressing merely an individual's existence as a corporate memory that constitutes a corporate identity and revealing nothing about the individual who declares it.

In his *Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume provided a radically different description of personal identity. Or, rather, Hume provided the principal counter to Locke, insofar as Hume largely denied the existence of personal identity altogether. Hume's attempts to put his finger on his own personal self only resulted, he said, in putting a finger not on the self itself but only on particular perceptions that the theoretical self was supposed to be having—heat, light, pain, anger, etc. Apart from the perceptions, Hume thought, nothing presented itself, and, therefore, Hume concluded that there was nothing more than the perceptions. Hume decided that personal identity was a phantom created by a swirling agglomeration of perceptions. Because we perceive or experience heat and light and anger, we suppose that some self, independent of the experiences themselves, must exist, as *something* must be having the experiences. But this self is only an illusion created by the perceptions or experiences, as they seem to present themselves as distinct and unified at the same time. The self, to Hume, is not persistent over time, somehow distinctly cohesive and surfing over the flow of all other existence, but composed in time and in the present moment by all the existence that colludes in a moment. Nor did Hume allow Locke his constitutive memory, which seems to survive independently through time. Even memory, said Hume, is a contingent phenomenon, malleable, imperfect, incomplete, and often wrong. Memory, then, cannot be said to be constitutive of a stable, cohesive, personal identity, but can only be another mechanism by which an illusion of unity presents itself to perception. Hume conceded only that in the search for a personal self, no one could be certain of any claim that another person might make since the other person's perceptions (of heat, light, and of his or her self) were completely inaccessible to anyone else. Another person's claim to experience a self that is distinct and independent of perceptions might be true for all anyone else could know. But, of course, there is no way for anyone else to know.

In Hume's scheme, a personal Mormon identity would be no more substantive than a personal identity per se but would, nevertheless, manifest to the same extent as any personal identity—only personally and privately, and necessarily reserved from external determination. Strictly speaking, for Hume, a Mormon identity would be impossible, since any identity is an illusion; but, since we have the experience of a self, as illusory as it may be, we could concede that we might individually have the experience of a Mormon self. The Mormon-ness of a self would be some perception among the many perceptions in which the illusion of a self coalesces so that the person who fields the perception not only of being at the center of a cloud of experience but at the center of a cloud of experience that includes Mormon wisps could identify those Mormon wisps as continuous with his or her self in the same way and to the same extent that he or she could identify hot-ness, light-ness, or angry-ness as continuous with his or her self or, in other words, as experiences that his or her self is "having." The only question here would be the quality of the experience that a person might identify as "Mormon" in the way one would identify the qualities of experiencing "heat" and "light."

One possible response to Hume involves the experience Mormons often refer to as "feeling the Spirit." Inheriting the affective spirituality of late-eighteenth century Christian movements, such as the Methodists and "New Light Baptists" among whom Brigham Young was raised, Mormons have from the beginning of the movement coupled conversion and the genuine identity associated with it with feeling. So much is the authenticity of feeling still a part of the tradition that children and newcomers to Mormonism are carefully instructed in the discovery and interpretation of feeling, and certain describable feelings have become indicative among Mormons of divine presence and approval. Following Hume, we might say that the person who can say *I'm a Mormon* is the person who has sensed his or her consciousness as the collusion of experiences among which has been or is the "burning in the bosom" or other such affective experience, especially as the person's consciousness is able to associate this particular affective experience with some Mormon content—say, as a "response" (or complement) to a personal interrogation of Mormonism.

But because an affective experience does not rationalize itself, a feeling can only be more than what it simply is—it can only have some *meaning*—once it has been understood as a sign. Unless an affective experience or feeling is the kind of sign that Charles

Sanders Peirce calls an icon or an index—in which case the experience has an essential relationship with what it signifies—the affective experience has been *assigned* a relationship with what it signifies. That is, an affective experience means something such as Mormon-ness only once someone has decided that the affective experience in question means such a thing. Smoke is an index of fire insofar as smoke's existence is essentially contingent on fire. We can identify smoke as an index of fire on account of a common, objective experience of fire. We can identify a drawing of a frog as an icon of a frog, given a common, objective experience of frogs and a capacity to recognize an essential resemblance between a drawing and a frog. Without universal access to a materially constituted, objectively perceivable Mormon-ness (say, an identical manifestation of a Mormon God to everyone on the planet, in the same way, simultaneously, such that everyone experiences the same *feeling* from the encounter and also *knows* somehow that everyone is having the same affective feeling), we cannot conclude that the "burning" of Mormon tradition is an icon or index. The association of "burning"—or whatever other sensation—with an especially Mormon quality appears to be a *symbol*, an arbitrary or conventional, rather than a necessary or essential, relationship. If we decide, we might just as well interpret the peculiarly affective nausea that follows the eating of Jell-O with shredded carrots as a sign of Mormon-ness. Since, for Hume, the self is an illusion, anyway, the arbitrary ways in which we choose to characterize the self may be superfluous, and we may as well select "Mormon" as anything else to describe experience that has not already been unassailably co-opted by other conventions.[23] The convention, then, such as a burning that symbolizes the birth of an especially Mormon identity, might *define* an individual (according to further conventions by which definitions operate) but does not *describe* an individual's personal identity or unique selfhood.

We find, then, Locke and Hume still opposed to each other with respect to defining personal identity. Accordingly, we find the Lockean and Humean possibilities for a personal Mormon identity at odds with each other. On the one hand, Locke channels Mormon identity toward institutional determination, so that a person's Mormon-ness is a relational status granted by others and *I'm a Mormon* becomes a declaration of affiliation rather than a description of the self (and, generally, given the public context that *I'm a Mormon* has created, an affiliation with only one of the many institutional possibilities). On the other hand, Hume erases identity altogether, allowing for the possibility of a Mormon self of no particular substance or distinction. The individual who would yet say *I'm a Mormon* for himself or herself remains a cypher, and the matter of *being* Mormon is left either to external judgment or to the convention of a community.

One alternative to being merely composed as a Mormon person by the criteria of an institution (in which there can be no individual self-hood and no particular Mormon-ness) and merely deciding that one's experiences signify Mormon-ness (where one's religious identity is merely a convention) may be found in Kierkegaard, who—ironically using an array of pseudonyms—recommended self-ness as an ongoing achievement, ever developing, never accomplished, and, thus, "located" not in a place nor a time nor even in a *being*, as such, but in the effort to realize itself. We discover in the Kierkegaardian tradition that identity as such—Mormon and otherwise—offers itself as a *doing* rather than a *being*, and, consequently, that the construction of a distinctly Mormon personal identity has ethical implications. In fact, we may find that the declaration *I'm a Mormon* is ethically suspect and, on ethical grounds, ought to be eliminated as a description of the (Mormon) self in favor of a less combative option.

For Kierkegaard, the maximally reduced definition of the self that might also be identified as a personal identity comes in a statement in the essay titled "The Sickness unto Death" that is aggravating both for its childish simplicity and flippant ambiguity. A self, writes Kierkegaard under a pseudonym that is counterpart to another of his pseudonyms, is "a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another."[24] Unless and until a person becomes aware of himself or herself as an existing entity, becoming, then, aware of his or her capacity to act in existence, and, in that awareness necessarily assuming responsibility for his or her acts, he or she is not a self.

The material components of a person are not the issue.[25] Body exists. Soul exists. Never mind. In the same way that Locke was not satisfied that either body or (Christian) soul could be the seat of identity, so Kierkegaard, while conceding the body-soul duality, did not accept body, soul, nor both together as the self's harbor. Like Locke, Kierkegaard prefers to find the self in consciousness, but, unlike Locke, he does not find consciousness revealed in memory. Though he associates consciousness with "spirit," Kierkegaard, cleverly, does not situate consciousness in any particular phenomenon apart from consciousness itself. This consciousness for Kierkegaard is nothing except self-consciousness.[26] The *sine qua non* of the self, for Kierkegaard, is a relationship one has with one's own being by becoming conscious of it. Spirit, as an awareness, works upon the individual as a power, a force, that impels the individual toward seeing itself. But this vision is not merely of the self—body and soul—as it is. One's consciousness of oneself sees what one is and all that one might be. The relationship of the self to the self, then, involves a consciousness of potential. In a rather Anselmian way, God reveals this potential to the individual as the unavoidable consciousness of a self of which a better cannot be imagined.[27] The divine, thus, joins the relationship of self to itself, becomes a feature of the self to which the self relates itself, and this new self necessarily confronts as part of its very existence the desperate reality that it exists only as something that its self has not yet become. The self, at this point, entails both a material necessity and a divine possibility—the former a constraint and the latter a liberation, an awful liberation that affords the self no excuses.

Both necessity and possibility are, thus, constituent elements of the self. The individual who ignores the possible does not know his or her aim and loses his or her self, then, to the imposition of circumstances. But the individual who sheds all concern for necessity can never bring his or her pursuit of possibility toward actuality. The self oscillates, ever, always, "breathing," as Kierkegaard writes, necessity and possibility.[28] For Kierkegaard, the self might be characterized as "Christian" insofar as the temporal and divine dialectic inherent in the genuine self's relation of self to itself is consummated in Jesus. Becoming a genuine Christian self, consequently, is a matter of living in "Christ's mode of being."[29] The Kierkegaardian self might also be a "Mormon" self to the extent that the dialectic oscillation of necessity and possibility in the self involves some inherently Mormon quality. If we follow Kierkegaard's identification of Jesus as the paradigmatic self for being that in which necessity and possibility fully coincide and would call this paradigmatic coincidence "Christian," we should expect to find a similarly paradigmatic coincidence of necessity and possibility in something that is distinctly "Mormon" if we expect that there is some especially Mormon identity to be found.

In 1843, Joseph Smith, apparently with his tongue buried deeply in his prophetic cheek, provided an etymology for the word *mormon*.[30] Following the careful disclaimer that the language of the Book of Mormon was inaccessible without revelation, Smith proceeded impishly to combine an Egyptian cognate with an absurdly abbreviated English adverb to define *mormon* as meaning "more good."[31] The tantalizing implication of Smith's etymological gag is its presumption of good outside the religious tradition he fashioned around himself. "More good" can only arise where good has already materialized. Which is to say that Smith seems, here, to have acknowledged deliberately the good-ness of Mormonism's broader, American, and traditionally-Christian foundation. His appreciation for the good of the world he inhabited is of a piece with Smith's apocalyptic optimism.[32] It was the Mormon prophet, after all, who envisioned an afterlife that did away almost entirely with the Christian hell and, instead, offered all the dead an eternal condition that could only be more good than their mortal condition. If we give a nod to Smith's prophetic calling, fulfilled even when disposing himself rather brazenly of sarcasm, we find ourselves, perhaps, with revelatory ground on which to build the dialectic we need to come, finally, face-to-face with the Mormon in *I'm a Mormon*.

Where Kierkegaard would find Christian identity in an individual's consciousness of the convergence in herself of mortal exigency and divine promise, we might find a Mormon identity in an individual's consciousness of the convergence in herself of good and more good. That is, the genuine Mormon self is always in awareness of its oscillation between what is good and what is more good, between seeing its part in the glorious good of the world as it is, the good of its varied life, its people, their relationships and accord, and its anticipation of more good—a more good world, more good people, a more good church, and a more good eternity in which good only grows. The Mormon self inhales the brute facts of existence—his own and the world's, however abominable—as experience that constitutes good, and then exhales an imaginative hope for more good to come, to replace the good of reality with a more good reality in himself and in all existence.[33] Good is ever present to the Mormon. More good is ever, consciously, unrealized. And her Mormon-ness—quite independent of any institutional affiliation—manifests itself in her always-catastrophic liminality between the two. Good, for the Mormon, is ever present, even in church. More good is ever unrealized, especially in church. Mormon-ness manifests in knowing the transition from one to the other is always, ever, forever ongoing.[34]

Mormon identity, so construed, is not an existential state or quality that might be determined by decree or reached by accomplishment. On the contrary, the eternal oscillation between present good and future more good that characterizes the duality of Mormon existence constitutes a non-condition or an un-quality, a state that presents itself, thus, as non-being. Toward reconciling the struggling Mormon conviction that works matter to salvation with the neo-orthodox Protestant fixation on God's grace as the sole, unqualified mechanism of salvation, the genuine Mormon can affirm that works matter but they do not accomplish the goal of exaltation, which never is accomplished by anything. God's grace makes the way open for work and progress in a process that transforms rather than to an end that never arrives. Following Kierkegaard's argument, God's ordinances do not make a Mormon, and so much less the membership records of any one of the many Mormon churches. Although a person might construe an ordinance, a church, or an affiliation to one extent or another as a mark of *being*—a sign of a fixed, persisting identity—any one of these circumstances, or even all of them together, only stand as blocks to progression. If Mormon-ness is embedded in the self's immanent, material circumstances—say, in the body that has been baptized or in the institutional record of that baptism—then Mormon-ness surrounds and qualifies the self as do other contingencies of necessary actuality as, for instance, a person's height, bank balance, and addiction to Diet Coke. Mormon-ness of this sort is a constraint that keeps a person rooted (or, perhaps, damned) to being. The genuine Mormon perceives his eternal un-state between good and more good, between mortality and exaltation, between church and God.

One cannot *be* a Mormon. If we follow Kierkegaard, one can only ever *become* a Mormon. The declaration *I'm a Mormon* à la Kierkegaard becomes a nonsensical statement. In the same way that declaring *I'm a Gooding* declares nothing at all, so, also, *I'm a Mormon* is only a sequence of sounds a person might make that has no propositional content. Similarly, the idea that a person's Mormon-ness is determined only and exclusively by an institutional affiliation removes every and all claims to Mormonism from the realm of goodness, progression, faith, love for God and humankind, and our gaze into the cosmic mystery, and reduces them—reduces them *all*—to something mundane and trivial. Whatever the self might be—a combination of spirit and body, a continuous consciousness, a convergence of sensation, a complex of learned and enacted social formulae—the Mormon-ness that might be part of it does not reveal itself as a *thing* a person claims and can incorporate or as a record that an institution makes but as a sense of self in suspension, neither whole at the given moment nor prophetically final but channeled by a conviction deliberately echoing Joseph Smith's cheeky exegesis that saw the world, as awful as it acts, as good and that believed more good must surely come.

Which draws us to the remainder of *I'm a Mormon*'s identity problems and also toward its solution. Does the extent to which a person can *be* a Mormon preclude *being* anything else also? Hume, of course, would say that the sense of being anything in particular is an illusion anyway, so a person just as well *is* whatever she perceives collecting in her perceptions, and that might be in multiples: a woman, an American, a caucasian, a Mormon, a Christian, a dentist, and an atheist. What Kierkegaard offers to the concept of Mormon identity also seems to allow for a multiplicity of affirmations or, as it happens in Kierkegaard, affirmative denials. Inasmuch as a person cannot *be* a Mormon in accomplished fact, it is just as well that one also cannot simultaneously *be* a Christian or an atheist in accomplished fact.[35] But what about the hopeful hopelessness of moving in the space between the world and eternity by confirming the good and aiming at more good? Does this positive construction of an always unrealized, Kierkegaardian Mormonism exclude all other modes of engaging with our existence?

Institutions, pointing every direction, say yes. The Roman Catholic Church rebaptizes Mormon converts to Catholicism. The United Methodist Church does as well. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America kindly offers Mormons "Christian Baptism" rather than re-baptism.[36] And, of course, as LDS Church spokesman Michael Otterson has tersely stated LDS Church policy: "We rebaptize Catholics, we rebaptize Protestants and we rebaptize everyone else."[37] The institutions, here, seem to regard identity as something that is at least partly composed of a rite legitimized by a corporate organization and mostly exclusive of alternatives. The LDS Church formally disciplines as apostates its members who join other churches.[38] Since excommunication from the LDS Church on the grounds of apostasy results in the putative removal of an individual's name from the Church's records as well as the cancellation of "any privileges of Church membership," we can conclude that the LDS Church regards the identity that it assigns through its record-keeping as excluding all other comparable identities.[39] The institutional position is that a person cannot be a Catholic and also a Mormon. Saying *I'm a Mormon* seems to preclude saying *I'm an Anything Else*.

But if one aims at *not* being a Mormon in order genuinely to become Mormon, one might consider how one goes about preventing one's ossification in being. One method can be gathered from the remarkably liberal attitudes that both Joseph Smith and his devoted successor Brigham Young held concerning religions. In a letter he wrote to Isaac Galland while confined in the preposterously-named Liberty Jail late in the winter of 1839, Joseph Smith railed on the "long faced Baptists" who were responsible both for his incarceration and for the undeniably abominable persecution of his followers and then, with a customary measure of inconsistency, the prophet described his emerging religion thus:

> Mormonism is truth, in other words the doctrine of the Latter Day Saints, is truth. . . . the first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the denominations of one another, when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds,and [*sic*] we have the highest degree of evidence of the same.[40]

Given the tongue-lashing that he lays on the Baptists and other sectarians in the same letter, Smith here probably intends to say that Mormons claim the constitutional right to reject traditional religion in favor of anything else they can imagine for themselves. But the prophetic word, as it so often does, gets out ahead of Smith. Whatever he may have meant in the moment, what he wrote is distinctly infused with a meaning that reaches far beyond Smith's immediate circumstances. Mormons, for Smith, were ever to accommodate themselves to truth—all truth, from whatever source, dismissing the artificial boundaries between sects and systems, including those that worked to cordon off Mormons from everyone else. Even Brigham Young, who was as given to parochial superiority as any Mormon leader, imbibed Smith's liberal intuition. In 1859, and speaking contrary to what has become a conventional Mormon reading of the "Dark Ages" between 100 CE and 1830 CE, in which the world's religions are supposed to have been getting along without truth, Young declared to a Utah congregation:

> It is our duty and calling . . . to gather every item of truth and reject every error. Whether a truth be found with professed infidels, or with the Universalists, or the Church of Rome, or the Methodists, the Church of England, the Presbyterians, the

> Baptists, the Quakers, the Shakers, or any other of the various and numerous different sects and parties, all of whom have more or less truth, it is the business of the Elders of this Church . . . to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, to mechanism of every kind, to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever it may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people and bring it to Zion. . . . This statement is not only true of the nations termed civilized—those who profess to worship the true God, but is equally applicable to pagans of all countries, for in their religious rights [*sic*] and ceremonies may be found a great many truths which we will also gather home to Zion.[41]

Since the LDS Church understands the term *Zion* to refer to its own dioceses, or stakes, throughout the world, the injunction that Young laid on Church members in 1859 to gather the world's truths "home to Zion" calls for them to find the truth that every other religion on the planet conserves (not to mention every truth of science, philosophy, etc.), and to gather those truths into the religious life of their Mormon communities. These truths, Young averred, lie even in "pagan" rituals.

Speaking of the silent rites of Zen Buddhism, Ronald Grimes has reasoned, convincingly, that while "theology" involves "reflection on normative texts"—so that theological study is a way of conserving and transmitting meaning—ritual tends not to "mean" anything, but simply is, actively, what it is.[42] Or, we might say, ritual does, simply, what it does. The fundamental value of religious ritual is found in the doing of it and, perhaps, secondarily, in studying and rationalizing it. It is, perhaps, self-evident that one does not come to know the truth of physical exercise from watching the Olympics. One does not come to know the truth of philanthropic engineering without digging some ditches. Running twenty miles a week reveals something that the watching of marathon runners can never know, and that revelation appears not merely as the confirmation of propositions such as "sustained exercise makes a person feel better." The revelation that comes from exercise is also the transformation of the individual, who not only "knows" something about exercise but, through exercise, becomes something exercised. As Brigham Young intuited, knowing the truth of a rite—the Compostela pilgrimage, the Ramadan fast, covering the head in a Gurudwara—cannot materialize fully without participating in the rite.

By charging their followers to embrace all truth, even in the rituals of the world's other religions, the first and second LDS prophets imply, inescapably, that the Kierkegaardian *doing* that comprises Mormon non-being necessarily involves actively living other religions. Indeed, insofar as Mormon non-being consists of eternal movement between *good* and *more good*, that movement seems to involve, as a fundamental characteristic, passing into all the world's religious traditions—not as a patronizing voyeur or a type of Orientalist but as a person who sees, clearly, that the *good* of Mormon reality is, indeed, good but inadequate and that the *more good* he must realize lies as well in Catholicism, existentialism, particle physics, Hinduism, Sufism, primatology, and philanthropic engineering, as it does in the correlated curriculum issued from Salt Lake City to his stake.

If pursued actively (or "sought" according to the injunction of the thirteenth of Smith's basic articles of Mormon faith), the truth the first prophets of Mormonism perceived in everything else—including, explicitly, in "pagan rites"—dispels the inertia that leads to spiritual ossification in *being*. The active pursuit of such truth requires not only study but participation. The building of water works both confirms principles of mathematics and physics and also transforms the ditch-digging individual, who, in the act of digging, becomes something that has to do with the well-being of the world. So, too, one does not come to know the truth that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young both insist is available in Hinduism without looking at Krishna. Without taking *darshan* of Shrinathji in Nathdwara, the one who would become Mormon can never know what great truth this act makes available. Circumambulating the Sarovar at Amritsar accelerates the Mormon out of *being*'s torpor and toward the infinite possibility of not-being. The doing, in these examples, tears open the individual's tendency toward hebetude and puts the individual into acceleration—a changing velocity and direction. Accordingly, the pursuit of truth that Mormonism requires expects the believer to participate, to *do* the "pagan rites" in order to find their "great many truths."[43]

The becoming Mormon goes to Mass, reads Sartre, collects neutrinos, bathes Krishna, whirls like a dervish, documents the behavior of Javan lutungs, and constructs irrigation works, recognizing that she will find a great many truths everywhere, not to be discovered only by disinterested study but by participation. Rather than cultivating an identity that *is* Mormon and, thus, essentially bound to a sect rather than let loose to eternity, a person with genuine Mormon aspirations pursues everything. Said Brigham Young in 1853:

> "Shall I sit down and read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Covenants all the time?" says one. Yes, if you please, and when you have done, you may be nothing but a sectarian after all. It is your duty to study to know everything upon the face of the earth in addition to reading those books.[44]

The person genuinely *becoming* a Mormon is in the same activity *becoming* a Catholic, an existentialist, a physicist, a Hindu, a Sufi, a primatologist, and a philanthropic engineer. For that matter, the person is becoming a fireman, a mayor, a tutor, a Lutheran, an activist, a parent, and a child in order, precisely, to prevent *being* a Mormon, which can only be understood as a stagnant state that is not at all distinct from the uniquely Mormon understanding of the word *damnation*. The Mormon issue is not whether a person can *be* all such things—the accomplishment of which would signal an eternal death—but whether or not one *is becoming* in a divine, eternal life.[45]

Rather than speaking such slogans as *I'm a Mormon* that do as much to prevent the individual Mormon's progress as they do to promote the LDS Church's claim to a place in the mainstream of American culture, we might consider some alternatives. Those of us with Mormon aspirations might affirm, for instance, *Mormonism is me*. The ontological problem remains, insofar as the problem we have heretofore confronted is the conception of the self as an accomplished, static object. But this problem is here mitigated by pointing to the self as the seat of Mormon-ness, rather than the other way around. In this affirmation, Mormonism is not a condition that is external to the self and that appropriates the self. This affirmation also allows for the many things that ineluctably coalesce in an individual as an owned identity. We might also consider *I'm becoming a Mormon*, which is probably a more truthful statement for most LDS practitioners, even if Kierkegaard has nothing to do with the discussion.

This Mormon's personal preference would be to assert *I do Mormonism*. Spencer Kimball, according to legend, solicited the change to the lyrics in the song "I Am a Child of God" from "Teach me all that I must *know*" to "Teach me all that I must *do*." Although I am more than a little suspicious of the implications of "*teach* me *all* that I must do," I appreciate the former LDS Church president's sense that doing must be at the heart of Mormonism. *Doing* Mormonism, as opposed to *being* Mormon, sets aside the existential problem of *I'm a Mormon*. The person who *does* Mormonism is *moving*, past the good that is and toward the more good that will be. The person doing Mormonism is less concerned with the kinds of self-assertive identities or institutional affiliations that inevitably draw antagonistic lines between peoples—the insiders who can say *I am* and the outsiders who must say *I am not*—and is, rather, attuned to his or her own *I am neither*, a selfless emptiness between the anxious, good cause of the world and the more good of eternity. A person doing Mormonism does so for the absurd realization of both.

Notes

1. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 330.

2. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6. By proposing a "narrative theory" of identity, by which a self comes into being and knows itself as a result of one entity's interaction with other entities, Ricoeur does his best to supply some ground in which to plant a personal identity. Ricoeur's is one proposal among

many. Considered here are only those proposals—Locke's and Hume's, with a nod to Kierkegaard's—that provide the touchstone for the ongoing examination of the problem in Western thought.

3. Joseph Walker, "LDS Church Pleased with Positive Response to 'I'm a Mormon' in Great Britain," *Deseret News*, June 22, 2013.

4. Part of a court order imposed earlier this year forbade Canadian Winston Blackmore from "interfering" with the LDS Church's use of the term *Mormon.* Daphne Bramham, "Mormons win battle to distance themselves from B.C. polygamist," *The Province*, January 13, 2015.

5. The corporation that is the LDS Church certainly has the capacity to determine who enjoys its institutional membership status since it can invalidate membership records according to its internally-determined procedures. The matter under examination is not whether a church institution can deny membership to an individual but whether institutional membership and a Mormon-ness of identity are the same thing.

6. Jan Shipps, "From Peoplehood to Church Membership: Mormonism's Trajectory since World War II," *Church History* 76, no. 2 (2007): 261.

7. There are nearly 300,000 members of the Community of Christ, a church that shares a nineteenth-century origin with the LDS Church, acknowledges the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith, and regards the Book of Mormon as scripture. See http://www.cofchrist.org/OurFaith/scripture.asp. The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints may have 10,000 members who also collectively affirm that Joseph Smith was a prophet and regard the Book of Mormon as scripture. The number of distinct church institutions that have developed from Joseph Smith's visionary energy in the 1820s may be impossible to determine. Membership in any of the extant versions of these many churches ranges from fifteen million to twelve. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latter_Day_Saint_movement (accessed March 25, 2015).

8. Not everyone is confused about the multiplicity of Mormonism. When one looks up the term "Mormonism" in the index of *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, one is directed to several portions of the book that have to do specifically—and not erroneously, I would argue—with the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. See Robert A. Orsi, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

9. In the "Mormon Moment" that coincided with Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential candidacy, the American media rather uncritically adopted the practice of referring to the LDS Church as "*the* Mormon church."

10. The thesis is not obligatory, of course. One might yet stand on the assertion that the LDS Church is the only Mormon church and only documented affiliates of the LDS Church can declare *I'm a Mormon* without any radical qualification, invalidating any such claim not only by the faithful of other churches that claim Smith and the Book of Mormon but also of LDS excommunicants. But this position merely insists, arbitrarily, that the term *Mormon* must signify the LDS Church and no other believers in Smith and his scripture. The arbitrariness of this assertion does not contribute to understanding what constitutes Mormon identity.

11. *I'm a Mormon* does not tell an audience of outsiders whether one's affiliation is LDS, FLDS, Community of Christ, etc., but leaves the matter of affiliation open so that an audience is free to assume that one is a polygamist. The insistence that Mormons are not polygamists can sound like deliberate dishonesty to outsiders who can see Mormon polygamists spread across the western states.

12. Where the link between Mormon-ness and institutional affiliation is arbitrary—as in "Only LDS members are Mormons" and vice-versa—the matter of who really is Mormon can be resolved simply by agreement in the form of a convention. Never mind that an agreement among the Community of Christ, the FLDS church, the LDS church, et al. that only LDS members shall be considered Mormons would never materialize. If Mormon-ness is only a convention that correlates a particular institution and a concept, an exclusively LDS claim on Mormon-ness could be determined by a vote. That the matter would not be resolved by a vote itself indicates that Mormon-ness is not an arbitrary relationship between an institution and a concept. The various concerned populations here would refuse to come to such an agreement on the grounds that they would regard as ontological rather than conventional.

13. D&C 88:15.

14. There is, of course, tripartism in Christianity, variously conceived by such important figures as Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Martin Luther, and Kierkegaard.

15. See D&C 93:33–34.

16. If the transfer of Mormon identity between bodies as a correlate of the transfer of Christian spirits between bodies appears to Mormons too nonsensical to consider, perhaps we have discovered another area in which

Mormonism does not coincide with Christianity. Given the metaphysics that might be involved in the proposition that an identity can be Mormon, perhaps only the person who proposes that there can be no Mormon self that is distinct from not-Mormon selves can regard a question like the transposition of spirits between an American professor and a North Korean dictator as too absurd to consider.

17. Patrick Stokes, "Locke, Kierkegaard and the Phenomenology of Personal Identity," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 16, no. 5 (2008): 649.

18. If, as the verse reads, a person who only does what he or she is told to do is a "slothful servant," then a person who is only obedient is slothful. The person who acts independently, on the other hand, or "of [his or her] own free will" secures a heavenly reward (D&C 58:26–28). Obedience, it would seem here, is not the highest law nor the standard by which God will judge.

19. D&C 93:30.

20. This rebaptism problem is historically contingent. The LDS Church, for one, might very well have rebaptized this hypothetical individual, had the coma and the individual's emergence from it occurred during the nineteenth century, during which members of the church were rebaptized frequently and regularly. Brigham Young encouraged his followers to be rebaptized often, and was himself rebaptized several times: notably, upon entry to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and in concert with the establishment of his version of the United Order in Utah in the last decade of his life. Besides helping us wrestle with the nature of individual identity in Mormonism, this hypothetical coma draws our attention to the way that LDS belief and practice are tied to historical moments rather than to a transcendently unabridged whole.

21. *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 141.

22. "If the ordinance is not verified by an original certificate, a search of Church records, or the testimony of witnesses, it must be performed again to be considered valid." *Handbook 1*, 142.

23. Although referring to a perception or sensation as "hot" may be arbitrary, it would defy reason, nevertheless, to decide to begin to refer to all "hot" experiences as "Mormon" experiences. Among other problems, by appropriating for itself such a universal experience as hot-ness, a convention-swap of this sort would paradoxically undermine the search for a perception that might be understood as uniquely Mormon.

24. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 351.

25. Since we are in the realm of Mormon metaphysics, we will accept "spirit" as material and a counterpart of the "soul" of the traditional Christian lexicon.

26. Kierkegaard here anticipates Nobel Prize-winning scientist Gerald Edelman, who insists that "consciousness is not a thing, it is a process" and who refers to genuine, human consciousness as necessarily "consciousness of consciousness" (*Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006], 38, 41).

27. St. Anselm gives us the famous proof of God's existence that involves a definition of God as that thing no greater than which can be imagined.

28. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 314.

29. J. Preston Cole, *The Problematic Self in Kierkegaard and Freud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 31.

30. Part of what might account for Smith's sardonic tone is his sense of the absurdity in asking about the meaning of a word that was, in the origin of the religious tradition in question, a proper name rather than a grammatically functional term and which came to be regarded mistakenly by outsiders to the tradition as some kind of adjective that could be employed as a predicate nominative. Smith may have read the question, "What does the word 'Mormon' mean?" much in the way a Jew might read the question, "What does the word 'Moses' mean?" The prophet's convoluted response purposefully treats the inquiry as a misunderstanding too ridiculous to take seriously. We might also consider just how ridiculous *I'm a Moses* would be as some religious tradition's marketing slogan.

31. Joseph Smith, "To the Editor of the Times & Seasons," *Times & Seasons* 4, no. 13 (1843): 194. May 15, 1843.

32. Of course, Smith's liberal optimism is also of a piece with the rest of his considerable paradoxes. The founding vision of Smith's religious tradition condemned traditional Christianity as an abomination, after all, and Smith was not averse to condemning in ferocious terms those who denied him legitimate space in their America. Smith oscillated in high, noble crests and deeply spiteful troughs.

33. We might ask how the ninth of the thirteen LDS "Articles of Faith" could mean anything else.

34. Kierkegaard's forever "becoming-ness" intimates an "eternal progression" that traditional Christianity still rejects and articulates "eternal progression" in a way that Mormonism has yet to fully realize insofar as the

Mormon nod too often ignores that, by definition, "eternal progression" must include "mortal progression."

35. As Judith Butler, et al., have argued, we may not be able to claim "man" or "woman" as accomplished fact of identity.

36. See http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Do_Lutherans_rebaptize_former_Mormons_who_are_joining_the_congregation.pdf (accessed March 25, 2015).

37. Gustav Niebuhr, "Vatican Decides to Rebaptize Mormons Who Are Converting," *New York Times*, July 24, 2001.

38. *Handbook 1*, 57.

39. *Handbook 1*, 59.

40. Joseph Smith Jr., "Copy of a Letter from J. Smith Jr to Mr. Galland," *Times & Seasons* 1, no. 4 (1840): 54.

41. JD 7:283–84.

42. Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Waterloo: Ritual Studies International, 2010), 90.

43. I hope that it is clear that I do not advocate here a colonialist-orientalist project of thrusting oneself uninvited into the lives of communities that are not one's own. Nor am I advocating any senseless, tasteless *doing* without any reflection, without any thinking at all. I hope here to justify, as a principle, a joyful participation with the world to a people whose religious tradition works too hard to impose on them a fear of everything else that too often becomes a contempt for everything else. The nuances of the responsibility and good neighborliness that such participation requires must be reserved for another essay.

44. JD 2:93–94. To the objection that Brigham's injunction to know everything on the face of the earth is an expression of a particular, naturally-inquisitive temperament that does not expect literal implementation and, therefore, that it is expressive of a distinctly elitist attitude, we might first concede that Brother Brigham did, indeed, harbor a distinctly elitist attitude but that, secondly, the "eternal" in eternal progression opens up an infinite space in which to develop and pursue interests to their perfection. Pursue what one must or can here in one's very narrow mortality as one's inclinations direct and possibilities allow, but expect that in the great, grand, never-ending scheme of things, one will also come to an interest in Chinese, fiddle-playing, Vedanta, and trigonometry, and will know them all.

45. What else could be the implication of the fundamentally Mormon doctrine of "eternal progression"? In its genesis, Mormonism charges every-

one to do everything and propels that apparently impossible injunction with the doctrine that all of eternity is open to the pursuit. Unless LDS doctrine has resolved that mortality is the only space in which we can do (and learn), then basic LDS doctrine asserts that doing everything is not beyond the reach of people aspiring to divinity. Rather than a soul-crushing standard that no one can hope to meet, the Mormon mandate to arrive at perfection by doing everything conceives the infinite circle of celestial eternity as space in which to do—to collect neutrinos, to read Sartre, to dance the charleston whether or not one has time or inclination in mortality to dance it. Surely God can dance the charleston. The eternal movement toward God that Mormonism imagines offers the grand hope that existence provides everyone the endless room to dance as God dances.

Amy Jorgensen
Far From the Tree (2014)
7:14 min., HD video

"This work explores themes and imagery of the apple as a loaded and sometimes contradictory cultural symbol. 'Far From the Tree' documents the artist unsuccessfully bobbing for red apples, a performance that treads the line between the romantic nostalgia of a childhood game and the voyeuristic discomfort of observing someone struggle underwater." —Rebecca Maksym, UMOCA, curator

"Shot from underwater with audio, the viewer watches Jorgensen struggle, drowning, desperately searching for the desired fruit. Her hair floats eerily outward, filling the frame. She struggles back and forth, fluttering about, failing. The exercise is futile; the apple is never attained. Mirroring documentation of waterboarding, the seemingly playful reference to the childhood party game feels terrifying from this perspective. And as a viewer, one is left as the voyeur, watching without an ability to assist. Therefore, it is a metaphor for other, similar, yet more horrific images, of American torture. Such images can be difficult to see because they debunk the notion of American exceptionalism. They demystify America, a nation fallen from the tree." —Esmé Thomas

For and In Behalf Of

Allan Davis

For the premiere production held in the Cafritz Foundation Theatre at the University of Maryland, College Park on December 10–12, 2014. The production was supported by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's Second Season Program and the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies of the University of Maryland.

Directed by Jessica Krenek
Choreography by Christina Banalapoulou

Allan—Allan Davis
A—Zach Harris
B—Christina O'Brian
C—Patrick Young
D—Parisa Bayenat
E—Brian Novonty
F—Amee Walden

I. In the Beginning . . .
II. The Fall
III. A New Skin
IV. Consecration
V. Circumscribed into One Great Whole

I. In the Beginning . . .

[*Prelude music fades. House lights drop. Projection reads: "I. In the Beginning . . ." Lights rise on two figures who are both dressed in white clothes.*]
A: "My son,"

B: says the Christian father—

A: "you should not attend a theatre, for there the wicked assemble; nor a ball room, for there the wicked assemble; you should not be found playing a ball, for the sinner does that."

B: Hundreds of like admonitions are thus given, and so we have been thus traditioned; but it is our privilege and our duty to scan all the works of man from the days of Adam until now, and thereby learn what man was made for, what he is capable of performing, and how far his wisdom can reach into the heavens, and to know the evil and the good.

[*Light fades on A. A exits.*]

B: Upon the stage of a theatre can be represented in character, evil and its consequences, good and its happy results and rewards; the weakness and the follies of man, the magnanimity of virtue and the greatness of truth.

[*Projection reads: "Upon the stage of a theatre can be represented [. . .] the weakness and follies of man, the magnanimity of virtue and the greatness of truth."—Brigham Young, on the dedication of the Salt Lake Theatre, 1862*]

B: Brigham Young, 1862.

[*Light and projection fade as B exits. Projection returns to reading: "In the Beginning . . ." Lights rise as Allan enters.*]

Allan: I am a card-carrying Mormon; the thing is the card's expired. I was born of goodly parents who raised me in Florida and taught me the faith of their parents. My father blessed me as an infant, giving me the name of his father. My father baptized me into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when I was eight. Dressed in white, we stepped into a font at a church building. He invoked my name and that of God. "Allan Nathan Davis, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Then he buried me in the water.

Four years later, my father placed his hands upon my head and ordained me, conferring the priesthood, the authority of God. I followed the plan pretty well: ordained a deacon when I was 12, a teacher when I was 14, a priest when I was 16, and an elder when I was 18; received my temple endowment and served a mission when I was 19; hell, I graduated from Brigham Young University twice by the time I was 25.

But it was all the way back when I turned eight, I was taught, that a part of me would die: my innocence. Before this age of accountability, any personal imperfection or mistake was swallowed up in Christ. But at eight, I would be capable of discerning right from wrong. So I received one of the most precious gifts God could bestow: agency—the power to choose. As a child of God, I had already received an amazing gift: my physical body, something that made me like my Heavenly Father and my Heavenly Mother. I was alive on Earth to gain a physical body and to learn how to use it, how to endure it, and how to enjoy it. But at eight, I was given a related gift: the capacity to choose—the weakness and follies of man OR the magnanimity of virtue and the greatness of truth. My baptism would be my first chance to exercise my choice to make a covenant with God.

As my father lowered me into the water, the innocent child that I was died. I could not breathe and darkness engulfed everything. But he raised me up and I was born again into a life of responsibility.

Resurrected into agency. It is a ritual that I have seen repeatedly: siblings, my niece, converts I taught. But throughout my life, I witnessed the rehearsal of this ceremony most in temples, when Mormon youth stood in proxy for the dead.

[*Projection: The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell, Holocaust Victims, and Elie Wiesel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F8XdqmtFRw (0:00–0:28).*]

Allan: It's not a practice without its critics. Mormons take on the identities of others. They represent others and are baptized for them. This violates the agency, the convictions, and the cultural memory of the dead. The wound is significantly poignant when we are discussing those that died for their religious beliefs. What gives Mormons the right to act in the place of others against their will?

And yet, at the risk of sounding like an apologist, I feel it necessary to highlight for Mormons, the baptism does not destroy agency, but creates it. Unlike most Protestant or Catholic perspectives on baptism, the event itself is not immediately efficacious. When an infant is baptized Catholic, in the worldview of the faithful, that child is thenceforth Catholic. But for Mormons, a person has to choose to accept the work, that ordinance. In other words, Mormons believe they need to be baptized for others not to make the dead Mormon, but to give them access to the choice to be Mormon if they so desire.

This is not to dismiss the critique of the practice, but to emphasize that both sides are speaking in the same language. Choice. Will. Self-determination. Agency. It's important to the critics and the proponents. Both cherish and champion the principle. But what does the ritual do to the memory of the dead? I still want to and very often do see beauty in a people that have an impulse to honor and remember the dead. But it makes me wonder how anything we do to remember the dead alters them for us.

And like I said earlier, while I have my card, it's expired. And lest there be any confusion, I am not speaking metaphorically; the card-carrying activity is not just a figure of speech. I actually have my card in my wallet if you would like to see it.

[*Allan removes wallet from back pocket and takes out temple recommend.*]

Allan: This is my temple recommend. Once upon a time, it would have let me into any LDS temple in the world. The temple in Orlando, Florida, I grew up going to as a teenager. The iconic granite temple in Salt Lake City. A more modest one in Medford, Oregon. That's the one illustrated on the cover of my recommend holder. Even DC, the one I assume most of you are familiar with. Visible from the Beltway; it would be that giant white edifice my roommate refers to as the "Fortress of Solitude."

[*Enter C.*]

Allan: It's very simple, really. When one has a recommend, he or she simply goes inside the temple, approaches a reception desk, and hands a temple worker his or her card.

[*Allan hands C his temple recommend. C begins to look it over.*]

Allan: The temple worker takes the recommend. He scans the barcode printed on the recommend, like a library card. Come to think of it, it's like when I go to research at the Library of Congress.

[*C pantomimes scanning the card.*]

Allan: After scanning the card, the temple worker hands the card back, shakes your hand, and generally says something like . . .

C: [*shaking Allan's hand*] Welcome to the temple, Brother Davis.

Allan: I can honestly tell you that of the many times I went through that routine to get in, it never felt rote. It was a sincere welcome every time. Entrance into the House of the Lord—a place of contemplation, of revelation, of peace.

[*C exits.*]

Allan: The recommend lasts for two years, at which point it needs to be renewed. But it has almost been that long since I have let it expire. Buried in my wallet, but always with me. When I was a teenager, if I wanted to go to the temple I had to have an ecclesiastical interview for every temple trip. This let me get a limited use recommend. Recently, I found one of these training wheel recommends.

[*Allan pulls out paper recommend.*]

Allan: It's flimsier. The other recommend permitted access to the entire temple, allowing me to participate in all of the ceremonies that take place there: the initiatories, which include washings and anointings; the endowment which is a lengthy ceremony built around an allegorical dramatization of the story of Adam and Eve; and then sealings where couples and families can be bound together as a family unit for eternity. This one, however, only allows teenagers or recent converts to go into the basement level of the temples to participate in the baptisms for the dead.

It's some nice architectural symbolism: the baptismal font is subterranean, buried in the earth like those it is designed to serve. And these fonts, they are pretty large, usually elevated and stationed on top of the backs of twelve oxen-shaped statues. I've taken some poetic license. Each ox represents one of the twelve tribes of Israel and they face the four corners of the world to signify the gathering of Israel, the entire human family, on both sides of the veil of death.

[*Enter A, B, C, D, E, and F. C enters the font. A and E stand upstage from font, one on each side. D and F both stand upstage center of the font, holding towels. B waits to enter font.*]

Allan: When Mormon teenagers arrive, they go downstairs and change into white clothes. They sit on the edge of the font to wait their turn. It is a space of reverence, of stillness. If there are conversations, they are generally whispered, covered by the sound of splashing water. There are four adult men and two or three adult women present. Of the men, one officiates the baptism, one serves as a record keeper, and the last two serve as witnesses to make sure all goes correctly with each baptism. If something goes wrong—a missed word or a stray toe popping out of the water—the ordinance is repeated. The women stand to help the proxies into and out of the font, providing towels to dry off.

[*B gets into font with assistance of D.*]

Allan: When it is your turn as proxy, as you enter the water, the person performing the baptism usually asks for a confirmation of your last name.

C: Sister O'Brian, right?

B: Yeah.

Allan: The baptizer places the proxy's left hand on his left forearm and their right hand in his left hand. One hand for support for when it's time to be pulled out of the water and one hand primed to hold your nose. The baptizer then raises his right hand, and speaks the words of the liturgy, addressing the one being baptized and names the person for whom the ordinance is performed, and then plunges the proxy all the way into the water.

[*C baptizes B. A and E approve of ritual.*]

Allan: This is repeated another eight or twelve times. It depends on how many people came on the temple trip and if someone had been doing family history recently.

[*F and D help C and B dry off. All exit.*]

Allan: When I was home recently, I attended the funeral of a friend. I noticed a lot of things. I had spent my summer writing this piece about what any of us do with the memories of our dead loved ones. And in my mind that meant dealing with my grandparents. But I woke up one morning in July, rolled over in the dark, and checked my email on my phone. Before I understood what was going on, I was reading a message from my friend Cory. Emma, his sister-in-law, the wife of one of my best friends in college, had died. Emma was 26 years old, pregnant with her second child. She wasn't elderly, battling a disease, or a victim of an accident. Her heart just stopped. And it just doesn't make sense.

When I attended Emma's memorial services, I noticed how much we bring stories to the dead. Stories of their lives. And stories about a much larger cosmology. At Emma's services, there was an ecclesiastical leader who shared remarks about the plan of salvation: what Mormons see as God's restored explanation of where we all come from, why we are here, where we are going, and in terms of something like a funeral some sense of why unexplainable shit happens or how you deal with it. I have trouble believing the literality of the story, but you know what? It's a beautiful vision of humanity, of God, of life. Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy. The story is healing. Stories and memories of our dead loved ones—it's what we do.

When I was a small child, I had asthma. I inherited it from my dad and his mom. Sometimes when I'd have an attack my dad would take me outside into the night air hoping that might help. He'd hold me in his arms and walk around our little boxed-in yard.

[*Enter E, pantomiming holding a small child, humming "Ten Minutes Ago I Met You."*]

Allan: Sometimes he would sit in a metal folding chair that he pulled from inside. At the time I would have been four or five, so he was not exactly cradling an infant. Sometimes he'd alternate sitting and standing, sitting and pacing, for however long it took my breathing to regulate. I can't remember what it felt like having trouble breathing. What I can remember is my dad holding me, rocking me, and singing to me.

E: [*singing*] Ten minutes ago, I saw you / I looked up when you came through the door / My head started reeling you gave me the feeling the room had no ceiling or floor. / Ten minutes ago, I met you, / and we murmured our how-do-you-dos / I wanted to ring out the bells and fling out my arms and sing out the news.

Allan: "On the Street Where You Live" from *My Fair Lady*; "My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music*. Thanks to my father, my lullabies were show tunes. The one I remember the most though is "Ten Minutes Ago" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. From what I'm told, he sang it to my mom the night they got engaged.

E: [*singing*] In the arms of my love, I'm flying, / over mountain and meadow and glen. / And I like it so well that for all I can tell I may never come down again. / I may never come down to earth again.

Allan: It's not a particularly great song; the lyrics are lazy. But it's the one I remember. When my dad sang that to me he wasn't much older than I am right now. In his arms, I did not feel anxiety at all. Only protection and peace. My father is alive and well. But I know one day that will change—we will be left to remember, to forget, to make sense of what remains. Bodies die. But my parents gave me their faith. And by that tradition, I learned to celebrate the physical body as a way of conveying truth. [*Indicating E*] I don't know if I can offer a better articulation of Mormonism's view of God. A parent and a child. Intimate connection; physical immediacy. For Mormons, the physical body is at the heart of the purpose of life. In my father's arms, I learned that what made me like God was having a physical body.

[*Enter A, D, and F. D and F are wearing black missionary name tags and carrying copies of the Book of Mormon; A is to the side.*]

Allan: It is an image of the character and nature of God made flesh in the words of Mormonism's founder Joseph Smith and rehearsed daily by generations of LDS missionaries, myself included.

D: In 1820, Joseph Smith was fourteen years old. He wanted to know what church to join, but there were many faiths. He did not know which one was the right one.

[*Enter A, pantomiming Joseph Smith, kneels to pray.*]

D: After reading the Bible, he decided to pray and ask God what he should do. Joseph Smith later described in his own words what happened next.

[*C enters and stands next to E, upstage of A. E shifts from pantomiming Allan's father to pantomiming Heavenly Father as the following vision is described. C is Christ in this tableau.*]

F: He said, "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. When the light rested upon me, I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name. . .

E: Joseph . . .

F: . . . and said, pointing to the other . . .

F and E: This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"

[*Exit A, C, D, E, and F.*]

Allan: Usually, a missionary then uses the event to talk about Joseph Smith's call to be a prophet, to restore the Church, to translate the Book of Mormon. But me, what I love is this vision of an embodied God—twice over. What some scholars have referred to as Mormonism's insistent collapse of the sacred and the profane. That with the physical body as the thing that makes us like God comes an entire culture that values ways to use and celebrate the body, including performance. Mormons love theater and dance. My dad sang show tunes to me. Like me, he grew up in a church that for a long time mandated the construction of theater stages in church buildings. Brigham Young once said that theater offered more immediate benefits to society than scientific research.

[*Enter B and E, wearing ballroom competition numbers, begin dancing. Song: "La valse d'Amélie (piano)" from* Amélie *soundtrack. A rehearsal for the choreography of this can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLBpRHoPKcM.*]

Allan: When my dad went to BYU, his mom encouraged him to join the ballroom dance team. I grew up watching old tapes of my dad's performances. Lots of Mormon kids have been going to dance classes since they were young teens, on the days that they didn't have youth temple trips. And baptisms for the dead and dancing are connected. Both reflect a vision of the human soul as a divine integration of body and spirit. The dead do not have bodies to make decisions. They cannot dance unless one of the living invites them, stands in place for them, not unlike when Christ stood in for all mankind. How many times I heard that this would let me be a savior on Mount Zion—that Christ brings salvation, but expects the rest of us, a full community and ensemble of the saints, to administer it. By the actions of our bodies, we offer the chance of salvation to strangers. Such a body should move at all times and celebrate life. Dance, theater, performance—they're just ways to act like God; they're the way to be divine.

[*Exit B and E.*]

[*Lights fade. Allan exits.*]

II. The Fall

[*With lights out, projection reads: "II. The Fall." Chuck Berry's "Back in the USA" begins to play. Lights rise on female figure.*]

F: As my sister and I drive along the Trail of Tears, the most happiness I find is when we're in the car and I can blare the Chuck Berry tape I brought. We drive the trail where thousands died, and I listen to the music and think what are we supposed to do with the grisly past? I feel a righteous anger and bitterness about every historical fact of what the American nation did to the Cherokee. But, at the same time, I'm an entirely American creature. I'm in love with this song and the country that gave birth to it.

[*Music playing: "Back in the USA" by Chuck Berry.*]

F: Listening to "Back in the USA" while driving the Trail of Tears, I turn it over and over in my head. It's a good country. It's a bad country. Good country, bad country. And, of course, it's both. When I think about my relationship with America, I feel like a battered wife. Yeah, he knocks me around a lot, but boy he sure can dance.

[*Projection reads: "What are we supposed to do with the grisly past? [. . .] I turn it over and over in my head. […] When I think about my relationship with America, I feel like a battered wife. Yeah, he knocks me around a lot, but boy he sure can dance." —Sarah Vowell, 1998*]

[*Lights up on Allan as he enters.*]

Allan: As a historian, I kinda wish everyone were Mormon. Mormons take the notion of the book of life pretty literally. In addition to genealogy or keeping track of the dead that are baptized in temples, journal keeping has been admonished heavily as a cultural practice, as a way to produce personal scripture for subsequent generations. Every quotidian action of a person's life has the potential to be consecrated to the building up of the kingdom of God, so even the most mundane activities can be sacred. The point is to raise up the earthly and to make it holy. Journals or ledgers for business transactions can be akin to holy writ. This perspective translates into some wonderfully exhaustive archives. My archives, too. My journals account for every day of my mission. I have large binders at home filled with letters I received from family and friends, as well as copies of the letters I wrote. After I wrote a letter, I would photocopy it. I wanted a record of my time and service in Oregon.

[*Enter A.*]

Allan: When I was home recently, I looked through the folder with letters from family—organized separately from the friends' binder, mind you—and I found a letter to my maternal grandmother. In the summer of 2005, I wrote:

A: Dear Grandmother Crews, I'm going to make my request of the past. I'd like to know about you, where you came from, what you've done in life. At this time I request the story of you. This is pretty vague I suppose, but basically I just want to know as much about my grandparents as I can because I'm realizing that, in the grand scheme of things at this time I know nothing of them. Right now, I'd be really interested in hearing anything and everything about your conversion story: missionaries involved, how you were introduced to the Church, who baptized you, what things were like with you (what you felt about the whole experience) and Grandpa Crews. In ways I feel quite connected to the man in ways that don't always make that much sense to me. In other ways, I don't really know anything about him. I know in a way it isn't fair, but I guess I'm asking for both the story of your life *and* the story of his. So there's my request. I hope it makes sense. Just write what you feel inspired to record. That's what I usually do.

[*Exit A. Enter B.*]

Allan: Because I grew up where my mom grew up, there were many people around at church who knew my maternal grandfather. While I was a teenager, I heard about how much I looked like and sounded like their friend Chuck. But he died when I was nine. I knew snippets of the man—he played the banjo, he hosted a morning radio show long before I was born, and a lot of people admired him—but to me there was little more than a thin sense of who he was. Thankfully, in my little orange binder of an archive, I found my grandmother's response:

B: Dear Elder Davis, what an awesome letter from a grandson to his grandmother. It warmed my heart to hear you wanted to know me better and learn of events that helped shape my life. Most important is the fact that I relied on Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost to guide me in decisions from an early age.

I should tell you, my sisters married very young. Most likely trying to escape the hardships after our family home burned down in a fire. Just overnight they went from having plenty to being *very poor*. Dad had his money in the attic, that's where the fire started. The three older sisters married men that drank and beat them. Once I had to take a second look to recognize my sister; she had to drink out of a straw for two weeks. I can remember when I was in the second grade walking to school praying for a good husband when I grew up.

I continued this prayer for nineteen years. Never dated anyone that drank, smoked, or used bad language. When I saw Coleman across the room, a thought came to me: "There is your husband." I scolded myself, "Betty, when do you go around picking out husbands?" A year later when we had been married about three months, I was saying my 1:00 prayer and that thought came back to me: then I knew it was the Holy Ghost that had prompted that thought. I always treasured the fact that Heavenly Father answered my prayer. Coleman was the best husband anyone could ever have.

I will stop here and continue my novel later. It is so much to write or leave out! Much love, Grandmother Crews. I pray for your success! I won't proofread, afraid I won't get it in the mail.

[*Exit B.*]

Allan: She never did end up writing another letter, though I would have loved to receive it.

However, she did give me a surprise gift of open memory one day at church. When I came home from my mission, I was asked to speak a few times. Missionaries get asked to speak in church fairly frequently. And I will not lie, as you have probably noticed, I like to talk, so I often enjoyed it.

But after I spoke that time, my grandmother found me afterwards in the hallway. I can still see the enthusiasm in her eyes. I don't know that I ever saw her with such energy and excitement. I think her pride in me fell away in the presence of something far more commanding: in me she could catch a glimpse of her Coleman.

[*Enter F.*]

F: That's my handsome grandson. Such a strong missionary. Reminds me of all the sets of missionaries your grandfather went through. One summer when he was working, I went up to North Carolina to visit my sisters. I didn't know it at the time but my sister Beulah had joined the church. So I was sitting in her living room and while she was in the kitchen, I noticed that she was making dinner for more than just the two of us. I asked her about it and she just said that we'd be having company join us. And an hour or so later, there were the missionaries. At the time your grandfather and I were looking for a church to go to, but he just knew his Bible so well, because for a while he was thinking of being a minister. But then whenever we went to a church, eventually Chuck would hear something that he knew didn't agree with what he had been reading in the Bible. So pretty soon we'd stop going to that one. And I told him, honey, eventually you're just going to have to pick. So I went up to my sister's a few more times and met with the missionaries there. And then one time I asked your grandfather if he wanted to go up to see her with me. And while we were there, he noticed Beulah and I were making more food than would feed the three of us; and when he asked about it, we just said that we'd be having company join us. And then soon enough, there were the missionaries. And your grandfather just laid into them. He kept asking them questions and they kept showing him scriptures. It went on for hours. Eventually they gave us a Book of Mormon and a phone number for missionaries in Jacksonville. When your grandfather actually called them, I tried not to get my hopes up. But he invited them over and they talked. And he'd ask them questions; they'd answer and leave him with something to read. Now he must have gone through at least six or eight sets of missionaries. But that was Chuck; he was so determined to prove that they taught something wrong just like the other churches we had gone to. But you know, one night, he came into our room, he sat next to me on the bed and said, "Betty, I think it might be true." And all I said was, "Well, it's about time."

[*Exit F.*]

Allan: From all accounts, my grandfather was a great man: kind, giving, a devoted husband and father, a loyal friend. However, I also know that my grandfather was very much a man of his time, a man that grew up in Georgia and northern Florida in the mid-twentieth century. That is basically to say that he was pretty racist. I remember growing up hearing the terms "nigger-rigged" and the rhyme "Eeny-Meanie-Miney-Mo" including the hauntingly violent image of "catch[ing] a nigger by the toe." And for the most part, there's a simple narrative you come to learn in the South that lets you reconcile yourself to this messy history: "They're from an earlier generation, they didn't know better." But something about that is not enough; I still struggle with what exactly

I am supposed to do with this strain of mortal imperfection that disrupts the vision of familial sainthood.

To be honest, I much prefer whitewashing the memory of my grandfather's racist convictions—it's just more pleasant to remember the more uplifting qualities of the man, of which there were plenty. I mean really, don't most of us want in some way to redeem our ancestors or loved ones? How many eulogies erase flaws ironically in honor of memory? I am not alone in this. How do you deal with your progenitors' own falls from grace?

Growing up in the South provided me some sense of how to address the messy history, but for some haunting reason, something I just can't quite put my finger on, there's an extra wrench when you throw Mormonism into the mix.

[*Projection: "I Believe" from* The Book of Mormon. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVJgmp2Tc2s 3:26–3:52.*]

Allan: Oh yeah, that's the reason. That's from *The Book of Mormon* musical. And let's be honest, that's a funny ass joke. I laugh every time I hear it. Until 1978, black men and women could be baptized into, and confirmed members of, the LDS Church, but the men could not be ordained like their white counterparts, which meant they could not serve in ecclesiastical or leadership positions at local, regional, or general levels; could not represent the church by serving missions, perform baptisms, bless or pass the sacrament, ordain others, provide blessings of healing or comfort; or participate in any temple rituals for themselves or as proxies because you have to hold the priesthood to enter the temple. This temple ban also prevented the participation of black women in such rituals despite the fact that their white female counterparts, who are also ineligible for priesthood ordination, could always participate in temple rituals. In the 1950s and 1960s, some prominent church leaders discussed how they asked for revelation to change the policies; others taught it was the order of heaven and that it would never change.

And then in 1978, it did. In the broad cultural context of US American religious—particularly Christian—history, Mormonism's ban on priesthood ordination based on race is sadly representative of the rule rather than the exception. That's not to excuse what was undeniably a racist practice, but just a means to indicate Mormonism was by no means special. For example, Southern Baptist Conventions addressed similar changes around the same time. Both religious communities were a just bit late to the Civil Rights Dance. But I must confess there are other elements going into why that joke in that song in that musical is so damn funny. The decision and the change in 1978 were arrived at not because a faith community necessarily worked through its theological and social concerns regarding race (say like other Christian denominations and eventually the Southern Baptists did), but rather because leaders said God revealed it was time to change … and so they did. There's no sense of struggle; no real consideration of the racist work the ban did in Mormon culture or theology; no apology for the discrimination that many men and women faced. Everything just changed and that was it.

[*Enter A, B, C, D, E, and F for choreographed movement inspired by the gestures and physicality of ordination and ministration of Mormon ordinances. Music: "Summer 78" from the* Good Bye Lenin! *soundtrack. This will happen concurrently with next part of the monologue. A rehearsal of the choreography for this dance can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ft9AN-nAGI.*]

I look at 1978 as this step forward for the institutional LDS Church where it ended its discriminatory practices—perhaps not thoughtfully, but it did stop discriminating at least. And as a gay, progressive, heterodox Mormon, 1978 is this watershed moment of potential—where everything you thought was impossible could become reality and the order of God. So when I stand alongside Mormon women seeking equality in the LDS Church through true universal priesthood ordination, it's not like there isn't precedent. And as I move forward with other LGBTQ Mormons who envision a day when they do not have to choose between their religious and their sexual identities, it's not like there isn't precedent. Because of the belief in ongoing, modern revelation, God can change his mind about a lot of things. But that's how I see 1978: more than a joke, it's hope.

That's not how my grandfather saw 1978. For him, it was a church he converted to, asking him to do and believe something really hard. My mother has told me it did not make sense to him, he didn't like it, it made him question his decision to join the Church. He thought about leaving the faith. Besides the family he was raising, none of his family was part of the LDS Church. He did not have deep generational roots. And remember, he was a convert that spent a lot of time looking for what he felt was God's one correct church on the earth and just fourteen years in, it changed on him in a pretty fundamental way. And in terms of an on-the-ground application of the revelation, it affected northern Florida a lot more than it did Utah. As an ecclesiastical leader, my grandfather would be responsible for ordaining black men to the priesthood, preparing black men and women to go to the temple. He would be laying his hands upon their heads conferring authority. He would be the very instrument of the thing he could not agree with. The 1978 revelation asked him to confront his convictions head on and sacrifice his own pride or way of seeing things for Zion. See, I think 1978 is great because it asked the Church to change and start believing what I believe; for me it's easy. But when have I been asked to repent so fundamentally?

That song from the musical is a funny joke, but behind it there are people: the ones who suffered discrimination for generations; the ones who benefited from discrimination; the ones who are left to figure out what exactly to do with the grisly past; and the ones who lived in the transition and struggled to figure out what to do in a complicated present.

[*Enter A, B, C, D, E, and F. A and C enter font.*]

C: Brother Zachary Harris, I baptize you for and in behalf of William Coleman Crews, who is dead . . . Amen.

[*C baptizes D. Lights fade. All exit, except D.*]

III. A New Skin

[*With lights out, projection reads: "III. A New Skin." Lights rise on female figure.*]

D: I don't care what anyone says: Clothes *make* the man. Naked people often have little to no influence in society.

[*Projection reads: "I don't care what anyone says: Clothes* make *the man. Naked people often have little to no influence in society."—Mark Twain, 1905*]

D: Mark Twain, 1905.

[*Light fades on D. D exits and Allan re-enters. Lights up on Allan.*]

Allan: Two years ago, my best friend invited me to participate in his wedding. We needed to find suits. I reflected on my own wardrobe and upon asking his opinion, Brett observed that I did not necessarily dress poorly—things . . . matched—but I didn't exactly wear things that either flattered me or stood out. I realized I had not purchased any new clothes in four years. It had been a full presidential term.

For someone from an upper-middle-class background that does something as bougie as study theater history, this is downright anathema. But I had my reasons for not shopping. Thanks to my fiscally conservative Mormon upbringing, I know not to spend more money than I have. Frugality is next to godliness. Second, I knew nothing about fashion. This bred insecurity about making any wardrobe choices. And finally, I'm colorblind. I didn't feel comfortable making any choices; and because I was frugal I was convinced any choice I did make was going to be a faux pas *and* a financial disaster. It was best just to leave it all alone and to go on wearing what my former mentor at BYU referred to as the "same damn orange sweatshirt every day."

However, wedding party responsibilities called. A few days later, I went to Dillards with my roommate and his fiancée, Chelsea. We were there to look for Brett's new suit. I was along in a merely auxiliary capacity; but you know, why not peruse some options? So I looked at the suits. My selection was going to be limited to a grey palette since orange and grey were the wedding colors. But there were a surprising number of grey suits available. And while I was looking around, I noticed they had some vests. You know, I had always kinda wanted a vest, but I was sure they were expensive. And we kept looking around and, well, there were just so many ties. And the fluorescent bulbs accented how each one seemed to pop in its own particular way. We were inside but there was just this intense brightness reflected by the sea of neckwear. And then we got to the white button-up shirts. Some have openings for cuff links, and some just have buttons on the sleeves. Some have lines that are part of the design; and some don't have any lines. Some of the necks of the shirts seem normal, but then there are others with very narrow necks for skinny ties and some are very wide for larger ties—at least I think you wear a larger knot tie with a wide neck shirt. Maybe? Or do you do the opposite to accent each? So I'm standing in the department store, holding a suit, with a vest, a tie, and a few shirts in plastic bags, and I don't know if I'm allowed to take the shirts out of the bags. What if they have pins in them? Am I allowed to take the pins out to try on the shirt? I don't know the rules of the department store. What are the rules? If I pull the damn pins out of the shirt, does that mean I have to buy it and spend money I don't feel like I have? By the time I get to the dressing room, I realize that I have stopped breathing. For the first time in my life, I am having a panic attack.

And I know, even in that moment, how *ridiculous* this all is. I am freaking out and having trouble breathing because there are too many *shirt* options. And as I sit in the dressing room, in my underwear, with my head between my knees, I fight the urge to cry. Unsuccessfully. I suppose we all have our first-world crosses to bear. After a while Brett and Chelsea investigated why I had not emerged from the dressing room yet. Through tears, hyperventilated breaths, and snot, I tried to explain to them where I'm *at*. Chelsea's response: "Let's start with something easier." We left Dillards and found me my first pair of boat shoes and other casual apparel—Allan selected, Chelsea and Brett approved.

Over the rest of the summer, Brett introduced me to other stores: American Eagle, Eddie Bauer, Macy's. But one store, above all others, stood out to me. Banana Republic. I had heard of this store before. Jack from *Will & Grace* worked there and Brett had some sweaters. Though it seemed a bit pricey, still the siren began to sing. After returning to the DC area, I happened upon the local Banana Republic—13th and F NW—and spent the better part of two hours deciding whether or not to get a $75 sweater marked down to $20. When I came home, my roommate informed me that my cerulean purchase was indeed an excellent color and a good purchase. I did it. By myself. I was ok.

Then I went home for Christmas. And one fateful day, I traveled to the Banana Republic outlet store in St. Augustine. I decided then and there to sign up for the Banana Republic credit card. And lo, the walls of Jericho came tumbling down! Sweaters, chinos, a plethora of gingham quickly followed. I believe it took me about four weeks before I spent enough for my member status to be upgraded. You know, retrospectively, I might have come out of the closet at that time because there just wasn't any room in there for both me and my wardrobe. I had four years' worth of savings I could use to go on what I like to call my roaring rampage of sartorial self-discovery. By about March of 2013, I was not merely a citizen of the Banana Republic; I was the representative from its sixth congressional district.

When I think about this new skin, sometimes I think about my maternal grandmother. Of all my relatives, she had the most elegant and cultivated sense of fashion. I like to think she would have enjoyed seeing my selections. She's the one that taught me how to fold a suit so it doesn't get wrinkles in a suitcase. If I had to pick one word to describe her, I feel I would be hard-pressed to choose between "classy" and "resourceful."

She was a beautiful woman. Not only did she go to modeling school, but she actually worked as a model. Recently, my mother told me that my grandmother organized fashion shows at church during the 1970s: mother/daughter affairs designed to instill modesty. But my grandmother did not just model or construct the clothes. No, my grandmother used her carpentry tools to build the elevated modeling platform that the mothers and daughters walked on. She went to modeling school after playing on her high school basketball team. As handy with a rifle as she was with a needle and thread.

[*Enter D.*]

Allan: The kind of person at the end of her life you are convinced can pretty much do anything, I imagine her resourcefulness and talents were born out of necessity. That letter I mentioned and quoted from earlier—in it she talks about some of her early hardships.

D: I was born in Farmer, North Carolina, to a successful farmer. My mom and older sisters have told me about that life. The house had thirteen rooms, with a huge walk-in fireplace in every room, even in the kitchen. Mom was most proud of the porch that circled the entire house. I was number eleven of thirteen children and a couple months old when a fire started during the night. The smoke woke Mom. Everyone got out safely, running out onto the ice-covered ground in their night clothes.

The house burned to the ground. It was 1936. There were no fire stations out in the country; everything was lost. They turned the livestock loose and never got them back: horses, cattle, pigs, chicken, geese. A farmer heard of this tragedy and came about thirty miles and took the whole family to live in one of his tenant houses (three rooms). Later some cousins gave my mom some pictures they had of our family. She treasured these.

Allan: My maternal grandmother was a woman that treasured life. Lived it fully. And gave so much. While always appreciating the scarcity of things. Perhaps she converted so readily to Mormonism because self-sufficiency came naturally to her. That was one of Brigham Young's primary teachings as he led Mormonism into one of the most compelling social experiments in communitarian living. For a time in Utah, the Latter-day Saints lived under the United Order, a radically communitarian attempt to ensure that the Saints had all things in common among them and that no one suffered the trials of poverty. Young felt capitalism fostered the type of individualism and selfish isolationism that I often hear my academic colleagues critique when they discuss the impact of neoliberalism and Reaganomics in the twentieth and twentyfirst centuries. Of particular disdain to Young were large Gentile department stores that moved into the Utah Territory at the end of the nineteenth century. He would have hated my conversion to the Banana Republic. Young argued that Mormons needed to be self-sufficient, construct their own clothes, and do all things that would serve the collective interests of the group. Selflessness. My grandmother excelled at that. She provided a lot of service to the Church throughout her life. She was often in leadership positions of the women's organization, the Relief Society, at local and regional levels, where her talents shone. Ever classy. Ever resourceful. It's what makes the way my mother and her sisters decided to honor their mother's memory incredible.

[*B enters with the Grandmother Crews pillow. B hands pillow to Allan. B exits.*]

Allan: A few months after my grandmother died, I received this pillow in a package from my mother. She explained that it was made from the clothing that my grandmother wore. When I look at it, I can remember seeing her in some of these shirts in the pattern. The back is made from the soft velvet pajama pants she always wore. The stuffing inside includes some other scraps of clothes that my sister, my mom, and her sisters could not fit into the external patterns. I think my favorite touch is these accented pieces. These are from a shirt that my grandfather wore. After he died, my grandmother started to wear it. I can remember her giving me haircuts in her kitchen while wearing this shirt. Sometimes she would wipe her scissors against it to get pieces of my wet hair off the blades.

This isn't part of some traditional Mormon mourning process. There's not a ton of Mormon pillows decorating beds or couches in Utah and Idaho. It's just something my family did. That said, it is completely something Mormons would think of doing. Humans make clothes, but in more ways than we imagine they make us. They are a material thing that connects us. They are as mundane and as holy as anything else in life.

For all her service, talents, and leadership, because she was a woman, my grandmother would never be ordained to the priesthood. Not in the regular operations of the LDS Church, anyway. But in the temple and in the covenants my grandmother wore to her death, she wore the power of the priesthood and acted in its authority.

[*Enter B and F.*]

Allan: But I think I would like you to learn about that from two women who have often been close to my family. This is Sister Kelley and Sister Jensen.

B and F: Hi there.

Allan: I was hoping you wouldn't mind telling them how you know me and my family, maybe a little about the temple, particularly the garments, and maybe how you helped dress my grandmother before her funeral.

B: [*laughing*] Oh wow. Well, that's a lot.

F: Allan, I don't know that we should talk about some of these things outside of the temple.
Allan: Oh no, they're good. And just share whatever you feel most comfortable talking about.

B: Well, hi. My name's Susan. I guess Allan grew up knowing me as Sister Kelley.

F: And I'm Minty Jensen.

B: We both grew up with Allan's mom when they lived in our ward. And then after Kathy moved back . . .

F: That'd be Allan's mom.

B: Right, when Kathy and her family moved back into the area, well we all had children about the same age. My youngest, Amos, was about Allan's age.

F: And my daughter Hillary was a year younger.

B: I remember being their primary or Sunday School teacher. I guess you see how that just makes things full circle since we knew Kathy's mom when she was our Young Women leader. I feel like Betty, well, she was just like a second mother to us. So when she died, Kathy and her sisters asked us if we would help them dress her before the funeral.

Allan: When Mormons who have been endowed die and have decided to be buried after embalming, family members or close friends dress the dead in their temple garments, white clothes, and other sacred clothing worn during temple ceremonies.

F: When you go to the temple, you enter into certain covenants. The temple is a very sacred and holy place; it is the House of the Lord. But we can't live there every day. We have to live in the world and it can be a hard and tempting place. We wear the garment to remind us of the promises we have made to God and the protection and blessings he has promised us if we remain worthy.

Allan: Garments—the vestments referred to as sacred underwear—they are representations of the cloaks of skin that God gives Adam and Eve when he drives them out of the Garden of Eden. In some Christian interpretations, the skins of these sacrificed animals are emblematic of the sacrificed body of Christ. So to wear a garment in similitude of those Adam and Eve received is to put on, if at least symbolically, Christ every day.

Material culture is just so fascinating. And that's the thing, unlike the special robes that one puts on during the ceremony of the endowment or at a sealing, garments are ever present, part of the quotidian dress. They are a perfect articulation of Mormonism's impulse to make all things sacred in this world, even our material surroundings. Where there is no distinction between the sacred and the profane, even underwear can and should be holy. All things reflected upon. All things made common among us.

[*D, wearing nude/skin tone colored underwear, brought in on gurney by A and E. A and E exit.*]

F: When you go to the temple, you are promised that if you live your life righteously, you will be raised in the first resurrection.

B: Every person that has ever lived will be resurrected, just at different points in the millennium.

F: We dress our loved ones who have been to the temple in the garments and temple clothes so that when they are resurrected, they will be dressed in glory.

B: When I think about how Betty taught me as a young woman, preparing me to go to the temple before I went on a mission, and then how she was present the day I was sealed to my husband, I think of her in her temple clothes. I hope that's how my boys see me.

F: Depending on who a funeral is for, men dress the men and women dress the women. You have to wear gloves as you touch the body because of the chemicals. And sometimes it can be difficult because moving a loved one's body can be a physical challenge. But it means a lot to be asked to provide that service, especially when it's not your own mother or sister. But I guess in every way that counts, she was.

B: She did so much for us in our lives. This is the least we can do.

[*B and F move to D and dress her. A, C, and E appear and hum "Come, Come, Ye Saints."*]

Allan: My father dressed his father when he died. My mother dressed her mother. I don't know how it will be to dress my family. I am in awe of the intimacy required by this practice.

All except D: [*singing*] And should we die before our journey's through, / Happy Day! All is well! / We then are free from toil and sorrow, too; / With the just, we shall dwell! / But if our lives are spared again / To see the Saint their rest obtain, / Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell— / All is well! / All is well!

[*Allan will place the pillow on the gurney. Cast, except for B, move D and the gurney offstage.*]

Allan: For Mormons, death is only the beginning.

[*B lies on floor. Music plays, Arvo Pärt's "Spiegel im Spiegel." With the music, B begins a dance of resurrection. Cast joins one by one into male/female pairs. After a full sequence, rearrange to male/female, male/male, and* *female/female pairs. A rehearsal of the choreography of this can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYJqBV7UiX4.*]

Allan: This is my favorite song. It's by the composer Arvo Pärt. This piece is called "Spiegel im Spiegel." Which from what I understand translates to "Mirror in Mirror." It refers to the effect of placing two mirrors across from each other so that whatever is placed between the mirrors is caught in a never-ending reflection, reaching into eternities in either direction. Musically, that's how the song is written: the piano begins, then a string instrument—cello or violin—mirrors the piano. But like a mirror the reflection is more a refraction. It is similar to it but slightly off. The piano responds to what the violin plays, refracting that. And so on and so forth. Each instrument forever dancing with the other.

It is soothing. It is peaceful. It is contemplative. But I fully recognize that part of the reason I love it is because of my faith tradition. Every sealing room in the temple is decorated with two mirrors. When a couple goes to get married, they kneel at an altar, but when they stand and look into the eyes of the person they love, each one sees not only the face and the eyes of their spouse immediately before them but also, peripherally, in the mirror images that repeat for eternity. It is a physical manifestation of faith that death is not the end of this family.

In Mormon theology, resurrection is an ordinance, just like baptism. And while the power and authority to raise the dead come from God through Christ, in execution, resurrection is far more personal and hands on. Family members resurrect each other. Fathers resurrect their children; husbands resurrect their wives. It's complicated; it's messy; it's patriarchal. I know it's problematic. But damn me if I can't help but find it beautiful, moving, inspiring.

[*C and D move into the font.*]

Allan: Where the distance of eternity is collapsed. And that through the touch, the care, the service of a loved one, we might all put on a new and everlasting body of skin and bone.

[*Projection reads: baptismal prayer.*]
C: Sister Parisa Bayenat, I baptize you for and in behalf of Betty Lou Bryson, who is dead . . . Amen.

[*C baptizes D. Lights fade. All exit, except E.*]

IV. Consecration

[*With lights out, projection reads: "IV. Consecration." Lights rise on male figure.*]

E: It is essential for any person to have an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to the will of God to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life. Such was and always will be the situation of the Saints of God. Unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint. Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.

[*Projection reads: "Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."* —*Joseph Smith, 1835*]

E: Joseph Smith, 1835.

[*Light fades on E. E exits. Allan reenters. Lights up on Allan.*]

Allan: So my name is Allan Nathan Davis. I love each root of my family tree on both sides of my family. However, I inherited all three parts of my name from my father's father's side. There's the surname Davis: that's from my dad . . . and his dad . . . and his. Then there's my middle name Nathan—in honor of Nathan Davis, the first Mormon convert in the family. I would regale you with legendary, faith-promoting accounts from his life involving snow, famine, disease, or miracles—as that tends to be the way Mormons talk about pioneers—but Nathan Davis was not that kind of Mormon. He joined the church in the 1860s and moved to Utah after the completion of the transcontinental railroad. I am not the stuff of wagons and handcarts; we Davises are strictly train people. However, I can tell you that Nathan Davis owned a company in Utah that produced the materials for the roof of the Salt Lake Temple. And he cast the metal for the baptismal font in the Manti, Utah Temple. I think he might have provided the metal casting for the oxen in that font. I guess I'm not the first one in the family to build a font.

But it's Allan Mervin Davis, my paternal grandfather and most immediate namesake, I want to tell you more about. He traveled by train from Salt Lake City to Rochester, New York after finishing medical school at the University of Utah. Dr. Allan Davis and his wife eventually raised ten children in Florida; seven still live there, my dad included.

Like me, Allan Mervin Davis grew up the middle child in a family of three children. Like me, he always wore glasses. Like me, he was reticent and studious. In an opposites-attract sort of way, my paternal grandmother is a social force, a gregarious woman whom "outgoing" does not begin to describe. She loves sports, camping, and large social gatherings. Each of their children seemed to inherit her personality. A Davis, by definition, is engaging and rambunctious; except, of course, for the patriarch Allan Davis, a reserved man who went camping and attended sporting events as a supportive father. He preferred to play the piano at home.

As a child, when I expressed disinterest in camping or spending time outside, my parents noted the similarity with my namesake.

When I realized sports—playing or watching them—were not my cup of tea, everyone knew I was my grandfather's grandson.

[*Enter E.*]

Allan: When adolescence brought both insularity and academic achievement, I approached clone status. Even my faults were his faults: I remember my father telling me one time,

E: You're like your Grandpa Davis. Instead of dealing with your anger, you bottle it up until you explode.

[*Exit E.*]

Allan: The loneliness of adolescence—the moments when you think you are the only one who is not like everyone else—visited me as they did most of us. However, the pangs of peculiarity were swallowed up in my grandfather. He wasn't like everyone else either. He and I were not like others. We were different and alone, together. To be a Davis meant something; to be Allan Davis meant something different.

As anyone might surmise in a family of ten children, I am not the only grandson to bear the patriarch's name. I have three cousins who boast it as a middle name. Yet it was not until I was twenty-one that I learned we were not the sole inheritors. When I returned from my mission, a giant three-inch folder sat waiting for me at home. It was filled with emails and letters I had sent. Tucked in the back flap of the binder was a hidden printout announcing the marriage of a girl I dated my first year at BYU. My mom placed it there. I imagined the invitation was sent as a polite formality. . . . "pleased to announce the marriage of Kathryn Michelle Oliver to Thomas Allan Zane." I stared at her husband's name and thought, "Oh, that's funny: his middle name is Allan. And it's spelled the same way I spell it." Not A-l-a-n or A-l-l-e-n, but A-l-l-a-n, the least common way to spell Allan in America.

[*Enter F.*]

Allan: A few days later, I brought up the quirky coincidence in a conversation with my mom. "Isn't it strange that Katy married someone whose middle name is Allan, and that he spells it like Grandpa Davis and I do?" That was when my mom—without any appreciation for either her role as an oracle or the grandeur of the revelation she was about to dispense—nonchalantly mentioned:

F: Oh, yeah. Funny story: he's actually named after your grandfather.

Allan: What?

F: Yeah, his dad, Tom Zane, was friends with your dad and your uncles in high school. When they were at BYU and before you were born, sometimes your dad and I would babysit Tom.

[*F exits.*]

Allan: Ultimately, I realized that the wedding invitation was not addressed to me, the former boyfriend, but to my dad—the friend of the groom's father, a son of Allan Mervin Davis. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Zane and Davis families lived in Daytona Beach, Florida. When they were teenagers, Tom Zane developed friendships with my uncles and my dad. They invited Tom to play basketball and baseball where they played, to go camping with the scouts they camped with, to have fun where they had fun. It happened that for the Davis family, all of those activities were connected to the LDS Church. By his senior year, Tom Zane decided he wanted to join the Church. This decision prompted Tom's parents to disown him. They did not want him living in their home. My grandparents "adopted" him—they took the recent convert into their home, fed him, disciplined him, and provided some financial support when he decided to serve a mission.

Adoption was not alien to the Davis household. My grandparents raised five kids and then adopted five more. Tom Zane's "adoption" was less official. He was one of a third batch of four or five kids whom Allan Davis cared for. Kids who needed shelter from the world and found it under Allan's roof and counted his name blessed. Tom, like my other uncles, gave his child the name Allan as a middle name.

"Allan Davis" is a testament of faith. It signifies service and sacrifice. It represents a legacy for Thomas Allan Zane, my cousins, and me. "Allan Davis," in short, embodies the principle of consecration—the last law that Mormons covenant to live in the endowment ceremony. That we will give everything we have to build the Kingdom of God on earth. It's a beautiful, powerful vision—mighty enough to compel a man who only wanted two kids to become a father to so many more.

But, if we were to stop in the ecstasy of elegy, only honoring the man and the faith that shaped the name, it would be a disservice to the man and the faith. I could balance the elegy of Allan Davis with instances when my grandfather did not live up to the name; but, instead I posit, Allan Davis can be understood in an instance where cruelty worked under the character of kindness. When I was about thirteen or fourteen years old. I remember how the envelope had his personalized address hand-stamped onto the upper left hand corner. I received similar envelopes later on my mission. I was not sure what was inside; it wasn't time for my birthday or an early Christmas card. When I opened the letter and started reading, the content and tone surprised me. Allan Davis said that my parents were concerned about me, and he felt impressed to write to me about the LDS Church's definitive stance against homosexuality.

When I was a kid, I debated with my parents about the acceptability of homosexual couples marrying and adopting children. When I was an adolescent, I did not understand why homosexuality was considered a sin and I was quite vocal about that. But the letter seemed seated in a different place, in a related but different concern. I am not sure what prompted the letter or what exactly concerned my parents. They never talked to me about it. But let's be fair to their observational skills: as a child, I loved listening to Madonna. I could not get enough of shows on Lifetime like *Designing Women* and *The Golden Girls*. I developed an interest in theater. And possibly the kicker, when I was a kid playing make-believe, I felt just as comfortable pretending I was a female character as a male one. Sex and gender did not matter to me. Being Batgirl or Rogue was just as fun as being Donatello or the Blue Power Ranger. As a teenager, the only reason I could think that my grandfather was writing me were my politics; but of course I was full of anxiety that I had been found out. All the more confusing because it was something I did not know myself.

All I knew was that I was different. But I had thought it was okay to be different because Allan Mervin Davis was different, too. One letter indicated that this was not necessarily true. Something about me—what I said or how I was—concerned my parents enough to seek the help of an authority who could outline correct morality to me. Homosexuality was a sin. We should not condone it or tolerate it. We should not advocate it and certainly not embrace it. None of us ever said anything about the letter.

I was angry. Allan Davis was an old man who held on to a homophobic way of thinking that was just as wrong as racism. And not to be too off-color, but just as a side note: Dr. Allan Mervin Davis was a urologist. The irony that a man whose job it was to look at penises all day would be concerned that his grandson might like them too much is not lost on me. Point is, I recognized the statements as homophobic even as a child. But that's not to say the capacity for critical thought prevented hurt or, to be quite honest, its intended result—it would be twelve more years before I could admit to myself something as huge and as insignificant as the fact that I like boys.

In a single letter, Allan Davis indicated that to be different and to think differently wwere not necessarily what it meant to be "Allan Davis." My name no longer meant what it once did. I used it, but it didn't connect me to my past, my faith, or my peculiarity anymore. I thought about going by Nathan for a while, but I never did. I was confused. So much was said without anyone ever speaking a word. Trust no longer felt possible. I held on to that letter for a few years, but I think I threw it away when I left for college.

And despite what you might think about BYU, I could not have found safer spaces. I was in a theater department (perhaps a cliché, but at BYU a real haven for LGBTQ students); my roommates were all liberal, progressive Mormons; one of them not only came out while we were roommates but started the closest thing the school has to a gay-straight alliance. And I was an original member; but as far as I was concerned as a straight ally. And it's not because I agreed with my grandfather, thinking homosexuality was a sin. I never believed that. But I can't dispute that that letter probably played a role in reinforcing a voice in my head telling me that was not who I was.

Even before that, my mission blessed me. The gospel I taught changed me as I administered it and that was enough to make me question my pride, my angst, my hurt, and my suspicion. For many men and women in my position, this is not the case, but for me, serving a mission was healing to my soul. It was a time of consecration. I gave all of my time, my talents—all that I had—to build up of the kingdom of God as I covenanted to do. And I felt richly blessed. There were moments of service and ministry that I still believe saved me.

Yet there were moments of confusion and darkness and loneliness. There's always one that comes to mind. I was in La Pine—the middle of nowhere, Central Oregon. A flat high desert with roads that stretched beyond the horizon in the type of tiny town you drive through on a long distance road trip sort of way. You might stop and wonder how people live out there but before that thought has completely crystallized, you've already passed through the town. My mission companion and I had a car, but we were supposed to limit our use of it so we biked around as much as we could.

[*Enter A and E. E lies on his stomach on the floor. A stands to the side.*]

Allan: One afternoon, we came home exhausted from biking. I sat in the chair by my desk as he collapsed onto the ground. We had a half hour before we would be leaving for a dinner appointment. And I sat and I asked:

A: Do you want a massage?

Allan: The intent was innocent. It sprang from a pure desire to serve. And he said yes but it was more of a . . .

E: [*with uncertainty*] I guess?

Allan: It was only massaging his shoulders. We had been carrying backpacks; I assumed since that's where I felt soreness, that's where his pain would be. Pretty soon, we got up and we went to dinner. But later that night, when we were back in our apartment, and writing in our journals or letters home, I eventually asked,

A: Would you like me to give you another massage?

Allan: This time I asked without any hesitation or sense that this would be a weird request. I mean I could recognize that some forms of physical intimacy between men could be precarious, but we were friends and it felt established that this was not an odd thing to do or offer. It felt innocent, devoid of sexual connotation.

And yet, I can't tell you how he responded in the affirmative because mostly I did not care as long as he did. It might not have started from a desire for closer physical intimacy but as I touched his shoulders, and his back, and his legs, that is what I wanted. And I could feel my body tell me that's what I wanted. And I didn't need anything in return, just a chance to serve and enjoy some measure of fraternity. It is a story that embarrasses me: not just because it is about my sexuality or because it feels like such a cliché about a sexually-repressed, gay, Mormon missionary, but because I could not see it for what it was. It stared me in the face and I felt it in every part of my soul but I could not fathom what it meant.

[*Reposition A and E into some other position on stage.*]

Allan: The next morning, while my companion was in the shower, I saw the letter he had been writing his sister the night before. In it, he expressed:

E: I am pretty sure that my companion right now is gay. How do I handle that?

Allan: Suddenly, I was fourteen again—reading the letter from my grandfather, mortified that someone close to me would think that, feeling I had been misunderstood, and probably wrestling with a fear that I had been found out. It is terrifying to consider that others know you better than you know yourself, that they have some power over you as they name you. In the conversation provoked by the letter, I tried to find out what behavior—besides just giving a massage—to curtail so others wouldn't make the same mistake he obviously was making. I don't remember what he said, just the embarrassment and the vulnerability. Something not unlike what I am feeling now.

[*Enter C.*]

Allan: It would be easier to characterize the letter my grandfather sent me so many years ago as spiteful and indicative of the psychologically harmful consequences meted out by those holding religious convictions. That certainly makes for an easier narrative. People who profess love for God are judgmental hypocrites. Done. But Allan Mervin Davis was not a caricature of hate. How does one reconcile this moment of clinical condemnation with the earlier feat of Christian charity? How do I harmonize the actions of Allan Davis? his faith? . . . my faith . . . me?

It wasn't until my grandfather died in 2012 that I finally stopped running around in mental circles, explaining in a convoluted way why it was my eye might wander in a locker room. Death breeds stillness. It is, as is said in one of my favorite movies, the road to awe.

[*Music begins to play: Clint Mansell's "The Last Man" from* The Fountain *soundtrack.*]

[*Allan dances with E, then A, then C, then self. In this dance, Allan will change into clothes for baptism. This will mean part of the practical purpose of this scene is going to be an on-stage costume change. Allan's shirt and pants will be removed; he will be wearing garments. He will then put on a white shirt and white pants. Allan and C should be near the font; D and F should be in place with towels. A rehearsal of the choreography for this can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXgeT4ahZ1M.*]

Allan: When my grandfather died, I took the chance to live.

[*Projection reads: "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."*]

C: Brother Allan Davis, I baptize you for and in behalf of Allan Mervin Davis, who is dead . . . Amen.

[*C baptizes Allan. Lights fade. All exit, except for C, who this time remains standing in the font.*]

V. Circumscribed into One Great Whole

[*With lights out, projection reads: "V. Circumscribed into One Great Whole." Lights rise on male figure standing in the font.*]

C: The plane leapt the tropopause, the safe air, and attained the outer rim, the ozone which was ragged and torn, patches of it as threadbare as old cheesecloth and that was frightening. But I saw something only I could see because of my astonishing ability to see such things. Souls were rising from the earth far below, souls of the dead, of people who had perished from famine, from war, from the plague, and they floated up like skydivers in reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling and spinning. And the souls of these departed joined hands, clasped ankles, and formed a web, a great net of souls. And the souls were three atom oxygen molecules of the stuff of ozone and the outer rim absorbed them and was repaired. Nothing's lost forever. In this world, there's a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind and dreaming ahead. At least I think that's so.

[*Projection reads: "Harper: . . . a great net of souls . . . the outer rim absorbed them and was repaired. Nothing's lost forever. In this world, there's a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind and dreaming ahead." —Tony Kushner,* Angels in America: Perestroika, *1992*]

C: Tony Kushner, 1992.

[*Enter A, B, D, E, and F. Perhaps entrance will be in succession after each one completes a story. Stories will be work shopped in early parts of rehearsal where A, B, D, E, and F discuss their relationship to the content of this show.*]

B: My grandmother died this past April, at the very end. And that was kind of incredible because I was dancing in a piece that my dad said reminded him specifically of her while he was watching it. It was the time period, the dresses we were wearing, the music we were playing, and everything. Well, she was sick already and at the end. So she was on the forefront of his mind, but it did call that to mind. And it was the last piece of the show. And when we came out and talked to them immediately after the show, my dad was on the phone with my aunt who was saying that my grandmother had passed away just minutes ago. And he asked around when and it was around ten, which is when I would have been dancing in that piece. So that was . . . her. And then I got a thing about this show the next day. And it was like ok . . .

I hadn't heard of proxy baptisms before the show. I guess I don't have super strong feelings about it. The idea of covering your bases makes sense to me. But at the same time, if they were devoutly something else, it does seem to disrespect the choices that others made. And that's the biggest thing: it's all a high stakes thing. It's not just about what makes people feel comfortable. It's like it's either God is there and we have eternal life or he's not and it's all useless. And either way it's going to dictate how you live your life.

The theology of it doesn't quite make sense to me completely either. That you can't accept God unless you've had this sacrament. And that's not just Mormonism, I mean baptism for any religion. With my Catholicism . . . I am very interested in Catholic theology and knowing what the faith teaches to understand it completely so I am not living as a cafeteria Catholic. That doesn't make sense to me. I feel as if there are things you don't understand, you need to figure them out. And if you still don't understand, maybe somebody is wrong, but there's not personal preference in truth. That's not a thing. So I want to learn more about baptism.

E: My grandfather passed away in the spring. He's the only one I have a conscious memory of before he died and that he died. It's been a weird process, like the whole grief thing. And I feel bad saying this, but I felt a lot worse when my dog died. I mean I probably felt a little bit better with my grandfather because I was mentally prepping myself for a long time. He died in hospice care. The weirdest thing that happened was after he died and we were preparing things for the services, I was in the basement watching Netflix and my dad came down and asked, "Do you mind reading over the eulogy I wrote?" My dad and I aren't the closest, but we're close enough to have frank conversations. But I may have been too frank about what I thought of what he wrote in the eulogy because I went into editor mode. I outlined that his point was X, Y, and Z and put a big X on his third paragraph, saying it had nothing to do with points X, Y, and Z. So I guess that was me dealing with my grief in some way.

My dad said he was fine with my comments, but in this whole ordeal, after my grandfather died, I learned that he had suffered from depression. I knew my dad had, but not that his dad did too. And my dad and I had a conversation about it later and I told him, "I feel like I should feel worse about this." And the statement that finally set me off on a realization that maybe I should explore seeking medication for my depression was when my dad said, "Yeah, that's just how Novotny men deal with things: we just internalize." And as we're talking, I'm nodding along, thinking, "Yeah. I do that." But in the back of my mind I'm also thinking, "That's really not healthy Brian." But yeah, me and my dad never cried through the process. That was the thing that threw us off the most I think.

Proxy baptisms for the dead is a really interesting idea . . . like intellectually. Agency is something I would never consider for the dead. In English and theater classes, I'm used to writing about agency. I mean I wrote about whether or not the female characters in *Into the Woods* have agency. It's usually something that comes up in any form of art, but not usually for the dead. From my perspective there probably isn't an afterlife, so is it taking or giving agency . . . ehh???

D: In Iran, we had a war for ten years with Iraq. I was really little, only nine years old. But I remember seeing things on the news or in the city. And people would be carried in the city. And it was really sad. I remember it being really sad. And if they couldn't find the body of the soldier, they would present just a watch or just a necklace. Just a necklace as a body.

So yeah, it was interesting for me after reading Allan's text because I found several common things between my religion and Allan's religion. So, it's totally different. You know there's Muslims and there's Mormons. Mormons have this thing where people are baptized. We have this thing where if someone is dead, we have to wash him or wash her with water. So the water, it's the same thing. So we wash hair, face, all of the body. And then the family can watch that or not; it depends if you want to see it.

The other thing that was interesting to me was how for Allan he's a second generation of Mormon so he doesn't practice it. Exactly the same way with Muslims. Like the second generation, like me, we don't practice. I mean it's not just me. Ninety percent of people, of Muslim people in my country, they don't practice. When I was young, when I was in school, I practiced it, because in school they train you in religion in school to pray to God, and they would have you pray three times in a day. So it forced us to pray but then I got older and I wondered, "Why do we have to do these stupid things?" And then I just thought, "No, I don't want to do this. I'm just going to be a good person in my life. Why do I have to do this?" So I just stopped. So I found this similarity in the religions very interesting.

I think all religion is the same. Seriously, it's the same. If you want to pray to God, God is God—just one thing. But you have a different way to pray. You have a different way if someone is dead how you would deal with that. We wash. You might baptize. Before I had no idea what Mormons did about it, then I just thought, "Oh my God. It's really common things between my religion and Mormon religion." I don't practice Islam, but if I was thinking about my grandfather and Allan or someone came up to me and offered this baptism and explained it was a prayer and a good thing and that it would bless him I would accept that, because I think it's the same thing. Because I just want God to bless my grandfather. It doesn't matter which way. If I cannot be in Iran and I cannot do the things we would do, it would be something I could do here. But again, I'm second generation.

F: From my experience, Mormonism is not a bad religion. I think all religions are kind of silly. But I had a good upbringing. I have fifteen brothers and sisters. They are beautiful people; they have beautiful families. But I was the first to leave the LDS Church when I was eighteen.

And baptisms by proxy really upset me. On many levels. Partly because of the way that Mormons talk about this. That it's so beautiful and it's such a gift. They believe they are giving to all these people—with very little recognition of what the family unit was before 1830. So that's a huge struggle for me. Mormons look at the baptisms from the perspective of "I have a family. I love my family. I would never want to break up my family." So then, "if I've had a good experience with it, everyone else must have had a good experience with it." So pre-1830 what if you were molested by your father or beaten by your brother. Or even currently now, if you're waiting in purgatory, or what do they call it? Spirit world. You're waiting in the spirit world to be baptized so you can be sealed to your family for time and all eternity, you're essentially shackled to the criminal that heinously destroyed your life. I just really struggle with this very one-sided perspective of truth, this one-sided perspective of happiness, this one-sided perspective on life and death. That my truth, my experience, must be your truth and your experience. I struggle with the fact that other religions believe just as vehemently in someone's personal practices and their burials, their gifts they give people during their lives, the way they are left as a legacy. And we just take that away from them. We say it doesn't matter. We are now appropriating your life and forcing you to be us. And I guess that is very American.

I had a good upbringing, but my experiences with the religion, after I left, were shockingly painful. Having someone spread lies about me because they didn't want me to take the sacrament, literally taking the tray out of my hand just in case. I couldn't do it myself; I couldn't make that choice myself. And I did end up deciding to take my name off the LDS Church membership records. I knew I could not die with that legacy. That even if I left the Church would still claim me. And I couldn't do that. I couldn't let them use my name to bolster their name, a name I don't agree with, a name that I can't agree with.

But I still go home. I still attend church when my family has something happen. My husband and I are still very respectful. He comes from an equally devout Catholic family. When we got married, it was out in the forest. And we created our own ceremony and our own spiritual rituals.

A: I never met my granddad, but in my mind, he embodies the possibility of change. When he was born, acceptance of black people or a whole other range of things wasn't a way of thinking. So while at first he rejected the ideas of tolerance or interracial relationships when it came to his daughter, to the point that he disowned her when she was in a relationship with my dad, by the time he died in 1992—like if he were living today, I know he would love me. It's not one of those things like he would stay deeply rooted in the things he learned, because by the time he died, he knew he was wrong. I didn't see the process and my mother was never specific about it, but she just said he changed. I think with all of the turmoil that happens around us today, I always look upon him as someone to look up to when it comes to change, because there are not many people who changed as drastically as he did. When it comes to proxy baptisms, I don't have a strong opinion on them. I think if I were to do a proxy baptism for the dead, I think it would be cool to do one for my grandfather—for like what that would mean to me, but also because it could be a sort of symbolism thing. Like, "Oh hey, he's changed. An African American is doing his baptism." I think it could be a really beautiful thing, but I don't think I know enough to have a really strong opinion.

My aunt Sue was one of the only family members who stayed in touch with my mom after she got disowned from her family. It wasn't like they stopped loving her, but my grandfather was very much the patriarch of his family and everyone did what he said. But she died in 2001 of breast cancer. Her funeral was the last time I saw extended family. Everyone says she's where I got my singing voice. We even have the same ear problem. I didn't get to know her very well either; in 2001, I was seven years old. But she means a lot to me. She gave me my first haircut. She's the one that helped my mom become the mother she is. She wrote songs and poetry; I remember her singing and playing at her organ. When it comes to performing arts, I always think of her, always and forever. And when I have to make a bio in a program, I usually give her a shout out, because according to my mother I wouldn't be able to sing without her.

[*Enter Allan.*]

Allan: My junior year in college, I volunteered as a temple worker. A year off my mission, I effectively traded my black name tag for a white one that indicated I was a veil worker. As a veil worker, I would sit in the hallway, reading scriptures, thinking about my week or talking with other volunteers. And then every twenty minutes we would be called up to assist patrons across the veil as they reached the end of their endowment session. Each experience at the veil consists of three individuals: first, the patron who is usually standing as proxy for someone who is dead; second, a guide at the veil, a male or female temple worker representing an angel introducing the patron to the veil; and finally, the veil worker, who stands in for God, the Father. The veil represents Christ and itself corresponds with the appearance of the temple garment, so to approach God in the ritual, one must put on Christ in a way that will be reenacted every day when a Mormon puts on his or her temple garment. Part of this process contains imparted recognition: that one day all things, all light and truth, will be circumscribed into one great whole. It's a universalist confession: Mormonism does not hold all Truth but hopes to one day possess all truth and voices gathered through revelation, science, experience, or other religions. It pronounces the need to strive—to push out the stakes and enlarge the tent. To absorb the outer rim and be repaired.

Once a week, I committed three hours of my time to play God. To rehearse a holy ritual with words that breathe life into a vision of a glorified, resurrected body. In the endowment ceremony, Mormons may hear the most beautiful poetry describing an exalted, everlasting body. One that will last for eternities, ever moving, ever working, ever dancing, ever loving. Flesh made whole, present and now.

It's a vocabulary that resonates with me still. A vision of a human family and community that is no longer certain to me but one I can't stop hoping to believe in. A scholar named Joseph Roach has said that it is human for us to make effigies in our lives, to make things stand in as surrogates for something else that we would like to attain or bring back particularly from the past, from the dead. But he explains that such acts of surrogation rarely succeed. They fail constantly, but in a way that almost encourages us to attempt the effort again and again and again. Every time there is a proxy baptism or crossing at the veil for some unknown relative generations ago or an individual who has no say in the matter, it might be more about reaching for the touch of a parent, a sibling, a child, a friend, a spouse. Mormons stand in proxy for the dead, but we make the dead we don't know stand in proxy for the dead that we do.

I am left wondering what to do with these echoes and spiritual repertoire disciplined into the bones of my body, the sinews of my soul. I wonder, still, if the dead can ever be free of the living. And if we can still yet make a great net of souls.

[*Allan steps into the font; cast surrounds font in semi-circle.]*

Allan: Now behold, a marvelous work and a wonder is about to come forth.

[*Projection: "Brother Patrick Young, having been commissioned of my own will, I baptize you for and in behalf of all who are here in this room and live, in the name of all light and truth that might circumscribe us into one great whole."*]

Allan: Brother Patrick Young, having been commissioned of my own will, I baptize you for and in behalf of all who are here in this room and live, in the name of all light and truth that might circumscribe us into one great whole. Amen.

[*Allan baptizes C. Lights fade to black.*]

Chauvinist

Clifton Jolley

Moses murdered the Egyptian for a wickedness
less miserable than its subsequence: dead children,
every firstborn son (daughters spared the ordination
for being less blessed of our God who murders
whom He chooses and for the least ignominy).

Moses's wage for generosity was blackmail
(by the man he rescued made to flee), kept from Zion
by a God who would neither save him nor his people
but made us to wander until most of us are dead.
And this is everywhere how our God has made us

to suffer for Him (who cannot be a woman,
else She would have murdered every man).

Absent Sound

Clifton Jolley

God lives in silence, Heaven
too far from atmosphere for sound
to vibrate absent oxygen, separate causes
of reverence and calm coincidental

to the environment of a mute God.
Which explains why prayers
are simpler said than answered
and we so seldom hear our Lord:

pleadings stop at the edge of space,
never reaching outer, untraceable
amounts of CO_2 the only evidence
we hoped embrace to supplicate.

All things are possible with Eloi,
so insisting science and the physicality
of universes on Divinity may be
irreverently disinclined to grace.

But directed by the scientific method,
there is evidence, as in the absence
of voice or melody or any sound resounding
in the limitless impressiveness of space.

That evidence is the same
whether Buddha, Allah, Zeus:
Nothing. Neither door closing
nor engine of God's calamity

turning over. How can we know
the angel song, the voice of God,
when every noise goes deaf in that
vacuum between us and Heaven?

BROKEN VESSELS

Bonnie Shiffler-Olsen

A series of six found poems derived from "Agency, Disability, and Atonement" by J. Mark Olsen.

I. Sunday School Psychotherapy for the Bipolar: a found poem with Daddy issues

He is a good parent. But there is not enough space
in the boat for all of us heroic cowards. I need an excuse.

Some are left in the psychological current, bound
in Kantian irons and a counterintuitive duty to live.

I struggle against the force of God's headwind,
blown by the irrational weight of his belief

in divided kinds of persons. He demands these
differences: good and skew, level and mood, function

and desire. I want to be committed, but the delusional
damage is deep. It undercuts a moral stem, and atonement

is a drag. It takes a psychiatric Christ to repair disordered reason—
a borrowed weight to hold our bodies under, to heal

the subtle spots on our reality, the flaws of internal experience.
We need a physician against our false sense of rational acts,

against the opposition of a parent incapable of seeing His
mistake; blind to the suffering attempts of all His broken children.

II. Kantian want ad for the ideal Mormon robot

Required:
complete persons
who know they are greater
than others, separate,
differences clearly obvious.

Those neatly labelled,
deserving of praise, sense
damage, avoid others
with questionable family
history, social flaws,
and poor genetics.

Whatever the difficulty—
filling their natural born character,
as a matter of duty, and contempt
for excuse.

Strong all-or-nothing persons,
do not break down, know the way
to flip the switch on mental snap,
face death—choose life.

Finished persons keep their word
will not abuse Christ with weakness
are rationally categorical
fulfill obligations
and responsibility
and responsibility
and responsibility
with no need to be forgiven.

Good agents should answer
by writing a profound letter.

III. Intuitively wrong action

Persons depress some tasks
some tasks
some tasks
simply impossible. But then,

much more much m or e
much mo re
difficult, without im po ssible

imp oss ible
imp ossib le. For instance, that person
pers on
p er son
that person with

a severe moral ob ligation to a let ter
of th anks than ks
of thanks to
a letter to a fri end.

Further that the letter po ssib le
p oss ible
pos s ib le
poss ib le

po ssible for this agent,
but only just.

Ag ency
Agen cy
a gen cy AGENCY.
in this case, might well restrict
altogether

the letter.
The LE TT ER
the LET TER
l et te r

possible,
but very, very difficult.

IV. Disabled Reason's second attempt at writing a letter

Friend, I give my word I am only just writing, radically constrained by the faces. Their contempt. How they stare because the saintly way exists in me. I am full of phenomenon, and they see. See all the weight of the second notion of roots? How the body does not break? I blame it on the rough calculation—the causes and the literal two-word continuum. I am writing. We are not limited by relevant history. The real elements further the purposes of the irrelevant interpretation, the labor of children born—brothers and sisters. We are all related to the literal hold of the body of the household, all in the family way, and we point to the heavy spots. What is right, Friend? I am writing this bit of soul making. The attempts not limited to ends of existence, to flaws that want to leave to body. I am locked in impossible outcomes. I see you struggle against the severe surrounding, the forces of sin—reflection. I see you. I see, Friend. It is as I say.

V. God speaks for Himself, for Lehi, and for Kant

Some might be bothered that I could be
interpreted as confusing. But I am

the problem of space and time restrictions.
The I AM nomenclature limited

by empirical objects, the "ought." There is
no reflection; no "we" in the suggestion.

What can a moral God do? The obvious:
more and less. I weaken my infinite ability,

advocating the cultivated struggle
in a covenant demographic, creating types,

a history of "oughts," and certain kinds
of misguided mental tasks, however I must

to mitigate my children's agency, to get them
to safety. I hold this responsibility—

the commitment to opposition. That is
my reason. That is my end.

VI. Christ contemplates atonement at the helm of the ship

How does one will to rise against this body experience?
I have reason to question my ability to keep my word.
From here the way does not seem clear.
We struggle, a family altogether blind, bound

in certain death and blown on a severe current.
I take up the least of God's issue, and the greater—
brothers and sisters in reflection and all degree of character
—and we hold on. My duty, to keep course, maintain

a mild state of hope, but some are more afraid
to get into the boat than others. The evil is deep.
I have struggles of my own—a potential global loss;
difficulties making sense of this planning

even before the suggestion of the other
above self. But the tremendous history of need—
the outcomes of these lost children more relevant
than all my weaknesses. It is hard to do the heavy act

of healing—the unforgiving attempts necessary to give
life, to make claim on the demands of their agent bodies,
separate sin from the soul, repair the absurd suffering
of madness to save purpose.

Entirely difficult if not impossible. I point this boat of empathy
from captivity. I think I can see the way. By the time
it is finished we will arrive in more certain surroundings
as one, an equal household—all of us justly broken.

Amy Jorgensen
An Apple A Day, Day 1–30 (2014)
Archival pigment prints, 5x5 inches

"Jorgensen references the popular saying by partially eating and then destroying the remains of an apple using the brute force of a sledge hammer. The images are shot in such a way to suggest decay, repulsion, and unsanitary conditions. Jorgensen explores themes and imagery of the apple as a loaded and sometimes contradictory cultural symbol. Her performative acts of eating, destroying, and documenting the common fruit speaks to the ways in which the apple embodies notions of sensuality, and by extension the female body, while simultaneously hinting to the negative connotations of a tainted fruit. Through her exploration of this quintessential American symbol, Jorgensen rejects the traditional construct of the apple as a signifier of femininity and female transgression. Rather, she addresses themes of brutality embedded in the apple as a target of aggression." —Rebecca Maksym, UMOCA, curator

Mormon Lit Blitz Introduction

Nicole Wilkes Goldberg
Mormon Lit Blitz Co-Editor

Every Mormon writer has heard Orson F. Whitney's claim that "we will yet have Shakespeares and Miltons of our own." Mormon writers have been so excited, overwhelmed, and preoccupied by this statement that we still remember Whitney in the name of the biggest annual fiction awards for Mormon writers and in regular online arguments over the prospects for Mormon Literature.

More often than not, unfortunately, Elder Whitney's phrasing ends up being counter-productive. By evoking the literary grandeur associated with Shakespeare and Milton, Whitney overshadowed his own best idea: a literature that is distinctively and definitively our own.

The Mormon Lit Blitz and its two sister contests, Four Centuries of Mormon Stories and the Meeting of the Myths, began with a challenge: write something interesting for a faithful Mormon audience that is worth three minutes of their reading time. While flash fiction, short poems, and brief essays don't encourage works of *Hamlet*'s proportions, we've been impressed by the intensity of the writers' works and the sophistication of their engagement with Mormons' rich heritage.

For the contests, we haven't worried about what genres pieces borrow from, whether they're original or previously published, or whether their writers have any established reputation. We've just looked for things that will engage readers and then linger with them. All of our finalists had something unique to offer in fewer than two thousand words, and we have been honored to share that.

People will, no doubt, continue to debate whether Mormons will be able to produce their own Shakespeares and Miltons. But we've found writers who are definitely good and unmistakably our own. And why shouldn't Mormons have their own stories and essays and poems with shades of Emily Dickinson, Madeleine l'Engle, David Sedaris, Cynthia Ozick, Vijay Tendulkar, or Jorge Luis Borges?

We are not worried about seeing a day when Mormon Literature is recognized for its greatness, but feel grateful to live in days when it is getting really interesting. Each of the authors we've featured brings his or her own voice to the work, and—through the humor, imagery, and wild speculations—his or her own declarations of a deeply personal faith.

We hope the following pieces help you see why we keep coming back to this project year after year, and invite you to join us this May in cyberspace for the fourth annual Mormon Lit Blitz.

"Slippery"

Stephen Carter

The sun streamed unimpeded through the kitchen window, warming Jake's back as he ate a bowl of cereal. It was a pleasant feeling, but also strange. Usually the light couldn't get in. His RV blocked the east-facing windows and—

Something clicked.

Jake dropped his spoon and ran outside.

Soon Carl came by in his uniform. He flipped his report book open and considered the empty gravel rectangle: 8x40 feet.

"So much for Fathers and Sons," he said. Jake looked up at him and Carl motioned with his thumb.

Jake followed the gesture and saw that it indicated an unobstructed view all the way to the end of the road and out to the pasture. Not a single RV or hitch camper graced a single driveway.

An emergency elders quorum meeting was called that night. After a brief opening prayer, they discussed the facts. Every recreational vehicle in the ward was gone. No tire tracks leading to or from the missing campers could be found. The police were stumped.

The men compared the amounts each owed on his particular vehicle. Jake came in second.

Then Malcolm, still wearing his monogrammed shirt and tie, appeared in the classroom doorway. Everyone turned to look at him—the only man in the ward who didn't camp. Malcolm walked around the room scrutinizing each face, trying to pry something out of them. Then he turned and stomped out.

"His painting from New York," said the still-uniformed Carl. "The one with the pink dots."

Jake tried to suppress a snicker but was unsuccessful. In a few seconds, the entire quorum had joined him.

The next morning was quiet. Lying in bed, Jake could hear the cows. A pleasant sound, but vaguely disorienting. Usually the television would—

Something clicked.

An emergency elders quorum meeting was called that night. Even Malcolm was there—tie askew—sitting in a folding chair just like the rest of them.

The facts: no signs of break-ins. Even TVs bolted to the wall were gone, their cords cut even with the floor.

There must be more than one thief, they decided. How else could the whole neighborhood get hit in a single night?

Carl was dispatched to check the Covered Wagon Motel for shady guests. Then the quorum mobilized a posse charged with patrolling the ward that night.

They separated into pairs and strode up and down the streets well into the wee hours of the morning. But all they heard were the chirping of frogs and the breath of the highway; all they saw were the shadows of deer and the halo of the Milky Way.

Jake fell into bed at 5 a.m., glad it was Saturday.

Then something clicked.

He got out of bed and padded out of the room. He grabbed a flashlight and searched through his kids' bedrooms and then through the kitchen, living room, and garage.

Everything seemed to be in its place.

"All is well," he said.

A fitting phrase.

He decided to text it to Carl.

He sat down on the side of his bed and felt around on the top of the nightstand. Brow furrowed, he knelt next to his bed and felt out the transformer plugged into the wall. He took the cord between index finger and thumb and pulled gently along its length. The cord ended with an empty USB head.

The emergency elders quorum meeting was grim. The enemy was as a thief in the night, invading with no warning, stealing their possessions with impunity. Who knew what would vanish next?

Jake stood up and cleared his throat. He said it was time to put the revealed word into action. Time to fulfill the measure of their creation; time to ensure the safety of home and family.

Then he looked meaningfully at Malcolm. Uinta Grocery and Sport was still open . . . if anyone needed to buy a particular something. And maybe some ammo.

After his wife slumped snoring against his shoulder, Jake edged out of bed and opened the closet. He reached to the top shelf and pulled down a metal box.

He fiddled with the combination and then opened the lid, hefting out a Glock 42. Its gravity assured him that tonight would be his first and last meeting with the enemy.

He paced through the house, rattling doorknobs and jiggling windows. So strange, he thought. All his things just slipping away.

Then something clicked.

He found a roll of duct tape in the laundry room cupboard. He pulled a strip free and pressed the end of it to the gun's handle. Then he wrapped the tape around the back of his hand and onto the handle again, taping his fourth and fifth finger to the grip and leaving his thumb, middle, and index fingers free.

He wrapped the tape around a few more times until the weapon and his hand were inseparable.

It felt good.

Then he sat down on a kitchen chair and, despite his best intentions, nodded into a dream.

He woke with his face pressed to the floor, his right hand cold and pained. Jake tried to raise himself to his knees but jerked to a stop mid-way.

He looked down and blinked.

His hand was inside the kitchen floor, his arm sticking straight up out of the linoleum.

Then he felt the gun pulling away from him, down into the ground, with a steady, implacable movement. His wrist bones began to separate as he labored against the force.

At first he panicked, almost crying out. But then the panic ignited into a holy rage. He squeezed the trigger again and again, his arm jolting with the recoil, dealing round after round into the earth beneath him.

But the gun sank steadily. And Jake suddenly understood that he would lose.

He opened his hand.

And felt the bond pull tight.

Living Scriptures

Scott Hales

Timothy smiles as he hands a five-dollar bill to the teenager behind the window. "Keep the change," he says. The teenager—a red-headed seventeen-year-old with almost as many piercings on her face as freckles—giggles and gives him a towering vanilla ice cream cone and a stack of brown paper napkins.

"You're gonna need these on a day like today," she says. She is referring to the heat, a staple of mid-July days in Palmyra, and Timothy has to remind himself once again how bothersome a blazing sun can be to mortals. It has been almost two millennia since he last felt the sun's rays on his skin, and he has become unused to feeling a sensation so . . . trivial. At first he had missed it—almost to the point of regretting his decision—but now he understands why he must go without such distractions.

Jeremiah, ever-cryptic in his aphorisms, put it best when they were tending to wounded civilians in India during the Sepoy Rebellion: "Suffering determines the length of a lifespan." Having died once himself, the victim of a brutal stoning, Timothy knew immediately what his friend meant. The body can only take a certain amount of pain—physical, emotional, spiritual—before it gives up the ghost. Death is the spirit's rejection of suffering, and no physical body, no matter how strong or righteous, can contain its spirit when pain tips the scales. Had they not been made to withstand the most harrowing conditions of the Fall, they could not fulfill their divinely-appointed mission.

Or eat an extra-large ice cream cone without guilt or threat of a heart attack.

Using the last of the napkins to wipe melted ice cream from his hands and lips, Timothy decides to visit Grandin's printing press for the first time since he'd helped E. B. Grandin—then only a brash kid!—set up shop in the 1820s. So much has changed in Palmyra since then, changes that cause Timothy to remember a *Church News* article about the most recent renovation of the building: an overhaul of the interior that, by Timothy's best guess, probably made it almost unrecognizable to those who had known it almost two hundred years ago. Still, Timothy harbors no love for the old interior—Grandin had had no decorative sense—so he doubts he'll be terribly disappointed by what he'll find. He is simply looking for a good way to kill a few hours before he needs to be in place to save the life of the actor playing Jesus in the pageant tonight.

Pushing past a contingent of anti-Mormons with loud yellow signs, Timothy takes in the crowd milling outside an LDS bookstore beside the historical site. Tourists all, they move in a kind of chaotic order, juggling strollers, cameras, shopping bags, and sunburns. Their whiteness—or, more accurately, pinkness—shocks him, so used he is to working in parts of the world where pale skin belongs to the minority. He laughs at their insipid legs and comfortable waist-lines—not spitefully, but with the amusement of one who has seen their kind rise and fall with every century. He wishes Jeremiah and Kumen could be there, especially Kumen, who would probably say something like, "And for this we wander!"

Thinking of Kumen, Timothy almost doesn't hear the eager voice address him. Turning, he sees the tightly grinning face of a well-dressed young man sitting at a table with a display of colorful scripture-themed books and DVDs arranged upon it. "Hello, brother," the young man says. "How would you like a free DVD to share with your family?" Timothy holds up a hand to wave away the offer, but the young man gestures toward an empty seat. "It won't take more'n two minutes, brother. Hear me out and you get a free DVD."

"I've really got to keep moving," says Timothy apologetically.

"Let me ask you this," says the young man. "Are you concerned about the growing wickedness of the world?"

"Of course," says Timothy.

"And aren't you worried about the worldliness and immorality on television these days?"

"Television?" The word sounds ridiculous on Timothy's tongue. As he says it, heinous scenes of barbarous torture and debauchery—memories of darker times of terror and apostasy—flash across his mind. The bloody shadows almost chill him. "No," he says sharply, "not really."

The tight smile briefly leaves the young man's face before two weeks of sales training kick in and he recovers it. Still, Timothy notices a slight tremble surface on the young man's smooth jaw. He feels slighted, challenged, no doubt feeling as he had as a missionary when people had rejected his invitation to learn more about the Gospel. In the young man's eyes, now cold with offense, Timothy discerns a weariness, a longing to be somewhere other than a sweltering sidewalk in upstate New York. While Timothy cannot identify with the youth's desire to sell that which is of no worth, he sympathizes with the weariness. It is what he would feel if he could still feel.

"How much for your DVDs?" Timothy asks.

The young man gives what seems to Timothy to be an unreasonable price.

Reaching for his wallet, Timothy takes the empty seat beside him. "Let's do this," he says. "I want you to give a full set of DVDs and books to the next family you talk to. On me." He pulls a wad of bills from his wallet and hands them to the young man. "Keep the change," he adds.

The young man counts the bills, speechless. Timothy rises from the chair and replaces his wallet in the back pocket of his cargo shorts. "Make sure it's a family," he says to the young man. "I don't want you giving the DVDs to just anyone."

"OK," says the young man.

"And, for the record," Timothy says, pointing to the flashy image of an ancient prophet on the cover of the nearest DVD, "no self-respecting Nephite would ever dress like that. Not in my day, at least."

Amy Jorgensen
An Apple A Day, Day 10 (2014)
Archival pigment prints, 5x5 inches

“Each day, an apple was partially eaten—sometimes a tiny little bite; sometimes almost consumed to the core—then discarded onto a stained floor and hit by a sledge hammer. According to Maksym, the images were ‘shot in a way to suggest decay, repulsion and unsanitary conditions.’” —Esmé Thomas

Spring Hill

Luisa Perkins

Becca was taking too long.

Emma huddled against the iron fencepost and hugged her knees. The chilly breeze had dried her tears, but her nose was still running. She wiped it with the back of her hand, even though her mom had told her a million times not to. As she watched the sullen autumn sun sink toward the faraway trees lining the bank of the Grand River, she shivered. If Becca didn't hurry, they'd both get grounded. They wouldn't get to go apple picking at the Amish orchard that weekend. It wasn't fair.

"Life's not fair, girl. You can count on that."

Emma jolted upright and hit her head on the ice-cold iron of the fence. She and Becca weren't supposed to be here, but Emma couldn't run away and leave her little sister behind.

She scowled up at the intruder, trying to look like she had every right to be here. One of the Amish women from over in Jamesport stood looking down at Emma, a half smile on her face.

"What are you doing here?" Emma asked.

"Same as you. Wishing I were in there." The woman sat down next to Emma on the tired grass. Her dress was a little fancier than the Amish usually wore: dark brown calico instead of black or gray wool. Her hair, too. She sort of looked like Princess Leia, if Leia were a grandma. She had a basket on her arm filled with apples. She set it between them, and the fruit's rich, spicy smell made Emma's mouth water.

She scooted away a little, though. She figured she was safe with the Amish, but why was the lady here?

The woman offered her an apple, but Emma shook her head. "I'm not hungry."

But of course just then her stomach growled. The woman laughed. "Suit yourself."

Emma craned her neck to look through the fence, trying to see the place where Becca had gone through. Nothing. Over the past year or so, they'd worn down the grass by going under the fence, but that's not where Becca had disappeared. The place they'd always crossed into Narnia was a few feet *past* the iron fence, just on the other side of a big spice bush. She turned back to find the old woman looking at her with pity in her eyes.

"I'll hazard you just had a birthday."

Now Emma stood up. How did this stranger know so much? What did she want? Emma looked out at the road both ways, but didn't see any horse-drawn buggy with reflectors nailed to the sides. Jamesport was miles away. How had the woman even gotten here?

When the guards' golf cart came up the rise, Emma ducked down again, ready to bolt if necessary and come back for Becca later. She double-checked to make sure their bikes were well-hidden in their usual spot.

The guards traveled the perimeter of the property at all hours, sometimes taking a break out near Koala Road. They worked for the Latter-day Saints—the same people who owned that ugly brick church in Gallatin. Emma figured they must know what they were guarding here on Spring Hill; it was obvious to her why the Saints had put a fence around it.

She couldn't tell for sure, though; the guards had never given her a chance to ask any questions. They just chased her and her sister off, wanting to keep all the magic for themselves. Except Emma had never actually seen them—or anyone else—inside the fence. Some day when she was older, she was going to march into that church in Gallatin and see what other magic powers those Saints had.

The guards were still a ways off. They wouldn't see Emma if she stayed low, but Becca *had* to hurry. Emma looked in at the spice bush again.

"When was the last time you were inside?"

Emma narrowed her eyes at the woman. Maybe she wasn't Amish at all. Was she a Saint? "Inside the fence?"

"No. *Inside*." She gave the word extra emphasis.

"In Narnia?" Emma blurted out, then immediately regretted it.

The woman laughed again. "What kind of outlandish name is that? Why do you call it that?"

Emma looked down at her feet. "S'from a book." Their dad had read them the whole series last summer when they'd visited him, and both girls had loved it—though their Narnia was very different from the one in the books.

In their Narnia, it was always sort of both Indian summer and spring, with flowers and ripe fruit on the trees at the same time. The animals didn't talk, but they did let you pet them and feed them. And there weren't any people at all—unless you counted Obi-Wan.

That wasn't his real name. Emma and Becca couldn't pronounce *that*, so they'd given him a new name, which had seemed to please him. He didn't talk much, his robes glowed so brightly that he was hard to look at straight on, and he never put down his light saber. But somehow, he wasn't scary.

"Narnia," the woman repeated to herself. "I suppose it's no worse than Diahman."

Emma looked at the old woman. She definitely knew stuff. "When was the last time *you* were inside?" she asked.

The woman's wrinkles sagged. "Oh, it's been a very long time."

"Were you a kid, like me?"

"No, I was grown and married, with babes of my own. I only went in once, but I've never forgotten it." Her eyes gleamed. "My husband . . . had a key."

Emma mulled this over. "We've never needed a key to get in."

"When was your birthday?"

"Yesterday."

"Eight years old, now, are you?"

Emma nodded.

"Too old. Accountable. You'll never get in without a key now."

Emma bit her lip to keep her chin from trembling. She plopped her rear back down on the ground and put her forehead down on her bent knees.

Obi-Wan had hinted at this last Friday—that he might not see her again for a long time. But Emma had hoped that meant maybe he was taking a vacation, or something. She hadn't wanted to face the idea that Narnia might be closed to her already.

Peter Pevensie had visited Narnia until he was fourteen; Emma had assumed she and Becca had years ahead of them. Years of respite from the extremes of Missouri's weather, years of feeling special in a magical land they had all to themselves, with no step-fathers or gross school lunches or any of the ugliness of reality. But today, when she hadn't been able to cross through . . . "Where can I get a key?" Emma asked, lifting her head suddenly. "Would your husband let me borrow his?"

The woman didn't answer for what seemed like a long time. "He's gone away," she finally said, and the thin line of her mouth didn't invite any further questions.

Emma glanced at the spice bush. A few of its leaves had drifted to the ground, making a golden ring around it.

"It won't do you any good, staring at it."

Look who's talking, Emma thought. But that wasn't nice. "I know," she said out loud. And she did know; she felt it in the pit of her stomach. "My little sister's inside."

"She's not a kind sister, to go in and leave you behind," the woman observed.

"No, she just went in to get my coat. I forgot it there on Friday. When I couldn't get through today, I told her I'd wait out here for her. She promised she'd be quick. My mom'll kill me if I don't bring my coat home." Emma shut her mouth, because her words were getting shaky again.

"Ah." The woman put the basket of apples on her other side and moved over closer to Emma. "What's your name, girl?"

"Emma."

The woman looked at her funny. "That's quite a coincidence."

Emma rolled her eyes. "I know. Everybody's named Emma. I don't know why my mom couldn't think of something more original. There are three other Emmas in third grade. My teacher says it's a popular name right now."

"Popular. Is that a fact." Humor lit up the woman's eyes. "My husband used to say that life was one eternal round. I suppose that's true of fashion as well."

The guards' cart was close now, but didn't sound like it was going to slow down. Emma let out a breath. The two big men with stern, foreign-looking faces had always scared the girls—not that they had ever kept them from coming back.

The woman looked up when she heard the electric whine of the golf cart. She waved a hand as if fanning away a fly. "Nalu and Lota won't bother us. They know me well."

"Oh. Really? I wish we'd met you a long time ago, then." Emma thought for a moment. "How come we've never seen you before? We're here a lot."

The woman chuckled, but didn't answer. She laughed louder when Emma's stomach growled again.

"Are you certain you won't accept an apple? It might quiet your belly's grumbling until you can get home to your supper." She held out one again, yellowish-red and fragrant.

Emma gave in, even though her mom would freak out if she knew Emma had taken food from a stranger. She bit into the crisp flesh and sucked in to keep the juice from running down her chin.

"Really good," she said around the mouthful. The woman gave her a real smile then. She must have been beautiful when she was younger. Emma hoped the lady's husband would come back soon.

The apple *was* good—almost as good as Narnian fruit. Emma and Becca had stuffed themselves silly when they'd first gone in more than a year ago, when their mom had started letting them ride their bikes to and from school.

They'd learned quickly, though, that they could never bring anything out. Berries, cherries, flowers—they all turned to black mold the minute they came out beside the spice bush.

The sun was down among the trees now. What was keeping Becca?

Finally, the spice bush rustled. Emma scooted around to look as Becca emerged, a few golden leaves getting stuck in her dark, curly hair. "Sorry," she gasped, crawling under the fence on her stomach, Emma's coat under her arm. "Obi-Wan asked about you, and I wanted to say goodbye."

"What do you mean?" Emma asked around the lump in her throat. "Did he kick you out?"

Becca looked to the side and pursed her lips the way she always did when she was about to lie. "Yeah."

"C'mon. Tell me the truth."

Becca shook her head and started to cry.

Emma grabbed her sister's upper arm hard, too anxious to be nice. "C'mon," she repeated through gritted teeth.

Becca hiccupped and looked up at her sister, grief in her eyes. "You're too old now," she admitted finally. "I can come back whenever I want until my birthday—but I told him I wouldn't come if you weren't allowed. It's not fair, and besides, it's no fun in there without you." Her lips pursed again.

"Liar," Emma said, but hugged her little sister tightly. She didn't care that Becca's snot was getting all over her shirt, because she was crying a little, too. She lifted her hand to wipe her nose; she still had the old woman's half-eaten apple in her hand. She looked around, wanting to introduce her sister.

But the woman was gone, basket and all. Not a sign of her on the road. Glancing at the horizon, Emma didn't have time to wonder how or why she'd left so quickly. She grabbed Becca's hand and ran down the hill to their bikes.

"Hurry, Beck," she said as they went. "We can still make it home before dark."

Job: A Useful Reading

Michael Austin. *Re-reading Job: Understanding the Ancient World's Greatest Poem*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014. 174 pp. Paperback: $20.95. ISBN: 9781589586673.

Reviewed by John Crawford

Michael Austin's book aims to convince Mormons that the manner in which the Latter-day Saints have traditionally (since the early 1970s, if not longer) read the Book of Job is wrong and unhelpful and that a better reading of the text is worthwhile, yielding more useful applications to life and theology. He succeeds in making both arguments. The book is not a scholarly treatise and does not appeal to the original language of the text. Instead, Austin applies the literary training of his profession and his own personal good humor to make a valuable contribution to Mormon devotional literature.

The book is divided into ten chapters, which can in turn be roughly divided into three parts. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the background and foundation for what follows. In chapter 1, Austin confesses to having only a shallow understanding of Job for much of his life. The title of the work, *Re-reading Job*, is a reference to the tendency, common among contemporary Latter-day Saints, to read only the beginning and the end of Job, along with a smattering of proof-texting verses in the middle. We've all "read" Job in this way, without really reading it, so another reading is necessary. Chapter 2 makes the argument that Job should be read as literature and not as history. Austin asserts that, whether or not there was once someone on earth named Job, the story, as found in the Bible, has valuable lessons that we can learn. Getting lost in the minutiae of identifying the Leviathan or the location of Uz detracts from the reader's ability to discern the poem's true purpose. That purpose, of course, is to undermine a central tenet of almost all religions: the notion that God rewards the good and punishes the evil.

The next part, consisting of four chapters take us on a whirlwind tour of Job. The basics of the frame story, the dialogues, the wisdom material, and the final appearance of God are laid out. Austin is obviously familiar with the history of scholarly and literary interpretations of Job. He explains the traditional scholarly divisions within the text, noting how different sections play against one another to create a sense of irony or to confirm suspicions. He also spends some time in this section persuading the reader to reject a second easy reading. If the initial easy reading is "God rewards the just and punishes the evil," it is tempting to understand Job as making an equally flawed statement in opposition: "God is evil; nothing makes sense; nothing means anything." Austin, by humanizing the villains of Job and by demonstrating that Job is also flawed in spite of his perfection, hopes to instead convince the reader that easy morals and straightforward understanding are impossible with a text like Job, but that this resistance to facile moralizing is what makes the text valuable.

The final portion of the book suggests different interpretive models for approaching Job. In chapter 7, Austin examines the critique of the "law of the harvest" found in Job. Placing the book in the context of the Old Testament canon, Austin argues that it acts as a counterweight to the Deuteronomistic history in particular, but also to the whole notion that God is bound by human acts to reward or punish. The Deuteronomistic history, that section of the Old Testament that begins with Joshua and ends with Second Kings, is commonly understood to be an historical document given its final form during the Babylonian exile. It appears to have been written to answer the question "What just happened?" for the Jews. If they really were the chosen people of God, how could they, God's temple, and God's chosen city be destroyed by these interloping barbarians? The Deuteronomistic history, reliant in particular on the book of Deuteronomy, argues that Israel broke covenant with the Lord early and often, bowing itself down to foreign gods and engaging in forbidden rites. In this understanding, the Lord put up with Israelite waywardness for hundreds of years, but eventually enough was enough and he brought in the Mesopotamians. The Israelites were the cause of their own destruction.

Austin argues that Job acts to undermine this interpretation by offering a hero whose destruction is clearly not his own fault.

Job is, after all, described as perfect. Austin sees, in the Job story, a means for positing that Israel's destruction may not have been its own fault and that the appropriate response may not be renewed devotion to the temple cult that the Deuteronomists suggested, but rather an assessment of the reliability of the "law of the harvest." If God is less like a vending machine and more like a slot machine, should we examine why we emphasize the blessings we have received or may receive for our righteousness? Austin suggests that setting aside the pursuit of reciprocal altruism with God may allow disciples to better fulfill God's will.

In the remaining chapters of the book, Austin applies the lessons he draws from Job to various features of the text. In chapter 8, the famous passage, rendered in the King James text as "I know that my Redeemer lives," is considered. Austin questions the common messianic rendering of the passage, arguing that it contradicts the purpose of the text. In chapter 9, Austin considers how we ought to read Job (and other works of theodicy) in the aftermath of the Holocaust. He carefully considers Jewish approaches to theodicy and Job, using them to illuminate potentially fruitful interpretations for Latter-day Saint readers. Finally, in chapter 10, Austin considers Job in the context of the biblical wisdom literature, considering its similarities with Ecclesiastes and its differences from Proverbs.

The sum of all this is a persuasive work that corrects a common misreading of an important biblical text. However, there are a few things that detract from the power of the work. There seems to be insufficient Job in this book about Job. By going through a reception history of Job, Austin does a fine job of covering the history of interpretation, but the book itself—the title character—sometimes feels like a minor player. Understanding that Austin cannot work with the original Hebrew, it would still be helpful to have a few more examples of the sublime poetry in Job in the place of assurances that the poetry is indeed sublime.

More troubling to his readers will be Austin's deconstruction of "I know that My Redeemer lives" as a messianic phrase. He admirably lays out the arguments for and against a messianic interpretation, explaining why he prefers the latter. The literary and historical context renders a messianic interpretation altogether incongruous with the surrounding text. However, Mormons have a long history of acontextual interpretations, one noticeable even in founding Mormon documents (see, for example, the acontextual use of the Song of Solomon in D&C 5:14 [cf. Song 6:10]). Arguing for contextual readings within a context of traditional decontextualized interpretations is a hard argument for Austin to make and, while I suspect he will be convincing to the scholars who read this chapter, the average layperson will shrug his shoulders and continue to find Jesus in Job's exclamation.

Both of these criticisms are small, however, as Austin's book is a necessary and useful aid to Mormon engagement with the Bible. This work constitutes another worthy contribution to Mormon devotional literature by Kofford Books' Contemporary Studies in Scripture series.

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Full Lives but Not Fulfilling

Paula Kelly Harline. *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club: From the Diaries of Mormon Pioneer Women*. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. 256 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, index. Hardcover: $29.95. ISBN: 9780199346509.

Reviewed by Polly Aird

This book is a gem. Paula Kelly Harline's writing shines. She has compiled excerpts from twenty-nine diaries and autobiographies of women who lived in polygamy between 1847, when the Mormons first arrived in Utah, and 1890, when the Manifesto was issued and polygamy was abandoned by the LDS Church. Harline chose women who were not married to Church leaders because she wanted to know "how common folk understood and lived polygamy" (4). Other criteria were that the women did not leave the Church or move to Mexico or Canada to escape prosecution. And finally, she focused on writings that were not widely known.

Harline organized the book into three sections: (1) Settling Utah Territory: Polygamous Yet Monogamous; (2) Making Sense of Sisterhood: Relations between Wives; and (3) Abandoning Polygamy: Weariness. Within these sections are chapters, each of which covers the lives of two or three women who shared something in common: first wives who were initially willing for their husbands to take another wife; single women who arrived in Utah at a somewhat older age and quickly married polygamists; first wives living in Provo who bore the difficulties of polygamy by taking the upper hand over the other wives; women who strove to maintain their self-respect and even sanity when their husbands took other wives; three women in Arizona who experienced mental anguish and even physical pain because of polygamy; women who never really loved their husbands; wives who, during the 1880s and 1890s, had to hide to protect their husbands from prosecution for "cohabitation"; wives who "grew rebellious" and left their husbands to find better ways to support and educate their children; and one girl forced into polygamy at age fourteen who eventually escaped her husband only to marry a monogamous man who made her life difficult in other ways. Each chapter about the wives begins with a map that locates where each lived and moved to or from. The maps help the reader keep the individual women straight as the author interweaves their stories.

Harline imagines that the women would have loved to share their writings with the others in the same chapter, for they often lived not far from each other. Harline further explains, "The idea of writing clubs first came to me after watching seven Mormon Relief Society women in my Utah Valley neighborhood meet monthly to share their personal writings, and I imagined that nineteenth-century women could have done the same. . . . I lightly employ the writing club as a device to organize, to engage general readers, and to bring the wives' flesh-and-blood nonfiction lives to the forefront" (4).

Interspersed among the chapters about the women are three essays or "interludes" that discuss how polygamy was defended by the Church and by women living in plural marriages, how rarely the wives in a family got along, and how the 1890 Manifesto came as a relief to some of the women. In the final chapter, Harline reveals some of her ancestors' experiences with plural marriage and then gives a brief history of polygamy from Joseph Smith's revelation to the 1890 Manifesto and on to how Church leaders view polygamy today.

Although the organization may sound overly complex, the book flows and quickly engrossed this reader. Harline skillfully weaves together the raw lives of these women and comments on insights gained from their writings. She admits that she originally believed polygamy was a positive force for women, freeing them to pursue personal interests thanks to the cooperation among the wives. But as she studied their writings, it became apparent that for these women life was difficult, sisterhood rarely worked out, and though their lives were full, they were not fulfilling.

So what is unique here compared to other excellent books about polygamy? In contrast to other works, Harline does not attempt a demographic study or analyze statistics of those living in polygamy but rather describes the reactions and moods of these women who struggled to live the religious principle. The diaries, in contrast to the autobiographies, which were usually written late in life, are more apt to reveal the emotional ups and downs of the women and often served as their only outlet for expressing anger or disappointment.

One feature of plural marriages especially caught my eye: "Most polygamous wives' personal writings provide evidence of the underlying tension between the expectations of monogamy and the practice of polygamy. Even while living polygamy, inertia pulled wives back to their cultural DNA—Adam and Eve alone" (22).

The book is marred by occasional errors in fact: Joseph Smith was born in Vermont, not New York, and the temple in Ohio was never used for marriage sealings (6); Martha Heywood was the third, not second, wife of Joseph Heywood (34, photo); and an Illinois mob, not one in Missouri, killed Joseph Smith (155). These are minor glitches in a remarkable work.

I highly recommend this book for its portrayal of the women's varied and mostly negative reactions to living in polygamy even when they believed in the principle.

Mormons Are a Different Country

Mette Ivie Harrison. *The Bishop's Wife*. New York: Soho Crime, 2014. 352 pp. Hardcover: $18.99. ISBN: 9781616954765.

Reviewed by Scott Abbott

Mette Ivie Harrison's new novel is a work of genre fiction. Like other mysteries, *The Bishop's Wife* revolves around a crime the main character eventually solves. In this case, a young woman disappears, leaving her husband both bereft and suspect. The husband first turns to Bishop Kurt Wallheim for help, but it is the bishop's wife, Linda Wallheim, who becomes involved in the case. Like other mysteries, including Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander mysteries, whose characters lend Harrison's their approximate names, there will be subsequent volumes, for this is "A Linda Wallheim Novel."

Harrison's book has drawn attention well beyond the tepid critical interest that usually accompanies publication of genre fiction; the novel has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *LA Times*, NPR's *Weekend Edition*, and so on. The reason for the attention, I think, is that this book invites a reader into the mundane and intimate details of contemporary Mormonism. It does so through the intriguing but decidedly unglamorous person of its narrator, Linda Wallheim.

The bishop's wife is a Latter-day Saint. She bakes bread and cinnamon rolls and delivers them to troubled ward members. She eases their spiritual pain with practical wisdom. She is the devoted and skillful stay-at-home mother of five boys. She is well-read and theologically astute and good at keeping that knowledge to herself in Relief Society and Sunday School. She lends a hand at the marriages and funerals of her Mormon brothers and sisters. She is a good wife.

The bishop's wife is a heretic. She blithely prepares breakfast on fast Sunday. She was a philosophy major in college. She uses Catholic words like "peccadillo." She can swear. She doubts the efficacy of fasting and prayer. In the heat of the moment, she distrusts God because he is a man. She thinks the structural hierarchy of the LDS Church enables the crimes she attempts to uncover in her Draper, Utah ward.

The bishop's wife is also a fairly normal human being. She is a little rounder than she might be (the cinnamon rolls!). She can be didactic. She suffers emotionally after the birth of a stillborn daughter. She is a bit of a busybody. She hasn't traveled much and thinks a cruise would widen her horizons. She can be obsessive-compulsive (peeling and chopping ten pounds of onions and fifty pounds of potatoes in a fit of anger). She sometimes states the obvious as if no one else has ever had those thoughts. She jumps to conclusions. To her credit, she is aware that she is human—all too human.

These triple set of attributes makes Linda Wallheim a very interesting character and a unique narrator. This Mormon woman is thoughtful, self-critical, observant, quick to explain, ready to opine, and wonderfully garrulous. She stands looking at the cultural hall in the church, for instance, and admits:

> I . . . thought how strange it was that we could repurpose the same room for so many different things. This cultural hall would see everything in the course of its life. Funeral luncheons, weddings, basketball games, monthly Relief Society meetings, a Road Show or Stake Pageant, music practices, Sunday School, Young Men's and Young Women's activities, Boy Scout meetings, and the overflow from sacrament meetings and stake conferences. In many ways, this hall was the most Mormon place of them all. Didn't that make it holy in its own way? Maybe more holy than the quiet, white temple that was not part of our weekly worship? This hall was where God came, if you believed in God. And I did. After all this time and all my doubts, I did. (20)

When she gets involved with the disappearance of a young wife and mother from the ward, Linda Wallheim must contend with the bishop's counsel, and her internal response to this (and to other situations) sets this novel apart from others in the genre:

> "You've gotten too caught up in this," Kurt went on. "You're not thinking clearly about it." Of course he was thinking clearly. He always thought clearly. And that was supposed to be the right thing to do. Not feel emotion. Not thrash around in anger. Be rational. Be a man. Well, I wasn't a man. . . . How could he say this to me? He was playing the authority card. He was the bishop. He had the experience. He had the mantle of being God's voice in my ears. Well, I didn't care what God had to say about this. God was a man, too, and as far as I was concerned, until I heard Heavenly Mother tell me how to deal with a little girl in shock and fear, I wasn't going to listen. (212)

Internal dialogue of this sort is a staple of the novel. To give a second example, when Linda Wallheim finds herself discussing marriage with ward members whose matrimonial situations are widely varied and even dangerous, she confesses that

> I am a happily married woman myself, but I acknowledge marriage can be a dangerous covenant. When both people are honest and good, it is still difficult to live together so intimately, day in and day out. But no one is perfectly good or honest. And so marriage becomes a dance over hot coals and metal spikes. . . . I know from personal experience that marriage can be a holy institution, blessed by God. I have felt moments of perfect bliss and contentment with my husband. I have been expanded in many ways by being yoked to someone who is so different, and I am glad for those chances. But there are twice as many occasions when I shake my head and wonder if we would be happier if we could only live together as friends. Or be business partners. Or share parental responsibilities. Does it always have to be marriage—everything shared and stirred together? (53–54)

The charm of the bishop's wife, at least for me, is that she is a skeptical believer and a faithful skeptic. She is a real person, complex and opinionated and troubled and fallible and curious and gentle and judgmental and generous. She is the antithesis of the Mormons I described in a *Sunstone* essay in 1992:

> The word "Mormon" can and does evoke bigotry, exclusion, narrowness, and sectarianism. In John Gardner's 1982 novel *Mickelsson's Ghosts*, for example, Mormons are described as a "sea of drab faces, dutiful, bent-backed, hurrying obediently, meekly across an endless murky plain . . . timidly smiling beasts, imaginationless . . . family people, unusually successful in business and agriculture, non-drinkers, non-smokers . . . no real fault but dullness." Or in Tony Kushner's 1992 play, *Angels in America*, a Mormon woman describes Salt Lake City as a hard place, "baked dry. Abundant energy; not much intelligence. That's a combination that can wear a body out."[1]

Gardner and Kushner obviously hadn't met Linda Wallheim.

A comparison with another recent mystery featuring a Mormon narrator may help draw a distinction between a book primarily interested in the ideas and workings of a faith and a book that is set among the people of a faith. Andrew Hunt's lively *City of Saints* is narrated by young Deputy Art Oveson, an observant Mormon working in a corrupt Salt Lake police department. Historical details abound in a plot patterned after a real 1930 homicide. Oveson's character is interesting and his family life very Mormon, but the novel is focused on solving the case. Mormonism and Salt Lake City provide interesting contexts for the mystery in the way Scandinavia is so interesting in crime novels by Jo Nesbø and Stieg Larsson. A note at the end of the book thanks historians John McCormick, Kirk Huffaker, John Sillito, Thomas Alexander, Dean May, and several others for helping to "recreate the Salt Lake City of 1930 and its inhabitants."[2]

To recreate the LDS ward in Draper, Harrison needed only her own lived experience. Her novel mentions the mountains. Linda Wallheim travels once to Provo. But the novel takes place largely in the interactions among ward members, among members of the Wallheim family, and in the narrator's active mind.

Mette Harrison, who is also the author of seven young-adult novels and a book about herself as a triathlete and mother, was surprised, she writes in the acknowledgments section, that SoHo Crime, which mostly specializes in international crime stories, would want to publish a book set in small-town Utah. Her editor explained, "It's like Mormons are a different country. They speak a different language, and you're the interpreter" (343). Through her marvelous narrator, Harrison is a revealing interpreter of a world she inhabits both gracefully and critically.

Notes

1. Scott Abbott, "One Lord, One Faith, Two Universities," in *Sunstone* 16, no. 3 (1992): 21–22.

2. Andrew Hunt, *City of Saints* (New York: Minotaur Books, 2012), 321.

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The Mormon Murder Mystery Grows Up

Mette Ivie Harrison. *The Bishop's Wife*. New York: SoHo Crime, 2014. 352 pp. $26.95. Paperback. ISBN: 9781616954765.

Tim Wirkus. *City of Brick and Shadow*. Madison, Wisc.: Tyrus Books, 2014. 304 pp. $24.99. Paperback. ISBN: 9781440582769.

Reviewed by Michael Austin

Mystery fiction and Mormonism grew up together. The first modern writer of mystery tales, Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), was an exact contemporary of Joseph Smith (1805–1844). The most famous literary detective in the English-speaking world, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, got his start in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)—a novel set partly in Utah among the Latter-day Saints. And during the twentieth and early twenty-first century, Mormon mysteries became a recognizable sub-genre in series by Robert Irvine, Gary Stewart, and Sarah Andrews, and in bestselling single installments by (among many others) Tony Hillerman, Stephen White, Karen Kijewski, and Scott Turow.[1]

Nearly all of these contemporary novels show that, while both Mormonism and mystery fiction have matured considerably since their birth, the Mormon mystery novel has been stuck in a particularly obnoxious adolescence for more than a hundred years. Virtually without exception, the Mormons in these books are cartoon villains based on nineteenth-century stereotypes. The mystery plots almost always involve secret polygamy, blood-atonement murders, or avenging Danites, and the Mormon characters all speak and act like they have been plucked out of the nineteenth-century desert, given a shave and a haircut, and sent into the twenty-first century to make their way in a world of gentiles.

Recent explosions in both self-publishing and in the Mormon market for fiction have improved the picture somewhat by setting dozens of three-dimensional Latter-day Saint detectives loose on an unsuspecting world. But given the limited distribution that such books have, the world still doesn't suspect a thing. For all the tilling that has been done here, the world of contemporary Mormonism remains virgin soil for mystery writers in the national market. Two books published in 2014— Mette Ivie Harrison's *The Bishop's Wife* and Tim Wirkus's *City of Brick and Shadow*—fill this niche admirably and, taken together, suggest that the Mormon mystery novel has finally started to grow up.

The Bishop's Wife introduces a new fictional sleuth, Linda Wallheim, who will hopefully have a long run in the national spotlight. As the title suggests, Linda is the wife of a lay Mormon bishop—a position with no formal institutional authority but a great deal of informal power as both her husband's chief advisor and as the confidante of many of the women in the ward (and some men, too) who feel uncomfortable telling their secrets to the bishop. And, as it turns out, Bishop Wallheim's ward has a lot of secrets.

The novel revolves around two strange disappearances—one that unfolds in the novel and one that occurred more than thirty years earlier but has never been solved. In the contemporary mystery, a young wife and mother named Carrie Helm disappears under suspicious circumstances, and her husband becomes the prime suspect in what may or may not be a murder case. Thrown into the mix are Carrie's parents, who are solid and respectable members of the LDS community, and her father-in-law, an obnoxious Mormon fanatic whose views on gender roles come straight from the fourteenth century. These events are modeled on the 2009 disappearance of West Valley City, Utah, resident Susan Powell—though only very loosely and not in a way that will spoil the ending.

The historical mystery emerges as another ward member, Tobias Tortensen, nears death. Anna, his second wife, confides in Linda during her husband's final days. As they try to piece together Tobias's life, they discover that nobody quite remembers what happened to his first wife. When Linda discovers evidence that she could have been the victim of foul play, she tries to follow a trail of clues and memories to solve a thirty-year-old mystery. As these two plotlines wind through their various twists and turns, they reveal multiple layers of misogyny, domestic violence, and sexual abuse within the seemingly pristine Mormon world.

In an afterword, Harrison explains that Linda Wallheim has been crafted to appeal to two very different audiences:

> I hope there are many Mormon women out there who read this book and see parts of themselves in Linda. I hope that there are many non-Mormons who read this book and see how smart, thoughtful, kind, and powerful Mormon women can be, even if they seem to be following a traditionally feminine path, and even if you do not see them in the church leadership. (344–45)

The rhetorical objectives that Harrison identifies—1) giving Mormon women a heroine to identify with, and 2) showing non-Mormons how complex and powerful Mormon women can be—don't always exist comfortably in the same narrative. The first objective requires a lot of inside baseball—appealing to nuances of Mormonism that outsiders are unlikely to understand and drawing excruciatingly fine distinctions between doctrine and orthopraxy. The second objective requires basic explanation of Mormon beliefs, tempered by multiple distancing moves to show that neither the author nor the character is THAT kind of Mormon. Linda has no problem with gay people and didn't really like what the Church did with Proposition 8 in California (247). And she doesn't go in for all the food-in-the-basement survivalist stuff either (273). And, just by the way, temple garments aren't as weird as you think; "there are new styles every few years to keep up with the expectations of each generation" (171).

It is this meta-commentary on Mormonism, more than the plot or the setting, that most distinguishes *The Bishop's Wife* from *City of Brick and Shadow*. Wirkus's characters are Mormon missionaries, but they don't spend much time thinking about what it means to be missionaries or trying to explain missionary-ness to the average reader. Average readers are not likely to read *City of Brick and Shadow* in the first place, as it is the sort of experimental novel usually produced by academics (Wirkus is a PhD candidate at USC) and touted in the trade journals as "serious" and perhaps even "artistic." Like most books so touted, it focuses less on what it appears to focus on and more on the standard post-modern questions about the nature of truth, the reliability of experience, and the role of stories in shaping our memories and our perceptions.

This is not to say that *City of Brick and Shadow* is a work of abstract philosophy masquerading as a mystery novel. It is an extremely well-written and engaging book, but it is not the sort of novel that comes to a definite closure where the mystery is solved, the bad guy is punished, and the detectives get to bask in the glow of a job well done. It is not, in other words, very much like a mystery novel. It subverts those conventions, even as it uses them to tell a story. At the same time, though, it invokes other conventions that will be quite familiar to those used to reading academic fiction designed to subvert genre expectations and question the reliability of things like truth and story.

The novel's detectives are Mormon missionaries in Vila Barbosa, a particularly unsavory neighborhood in São Paulo, Brazil—where Wirkus himself was a Mormon missionary from 2003–2005. Elder John Toronto is a brilliant but obsessive and socially awkward missionary with a penchant for deduction. His companion, Elder Mike Schwartz, is the "normal guy" whose point of view structures most of the story. These loving gestures to Sherlock Holmes aside, the narrative is fragmented, non-linear, and multi-perspectival—but it goes something like this: soon after Elder Schwartz arrives in Vila Barbosa he sees one of their recent converts—a man named Marco Aurélio—running through a marketplace as if he were being chased. Soon after, Marco disappears, and, when they start looking for him, the three people who might have known something about his disappearance end up dead. We eventually learn that Marco was once a successful confidence man, whose ex-wife and ex-partner also ended up in Vila Barbosa, where they help the missionaries reconstruct Marco's past.

Throughout the novel, Wirkus mixes the story of Marco's disappearance with brief chapters about "The Argentine," a shadowy underworld figure who is said to have taken over Vila Barbosa and then disappeared into an underground labyrinth to study the forms of human cruelty. These stories begin as myths, but, gradually, they merge with the story of Marco Aurélio to become a single narrative that defies both comprehension and closure. Marco's disappearance may (or may not) be part of an elaborate con game in which the Argentine may (or may not) be the ultimate mark. The Argentine may (or may not) be controlling the entire story through minions pledged to his service. Toward the end, when the elders meet a man claiming to be the Argentine, they must decide (as must we) whether he is a harmless crank, or a near-omniscient being in whose mind the entire story is taking place—or, perhaps, something completely different.

The great pleasure in a book like *City of Brick and Shadow* lies in the way it asks questions and manipulates expectations. This places it on the other end of a spectrum from books like *The Bishop's Wife*, which present intellectual puzzles and which solve them according to a fairly standard set of genre conventions. I do not mean to make a value judgment here. One author has chosen to work within a set of conventions that the other author has chosen to subvert, but these are differences in taste, not talent. Both books accomplish what they set out to do, and, in the process, significantly enrich the ways that Mormons are portrayed in the national market.

The modern mystery novel is as much about anthropological tourism as it is about solving puzzles. Readers expect their favorite authors to teach them things about times and places that they know nothing about: Tony Hillerman and the Navajo reservation, Ellis Peters and medieval England, Janet Evanovich and New Jersey. Mormonism works in this formula today for the same reason it worked in 1887: for many readers, Mormons are exotic, unknown, mysterious, and a little bit weird. Dozens of mystery writers in the past have exploited this otherness in ways that do not give a true picture of the culture. For all of their differences in style and tone, both *The Bishop's Wife* and *City of Brick and Shadow* bring realistic and informed portraits of Mormonism to the national reading public. And they are both very good books whose authors, I hope, will be around for a long time.

Notes

1. See Michael Austin, "Troped by the Mormons: The Persistence of 19th-Century Mormon Stereotypes in Contemporary Detective Fiction," *Sunstone* 21, no. 3 (August 1998): 51–71.

Learning to Read with the Book of Mormon

Jared Hickman

Good morning, brothers and sisters. It's my pleasure today to speak about something that absolutely distinguishes Mormonism from other religious traditions—namely, the book from which it takes its name. Say it with me now: the Book of Mormon. To put the cart ahead of the horse, let me simply state the main point I hope to get across today: among the many important functions often ascribed to the Book of Mormon—whether validating Joseph Smith's prophethood or providing "another testament of Jesus Christ"—one of its most important functions may be to invite us to rethink entirely our practices of reading scripture and, more broadly, our sense of how revelation works. In what follows, I hope to begin to substantiate this claim.

I should begin by disclosing that I may bring a somewhat unique perspective to the Book of Mormon. I am an English professor who studies nineteenth-century American literature and religion, and I regularly teach the Book of Mormon in a course called American Bibles that examines nineteenth-century texts that were biblical in their inspirations, aspirations, and proportions. One of the things we talk about in that course is how the Book of Mormon interacted with the intensely Bible-focused culture of early nineteenth-century American Protestants, who, in the era of the Book of Mormon's publication, went "all-in" on the Bible as perhaps no group before ever had. They took Martin Luther's Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura*—Latin for "by Scripture alone"—to a whole new level. Many American Protestants, especially those swept up in the evangelical revivals that Joseph Smith describes in his personal history, came to believe that the Bible was the literal word of God—that "every direction contained in its pages was applicable to all men at all times"—and that the Bible was sufficiently legible that any person, regardless of his or her learning, was capable of discerning those directions and living his or her life accordingly in the confidence that he or she was "good with God," so to speak. Many American Protestant traditions today maintain these positions or variations thereof, as some of you in this congregation may well know, whether through missionary encounters or as former or current devotees of those traditions.

Now I want to suggest that *one* of the reasons that American Protestants felt empowered to read the Bible as a text whose meanings were self-evident and whose words were absolutely binding is the way the biblical narrative typically works. Literary critics see in the most ancient portions of the Bible an especially powerful formal innovation—namely, a third-person omniscient narrative voice. Now please don't tell the English professor that you've forgotten these terms from your English classes! You remember, right? Here's a quick refresher on the off-chance you have forgotten. In a narrative written from a third-person point of view, the characters in the story are viewed entirely from without—referred to by the pronouns *he*, *she*, *they*. If the narrative point of view is, further, an omniscient one, then the narrator of the story has total access to the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters and, really, everything else about the narrative world. Such a narrative voice often sounds matter-of-fact and seems authoritative. For the reader, it can be easy to trust such a knowing voice that seems to float impersonally above the events—however dramatic—that are related. Take the first few verses of Genesis 1 as an example:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light."

These words—about nothing less than the creation of the world—come at us from nowhere. It is not stated by whom or whence or why this information is relayed. And these words may be compelling in part precisely *because* they seem to come at us from nowhere, from something like the very formless void mentioned in these verses. One might even see an analogy between the way God is depicted as creating the world—by simply stating what he wishes to be—and the way the narration works here—bringing a coherent narrative world into being through the abrupt assertion of a no-nonsense impersonal point of view. The point is: Even though the subject matter is about as grandiose as one can imagine, the manner in which the events are narrated is so forceful and forthright as, perhaps, to foreclose our asking any questions about who, when, where, and why.

Now compare this to the first few verses of the Book of Mormon:

> I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

What's different about the narrative voice here? In technical terms, this is a narrative written from a *first-person* rather than third-person point of view—we are confronted with Nephi's "I" right from the get-go; the pronouns "I" and "my" appear eight times in this single verse. The reader is placed inside Nephi's perspective rather than privileged to stand outside it with an omniscient narrator. Whereas in the Genesis passage any trace of the author or narrator is rigorously effaced, here we are bombarded with particulars about the individual—Nephi—who has written and/or narrated what we are reading. We know precisely where this story is coming from.

What do we do with this striking difference? What is different or should be different about reading a scripture written in a magisterial third-person perspective that strikes such an authoritative posture as to presuppose readerly confidence, consequently causing some to hear it as the literal word of God, as opposed to reading a scripture written from an unabashed first-person perspective that both openly admits and also not-so-openly reveals its human limitations? At the time the Book of Mormon "came forth" in 1830, American Protestants were struggling with what Harvard historian David Holland—who also happens to be Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's son—calls the problem of "revelatory particularity." What does he mean by this term—revelatory particularity? Well, in the eighteenth century, as textual criticism of the Bible and historical understanding of the ancient near East became more advanced, some people began to realize what the Book of Mormon itself clearly sets out—that the Bible was composed and translated over long periods of time by many hands and that it was substantially transformed as a result. This view posed a real challenge to any naïve notion of the Bible as seamless word of God—it became clearer and clearer that particular people at particular times and places for particular reasons had written down ancient stories in the particular manner that they did. The question was: What happens to the status of divine revelation when it is itself revealed to issue from historically and culturally particular circumstances that inevitably produced certain blind spots?

For some, this realization became the basis for rejecting the Bible as the source of theological authority: if the Bible, the argument went, had the fingerprints of particular individuals and cultural groups all over it, then it seemed problematic to make it the first and last word about a god who ostensibly created and loved all people. Some of these people touted what they called *natural* rather than *revealed* religion as the basis of a sound faith—the better source of information about God's character was "the book of nature" rather than one of many books of scripture; it was in the universal workings of natural law rather than the particular commandments enshrined by one cultural group that one could get the best idea about who God was and what he expected of his creatures. By Joseph Smith's time, as I suggested before, many American Protestants tended to evade this problem of revelatory particularity by suggesting that the words of the Bible were the literal word of God, applicable in all times and places and accessible in its universal meaning to any right-minded person. These folks papered over the cracks the textual critics of the Bible had noticed, in part by hewing to the slick surface created by that remarkable third-person narrative voice of the Bible that I described a moment ago. They happily succumbed to the power of that narrative voice.

So the Book of Mormon comes onto this scene of struggle with the problem of revelatory particularity, and what does it do? It not only confronts the problem of revelatory particularity; it fairly rubs the reader's nose in it. It gives us a series of first-person prophet-narrators—Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, etc.—who, on the one hand, self-consciously apologize for their "faults"—that is, admit their human fallibility—and, on the other, maintain their divine inspiration. How are we to approach such a scripture? And how does this scripture, which we regard as uniquely "written for our day," instruct us as "latter-day saints" to interact with scripture in general?

The first thing to say is that the Book of Mormon discourages us from reading it—and any other text—as the literal word of God in the way that some American Protestants came to read—and still read—the Bible. For instance, the book of 1 Nephi, it is impressed upon us as readers, is not written by God but very much by Nephi, who reminds us at every turn that the words we are reading are *his* words, as inscribed by *his* own hand on plates *he himself* made. By foregrounding rather than downplaying the extent to which particular human beings mediate the transmission of the divine word, by going so far as to emphasize that the text contains "the mistakes of men," as Mormon puts it, the Book of Mormon *asks us* to read it—and other scriptures—with what I might call *critical discernment*. That is to say, the Book of Mormon itself suggests that we cannot take it or any other text, scriptural or otherwise, purely at face value as "God's own truth," so to speak. The Book of Mormon underscores for us that what we are reading when we read scripture is the word of God "given unto [his] servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language," to borrow the terms of D&C 1:24.

So what does this mean for how we think about scripture? Does such a view necessarily lessen the authority of scripture? Is it inherently irreligious to read scripture as *partial*—in both the senses of that word as incomplete and biased? No, I hasten to say! *A literalist, deferential reading of scripture is not the only way to read scripture devotionally.* The most profound meanings, by definition, may not lie right at the surface in what the words themselves explicitly state. If scripture—as the Book of Mormon suggests—cannot be treated as a well of truth undefiled—as the literal word of God, unmediated by particular, fallible human beings—that does not mean it does not have saving truths to teach us. It simply means that our way of accessing those truths may not always be as straightforward or simple as we might want them to be. It means that rather than treat scripture as a repository of timeless truths just waiting there right on the page to be picked up, we might instead need to treat scripture as a wrestling partner with whom—and against whom—we grapple and so develop our spiritual strength. "Searching the scriptures" may not simply mean devising an elaborate system of cross-referencing that happily harmonizes the standard works as though they were but a single, self-reinforcing text, as I tended to think on my mission, but rather engaging the revelations to particular human beings the scriptures contain with our own and others' revelations as particular human beings. The scriptures may not be meant to supply us with the easy certainties we crave as so-called "natural" men and women as much as to push us toward hard spiritual self-discovery.

Let me conclude with an example of how such a reading practice might proceed, one I think is apropos in light of the recent statement on "Race and the Priesthood" issued on the Church's website, which I'd strongly encourage all of you to read if you haven't already. I've already shown how Nephi never allows us as readers to forget for a moment that he is the one writing the words we are reading in 1 and 2 Nephi. What are the implications of this narrative fact for how Nephi and his descendants describe Laman and Lemuel and their descendants? I would draw your attention in particular to 2 Nephi chapter 5, which contains the following verses. First, verses 21 and 24:

> And he [the Lord] caused the cursing to come upon them [Laman and Lemuel and their associates and progeny], yea, even a sore

> cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people, the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them . . . And they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey.

Now verses 11, 17, and 27:

> And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly; for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind . . . And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious and to labor with their hands . . . And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.

How are we to reconcile Nephi's quite cold-blooded relation of the curse of his brothers with his fulsome account of the blessing of what he pointedly calls "*my* people"? How are we to take the fact that the first-person plural pronoun "we" now emphatically excludes his brothers and nephews and nieces, etc.? Under a literalist, deferential reading, we have no other choice but to accept Nephi's account of things. As morally retrograde or politically suspect as it may seem to us for Nephi to espouse such blatant theological racism, we just have to say: I guess that's what the Lord in his wisdom saw fit to do, and maybe I don't understand it, but that's just how it is. What I, by contrast, want to submit for your consideration is that the Book of Mormon—by foregrounding the human mediation of scripture—invites us as readers to consider the possibility that Nephi's "faults" as a human being have in this case—quite literally—colored his account of events. After all, patently and quite pointedly, we don't have Laman and Lemuel's side of the story, now do we? The question I want to pose is: What if the spiritual "message," as it were, of these verses does not necessarily consist of the explicit pronouncement made by Nephi here—God cursed the Lamanites for their wickedness? Might it be possible, in light of the Book of Mormon's particular narrative construction, that these verses instead or at least also provide an example of how even the seemingly best of us might be subject to the tendency of excluding others to the extent that we can't even see them as being like ourselves, that we banish them to the margins or cast them as villains in the stories we tell about ourselves?

That such a reading might be supported by the Book of Mormon, I conclude by drawing your attention to an interesting episode during Christ's visit to the Americas in 3 Nephi. In chapter 23, Christ asks another Nephi, a descendant of the original, to bring all their records for him to peruse. And he immediately notes a glaring absence: "Verily, I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so? And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled. And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?" (23:9–11).

How be it, indeed, that they did not write this thing? Is there laid bare here a reluctance on the part of the Nephite prophets to include in their narrative something they themselves recognize as true prophecy, because, perhaps, it came from a Lamanite who had excoriated the Nephites for their wickedness? What does it mean that the literal voice of God in the text singles out for distinction precisely the voice the Nephite narrative does *not*, at least not willingly, include—the prophetic voice of the Lamanite? It seems to me the Book of Mormon here makes a vital distinction between the voice of God and the voices of the Nephite narrators who claim inspiration from God. Implicit in this arrangement is the question of how capable the Nephite narrators are of faithfully transmitting the message of Lamanite exaltation that Jesus himself has just expounded in the preceding chapters. Is the "scripture," so to speak, in the Book of Mormon not entirely co-extensive with the *narrative* of the Book of Mormon? Does the Book of Mormon at this point and others unravel its white Nephite narrative in order to reveal a god who has no patience for white supremacism in particular and simplistically takes things at face value in general? This—to me—deep and deeply relevant spiritual truth can be unlocked only if one is willing to accept the invitation the Book of Mormon itself extends: to read it and, by extension, all scripture in an earnestly interrogative spirit. Read boldly, I say; in my experience, the scriptures can take it. And they will take you to "an infinity of fulness."

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Amy Jorgensen
An Apple A Day, Day 11 (2014)
Archival pigment prints, 5x5 inches

"Jorgensen herself repeated this concept in an interview, when she compared the images to the dank darkness of a prison cell. Thus, the collective imagery deconstructs ubiquitous depictions of apples as icons of health, happiness and optimism. The reference to a prison cell draws a likely comparison to sites like Guantanamo Bay and highlights the poor conditions and treatment of suspected terrorists." —Esmé Thomas

Amy Jorgensen
Apple of My Eye (2014)
Loop, four channel HD video

"Drawing on the political landscape of terrorism, torture, and images associated with these topics, Jorgensen incorporates references to militaristic rebellion and the co-opting of male violence as a way to examine how the traditional symbolism of the apple correlates to imagery of force and extremism. Through her exploration of this quintessential American symbol, Jorgensen rejects the traditional construct of the apple as a signifier of femininity and female transgression. Rather, she addresses themes of brutality embedded in the apple as a target of aggression." —Rebecca Maksym, UMOCA, curator

Amy Jorgensen
Apple of My Eye (2014)
Loop, four channel HD video

“The final work in the gallery is a four-channel video called “Apple of my Eye,” which consists of two frames of a single apple being blown to pieces and two channels of Jorgensen target shooting with with a .45 Sig Sauer P220 on one screen and a .45 Kimber Match II in the other. From the audio, one can hear the sound of bullets and apples falling to the ground, set in a nondescript desert landscape. It is disarming repeatedly

Amy Jorgensen
Apple of My Eye (2014)
Loop, four channel HD video

to see a close-cropped gun being fired with apple flesh falling to the floor. While historically the image makes reference to Dr. Harold Edgerton, an MIT professor who first developed cameras fast enough to capture bullets shooting through apples in slow motion, such sharp shooting again seems to be a visual nod to the proliferation of gun violence here in America as well as the violence of American military involvement." —Esmé Thomas

Amy Jorgensen
Apple of My Eye (2014)
Loop, four channel HD video

"As an exhibition, Far From the Tree recodes the apple from its polished frame set cozily within notions of Americana and replaces it within the framework of American aggression, violence and torture. Duplicitous realities often exist simultaneously. But what are we to do with Jorgensen's recoding of our own story through the metaphor of the apple? Perhaps they are moralizing, designed to elicit sympathy, designed to critique. . . . As viewers, the question remains, where do we go from here? What action are we to take?

Perhaps we are left with our own impotence in the face of such horrors and, of course, with a delicious red apple as we exit." —Esmé Thomas

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue

Amy Jorgensen

This work investigates the search for, or the making of, identity that draws upon the plurality and fraction of the self, and the span of influence that is made from generation to generation. In 1914 the Criminal Records Office of Scottland Yard dispersed to its officers surveillance images of eighteen suffragettes. These historic images of surveillance are transferred onto ladies' handkerchiefs using cyanotype printing techniques, an early 19th century photographic process popularized by Anna Atkins, the first woman photographer. The gift of the handkerchief is a matrimonial tradition passed from mother to daughter, woman to woman, generation to generation.

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue, 2014

Cyanotype prints on cotton handkerchiefs, 18 images, 12x12 inches each.

Not Editioned

1 *Margaret Scott*
2 *Olive Leared*
3 *Margaret McFarlane*
4 *Mary Wyan*
5 *Annie Bell*

6 *Jane Short*
7 *Gertrude Mary Ansell*
8 *Maud Brindley*
9 *Verity Oates*
10 *Evelyn Manesta*
11 *Mary Raleigh Richardson*
12 *May Dennis*
13 *Kitty Marion*
14 *Lillian Forrester*
15 *Miss Johansen*
16 *Clara Giveen*
17 *Jennie Baines*
18 *Miriam Pratt*

Contributors

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Scott Hales {scotthales80@gmail.com} is a writer and cartoonist from Cincinnati, Ohio. He has a PhD in English from the University of Cincinnati and teaches classes in English composition and American literature. His writing has appeared in *The Journal of Transnational American Studies, Religion and the Arts*, *International Journal of Comic Arts*, *Religion and Popular Culture*, *Mormon Studies Review*, and *Dialogue*. He blogs at *A Motley Vision*, *Dawning of a Brighter Day*, and *Artistic Preaching: Exploring Mormon Literature*. His cartoons and comics about Mormon life have appeared in *Sunstone* and online at www.gardenofenid.tumblr.com and www.mormonshorts.tumblr.com.

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Clifton Jolley {clifton@adventcommunications.com} and his wife Avigail Weinflash recently purchased a home in Ogden, Utah, "to be nearer trees and horizon, and to trade the ruthless craziness of Texas politics for the kinder craziness of Zion."

Amy Jorgensen {amyjorgen@gmail.com} is a photographer, video and performance artist exploring ideas of the body as author and figure using alternate narrative forms. She was born in Milan, Italy and spent her formative years living in Europe. After studying photography at Columbia College in Chicago, she received a BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Tufts University in 1997, and an MFA from the University of California

San Diego in 2002. Selected exhibitions include Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Oceanside Museum of Art, Museum of Art at BYU, CUAC, Jancar Gallery in Los Angeles, Rio Gallery, Access II, Visual Arts Gallery in La Jolla and Video Space. She is a recipient of multiple fellowships and grants including a GSA grant and an Individual Artist Grant from the Utah Arts Council. In 2013 her work Red Delicious became the first digital video work acquired by the Utah Division of Arts and Museums as part of its permanent collection. She is currently an Associate Professor of Visual Art at Snow College and is the Co-Director and co-founder of Granary Art Center, a non-profit contemporary exhibition and arts outreach space. Her work is included in public and private collections. Jorgensen lives and works remotely in the high plains desert of Utah. She can be reached via www.amyjorgensen.com

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